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## IMPORTANT NOTICE

**All written submissions to Persian Heritage with the expectation of publication in the magazine must include the writer's name, address and telephone number.**



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The summer issue of Persian Heritage magazine was delayed because of the historical events that occurred in Iran on June 22, 2009. While most were disappointed with the delay of the magazine some were delighted with the idea that Persian Heritage had ceased to exist. They surmised the reason for our delay or closing was due to our fear to report the events of June 22. When the issue finally came there were those who were happy to receive their issue and those who were angered by its appearance, cover and contents.

Those angered with the issue accused the editor of receiving financial gain from the magazine from the printed images (the bloodshed) of the June events in Iran. It was interesting to me that there was so much anger driven towards Persian Heritage magazine and nothing shown against the other media's who originally printed the same images of the events. Perhaps it was personal. These pictures were reported on television, the internet, magazines and papers and seen by the world. Those who saw them, including the President of the United States, were heartbroken by the images, how could one not be moved? The only gain sought by this magazine in telling the stories of the Nedas of June was to provoke emotion to continue to rally the people of the world with the victims of the June movement, the people of Iran. Keeping their stories in the minds of the world keeps their sacrifices and spirit alive in our hearts and minds. NEVER SHOULD WE FORGET!

It has been almost three months since the June movement; a dignified peaceful movement that was unfortunately opposed with brutal force resulting in the death of 70 to 80 people and the torture of hundreds of others. A peaceful movement that resulted in the brave being brought to trials where they were humiliated and forced to give false confessions. As they spoke their words and were convicted, thrown in jail and tortured, we listened. We listened and understood that these confessions were inaccurate. These post movement actions made us angrier and frustrated.

Most believed that after three months the strength of their movement for freedom was weakened, until September 17, 2009. On that yet another historical day we witnessed the day of Qods that occurred in Tehran and other major Iranian cities. Despite the oppression and torture of the Iranian people and security they were to face, they poured into the streets. Once again their hearts and souls were filled with peace and harmony though, they knew that they could become the next Nedas. With this demonstration they again showed the world that the flame and desire for human rights, freedom, equality, peace and harmony still burns within and becomes stronger with each passing day. They came fearlessly to the streets to deliver one message to the world and Iranians abroad and that

message is "PLEASE DO NOT FORGET US UNTIL THE DAY OF OUR VICTORY."

Their determination, dedication and sacrifices for a greater cause initiated individuals and groups to organize a demonstration in support of fellow countrymen and human beings.

It was decided that the day to hold their demonstration was on the day that President Ahmadinejad arrived at the United Nations, September 23, 2009. It was their intention, on that day, to show the world that President Ahmadinejad was not the elected leadership of the people of Iran and that Iranians must be separated from this leadership.

The organizers worked on this demonstration day and night for many weeks. Iranian media assisted in connecting the rings of this unity movement. The end result was "Caravans of Freedom," buses from California, Illinois, Arizona, Georgia, Washington and Florida that came to New York, filled with supporters. The support also came from England, Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium, France and Germany. On September 23, 2009 they gathered in front of the United Nations. On that day, the day of President Ahmadinejad's arrival and speech, they showed him and the world that they want justice for the NEDAS and SOHRABS of Iran. They want human rights for the people of Iran. They want "freedom to choose" for the people of Iran.

The groups involved in the organization of this demonstration included *Sabz*, Royalists Mojahedin, Fadie, National Front, Socialists and A Republic Without Religion. Each of these groups applied for permits to demonstrate and 7 to 10 permits were issued by the city of New York.

It was estimated that over 30,000 people attended this wonderful event. This was the best opportunity for all of us to forget our political ideologies and unite for one common cause, to show the crimes afflicted on the people of Iran by the present leadership. There was a downside to this glorious event of unity. Unfortunately the leadership of the groups organizing the event were not able to reach an agreement to make the event one unified group. One without regard to the flag or placard they carried or uniform they wore. Fortunately outsiders who saw this beautiful and glorious demonstration were unaware of the underlying discontent.

What was beautiful about this demonstration was the clear message that was sent to the world by the participants. They gathered on that day in front of the United Nations for the sole purpose of showing the world that President Ahmadinejad was not the Iranian people's choice for leadership. They did so brilliantly and without showing outsiders their differences. They were united and would not allow an outside

enemy to destroy them.

If you look back at pictures of Ahmadinejad and Rafsanjani the day of the swearing in of the Chief Justice you can see that despite their rivalry and animosity they showed a unified and dignified front. On the surface they were unified and would not allow an outside enemy to walk in and destroy their regime. One must look at these pictures and see how they treated each other.

We must remember that Iranians inside Iran are also looking to those Iranians abroad to see the validity of their moral support and for them it must be truly genuine.

The events of this day reminds me of moments in my childhood. It was a time when there was no television or cinema in Gouchan. One day one of my older classmates brought a few handwritten pages of poetry to school. The poems were by some famous poet. He took us to a private place to read the verses because of their content. In one of the poems the poet states, "one day I was walking in the street and saw the most beautiful young woman covered from head to toe in her chador." The poet lost control and decided to do something. He approached the woman and told her that he had a confidential letter for her. She demanded to receive it and he told her he needed to read it to her.

He invited her to a dark isolated place. While reading the letter he attempted to touch her. Anytime he tried to touch her face she tightened her chador. Gradually the poet was able to get his way and had her, but she did so without uncovering herself. When his meeting with her ended he came to the conclusion that the "real hejab" is not the one that covers your face and lets loose the remainder of your body. The real hejab is one that covers your soul, character and purity.

At this demonstration and gathering there was and remains one essential element, which is the support and unity with and for the oppressed people within Iran. Our goal should always be for the good of the masses and not for the individual or political gain. Our personal associations should have no voice in any gathering of unity.

On this day when over 30,000 people gathered, their flag, ideology and affiliations were not important. The most important and essential element to this and future demonstrations is a united voice. A voice that clearly and loudly shows

the world that Ahmadinejad was not the elected President of Iran. He is simply a by product of a military coup.

On June 22, the young and old, women and men sacrificed themselves for a single cause. Their sacrifices gave Iranians abroad credibility. They, on their own, made the world understand that the people of Iran have nothing to do with its government. Now on September 23, 24 and 25th Iranians abroad showed the world that Iranians are civilized, educated and great supporters of human rights. And, even though they now live outside of Iran, they remain passionate for the citizens of Iran and the soil of its earth.

September 23 was an impressive day for Iranians. We did ourselves proud in getting a message out to the world and to Iranians in Iran, that we support them in their mission. And we showed the media and the New York City police, who were unaware of our discontent, that we are unified and will not allow any outside enemy to destroy the people of Iran.

Once again President Ahmadinejad's speech was filled with intentional misstated facts regarding the Holocaust and other matters. Even though his words again provoked great anger yet, because of the blood shed at his hands in June against the Nedas, this time we hope that the world saw Iranians separate from their government.

Again the success of September 23, 2009 was a direct result of the sacrifices of the Nedas and the others taken prisoner, beaten and tortured. On September 23, 2009 we were one voice that remembered their sacrifices and demonstrated to the world that Iranians are a proud nation of educated and cultured people, a civilized people seeking peace and prosperity.

I wish Iran and its citizen's better days ahead. I hope that we have learned a valuable lesson from this gathering, that individual gain will only weaken our unity. Though we may never agree on all ingredients that make us Iranians, one thing we do agree on is the cause of the people in Iran and to that basis we must always put a united front.

*Shahrokh Alavi*



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**THE SUMMER ISSUE**

The summer issue of the Magazine was fantastic to say the least. It was by far one of the best issues that you have had mainly of course because of the events which transpired, in Iran. The articles starting with your editorial and going on to the article by Mr. Beeman, Ali Ghaemi and others were fantastic. I loved all of them. However, there is a sinister evolution that is taking place in Iran, which has basically been missed by the media. That is people forget who Ahmadinejad was and is. Ahmadinejad was a senior member of the Revolutionary Guard, right from the beginning he was responsible for all the terroristic activities which transpired during the past 30 years. The massacre and assassination of our young people after the election was a direct order by him, implemented by the Revolutionary Guard, The sinister evolution however, has got nothing to do with atrocities. It is, the chasm, which is crested between him and the clergy including Ali Khamenei. If you recall, during the post election on one occasion he disobeyed Ali Khamenei by appointing his brother in law as first minister was not until the pressure was raised in the parliament that he let that go. However, the dismissing of the so-called minister of the intelligence, who is clergy, clearly signifies a threat that this individual is trying to take the power away from the clergy and put it in the hands of own people. I wouldn't be surprised if very soon the Revolutionary Guard takes over and kicks the clergy out of power and send them back to Qum. I don't know if this is good or bad but it is simply something that is one step toward getting rid of those in power. The other sinister event is, the recant trip of President Carter to Iran, which I heard through the grape

vine end has not been mentioned in the press at all. This is quite interesting, this is the person who is responsible for bringing the terroristic government of the Islamic Republic into power because of his impotence when he was the President. The take over of the American Embassy had occurred under his watch. He was unable to do anything about it. I am afraid of is that Jimmy Carter may convince the government that the time is right for them to stop being belligerent, stop their nuclear progress and talk to the United States. This is a dangerous precedent because it will legitimize that terroristic government and it will negate the sacrifices Iranians have made during the past several months.

*David Yazdan*

**A QUESTION OF INTENTION**

I am sorry instead of being a fighter for your country, you are trying to take advantage of it, and make money and business. Stop sending me any email, you will be on my spam list.

*Mr. Hoosh*

**GRACIOUS ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Wonderful.... great articles and your editorial is wonderful!  
*Many thanks, Shahri Estakhry*

**UNIFICATION NEEDED**

What a beautiful article. As you mentioned, we must get together, to be able help each other, especially those Iranians that are caged birds in Iran, in their battle for freedom.

*Best Regards Mahin Afkhami*

## Best Wishes to *Persian Heritage*

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**ROTHSCHILDS**

Although largely unknown to modern Americans, the name of Rothschild is synonymous with international banking and can be found behind the scene of many major world events.

This secretive banking dynasty was begun by Mayer Aschel Bauer, a German Jew born on February 23, 1744, in Frankfurt, then a hotbed of anti-Semitism stemming from the widely publicized philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Johann Fichte. His father dealt in fine silk cloth despite ordinances prohibiting Jews from the practice. Young Mayer studied to become a Rabbi. He was particularly schooled in Hashbalah, a blending of religion, Hebrew law, and reason, which had become popular during the Age of Enlightenment. The death of his parents forced Mayer to leave Rabbinical school and become an apprentice at a banking house.

Quickly learning the trade, he became court financial agent to William IX, royal administrator of the Hesse-Kassel region, and a prominent Freemason. He ingratiated himself to William, who was only one year older than himself, by joining his interest in Freemasonry and antiquities. Mayer would search out ancient coins and sell them to his benefactor at greatly reduced prices. Considering his rabbinical training coupled with his serious searches for antiquities, he surely developed a deep understanding of the ancient mysteries, particularly those of the Jewish Cabala. It was during this same period that the metaphysics of the Cabala began to fuse with traditions of Freemasonry as will be described later.

