



Works of Iranian composer to echo in St. Petersburg

Tehran Times Art Desk

TEHRAN — Pieces created by the Iranian composer and ethnomusicologist Mehdi Hosseini will be played during two separate performances in St. Petersburg in this coming April and May.

His composition, based on the music of the northwestern Iranian Taleshi tribesmen, will be performed at the Chamber hall of the Saint-Petersburg State Conservatory, Russia on April 8.

Entitled "Taleshi Hava", the composition will be performed with a solo violin and bassoon in the second part of the performance in memory of the Italian composer Luigi Nono.

The Saint-Petersburg State Philharmonic Hall will host the World premiere of the Concerto for String Quartet and Chamber

Orchestra by Mehdi Hosseini on May 23.

Conducted by the American musician Brad Cawyer, the Saint-Petersburg State Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra will perform it.

The world premiere of this concerto, which utilizes folk music material from the area surrounding the ancient city of Torbat-e Jam in Iran, is dedicated to Nigel Osborne, mentor to Hosseini.

Following the performance, the St. Petersburg State Philharmonic Orchestra will be recording for Hosseini's next compact disk, which will include the Concerto for String Quartet and will be released in Iran.

Born in 1979 in Tehran, Mehdi Hosseini studied music theory, Persian music and composition with Master Farhad Fakhredini.



Mehdi Hosseini

He later completed his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Composition at the Saint Petersburg State Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Apart from his education in Russia, Hosseini has also been a student of the composer Nigel Osborne. He has demonstrated his creative capabilities as a composer and his

research abilities as an ethnomusicologist and theorist.

Hosseini has written symphonic music and chamber orchestra pieces for ensembles and soloists in various compositional genres. At its core, his music reflects his on-going research into the astonishing variety of Persian regional folk music.

Leili and Majnun now available in Spanish

Tehran Times Culture Desk

TEHRAN — Leili and Majnun (Leyli y Majnun), a chapter of "Khamseh" ("The Quintuplet") composed by the Iranian romantic epic poet Nezami Ganjavi (c. 1141-1209 CE), has recently been published in Spanish in Salamanca.

The collection has been translated by Mahmmad Kangarani, a Ph.D. student at the University of Salamanca, and the Ediciones Sigueme, a Spanish-language publishing house has printed the work, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Saturday.

Permanent Associate Professor of the University of Salamanca Alberto Cantera Glera has written an introduction to the translation.



Leili and Majnun is one of chapters of "Khamseh", which is a pentology of poems written in Masnavi verse form (rhymed couplets).

"Khamseh" also includes the didactic work Makhzan ol-Asrar (The Treasury of Mysteries), traditional love stories of Khosrow and Shirin and Haft Paykar, and the Eskandar-nameh, which records the adventures of Alexander the Great.

Iran plans to propose two versions of the book, which will be kept at the Central Library of the University of Tehran and the library of the Shahid Motahari School and Mosque in Tehran, for registration on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list.

Berlin museum hosts Aga Khan's Islamic treasures

BERLIN (AP) — More than 200 items from the Aga Khan's collection of Islamic treasures are in a Berlin exhibition spanning a millennium and covering half the globe.

A chestnut leaf delicately inscribed with golden calligraphy greets visitors at the start of the show of works collected by the billionaire philanthropist and illustrating the breadth of Islamic culture.

Dating to the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, it's one of the newest pieces on display at the Martin Gropius Bau gallery. Exhibits date back as far as a green-glazed pilgrim's flask from the seventh or eighth century.

Organizers hope "to present to our Western public the pluralism of the Islamic cultures," said Luis Monreal, the managing director of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

"We in general view Islam as a single

cultural identity, and this is simply a wrong perception, because Islam over 13 centuries has been a religion practiced by a great diversity of people," he said.

From the western end of the Islamic world, the exhibit showcases artifacts such as an inlaid scribe's cabinet and an astrolabe from "al-Andalus," the area of Spain ruled by the Moors until 1492. It also includes pages from the "blue Quran," inscribed in gold on blue-dyed parchment, from North Africa.

