“Kaboudan and Esfandiar” under Eclecticism: An Analytical Study

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“Kaboudan and Esfandiar” under eclecticism: An analytical study

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Abstract: Special theatrical forms have been developed in many geographical-cultural areas of the world, and are indigenous to that area. In comparison with the original forms, these forms are considered as traditional, and when they are comprehensive, they are considered as national. The present research investigates “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” based on eclectic theory. “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” result from dramatic storytelling, and are combined with Western theater. An analysis of storytelling and Western theater is carried out in this study based on the eclectic theory. To this end, the questions, what makes a play an eclectic theater? And to what extent are “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” successfully applied in eclecticism? are asked. To address these questions, the definition of the critical elements in both forms of theater (tradition and Western method), their structure and also play construction, are comprehensively discussed based on authors’ designed analysis for analytical study.

Subjects: Theater; Dramatic arts

Keywords: Comparative analysis; eclecticism; Iran; traditional theater; Western theater

1. Introduction

How have traditional and Western theater elements been combined to produce new art works? This study attempts to answer this question. During the last few decades, researchers, playwrights, and directors in the field of theater have responded to this question using a new approach, through which they attempt to create their own aesthetic principle by applying one or some traditional elements in their works. In recent times, significant developments in drama have not only centered on the framework of Aristotle theater but other principles.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Farideh Alizadeh and Mohd Nasir Hashim authors of this journal article have collaborated since 2014 to work among different projects. The basis of their publication is established in the performing arts area and multidisciplinary research, either individually or collaboration such as, “Ta’ziyeh-influenced Theatre” (2015), “Eclecticism in Drama” (2016), “When the attraction of Ta’ziyeh is diminished, the community should inevitably find a suitable replacement for it!” (2016), “Role of Cultural Coffee-house in the Sustainable Development of Traditional Performance in Iran” (2017), and “Xenophobia in Shakespeare’s the Merchant of Venice” (2018).

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

What makes a play an eclectic theater? And to what extent are “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” successfully applied in eclecticism? How have traditional and Western theater elements been combined to produce new art works? In this study, an attempt is made to provide an answer to these questions. The significance of response to the questions is seen in a new approach by researchers, playwrights and directors in the field of theater during the last few decades, through which they have made every attempt to create their own aesthetic principle by applying one or some traditional elements in their works.
In Iran, the increased numbers of dramatic arts students, particularly in institutions of higher learning, have led to different kinds of plays being performed in theaters. As a result, drama institutes and art galleries have been established to increase spaces for dramatic performances and performance art. To allow young Iranian dramatic arts students to gain experience in playacting, different authors have written dramas, which are performed by students. These dramas, however, have not yet been critically assessed. Aristotle’s (384–322 BCE) classification on the theater is of two types, tragedy and comedy. Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani has used the objective and methods of Aristotle and other theatrical theoreticians as his guiding light in trying to study and define theatrical activities in Iran. As no phenomena can be researched without correct definition, Nazerzadeh-Kermani has tried to define and describe the Iranian taxonomy (Iranian forms) in order to make research and criticism possible in Iran. This may have originated from eastern beliefs differing from those of the Greeks. It was thus important to assess these plays and dramas based on the taxonomy proposed by Farhad Nazerzadeh-kermani. Current research focuses on analyzing plays in Iran based on the theory of eclectic theater, with a section that discusses theater studies, especially dramatic literature. However, it must be noted that the current research is a starting point in this field, aiming to provide insight into and intelligence on Iranian eclectic theater; it can thus be considered a new area of research.

