

'Luxury and Power: Persia to Greece' at the British Museum



BRITISH MUSEUM – An art exhibition titled 'Luxury and power: Persia to Greece' will open today at the British Museum. It will run through August 13.

Drawing on dazzling objects from Afghanistan to Greece, this exhibition moves beyond the ancient Greek spin to explore a more complex story about luxury as a political tool in the Middle East and southeast Europe from 550–30 B.C.

It explores how the royal Achaemenid court of Persia used precious objects as markers of authority, defining a style of luxury that resonated across the empire from Egypt to India. It considers how eastern luxuries were received in early democratic Athens, self-styled as Persia's arch-enemy, and how they were adapted in innovative ways to make them socially and politically acceptable. Finally, it explores how Alexander the Great swept aside the Persian empire to usher in a new Hellenistic age in which eastern and western styles of luxury were fused as part of an increasingly interconnected world.

Featuring star loans as well as objects from the British Museum collection, the exhibition brings together exquisitely crafted objects in gold, silver and glass, including the extraordinary Panagurishte Treasure from Bulgaria. Whether coveted as objects of prestige or disparaged as signs of decadence, the beauty of these Persian, Greek and Hellenistic luxuries shaped the political landscape of Europe and Asia in the first millennium B.C. – and their legacy persists in our attitudes to luxury today.

Iran's actor Mahmoudi dies at 37



IRNA – Iran's young actor Hesam Mahmoudi, renowned for his performance in 'Romanticism of Emad & Tooba' (2019), died on Wednesday due to heart failure at the age of 37. He gained fame after his role in television series 'Moment of Twilight', directed by Homayoun As'adian. He also portrayed several characters in cinematic works such as 'Voice of Silence' (2014), 'Death of the Fish' (2015), and 'Astigmatism' (2018). The details of his funeral have yet to be announced.

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Iran's 'Macbeth Zar' to tour St. Petersburg

Iranian theatrical production 'Macbeth Zar,' will grace the stage at the 18th Saint Petersburg Theater Festival, slated to be held from May 23 to June 2. Ebrahim Posht Koochi, the playwright and director, has crafted an exquisite adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth,' blending it with Iran's southern

Zar ritual. The play was selected as the piece to close the Russian festival by the Russian Association of Theater Critics, according to ISNA. Along with 'Macbeth Zar,' other works from France, Denmark, Poland, Estonia, Japan, Russia, and Georgia are scheduled to be performed.

The Saint Petersburg Theater Festival has been a yearly occurrence since 2000 and is known for hosting fresh and original productions. The play's concept is rooted in Zar, a religious rite that involves an individual, usually female, being possessed by a spirit. Zar is the term used to refer to

a type of spirit, the malady they inflict when they descend upon a person, and the ceremony required to soothe the spirits and alleviate the patient's symptoms. The ceremony includes burning incense, playing music, and performing movement to appease the Zar, which will help relieve the afflicted

person. The 'Macbeth Zar' play has previously won awards at the Moscow Nights Festival and Munich Theater Festival. Additionally, it has been staged at the Avignon Festival, GITIS International Institute of Russia, and other festivals in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and India.

Legacy of Aminollah Rashidi: A reflection on Iran's music

Arts & Culture Desk

Aminollah Rashidi is a celebrated singer and composer of Iranian music, considered a maestro and the last surviving crooner from the country's pioneering era of the 1950s and 1960s. At 98 years old, he remains active and engaged in his art, with an ample collection of songs still waiting to be unveiled. Nevertheless, neither orchestras nor radio and television networks support his artistic endeavors. Despite being a prominent figure in the music industry, Rashidi receives no acknowledgment from friends, colleagues, or officials, and has no financial support to bring his compositions to life. Rashidi's birthday on April 24 coincided with the anniversary of the launch of the first radio transmitter in Iran in 1940. This milestone marks 83 years of the nation's love for art and music, which evokes memories of classic radio programs and the emergence of renowned composers and vocalists like Hossein Qavami, Gholamhossein Banan, Mahmoud Mahmoudi

Khansari, Rouhollah Khaledi, Parviz Yahaqqi, and Morteza Mahjoubi. However, Rashidi bemoans that the radio, no longer possesses the same vibrant and lively character it once had. Most of his works in the last year or two were broadcasted on television, but recently, less attention has been paid to the works of past maestros and old masters. Even the national media seems to have overlooked these great artists, leading Rashidi to conclude that the era of music and literature has drawn to a close.

Need for support

Rashidi is still awaiting a singer and sponsor to bring his compositions to life, but neither orchestras nor financial backers seem to care about his work. Having lived through nearly a century of the music world's ebbs and flows, Rashidi speaks passionately and optimistically about his beloved art form. Yet, he laments the lack of empathy and interest from certain friends, colleagues, and officials. On his birthday, he re-

ceived no acknowledgment from anyone, despite being one of Iran's greatest and most distinguished contemporary poets, whose lyrics and melodies are widely renowned. He is still awaiting a singer and sponsor to bring his compositions to life, but neither orchestras nor financial backers seem to care about this issue. "It is a protracted odyssey to return to the bygone four decades, yet I endure and am renowned, a treasure to cherish. My works have not been confined to a receptacle and I would be thrilled for enthusiasts to read them." Furthermore, he remarks on the current state of Iranian music: "These days, works are conceived and enjoyed by society and friends, but not akin to the productions of the 1950s and 1960s. It appears that the tastes of friends are not in harmony with Persian music, and the epoch has reverted to a state where good and harmonious music is no longer extant. The times have changed and turned upside down. I must declare that there are scant performers who compose and sing songs

based on the principles of instrumental music in recent years."

Still keen to sing

In 1946, the veteran singer migrated from central city of Kashan to the capital Tehran, where he enrolled at Roudaki Hall under the tutelage of Mousa Maroufi to hone his singing skills. Thereafter, he continued his education with Mehdi Forough at the Conservatory of Music, studying the theory of contemporary music and vocalization. "They were instrumental in guiding me along this path." On May 10, 2018, Rashidi graced Tehran's Andisheh Hall with his presence as a guest singer, performing alongside the music band "Oshshaq" (lovers). Even at the age of 98, he remains enthusiastic and fervent about staging concerts, expressing, "Though conditions have changes and our work has waned, I am yet keen to perform for my fans. I implore the authorities to take heed of this matter, for our beloved Iran abounds with prodigious artists who need support." The stalwart singer of

Persian music shares his aspirations, stating, "As with all admirers of Iran, patriots, literature aficionados, and music enthusiasts, I yearn for the headway and perpetuation of cultural and artistic pursuits within our nation, providing a platform for veteran artists to continue to shine."



● AMIR-HESAM ZARAFSHAN/IRAN DAILY