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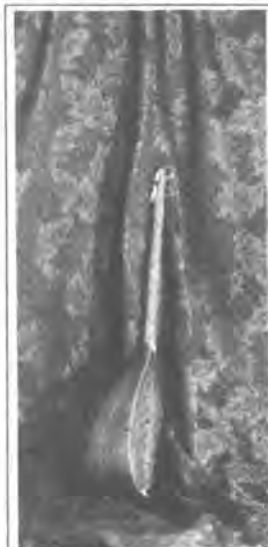
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Preseverance Of Persian Music

By: Dianne Impallaria

From the moment of inception, an embryo floats in the mother's womb to the rhythm of her heartbeat, and when the child is born, there remains this innate sense of rhythm. A babe slumbers to his mother's croon thus becoming part of the nurturing process.

Music was first announced to man through the noises of nature that surrounded him. The androgynous frog bleating his guttural croak. The owl in the trees with his nocturnal hoot. The rustling of trees, and the knocking of limbs. These sounds comprised a chorus of musical sounds that were the inspiration of music.

As man evolved, so too did music. Our first record of music had its beginning with the ancient peoples of Sumeria. Sumeria, at that time, was a region in the Near East that was part of southwestern Iran. Due to its proximity to Sumeria, Persia became

heir apparent to their music. However, from its dawn Persian music has been highly sophisticated, and it found its way into the temples as an expression to pay homage to the glory of God. Persian music is also infused with poetry which is so important to their culture. The earliest Persian hymns were comprised of poetry, Gathas in Avesta, (Zoroastrian Holy Book), that spoke of man's relationship with God. These hymns preceded Rig Veda, a book of Hinduism, by approximately 2,500 years.

From the temples, music was directed into the courts for the entertainment of the king. Persian music began to be displayed in many different shapes and forms. In the courts music was played on solo instruments such as the chang, nay, and roud, as well as the tar. (Any instrument with silk strings that was plucked was called tar). These

instruments also comprised ensembles. With the records that are extant about the Sassanian Dynasty, it appears that the form of music referred to as Cantata, a work usually for a single voice accompanied by one or more instruments, was already quite developed at this time. The Cantata is still in existence to this day.

Among the ancient nations, it is not surprising to note that there was a dichotomy between martial music and music for entertainment in the Persian Empire. There were many solo instrumentalists and singers whose names and accomplishments have left as their legacy a virtuosity that has been difficult to match. Some of these "Ostads" are: Barbed, Kaneesa, Bamshad, Ramteen. The works of these maestros became so popular throughout Asia Minor that Persian music reached as far as the Roman Empire, and other countries in Europe. Transversely, melodies and instrumental works were imported from the Romans and found their way into Persian music.

It must be mentioned that an Arab ambassador to the Sassanian Court, Ashi Bani Quas, exported to his country the roud (oud). Another of his countrymen, Nasr-ibn-Hareth-Khaled, learned to play instruments in classes of Barbed, and when he returned to his country, he became a teacher for other Arab musicians, and he was ministerial in introducing Persian

music and instruments to his country. They still follow the rules of Persian music. Another Arab, a wandering musician, Ibn-Moesaja, went to North Africa and brought with him to this region Persian music. Because of this, at a later time in history, Spanish flamenco music became involved with Persian elements of music.

After Islam, music and musicians were frowned upon, and music declined as an art form, depending upon who was ruling the Empire. Because of this fluctuation of attitude, many Persian musicians sought patrons outside of the Empire in the capitals of India, Ottoman Turkey, and Spain. Ironically, some of the Persian musicians joined the Saracens who had invaded Spain. The Persians immediately wandered into the countryside, and the cities of Spain much like troubadors singing and playing their native songs with their "Tars". One of the most popular forms of music of this period was what was known as the Saraband or Sarabande. The Saraband was made up of songs and dances. There was a city in Iran near Nahavand that was destroyed by the Mongols centuries later. The people of Saraband were known for their lively music and dances. This form was later adopted by Spanish musicians as well as by western composers of the Baroque Period such as, Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach composed English and French Suites that were comprised of dances and Airs. An Air was the equivalent of an Avaz or Cantata. Into these compositions, he incorporated the Saraband. The melodies, modes, and fragments of Persian music were preserved due to the migration of these masters into the different regions outside of Iran, and the propensity of the rulers of those regions toward Persian music. A good example of the integration of melodies can be heard in Hungary. The rhythmic music of this country is very much like Persian music known as Char Mezrab. In earlier times this was called Char Dast, but in Magyar it is known as Char Dasht. Because of the political upheaval in Iran during the 18th and 19th centuries, music was the least of the arts to be pursued.

In the mid 19th century, fragments of Persian music were retained by the amateurs known as motrebs. Gushehs (fragments of melodies) and modes of the old traditions had changed and new modes and rhythms adapted themselves into popular music. Folkloric fragments are as old as the history of Iran. The medes and gushes were integrated with folkloric melodies and became part of the musicians' repertoire. However, these changes did not occur suddenly, but discreetly crept into the traditions through the moralistic Sufis and scholars of the day. One of these scholars of music and poetry, Ali Akbar Farahani, who was of importance in the court of Nasreddin Shah during this period of 1850, was responsible for this new face of music and respect for musicians. Farahani played tar. A French visitor to Iran by the name of A. D. Gobineau called Farahani a genius virtuoso. Unfortunately, Farahani died in 1859. His brother Gholam-Hossein-Farahani continued to carry on his classes, training many more students in the performance of the tar.