Young Mayer also added to his client list the royal German family of Thurn and Taxis, a descendant of which would be executed as a member of the secret society, which created Adolf Hitler. The prominent Thurn and Taxis family administered a courier service throughout the Holy Roman Empire. "They prospered because they received before their rivals news of market trends, commodity process and major political events," noted Rothschild biographer Derek Wilson. Mayer saw firsthand that information, especially obtained quickly, often meant great wealth. Today, the axiom has become "time equals money." To prevent prying eyes from reading their mail, the family wrote all correspondence in Judendeutsch, German written in Hebrew characters. This code has prevented most researchers from any clear understanding of their methods and intentions. During this time, according to The New Encyclopedia Britannica, "Mayer set the pattern that his family was to follow so successfully-to do business with reigning houses by preference and to father as many sons as possible who could take care of the family's business affairs abroad."

According to several authors, the family fortune was built upon money embezzled from William IX, who was paid an enormous sum by the British government to provide Hessian soldiers to fight American colonists during the Revolutionary War. William handed over this money to Mayer for investment, but instead it reportedly was used to establish his son Nathan as head of the London branch of the family banking house. Mayer eventually repaid the money but "Nathan manipulated the situation in such a way that this became the origin of the enormous

Rothschild fortune," Icke wrote.

Biographer Derek Wilson acknowledged this by writing; "It was the temporary diversion of the immense sums of money originating in Hesse-Kassel which enabled N. M. [as Nathan like to be called] to launch his banking operation, providing him with both liquidity and prestige."

"From the earliest days, the Rothschild's appreciated the importance of proximity to politicians, the men who determined not only the extent of budget deficits but also the domestic and foreign policies..." wrote biographer Niall Ferguson.

"Rothschild influence extended to royalty as well. Nathan first came into contact with British royalty thanks to his father's purchase of outstanding debts owed by George, Prince Regent--later King George IV--and his brothers."

Ferguson traced Rothschild influence on through the British royalty Rothschild's also were quite close to most prominent Victorian politicians such as Lord John Russell, Lord William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain, and Lord Randolph Churchill, Winton's father.

It was also about the time of Nathan's arrival in London that Mayer Bauer changed his name to Rothschild (literally "red shield") taken from a red shield emblem on the ghetto home of his ancestors This name change undoubtedly was an attempt to separate his family from the raging anti-Semitism prevalent in Germany at the time. To further insulate the family from such racism, the Rothschilds used a stable of registered agents and front men to operate their far-flung business dealings.

This may be a good point to dismiss claims that the modern secret societies, either wittingly or otherwise, are furthering the aims of an international Jewish conspiracy. While it is undoubtedly true that many of the world's wealthy elite have a Jewish heritage, one should not be sidetracked by the issue of race or religion. There is no evidence of substance to prove that Jews or Hebrews---or any other racial or religious group---are any more greedy or ambitious than anyone else.

Furthermore, any discussion of anti-Semitism is frequently lost in a misunderstanding of the distinction between Hebrews, Jews, and Zionists. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language describes a Hebrew as a member of the Semitic people, a race descended from Abraham of the Old Testament, which, ironically enough, also includes most Arabs. A Jew, on the other hand, is an adherent of Judaism, a religion handed down by the Israelites. A Zionist is a member of a political movement concerned with preserving and furthering the aims of the state of Israel. These constitute three separate issues: race, religion, and politics.

To lump these singular issues into one single conspiracy is both wrong headed and contrary to the historical evidence. Most people in modern America realize that it is wrong to judge a person on race, an attribute over which that person has no control--Likewise, it is considered bad manners by most to publicly attack another person's religion. Only one's politics are considered fair game for dissension and argument.

It is here, in the realm of politics, that much confusion has

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## C O M M E N T A R Y

been sown. Supporters of Zionism for years have skillfully attacked their opponents as “anti-Semites” to the extent that many Americans, Jews and gentiles alike and especially the media, are loath to even question the policies of Israel no matter how odious. Furthermore, the broad brush of anti-Semitism frequently has been used to besmirch anyone offering a conspiratorial view of history.

While it may be true that secret organizations in the past were built along both racial and religious grounds, attempting to bring race or religion into a discussion of modern secret societies and conspiracies only serves to confuse the issue and repel conscientious researchers. Although many international financiers are of Jewish descent, it is no more fair to accuse the Hebrew race of an international conspiracy than it would be to blame all Caucasians for the acts of Hitler’s Nazis.

W. Cleon Skousen, a former FBI agent who served as police chief of Salt Lake City in the late 1960s, wrote about international conspiracies in several books, including *The Naked Communist*. He too came to understand that racial identification was “an oversimplified explanation for the rise of the global power structure which has snared mankind.” He explained, “in studying the global conspiracy it is important to keep in mind that it was not any particular race or religion but the ‘passion for money and power’ which has drawn the tycoons world finance into a tightly knit, mutual-aid society.” But such considered and reasoned understanding of anti-Semitism was not in vogue during Mayer Rothschild’s time. So he built his financial empire while studiously attempting to avoid the racism of his day.

This is not to imply that the Rothschilds were not proud of their Jewish ancestry. By all accounts, family leaders have been most devout in their observance of Jewish traditions and customs. Over the years, the family has donated liberally to Jewish ancestry. By all accounts, family leaders have been most devout in their observance of Jewish traditions and customs. Over the years, the family has donated liberally to Jewish causes and may have even played a vital role in establishing the state of Israel, although some conspiracy writers claim that Rothschild interest in Israel more concerns the control of oil than love of a homeland.

One method utilized to avoid racism was the enlistment of non-Jewish operatives as fronts for the Rothschild organization. At the time of the American Civil War, J. P. Morgan publicly made anti-Semitic remarks, yet furthered the goals of the Rothschilds. “How much of Morgan’s apparent anti-Semitism was real and how much may have been a pragmatic guise is, in the final analysis, of little importance.... Regardless of one’s interpretation of the nature of the relationship between the Houses of Morgan and Rothschild, the fact remains that it was close, it was ongoing, and it was profitable to both. If Morgan truly did harbor feelings of anti-Semitism, neither he nor the Rothschilds ever allowed them to go in the way of their business,” noted author Griffin.

According to author Icke, Morgan and Rockefeller were wealthy “gofers” who used Rothschild financing to “build vast empires which controlled banking, business, oil, steel, etc., and ran the United States economy in the way the Oppenheimers do in South Africa.” Another expediency was the use of Mayer Rothschild’s sons, known as the “Frankfurt Five,” who were carefully schooled and groomed to loyally further the family banking business. While Mayer and his eldest son, Amschel Mayer, supervised from their Frankfurt bank, son Nathan Mayer established the London branch in 1804. Meanwhile, the youngest son, Jakob (who preferred to be called James), joined Paris

banking circles in 1811 while Salomon Mayer began operating in Vienna and Karl Mayer in Naples.

Mayer also worked with neighbors. “The Warburgs began lobbying for Rothschild business in Hamburg as early as 1814, though regular dealings were not established until the 1830s...” wrote biographer Niall Ferguson.

In 1785 the Rothschilds shared quarters with a family named Schiff. A grandson, Jacob Henry Schiff, immigrated to America in 1865 after meeting Abraham Kuhn, who invited him to join his New York investment firm. In 1875 young Schiff married the daughter of Solomon Loeb, then head of the powerful investment-banking firm of Kuhn, Loeb & Company of New York City. Schiff became head of the firm in 1885 with the death of Loeb. It was Schiff who financed the purchase of the Union Pacific for railroad magnate Edward H. Harriman, father of later world statesman W. Averell Harriman. Both Schiff and Averell Harriman were to play important roles in the rise of Communism in Russia.

The elder Harriman’s two sons attended Yale and were inducted into the Order of the Skull and Bones--William Averell (the Order, 1913) and Edward Roland Noel (The Order, 1917). During the 1930s W. Averell’s banking firm of W. A. Harriman & Company merged with the private international banking firm of Brown Brothers creating Brown Brothers, Harriman & Company, a longtime partner of which was Prescott Bush (The Order, 1917), father of George Bush (The Order, 1949).

Intermarriages between the prominent Jewish immigrant families were common around the turn of the century. “As they set about protecting their vast estates, moreover, these Jewish dynasts often found it useful in the United States as in western



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Europe to marry among each other,” wrote history professor Howard M. Sachar. “Solomon Loeb and Abraham Kuhn, it is recalled, married each other’s sisters, and Jacob Schiff became an instate partner by marrying Loeb’s daughter. In turn, Felix Warburg, scion of a distinguished Hamburg banking family, assured himself a senior partnership in Kuhn, Loeb by marrying Schiff’s daughter Frieda. Felix’s brother Paul married Solomon Loeb’s daughter Nina – from Loeb’s second wife – and thus became his own brother’s uncle. Another partner, Otto Kahn, married Adelaide Wolff, daughter of one of the firm’s original investors. At Goldman, Sachs & Co., two Sachs boys married two Goldman daughters.” Another more recent example of these upper-level connections was the much-publicized 1950s love affair between Elie de Rothschild and Winston Churchill’s former daughter-in-law, Pamela Churchill. After the affair broke up, she moved to New York where, after a short-lived marriage to a Broadway producer, she wed financier and CFR member Averell Harriman. In 1993 Pamela Harriman was named U.S. Ambassador to France by President Clinton. Unrelenting attention to business, coupled with intermarriages and the use of front men, built a gigantic and secretive Rothschild banking empire. This empire exerted considerable influence on the economic and hence the political history of Europe as well as the United States, although here in a more covert and indirect manner.

In 1806 Nathan had become an English citizen and wed Hannah Cohen, the oldest daughter of Levi Barent Cohen, then London’s leading financier. The marriage cemented his acceptance by the British banking establishment.

“Nathan Rothschild was able to brag later that in the 17 years he had been in England he had increased his original 20,000 pounds stake given to him by his father by 2,500 times, i.e. to 50,000,000 – a truly vast sum at that time, comparable in purchasing power to billions of U.S. dollars today,” stated on Rothschild investigator.

Derek Wilson, a sympathetic biographer of the Rothschilds, noted that in 1810 Nathan was merely one of several financiers operating in London. But by 1815 he had become the principal financier to the British government and its Bank of England. “This remarkable coup could only have been achieved by a complex series of dealings, many of which were encased in a secrecy which cannot now be penetrated,” remarked Wilson.

Author Icke saw this connection as proof of conspiratorial control by the Rothschilds. “They had the crown heads of Europe in debt to them and this included the Black Nobility dynasty, the Hapsburgs, who ruled the Roman Empire for 600 years,” he wrote. “The Rothschilds also took control of the Bank of England. If there was a war, the Rothschilds were behind the scenes, creating the conflict and funding both sides.”

“They may have held citizenship in the country of their residence, but patriotism was beyond their comprehension,” wrote Griffin. “They were also very bright, if not cunning, and these combined traits made them the role model of the cool pragmatists who dominate the political and financial world of today.”

