

Shahla Riahi, first female director of Iranian cinema

Arts & Culture Desk

Shahla Riahi, was the veteran actress and the first female filmmaker in the history of Iran cinema.

Riahi (1927-2019) started stage acting in 1944. In 1956, she became the first Iranian woman to direct a feature film 'Marjan'. She has acted in over 120 films, plays and TV series.

Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, there were only a couple of female filmmakers in Iran and Riahi did a great job to direct a movie in the male-dominated film domain.

'Marjan', the 110-minute 35mm, black-and-white film was produced by Arya Film.

In 2015, Riahi was honored in a ceremony at Charsou Cineplex in Tehran which was organized by another renowned female film director and actress Niki Karimi who said, "I congratulate her for being the first woman in Iran who made a film almost 60 years ago. She was really courageous in doing so and paved the way for people like me to continue the path".

'Marjan', was about a group of gypsies who settle near a village. Squeezed by pressures of life, a man from the gypsies steals a sheep from the village. The young teacher of the village traps the man, locking him up in a schoolroom. Marjan, the daughter of the man, goes to the school to visit her father and the teacher falls in love with the girl.

Riahi began her acting career at the age of 17 by a suggestion from her husband, Esmail Riahi, a stage director and screenwriter. Her brilliant performance as the leading actress in director Moezzeddin Fekri's play 'Harun al-Rashid's Policy' presented her as a young, promising talent.



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Iran's 'No Prior Appointment' to compete in Italy

Iran's 'No Prior Appointment', directed by Behrouz Shoeibi and produced by Mahmoud Babaei, is set to take part in the 26th edition of the Religion Today Film Festival, to be held from September 13 to 20 in Trento, Italy.

In its 12th international screening, the film will compete in the Migration and Migrants section of the Italian festival.

Religion Today is an international and itinerant film festival dedicated to religious diversity for a culture of peace and inter-faith dialogue.

Recently, the film won the Best Film and Best Leading Actress awards at the 19th Kazan International Festival of Muslim Cinema in Russia.

'No Prior Appointment', a collaborative effort between the Farabi Cinema Foundation and the Image of the City Institute,

tells the story of Yasmin, a woman who returns to her homeland of Iran after years in German exile following her father's passing. Her journey is made all the more challenging by her six-year-old autistic son, but during her brief stay in Iran, she gains a profound insight into the essence of humanity and death.

This outstanding film made its Iranian debut at the 40th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran in 2021, where it earned Golden Simorgh for Best Film from a national perspective. Furthermore, 'No Prior Appointment' received more than 10 awards at the National Will Manifestation Awards, a companion event to the Fajr Film Festival, recognizing films that address key issues championed by various public organizations and institutions.



Iran's theatre ensemble to perform in Pakistan festival

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Iranian theatrical artists to stage performance in Pakistan's Theatre Festival, which opened in Karachi on September 8 and will run until October 8.

The Pakistani festival will host 'Tik Tok' performance by Petvazh theatre group in the first week of October at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi.

Directed by Ahmad Nadaafi, the ensemble consists of Maryam Hashemi, Alireza Kaghazgaran, Reza A'zami-raad and Mehdi Sarsangi, as reported

by Tasnim news agency. The group will also hold workshops for Pakistani theatregoers.

At the invitation of the head of the Pakistan Arts Council, Saeed Talebinia, who is affiliated with the Iranian Embassy in Pakistan and is responsible for the Iran Culture Center in Karachi, attended the opening ceremony of the event as a special guest.

Talebinia elaborated on the advancements in Iranian cinema and theatrical arts during the 44-year period of the Islamic Revolution and expressed



Iran's interest in expanding artistic relations with Pakistan.

"Considering the Islamic

Republic of Iran's interest in cultural diplomacy and its profound impact on neighboring nations,

and upon the invitation of the Pakistani side, the Iran Culture Center, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's Performing Arts Center, has taken the necessary steps to have a prominent Iranian theatre group in the festival."

In addition, Punjab Governor Baleegh-ur-Rehman said that art unites people and gives them a channel to express themselves. He added that he was happy to see plays in so many regional and international languages which would help the people of Pakistan to understand each other.

The idea behind the festival is to portray a "soft image" of Pakistan and to bring some respite to masses in difficult economic times, according to ACP President Mohammad Ahmed Shah.

"This is the first time we are having a theatre festival of this scale with international partnerships. We have tried to create diversity as well as unity. We want to send out an image of Pakistan that reflects its people want to prosper despite difficult circumstances," Shah told Arab News at the opening ceremony.

Theatre groups from different countries are participating in the festival and 45 performances in Urdu, English, Persian, Sindhi, Punjabi languages are being presented during the festival. The festival is hosting 27 Pakistani groups as well as seven foreign ensembles.

'Indiana Jones of art world' recovers stolen Van Gogh painting

A Dutch art detective recovered a precious Vincent van Gogh painting that was stolen from a museum in a midnight heist during the coronavirus lockdown three and a half years ago, police said.

Arthur Brand took possession of the missing painting, 'The Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring', painted in 1884 and worth €3m-€6m (£2.6m-£5.2m), at his Amsterdam home on Monday, stuffed in a blue Ikea bag, the Guardian wrote. Brand,

known as the "Indiana Jones of the art world" for tracing a series of high-profile lost artworks, told AFP that confirming the painting was the stolen Van Gogh was "one of the greatest moments of my life". Brand told AFP that frequent calls by him and the Dutch police to hand back the stolen artwork finally paid off when a man, whose identity was not revealed for his own safety, handed Brand the painting in a blue Ikea bag, covered with bubblewrap and stuffed in a pil-

low casing. A video clip supplied by Brand showed him unpacking the painting in his lounge and gasping in astonishment when he realised what it was. "I couldn't believe it," he said. The painting was taken from the Singer Laren Museum near Amsterdam on 30 March 2020 in a heist that made headlines around the world. In April 2021, police arrested a man named in Dutch media as Nils M for the theft. He was later convicted and

sentenced to eight years behind bars. He was also convicted for stealing another masterpiece, by Frans Hals, called 'Two Laughing Boys' in a separate burglary. "After a few months I heard from a source in the criminal world who had bought the Van Gogh," said Brand, who has gained fame for his remarkable recoveries of stolen art, including the "Hitler's Horses" bronze statues, a Picasso painting and a ring that once belonged to Oscar Wilde. This man, identified by Dutch media as Peter Roy K, was behind bars for a separate case involving the large-scale import and export of cocaine, Brand said.