EHSAN SABOOHI

CONCERTO FOR SOLO ACTRESS

THE LEGEND OF YUSH’S POET

Based on the poem “Afsaneh”

by Nima Yushij
Overture

The Concerto for Solo Actress is a faithful narration based on the poem “Afsaneh” (The Legend) by Nima Yushij. I left Tehran for two years in order to write “The Legend of Yush’s Poet”. For this purpose, what place could be better than the homeland of Nima, the father of modern Iranian poetry and whose poem “The Legend” poem charmed me?

I took up residence in the village of Khesht Sar, in the Central District of Mahmudabad County, Mazandaran Province, Iran, and in close proximity to the birthplace of Nima – Yush. Whenever I was going to the city, I saw a large board at the entrance of the city that had been written on it: “Welcome to Nima Yushij’s Birthplace”.

Indeed, Yush and Mazandaran are Nima, and Nima is the pristine nature of the North of Iran. My new home was near the Caspian Sea, which Nima describes it like this: “Your lips were smiling in that wave”. The only music that filled my mind in those two years were the sounds of nature and silence. In this silence, I had the opportunity to think about one thing every day and every hour! Who is the legend? What shape is she? How is her singing? How bitter is her bitterness? And how long is her way?

The performance of this work certainly has the result of cooperating with a sympathetic and committed group that I should be very grateful to all of them. Those who were with me at eleven nights’ live performance of this work and then at all stages of recording, producing, and preparing the audio and video version.

As far as I know, The Legend of Yush’s Poet is the first concerto that written for an actress. However, I am responsible for all the errors ahead. But at the same time, I present the premiere of this work to all members of the group and Ghazal Naeemi, who practiced hardly and tirelessly for almost seven months. I am grateful to my sophisticated and kind-hearted friend, Ramin Dargahi, who translated all the texts into English. I am grateful to my dear wife, Lena Koocheri, who has strongly supported me all this time. Also, I thank Mohammad Mousavi and Bruce Hamilton, who helped me to produce this work.

My greatest hope and desire during the making of this project and upon the release of its audio and video albums is that Nima Yushij, a well-known poet of Iran, is watching our work and smiling on what we have done – like a wave that smiles on the sea and caresses us slowly!

- Ehsan Saboohi
Tehran 2017
Nima Yushij (November 12, 1895 – January 6, 1960), also called Nima, born Ali Esfandiari, was a contemporary Persian poet who started the new poetry also known as Nimaic poetry trend in Iran. He is considered as the father of modern Persian poetry. He died of pneumonia in Shemiran, in the northern part of Tehran and was buried in his native village of Yush, Nur County, Mazandaran, as he had willed. He was the eldest son of Ibrahim Nuri of Yush (a village in Baladeh, Nur County, Mazandaran province of Iran). He was a Tabarian but had also Georgian roots. He grew up in Yush, mostly helping his father with the farm and taking care of the cattle. As a boy, he visited many local summer and winter camps and mingled with shepherds and itinerant workers. Images of life around the campfire, especially those emerging from the shepherds’ simple and entertaining stories about village and tribal conflicts, impressed him greatly. These images, etched in the young poet’s memory waited until his power of diction developed sufficiently to release them.

Nima’s early education took place in a maktab – an elementary school for teaching children in reading, writing, grammar and Islamic studies. He was a truant student and the mullah (teacher) often had to seek him out in the streets, drag him to school, and punish him. At the age of twelve, Nima was taken to Tehran and registered at the St. Louis School. The atmosphere at the Roman Catholic school did not change Nima’s ways, but the instructions of a thoughtful teacher did. Nezam Vafa, a major poet himself, took the budding poet under his wing and nurtured his poetic talent. [1]

Nima in his biography writes: “My early life was spent among herdsmen and horse breeders, who in search of meadows, migrate between distant summering and wintering grounds, and at night get together for long hours around the campfire in the mountains. In the year, that I came to the city, my close relatives forced me and my younger brother, Ladbon, into a Catholic school. At that time this school in Tehran was known as The Higher School of St. Louis. My education started here. The first years of my life in school were passed wrangling with kids. The fact that I was withdrawn and shy, peculiar to children raised outside of town, made me subject to mockery at school. My art consisted of making a good jump and escaping from the school grounds with my friend Hosein Pezhman [who would later become a new-classical poet]. I did not do well at school. Only my grades in art [drawing and painting] helped me, but later on at school the care and encouragement of a good-tempered teacher, today’s famous poet Nezam Vafa, thrust me into writing poetry.” [2]