The Rothschild financial empire arose from loans to Europe’s rulers and from the family’s successful use of fractional banking. To understand fractional banking requires a brief look at the nomenclature and history of money; to understand its application requires a look at one of the most powerful financial institutions on the planet.

**Reference:** “rule by secrecy” Author: Jim Marts

## MET MAKEOVER INCLUDES ENLARGED ISLAMIC GALLERY



In a recent article written by Carol Vogel which appeared in the New York Times on July 9, 2009, she discusses a contribution made to the Islamic Gallery of the Met. Despite the hard financial times renovations are continuing on a suite of galleries on the museum’s second floor devoted to arts of the Arab lands, Turkey, Iran and Central and South Asia, all of which fall under the department of Islamic art.

The \$50 million project, which includes an endowment, already has significant benefactors: Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani, New York philanthropists who have given \$10 million toward the new galleries that will be devoted to Safavid and later Persian art. In addition to the actual renovations, their donation will also go toward a new catalog of 350 highlights from the entire Islamic department’s collection and to an endowment to support educational programming centered on Iranian art.

Mr. Campbell said the museum’s Persian art collection includes several treasures, like the “Emperor’s Carpet,” an elaborately patterned 16th-century rug that got its name from its previous owners, the Hapsburg emperors, and an illuminated manuscript of the Persian epic known as the Shahnama, or Book of Kings, assembled in the courts of early-16th-century Persia. The museum will name the gallery after the Mossavar-Rahmanis. (He is chairman of the board of Foxtrot International, an oil and gas company based in Ivory Coast, and chief executive of Mondoil Enterprises, an energy company headquartered in New Mexico. He is also a trustee of the Met. She is a managing director at Goldman Sachs.)

“The Met was one of my first stops when I came here as a student in 1970,” Mr. Mossavar-Rahmani said in a telephone interview. “I come from a family of collectors that goes back generations, and giving comes naturally. I was aware that the Met was planning this renovation and that they were raising funds, and I thought this gift would help kick off the fund-raising and underscore the importance of Iranian and Persian art.”

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*An Interview with*

**BRENDEN HAMILTON**

*Filmmaker and Citizen Diplomat*

**BY: BRIAN H. APPLETON**

**PART ONE**

An independent film maker recently released his latest film, two years in the making called “Iran: Hot Tea, Cool Conversations.”

It is directed by Brenden Hamilton and co-produced with Mehdi Ghafourifar.

Brenden is a very affable, soft spoken young man, a product of Northern California with an irresistibly endearing smile and a winning personality whose friendship immediately becomes apparent and desirable.

*Brenden, I loved your film. As someone who spent five years in Iran and loves Iran as much as I do, let me say that you did a totally awesome job in capturing and presenting what a wonderful people and culture Iran is in a way that was sensitive, subtle, and captivating. Your political insights were understated yet poignant and your obvious understanding of the Iranian culture is impressive. I am amazed that you could do this so effectively and well in only 6 weeks of shooting and never having been to Iran before.*

*Let’s start at the beginning. Where were you born Brenden?*

I was born in SF California, Oct. 7, 1980. Then we moved to Oakland briefly. My parents divorced when I was at a young age after our move to Sonoma County so I grew up commuting between parents in San Francisco and Santa Rosa. I went to Analy High School in Sebastopol. Anna Lee was the daughter of one of the Sebastopol city fathers.

*What is your earliest childhood memory?*

Vague memories of Oakland. From the earliest age I expressed an interest in telling stories. My mom used to tell me that I loved to make up stories from a very early age and I enjoyed telling my stories to an audience.

I watched many films and paid close attention to media growing up. I thought a lot about what went into making stories I watched on TV from a very early age.

*Was there one story or film in particular which had a big influence on you as a kid?*

“Glory” (1989) was one of them. The film making process in itself was interesting to me but it was also a kind of an escape.

*I believe that entertainment is partially an escape from our present situations and realities. It is also a way to make a viewer experience or think about other realities and ideas right?*

So, we live in a culture where conversations and discussions of philosophical ideas are not particularly encouraged. A documentary is a place where people can safely have different ideas presented to them and spend some time thinking about them. Because of the power and influence of the mass media, our impressions of other cultures are based on pre-packaged information presented as objective when in fact they may not be. Intuitively, I just didn’t trust the media portrayal of Iran. Due to media distortions, most Americans think of Iran as a flat desert full of terrorists.

I believe the anti-intellectual climate of our culture stems from fear. This fear can be induced and managed by the media. Also the media having the loudest mouth insinuates that most of us, as the American public, are ignorant about foreign affairs, which is actually not the case. America is predominantly a nation of immigrants. Most Americans trace their roots to other countries and have an ongoing cultural liaison with them. This may be especially the case with first generation Americans who still have

families in other countries and are in continual communication with them. There are also many Americans working abroad and so the point is that we have other sources of information against which to measure the veracity of the media.

*I agree totally with your diagnosis of Western media. Most Americans have the impression that Iran is Saudi Arabia and Vice Versa....not because they have a poor sense of geography but their perception suits their agenda. The West accuses Iran of gender apartheid and yet women vote, women work, women drive, women go to grad school which is not true of Saudi Arabia but Saudis allow US military bases and ARAMCO, while Iran has committed the sin of insisting on its own sovereignty much like we did in 1776. What upset me the most about the going to war on Iraq was that at the time 99% of Americans only knew the name of one Iraqi; Saddam Hossein. That would be like letting George W. Bush represent all Americans. When you read a book, there is no visual aspect to it other than some photos perhaps so you as a reader are forced to use your imagination; the imagery is suggested and the details are left to your mind's eye. The greatness and the danger of the film media is that the director can portray reality exactly as he wants to, leaving little room for visualization.*

I think that the mass media does in fact have a huge influence over what people think and talk about. That is why I believe so firmly in citizen diplomacy because each one of us can represent our country and perhaps in a more accurate way than a government representative can, as well as going beyond nationalism and discovering our shared humanity. As a citizen and not a government or corporate representative I have a different agenda. What citizens of every country share an interest in, is usually the same thing...having friends, a decent career, healthy children, peace... When our government or our media speaks about American interests abroad, they are not necessarily speaking about the average American's interests nor about what

is in the best interests of the citizens of another country; they are often speaking about what is best for American corporations or special interest groups.

*The media has us believing that Israelis are 100% war hawks in favor of attacking Iran when we know in fact that is not the case and there are peace advocates in Israel who protest this aggression and the expanding of settlements on occupied Arab land. Also interestingly enough American Jews are the biggest critics of Zionism, a fact most Americans are unaware of.*

This is a passionate topic and I'm sure there are people on both sides of these issues. We haven't been focusing on this area. One of the members of the former New College faculty, Peter Gable writes for the Jewish magazine and interfaith movement Tikkun and I believe he is a Jewish pro Palestinian advocate.

My dad Martin worked at New College in SF for 35 years as a VP for a long time and eventually President. My mom was a New College graduate and a peace activist. She moved here from Florida and became very active in American Indian rights. She founded an organization called "Weaving for Freedom" which helped to give women on the Big Mountain Indian Reservation in Arizona some income. She helped to market their weaving to a large marketplace while simultaneously broadcasting their plight to the public.

My mom was more or less adopted into the Big Mountain community. She was one of a very few outsiders allowed to experience the Sun Dance ritual of the Navajo. I spent time on the reservation and was greatly influenced not only by her enthusiasm for social justice but also by her entrepreneurial ability as I watched her literally grow that business from a very small local operation with a trading post to a large international one. I think that she gave me the courage to become an independent filmmaker.

My mom was an advocate for the Navajo. There had been a long, long history of pressure from the BIA as well as private industry to relocate this tribe ever since it was discovered that there were significant coal deposits under the reservation land they had been given. At one point when Peabody Coal Company was corrupting certain of the tribal leaders with bribes to gain their consent to mine in their sacred sites, she assisted the elders in buying up enough shares in Peabody to become voting members of the board and a group of them went with her to London to negotiate with Hanson, the parent company.

My mom, Arlene also had a program called: "The Garden Project" which still exists and teaches prisoners how to garden. It is also called horticulture therapy. It gives prisoners a useful skill and some empowerment. While on the reservation I can remember wanting so much to be home watching TV and playing basketball. It was only much later that I realized what an incredible experience it had been and how much it influenced my life.

*Your mom sounds like she was quite courageous, intelligent and had a passion for social justice. I am sorry that she met her demise five years ago and that I will never have the pleasure of meeting her.*

I am touched that you would honor my mother in this in-



Brenden Hamilton & Aziz

terview.

***Why Iran and what was your purpose for making this film? Your first film “Bound” was about Robert Johnson so this one about Iran is kind of a radical departure. Were sports your first love?***

Yeah, “Hoop Dreams” (1994) was kind of the inspiration for that film. “Bound” picks up where “Hoop Dreams” leaves off; the character made it to college in “Hoop Dreams” and in “Bound” the film begins following Robert Johnson in his senior year of college attempting to both graduate and get drafted into the NBA. We were filming “Bound” at the time of March Madness and America’s “shock and awe” bombing of Iraq. This kind of eclipsed our film as far as relevance. We did a few film festivals and had a great opening at the Roxy, which was very exciting. The DVD is coming out soon.

The invasion of Iraq definitely grabbed my attention. I was always interested in politics.

I thought Iran would be next. I had learned in public high school about how the opposing side is dehumanized in order to make war possible, in order to get popular support for it, especially using the fear factor which accompanies demonization. I wanted to see Iran for myself and bring back a real perspective for the American people.

Jerry Dekker taught some courses on Iran at New College which I attended and I also took a course there about Middle Eastern religions that talked about Iran. Plus my dad also talked a lot about it and wanted to go to Iran. The politics unfolding about Iran intrigued me including the mystery of Iran and what it was really going to be like. While I was filming in Iran, I was so caught up in the process that I really didn’t have time to digest it. But once back in the US, in my cutting and editing studio, it really began to sink in — Iran, what an amazing, culturally and historically rich country.

Jerry had spoken highly of Iran and said it would be possible to go to Iran and film there. So I was really curious about the so-called “Axis of Evil” and wanted to see it for myself.

***Did you plan from the start to make the film a series of interviews or did that just kind of evolve as you went?***

It evolved as I went. I had no idea what to expect about how receptive Iranians were going to be about being filmed and interviewed.

I watched the D.A. Pennebaker film “Don’t Look Back” (1967) starring Bob Dylan. I used Pennebaker’s real intimate style. His camera work liberates the camera from convention. Free hand held, personal, and intimate, almost like one on one.

***You went to film school?***

I took ROP video courses in High School and then took additional filmmaking courses at Long Beach. I graduated from New College of California with a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities with concentration in Film/History in 2007.

My film courses were good for learning techniques and processes. But I learned most about filming through hands on experiences.

*to be continued*

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Easter Sunday I awoke to Tehran traffic outside my hotel window. Some wrestled the tangle of cars and pedestrians on their way to mass at the nearby Orthodox Church. I prepared for my own spiritual journey, the reason I had traveled through eleven time zones and half way around the world: to weave a knot on Iran's World Peace Carpet, a project sponsored by UNESCO and the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization of Iran. For a tapestry weaver and author (my first novel was inspired by an Afshar tribal rug), tying a goodwill knot on this carpet, along with 700 others from 89 nations, seemed every bit as reverent as attending Easter Mass.