Iranian eclectic theater is a theatrical form that certain playwrights and directors introduced in Iran such as Mirzadeh Eshghi, Ali Foroughi, Majtaba Minavi, Noushin, Fekri, Garmshir and Mohamad Rahmanian. Besides, Iranians who are migrated other countries such as Anna Djanbazian and a Western author and director who has had an intimate connection with Iranian traditional theater Peter Brook (these discussed in detail in the background). However, the concept of “eclectic theater” has not been clearly described in the Iranian context. This research attempts to present this new form based on some of the artists’ works that have been performed in Iran, in particular, “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” which has not previously been studied. This study aimed to analyze eclectic theater, especially performances of the works of authors who combine elements of traditional and Western forms, so as to derive a native and national artistic form that is also international. Despite the fact that eclecticism is a new theory when applied to Iran, there is existing research on the relationship between eclecticism and the stories of Shahnameh (Shah-NAMEH-2 شاهنامه (the epic poetry and legendary history of Iran by Ferdowsi). Previous researchers have acknowledged the efforts of “Eclecticism in Drama” and “Ta’ziyeh-influenced Theatre,” which concern traditional elements, as well as the influence they have on the contemporary theater based on eclectic theory.

This study’s main objective was to investigate one form of Iranian contemporary theater, based on the nine taxonomies (forms) proposed in 2005. As the proposed taxonomy explained, the elements of content of Iranian include genre, literary theatrical styles and elements of theater. Genre is about: tragedy, comedy, farcical, tragedy-comedy, and melodrama. These types have been influenced by Aristotle’s classifications and the beliefs and the ways of thinking of the people of the Middle East. In addition, the relationships among modern dramatic work, form, and rite in Iranian theater were analyzed based on the cohesive work and role of fundamental conventions of ceremonies in these dramatic elements. To make Iranian theater universal through the study of eclectic theatrical forms, and by using the terminology of world theater, the first phase of the study focused on evaluating Iranian plays and dramas that adopt the eclectic theoretical form. Classifications and criteria were then generated by watching theater productions of “Kaboudan and Esfandiar”. “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” was produced using Shahnameh as a specific resource. It was created by piercing through the imagination of mythical personalities; as such, it serves as a valuable example of the critical theories of eclecticism. The production of this kind of Iranian play is the result of efforts made by the director, who attempted to combine diverse theatrical forms using methods and techniques based on the theory of eclecticism.
2. Historical background

The concept of eclecticism has its origin in the Greek *eklektikos*, meaning “selective” or “choosing the best” (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2016b; Liddell & Scott, 1940). As a conceptual approach, eclecticism encompasses a set of assumptions, paradigms, different styles, theories, and ideas. When these are combined, they provide insight into the concept itself. As found in The Free Encyclopedia, the term “eclecticism” was first applied by a group that did not follow a particular system, but used different doctrines based on extant philosophers such as Posidonius (75 BCE), Stoic Panaetius (150 BCE), and Philo of Larissa (75 BCE). Based on these resources, the philosophy of eclecticism emerged (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2016b; Eclecticism in Art, 2012). It might have emerged during the 1960s or 1970s by some directors in America. There are more explanation about this in the background. The use of “eclecticism” is commonly employed in different fields, including religion, arts, drama, martial arts, and psychology. It this paper, however, the analysis of eclecticism is performed in the field of theater arts.