From the other end, an 18th-century Quran from India inscribed in tiny lettering on green cloth occupies part of a wall, contrasting with a geometrically styled edition of the Quran from the Indonesian island of Sulawesi.

The exhibit also includes 19th-century Chinese pilgrim Ma Fuchu's illustrated

report on his pilgrimage to Mecca; a well-preserved Mongol robe from the 13th or 14th century; and illustrations of the epic Persian poem Shahnameh (Book of Kings).

Organizers sought to highlight the importance of the written word and the Quran, while also following the routes of travelers, both those making the pilgrimage to Mecca and adventurers and explorers, curator Benoit Junod said.

The show, titled "Treasures of the Aga Khan Museum — Masterpieces of Islamic Art," continues through June 6.

The Aga Khan is spiritual leader of 20 million Shia Ismaili Muslims. The exhibition includes 215 items out of a collection totaling roughly 1,000 pieces, whose permanent home in Toronto should be ready in mid-2013.

Iranian painting of Saint Mary surprises Lebanese

Tehran Times Art Desk

TEHRAN — Iranian veteran Hossein Nuri surprised Lebanese Christians with his painting of Saint Mary.

What was amazing for them was the way the artist has created his artwork.

Nuri, 56, began his cultural campaign against the Shah's regime during his adulthood, and was arrested by SAVAK (the National Intelligence and Security Organization which was the domestic security and intelligence service established by Iran's Shah.)

He was severely tortured during his detention in prison which led to spinal cord injury. His arms and legs lost their sense of feeling and he had to grapple with the pain he suffered in his kidneys, lungs and larynx.

But, he picked up the paintbrush in his mouth with his teeth and began to paint with the help of his wife Nadia Maftuni.

His exhibit, running from March 17 to April 4 in different spots in Beirut, was warmly received by artists, students of art, and especially the Christians.

"My exhibits in Lebanon attracted more visitors compared to other countries like France, Germany, Algeria and China," Nuri who was pleased with his exhibit in Lebanon told the Persian service of IRNA.

"They liked the tableau of Saint Mary I had painted in response to the anti-Islamic Danish cartoon," he remarked.

Nuri created the painting in a few days in front of the Denmark Embassy in Tehran with his brush in his mouth, surprising visitors.

Bob Dylan cancels Asia tour after Beijing rejection: report

HONG KONG (AFP) — Bob Dylan has cancelled several legs of an Asian tour after Beijing refused to give him permission to perform in China, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Dylan originally planned to play in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, following his multi-city tour of Japan last month, the Sunday Morning Post said.

Tour organizers, Taiwan-based Brokers Brothers Herald, announced in January that Dylan would be performing in Hong Kong on April 8, but there was little subsequent promotion, the report said.

When permission for dates in Shanghai and Beijing was not granted by the Chinese government, the company pulled the other Asian dates.

"China's Ministry of Culture did not give us permission to stage concerts in Beijing and Shanghai, so we had no alternative but to scrap plans for a Southeast Asian tour," Jeffrey Wu, the promoter's chief of operations, was quoted as saying.

"The chance to play in China was the main attraction for him. When that fell through everything else was called off."

Telephone calls to the ministry by AFP went unanswered on Sunday.

Wu said the ministry had tightened control over foreign singers performing in China since Icelandic star Bjork's pro-Tibet outburst at a Shanghai concert two years ago.

"Kumar" goes from White House back to Hollywood

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — Nine months after leaving Hollywood for the White House, the actor Kal Penn is returning to Tinseltown to reprise his most famous role, as the marijuana-loving "Kumar" in the raucous "Harold and Kumar" feature film comedies.

As Kalpen Modi — Kal Penn is his stage name — the 32-year-old actor has been working in the Obama White House since July as an associate director of public engagement.

The magazine "Entertainment Weekly" reported on its website on Friday that Penn was leaving to make a new Harold and Kumar movie, this one with a Christmas theme, which might be shot in 3-D.