My desire to participate in the Peace Carpet stemmed from a long-held appreciation for Iranian culture, in particular its carpets and poetry, which are often literately woven together. On a visit to the carpet dealers' bazaar in Tehran I discovered several carpets with phrases of Hafez, Ferdowsi and Sa'adi or pictorial images of these poets incorporated into the design. I have always admired, if not romanticized, the lives of nomadic peoples and, like Iranian nomads, I learned to raise sheep, spin and dye wool with natural materials, and weave tapestries that are much like the Persian *gelims*. I discovered that colors have meanings and rugs contain amulets against the evil eye. Themes such as these inspired my novel about a young nomadic carpet weaver, which in turn led to an invitation in 2005 to participate in Iran's First International Children's Book Festival. I remember how elated I had felt that February morning when my plane touched down on Iranian soil. In love with Iranian culture, I could hardly wait to meet its people, with whom I bonded readily during that trip, often more easily than with people of my own culture. Thus,

## WEAVING PEACE IN TEHRAN

by Meghan Nuttall Sayres

when I heard about this UNESCO peace project, I couldn't think of a more perfect excuse to revisit these friends. It was also a way to release my long-held frustrations over the poor foreign relations between our countries and the palpable mistrust of Iranians among many Americans. I wanted to weave peace in Tehran.

The Peace Carpet stands in the Negaristan Museum situated within the Saad Abad Historical Complex, formerly a Qajar and then Pahlavi summer estate. After the Islamic Revolution it became a people's cultural park. The atmosphere in the museum felt more diplomatic than that of a weaving studio. Large posters of dignitaries who had tied knots on this carpet hung on the walls beside rugs made in all the provinces in Iran. The Peace Carpet is being woven under the direction of Jafar Shahabi, a master weaver and manager of his own family's respected carpet business, established nearly a century ago. The rug will depict an image of Cyrus the Great. It was under Cyrus, a sixth century Persian king, "that Iran became the core of the first universal, multiracial, multi-faith empire." He was famed even among his Greek enemies for his justice, mercy and generosity. Persians called him the Father of their nation. The clay cylinder bearing Cyrus' declaration of human rights is kept in the British Museum. Excerpts from this charter proclaiming religious freedom, elimination of slavery and equal rights for all will appear in a bed of flowers along with the words *UNESCO and universal peace and friendship* in several languages. Made of silk and the finest merino wool, it will consist of five hundred shades of naturally-dyed colors and four million knots.

Upon entering the museum, I was greeted by Fahimeh Naderinajad, the director of the Peace Carpet project. She told me



the idea for this carpet was conceived by the current Saad Abad Cultrual Center Director, Ms. Eshrat Shayegh. Ms. Naderinajad invited me and my translator to have tea at a table beside the loom along with Mr. Shahabi. Several times my hosts expressed their appreciation of having an American participate. They hoped the Peace Carpet would be a forum for both diplomats and citizens to gather unofficially and foster new dialogue. It was then that I learned that I was the first American to travel here to weave on this rug. This surprised me since the inaugural ceremony had taken place over six months ago, in November 2008. While I was honored to be the first American, I was saddened that no one else had come.

I asked why they chose to create a peace carpet, as opposed to some other form of art from Iran. They said that tying knots is something many people are capable of doing and because most of the world is familiar with Persian carpets. They explained that this project also has an economic component because so many people in Iran are dependent on the strength of the rug industry—the shepherds who grow the wool, the dyers, the weavers, the rug restorers, the dealers and exporters. They said that in this economically difficult time celebrating this particular kind of art could help renew global interest in Iranian culture and perhaps help boost the carpet industry. But most of all they want to “export their friendship and a message of peace to the world.”

“Art is a universal language,” Mr. Shahabi said. “It cuts across political ideologies to touch the soul.” I looked at him and smiled, knowing exactly what he meant as indeed it was their ideal that inspired me to journey here so that I could be a part of it.

Mr. Shahabi turned to the Peace Carpet. “What are we waiting for?” Time seemed to stand still for a moment when I sat beside the head weaver at the loom. I ran my palm across the silken warp threads in front of me and admired the subtle hues of the earth-toned yarns dangling above my head on the loom frame. It seemed that not much had yet been woven, only the selvage at the bottom of the rug and six inches or more of the design, knots that would rise toward the ceiling to make up the body of this medium-sized *qalicheh*.

Like every guest I was invited to write down my thoughts, which will be compiled into a book and published when the carpet is completed. After traveling to cities around the world, the book and the carpet will eventually hang in the United Nations. Flags representing each of the guest’s home countries were displayed on a round table in the room. “Unfortunately,” my hosts told me, “it is illegal to display an American flag in our country, so we cannot put one on our table for you.”

I never thought of myself as nationalistic, yet I felt disappointed and slightly offended. But rather than let this one omission damper the respect and friendship we’d forged, I decided to turn the other cheek that Easter morning and let the issue rest. Days later, I received a similar explanation by an apologetic waiter in a restaurant, where visitor nationalities were celebrated by setting flags on diners’ tables. He pumped my hand as he greeted me. “It’s very regrettable,” he said, as he ushered me toward a carpet and pillow-laden platform, an Iranian-style “booth,” and then handed me a menu written in both Farsi and English. It seemed that everyone I had met—hotel clerks, henna mill workers, merchants, museum employees, students, bookstore owners—either gave me high five for coming to visit Iran or a thumbs up for Obama. They all praised his recent Nurooz greeting. Some Iranians even exclaimed when meeting me, “I love Americans and America!”

It seemed these Iranians could do or say anything they wished in reference to America, except display the flag.

After my visit to the Peace Carpet I met a second personal guide and toured Shiraz and Yazd, driving hundreds of miles between the two cities through a high desert, dwarfed by the Zagros and Shirkuh mountain ranges. In Shiraz I made a pilgrimage to shrines of the classical Persian philosophers and poets, Sa’adi and Hafez. At Hafez’s shrine my guide showed me a ritual the locals do when they come here. Sitting on the stairs beneath the columned cupola that shelters his tomb from the relentless sun, we opened a book of his poems to the page the wind chose. It is said that reading his words in this random fashion should help people find solutions to problems or fulfill their dreams. Maybe it was the mood of the sanctuary or the *narange*-scented air, but I had not a worry at all and felt in need of nothing. In fact I felt almost drunk, giddy with gratitude. Therefore after reading a few passages, nothing struck me as pertinent at that moment, just a few lines such as: (*O Beloved!*) *With him, my heart is fellow traveler. In every place where he goeth, be / The blessing of people of liberality the guide of his soul and body.*

Not so for my guide. He gazed into the distance after he read the poet’s wisdom and a smile spread across his face.

“Were Hafez’s words relevant for you?” I asked.

“I can not answer that,” he said. “Or my wish may not come true.”

At the Persian philosopher Sa’adi’s shrine, my translator read me a story by him that we found inscribed in blue tiles on the walls encircling Sa’adi’s alabaster tomb. The tale seemed strangely familiar. “Once there was a traveler who watched a Sufi leave a caravan and go off weeping in the hills. His reason? Because the Sufi noticed all other forms of life were crying to God and he was simply sitting there.” One reason I embarked on this trip was that I felt my soul would go to ruin if I simply sat idle while heads of governments continued to speak indirectly at each other. Yet, I also sensed something else, a force pulling me toward this journey: plans fell easily into place; the Iranian government readily granted me a visa; everyone in my family was in good health. Standing inside Sa’adi’s domed shrine a space opened inside me. A flicker of knowing. Perhaps, I had thought, my coming to Iran served—or will serve—a larger purpose than simply appeasing my own impatience. Maybe the answer lies within this tale of Sa’adi or the words on that random page of Hafez.

On the road to Yazd, we stopped to visit the ancient site of Persepolis, the vast valley where Cyrus the Great and other Zoroastrian kings made their spring and fall homes. Before leaving the U.S., I hadn’t realized how my itinerary directly related to the Peace Carpet. However, while visiting this southern region of Iran, I noticed my tour seemed to be unfolding added layers of meaning and purpose. I had not known the Carpet would hang in the United Nations, where Sa’adi’s famous poem that begins, ‘The sons of Adam are limbs of each other,’ greets all who enters that building. I couldn’t have guessed that Cyrus the Great would be depicted on the rug. The news I had read about it was that the design would be kept secret until its unveiling. Above all, no amount of foretelling would have predicted that I would meet the oldest weaver in Yazd, a good-humored, ninety-year-old man named Ramazan who had an appetite for adventure and a penchant for smoking all manner of things. He traveled miles into the desert with us to visit a Zoroastrian cave temple, reciting en route the works of Hafez and Khayyam. The gift of his company will feed me for years to come.

I had more friends to meet at the Peace Carpet in Tehran, and so I returned for a second visit, where I was joined by my Iranian friend Manda and Iran's most well known dye master Abbas Sayahi, who is an author, a former teacher and actor in the film *Gabbeh*, about a nomadic carpet weaver. Sitting beside the Peace Carpet, he recited poetry of his own. The mood in the room was so convivial among us all, some who wove, others who didn't, that it gave me pause. It seemed so natural to be an American inside Iran, gathered amongst new friends discussing art, sharing stories, jokes, wishes for peace, and copious cups of tea served in gorgeous blue and white hand-thrown cups.

This visit to the Peace Carpet closed with a meeting with Ms. Eshrat Shayegh, the director of the Saad Abaad Historical Center and a former member of parliament. Seated around a large oval table, Ms. Shayegh thanked me for traveling so far to weave just one knot. She also expressed her appreciation that I had spent many years learning about her culture to write a novel that celebrates the richness and beauty of Iranian culture. "You are not like others who produce movies such as *300*, which are derivative and insulting to Iranians."

Ms. Shayegh denied that the project was her idea alone. "It was of the people, this is why we held the grand opening ceremony in Tabriz, a city known for its excellent weavers and far away from the halls of diplomats. This carpet, with its humble and simple message of friendship, got its start in a natural setting. People who share this fundamental belief in peace will weave it. It is not only today that Iran is seeking peace. We want others to understand that we have always stood for peace, dating back to Cyrus the Great."

Ms. Shayegh also said that women must show the world how to create peace. "Men have had their chance and it's time for women to get involved and seek positions of leadership." This is a woman, I thought, who refuses to sit idle. When she saw that my camera ran out of batteries, she reached for the clock on her desk and removed its batteries and handed them to me. It was a small but kind gesture, but her generosity didn't stop there. She loaded my arms with books and CDs about Iranian culture and told me to email her anytime.

I gave my Peace Carpet hosts a copy of my novel, which they placed on their peace table. They also accepted skeins of my sheep's wool as keepsakes. Mr. Shahabi hung my yarn on the Peace Carpet loom and said that he will weave it into the rug. My sheep Eiley's and Lydia's wool, American wool. It tickled me to imagine what my sheep would think if they understood that their wool is not only working for world peace but would be part of a masterpiece that in a year or two would eventually hang in the United Nations.

