

Iran's ta'zieh artist Alaeddin Qassemi dies at 69



IRNA – Iran's ta'zieh (Iranian passion play on religious events) artist Alaeddin Qassemi died after a long illness, Iran's theatrical figure Davoud Fath'ali Beigi confirmed.

Fath'ali Beigi mentioned Qassemi as one of the best ta'zieh artists in Iran, adding that he had performed ta'zieh in many cities in Iran and abroad and had a very impressive voice.

He is one of the artists who can hardly be replaced, he noted.

The artist was highly influential in introducing ta'zieh to the world, he said; he staged a ta'zieh performance in Festival d'Avignon in France.

He also performed in the U.S. and Germany.

Qassemi is known for his role as a ta'zieh artist in the TV series including 'The Tenth Night' (2002), and 'Dress Rehearsal: The Brave Hurr's Ta'zieh' (2005).

Qassemi held the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's First-Degree Art Certificate in performing ta'zieh, and in 2016, he became a member of Iran's Veteran Artists Institute.

Along with Iran's film director Nasser Taqvaei, Qassemi submitted an all-inclusive dossier on the art of ta'zieh for having it registered in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. He will be laid to rest today at the Artists' Section of Behesht-e Zahra cemetery in southern Tehran.

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Fajr Music Festival to become more competitive: Executive



Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Iran's Fajr Music Festival will be more competitive in the coming years, said the artistic secretary of the 38th edition of the event.

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Behzad Abdi added that the Barbad Award (a statuette awarded to the winners of the Competitive Section of Fajr Music Festival) will eventually be given to top works in all sections of the festival.

The Barbad Award was added to the festival two years ago for music albums, he said, although this year, the award will be extended to musical performances, and for the first time it will be given to the best individuals and groups in the instrumental section.

In the next editions, the significant accolade will be given to single pieces and stage performances both in the pop and the international sections, he added.

Just as the Simorgh Award at the Fajr Film Festival has gained immense prestige for the top works in



the field of cinema, the Barbad Award could also gain such a value for music performers.

The recipients of the Barbad Award, though, should be given special incentives so that they are encouraged to present top musical works, he said.

Pointing to the participation of 188 musical groups from the country's provinces in this year's festival, he said that the festival could be like a turning point for the participants in helping them to be seen. He expressed hope that young musical groups can generate income through holding concerts, and calling for cultural officials

to provide appropriate facilities to support these groups.

Referring to the importance of music in the dynamism of society, Abdi said, music is considered the most abstract art because you understand a concept only with your ears; you don't even need to know the language used in the music.

Thus, such art has great influence and can stimulate all parts of the society, he added.

On his future plans, he explained that "the composition of 'Homay and Homayoun Opera' has been completed and the opera singers have performed

the work. I have also written the opera, 'Rostam and Sohrab,' which is a great opera and is ready to be staged."

The 47-year-old composer studied setar and Iranian traditional music with composer and setar virtuoso Masoud Sho'ari and the composer, music researcher, theoretician and player of tar and setar, Mohsen Nafar. He learnt Western classical music with pianist Ludmila Yurina and Vadim Juravitsky at the Tchaikovsky Academy in Ukraine.

His works have been recorded with international orchestras such as the National Radio Company

of Ukraine Symphony Orchestra.

Among his well-known operas are 'Bright Future,' 'When God Calls You,' 'Rumi Opera,' 'Hafez Opera' and 'Ashura Opera'.

In 2008, he won the Best Music Award for the piece 'Pahlevan,' from the National Olympic Academy; and in 2009, he received the Crystal Simorgh of the Fajr Film Festival for the musical score of 'Aal,' and in 2013, he grabbed the same award for the film, 'Mazar Sharif.' Also in 2013, he won the Best Score Award for 'The Legend of Mardoush' at the Jame Jam Television Festival.



The recipients of the Barbad Award, though, should be given special incentives so that they are encouraged to present top musical works.

George T. Miller, Australian director dies at 79

VARIETY – George Trumbull Miller, an Australian film and television director whose most notable credits include 'The Never-Ending Story II: The Next Chapter' and 'The Man from Snowy River,' died of a heart attack in a hospital in Melbourne. He was 79 years old.

