

Iran's *Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera*: An Anthropological Interpretation

Alireza Ghobadi¹ 

¹Assist. Prof., Kharazmi University, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Department of Sociology, Tehran- Karaj, Iran

Corresponding author/
Sorumlu yazar : Alireza Ghobadi
E-mail/E-posta : ghobadi@khu.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

Mirzadeh Eshghi (1894–1924) was an innovative and patriotic Iranian poet. Mirzadeh is noted in the history of Iranian literature for pioneering a literary revolution and creating a new literary style. This qualitative study contemplates one of his literary innovations titled *Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhiz Opera*, scrutinizing historical documents and employing ethnographic techniques. It expresses Mirzadeh's concerns about the damage inflicted on the material and nonmaterial culture of Iranians after the Achaemenid era. This opera form utilizes four different genres of Iranian classical music, with six singers performing poems about cultural and social changes. Mirzadeh's opera is a very attractive tool for inculcating social and cultural awareness, especially regarding Iran's national and cultural identity. This study probes the diverse sociocultural and political functions accomplished by this dramatic work of art and simultaneously examines its problems.

Keywords: opera, Mirzadeh Eshghi, culture, Clifford Geertz, interpretation

Submitted/Başvuru : 12.05.2024

Revision Requested/Revizyon Talebi

: 09.09.2024

Last Revision Received/
Son Revizyon

: 11.10.2024

Accepted/Kabul : 29.11.2024



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)

Introduction

Theater and opera are effective means of meaning transmission between discrete actors including authors, artists, performers, and audiences. According to Lucien Goldman, artist, poet, and writer Mirzadeh Eshghi did not seek to benefit from literature merely for its own sake. Rather, he used his art, and particularly his literature, as a model to convey his thoughts and register his critique of the social system. This qualitative study purposed to examine Shahriaran's resurrection opera from the perspective of artistic anthropology to more intensively understand the sociocultural functions, artistic charms, and theatrical limitations of this seminal work by Mirzadeh Eshghi. To this end, it employed the technique of artistic ethnography, conducted a document review, and applied Clifford Geertz's theory of cultural interpretation to ascertain the sociocultural sect of this phenomenon. In so doing, it sought to understand the sociocultural objectives of this opera and to simultaneously discover its artistic limitations.

Hence, this study inspected several articles to apprehend how opera was established in Iranian literature and understand the hidden political, social, and cultural meanings and functions of *Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera*. In addition, it utilized the perspectives of theater and opera to determine the quality of the writing and presentation of this honorable work.

In this context, I adopted the qualitative research methodology to achieve the stated objectives and employed the techniques of interpretative ethnography and document review. Further, I used Clifford Geertz's (1973)¹ theory of cultural interpretation to interpret my findings. I selected the ethnographic approach because it allowed me to consider all elements of the studied subject.²

I also intended to descriptively examine the text of *Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera* before reviewing it through the lens of artistry. Then, I planned to deliberate on the construction and functions of the opera and take the semiotic standpoint to discuss problems related to the performance of the opera. Therefore, I needed to holistically review semiotics before attempting an interpretation. In addition, I searched for the resource most important to my study: the original text of Shahriaran's resurrection opera contained in a book on Mirzadeh Eshghi compiled by Ali Akbar Moshir Salimi and titled *Illustrated Generalities*.

First, certain definitions are mandated. I begin by clarifying the term "opera," a performance format that combines Western classical music and the performing arts: a classical music singer portrays every opera character. Opera is a type of theater in which music plays the main role and singers perform parts. However, opera is distinguished from musical theater. Generally, operas incorporate several performing arts such as acting, dance, or ballet, and require the composer and the writer of the opera's libretto to collaborate. In addition, operas encompass aspects of theater such as set and costume design. Operas represent a significant part of the Western classical music tradition and mainstream Western culture. However, attendance in opera performances became increasingly restricted to the elite class after World War II. Operas utilize both drama and music to depict reality. Thus, remarkable opera productions demand the mastery of both music and theater. According to Richard Wagner, performance is the noble goal of music. The musical, literary, and theatrical arts must be combined with stage design, décor, and direction to produce an opera. Moreover, opera performances incorporate unique theatrical aspects such as settings, atmosphere, costumes, makeup, and acting. In addition, the words utilized in operas or their titles are not spoken: rather, they are distinctively voiced or sung.