Before departing, I glanced again at the table where all the flags stood. Despite my new friends' gracious welcomes and generous offer to weave my yarn into their carpet, it still bothered me that to look at this table it appeared that no American came to express hope for reconciliation.

I realize now that this flag incident has provided an opportunity for introspection. I am grateful for having experienced this "shunning" first hand. Bred in American culture, I have had little experience with being "unheard" and have been steeped in the notion that on these shores there is always a possibility that we might eventually have it our way. The Sufis offer another view. *If every door is always open, is there room for the growth that must come?*

The Iranians' omission of a flag has also given me reason

to ponder on a political plane, reexamine the past actions my country took against Iran that contributed to the climate that led to such treatment—essentially an act of deeming another's very presence non-existent. I now have a better understanding about what people have experienced from the many nations who have been left out of world trade talks. I look forward to the day when the new G20 becomes a G200.

What I appreciate most is that the World Peace Carpet of Iran no longer contains my nationalistic inklings, but threads of my own sheep's wool and a strand of my heart. Several people I came to know on this journey reinforced the positive feelings I have held for the Iranian people since my first trip there in 2005. I continue to find Iranians among the most warm, intelligent, artistic, friendly and generous people in the world.

I deeply appreciate the Iranians who helped me take this journey and shared with me my quest of weaving one small knot. This peace knot that is joined with so many others in this lustrous silk carpet, whose wondrously, multi-surfaced fibers are so suited to its mission—to refract and reflect hope and light. To shimmer with Cyrus the Great's vision of dignity for all, and to illume Sa'adi's reminder of truth—that harmony in this world lies in the realization that we are interdependent, of one body.

*The sons of Adam are limbs of each other,  
having been created of one essence.*

*When the calamity of time affects one limb,  
the other limbs cannot remain at rest.*

*If thou hast no sympathy for the troubles of others  
Thou art unworthy to be called by the name of a human.*

**Note:** I'd like to recognize Jerry Dekker and Orient Star Tours for their expertise; Amir Haeri Mehrizi for an unparalleled journey; Jim Opie, who introduced me to Abbas Sayahi; and Janet Stuart, who tried to accompany me to Iran but could not, due to circumstances beyond her control. One of the knots I tied on the Peace Carpet is hers in spirit.

**Meghan Nuttall Sayres** is author of a novel set in Iran *Anahita's Woven Riddle*, an ALA Top Ten Best Books YA and an Indie Pick 2007; *Weaving Tapestry in Rural Ireland*; and co-author of *Daughters of the Desert: Tales of Remarkable Women from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim Traditions*. She is at work editing an anthology of essays by people who have traveled, lived and worked in Iran.

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عصرها و یکشنبه‌ها با تعیین وقت قبلی

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**IRANIAN PLATEAU LAND OF ANCIENT CULTURE**

Edited and Composed by Nader Paymai (2009)

As eloquently stated in the foreword of the book by Farhang Mehr, Nader Paymai with rehearsing the history of Medes, Pishadian and Kantians before the Medes has resurrected the Iranians belief about creation, existence on Earth, discovery of fire, metal melting and development of technology simple and primitive, spread the agriculture, animal husbandry, thread milling, fabric making and, no matter how brief, has touched up on the outstanding features of Zoroastrianism as an Iranian religion for the readers.”

For over three decades the author researched this subject matter. Finally he has organized the material and placed in on pages. His hope is for the younger generation of Iranians living in Diaspora that they will be educated about Iranian culture, through the information found in the book.

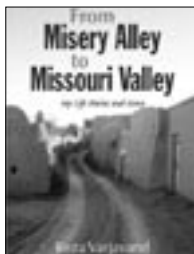


**FROM MISERY ALLEY TO MISSOURI VALLEY, MY LIFE STORIES AND MORE**

Reza Varjavand (Xlibruis Corporation 2009)

There are certain individuals who, regardless of their financial status in life, will fight and suffer to fill their dreams. This is the case in this book written by a man who was born in a rural part of Iran and the struggles he encountered to receive an education.

The book provides you with inspiration to prevail and appreciate that which most of us take for granted! It is a book that one should keep near when they believe their path in life is insurmountable. In some life experience stories it is hard to attach yourself to the writer, but his words are clearly spoken from the heart, a heart that is open for all to see.



**HONEYMOON IN TEHRAN; TWO YEARS OF LOVE AND DANGER IN IRAN**

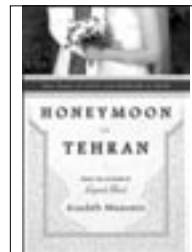
By: Azadeh Moaveni

Published Random House publishing 2009

REVIEWED BY: HOSSAIN GUILAK

This is the second book by Azadeh Moaveni. Her first book *Lipstick Jihad* was published earlier.

She is Iranian-American, born and raised in California, and graduated from U.C. Santa Cruz. She received a Fulbright scholarship to the American University of Cairo. She was a reporter for Time Magazine, and the Los Angeles Times, and covered the Middle East, and Iraq wars



In *Lipstick Jihad* Moaveni wrote about her time in Iran in 2000, in the student uprising, and attempted to find her cultural identity.


Honeymoon in Tehran is about life before and after the election of Ahmadinejad as President of Islamic Republic of Iran. She spent 2 further years of her life in Iran, from 2005 to 2007, before leaving Iran, and she now resides in England.

The book is written from the eyes of a reporter and even though it recounts two years of her life in Iran, detailing her love and marriage and having a boy, one should not expect or confuse it as being introspective. It is fair to say that it touches the themes of romance, marriage, and child birth, but these are entwined with stories of other people in today’s Iran. She uses these events to give us a picture of Iranian society, and all the changes that happened from 1979 until 2000. She has succeeded in giving us a snapshot of the country between 2005 and 2007, and managed to contrast it with 2000. On top of this there are stories of hopes, fights, uprisings and death, combined with a cocktail of car racing, alcohol, drugs, and western music, which created and yearning style of life, and the longing to leave Iran.

Her descriptions of Iranian weddings, for example give us three types of settings. At one level, there is Shrooz, the wedding planner supreme, complete with *Karaj* gardens, sumptuous meals with music, and protection from *Pasdaran*. Then there is well connected government official wedding, in *Farmanieh Club*, segregated and very expensive, with private mixed gender reception after the wedding party. And then there is the government sponsored, all expenses paid wedding in the *Ali Akbar* auditorium, with party favors and cake, but also with a limit on *mehrieh*. The chapter on pregnancy and delivery is also amusing; from finding an obstetrician who can perform childbirth without doing a cesarean, to choosing a name for the child that conformed to government directives. Moaveni readily admits that her stories may reflect the way of life of the westernized fringes of Iranian society, but disputes that the rest of society is so different in that she ascertains that everyone in their own way is trying to “reach tacit accommodation with government”.

For Iranian Diaspora, and more specifically for the first generation, who were here before 1979, this book gives us a good description of lives and life itself, and struggle of our people in our homeland. They are going through life in extreme conditions courtesy of a theocratic dictatorship.

For me, this book was very informative. I have not seen my country for fifteen years, and lots of changes that were described are new to me. It is a book that is definitely worth reading.



**In That Hollow**

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**Iranians against tyranny**

*It Will Be Spring Again*

**FIROUZ HEJAZI**

*Yes it will, I can imagine the old land  
The high marked mountains  
Caspian the see of the Persians frontiers  
Prairies of the south with tombs of kings  
There is an epic song - there is Neda in the air  
When the rainbow appears in the sky of Persia  
The spring breeze tells the story of the Persians  
Who secured the Land of Poets for Good Manners  
It was the books of poets and wisdom  
Infatuated Mongolians to become Persians  
Nourishing diversity of life and nature  
A constant stream for thousands of years  
Now from a far window I am witnessing the pain  
Children are fading away in their blood stream  
The cries of mothers reach the seventh sky  
A thunder bolt breaks the crystallized vases of faith  
Youths for humanly green movement  
As they came together to praise the peace  
Managing the view of greenish tomorrow  
Are punished by the word of the Fuhrer  
Intimidation in their eyes, children watching  
The bloody militias shooting randomly  
For shutting up the neda of the crowd  
Der Fuhrer commands annihilation of decent people.*

*The crimson pages of the history  
Will reveal the truth against tyranny  
The future belongs NOT to the soldiers  
Since they kill under illegitimate excuses;  
Murdering for their Fuhrer or their faith  
The future, however, belongs to the youths  
Who, will keep up with Holocaust  
Condemning bullying and genocides  
Short time powered tyrants and the bullies  
Should be aware of the power of universe  
They will be punished even after their death.*

Ps. Neda- the young female protester killed by the tyranny's militias in Tehran-Iran.

Neda, also, means a loud voice, announcement.

**IRAN'S ANCIENT WATER SYSTEM  
REGISTERED ON UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST**



TEHRAN, June 27 (MNA) – Iran’s ancient water system of canals, tunnels and waterfalls in Shushtar was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the UNESCO website reported on June 26.

The decision was made during the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee underway in Seville, Spain. The meeting is chaired by María Jesús San Segundo, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Spain to UNESCO and will continue inscribing sites and examining the condition of properties already listed during the coming days. The committee will remain in session until June 30.

The man-made Shushtar waterfalls are located near the Elamite capital of Susa in Khuzestan Province. Construction of the structures began during the Achaemenid era (about 550-331 BC) on one of the Gargar River’s tributaries and then the system was improved by the Sassanid dynasty (224-651 CE).

This is Iran’s tenth structure registered on UNESCO World Heritage List, Iran’s permanent representative at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris Mohammadreza Dehshiri told the Persian Service of IRNA.

“This will help increase world attention to this ancient site, boost tourism, and raise the importance of the restoration process at the site more than before”, he remarked.

The waterworks comprises bridges, dams, mills, aquifers, reservoirs, tunnels, and canals, most of which were constructed in the Sassanid period especially during the reign of Shapur I (241-272 CE).

The structures were used as an irrigation system and encouraged cultural interactions in the region. The waterfalls presented visitors with a beautiful unique landscape, enjoying results of hydraulic engineering technology rare for that point in history.

The Shushtar waterfalls are among the few ancient water systems in Iran used for irrigating the Shushtar plain. Remnants of some of the many water wheels built at the waterfalls during the Safavid era (1501-1722) still remain.

The other Iranian monuments and sites that have been registered on the World Heritage List over the years include Chogha Zambil (Khuzestan Province, 1979), Persepolis (Fars Province, 1979), Naqsh-e Jahan Square (Isfahan Province, 1979), Takht-e Soleiman (West Azarbaijan Province, 2003), Pasargadae (Fars Province, 2004), and the city of Bam and its Cultural Landscape (Kerman Province, 2004).