The new Persian tradition that engulfed model structures and melodies flourished in the court of Nasreddin Shah. Mir Ghor'au, who was the artistic factotum of the king, brought singers and dancers from various regions, and gathered them together to perform "religious operas" or ta'zieh. From the court, music spread to the Caucasus, especially into the region of Herat, now in Afghanistan. Poetic odes, ghazals, and great melodies were changed and accompanied most often by the tar well into the early part of the 20th century. The remnants of this system can be found in the music of this region, but is disappearing. During this period of Persian history, there was a great feeling of nationalism, and the regions of Iran, Kurdistan, and Caucasia formed a cultural union that has since been geographically divided. Jews, Armenians, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Persians shared many elements of the same type of music. Yet, as we know, Persian music is much more poetic and has a language of its own.



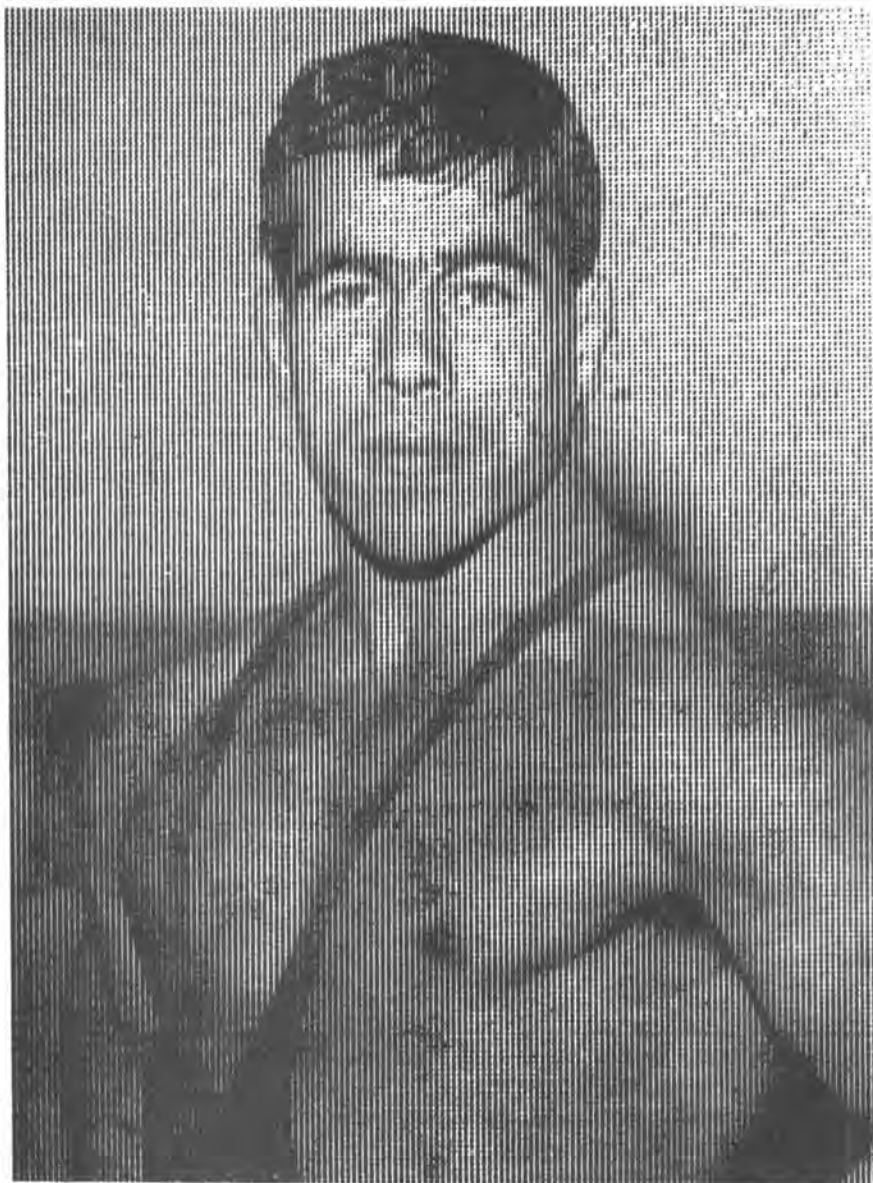
With the advent of radio and recordings in the 20th century, Persian music developed and reached its zenith. It was not until the Islamic Revolution in 1979 that it began to see its decline. Since 1979, some of the spiritual leaders once again frowned upon musicians and their artistic endeavors. Because of this change in attitude, many musicians and composers have escaped the rigid rulers and brought their talents into various countries of Europe and the continent of North America. Here, in the United States the music of composers such as, Shahdad Rohani, Behzad Ranjbaran and Reza Vali have introduced their compositions to the audiences of the U.S., and have received the highest recognition. Rohani has won the first prize for composing the theme for the Asian Games in Thailand.

The loss of such talent to the country of Iran has been a gain for the west. Music and poetry has been an expression of art within the Persian soul from the beginning of time. As far as this writer is concerned Iranians have created art with style and style is art, and art is eternal!

In my small way I hope to be able to acquaint the American audience with the beauty of Persian music.

PH

Dianne Impallaria is a graduate of Northeastern University with a B.A. (Cum Laude) in Music. Ms. Impallaria has a Certificate in Pedagogy from the New England Conservatory of Music, and has studied music performance with Myron Press, Jeannette Giguere, Phyllis Moss, Jean Alderman, and Alice Wilkinson. She has recorded western classical and Persian music, and as a pianist for the Persian Cultural Foundation in Massachusetts, has advocated the works of Andre Amir Hossein (Aminolah Hossein). Ms. Impallaria is a member of the New England Piano Teacher's Association, as well as a member of the National Association of Music Teachers. She currently teaches music, and is in the process of recording a CD of Persian music.