Notably, music is a principal element of opera performances and functions crucially in this art form. It is also important to note that opera is not an Iranian art genre. Thus, in the language of artistic anthropology, it is natural that the opera experienced special changes as an imported art form so it could conform to the cultural and social structures of its host society.³ Therefore, besides the textual or literary divergences of the genres of Iranian and European operas, their musical language also differs substantively.

Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera Soundtrack

Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera employs four discrete Iranian classical music genres: *Masnavi*, *Se Gah Qafqaz*, *Isfahan Bayat*, and *Laili and Majnoon* songs. The aesthetics and meanings of each of these musical genres relate to the sociocultural conditions of each opera scene.

Six singers showcase these four musical styles according to their rhythms, instruments, and vocals in the respective scenes. However, traditional Iranian music and the tones of the utilized lyrics are not apparently suited to opera performance. An old performance of this opera involved one of the first female Iranian singers and musicians the late Moluk Zarrabi (1910–2000 m) and music diploma holder Hossein Khan (1886–1941 m).

¹ Geertz Clifford, *The Interpretation of Culture* (USA: Amazon publisher, 1973).

² Kristin G. Esterberg, *Qualitative Research Method in Social Sciences*, Trans. Ahmad Pour Ahmad & Ali Shamae (Yazd: University of Yazd, 2005).

³ Richard Schechner, *Between Theater & Anthropology* (Pensilvania: University of Pensilvania Press, 1981), 117.

Crucially, some of the opening musical notes of this Iranian opera genre are no longer available. Noteworthy, different music categories encompass discrete aesthetic implications; they can also signify the cultural and social conditions of historical periods. The music of a work can be changed in various performances to adhere to specific cultural patterns.⁴

This opera encompasses six singers, each using a musical style appropriate to the text to articulate opinions on cultural and social changes. The six vocalists are:

- First singer: Mirzadeh Eshghi
- Second singer: Khosro Dokht
- Third singer: Cyrus
- Fourth singer: Dariush
- Fifth singer: Anoushirvan
- Sixth singer: Rovaniyeh Zarathustra

Mirzadeh is the narrator. Khosro Dokht is a princess. Dariush, Cyrus, and Anoushirvan represent kings from the Achaemenid to the Sassanid era and Rovaniyeh Zarathustra is a Zoroastrian prophet. Mirzadeh refers to these characters as singers in this work.

The Iranian classical music genres used in this opera should also be described at this juncture:

- *Masnavi song*:

The musical style of the Masnavi song denotes a famed poetry format utilized in Persian literature to write long stories and content. Each Masnavi verse exhibits a distinct rhyme. The Masnavi stanza generally comprises thirteen syllables structured as a rhyming couplet.

- *Isfahan Bayat*:

Isfahan Bayat is a traditional Iranian song form that most musicians deem part of Homayun's system. Such songs incorporate diverse emotions denoting happiness and sadness. The rising and falling notes of such songs can be accompanied by texts describing emotional shifts. Therefore, this musical style is effectively deployed in Shahriaran's opera.

- *Se Gah Qafqaz*:

Se Gah is another Iranian musical instrument. It is placed at the bottom of Iranian musical instruments such as the Shahid and Ist string. The Se Gah Qafqaz song is also extremely important for Shahriaran's opera.

- *Laili and Majnoon song*:

The Laili and Majnoon song in the opera represents a traditional Iranian folk music style. The love story of Laili and Majnoon is renowned in literature, music, and other art forms, and this song genre functions significantly in the performance of this type of opera in Iran. Iranian opera follows the tenets of classical music, while Laili and Majnoon songs are rendered in a romantic and human musical style that conveys a special aesthetic value.⁵

Each of the six aforementioned opera singers uses musical styles appropriate to their performance.