Instruction at the Catholic school was in direct contrast to instruction at the maktab. Similarly, living among the urban people was at variance with life among the tribal and rural peoples of the north. In addition, both these lifestyles differed greatly from the description of the lifestyle about which he read in
his books or listened to in class. Although it did not change his attachment to tradition, the difference set fire to young Nima’s imagination. In other words, even though Nima continued to write poetry in the tradition of Sa’adi and Hafez for quite some time his expression was being affected gradually and steadily. [1] Eventually, the impact of the new overpowered the tenacity of tradition and led Nima down a new path. Consequently, Nima began to replace the familiar devices that he felt were impeding the free flow of ideas with innovative, even though less familiar devices that enhanced a free flow of concepts. “Ay Shab” (O Night) and “Afsaneh” (The Legend) belong to this transitional period in the poet’s life (1922). [1]

Nima Yushij was the first to propose a radical renewal of Persian poetry, not only of its contents but also of its prosody and imagery, but he found the opposing forces of tradition to be very strong. His earliest poems, influenced by French Romanticism and Symbolism, appeared in the 1920s. But it was not until the 1940s that his ideas were adopted by a young generation of poets who went on to create a “new poetry” in Iran. [3]

Toward the end of the 18th century various influences, including contact with the West, started to bring about change in Persian literature. Since World War II, poetry has gained a new vitality. Some modern poets, following Nima Yushij as their model, broke from tradition and experimented in blank verse. [4]

What made Nima Yushij a great, powerful guru for the young poets of his time were his innovations in form and style rather than the content of his poetry. In this way Persian Poetry, while maintaining its own independence, gained after a thousand years the unbounded freedom of prose. This was the real achievement of Nima Yushij and the reason for his being acclaimed as the founder, or the father, of modern Persian poetry. [5]

Portrait of Ehsan Sabooohi | Photo by Hossein Jandaghi
Ehsan Saboohi (1981 - Tehran, Iran)

Education:
Master of Music in Composition (Contemporary Music), The Tehran University of Art (2009).
Music Diploma in Iranian Traditional Music (Santour & Tombak Performance), The Sooreh Conservatory (1999).

Recordings & Publications:
Phonemes Requiem (for four Soloists, mixed Chorus, Didgeridoo, prepared Tombak, Electronics, Computer) Tehran, Mahoor Institute of Culture and Art, 2016.
Chaos in the Cosmos (Electronic & Electroacoustic works), USA, Spectropol Records, 2014.
Ear 5/ Goosh 5 (Various Artists), Sonata for Clarinet (Farewell), Tehran, Maahriz Recordings, 2012.
Portrait of Ghazal Naeemi | Photo by Hossein Jandaghi
**Ghazal Naeemi** (1988 - Rasht, Iran)

**Education:**
PhD student in Art Researching, The University of Tehran (2016)

**A Selection of Directing Works:**

**A Selection of Acting Works:**

**Awards:**
First Prize Winner of Directing, The 22th Mah National Theater Festival (2013)
Third Prize Winner of Directing, The 14th Tajrobeh National Theater Festival (2012)
First Prize Winner of Light Design, The 14th Tajrobeh National Theater Festival (2012)
Second Prize Winner of Scene Design, The 14th Tajrobeh National Theater Festival (2012)
Second Prize Winner of Acting, The 3rd Toranj National Theatre Festival (2010)
Prize Winner of Stage Reading, The 1st Mah Provincial Festival (2007)
The Legend

Synopsis

Narrator:
In a dark night, a frenzied he who has fallen in love with an elusive hue, is sitting in a cold and secluded vale, like a withered plant, and tells a gloomy tale. In this all too turbulence, there is story of livestock and grain. And he has spoken of everything, but what is unsaid is the message of lovelorn. The story of pain:

Lover:
– “O my heart, my heart, my heart! Poor, distressed, my deserved! O my poor heart! why you fell by the way of salvation?
O my heart! you could save yourself if the times did not deceive you. You are only a victim of yourself. Every time you find a way and a reason to fight with me, O mad!”