TAKHTI'S

Legend
lives on today

By: Azish Filabi

From the rich and intricate details of ancient Persian culture blossoms a notion recognized as *pahlevani*. A *pahlevan* is a renowned champion whose value surpasses athletic feats, whose modesty carries him above the glory of victory into the chivalrous domain of public service and philanthropy. Superior physical prowess is only one aspect of *pahlevani*. Dr. Tahmassebi, editor of the "Journal for Science and Technology", declares that *pahlevans* believe that the human spirit seeks a path to truth through people; in seeking truth, a *pahlevan* must be firm against oppression and evil. Iranian studies scholar H. E. Chehabi concurs:

"a *pahlevan* is not a mere champion, in Persian *gahraman*, but also a moral exemplar who is just, fair, self-abnegating and kind to the weak". These characteristics of a *pahlevan* are symbolic of Persian heritage and their high esteem for sportsmen.

Therefore, it is not surprising that among twentieth-century *pahlevans*, the one who has become a legend is revered as the epitome of generosity, humaneness, and sacrifice. Gholam Reza Takhti, through the eyes of most Iranians, is recognized as the greatest Iranian *pahlevan* of the twentieth-century.

A Short History of Sports and Pahlevani in Iran

In ancient Persia, competitive sports developed as an adjunct to military training. Upon the Arab invasion and conquest of their lands, Persians converted to Islam, but continued to guard aspects of their heritage--patriotism prevailed in their Persianness. To train for battles, the men would clandestinely exercise in gymnasiums called *zurkhaneh*, literally, house of strength. These *zurkhaneh* used rudimentary methods of weight-lifting and wrestling in order to train men for the physical brawls to which battles often reverted.

Competitive sports developed from these *zurkhaneh*. A man's training and victory on the battle field was prized within the community as a model of physical strength and devotion to their nation. Athletic might intertwined with duties to protect the community from invasion and harm. Chehabi characterizes the *zurkhaneh* as "a realm of moral purity (where) virtuous and chivalrous men come together for exercise and to render community service." These men were ideals of bravery and compassion because of their use of physical power in order to preserve Persian heritage in the face of foreign invasion.

The notion of *pahlevani* has thus intertwined physical strength, philanthropy, prominent morality, and patriotism. Although the *zurkhaneh* have been marginalized in comparison to new athletic facilities, in present

day Iran they continue to define the value system in which Iranians view their champions--exemplars of strength, generosity, and morality. As one modern day *pahlevan*, Moslem Filabi, recalls from his wrestling days, "among wrestlers, medals did not have much inherent value. At the end of the day, the conversations revolved around who we helped and what public service functions we had performed."

The *Pahlevani* of Gholam Reza Takhti

Pahlevan suitably describes Takhti because he possesses all of the aforementioned characteristics. It is not uncommon to see descriptions by journalists to the likes of: "Takhti is the symbol of a powerful, humble, person whom we must cherish... it was for the people that he casted pride and dignity," or as one Russian opponent describes "I had heard alot about him, and rumor, as we all know, is a powerful force" (Chehabi). These references in the media show how powerful Takhti's influence was, beyond the wrestling arena.

Takhti's character is perhaps better depicted by the memories of some close confidants. Hossein Arab, Takhti's team-mate and good friend, recalls an incident in which the Dominican Republic used a picture of Takhti on a stamp. Arab claims that receiving a copy of the stamp, a great symbol of public support, had a major influence on Takhti's devotion to humanity. "From that moment on, Takhti realized that he had to exclude time for wrestling practice; all his energies must go into serving the people," Arab explains.

Another team-mate and good friend Moslem Filabi recalls his second meeting with Takhti in which he counseled Filabi about the importance of his role as a wrestler in society. Filabi narrates: "Takhti told me, 'whether you like it or not, you will be a *pahlevan* and will be in the public eye. The youth of this country will look up to you as a role model. Don't do anything that would be embarrassing to yourself.' These anecdotes help to define Takhti's personality and provide a brief glance into his psyche in order to understand

his progression to political prominence in Iran.

Takhti's rise to fame coincided with heightened Iranian nationalism during the era of Mohammed Mossadegh. The year 1951 marks the peak of the National Front's strength, a political party devoted to upholding national ideals, particularly through Iranian ownership of the Anglo-Iranian oil company. Although his term was short-lived (a monarchial coup ousted him in 1953), Mossadegh served two years as Prime Minister.

In the same year, 1951, Takhti brought home the first prize any Iranian wrestler had won in an international competition, a silver medal from a tournament in Helsinki. Iranians bore Takhti's international success as a source of national pride and victory over foreign powers. Takhti represented a nation recently released from bondage; the oppressive chains of the Shah and foreign powers were symbolically freed in Iranian reveries of their new hero. Takhti's prominence within Iranian circles is so great that, in an article edited by Dr. Tahmassebi thirty years after Takhti's death, the champion continues to bear the title of "son of the nationalistic movement."

In the early years of his career, Takhti sympathized with that National Front, but he was not yet politically active. Not until 1961, when a second-wave National Front party formed, did Takhti actively participate by attending meetings, demonstrations, and forums. Takhti's activism and influence show in his campaigns to mobilize a relief group in response to the 1962 earthquakes in Qazvin. As Filabi recalls from this event, and elderly woman, upon seeing Takhti, de-veiled herself in order to donate to the earthquake victims. Takhti's charisma was such that she was willing to offer her veil, her most sacred article of clothing. Of all the donations he had received, according to Filabi, Takhti remembered this act as the most poignant.

Takhti's deeds thus incorporated the inner concepts of *pahlevani* with the exigent realities of his time. In the name of humanity, he fought against the oppression of foreign powers.



According to Moslem Filabi, Takhti's three main fights in life were against dictatorship, exploitation, and oppression. As many good *pahlevan*'s would do, Takhti struggled to represent the beliefs and aspirations of Iranians. Takhti helped create two wings of the National Front: The Athletes of the National Front, and The National Front Workers. His dedication to the party and compassion for the cause won him a seat on the National Front's central planning council.

Takhti's prominence as an opposition figure is perhaps most obvious by the public's reaction upon his return from Yokohama with the world champion medal in his weight-class. He was greeted by cheering crowds and flowers by the National Front.

