

Fajr Int'l Music Festival opens in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

The 41st edition of the Fajr International Music Festival officially opened on Monday, February 9, and will run until February 15, marking more than four decades of continuous celebration of Iran's musical diversity and heritage.

The festival's formal opening ceremony was held in the Artists' Section of Tehran's main cemetery, attended by cultural officials and artists, where participants paid tribute to deceased musical figures.

Although Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi did not attend the ceremony in person, he issued a message addressed to the 41st Fajr Music Festival. In his message, Salehi said music today requires a responsible approach and serious dialogue with society, stressing that the Fajr Music Festival can and should serve as one of the central platforms for such dialogue.

"Music is not merely the art of

sound, but the auditory memory of a nation," Salehi wrote.

He noted that over more than four decades, the festival has sought to provide a platform in which tradition and innovation are not in opposition but find meaning through dialogue, allowing different generations of Iranian music to be seen and heard.

Salehi emphasized that now more than ever, music needs a responsible perspective, conscious support, and meaningful engagement with society, an approach that views music not as a decorative margin, but as an integral part of the country's cultural life and social capital.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the director general of the Music Office at the Ministry of Culture highlighted the unifying role of the festival, saying that the works and programs of the 41st edition have been designed around the theme of national unity.

He expressed hope that the Fajr Music Festival would contribute

to strengthening national cohesion and to a more effective role for people and artists in the country's path toward development and progress.

Arash Amini, secretary of the 41st Fajr Music Festival, addressed the structural changes introduced this year, including the removal of the competitive section. He explained that competitions should be separated from festivals as they detract from a focus on deep, authentic, and high-quality music.

"The Fajr Music Festival should be the place for the best—both talented young artists and experienced, professional musicians," he said. "I do not believe it is right to judge and rank these figures. Each of these artists is number one in their own field."

The 41st Fajr International Music Festival is being held by the Iran Music Association with the support of the Music Affairs Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance February 9-15. The event features six main sections, namely Iranian

music, choirs or choral groups, performances by children and youth groups, fusion music and pop genres, classical music, and the music of Iran's ethnic groups and regions.

The first day of the festival began with a performance in the children and youth music section, followed by additional performances in the youth and regional music categories.

In parallel, a specialized session titled "The Link Between Toys and Music in the Development of Children's Skills" was held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, with the participation of experts and specialists in the field.

Performances will continue in the coming days and according to the published schedule at various venues across Tehran, covering regional, classical, Iranian traditional, and pop music.



Official poster of the 41st Fajr International Music Festival
● IRNA



Isfahan to host 27th International Storytelling Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The 27th International Storytelling Festival, organized by the Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (CIDCA), will be held in the central city of Isfahan from February 13-15.

The opening ceremony of the cultural event is scheduled to be held at the historic Chaharbagh street, one of Isfahan's most prominent public and cultural spaces.

A total of 61 storytellers will compete for the festival's top honor across nine categories: Classic, Storytelling with Props, Sacrifice and Heroes, Religious, Sign Language, Narrative Poetry, New Stories, Ritual-Traditional, and Winners of the Previous Year.

Hamed Alamati, president of the festival, has outlined the festival's overarching policies, emphasizing the need to broaden and popularize storytelling among the general public, expand storytelling education, and pay special attention to families and adolescents in both the practice and promotion of storytelling.

He has also highlighted the extensive use of media to make storytelling more accessible and people-centered, as well as the mobilization of all capacities of the CIDCA in support of the national storytelling movement.

Storytelling in Iran is regarded as a living and dynamic heritage, deeply rooted in the country's long history and rich cultural traditions. Its most renowned and elevated form is "Naqqali", the dramatic narration of epic tales from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and other stories of Iranian kings and



heroes, traditionally performed in coffeehouses and public gatherings. This art form has been registered by UNESCO as an element of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Religious storytelling, which recounts episodes from the lives of the religious figures through emotive and dramatic narration, also represents a powerful example of storytelling with ritual and social functions in Iran. In addition, folktales and fairy tales were historically shared in streets and marketplaces, forming an integral part of everyday communal life. Iranian storytelling is closely intertwined with poetry, music, theatre, and visual arts, with improvisation playing a central role. Storytellers traditionally adapted their narratives to the audience, setting, and moment, using improvisation to keep stories vivid, relevant, and alive.

Stork conservation site in southern Tehran revives historic symbol of Rey

Social Desk

A stork conservation site has been inaugurated in the city of Rey, south of Tehran, setting the stage for the gradual return of the migratory birds to their historic habitat, IRNA reported.

Storks lived for more than 150 years across the plains and rooftops of Rey, and in local historical sources the bird is described as a symbol of wisdom and tranquility. However, rapid urban development and changes to natural habitats led to a sharp decline in their presence in recent decades. Officials say the construction of an artificial habitat has now created the conditions for their gradual return.

As part of the project, 20 live storks, both black and white species with red beaks, are being transferred from Marivan, a region with a long-standing history of stork populations, to Rey. Specially designed nests have also been installed to enable the birds to mate and build nests during their seasonal return, which typically occurs between February and September.

Migratory birds usually pass through Iran and, after breeding, migrate southward in autumn toward regions closer to



the equator.

Environmental experts in Rey County have described the launch of the stork site as an important step toward preserving the natural heritage and biodiversity of the historic city. They believe storks can once again become part of Rey's bio-cultural identity and help attract enthusiasts, researchers, and tourists.

According to Ali Mortazavi, head of green space management at Tehran's local municipal department, the site covers an area of about one hectare and, in terms of design and facilities, is considered one of the most comprehensive and practical examples of urban birdwatching infrastructure.

Mortazavi said the city lies along the migratory routes of many bird species, including storks, and that the establishment of the site can help attract and temporarily host these

birds during specific seasons. To this end, birdwatching, research, and educational sections have been incorporated into the site's design, allowing citizens, students, and enthusiasts to learn scientific methods of observing and studying birds while visiting the area. He added that the complex includes facilities such as a pigeon tower, a research room, a designated stork habitat hall, and a specialized birdwatching platform. To facilitate public use, amenities including restrooms, a conference room, and monitoring equipment for studying bird species passing through the region have also been provided. Mortazavi noted that the primary approach to landscape design has focused on fruit-bearing and native plant species which provide food sources for birds.

Two ecological ponds have been incorporated into the site's design, according to Mortazavi, one with continuous water circulation to help moderate the air, and another designed specifically for aquatic habitats.

"Our aim," Mortazavi said, "is for Rey to benefit not only from recreational and cultural spaces, but also to become a center for environmental studies and citizen education in birdwatching and environmentally responsible behavior."



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