Narrator:
And make a friend of the “Legend” with compassion and inebriation.
All flee from her, but you are both compatible. She will not find any enamored better than you.

Legend:
An enamored who has not seen anyone like him in this slippery slope. Ah! For long this story is said: A bird has flown from branches, only its nest remains. But these nests are all captured by the winds. The followers are on this path and in this sorrow sing dolefully… He was one of the followers.

Narrator:
You were depressed for years in this ruined cave and under the heavens and stars, and
to relieve the pain of what happened to the broken heart he kissed you and you her...

Lover:
We were depressed for years, like failures. But the turbulent wave had a story about you. Your lips were smiling in that wave.

Legend:
I saw on that turbulent wave a hectic lone rider.

Narrator:
But!

Lover:
I encountered a rosy-cheeked with curly tresses like a mystery, an angry whirlwind. O Legend! Are you my destiny that you are so distressed and confidant? Are you my heart full of agitation or my tearfully eyes? Are you cursed Satan? Are you my heart full of struggles that you are so anonymous and obscure? Are you my substance that you are not looking for prosperity and reputation? Are you my fortunes that you run away from me? Everyone drive you away, unaware of the fact that you’re immortal. Who are you? O driven from everywhere! Have you ever been friendly with me? Are you tear or sorrow? O Legend! Tell! Answer me!

Legend:
No longer ask! O afflicted! My heart bled from your words. I believed you are drunk by sorrow. Anyone who’s sorrowful, has many sayings. O lover! You know me well: I am a wanderer of the heavens. I am a veteran being, a defendant of enamored forlorn. The old mother scares the children stiff by me in a dark night. I am an unfinished tale.

Lover:
Are you a tale?
Legend:
Yea! Yea! I am a tale of a restless lover, a hopeless full of disquietude that who lived in grief and vigil for many years in sadness and isolation. I have been once a lass. I have been a dear sweetheart. With eyes full of riot, I have been a lone charmer. I came and sat on a grave… in one hand my handmade lyre and in the other one a chalice. Before I play a pleasing ballad, my black eyes opened and I wept blood.

Narrator:
At that moment, the face of the bloody cloud was dark on the horizon. A loud conversation ensued between the terrain and the heaven. The smoke went up from the roof... What the people's muddy hands was making in those mountains? But alas! from that moment, the residents no longer earned. Years passed… A fleeing deer ate all the leaves of one branch… Other voices were heard…

Lover:
O Legend! The thorns are those who have closed the road to the rose garden. The thorns do not turn a hair against a storm, but the flowers do not endure a wind. Do not hide your words… Say what is in your heart in your own words – even if nobody likes that. Of course, you can conceal your secrets from the people, but to keep silent for fear of get yourself talked about is a flaw for an ingenious person. The heartbroken do this, not one who wants to be reputed; even if one does not count on him. In this burning world, we shall pour out our heart: Who was in those other huts?

Narrator:
The night was dark and silent… A severe and cold wind was blowing. There was a flame inside the hut. Suddenly a girl came out of the hut and as she was ululating like an owl said: O my heart, my heart, my heart!

Legend:
She sighed and fell in his mother’s arms and became cold. What really humbled this enamored girl? A fatal love. I am Love! I am purpose of life! I am the world lighting! I,
the Legend, am the heart of lovers! If there is a body and a soul, it is me! born of love and child of tear. What happened previously one day it was like the fountain of life, just like today. That’s the whole point: seize the opportunity. The treasure is at home, but the heart is distressed. What for? Is not the lawn charming? Do not complain. Get up and see how the winter was over.

**Narrator:**
The forest and the mountain are reviving. The world came out of darkness, unveiled his face, and laughed like a lightning. The snow melted. The mountain peak was completely pied. The shepherd came out of the cellar and smiled happily, because it’s time to graze.

**Legend:**
O lover! Get up because it is springtide. A small fountain gushed from the mountain. The flowers grew in desert like fire. The dark stream flowed like a storm. The plain is colorful with flowers. That bird is building a nest, twittering on the branches, and gathering thorns. The green branches germinate at any moment.