Penn, who had campaigned for President Barack Obama, took a big pay cut to work in his administration after starring in "Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle" and "Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay" and playing a leading role on the medical-mystery television drama "House."

The writers of "House" cleared Penn's schedule to take his new job in Washington by having his character abruptly commit suicide last year.

One of the few Indian-American actors to make it big in Hollywood, Penn has said he was inspired to get involved in politics partly by his grandparents, who marched with Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian independence movement.

The Washington Post reported on Saturday that the White House was declining comment, saying Modi "has no announcements to make about his tenure here at this point."

Swiss bring manga, anime, video-games characters to life

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AFP) — Colleagues at the factory where Michel Parchet works may not quite imagine him as a ninja. But on Saturday, the 27-year-old put on a yellow spiky wig and an orange tunic, turning himself into the manga character Naruto.

Parchet was among hundreds of others who were cosplaying — dressed up in costumes and role-playing — at western Switzerland's anime, manga and video games festival Polymanga.

"It's really just for fun," said Parchet, who had turned up with 24-year-old Denis Fontannaz, also dressed as a character in the same manga series that features the young ninja Naruto.

The two apparently looked their part, as they were repeatedly asked to be photographed by others attending the three-day festival, now in its sixth year, which celebrates Japanese contemporary culture.

While it started with just 6,000 enthusiasts, organizers are expecting this year to pull in 16,000 people, ranging from children to adults in their thirties.

Beyond the vendors peddling the latest mangas, screenings of animes and interviews with guests such as the creator of popular manga Kenichi, Syun Matsuena, what is perhaps the highlight of the event is the cosplay competition.

Saturday's competition was jampacked with visitors, many of whom stood along the aisles for over two hours, to see participants of the contest bring to life their favorite manga, anime or video game characters.

"Solitude", "Offering" share best animation award at U.S. festival

Tehran Times Art Desk

TEHRAN — Iran's "Solitude" by Mehrdad Sheikhan shares the Best Short Animation Award with Michael Z. Huber's "The Offering" from the United States at the Tiburon International Film Festival.

The festival, which was held from March 18 at 26 in Tiburon, north of San Francisco, presents the best of each category with the "Golden Reel Awards".

The winners of the Golden Reel Awards were announced during a formal ceremony on March 26 in Tiburon, with many filmmakers, local guests, and dignitaries present.

"Solitude" tells the story of a stone colossus that has lived a lonely life on its barren planet for thousands of years. Worn out by solitude, it decides to change its fate.

Hossein Alizadeh composed the music and Behruz Shahamat made the sound effects for the animation, which has won several awards in Iranian and foreign events.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

* Tehran's Aan Gallery is holding a group exhibition of paintings arranged by Fereidun Av.

The exhibit runs until April 16 at the gallery located at No.40 Seoul St. off Vanak Sq.

* An exhibition of paintings by Karan Rashad is to open at the Seyhun Gallery on April 9.

The exhibit will run through April 21 at the gallery located at No. 30 Fourth Alley, off Vozara St.

* Mohsen Gallery will be holding an exhibition of paintings. Works by several artists including Fereidun Mamebeigi, Mohammad Eskandari, Hamidreza Jadid, Mehdi Hosseini will be put on display on April 9.

The exhibit will run through April 21 at the gallery located on Naji St., near Farzan St., off East Mina Blvd. in the Zafar neighborhood.

* The Dey Gallery will be hosting an exhibition by Jaleh Talebpour opening on April 9.

The exhibit will continue until April 15 at the gallery located on 1st Naz Alley, 4th Tangestan, Pasdaran Ave.

* An exhibition of paintings by Afshin Zardin will open on April 23 at the Golestan Gallery.

The exhibit will continue until April 29 at the gallery located at 42, Kamasaii St., in the Darrus neighborhood.

* The Kamaledin Behzad Gallery is holding an exhibition of 3D calligraphic paintings by Habibollah Ajdari.

The exhibit will continue until April 15 at the gallery located on Shanzdah-e Azar St. at the intersection with Keshavarz Blvd.