An Interview with

## ABTIN SASSANFAR

### Philanthropist, Lawyer and the Founder of the Zoroastrian World Organization

**Shahrokh Ahkami**

*Professor Sassanfar was born in Tehran, Iran in 1927. He received his primary and high school education from Zoroastrian schools in Tehran. Both his law and economic degrees were achieved from Tehran University. His professional life commenced as an attorney in Iran but later he moved to Switzerland. While there he obtained his master's and doctorate in law from the University of Geneva. He returned to Iran as a professor of law at the National University in Tehran. Since high school he extensively studied Persian history and Zoroastrian principals. Since the revolution he has practiced law and is involved in business in France.*

*In a recent trip to Paris I visited Dr. Sassanfar and his organization. During that visit he was kind enough to answer some questions for Persian Heritage about his life and accomplishments.*

**Could you tell us the year you founded this organization and the purpose of its formation?**

I planned to have a cultural foundation for Iranians in France for a long time. Twenty-four years ago for the first time my wife, Mrs. Firouzgar and a group of Zoroastrians founded the Zoroastrian organization in Paris. The membership was comprised of Iranians living in Paris and those outside of Paris interested in Persian culture and identity. The meetings of this organization were family oriented and friendly with no political agenda. We chose to keep politics out of the group to prevent division and argument. Eventually the membership increased and a larger space was needed for the meetings. This was decided after Zoroastrian scholars such as Dr. Jafarey and Professor Fahang Mehr came to



Paris, we had at least twenty people a night in my office. And, when we met in a conferences halls more people attended, even those of different faiths.

The increasing interest of the public in Persian culture, history and identity was very encouraging to all of us and solidified the need for a bigger meeting place. Unfortunately finances were lacking. The group got together and held fund raisers but it was still not enough to make a move. About four years ago I, with my wife and children decided to use our personal savings to purchase a building for the center.

**Describe the building for us.**

It is about 1200 square meters with a garden and courtyard of about 400 square meters. The building is well equipped with multiple conference halls and a lecture hall that holds over 200 people. There are also rooms for seminars, classrooms for Persian language education, a Persian exhibition room, library with over 6,000 books about Iran and a prayer center for Zoroastrians. The building was donated to the Zoroastrian World Organization registered under French Laws.

**Has this building increased the membership?**

Yes. According to the Census Bureau there are now eleven million Iranians devoted to their religions, nationalism and historical identity. Outside of Iran there are many Zoroastrians and all of them need a center in order to unite them. Once united, they can help, assist and reach others and that is one of our

primary goals.

Remember the Zarathustra's Principles, Gathas, more than 3,700 years old have miraculously remained and now reach to the United States. This philosophy and ethical treasure, because of many devastating events and wars was hidden and unavailable to Iranians. The experts of Avesta Zoroastrian (Gatha) the Zoroastrian religious book, started to work started to work with and study it worldwide about 200 years ago. Today the Iranians, through studying and understand the Avesta and Zarathustra's Gathas in Avesta are becoming more interested in their past and their original faith.

***Who are the members of the organization and what are its rules and regulations?***

In the first session held in 2006 the members were world organizations and local and international assemblies, from Canada, Australia, USA, Belgium, Sweden, England, Germany, Holland, France, Spain and a few independent dignitaries.

This foundation has two organizations one for consultation and decision-making and the other for implementation of the decisions. Because Zoroastrians are all over the world, the decisions that were made are temporary until the information can be dispersed to all. Within three years if accepted by the popular congress they will submit them for final approval to the steering committee and the group of people in charge of implementing the decisions.

The leadership of the organization is made up of seven people, Dr. Jafarey, Dr. Jahanian, Dr. Anoushirvani, Mr. Maziar Ghavidel (Sweden), Mrs. Mehrfar Afsoun (USA), Dr. Abtin Sassanfar (Paris), Mrs. Mehtaafsoun Sassanfar and Dr. Farhang Mehr (advisor, US). They are in control of the world organization in the absence of Congress. The secretary of the organization is in Paris, but periodical meetings are held in different countries. The next meeting is in Los Angeles and will be run by the California Zoroastrian Organization. The number of Zoroastrians and their local organizations is very important as is the interest and insistence of Zoroastrians for such a center.

***You opened another cultural center in Tajikistan, what was its purpose?***

The people of Tajikistan (the Tajiks) have the same roots and language, history and culture as we do, but they have financial limitations. They speak Persian with a different dialect, but in their schools they teach in the Persian language, with a sirilic alphabet. Tajiks have preserved their Persian traditions and have a strong national pride. We have the same political national and literary personalities such as the Samanian Dynasty, Rudaki, the first Persian (Iranian) poet.

Tajikis, especially the youth are very interested in their culture and history. Over the past six to seven years Tajiki reporters have come to Paris to interview me and others. On one trip, President Iman Ali Rahmanof came with a few of his ministers. He appears to be sincere in his interest in Tajikistan's prosperity and preservation along with the preservation of the Persian culture and civilization of those of our mutual ancestors.

The enthusiasm of the Tajikisi and their president of Persian culture, without religious fanaticism is very encouraging. In Tajikistan Law all personal religious beliefs are respected. It was rumored that Saudi Arabia will pay 100 dollars monthly to every

woman wearing the black chador, while the monthly salary of the worker or government employee is \$40.00 to \$50.00 dollars. The president objected and did not allow this to happen.

On one of his trips to Paris I discussed with him the idea of erecting a cultural center for Iranian national traditions and culture in Tajikistan. He liked the idea and passed my proposal on to his minister of cultural affairs. Though approved they did not have a convenient piece of land in the city of Doshanbeh (the capital) to build. After searching for some time it was decided to build it on land in the historical city of Istroshan which has the largest Zoroastrian fire temples Mogh-Tappeh, as well are artifacts. The mayor gave me a piece of land in the middle of the city. We inaugurated it last year.

For those not aware Istroshan is also called the city of Koroushikadeh, or city of Cyrus (Koroush). It is a very interesting city to visit but difficult to get to.

***Do you still want to build in the capital?***

Yes but due to difficulties we have had to postpone the plans.

***What is the name of the center in Istroshan?***

It is called the Arian Cultural Center, (Farhang-sara-e-Aryai'e). Contrary to what some may think the Tajiki race is very intelligent. The children at young ages are well versed in the Shanemah and Hafezcan recite many of its verses by heart. The unfortunate part for Tajikistan is the infrastructure. This impedes ability to aid them and their ability to access the outside world. The country's population is about 5 million. It is very important for them to create a better infrastructure. After the Soviet Union collapsed there were internal wars between Islamist sympathizers and the Iran Islamic Republic and other nationals. When they received their independence they had little financial resources. Their president, however, is very capable and trying very hard to boost the economy.

***You have a tremendous interest in Persian culture could you give your opinion of the future of Iran?***

What is happening presently in Iran is a necessity. One must remember that we do to expand the economy and the Persian culture will not be sufficient because the need of Iranians is higher. Unfortunately, the present government is fundamentalist and shows little or no respect for the natural human needs of its people. They will obstruct any constructive movement for change. The financial strength of the country is held by one group which blatantly exhibits prejudice and shows favoritism. There are no freedoms and Iranians, who love their country, their culture and their history, are forbidden to seek such freedoms.

Thousands of Iranians have immigrated abroad and now hold high positions in universities as well as in governments of different countries. Many have become financially successful. Had they remained in Iran they would probably be in jail, hungry or dead.

You asked me my opinion and I have told you. Something else that I repeat wherever I go is that one has to understand that the rest of the people of Iran have no problem with Islam or other religious factions. The religion of Islam is worldwide with over 1,200-1,300 billion followers. There are over 5 billion people of the world not Moslem. In the 21st century meaning

no one person wants to kill anyone including another Moslem, especially a Zoroastrian who is open-minded and respects all faiths and beliefs. Islam is very dear for every Moslem and every Zoroastrian respects the belief.

There are no Zoroastrian who desires to hurt, threaten or orders the killing of another religious following. We believe that no one religion should be under the control of another religion and all should be free to practice their own thoughts and activities in order to have society grow and prosper.

So, Zoroastrians and other faiths have no problem with Islam and don't want it to interfere in their religion. The only problem we have is the Islamic government, who controls under the name of religion. It is these type of oppressive governments and conditions that will cause the people to react. It is obvious that this is happening in Iran and millions of Iranians are now in search of their national identity. A solution for Iran at this time is to have the government not support any specific religion or give it unconditional.

A candidate running for office should not be asked about their religion. A vote for them should be based on their platforms and not on their religious belief. In Iran's case the government must understand that Iran does not belong only to the Moslems.

It is hard for me to see Iran in this situation. After all Iran was the first nation in the world to know how to run a government with a leader who understood the idea of human rights and dignity. Of course I am speaking of Cyrus the Great. His message was one of peace, love and, good will and deed.

When one has a government like the one in Iran it is a certain that the social and economic administrative systems will become corrupt and the end result will be a dictatorships. Under a dictatorship people's general human rights are ignored and the country becomes monopolized by a small but powerful group. You cannot blame this on Islam, but rather on the leaders who use Islam for their purpose. All religions must always be respected and practice freely. The law of the land should be approved by all of the people and that law that is approved should be the one that governs.

***Thank you for your opinion. Could you speak a little more about the Zoroastrian religion, Zarathustra's principles, about wisdom, liberal thinking and constructive facts and its teachings?***

I would like to explain and explore this in future issues of *Persian Heritage* magazine, if possible.

For certain, some of what I have said will be construed as political but I am not a political activist. I believe that when someone becomes politically involved they are seeking to gain power. Without political power it is impossible to succeed. For me and others like me power is not necessary. But when you are in a leadership position there are individuals who will turn your words and give it a political interpretation. My present activities are only for awareness and education. They have no effect on present Iranian politics, but may be used for future guidance. The happiness and progress of people is only guaranteed by their own will and decision. No foreign tradition or culture imported from other lands should interfere.

***Thank you for accepting to answer these questions and your offer to expand on the Iranian culture ad Zarathustra teachings in future editions of the magazine.***

## ***Iran My Mother***

**Shahrzad Taavoni**

We are exiled  
 No longer walking on the skin of your earth  
 Oh Iran  
 We long to be inside of your home  
 Our homeland now only in the nostalgia of our memories  
 We crave to be inside the creviced clay of your womb  
 Yet all we can do is lament and long for you  
 We cry for the days that will never be  
 As you remain to stay hostage  
 A muzzled voiceless turmoiled anguish  
 that you silently speak in each beat of our hearts  
 That silent rape that you suffer each grueling day  
 Your hands roped  
 Your mouth clasped of your freedom songs  
 You are sad holding your head down  
 yet your iridescent angel wings stand tall and open  
 Someday you will be free  
 And then, us inhabitants of you can finally say  
 At last, At last  
 thank God almighty  
 free at last!

## ***My Iran***

**Shahrzad Taavoni**

I have been chocked  
 My home  
 My beloved country  
 Iran  
 is bondaged in exile  
 Its wings stapled down  
 Its woman's heart's hands tied  
 to restrain her voice  
 She wants beggingly to prostrate  
 Her convicted feminine voice  
 She wants to break through the bondage  
 of fear and restraint put upon her  
 She wants to fly  
 like a white dove flying her prayers  
 to the sun's moon  
 Beckoning  
 her bloody unshackled feet  
 to be free again and let out her voice  
 A crying shameless bandit  
 full of purity



*Professor Ranjbaran please introduce yourself to our readers?*

First of all I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you and your readers. I was born in Tehran, Iran in 1955 and moved to the US in 1974 to continue my musical education. My formal training began at age 9 at the Tehran Music Conservatory where I studied the violin. Following my graduation from the Conservatory I attended Indiana University and later received my doctorate in music composition from The Juilliard School in New York where I currently teach.