Need for Changes in Literature: Mirzadeh Eshghi's Important Literary Concept

Assuming that Persian literature is beautifully written, the colors of the currents of time have shrouded its original hues with the passing ages.⁶ Indubitably, the cultural phenomenon of Persian literature requires polishing; new styles must be defined and refined so that Persian literature can regain its original splendor.⁷

In 1955, Mirzadeh Eshghi traveled from Baghdad to Mosul in Iraq. He encountered the ruins of the great city of Mada'in, or Teshphon during this journey. He lost his mind as he watched these ruins associated with the Achaemenid empire or the cradle of world civilization. In this regard, Mirzadeh Eshghi stated, "This opera of the resurrection of Shahriaran of Iran is the sign of tears that I have shed to mourn the ruins of the good and unfortunate." The utterance "tears and sighs" evidences Mirzadeh Eshghi's distress at the sight of the ruined ancient works of Ctesiphon, which should have remained preserved. He decided to conceive of the studied opera in such unpleasant circumstances.⁸

Mirzadeh wrote the lyrics necessary for the emotional description of this operatic system and considered the musical compositions essential for a beautiful performance.

⁴ Aliakbar Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzafah Eshghi* (Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1978), 261.

⁵ Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzafah Eshghi*, 234-236.

⁶ Daniel G. Bates and Fred Plog, *Cultural Anthropology* (USA: McGraw-Hill inc, 1990), 266.

⁷ Mahmood Ebadian, *Anvae Adabi* (Tehran: Soreh Mehr, 2000), 225.

⁸ Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzafah Eshghi*, 231

In terms of the opera's lyrical content, this segment of the opera's soundtrack addresses Mirzadeh's familiarity with the structure and outlines the musical purpose of the opera. Mirzadeh Eshghi uses the Masnavi song style to express his anguished response to the historical events. He then attempts to highlight in a brief format the significant aspects of the Three Times of Caucasus song at the next stage, sporting a bewildered and sorrowful expression. This song depicts historical occurrences in Iran and in it, he articulates the grievance of the Achaemenid forefathers at Iran's precarious state. He asserts that such incidents have converted Iran's pride and dignity into shame and humiliation. Through this song, Mirzadeh conveys his belief that Iranians are destroying their priceless cultural history, whereas Westerners treat their historical legacies with flowers.⁹ All Iranians are embarrassed and ashamed of their cultural heritage in its contemporary deplorable form. In this context, he states in one of his poems:

*In Mada'an, where all the sultans are mourning
Condolence pours from the Turkey sky
The mourning curtain of the kings of Mirzadeh's predecessor saw love
The thorn that was in the curtain is coming out of the curtain.*¹⁰

Then, in a drowsy mood, he sings along with a refrain from the *Laili and Majnoon* operetta:

*Now that I feel like I'm in the homeland
I see a woman come out of the grave with a shroud
She poked her head out of the dirt
She looked around
Suddenly what can I say when
Shaun came out of it.*¹¹

A beautiful but sad girl named Khosro Dokht also recounts another story about the changed history of Iran. Khosro Dokht rises from the grave with a beautiful but sad face. She introduces herself as an Iranian princess, the daughter of Kesra. She says the grief I sense from your critical condition has brought me out of my grave. She describes the land of Iran as prosperous in the past and evaluates that what remains is unfortunate. She queries the residents: "What has happened to the brave Iranian soldiers? Where is Khosro Tajdar? What is his opinion on today's Iran?" She calls to her father:

*O my monarch father, Khosro is sad
Get up from the grave and learn about the state of your country.*¹²

As previously mentioned, this opera entails six singers who represent different citizenships and depict distinct social, political, and religious roles. Khosro Dokht or Khosro's daughter is the second opera singer to appear on stage after Mirzadeh Eshghi. She describes the sadness and discomfort sensed by her ancestors, ranging from Ki Khosro to the Sassanians, and communicates her feelings in the following couplet:

