

Iranian arts displayed at Japan's AGEO World Fair



TASNIM – Iranian arts and culture were showcased at the recent AGEO World Fair, hosted at the International Exhibitions venue of the Saitama Prefecture Municipality in Japan.

The event brought together representatives from 25 nations, including Iran, to celebrate and explore the diverse offerings of the global cultural industry.

Of particular note was the Islamic Republic of Iran's pavilion, which got kudos from those who hold a deep appreciation for Iranian culture, particularly students of Persian language and literature showing keen interest.

Iran's Cultural Attaché to Japan Ali Sa'adatazar, was among the attendees, who toured the exhibition, saying that the collection featured handmade dolls portraying fictional characters, Iranian cartoons, and traditional clothing. Sa'adatazar highlighted the fair's importance as a platform for introducing the rich cultural achievements of Iran to the Japanese people, highlighting the significance of such cross-cultural exchanges.



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'War plays require new perspective to attract greater audience'

Female directors need more financial support



By **Hamideh Hosseini**
Staff writer

Shiva Dinarvand, a renowned actress and theater director, began her journey in the world of performing arts in the mid-2010s with her acting debut in the play 'Bazichegan,' directed by Hassan Ravandeh.

Her directorial debut came with 'Steel Never Rusts,' addressing themes of family, social issues, and women as breadwinners, with a focus on the destructive aftermath of war on families.

Dinarvand's second work, 'Fragments of Several Lives,' explored the memories of six women during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). However, her third production, 'Three Nights with Madox,' originally written by Romanian-French playwright Matei Vişniec, took a completely different turn into the realm of absurdity.

In a recent interview with Iran Daily, Dinarvand shared her experiences about her theatrical journey and the development of her works.

Dinarvand's earlier productions, 'Steel Never Rusts' and 'Fragments of Several Lives,' were characterized by a realistic approach, evoking images, memories, and emotions.

However, 'Three Nights with Madox' was a departure from this style. When asked about this shift, Dinarvand explained that her commitment to preserving a sense of realism and simplicity in



her works remained constant. Following the production of 'Three Nights with Madox,' she felt a stronger feeling toward Iranian-themed productions. Her next project is set to explore the struggles of a populous family in the Iranian society. 'Three Nights with Madox' has been previously staged by a few Iranian directors. When Dinarvand was asked about the differences in her approach, she highlighted the use of well-known actors, distinct mise-en-scène, and the unique perspective she brought to her work as the distinguishing features of her directorial style.

Touching upon the perception of theater as a medium, the female director emphasized the need for fidelity to the original text in the-

ater productions. She rejected the criticism that 'Three Nights with Madox' is simply a visual representation of the script, pointing out that the live performance, the use of live instruments like the piano, and the nuanced changes in lighting are all important to conveying the depth of the narrative to the audience.

Regarding the number of audience of 'Three Nights with Madox,' Dinarvand said that approximately 2,300 people had watched the show.

In response to questions about government support for theatrical productions, Dinarvand said that, to date, her work had received minimal government support, except for modest discounts on venue rentals.

She expressed gratitude to her

private sponsors, such as the Tabi'at Food Factory and the Mashhad Leather Company, for making her latest production possible.

She stressed the importance of presenting the themes of the Iran-Iraq war in her works in a fresh and comprehensible manner, focusing on the struggles of women, children, and families during those times. The objective is to engage a new generation, making the subject matter more palpable for this generation.

When asked about the demand for works centered on the Iran-Iraq war, Dinarvand noted that it is crucial to introduce new perspectives and fresh storytelling to maintain audience interest.

She believes that simply retelling the same stories of war and weapons would not attract the younger

generation. Addressing the target audience for such productions, Dinarvand stressed the importance of expanding beyond a specific religious or ideological audience, saying that well-produced, engaging plays can attract a wider range of viewers, including young people, in addition to theater enthusiasts. Speaking about her future programs, Dinarvand revealed her plans to quickly move on to her next project, which will be staged in a governmental venue.

Dinarvand concluded that the main challenges faced by female directors are the struggle for financial support and recognition by governmental and private organizations due to the limited trust placed in female directors producing high-budget works.

● TWALL

Palestinian voices 'shut down' at Frankfurt Book Fair, say authors

Several prominent authors and publishers from around the world have accused the Frankfurt Book Fair of "shutting down" Palestinian voices, after an awards ceremony due to honour a novel by a Palestinian author was called off due to the war in Palestine.

Palestine-born novelist and essayist Adania Shibli, who divides her time between Berlin and Al-Quds, was due on October 20 to be awarded the 2023 LiBeraturpreis, an annual prize given to female writers from Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Arab world, the Guardian reported.

On Friday, however, the Lit-Prom association that hands out the prize announced it would postpone the award ceremony "due to the war started by Hamas, under which millions of people in Israel and Palestine are suffering".

In its original announcement, LitProm said it had taken the step to postpone the award as a "joint decision" with the author. But Shibli's literary agency told the Guardian the decision was not made with her consent, and that if the ceremony had been held she would have taken the opportunity to reflect on the role of literature in these cruel and painful times.

An open letter, signed by more than 350 authors including the Irish novelist Colm Tóibín, the American-Libyan Pulitzer winner Hisham Matar, the British-Pakistani novelist Kamila Shamsie and the British historian William Dalrymple, admonishes the organisers of the Frankfurt book fair, the world's largest trade fair of its kind, saying it has "a responsibility to be creating spaces for Palestinian writers to share their thoughts, feelings, re-

lections on literature through these terrible, cruel times, not shutting them down".

Shibli's novel, published in English in 2020 as *Minor Detail*, was hailed by LitProm as a "rigorously composed work of art that tells of the power of borders and what violent conflicts do to and with people". The novel, which was also nominated in the US for the National Book Awards as well as the International Book Awards, juxtaposes the true story of the 1949 rape and murder of a Bedouin girl at the hands of an Israeli army unit with the fictional story of a female journalist investigating the crime in Ramallah decades later.

The novel has proven particularly controversial in Germany, where the journalist Ulrich Noller left the LiBeraturpreis jury this summer in protest over the decision to honour

the book.

A review in the left-leaning newspaper Taz carried the criticism that "all Israelis in this short novel are anonymous rapists or killers, while the Palestinians are victims of poisoned or trigger-happy occupiers".

More favourable reviews have argued the portrayal of Israeli soldiers is merely consistent with Shibli's detached literary style, which harked back to Albert Camus' 'The Stranger'.



● REUTERS