Takhti's legend lives on today. Many *zurkhaneh*, stadiums, and avenues are named in his memory. His brother plans to erect a statue in his honor in one of Tehran's squares. Moreover, his memory lies in the hearts of many Iranians, and those fortunate enough to have made his acquaintance. Takhti's deep compassion for his homeland and generosity towards humanity is a flame that burns within a torch to be passed on to future generations.



Akhavan and Existential Winter

By: Hedayat Izadpanah

Akhavan's poetry spans the space between tradition and innovation in modern Persian literature. Drawing his vigor from the past, where his roots are firmly planted, Akhavan is yet capable of sending the fresh tendrils of his poetic craft far into unexplored artistic heights. His traditionalism is marked by an openness to experimentation, employing of new metrics, and instilling fresh ideas; just as his modernism, dates back to tradition with the pious veneration of a bright disciple who never forgets his masters.

As a modern exponent of a classical style of poetry known as Khorasani, his poetry epitomizes the sharp clarity of image and a

compelling purity of idiom which characterizes the poetry of Farrokhi, Manuchehri and Anvari. As though intuitively, he eschews intricacy of thoughts and subtlety of metaphoric expressions. His predilection toward narrative and descriptive imagery, stems from the same tendency, his descriptive flair joined with a vibrant vigor of language, reflecting the close affinity of his style to qasida from the classical poetry.

However, the narrative vein running through his most characteristic poems, usually rises to an allegoric plane, thus extending the meaning beyond the sphere of the mere descriptive-imagistic qasida of Farrokhi and Manuchehri, and

approaches Attar's mystical allegory.

Therefore, at his best, Akhavan becomes an allegorist, and his major works--"The Hunter", "The Legend of the Stony City", "Heraldry" and "The Winter":-attain allegoric dimensions far beyond the narrative scope of their literal meaning.

"The Winter": An analysis

It is befitting to consider "The Winter" as one of Akhavan's most characteristic poems, as it infuses his penetrating vision and his pervasive skepticism, into an artistic expression, whose vigor and incisiveness could be representative of the poet's mature style. In this poem, Akhavan has forged out of the image of "winter" a somber and gripping allegory of alienation and ultimate loneliness of human soul. The poem has a highly dramatic form, and opens with a dramatic monologue by a speaker who, as though in an outburst of frustration, relates how his attempts at reaching out toward the others and opening a line of communication has been baffled. There is an unusual abruptness about the opening of the poem--"Greeting would not be answered..." which chimes well with the tone of an exasperated and melancholy outburst. The speaker relates that how being lashed by a biting cold, he is desperately driven to seek shelter in the warmth of human affection and community. But he finds his friends and acquaintances more paralyzed and debilitated by the cold and incapable of reciprocating his affectionate advances. Thus "Greetings" as the primary expression of friendship, and symbolic overture to any communion, either beginning a new or confirming an old friendship, is sharply undercut and harshly rebuffed because, "...the heads are lowered and couldn't be raised to accost the friends." In an attempt to insulate and protect themselves against a brutal cold, people have also-- ironically--isolated themselves from one another, thus creating a far more frigid inner world within the ruthless cold of the outside world. The

all-pervading winter then becomes the symbolic instrument of a hostile universe which, drives men into their own isolated cocoons, and physically paralyzes them, impeding their movements on paths made "dark and slippery." Thus fluidity and motion collapses into frigidity and stasis.

To shatter the walls of his loneliness, the speaker now takes himself to the tavern and knocking at the door implores admission. The epithets by which the speaker calls the tavern keeper. "Messiah", "Nazarene", "master", all resonate with clear association of religious and spiritual redemption and mystical union. The speaker, therefore, pleads to be delivered not only from the physical paralysis of the cold, but from the spiritual anguish of a lonely and benighted soul. The poignant and plaintive supplications of the speaker modulates into self-degrading and self-depreciating metaphors--and even mixed metaphors--of alienation: "This is your nightly guest, the wretched waif / the sorely ailing castaway / Base curse of the creation, the jarring chord."

These pathetic notes mark a tragic awareness that for the speaker--the contemporary every man--the doors of the mystical illumination and sufistic communion through symbolism of tavern and wine-cups, are forever locked. Even the often unflinching persuasion that the speaker has come to clear the score and pay the overdue tally fails to open this door, and this last source of hope and inspiration remains barred. The failure has been accentuated by the dramatic form of the poem. Opening the poem as a dramatic monologue in the first part, the speaker tries, in the second part, to establish a dialogue with the tavern-keeper--Messiah and master. Yet, this dialogue never materializes; and at its best culminates into only an aborted dialogue. The tavern-keeper's negative response to the speaker's plea is also reported to us obliquely embedded within the speaker's monologue: "Wherefore you say it is too late, and morning had broken..." Thus the dramatic form conveys--far better than explicit expression--the speaker's

failure to break the walls of his isolation and establish communion with a redeeming and enlightening source.

Starting as a dramatic monologue, the poem modulates into a single-voiced and reported dialogue, and then reverts again, in the final stanza, into the monologue form. Thus the final stanza, cast in a rapid succession of images, some picked up from the rest of the poem, approaches, both in form and concentration, a musical coda, demonstrating Akhavan's superb mastery of rhythm and imagistic virtuosity. The image of the ice-encrusted trees as "crystal bedecked skeletons", in the last stanza, sharply condenses the themes of frigidity, emotional paralysis and death which dominate the poem.

"The Winter" could be read on three different levels of meaning. On the first, that is the realistic level, the poem depicts in sharply-defined and artistically-focused images the sweeping assault of the winter and its harshly cramping effect upon men who can no longer socialize freely. The speaker on this level of meaning, finding the cold outside unbearable and his friends benumbed and unresponsive to his affection, seeks the shelter of a tavern. But neither by soft pleading and flattery, nor by the hard persuasion of ready cash could he prevail upon the tavern-keeper to let him in, as the night seems to be far advanced and near the small hours of morning.