*My ancestors from the traders of Ki Khosro and Sasan
are covered with dirt from the mourning of Iran.*

Therefore, Khosro's daughter grabs her hair and curses the foolish residents of contemporary Iran.¹³

The third opera singer to appear on stage is Cyrus, the first king of the Achaemenid era. Cyrus enters the stage with a well-groomed and impressive appearance. Notably, each character is set in the appropriate era in terms of the décor and costume. Cyrus places his hand on his forehead and squeezes it to signal his discomfort via the language of body symbolism.¹⁴ He is also ashamed about this destruction of Iran's cultural heritage from the perspective of previous sultans:

⁹ John Brookshire Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, Trans. Masood Ohadi (Tehran: Ayande pouyan cultural institution, 2000), 337.

¹⁰ Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, 234.

¹¹ Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzafeh Eshghi*, 237.

¹² Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzafeh Eshghi*, 239.

¹³ Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzafeh Eshghi*, 235.

¹⁴ Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Tradition and The Verbal Arts* (USA: Routledge, 2001), 91.

*Cry out with pity if my head is down
I am ashamed of the kings who are underground.*¹⁵

He then states that Iran's current situation results from the lack of appreciation of past opportunities.

Along with other Achaemenid monarchs, Darius, Anoushirvan, and Khosro sport regal jewelry as they take the stage with gloomy and dejected expressions that convey their discontent with the current state of Iran's society and culture in comparison to earlier periods. The deterioration of the setting is another reason these rulers lament the loss of Iran's social and cultural legacy. In reality, the sultans refer in each of their pieces to the crumbling walls as indicators through which the audience can piece together its rich cultural and social history. The next few lyrics of the Isfahan Bayat are sung by Khosro, who then enters the stage in amazement:

*It is not known whether you are dead or alive
O people, are you eunuchs, or are you slaves?
Is this the life you are living? Death:
What are you living for?
Your ancestors are crying for you.
Why are you a laughing stock among the nations?
Irani was big and tall from the olden days
What happened that you have turned your head?
He died at your hands:
Have you given up on maintaining this property?*¹⁶

Then Khosro's wife Shirin emerges beside Khosro the same sad state but her appearance is beautiful and well-groomed. She repeats the unpleasant experiences of the past kings:

*Oh, pure soil of the earth
Iran, O the court of Shirin
Where is your crown and jewel?
In my husband's palace.*¹⁷

Her verses recount the previous kings with great authority and narrate the social, cultural, and political lifestyles they created for Iranians. Then, she turns to the audience and questions them about the destroyed pride and glory of the cultural heritage of the previous kings.¹⁸

After Shirin's lamentation, all the kings present in the scene lower their hands, end their mourning, and sing a grieving refrain as they take the tale of Iran's devastation to Zarathustra.

*O Zoroaster, Iran is ruined
O pure-spirited Zoroaster
This ship is in the water
Shame on this water and soil of Zoroaster.*¹⁹

Eventually, all the kings conceal themselves behind walls. Subsequently, Zoroaster delivers his message about the social, cultural, religious, and political glory of Iranians, and Mirzadeh Eshghi awakens suddenly, reading the following verses with horror and surprise:

*What I saw in this ruined palace
Was God asleep or awake?
I saw the kings all sad.
I saw them fighting for Iran!*

¹⁵ Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzadeh Eshghi*, 233.

¹⁶ Finnegan, *Oral Tradition and The Verbal Arts*, 236.

¹⁷ Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzadeh Eshghi*, 244.

¹⁸ Finnegan, *Oral Tradition and The Verbal Arts*, 236.

¹⁹ Moshir Salimi, *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzadeh Eshghi*, 249.