Miller reached national prominence for his 1982 Western 'The Man from Snowy River,' starring Kirk Douglas. The film grossed \$17.2 million in Australia and reached more than \$20 million worldwide, inspiring a sequel as well as an arena attraction. More than 40 years on, 'Man from Snowy River' remains one of the top 20 highest grossing local productions in the history of the Australian box office.

Coincidentally, George T. Miller's rise as a filmmaker closely paralleled that of his fellow Australian, 'Mad Max' director George Miller.

Beijing set to be world's top tourism destination

Beijing will overtake Paris within the next decade to become the world's largest travel & tourism city destination, said the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in a new report.

The Cities Economic Impact Report, sponsored by Visa and researched in partnership with Oxford Economics, analysed key indicators such as travel & tourism's contribution to GDP, employment and traveller spend, Zawya reported.

But while long term the outlook for a number of Chinese cities looks positive, prolonged travel restrictions and border closures slowed down the recovery in the short term. WTTC studied the impact of the travel & tourism sector in four major cities across China; Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, and Shanghai and found a mixed picture across the four city destinations.

In all four cities the sector's GDP contribution last year almost fully re-

covered back to 2019 levels. The GDP contribution from the sector to Beijing and Chengdu's economy in 2022 was just 4% and 2% below 2019 levels respectively (\$34 billion and \$5.4 billion), compared to \$31 billion and \$5.5 billion.

Last year, the travel & tourism's GDP contribution in Guangzhou and Shanghai was around 7% below 2019 levels. In Guangzhou the sector contributed \$13.2 billion in 2022 compared to \$14.1 billion pre-pandemic, while in Shanghai, the sector contributed \$29.7 billion compared to \$31.5 billion in 2019.

Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO, said: "China has long been a world-favourite holiday destination and after more than two years of disruption, it's great to see tourists heading back. Tourists provide a massive boost to both the economy and job creation.

"It is crucial that the national and local governments continue to rec-

ognise the importance of travel & tourism for the local and national economies, jobs and businesses." In 2019, there were 1.35 million people employed by the travel & tourism sector in Beijing. But in 2020 this figure dropped to 1.16 million (-15%). In 2021, employment grew by more than 5% and is expected to have grown a further 4% in 2022 to reach 1.27 million jobs.

Before the pandemic, there were 1.32 million travel & tourism jobs in Shanghai, but this number fell to 1.13 million in 2020 (-14%). A 10% rise in 2021 saw the number increase to 1.25 million and it was predicted to see a slight increase to 1.26 million in 2022.

In Guangzhou there were just over 603,000 jobs in 2019 but this dropped by 23% to just over 464,000. A slight 4% rise in 2021 saw jobs increase to just under 481,000 and WTTC is expecting a 16.5% increase in 2022 to bring the total jobs to over 560,000.

Chengdu is seeing an even stronger return to pre-pandemic levels. In 2019 there were 336,000 jobs in the city which dropped by 12% to just under 297,000 in 2020. The following year saw a small 5% increase to 311,000 jobs and last year the global tourism body is predicting a 6% increase to 329,500 jobs – just 2% below pre-pandemic levels.

Due to the prolonged border closures imposed by the government, international visitor spend is taking longer to recover than in other countries around the world.

But light is at the end of the tunnel. Whilst international visitor spend is still on average 53% lower in 2022 than it was in 2019, all of the cities analysed are showing modest year-on-year increases. International visitor spend in Beijing is just 41% what it was in 2019, with visitors spending a predicted \$5 billion in 2022 compared to \$12.1 billion



in 2019. In Chengdu, international visitor spend is performing better than the capital with recovery at 61% of 2019 levels. Travellers spent \$1.5 billion in Chengdu in 2022 compared to \$2.5 billion in 2019.

Both Shanghai and Guangzhou have seen international visitor spend drop to 44% of 2019 levels. In Shanghai it went from \$11.9 billion before the pandemic to \$5.2 billion in 2022, while in Guangzhou it went from \$4.3 billion in 2019 to \$1.9 billion in 2022.