On the second level which is the allegoric level of meaning, the poem acquires historic and socio-political dimension. It is on this phase of meaning that the factual events of Akhavan's life, his social stance, his dissent and political activities could be brought to bear upon the poem. From this perspective, the cold winter could be seen as the brutally repressive power and political tyranny of the dictatorial regime that swayed the country all through Akhavan's most productive years. Hardly could one find a more adequate image to symbolize the paralyzing grip of despotic police state over the hearts and minds of a people. Under the

deadly influence of such regime, people are isolated by fear and distrust; doubt and indecision hampers discourse and mars friendship. In this grim atmosphere of befogged visions and uncertain paths, the attempt to seek personal salvation through mystical ways is no more viable. In the words of the tavern-keeper, it is "too late" for such mystical certainties. One could no longer avert his face from the social injustices and hope to achieve spiritual bliss.

Encompassing the realistic and analytical planes of meaning is the third: the symbolic meaning. This area of meaning, far broader than the first two, incorporates and transcends them like the outer and ever-expanding circle of a wave which embracing the inner-cocentric ripples of meaning, is fed by and yet outreaches them. Here, the winter assumes a universal dimension and the speaker steps in the shoes of Everyman--his existential loneliness becomes the perennial loneliness on Man in the face of an indifferent and hostile universe. The bone-chilling cold of a seasonal change transmutes into the enduring tyranny of fate, tragically pervading human life.

The ultimate meaning of the poem is not only a synthesis of all three levels but rather a synergism transcending by far the individual areas of significance.

PH

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An Interview with

Homa Pirooz

A Change in Direction, Can Be Rewarding

By: Haleh Nia



PH. You have a diverse background, could you start by telling our readers where you received your formal education?

HP. Yes, I studied in England. After I received my diploma in Iran, I went to Geneva, Switzerland. In those days it was very fashionable for a young woman to get her education abroad. They would go to Geneva to become an interpreter.

PH. Is that what you wanted to do?

HP. No, not at all. I come from a very artistic family. My mother's side of the family are all artists. In fact, my mother's uncle, Abbas Zolfonoon did all the work for Reza Kabir at the

Persian Pavillion British Museum.

PH. So you followed in their footsteps?

HP. Yes. I studied graphic design at Bouwenmouth and Pool College of the Arts. I received my MA from Royal Collage of Arts in London. I am a member of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers (SIAP). I am also a Royal Charter Artist.

PH. After you returned what did you do?

HP. I started a freelance advertising agency in Tehran.

PH. Were you the first female graphic designer in Iran?

HP. One of the first who had actually studied the techniques of

graphic designs like typography.

PH. How did you get involved with the business side of graphic designs?

HP. When I opened a free lance advertising agency. The first year I had accounts with General Motors, Black & Decker, Johnson & Johnson and British Airways and the National Food Corporation, a Persian company. I was then introduced to Iran Air. Their art directors for their inflight magazine had always been foreigners. They had heard about me and the work I had done for General Motors. I had created the first catalogue introducing Cadillac into the Iranian market. I used a design with

Persepolis and also placed the Cadillac next to a Persian rug.

PH. Did your experience with Iran Air prove to be a positive one?

HP. Very much so. I learned so much about the country and my heritage and culture, it's arts crafts, music and poetry.

PH. What did your art work include?

HP. In each issue we had a section featuring Iranian handicrafts, artists, painters as well as an Iranian city or foreign city. I also designed some of the advertisements for Iran Air.

PH. How long did you work with them?

HP. About five years and then the revolution came.

PH. This experience must have allowed you to meet many interesting and important people?

HP. Yes, but the valuable experience from my employment was what I learned about my country. As I stated earlier each issue concentrated on a particular city in Iran. We did extensive research on the arts and crafts, culture and history of that city.

PH. Did the Revolution affect your life?

HP. Absolutely, everything at Iran Air was shut down. In fact the Editor stayed with me for a month before leaving Iran. We could not promote anything or do any kind of advertisement. Recently, however, I understand that marketing and advertising is again in place and agencies are once again alive.

PH. Where did you go after this?

HP. An artist cannot stop working and so I started to paint. First for myself and then I was commissioned by friends and acquaintances. I designed packages and labels for their companies. I was also asked by Teheran University to establish an internship program for their art students.

PH. We've talked about your early business life during this period but what about your personal life?

HP. It was a very difficult time for me, my father had passed away. I kept myself busy with my art. At this time the war with Iran was beginning to

take a toll on the youth in Iran I was touched to see how committed they were to Iran and the love they had for their country.

PH. How did you get interested in the bridal industry?

HP. Interesting question. I had a good friend, whose fiance was in prison and planned to be married as soon as he was released. She asked me to help her to plan her wedding. I had never done anything like that and was not the least bit interested, but... I could not turn her down. So I accepted the assignment. Once I accepted the offer I knew that everything I did had to be perfect, and should last her a lifetime.

PH. What happened or rather why the continued interest after her wedding?

HP. Her wedding generated countless phone calls requesting my assistance in preparing their weddings. I was stunned and disappointed because again I never aspired to be a bridal planner. I was an artist. That was what I wanted to do. It was what I planned for and why I went through such a difficult program of study. I was, you might say in a bit of a turmoil.

PH. And so....

HP. Well the war was taking its toll and truthfully there wasn't anything else for me to do. And so, I started accepting other peoples requests and eventually became a bridal consultant. It was tough for me, I am a perfectionist, and therefore whatever I take on must be perfect. After a few years I established a good reputation in this market. Soon I was doing everything for them. The extravagance of weddings at times amazed me.

PH. Were you doing this all by yourself?

HP. No, as the business grew I knew I had to hire some help.

PH. What was the greatest source of reference for your ideas?