*Our ancestors consider us a disgrace.
Oh my God. Reach out to us
Honor Zarathustra's promise
Mirzadeh saw a dream; you interpret it.*²⁰

Performative Characters of Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera

The Iranian art world has long been familiar with semi-artistic styles such as opera. Mirzadeh Eshghi, an intellectual and critical Iranian poet created an opera form. Initially, Mirzadeh Eshghi became acquainted with European opera. Later, he contemplated its reconstruction according to Iranian artistic and literary conceptions. Mirzadeh also conceived of transformations in literary language. As previously noted, he decided to construct this colossal piece of performative art when he encountered the destroyed Achaemenid era masterpieces during his trip to Mada'in and Ctesiphon in Iraq.

Thus we grasp the following facts:

First, opera is not native to Iran, and it is still not abundantly represented in Iranian art. Opera is an art form; nevertheless, it delivers a very valuable and powerful message!

Second, opera is an imaginative art form. Its inventive qualities become increasingly vibrant, particularly in historical genres. Therefore, opera authors and actors must use their ingenuity to create dramatic moments in their scripts as well as their performances. It is only logical that opera scripts and their applications would become increasingly complex in tandem with the growing complexities of human history.²¹ Such intricacies would naturally hinder seamless and organized opera presentations.

Third, the text of this opera lacks the literary fluency demanded by the depicted historical complexities and the multifaceted nature of Mirzadeh's literary text. The textual difficulties make the dramatic performance problematic.

Fourth, the grasp of the operatic message of this work mandates careful reading and requires an emotional construal of the meanings of the verses. The opera is successfully executed in such a context. We understand that performance art forms best represent theatrical texts that touch the heart.²²

Fifth, we must select the phrasing, flow, pauses, and rhythms of the desired performance pieces to avoid monotony, ensure attractive, vibrant, and effortless renditions, and deliver a structure that is simple and apt. We must check and adjust words (rhythms) and refine the expressions of various emotions (moods). Thus, we must ascertain where a sentence or stanza begins and where it ends. We must determine the tones to be conveyed to the audiences by specific statements: for instance, which utterance is a question, and which transmits surprise? The director and actors of the studied opera must examine the text and master the delivery of the appropriate emotion and tone, an aspect that is fundamental and significant for theater performances. For example, the performance of the *Isfahan Bayat* in Tehran and the last performance of this opera in London in 2024 were extremely attractive but did not appropriately follow the stated directions and interpretations.²³

Sixth, a metronome is used to regulate the intensity of musical sounds; similarly, writers or poets of opera lyrics must depict emotions such as anguish and happiness in high and low intensities via practice and experience. Mirzadeh's opera did not include this action because he was not a professional musician. Thus, the director of this opera must brainstorm and work with a musician to remedy this flaw and ensure an acceptable performance of the libretto.

Seventh, each component of this opera mandates numerous rhythm changes. Thus, both musical and oratorical tempo-related elements require focal attention to render a decent performance of this opera. Notably, this problem is directed at the text on the one hand, and at the poem reciter or declaimer on the other hand.²⁴

Eighth, producers and performers of this opera should attend more keenly to the music of the verses. The verses related to each actor or reciter must necessarily be compatible with the position and contexts of each depicted character such as a king, a king's daughter, or Zarathustra. For example, ordinarily, the statement "This is not our Iran, where is Iran?" could be ambiguously construed in a song and its meaning could be constructed in different ways according to the different characters who render it.²⁵ The lack of appropriate attention to each role can, in turn, adversely affect the attractiveness of the opera's performance. Of course, opera is condensed; therefore, any deficiencies in literary editing and any disharmony in the interpretation of the words can adversely affect the performance of the opera.

²⁰ Finnegan, *Oral Tradition and The Verbal Arts*, 239.

²¹ Christopher Nash, *Narrative in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 131.

²² Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 148.

²³ Noshin Abdol Hosain, *Theatre Art* (Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1985), 12.

²⁴ Abdol Hosain, *Theatre Art*, 20.

²⁵ D' Andrade, *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 248.