*What makes Juilliard the premier music school in the world?*

Many factors contribute to the fame of this music school. Among those I should count the excellence of the faculty, the extraordinary level of talent and dedication of its students, its location at the heart of Lincoln Center in New York City, and its proximity to the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic and other cultural mainstays. Also, in recent decades its reputation has been enhanced by the fact that some of the most celebrated classical performers, composers, actors and dancers have been trained at the Juilliard School.

## INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR BEHZAD RANJBARAN

### Composer, Musician, and Professor

By: Shahrokh Ahkami

*Was your interest in music in composition or playing violin?*

My formal musical studies began with playing violin at the Tehran Music Conservatory. From my early years, I was very interested in composition and eventually followed my passion to be a composer. Currently I devote my time mostly to composition as well as teaching at Juilliard. However, I would love to have more time to play violin.

*With your Iranian classical background was it difficult for you to make the change into western music and the United States?*

I didn't have any difficulty in continuing my music studies in America since my training in Iran was in western classical music. The Tehran Music Conservatory was one of the only conservatories in Iran where western classical music was taught. So, my early musical training was primarily shaped by western classical music. In fact, at the Tehran Music Conservatory, we were not encouraged to learn Iranian classical music or play Iranian instruments. Most of our teachers were concerned that the quarter and microtones of Iranian Classical music would corrupt our musical ear! To the contrary, I believe that the study of Iranian classical music should have been encouraged, and included in the school's curriculum. In fact, the study of Iranian music undoubtedly would have enriched our musical education. Since I was interested in learning about Iranian music, I took some lessons at the National Conservatory of Music, which was devoted to Iranian Classical music. I was also hugely interested in Iranian folk music as well.

I am glad that I studied Iranian music on my own, as it has become a source of inspiration in my compositions in America. I incorporate elements of Iranian rhythm, melody and instrumental color in my mu-

sic. During my early years in Iran, it was rare to see renowned classical musicians play Iranian music. However, it was not uncommon at that time for Iranian classical musicians to study western classical music. For example, I vividly remember that Rahmatollah Badiyi studied violin in both Iranian and western classical traditions.

*Do you have a mentor?*

I studied violin with Vahe Khochayan and Hratch Manoukian at the Tehran Music Conservatory in the late 1960's. Like many of my teachers they were trained in Europe. I have fond memories of both and after all these years I am still in contact with them.

*When I listen to your work it is obvious that you are influenced by the Persian culture and its music, am I correct? Please tell us about your works.*

Many of my works are inspired by Persian music, literature and history. A good example is my "Persian Trilogy", a collection of three orchestral works inspired by episodes in Shahnameh. The London Symphony Orchestra conducted by JoAnn Falletta recorded these three works in a CD called "Persian Trilogy" several years ago. I became very interested in Shahnameh at a young age when my mother won a copy of it in a literary contest in Tehran in the early 1960's. I composed my Persian Trilogy for symphony orchestra over the course of 11 years, beginning with "Simorgh" in 1989, "The Blood of Seyavash" in 1994 and finally "Seven Passages" (*Haft Khan Rostam*) in 2000.

Shahnameh is the masterpiece of the Persian language and its stories reflect a wide range of human emotions and characters with all their complexities and inner conflicts. It has inspired generations of poets and painters but surprisingly, not many

musicians. Somehow, Shahnameh has not been prominently incorporated into Iranian classical music. However, I believe the epic nature of Shahnameh is well suited for the symphony orchestra with all its power and variety of instrumental colors.

The first work in the Persian Trilogy is “Simorgh”, which is somewhat similar to the Phoenix, a well-known character in the west. This piece was commissioned and performed by the Long Beach Symphony in Long Beach, California in 1993 with JoAnn Falletta, conductor. This piece holds a special place for me, as it relates back to my childhood. As you know Simorgh was said to have lived in the Damavand Mountains, which are east of Tehran. As a young child I remember running up to the rooftop in the mornings, hoping to see Simorgh circling the snow-filled summit of Damavand Mountain with the young white haired Zaal on her back.

“The Blood of Seyavash” is the story of the young prince Seyavash. His commitment to high moral principles becomes his downfall and eventually causes him to tragically lose his life. In Persian history, Seyavash stands as the symbol of courage, integrity, and honesty. Based on these characteristics I chose this piece for a ballet. Nashville Ballet in Tennessee produced it in 1994. The staging and the ballet costumes, inspired by the 16th century Persian miniatures, were truly magnificent. The performing team consisted of 16 dancers and a 50-member Nashville Symphony Orchestra. The ballet was a huge success and during the several performances, I had a bittersweet feeling; sweet for its success and a bit of sadness since there were no Iranians in attendance.

“Seven Passages” was the final work in the Trilogy taking its inspiration from the Seven Labors of Rostam in Shahnameh. Rostam is the main hero of Shahnameh and stands as a symbol of integrity, wisdom and courage in battles with evil forces.

I have always been fascinated by Shahnameh’s artistic excellence. It explores a broad array of human emotions and characters as well as celebrating integrity, courage and wisdom. Shahnameh is the magnum opus of Persian literature that belongs to the world.

***Tell us about the success of these works and how the audiences have responded.***

The response to these performances has been very enthusiastic and supportive.

A number of symphony orchestras have already performed the Persian Trilogy in recent seasons with success. Each one was special and memorable in its own way. Last year, the Philadelphia Orchestra performed “Seven Passages” as part of its educational programs in conjunction with Philadelphia schools. Thousands of young students learned about Shahnameh through these performances at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. This past season, Fort Worth Symphony in Texas performed “The Blood of Seyavash” with great conviction and flair. The performances with Fort Worth Symphony were part of my residency with that orchestra this year. Also, I should mention the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra performing “Seven Passages” on March 20th (the first day of Norooz) of 2009.

***Have you written works inspired by other poets besides Ferdowsi?***

I have several other large works inspired by Persian poetry. I should mention “Songs of Eternity” for soprano and orchestra with text from the Ruba’iyat of Omar Khayyam. It was premiered by the famed American soprano, Renee Fleming and the Seattle Symphony in 2002 and was just recorded by the Fort Worth Symphony. I have a particular affinity for this piece as it explores the timelessness of Khayyam’s poetry. It ends with the line “Seek out these, life once gone cannot be sought again”

Another work is “Open Secret” for chorus and chamber orchestra written on poems of Rumi. Last year, I also composed “We are One!” for chorus on the text by

Saadi. It was commissioned and premiered by the fifty-member Ithaca Choir in New York. It was a fascinating experience to see how this talented choir learned to sing “We Are One” in Farsi! The Ithaca Choir took the piece on an Eastern US tour this spring.

***What direction is classical music taking in today’s world and how do you see your place as an Iranian composer in International scene.***

This is an interesting question. Western Classical music initially evolved as a synthesis of several styles in Europe over a few centuries. During the 19th and 20th centuries, it was widely accepted by Russia and many countries in Asia, Middle East, North and South America. It has truly become an international language with great flexibility in incorporating many different traditions. Composers in each country have expanded the boundaries of this language with the sound of their native music. In Iran, many composers have written for the symphony orchestra in the last 70 years, so it has become a branch of Iranian music as well. My music is written in this international medium inspired by elements of Iranian art and music.

I am also very interested in world peace as an important social issue of our time. In 2005, I composed “Awakening” for string orchestra on the theme of war and peace on a commission by the “Great Mountains Music Festival” in South Korea. It is a celebration of peace and its triumph over conflict. I choose Awakening as the



title to underline the individual's responsibility and greater awareness in the sanctity of preserving peace. The 8 years of the Iran-Iraq war with hundreds of thousands of dead and wounded is just another reminder of the brutality of war in recent years.

Sejong Soloists premiered "Awakening" in the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea in a large peace festival. It was a truly moving experience for me to hear the piece in such a place; really unforgettable. Peace is a very important concern among the Korean people, as they have lived in the shadow of war for the last 50 years. The memories of war in the 1950's are still strong.

**Earlier you showed me a picture where the notes of the musical piece formed the vision of the Arc of triumph, can you explain this?**

Yes, the main 5-note motif is used to craft an "Arc de Triumph" in the music of "Awakening", visually creating a symbolic gesture to represent the triumph of peace over conflict.

**You have traveled to Iran several times in recent years, have those visits influenced**

**your works?**

In recent years I had the opportunity to travel to Iran and visit a few beautiful cities. As a result of the trips I composed "Shiraz", "Isfahan" and "Fountains of Fin" for chamber ensembles. Interestingly, when a performance of "Shiraz" for violin, cello and piano was broadcast live on the national radio in Australia, there was a talk that this piece was about the Australian Shiraz wine! Then it was clarified that indeed the piece was honoring the city of Shiraz in Iran and its famous poets and enchanting gardens.

The Philadelphia Chamber Players commissioned and premiered "Isfahan" in 2007 as the celebration of their 30th anniversary. "Fountains of Fin" for flute, violin and cello, was inspired by the beauty of the garden of Fin in Kashan, Iran, as well as a tribute to Amir Kabir, the great reformist prime minister of the 19th century. Amir Kabir was slain in the bath of the garden of Fin on the order of Naseraldin Shah in 1852. The bath in the garden is considered somewhat of a sacred ground. This piece ends with a eulogy for this great man who contributed enormously in modernizing Iran.

**Amir Kabir was considered the father of modern Iran. His aspirations paralleled the modernization of Japan. It is interesting to see the contrast between the two nations today! I always wonder where Iran would be in world society if he were not slain!**

Amir Kabir was a man of a great vision whose life was tragically cut short. It was a devastating loss in a critical time in the modern history of Iran.

**Besides your music do you have any other hobbies?**

Literature, history, poetry and world music! Among the music courses that I teach at Juilliard School, I particularly enjoy my world music class. I initiated the course

into the Juilliard curriculum a few years ago. It explores music from China, Japan, India, Iran and Middle Eastern countries to music traditions in Africa and Latin America. Learning and teaching such diverse musical traditions has been a most fascinating experience for me. It has provided me with more global view about the role of music in society in many countries. Also it has given me the opportunity to find parallels and contrasts between the music of Iran and other countries as well, particularly the neighboring nations.

**Are there really similarities between Persian music and the music of India, Turkey, Greece and other Arab nations?**

Absolutely. We have to keep in mind that these countries have much common history and interaction with one another over their long histories. One could see many parallels in their language, culture and even their cuisines. The music of Iran, Arab and north India has influenced one another in many ways. Particularly the Arab, Turkish and Iranian music have similar aesthetics, which was evolved much closer during the Islamic period. Each society has its unique characteristics, however one could easily find elements like instruments borrowed from one another. There is no purity in culture, rather a degree of authenticity.