HP. Traveling of course and also the use of Persian designs. The work we did was very expensive because of its quality and uniqueness.

PH. Where did you get your materials?

HP. From Spain, England and France. I would travel to these places two or three times a year and grab anything that I thought would create a new and unique design.

PH. Let's change directions for a few minutes on a more personal side.

HP. Yes.

PH. How and where did you meet your husband?

HP. We met in Tehran. I don't really know what happened all I know is that I felt he was the right man for me.

PH. How was it that you came to live in the United States?

HP. My husband and I came for a visit. He has a son from a previous marriage who was in school here. We decided to stay for a few months and those months turned into years.

PH. You started a new empire. In less than ten years your work has been shown in publications all over the world. I would say this is more of a success story rather than something you did as a hobby!

HP. You flatter me.

PH. And I mean to do so... please continue on the creation of your empire. Was your husband supportive?

HP. In a way he had no choice. I told him if he wanted me to continue with the business he would have to help. Honestly, he was very supportive.

PH. So who gave you your first break?

HP. My husband made me an appointment with *Marthas* at the Trump Towers. They bought some of my earrings and placed them in the window. He now smiles with satisfaction and pride. He does still admit to me that he would not have put our life savings on the fact that this would have happened. But he is so proud.

PH. Earlier you said that graphic arts was your passion. When you had the opportunity to go back to graphic arts what kept you in the bridal industry.

HP. In all honesty, I knew I was good at it, I had years of experience and now I enjoyed it. I believed I have

A Change in Direction

an inner sense as to what a bride really wants and needs. My next appointment was with one of the bigger bridal shops in the world, located in New York. I had saved samples and they ordered fourteen pieces. I was so excited because I felt as if I was finally accepted here. Next I designed some jewelry and bridal accessories for the national bridal show held at the Marriot Marquis. All of the bridal houses there ordered some of my pieces.

PH. This must have been a heavy work load?

HP. It took me four months to do an order for the stores. The next year I showed more of my new designs.

PH. How many years have you been doing the bridal shows.

HP. I just completed my 20th show at the Marriot Marquis in New York.

PH. Do you advertise?

HP. No, I never have, but have been fortunate to receive orders from all over the world. I still continue to buy my materials from Spain, England, Italy and France. I will only use the best fabrics. After all it is for their wedding day.

PH. You seem to be uncomfortable when we talk about your success, why?

HP. Because I believe that there are others who are equally as talented and also deserve recognition.

PH. Deserving recognition is one thing but you must agree that your success did not just come from luck.

HP. No I worked hard for what I have achieved. When I was in Iran, my father would come in my room and turn off the light at 12:30 AM because he knew if he didn't he would find me in the same place in the morning... still working.

PH. You spoke of your husband as being one of greatest assets. What do you mean by that?

HP. His support and business savvy were the main reasons for my accomplishments. He never complained to me about the long hours I kept but would rather take up the slack of housework and parenthood. He would care for my son, though I must quickly add that I am

do receive success from luck, that success is often short lived.

very active in my son's schooling, any way my work days are long and if it were not for my husband I am not sure that I would know what is goes in the world. He is my newspaper.

PH. Did you find any obstacles in building your career because of your Iranian background?

HP. I am very proud of my heritage and do not hesitate to tell people where I am from. I would like to tell you a little story about this. In the bridal industry we have two yearly shows, one in March and one in September. For my customers attending the shows I always present them with a gift. The gift is always from Iran. This tradition has been going on for the last 20 years.

PH. That is a wonderful story and certainly a new way of showing off Persian heritage. And now what about your future?

HP. In the future I would like to expand our line.

PH. In reflecting back over your life would you have done anything differently?

HP. Absolutely not. I am very happy where I am and how I am and how I got there. If rewards come easily often they are not appreciated. I thrive on hard work.

PH. Well as an Iranian-American, I am proud of your achievement. You are certainly an inspiration...

HP. You flatter me.

PH. You deserve to be flattered. What is the most important aspect of your heritage that you will pass on to your son?

HP. Hopefully everything, the good and the bad. We still are very active as a family with the Persian community and in bringing the achievements and culture of the Persian community to other groups.

PH. Do you speak Persian at home?

HP. Yes. I am very traditional about customs. Even though we live here, because Iran is our birthplace, part of our heart remains connected to Iran.

PH. In closing do you have a message to give to the youth?

HP. Yes. This is not only true for those of Persian heritage. Be proud of your heritage and never forget from where your parents and other ancestors came from. Also, always work hard for what you want. Life is difficult and the rewards beautiful, but most rewards come with alot of sacrifice. I really do not believe that there is a thing called luck and if you

PH

Persian  Heritage
Mirass-e-Iran

با اشتراك مجله ميراث ايران

اين نشریه فرهنگی - ادبی و تاریخی را

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An Interview with
Stacy Morrison

A Love Affair with a Magazine, Launches a Career

By: Persian Heritage

Modern Bride is about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, tell us about its history. *Modern Bride* began publishing in 1949. It has meant something different in every decade. What we try to do is to present the most current ideas on planning a wedding. *Modern Bride* started out more as a bridal fashion magazine. Eventually, articles on travel and home were added because of the importance of honeymoons and registry. The changing of the guard... you took over the position of Cele Lalli, who was with the magazine for 33 years, a tough act to follow? Absolutely, Cele is a guru in the business. I got lucky, however. I had the opportunity to work with her prior to her leaving. She announced her retirement one year prior to the date. So the handing over the reins was an amicable rather than adverse event. She is a treasure trove of knowledge. I always tell her that I would like to borrow her brain just for a weekend. What *Modern Bride* needed Stacy Morrison brought, what is the most valuable asset you brought to *Modern Bride*? When I first came to *Modern Bride* I planned to present to the "bride-to-be" a more relaxed attitude about planning a wedding. The audience needed permission to do it their way. In the eighties, weddings were so by-the-numbers. During that time every wedding, had the same elements in the same sequence. The bouquet was tossed at x hour, garter at x-plus 15 minutes and so on. If these events did not go off on schedule that wedding was considered to be a disaster. I am trying to encourage the bride not to get so caught up in the minutia of the wedding and to remember that this is an event about family, friends and love. Having the wrong color rose at your wedding does not mean the marriage is doomed. The winning edge; there seem to be more bridal magazines on the market, why is *Modern Bride* more successful? In the magazine business you revel in the glory of success for only a second. In order to stay on top, you must constantly be in touch with