Considering the world principles of theatrical forms, there are nine basic Iranian theatrical forms, based on “formal elements” and “elements of content.” Seven forms (1–7)—processional performances (festivals); ritual performances (zoomorphic dances); performative storytelling or dramatic storytelling (*naqqali*	extsuperscript{3}, *pardeh-khani*	extsuperscript{3}); street (outdoor) performances (juggling or *mareke-giri*); puppet shows and shadow plays; traditional farcical plays (*taghlid*	extsuperscript{4}); and passion plays (*Taʿziyeh*)—are rooted in local Iranian traditions. The two other forms (8–9)—Western-influenced theater and eclectic theater—are influenced by Western theater. Eclecticism in Drama represents eclectic theater as a branch of dramatic literature. This branch was created by combining a set of traditional elements with Western theater. Having adequate familiarity with eclecticism makes it possible for one to understand the contemporary art of theater in Iran (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2016b). Eclectic theater has little background in theater. The term has been used in regards to performances and directors such as Max Reinhardt (1873–1943),	extsuperscript{7} Yevgeny Vakhtangov (1883–1922), and Peter Brook (1925–), as well as by some artists in works such as The Serpent: A Ceremony (1969), performed at Open Theatre, and the play Paradise Now (2013), which was first staged in Europe in 1968 at Living Theatre. These directors and playwrights believed that, through plays, their new styles of theater could be expressed while their special aesthetic principle was formed. In general, eclectics have different mixed forms, genres, and styles depending on their objectives and ideas, thereby giving them a new identity. Even though this theatrical form has nothing to do with style, eclecticism gives theater producers the opportunity to have their own unique style. This is one of the attributes of both modern and postmodern theatrical arts. Nazerzadeh-kermani (2005) noted that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, some artists, known as eclecticists, tried to establish a connection between realist and post-realist theater. They argued that every drama and play should define its own specific form. One such prominent artist, who must be acknowledged for his creative and innovative use of theatrical spaces, is Max Reinhardt. He changed a circus tent into a theater for productions of *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles, and *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes. Additionally, in the court of Salzburg Cathedral, he presented *Everyman*. He also gained experience in the principles of eclectic theater in the East, and some historical periods of the dramatic arts in the West (Nazerzadeh-kermani, 2005, p. 471–472). For example, in *Everyman*, Reinhardt enlarged the scope of theater by involving the whole town. Actors were stationed on the towers of churches throughout the city, calling out the name of “Everyman.” Then at the end of the play, as night fell, when Everyman’s soul is finally received in paradise, the interior of the cathedral lit up, its massive doors opened, organ music resounded, and choirs sang, while all over Salzburg the bells of many churches began to peal (Roose-Evans, 2002, p. 65). As cited in Mei (2008) Vakhtangov was one of the eclecticists, who combined Stanislavsky’s psychological realism	extsuperscript{8} and Meyerhold’s theatricalism	extsuperscript{9} (Mei, 2008, p. 189). Vakhtangov mostly worked in Moscow between 1921 and 1922, presenting plays such as The Dybbuk (1914) by S. Anski (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2010, p. 401).
Eclecticism as a theatrical form was developed by some directors during the 1960s and 1970s in America. Some of these that appeared in theaters included The Serpent: A Ceremony by Jean-Claude Van Itallie (1998), directed by Joseph Chaikin (1960) at Open Theatre (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2016b; Nazerzadeh-kermani, 2005; Wilson & Goldfarb, 2010). This play, especially the way it was performed, is a remarkable type of eclectic and alternative theater. The Serpent: A Ceremony has ritual characteristics that are performed in a ditty (folksong) and multilingual style. Based on the Old Testament, the stories of Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel are narrated in this play (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2010). As the basis for There Is No Secret, Peter Brook selected Mantegh-O Teir, the Iranian masterpiece of the sixteenth century (6th AH) written by Farid Ud-Din Attar (d. 627 AH); this piece can be understood by anybody, even if acted outside the setting in which it was written. In fact, Brook attempted to synthesize the attitudes that were created, based on mystical elements of an Iranian poet (Brook, 1994). The Conference of the Birds is a sub-species of non-conventional theater, which is sometimes referred to as experimentalism (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2016b; Brockett, 1977). As evidence of the attitude displayed at that time, Reinhardt (Everyman), Jozef Chaichen (The Serpent: A Ceremony), and Jery (Paradise Now) defined their new forms according to the theory of eclecticism. They also discussed issues within experimental and postmodern theater.