**Lover:**
Ah the Legend! let me alone. All of this is a deception. My heart is deprived of joy. What an illusion is perception and enthusiasm and rejoicing! The unaware is glad and the aware is sad. Nothing makes me happy and smiling. I have given everything to the fairground in exchange for buying a lost happy day. O alas! Alas! Alas! All seasons are dark for me. As far as I remember, my past have always been full of perplexity and unpleasantness. An anonymous ravished my heart and then suddenly he got lost. I am still attached to him…

**Narrator:**
The wind wails in the hills. Now, the fox howls. It seems that the mountains and forests are the arena of foxes. The birds have slept on the trees…
Lover:
Ah the Legend! It has tired of the world, closed his eyes, and fallen asleep. It is immersed in another illusion. O Legend! Leave me! Leave me alone! I do not want to ask my fortune a thousand questions: How did the roses blossom? What happened? What complaint does it have now? And how the winds faded it? Everything I’ve seen has been a dream to me like milking the ram. Was love like a delirium, or a crapulence, for me? O my companion! What tumult was that?

Narrator:
The flame had been burning until the dawn. The severe wind was blowing. It seems that some have gone in that narrow abyss, and some remain under the wall of cedars and boxes. The shape of the wall is heavy and silent. The mountain peak fell in. The cuckoo lost his nest. The thrush remained on the ruins, and forgot his mate…

Legend:
O lover! Were these really your words? So many things can be said. You can cast doubt on the whole lot. You can keep silent like night. You can be obedient like servant. But love is flying night and day, intellect is involved in mystery every day, and the man is in this fray. But there is not a thing except this: We are partners of each other. Whatever we do, the people see it as it is. Now, get up and walk in this way, because we do not know about the dead. The only thing that remains of us is the positive and negative roles that we play in the story of life. You want me and I want you. So what is this vainglory, jest, and arrogance? Are you ragging on me?

Lover:
O Legend! I am not looking for someone else’s love… I am born in the mountains. The clouds have brought me. It’s better for me to be in the grasslands with the spring that embrace me. I do not want anyone to conquer my heart, because it is the nest of somebody else. Although my nest is desolate, but I imagine it is full. I am delighted with the imagination.
Legend:
Ah, love! I am more delusive than any other deception. I am older than any lie. I am driven by the sages and admired by you that living in the solitude of mountain. There is only one truth: Be what you ought to be! It is a deception to find own way at any rate: blindfolded and entangled. We are what we are.

Lover:
Ah, Legend! You are right! If we make a mistake, it’s our fault. Once upon a time, if there was an opportunity, we would be more than happy with each other. We will be sympathetic, consentient, and congruous. You are a lie, a pleasant lie. You are a sadness, a very beautiful sadness. There is no demand for my love and heart. I leave them to you so that you leave yourself to me.

Narrator:
Ah, lie! sadness! good and evil, you! Who said you got up? Who said you walk this way, like a flower on the branches, like a moonlight in the garden? Ah, the heart of lovers! the Legend! O you who played thousands of roles for the time! O you who played thousands of immortal songs! O you who kissed the lovers more and more! Hide me behind the clouds so none but an angle hears my voice in the heavens, and so none reads these words but a lamenting lover. Shed my teardrops on her cheeks. Put my groans in her heart. Settle my wandering soul into somewhere that come wail and fire out from the hearts. Lo! Come forth from this narrow vale, for it is the Shepard’s best resting place, for no one knows the way here. So here, where everything is alone, we may sing together in our melancholy…

Translated into English by
Ramin Dargahi
Dec. 2017
Concerto for Solo Actress (2015-2017)
(The Legend of Yush’s Poet)
Based on the poem “Afsaneh” by Nima Yushij

Designer, Stage Director, and Composer: Ehsan Saboohi
Actress: Ghazal Naeemi
Assistant Stage Director: Afsaneh Rezaee
Costume Designer and Maker: Aida Sadeghi
Video & Lighting Designer: Hossein Jandaghi (Feel Group)
Makeup Artist: Aida Farshadi
Set Designer: Mojtaba Keshavarz
Cover Photographer: Pegah Ghadiri
Graphic Designer: Amir Norouzkhani
Mastering Engineer: Reza Assadpour
English Translator: Ramin Dargahi

Producers: Mahoor Institute of Culture and Arts, Ehsan Saboohi, Spectropol Records
• The Stage production was made possible by Mahoor Institute of Culture and Arts.
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By Ehsan Saboohi

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(The Legend of Yush's Poet)
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Assistant Stage Director: Afsane Rezaee
Costume Designer and Maker: Aida Sadeghi
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