events around you, in particular your audience. Everything effects the preparation of a wedding. Modern Bride prides itself in delivering the newest and latest trends to its readers. **Tradition is still protected; do extravagant Weddings continue to be the order of the day?** Actually, there is no real order of the day. Almost anything goes today, but in answer to your question, yes. Traditional weddings and extravagance still remain. The wedding is just not as structured. It also depends on the part of the country, the world, in which you are in. For instance, Texas is the land of the big wedding; while in other parts of the country people are more comfortable having a less formal wedding. One thing that the "over the top" wedding has is its ability to be creative. **Change in rank; what do you think caused the change in the wedding planning?** The present cultural moment. Getting married today takes on a new connotation. It no longer has a feminist spin on it. People are no longer sheepish about announcing their intention. **Are grooms more involved?** Without a doubt. In fact seventy percent of all brides and grooms share the planning. Fifteen years ago, the mother was the most important force in wedding planning; today, it is the groom. We think this is because of the edge of the marrying couple and their relationship. For instance, a wedding planned by a 26 year old will be different from a wedding planned by one who is 21. Seventy percent of brides and grooms live together; forty percent of the brides make as much or more than their grooms and weddings are being paid for more and more by the couple rather than by the parents. **Do you think the seventy percent statistic of couples living together prior to marriage will have a positive or negative affect on the longevity of the marriage?** That is something we will not know for a long time. These are statistics from a 1997 Robert Start survey. We will need another 10 to 15 years before we see how the rates are positioned? **Parental divorce can have a positive affect on the children. Do you have any**

statistics on how couples handle the "idea" of marriage? I spend a lot of time explaining to people that fifty percent of the couples marrying today are children from broken homes. What is interesting, however, is that these couples are very optimistic about their marriage. They are more pragmatic. It seems that these couples are heading into marriage with a clearer sense of the compromises and difficulties faced by two personalities working together and they understanding the real struggles which a long term relationship will encounter, rather than this fantasy that they will ride off in the sunset and live happily ever after. **Love at first sight; you have been instrumental in launching some very impressive magazines, what sparked the interest?** I fell in love with magazines at a very early age, I think nine. Receiving my own mail was what first attracted my attention, and I also fell in love with the packaging. When I first launched *Time Out*, everyone said that there was no room for another entertainment magazine in New York. I stood firm in my belief that my opposition was not taking the packaging into consideration. I worked hard to convince them that people buy a newspaper and throw it away an hour later. A magazine is kept for a week or longer. Packaging seduces the audience and, therefore, I believe one of a magazines most important features. **Is *Time Out*, magazine successful because of its packaging?** Partly yes. What also adds to its' success is that the magazine gives people what they want and not what we perceive or think they want simply because it happens to be "cool". To deliver what is "cool" rather than what is "real" can be the "death knoll" of a magazine. We should not act as critics but rather tell them the situation and let them figure it out. **Without mentioning your age you have accomplished a great deal in a short period of time. Well, in this business launching a magazine is an 80 hour week which is equivalent to two years of experience for every year worked. And the winner is; excluding *Modern Bride* which magazine has**



provided you with the most rewarding experience? Actually I cannot say. Each has provided me with a different and unique opportunity. I will be ever grateful to Cyndy Stivers and Tony Elliot for the opportunity they gave me at *Time Out New York*. As for *Modern Bride* I am amazed at how much we have accomplished in such a short period of time. Right now, I am sitting pretty, enjoying my position and taking it all in. **To be winner a in the world of magazines, what must one do?** Besides the packaging, it comes down to clarity of the magazine's voice. When a reader opens a magazines it has to be somebody the reader likes, someone with whom they want to share breakfast, lunch, and dinner and other valuable moments of their day. A magazine becomes a companion. The voice, therefore, must be right from the beginning. If it isn't right the reader will know immediately and be turned off. **Where will she be in ten years?** One of the things I like about getting older is that I no longer have any idea what tomorrow will bring. I used to have five- year plans but experience has changed my five- year plans to five year ideas. But, I do hope that I will continue to be given new challenges. **Please give a message to young people interested in the business of magazines.** That is easy. Read everything you can get your hands on, from literature to newspapers. Be a consumer of ideas and pop culture. Feed and nurture your curiosity any way you can. I have always said I get paid to be interested in a lot of things, to be professionally curious. So a sense of wonder at the world- paired with flawless grammer skills-is the key. Then you just keep sending out resumes and making follow-up phone calls until you get a break.



An Interview with
Jane Elissa

Someone Else's Rags, Becomes Another's Riches

home contains Persian artifacts and her art reflects her admiration for Persian artists' use of color. After a very successful showing at Art Expo 1999, she is sure to continue on a fruitful path as an artist.

