

A discussion with Miss. Kharrazi the founder of the Toos Foundation

Our cultural heritage must be more appreciated world wide



It was not foreseeable that one day a young, beautiful, happy, and energetic girl who was born in Iran, and had started dancing from the age of 5 could read poetry and sing with a beautiful voice. A girl who joined the choir and ballet group of the Ministry of arts and Culture would become the founder and

director of the Toos Foundation. We are talking about Mrs. Jamileh Kharrazi, that young girl has now become a lady, in love with Iran, mature with time but still very beautiful. She speaks in an articulated manner and has a great sense of humor. She has studied business and architecture. Her excellent taste and skills are evident in her house and office that are structured and designed by herself. Her aim with the Toos Foundation has been obvious from the start. She intends to promote the Iranian arts and culture and make it recognizable to the world; with her first two programmes, she has already made an excellent start.

When she accepts organizing a programme, the standard is usually well beyond any other event. When we ask her to explain the reason? In a short sentence, she replies

“Great obsession” and of course, this great obsession is the result of having a great sense of responsibility that exists in some people who would not want to deliver their work haphazardly. Two previous programmes of Mrs. Kharrazi are a tribute to Lu’bat Vālā the famous Iranian poetess with the presence of many contemporary Iranian poets and literary figures including Mrs. Simin Behbahāni. In this programme, more than 300 people were left outside because there was no more space inside the hall and some people had to watch the programme standing. The second programme a hundred years of song was also so popular that some people who did not have tickets could not gain entrance to the hall. In this programme as appears in the title, a hundred years of lyrics and songs in Iran was reviewed and

from 'Arif Qazvini to the Iranian rap music were discussed and covered.

Iranian songs were performed and there was the slide show of the old singers and lyric-writers as well as short films and interviews and the live performance of many famous Iranian singers who were invited from all over the world including: Sattar, 'Arif and Jamshid Sheybāni and many others who made this programme very special and dazzling.

At the end of the programme, Mrs. Kharrazi presented the artists with a statue of Firdawsi the great Persian poet that had been purposely designed for these programmes.

Naz Kharrazi, who was of course in those days a young girl with a free soul, strolling and dancing together with a group of dancers from the ministry of art and culture in Rūdakī hall displaying an astonishing performance.

Yes, I am talking about Jamileh Kharrazi, who works hard, days and months her work is continuing, not recognizing mornings and nights and in order to attain her goal, which is the restoration of arts and culture of Iran in exile she only concentrates on what she has in mind sparing no expense, be it intellectual or material. She has gathered the strength of



a lover and an infatuated mentality to tackle monsters and demons of her path.

Q- What motivated you to get involved

The top row: players and artists of the pop and Iranian music of the Radio Iran and some personnel of the Ministry of arts and culture, first from the right: Mahmud RahmaniPour, the seventh: Ahmad RahmaniPour, the tenth: Ebi, the last person on the left: Amir Mu'ayed the famous soloist.

The second row: the players of the Iranian classical music, the front row ladies- the third person from the right: Muzhdeh Pishruvian, the fourth from the right: Jamileh Kharrazi soloist, the last person from the end: 'Atiyyeh Tahuri.

with these projects? And where was the starting point for you?

A- I am full of love for the homeland Iran, and forever thrilled and overjoyed by the poems of Iraj Mirza, "Without you one night " by Fereydoun Mushiri the songs of Abdol

Vahāb Shahidi, Marziyya and many more artists. This valuable treasure of Iran must not be forgotten by time and it is the duty of

each and every one of us Iranians to promote and introduce our heritage to the world whenever we can. We cannot claim greatness only by relying on famous buildings such as Persepolis and Pasargard, and our Old Persian literary masters. We must do something that is representative of our cultural heritage reflecting our values to involve our younger generations so that they too feel responsible to carry the task. We asked her to explain about the Toos Foundation.

Before the Toos Foundation, I started the “House of Iranian art and culture” in London, with the help of others. This had 94 students and people from 6 years of age to grandfathers could learn to play an instrument or sing for free. In these classes fortunately some of the great Iranian musicians who are resident in London and were my colleagues in the Ministry of art and culture in Tehran, were rendering their services. Including maestros: Touraj Kiarash (singing teacher), Vida Edalat (Santour teacher), Farnoush Behzad (piano, choir and theory of music), Cyrus Malakuti (Guitar teacher), Atieh Tahuri (Theory of music), Mr. Yussef Zadeh (Theory of music).

Q-Mrs. Kharrazi, please name some of your colleagues from the Ministry of arts and culture.