Eclecticism is a new movement in Iran, like in other parts of the world. Among its distinguished examples, it refers to some Iranian patterns that provide insight into Iranian eclectic theater. Yahya Aryanpour, in Saba ta Nima by Mirzadeh Eshghi (1893–1924), combined Western opera with Iranian theater, resulting in the formation of a new style of opera. This new style can be classified as eclectic theater, because it was introduced based on theatrical forms such as Rastakhiz Salatin Iran Opera (Iranian Kings Resurrection Opera). Rastakhiz Salatin Iran Opera, which is also known as Rastakhiz Shahriyaran Iran, is a fantastic, poetic, and musical picture of the splendid eras of ancient Iran; its only real character is the author (Mirzadeh Eshghi) who is manifested dressed as a traveler (Aryanpour, 1996, p. 272–273). This work can be recognized as eclectic theater because it uses national anthems and one melody of Leily & Majnoun Opera, (Layla and possessed) parts of which have been narrated. In fact, its music is based on Iranian forms, while another symbol of Iranian forms, narration, is also seen in this work. In his work, Mirzadeh Eshghi took advantage of dramatic elements of Western opera, which he then based in the theatrical forms of Iran. His drama, or opera, Rastakhiz Salatin Iran Opera is therefore considered to be an eclectic work, and Mirzadeh Eshghi is an eclecticist. In an interview by James Wiener in the Hamazor, he said “in 1010 CE, the famed Persian poet, Ferdowsi of Tous (940–1020 CE), finished his epic poem of nearly 60,000 verses: the Shahnameh. It was a project that took Ferdowsi over thirty years to complete. A thousand years later, the Shahnameh is still revered and celebrated in Iran and across the Persian speaking world. Indeed, it is difficult to underscore the Iranian identity without discussing this literary gem.” (Wiener, 2015, p. 38). According to Mostafa Oskouei in the History of Iranian’s Theatre, the Ferdowsi’s Millennial Celebration was held in 1935 by innovators of these ceremonies, i.e. Mohammad Ali Foroughi and Mojtaba Minavi, Noushin. Fekri and Garmshir were invited as directors to this memorial to select three stories of Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh, such as Rostam and Sohrab, Zal and Roudabeh (lyric), “Ghobad” (epic), or Rostam and Tahmineh (mythical), and stage these stories as new productions (Oskouei, 1991). Mohammad Ali Foroughi and Mojtaba Minavi, Noushin, Fekri and Garmshir were known as innovators for the particular performances on Ferdowsi’s Millennial Celebration, because Shahnameh-khani (reciting of Shahnameh) usually recited in the street or narrated in the coffee house by naqqal (storyteller). As cited in Alizadeh, Hashim, and Amini (2017), Nareshakhki mentioned about street performance in Iran: street jugglers, performers, narrators, Shahnameh-khans (Shahnameh narrators), preachers and pardeh-khans (painted curtain narrators) performed for crowds gathered in coffee-houses, next to bazaars, plazas, caravanserai and hangouts (Nareshakh, 1971, p. 202). Figures 1 and 2.

The coffee-houses are related to the life style of the public in traditional Iran. They have always had an effective role in the formation of an important part of social cultures, people’s traditions
and customs. Such effects have seen numerous changes over time. Meanwhile, the performance of some traditional-religious and non-religious plays such as naqqali (narration), sokhanvari (oration), qazal-khani (singing odes or lyric verses), Ta’ziyeh (passion play) and parde-khani, have become long-lasting traditions in the coffee-house setting from one generation to next.

Another version of Zal and Rudabeh has been performed, which is a full-length contemporary ballet theater. The ballet production of Zal and Rudabeh was conceived and directed by a choreographer named Anna Djanbazian. The ballet, performed in Glendale, California, in 2009, divulges a timeless tale of forbidden romance, war, triumph, and the transcendental power of love, based on an epic tale—Shahnameh—the Book of Kings (Djanbazian, 2014). These performances involved some aspects of Ta’ziyeh, storytelling, puppet show, and traditional farce that are peculiar to Iran. The traditional ceremonies and rites of Iran involve particular specifications,
such as Ta’ziyeh which is a traditional Iranian rite. For example, Namira (“Immortal”) (Larian, 1987) was created using the traditional conventions of “Ta’ziyeh of Imam Hussein’s martyrdom” (a kind of Passion play in Iran), as well as some elements of Western theater. Ashaghe (“Story of Love”), another work produced by Mohamad Rahmanian (2008), used the subsequent tragedy and joyful Ta’ziyeh such as a “feminine Ta’ziyeh.”

To understand the aforementioned works of art, it is important to have a general insight of non-traditional styles. Non-traditional styles started appearing in the sphere of theater arts after the industrial revolution; their appearance influenced social substructures, giving rise to structural evolution in philosophy and history. These transformations influenced theater, art, and culture, thereby leading to different styles of symbolism and styles emerging. Non-traditional, or non-conventional, theater is a movement that avoids being a “style,” because style is a movement that is more or less stabilized, and that possesses both aesthetic and philosophical structures. Proponents of non-conventional theater have regarded style as a kind of tradition and convention. For this reason, they have tried to avoid using conventions and traditions to realize their own unique style. Nazerzadeh-kermani stated that the basis of the process, which is related to non-conventional theater, is a kind of eclecticism (2005, p. 437).