ARTIST FIRST? No, music was my first love. I did not discover my artistic ability until high school. When I took classes, I was shocked to discover I had the ability to paint and ended up receiving a number of awards; one of which was "best artist" of my graduating class. **HOW DID YOU SEE YOUR LIFE?** Working. I remember thinking about getting married and having a family, but it was to be combined with my love of "the work". I thought that those things would naturally happen. **DID YOU FOLLOW YOUR DREAM OR YOUR FAMILY'S?** Well, I went to college and got my degree in English education, but I did sneak in enough art classes to graduate with a dual major in Art and English. **AND YOUR CAREER AS A TEACHER?** I loved teaching and believe I was a good one. In fact, I might still be teaching, if there was not an over abundance of teachers in the seventies. Because of the surplus, I was, as a young teacher, always being transferred to other schools. So... teaching was not giving me the security my family imagined. **WHEN DID THE TEACHER/ARTIST BECOME ARTIST/DESIGNER? I**

always loved clothes, especially vintage clothing and shopped in thrift stores. One day, I purchased this magnificent antique shawl. It had a number of stains; that made it unwearable. I decided to cover the stains by painting over them with magic marker. Not satisfied, I then took appliques from other vintage clothing and sewed them, over other stains. The finished product was a mixture of paint and applique. I knew I had created something unique. I wanted to patent the idea but found out that an idea is not patentable. But, I knew that I was the first person to combine hand painting with textural collages on fabric. I thought my idea was going to be copied and it was. **TELL US ABOUT YOUR WEDDING GOWN. BUT YOUR IDEA DID EVENTUALLY BRING YOU SUCCESS AND NOTORIETY?** Eventually, yes. It was not an easy road, but I would not trade the experience for anything. I was discontented with teaching and my creative juices were flowing. I contacted someone I had modeled with, who suggested that I do trade shows to sell my designs. I did, and was able to get some orders for specialty stores. A fellow teacher then suggested I call department stores. During my breaks at school, I would call the stores asking to speak with their accessory buyers. After a

Rare is the person who shines in a number of categories. Jane Elissa Meyers is such a person. She is an accomplished artist and musician. She is a person who gives 100% of herself to whatever she does for anything and anyone. Her road to success has been filled with disappointments, rejection and loss. But support from her family and friends, coupled with her determination to enjoy life, has helped her overcome these obstacles. She is not Persian, but is familiar with the Persian community. Her

significant amount of rejection, BINGO, the buyer of Bonwit Teller answered her own phone. After a little perseverance she invited me to come to her office. I thought this was a personal invitation. Instead it was one of many appointments given that day. Unbeknownst to me, it was a "look/see". A "look/see" is when the buyer looks at a number of articles brought in by a number of designers. Anyway, I weathered through a blizzard to show up and be at the end of a very long line. When I was fourth from the end, I heard her say "don't show me anything else painted". I melted. After all, that was what I brought. For a brief moment I thought about leaving. I thought about how I weathered a major snowstorm and used up a vacation day from work to be there. There was no way I was leaving, without her seeing my work, regardless of acceptance or rejection. It paid off. She ordered six pieces for her store. I have to interject something here. I had absolutely no business skills. I was selling my work for what I thought was a big profit. Not until later did I realize that I was just breaking even. She ordered 60 more pieces to put in stores across the nation. I then learned that a picture of one of my pieces appeared in *New York Magazine*. The picture did not name me as the artist, but it felt good. In August I received a call from her telling me that they wanted to put my work in their Christmas catalog. I could not believe it. She needed five to six hundred pieces. Not thinking clearly, I accepted the contract and then realized it was going to be next to impossible to produce that many shawls and scarves. Fortunately, my husband, at the time, had a client who was in the air brushing business. I took out a loan, bought the material, hand applied and drew the designs and the rest was airbrushed. It was at this point I knew I had something and decided to leave teaching. **YOU HAVE A LONG LIST OF CELEBRITIES THAT OWN YOUR ARTWORK AND ART-TO-WEAR.** Because the work is so unique, performers are attracted to them. You can only imagine how I felt



when I found out that Cher and Barbara Streisand, to name a few, owned something I designed. **ANOTHER UNIQUE ASPECT OF YOUR CAREER IS HOW YOU COMBINED YOUR ART WORK WITH RAISING MONEY FOR A WONDERFUL CAUSE, THE LEUKEMIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA, WHAT INITIATED THIS COMBINATION?** My mother, Charlotte Meyers, was diagnosed 12 years ago with leukemia. This caused me to want to be involved with the Society. The most important aspect of any disease, besides patient care, is research for a cure. Because I was a designer, I thought I could present a celebrity fashion show to raise money. I did, and it was the beginning of a twelve years of fund raising. \$700,000.00 I encourage your readers to think about coming, to one of these events, especially if they enjoy the theater and fashion. One event in June is a Cabaret setting. The October **EXTRAVAGANZA** is more formal. The program for that evening contains performances, a fashion show and recognition awards. Last year we honored Douglas Sills of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and this year we will be giving "The Shining Star Award" to Rob Evan of *Jekyll and Hyde*. I have been so moved by the generosity of the theater community and the community in general. Leukemia as well as other blood diseases has no territorial boundaries. Anyone can become infected with these dreaded diseases, at any age. **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A**

YOUNG PERSON WHO DESIRES TO PURSUE A CAREER IN THE ARTS? I would never discourage anyone who has a genuine desire for the arts. I do not judge their level of talent. What I will tell them, however, is to pursue their career in a logical order. They should take as many courses or classes to perfect their talent. I made the mistake of jumping into the profession with no business knowledge. That cost me dearly both emotionally and financially. It is imperative that you know the business side of the company or hire someone to do it for you. Always remember that talent is only one ingredient to success. **WHAT ABOUT BEGINNER'S LUCK?** Very few get that lucky, but if you have been given a lucky break, the only way to continue on a successful path is hard work. **AND YOUR FUTURE?** I have gotten back into painting and opened a new gallery 451 W. 46th St., E. Store, N.Y., NY 10036. It is a gallery where I can show all categories of my work and introduce promising new talent. **WELL THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME ...**No, thank you for allowing me to be interviewed. I understand that *Persian Heritage* has been very supportive of the Leukemia Society as well as the arts. It is a wonderful educational magazine and I wish you continued success. I also want to thank the Persian community for their support in my business over the years. I have a number of valued Persian customers.

PH