

A discussion with Jamileh Kharrazi in connection with another exceptional programme by “The Toos Foundation”

Poetry, Dance and Lyrics In the land of Harp and Mandolins

The Toos foundation whose several outstanding arts and culture programmes have appeared on the scene; creating a warm reception by the music and arts enthusiasts, once more has prepared another outstanding programme which will be shown on Sunday the 24th October 2010, in Logan Hall.

The programme’s title will be: “Poetry, Dance, and Lyrics in the land of Harp and Mandolins” thus, as the title clearly presents it entails collections of dances and lyrics from various districts of Iran; and as the coordinators say: it is a journey into the ever green fields of Mazandaran and the hot-t hirsty sandy regions of Baluchestan. Although the foundation had set tickets for this particular programme, yet still, Logan Hall was full and some people were left out.



We have conducted an interview with Ms. Jamileh Kharrazi regarding this programme. Ms. Kharrazi, who is the founder of the Toos foundation, has always been active in promoting and introducing the arts and culture of Iran to the Iranian youth and non-Iranians.

- **Ms. Kharrazi, the reception of the programme once again was extraordinary; how do you evaluate the event?**

The Iranian nature is to always be proud of its rich culture and I too, am no exception. The intention of the programme was to introduce the audience with historic and traditional facts and customs of various Iranian provinces and to familiarise the enthusiasts with dance and ritual costumes of the selected provinces of Iran. In its attempt in so doing, the programme was blended with short explanations and historical facts, which were displayed through slides in coordination with the dances and geographical

displays. We had done an extensive research through books, CDs, various Iranian schools and many other sources to present a factual statement about different musical instruments currently employed in Persian classical and provincial music. We also benefited from Mr. Khushnam’s 50 years knowledge of the music, so it would be safe to estimate the preparation time around eight months in total. However, I must add that still, we were the subject of many unkind and unfair criticism by many newspapers both from home and abroad; critical views with no credible background or sources.

It would be a more reliable statement if you asked the success of the programme from those who were present at the Hall; I believe their statement would speak for itself.

- **Programmes such as these, seem to present a mixture of Iranian dances and the western ballet, which makes it difficult for the ordinary audience to understand. What can you tell us in that aspect, how could one view these programmes?**



As you are well aware this programme was about the provincial dances in Iran, and it had no connection with any other culture and customs other than that of Iran. Therefore, it couldn't have been mixed with any other music and tradition except that of Iran and the chosen provinces. The musical instruments that were introduced are still very primitive and only used in some parts of Iran; thus independent of and western influence or any other part of the globe for that matter. For example, the music we introduced from Khuzestan was produced by a very primitive instrument; hence producing an irritating noise. We also had some critical statements accusing us of introducing the Spanish music instead of the music from Khuzestan, blaming us for confusing the audience.

The traditional body building dances of Iran was based on an imaginary fantasy; and in the painting part we tried to display the works of the Iranian Master painter, Mahmud Farshchiyan, blending them with ballet movement which was something quite new in its class.

- **To coordinate and exercise dances of different provinces is not a hard task. However, to attempt to coordinate such dances with accurate research and backed by relevant historic and cultural statement is something extraordinary, please tell us what points and details have were taken into account in that respect?**

Some of our dear friends and in particular the media and newspapers lack adequate knowledge about the problems involved in putting a programme on stage; therefore, all their talent and expertise are spent on criticism. We are a small cultural foundation with limited budget; trying to do what the ministries and governmental organizations are supposed to do. Naturally, our programmes won't suit those who are not into research and learning and are

only after entertainment. However, we have tried in the past to bring all the famous and prominent Iranian figures from around the world; surely you must appreciate the difficulties we face in so doing. Problems such as obtaining visa, accommodations, translations and many other obstacles, which involve hefty expenditure; time and effort, but all these are only borne purely for the purpose of love of Iran. Is there a love simpler and purer than this? Let us learn from the British newspapers that finally transmitted the message: "Iran benefits from an amazingly rich culture." Let us be happy and thankful for the support of those audiences who travel from other cities and countries to spend a night with us.

- **To choose proper custom dresses for each province of Iran requires an accurate research and hard work. Please tell us what efforts were made in that area and which artists assisted you?**

All the clothes and dresses that you saw on the stage were chosen from the works of Mr. Du Warren, who spent 11 years of his life in Iran; gathering the largest archive of the institute of folkloric by constantly travelling to every corner of the country for research and collecting information. Therefore, those designs weren't new. However, in creating some Mr. Du Warren and I were involved.

- **Finally, the design and coordination of the dances require research and study. Please tell us about that.**

Ms. Kaboli has been a famous dancer and one of the top students of Mr. Du Warren, and fortunately, with her help we managed to put on stage the provincial dances of Iran. The design of the new fantasy which was presented on stage was something completely new, produced by me.