Nevertheless, this paper does not reject theatrical styles. By reviewing both non-traditional and traditional styles in the works of theatrical artists, one gains insight into their relation and connection. The presence of many theatrical movements was noticeable in the twentieth century, especially in the second half of the century. These theatrical movements combined both classic and regular styles. During that time, the geographical boundaries of theater arts expanded (as well as those of dramatic techniques) to countries such as Japan, China, and India, whose dramatic techniques were combined with those of Western theater. In the context of this paper, however, we refer to artists who have mixed both modern and traditional forms of arts. For example, Mamnoon (1979) believed that Chinese theater influenced Brecht, who in turn created the distancing effect (verfremdungseffekt) and narrative theatre (p. 157). To this end, Kernodle and P. Kernodle noted that Brecht can be considered to be an eclecticist, because his style was based on an eclectic mixture of dramatic stories and Chinese theater using the principles of realism. This style can therefore be referred to as Epic or Brecht Realism (Kernodle & Kernodle, 1978, p. 177).

3. Methodology
This analytical study on “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” provides an insight on these new developments in Iranian theater. The study carries an investigation of “Kaboudan and Esfandiar”, which is almost based on elements of one of the stories in Shahnameh (Rostam and Esfandiar: the legends of the national epic of Greater Iran) synthesized with elements of Western theater, as clear examples of eclectic theater based on the Iranian heritage. After watching a performance of this play, some criteria and classifications were provided. These were based on the methods, techniques, and to some extent the content of the Shahnameh story. Eclecticism is a conceptual approach that does not merely include one paradigm or a set of assumptions. Instead, eclecticism adheres to or is constituted from several theories, styles, and ideas in order to gain a thorough insight about the subject, and draws upon different theories in different cases. Eclecticism hardly ever constitutes a specific style in art because it is not considered a particular style. In general, eclecticism describes a combination of a variety of influences, mainly of elements from different historical styles in architecture, painting, the graphic and decorative arts, as well as music in a single work (Eclecticism in Art, 2012). Furthermore, this analytical approach was employed to break down the different elements of this Iranian play based on its content, methods, and techniques. The eclectic approach is one that has been effectively used in comparative studies, which is why it was employed in this study to provide a clear picture of the Iranian theatrical forms based on above-proposed taxonomies. For example, the Ta’ziyeh-influenced Theatre, was targeted to analyze Brechtian theatre and Ta’ziyeh, if Brecht was influenced by Ta’ziyeh? The book analyzed “the dramatic value and considering the strong
moral principles of Ta’ziyeh performance and Western theatre” (Alizadeh, 2015). By this example, authors mentioned comparative studies Iranian theatrical forms would be more clear and researchable. In this study, the analyzed work was not judged as an excellent drama, a masterpiece, or a mediocre one. The investigation and analysis of eclectic theater are important from both theoretical and performance perspectives. In this paper, the latest findings in performing theater were analyzed, using “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” as an example, while defining the characteristics of eclectic theater.

4. Eclecticism and the play “Kaboudan and Esfandiar”

The emergence of eclectic theater, as a kind of avant-garde theater, can be based on method and style, direction, and the mixing of traditional and modern methods. It can emerge in any way; however, it is necessary to note that not just any work staged in the name of avant-garde or experimental theater can be considered directly as avant-garde or experimental. In fact, such movements have specific features that distinguish them from other work. To be more precise, theater scholars consider eclecticism to be created through elements of different forms and styles, combining these eclectic sources based on their aims and objectives, and giving them a new identity. “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” is the result of a dramatic storytelling, in this case, the story of Shahnameh, and is combined with Western theater. This play, which uses Shahnameh by the Persian epic poet Ferdowsi, has been included in this taxonomy of eclectic theater. However, the play is also based on the epic stories of Rostam and Esfandiar, Goshtasb, Arjaseb, and Pashootan (he is Esfandiar’s brother in this theatre).