Evidently, the knowledge of facial expressions is important in life and naturally in performance art. In particular, facial expressions represent a means of creating and transmitting cultural messages. The actors in Mirzadeh's dense work must critically convey extremely diverse moods. Each actor in the opera must relate to a specific time in history because in general, the opera aims to communicate the formation and evolution of Iranian community life through the ages. Each stage of the opera includes a specific style and phase of Iranian culture and civilization. Obviously, part of the charm of every performance is vested in the aspect of ensuring that the facial expressions are suited for their specific time.²⁶ Therefore, the success of opera performances is also related to how successfully the producers and actors apprehend the elements essential to facial appearances in opera performances.

Performances based on poems are attractive to audiences only when the poem's arrangement and combination of beautiful words are appropriately showcased. Of course, this effect can occur only when the poem's meter and rhyme are regular and consistent. If so, the reading of the text becomes eloquent, and the performance of the opera singer is successful. As previously noted, Mirzadeh's poems do not incorporate the necessary consonances, and their oral performance can be problematic.

Mirzadeh's poems demand special reading. Syllables and hyphens should be perfectly and appropriately pronounced. In the studied opera, Mirzadeh's verses require a distinctive reading and voice to exert the necessary effect (please refer to the text of the opera in the illustrated book of Mirzadeh Eshghi for examples). When the verses are read, due attention must also essentially be devoted to long and short syllables and the tensions and intensities of the words. Given this context, it is evident that both the textual and performance-related aspects of the opera pose significant difficulties. The performance can become more attractive if the text is accurately and appropriately amended and adapted.²⁷

Phenomenology of Iran's *Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera*

Common sense dictates that we should accept Mirzadeh's textual criticisms and consider the operatic renditions accomplished in Iran and other nations by him and others. However, we must also remember that Mirzadeh's opera was a literary and theatrical innovation for Iran. Poet and writer Mirzadeh Eshghi achieved two objectives by creating this opera. First, according to Goldman (1913–1970), Mirzadeh supplemented the aesthetic image of his messaging tools of poetry and prose. Second, he established the foundations for the creation of a national art form when he was still very young, a laudable feat.

Further, Mirzadeh Eshghi always delivered his political, social, and cultural themes to his audiences through the aesthetic language of poetry and prose. However, he sought to add a more wide-ranging artistic appeal to his repertoire by creating a musical opera to sway public opinion from politics, literature, and culture toward the creation of a national identity. Heidegger inspired Gadamer's (1900–2002) conception of art, according to which "human play leads to the true evolution of being an art." The interpretation of creative games reveals a portion of the truth of existence. A game is not always a show, but a show is always a game.²⁸

In aesthetic terms, a creative work begins with external indications and meanings. Further, the phenomenology of art holds the power to disclose more exact and profound significations in terms of sense and reasoning. Hence, we must recognize that the signals and meanings of creative works such as Iran's *Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera* cannot be summed merely by their textual and theatrical aspects. Rather, they reveal a more specific type of meaning through semantic-logical excavations. This opera conceived and composed by Mirzadeh showcases his creative sensibility.

However, his ideas and inner sense also function in the development of this work. In reality, we must understand his paradigm and philosophy in producing such a work. Thus, we must first determine Mirzadeh's worldview during the development of this work to better and more intensively understand it. Then, we can apprehend his intentions and determine whether the relevant difficulties are based on the production quality or our theoretical and mental characteristics.²⁹

Conclusion

The review of *Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera* disclosed that this work of art has attracted varied types of critiques based on aesthetics, cultural sociology, art anthropology, and critical literature. Other types of criticism of this work are also possible. The different aspects of criticism reveal the discrete semantic areas encompassed in this

²⁶ Antony Giddens, *Sociology*, trans. Hassan Chavoshian (Tehran: Nashre Ney Publication, 2001), 184.

²⁷ Giddens, *Sociology*, 241.

²⁸ Stanley JR. O. Gaines, *Culture Ethnicity and Personal Relationship Processes* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 90.