There are also common elements between Iranian and Greek music in modes and vocalizing techniques, though not nearly as much as the countries we just discussed.

**Do you believe Persian classical music is at a standstill?**

This is a critical and important issue for Iranian music. Over the past 80 years serious efforts have been made to preserve Iranian Classical music through notation and recording. It is essential to protect and safeguard one of the most important musical traditions in Asia before it is harmed by the rapid changes in society. However we should support musicians who are experimenting with new approaches to Iranian music.

But, we should also distinguish between the purists who continue to perform on the path of tradition and those who are experimenting with new ideas. I don't see a conflict between the two approaches. In many countries like Japan the traditionalists coexist along with the experimentalists.

**THEODORE PRESSER COMPANY**  
Behzad Ranjbaran  
**Awakening**  
for String Orchestra

Premiere: 26 August, 2005, International Sejong Soloists Great Mountain Music Festival, PyeongYang, South Korea  
Time: 17'  
Staff: String Orchestra  
Commissioned by International Sejong Soloists and the Great Mountain Music Festival in South Korea  
Published in 2005, Kang

Andante con Basso - Large spirituale - Andante con Basso (1/80)

Preserving the sanctity of peace is a common desire of all humanity. It is hard to understand why humans at times are drawn to war, when prosperity and happiness can be gained by peace. It is so fitting to celebrate peace with music, an inclusive art form that transcends time, cultures and generations.

Awakening was composed as a reflection on war and peace. It is one continuous movement with three interconnected sections: Andante con Basso, Large spirituale and Andante con Basso. The melodic and harmonic basis of Awakening is a short motive, based at the onset of the piece and is continuously varied and transformed as the work progresses. The agitated first section is followed by a meditative and contemplative middle section (large spirituale). The final section shares many characteristics of the first section but with a sense of optimism that brings the piece to an energetic finale.

—Behzad Ranjbaran

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Also, we have to keep in mind that what we call Iranian classical music is the music that is inherited from the 19th century. We really don't know how exactly Iranian music was centuries ago since the documentation was mostly theoretical rather than notational.

***Has progress been made in Persian classical music?***

I prefer to use the word change rather than progress since it is hard to define artistic progress. Music evolves through constant interaction between the forces of innovation and tradition. An innovative addition in music or in any aspect of culture might eventually become a tradition. Often, there is less resistance to change when the innovation is introduced gradually. However we now live in time of mass media and dizzying rapid changes in all aspects of life.

A number of musicians in Iran have developed innovative approaches to Iranian classical music. What direction this will take is still unknown. Ultimately, it is the people who will decide what aspect of innovation will become part of the next tradition. As we know, all aspects of our musical tradition, at some point, were considered innovations. For example the popularity of Pish-Daramad, initiated by Darvish Khan at the turn of the 20th century has now become widely accepted as musical tradition. Also, some traditions that have gone out of fashion during a time period may become popular again. For example, during the 1960's Kamancheh was widely replaced by violin in Iran. However the tide has turned again in favor of kamancheh in recent years.

***What is your opinion of the new and younger musicians?***

I traveled to Iran last summer for a brief time and was encouraged to see the diversity of music recorded in CD by the young musicians. A few decades ago there were only a few musical categories in Iran. But now there is a tremendous movement in fusion between classical Persian music, pop music, regional music and folk elements as well as electronic and religious music. I anticipate in short time we will witness an explosion of all kinds of musical experimentation in Iran. Looking at the tens of different Grammy Award categories in America might give us an idea of what to expect in the future in Iran. This is a widespread trend in many countries as well.

I particularly like the experimentation with regional music where the vitality of folk music is really exciting. There are young groups, particularly Kurdish, that are producing lively and innovative music.

***Does this make you hopeful or frightened for Persian Classical music?***

I am hopeful about the future of Iranian music. The documentation and recording of Iranian classical music and regional music is substantial. It has saved our musical heritage for future generations. In my recent trip, I purchased over 100 CDs of all kinds of music. I particularly like the anthologies of "A century of Avaz" and "A century of Tar" as well as many collections of Iranian masters like the "Radif of Mirza Abdollah". I also enjoy regional music, even finding a recording of music for Zorkhaneh! I have listened to that recording many times with delight.

The wealth of recorded music allows the Iranian musicians to create music that is fused by all these influences. It is not hard to imagine that soon Iranian music will be even more vibrant and diverse if we add the global influence to this mix.

***Do you have an opinion on the new Iranian music coming out of Los Angeles?***

From what I have heard, it is pop music that serves a segment of the Iranian community in Diaspora. I hope the Iranian community would broaden its support to other types of music like the Iranian classical, folk and even symphonic music.

***You made a somewhat risky move when you began to compose music for Ferdowsi's masterpieces. What were the reactions to these pieces?***

Composing the "Persian Trilogy" was my natural response to a fascination with Shahnameh, which was formed in my teenage years. I am thrilled that audiences and musicians alike have responded enthusiastically to these works. The Western audience is much more familiar with the stories of 1001 Nights, but know very little about Shahnameh. Part

of the popularity of 1001 Nights is certainly attributed to the beautiful music of Scheherazade by Russian composer Rimsky Korsakov, always a concert favorite around the world. However, Shahnameh is going through a renaissance of its own with new translations and exhibitions. In the concert world, thousands of people who have heard the Persian Trilogy in concert halls or through the CD have also become more acquainted with Shahnameh as well.

I should mention that the Persian Trilogy is just a small part of my works. I have also written other pieces like a violin concerto, inspired by Kamancheh, for the American violinist Joshua Bell, a cello concerto and a piano concerto. In my piano concerto, I was inspired by the sound of Deraz Nay, used in Norooz celebration in Persepolis as well as using DAF, a popular Persian percussion instrument. It was premiered by pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and the Atlanta Symphony in 2008.

***As an Iranian composer working in America were you met with challenges?***

It is always more challenging for an artist to work in a new country. However, I have been for the most part encouraged and supported by the musical community. It is the international character of classical music that allows composers and performers to work in different countries. Music is a powerful means of human expression that transcends borders and nationalities. I am delighted to see that more Iranian musicians are performing abroad. I hope this trend continues in the future.



**Tell us about your work in celebration of Thomas Jefferson.**

It is called "Thomas Jefferson" and it is written for narrator, solo cello and orchestra in 1998. The text for the narration was selected from The Declaration of Independence, which was largely written by Thomas Jefferson. I admire his writing and his vision, considering they were written over 200 years ago. Virginia symphony took the piece on a state-wide tour and eventually performed it in Charlottesville, near Jefferson's house in Monticello.

**From all you have written is there a favorite piece or performance?**

I am particularly fond of the recent multimedia performance of the whole Persian Trilogy (80 minutes long) by the Toronto Symphony in August 2008. The concert was unique in presenting for the first time a fusion of symphonic music with Naghali and Pardeh Khani on the stage of Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto. We invited Morshed Torabi, a leading Naghal (dramatic narrator) from Iran to

collaborate in the project. He would tell the story of each of the 11 movements of "Persian Trilogy" in dramatic presentation standing next to the 75-member symphony orchestra. For example, before the performance of "Seven Passages" (Haft Khan) Morshed Torabi would go on stage to tell the story while the English translation and Persian miniature depictions of the scene were projected on a large screen. On this performance, Mr. Ghavieh accompanied Morshed Torabi on Zarb. Several leading museums provided us with stunning Shahnameh paintings from 16th century. This historic performance was presented in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of International Society of Iranian Studies in Toronto. I particularly would like to thank Dr. Tavakoli, the current president of ISIS for his support. This concert, attended by more than 2,000 people, was in celebration of the Millennium of the completion of Shahnameh.

**Do you have any advice for young Persian musicians?**

I would like to see a greater exchange between the Iranian musicians

in Iran and abroad. Iranian musicians should have more opportunities to attend music festivals or attend music programs abroad. Also the musicians who live out side Iran should be invited to have short-term classes with the young Iranian musicians.

These exchanges would benefit the young musicians immensely. One of the immediate musical projects could be around the Millennium anniversary of the completion of Shahnameh in 2010. This is a rare opportunity for all the Ferdowsi admirers to educate the young and raise a greater international awareness for one of the masterpieces of Persian literature.

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On August 12<sup>th</sup>, the Philadelphia Orchestra performed Professor Ranjbaran's orchestral works called "Saratoga" in Saratoga Springs, New York. "Saratoga" was composed on a commission from the Philadelphia Orchestra for the 40th anniversary of the Saratoga Festival in 2005. This overture celebrates the festival as well as alluding to the Battle of Saratoga in 1778 when the American Revolutionary forces defeated the British army for the first time. It was conducted by and featured YoYoMa and Charles Dutoit.

**Iranian-American Entrepreneurs Create Revolutionary Auction Website**

**With the holiday season closing in, it seems like everyone is looking for a new way to shop and find the best deals online. While many will be looking at the same online retailers like amazon and eBay, others who enjoy searching for the best deals out there will turn to the latest crop of online auction sites.**

**Enter: Babbab.com**

The brainchild of three young Iranian-American entrepreneurs, Sahand Sepehrnia, Anthony Miller and Amir Kakhsaz. Babbab is a new type of online auction that takes many of the great features of a live auction and adds an exciting twist by making it silent. Users sign-up and purchase bid packages, which they then use to bid on auctions. Placing a bid costs less than one dollar, and users bid on a variety of items, mostly consumer electronics, from digital cameras to coffee-makers. The highest bid wins the auction, but the user can only see their own bids. This promotes healthy competition by weeding out last minute bid-sniping.

The three University of California, San Diego alumni came up with this revolutionary auction system one day when brainstorming in Miller's backyard about how to make the online auction process more fun and rewarding. Sepehrnia got to work on the financials and figuring out the mechanics of the auction, while Kakhsaz began designing the layout and integration of the various features. Meanwhile, Miller devised a lean and effective marketing strategy and started establishing relationships with wholesalers in the US and overseas to offer all the popular products.

The results speak for themselves. Babbab rewards bidders who use out-of-the-box thinking when approaching an auction. Couple that with great



Sahand Sepehrnia Anthony Miller Amir Kakhsaz

deals on desirable electronics, and people will be winning auctions and having a fun time doing it. The user can also program an automatic bidding system known as the Shuffle Bidder, to place bids for them when they are away from the computer. The Shuffle Bidder can be programmed to bid exactly at a certain time, using a preset number of bids. This method eliminates the risk of spending too much money bidding on an auction, which often happens on eBay when users forget to turn off their proxy bidder.

Currently, there is no direct competitor to Babbab, but there are other sites that have added a new twist to the traditional online auction theme. None of the other sites seem to offer the control over bidding that Babbab does, nor are they as engaging to participate in. The only real gripe about Babbab is that there isn't quite the breadth of products that other online auctions seem to offer. However, the site is still growing, and as such, new and unique products are being added every day.

Babbab will officially be launching November 10, 2009. If you're looking for a good place to pick up some gifts at competitive prices this holiday season, and would rather avoid those long lines and the hassle of parking, give Babbab.com a try. You'll find some great deals and enjoy being part of the online shopping experience.