4.1. Form and content

The artistic critique of this work is based on four forms of plays, namely: theme, message, style, conventional theater, while the analysis is based on components of form and content elements such as plot, genre, dramatic conventions, and play construction. The plot of Kaboudan and Esfandiar is summarized below. Figure 3.

After being tricked by Garzam (one of the king’s companions), Esfandiar plans to overthrow Goshtasb, who is the ruling king. Goshtasb asks others to help him, but they are all talking about Esfandiar’s conspiracy at night and capturing Balkh. Then, Goshtasb orders some children to break the wings of Esfandiar like mocking players. Goshtasb Shah sends him far from the palace and imprisons him in Gonbadan fortress. Esfandiar is alone in the fortress with the Hamaronic

Figure 3. An excerpt from Esfandiar and Kaboudan. Left, above, Esfandiar’s character, and the right above from left side are Esfandiar and Kaboudan. Pictures have been taken by Arman Omid and Sohrab Salimi (1991) playwright and director, in the Theatre-e Shar, Char-Soo (Hall), Tehran, Iran.
black slave, Kaboudan. When king Goshtasb is besieged by the Arjaseb troops of Turan, Esfandiar’s father orders his brother, Pashootan, to release Esfandiar from Gonbadan fortress and take him to Balkh. However, Esfandiar refuses; he decides to go to “Kaboudan-Hamavaran” lands without even looking back, because he has found out the truth in the castle darkness, when he hears Kaboudan singing about his land. Esfandiar wants to reveal the truth in the real Hamavaran land, where barefooted men and women sing and whisper about prosperity, respectively.

All Esfandiar’s dreams are destroyed, however, on hearing the news of Vakhshor-Zoroaster’s death from Varjaseb of Touran. According to Zarrir’s testimony (Esfandiar’s uncle), Vakhshor may still alive. If so, then far from missing Esfandiar, he would kill him sooner or later. When he hears the news, Esfandiar becomes greatly upset and decides to leave Balkh in order to bring freedom to men and women. Again, the men are singing and women are whispering in the beautiful land of Hamavaran, and they are ready to fight for the truth. Hearing the sound of a flute and Kaboudan’s song, Esfandiar falls asleep, dreaming about the freedom of his land and waiting for the break of day, so that he can leave Gonbadan fortress in the daylight.

To better understand this legendary Iranian hero, and the how the playwright presents his imagination through the story of “Kaboudan and Esfandiar”, the story of Esfandiar in the Shahnameh is now provided.

Esfandiar, an Iranian hero and invulnerable prince, and son of Goshtasb, King of Kiani, was enthroned while Lohrasb, Esfandiar’s grandfather was still alive. Goshtasb promises to hand over the kingdom if Esfandiar converts people to Zoroastrianism. Esfandiar achieves this, but his father refuses to fulfill his promise, and orders that Esfandiar be jailed in the Gunbadan fortress. Iran is attacked by Arjasp attacks. Iran, and Goshtasb asks Esfandiar to confront the Arjasp. Esfandiar defeats them, and rescues his sisters from Royin fortress, on the order of the king. He risks his life in the process and goes through the Seven Trials. The king again refuses to fulfill his promise and tricks Esfandiar after consulting Jamasp, a prophet and astronomer, about the fate of his son. The prophet predicts that Esfandiar will be killed in Zabolestan by Rostam, so Goshtasb sends him to Zabol with Rostam. At first, Esfandiar refuses to go but his father persuades him. His mother tries to discourage him, in vain. Rostam cautions him not to fight in Zabolestan. He refuses and war breaks out. Rostam becomes wounded and helpless. Zal, Rostam’s father, asks Simurgh to help him and Simurgh shows Rostam how to kill Esfandiar. Rostam fires an arrow into the eyes of Esfandiar, his only weak spot, and kills him.

The play “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” will now be analyzed to highlight the components of form and content.