²⁹ Mahmood Khatami, *Phenomenology of Art* (Tehran: Shad Rang Press, 2009), 70.

work. The text and performance of this opera have always confronted difficulties. However, according to the cumulative viewpoint of artistic heritage, new generations can always innovate to adapt works of art, especially in performance arts related to theater and opera. This opera can effectively revive a part of the political history of Iran and can make audiences aware of the cultural heritage of Iran in the Achaemenid era. Notably, this work is also an innovation in the domain of Iranian art. Therefore, its institutionalization requires people interested in theater and opera to produce and perform similar and different works for further advancement. In this manner, this category of social art may become elevated as an information tool.

It is valuable and vital to attend duly to Mirzadeh's intellectual paradigm vis-à-vis literature. He believed that "literature is prone to change and transformation." Therefore, different generations, especially the youth, can intercede to effect such transformations through innovations, just as Mirzadeh attempted to transfigure Iran's performing arts by producing musical theater. The production of this opera generates properties such as cultural and social awareness that become available to its audiences. Such features can always be traced in all literary histories, not merely the history of Iranian literature.³⁰ Mirzadeh's opera poses artistic problems; nevertheless, it is a very attractive tool for social and cultural awareness, especially concerning national and cultural identity.

However, performances of *Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera* would benefit from attention to several facets. First, we must know Iran's history. Knowledge of the historical process of the sociocultural shaping of Iranian society is integral to our understanding of the theme of cultural transformation on which the form of this opera is based.³¹ Performances of *Iran's Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera* would become even more appealing and powerful if its producers could select real ancient sites such as Persepolis for their staging. However, such a proposal could be extremely difficult to execute.

Ethics Committee Approval: N/A.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The authors declare that this study has received no financial support.

ORCID:

Alireza Ghobadi 0009-0002-0581-3003

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Back, Les and Andy, Bennett and *Cultural Sociology: An Introduction*. Jaipur: ABD Publisher, 2013.
- Bates, Daniel G. and Fred Plog. *Cultural Anthropology*. USA: McGraw-Hill inc, 1990.
- D' Andrade. *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Ebadian, Mahmood. *Anvae Asabi*. Tehran: Soreh Mehr, 2000.
- Esterberg, Kristin G. *Qualitative Research Method in Social Sciences*. Translated by Ahmad Pour Ahmad & Ali Shamae. Yazd: University of Yazd, 2005.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Tradition and The Verbal Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Culture*. USA: Amazon publisher, 1973.
- Giddens, Antony. *Sociology*. Translated by Hassan Chavoshian. Tehran: Nashre Ney publication, 2001.
- Johnson, Lesley. *The Cultural Critics*. Translated by Ziya Movahhed. Tehran: Nashre Agah press, 1979.
- JR. O. Gaines, Stanley. *Culture Ethnicity and Personal Relationship Processes*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Khatami, Mahmood. *Phenomenology of Art*. Tehran: Shad Rang press, 2009.
- Moshir Salimi, Aliakbar. *Koliyat Mosavar Mirzadeh Eshghi*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1978.
- Nash, Christopher. *Narrative in Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Abdol Hosain, Noshin. *Theatre Art*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Press, 1985.
- Schechner, Richard. *Between Theater & Anthropology*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
- Thompson, John Brookshire. *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Translated by Masood Ohadi. Tehran: Ayande Pouyan Cultural Institution, 2000.

³⁰ Lesley Johnson, *The Cultural Critics*, Trans. Ziya Movahhed, (Tehran: Nashre Agah press, 1979), 53.

³¹ Les Back, Andy Bennett and . . . , *Cultural Sociology: An Introduction*, (Jaipur: ABD Publisher, 2013), 275.

Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

How cite this article

Ghobadi, Alireza, “Iran’s *Shahriaran Rastakhize Opera*: An Anthropological Interpretation” *Tiyatro Eleřtirmenlięi ve Dramaturji Blm Dergisi* 39, (2024): 24-32. <https://doi.org/10.26650/jtcd.2024.3905>