A- Musician and singers and choir: Vida Edalat Santour and drum player: Ahmad and Mahmud Rahmānipur Uod and Santour players: Atieh Tahouri Robab and Gheychak player: Khātereh Parvāneh, Hermineh, Shahram Shahpareh (brother of Shahbal of Black Cats), Ebi, Zoli and Shahroukh, who at that time were all employed by the ministry of arts and culture. At present, some of them are singers of popular music in Los Angeles. Amir Moaed alias Rashid Behboudof of Iran and my own singing teacher gracious lady Mansoureh Ghassri. The conductors: David Ghassri the husband of Mansoureh, Muhammed Uoshal and Farnoush Behzad. The choir conductors: Marie Yaghiazian, Evelin Baghcheban and Marduyan. The musicians: Faramarz Pāyvar, Simin Manuchehri the head of women orchestra, Nāsser Eftetāh and Cyrus Malakuti. Show hosts and designers: Parvin Sarlak and Homā Partuvi. In the dance department, I had the pleasure of working with Mrs. Lalehzariān, Mu'men Zādeh, Mrs. Ahmadzādeh the head of the Iranian ballet, Robert De Warren the head of the institute of Iranian folklore. With great respect, I recall my bosses: Mr. Khushnevisān, Mr. Rouhāni and Mr.

Mehrdād Pahlbod - strict but dedicated head of the ministry.

Q-Mrs. Kharrazi about your charity organizations before the Toos Foundation in co-operation with Jacky Jackson the sister of Michael Jackson and the exact time that the Toos Foundation was established, please tell us some more.

A-Before the Toos Foundation, I was involved with the charity foundation of “Jamileh Kharrazi” and later “Kharrazi-Jackson” and carried out many humanitarian projects which included helping with the establishment of the nurseries for the 2-5 years old, helping the victims of floods, student scholarship to Universities including Harvard and Jackson Memorial. The idea of the Toos Foundation had been in my mind for a very long time and finally we established the foundation in 2005, two programmes were performed in 2006 and 2007 and the third programme was in Logan hall on 9th of March.

Dance and harmonized movements have been present in Iran for more than 3000 years as early as Mithraism. In this programme, Mr. Nima Kian resident in Sweden, the great artist, the founder of the Iranian ballet group would perform and dance pieces such as:

The land of turquoise, Mawlana Mawlana, The dance of women and dances inspired by the Persian folklore. Nima Kian is truly an outstanding artist, when you witness his artistic abilities for yourselves, I am sure you would praise him for his efforts. For this programme, he has only brought with him his younger ballet students.

Q-Please tell us about other people collaborating with this programme.

A-Mrs. Fakhri Nikzad well known for the “Seven cities of love” Iran television who is the programme presenter and Mrs. Elizabeth Mansfield professional English artist who is well known for her collaboration with Mrs. Susan Farukhniā’s programmes.

Q-Mrs. Kharrazi, how can we get tickets for this programme? and why were the tickets free?

A-Tickets are available subject to the confirmation and reservation. Toos Foundation Tickets should be requested only by emails and ticket holders must confirm their identification to prevent a false black market. Unfortunately or fortunately, soon after the first advert in Keyhan, all tickets

were reserved and we apologize to those who have not been able to obtain tickets for the programme.

Q-What is the reason for such popularity? Is it the past record of two excellent programmes, the choice of subjects or the fact that tickets are free?

A-Allow me not to answer this question since I do not want to praise myself. I have been greatly supported by everyone and at the same time have been subjected to criticism by some people too. We asked her why the criticism? After all, she is only trying to promote the Iranian culture! She answers: Truth be told, it is not always criticism. Sometimes people complain to me about matters that I am unable to rectify and some claim that for these programmes I get paid from an unknown source! Or that I get tax relief on the expenses of my companies. Therefore, I offer the tickets free to be protected against these claims. Some have even complained to me about the long queues in front of the toilets during the breaks! What can I answer Logan Hall is a well- respected center in London. We asked Mrs. Kharrazi “If you were a man would you

continue despite the bloodshed?” She answers no sir I am not a man I a woman and I hate bloodshed! I like to play my part to help the world recognize and acknowledge the Iranian culture, and there are a lot of Iranian art lovers who give me their support and encouragement. We tell Jamil that since she is determined to carry on with her services in the world of arts, she should pay no attention to the criticism and accusations because after all these criticisms are usually created by those who would not do anything positive in life but wish to prevent others from their achievements. In the end, we thank her for the interview, and wish her good luck for her future projects, asking her our final question.

Q-Mrs. Kharrazi, as far as I know at some point you have been co-operating with Keyhan too.

A- Yes sir, I had the reporter’s card for “The children Keyhan”!