The theatrical play “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” was written and performed so that readers and audience can understand the presence of myth in it. While this play is related to myths, the characters appear to be situated in a certain time and place. In contrast, in traditional Iranian performances, myths have no time and place—the only known point in mythological history books is that mythical kings lived in old and ancient periods before Median ruling.

Myths are not real, but are manifested in the world as symbols. Thus, all epic plays are assumed to be symbolic, unless the writer and theatrical director reproduce mythical stories within the framework of other artistic styles. In fact, using the mythological stories of Shahnameh at the heart of “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” is a major attraction. For instance, in the cellar of fortress, Esfandiar’s character evolves when he discovers the truth, nurturing such dreams in his mind and impatiently waiting to make them known. The truth, he finds out in darkness, should be given life in the green territory of Hamavaran (a city in Shahnameh). He decides to reveal the truth hidden in the fortress darkness by going to Hamavaran. After the distress he suffered in that cellar, he is ready to forget all about his descent and origin, and to
leave for another land. Arjoseb of Turan gives him no chance, however, and Esfandiar confronts him. What happens in the play is similar to real-world, but the work was produced from mythical stories. The story of real-life is the truth in the realm of allegory. Thus, according to Iranian mythology and understanding, the quality of the play and the artistic style of “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” is based on symbolization. “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” is classified as a tragedy; the tragedy of the characters in the Shahnameh, which expresses the lives of kings and mythical gods. Here, kings may use their own children as shields and expose them to their enemy’s sword just to protect their crown and throne. The ancient tragedy of this work is indebted to mythical tragic events that happened in the ancient era in the allegorical world. “Courage” is a basic theme formed under the banner of epopee (epic poem) and history, based on Esfandiar’s skepticism. The play’s message is repeated constantly in the work itself: that the errant is born to die fighting a war (Omid, 1994, p. 12).

4.2. Shahnameh stories

Omid (playwright of the “Kaboudan and Esfandiar”) pointed out that Kaboudan, son of Res, son of Gebt, is an imagination that he regained. He is Esfandiar’s indecision. While his name is not referred to anywhere in Shahnameh, his shadow is seen everywhere beside Goshtasb’s son; first in Balkh (the name of a stand) and finally in the Nimrooz (the stand in Shahnameh). Phoenix’s charm was the death of Kaboudan, an end to indecision by the invulnerable prince, Esfandiar (Omid, 1994, p. iii). Other authors have noted that Omid (playwright of “Kaboudan and Esfandiar”) created the play based on Shahnameh, but he used his own aesthetic to produce a new story by changing some of the stories in Shahnameh. Shahnameh is one of the richest showcases of Iranian myths, which has inspired the visual arts, such as painting and book illustration. Shahnameh is also manifested in the narrative arts, especially in storytelling and performances by the storyteller, which forms a large part of Iranian performance. About half of all theatrical works written and performed in Iran are based on Shahnameh. Storytellers use their capabilities, such as their power of expression, use of words in performance, and musical instruments, when telling the story and reading poems from Shahnameh, such as “Kaveh’s All Sons” (Hame- e Pesaran Kaveh) (Rahimi, 1993).

4.3. Play conventions

As in “Kaboudan and Esfandiar,” two clear features of Iranian traditional performance and ritual have been used:

(a) Players use naqqali (narration), depending on their characters’ performances.

(b) The play is based on Shahnameh.

Like other styles of performance, naqqali (narration) helps the audience identify the characters. For instance, in Ta’zizyeh, naqqali (narration) is organized according to what is happening on the stage and the events unfolding in the play. It is used to imply that antagonist characters, such as Shemr and Yazid, are evildoers and that the protagonists are well spoken. In naqqali (narration), the storyteller’s personality is reflected through his/her tone and wording. Similar examples are seen in traditional performances such as juggling (mareke-giri), as a street performance, and siah bazi and takhte-hozi, as farcical plays. In the play analyzed in this paper, the characters are identified through the process of naqqali (narration), using special songs that depict what is said regarding Ta’zizyeh, while the speeches are character specific. For instance:

Esfandiar: Welcome, my brother.
Pashootan: How are you, my brother?
Esfandiar: Fine, with the castle mice.
Pashootan: Mice?
Esfandiar: My friends, moles, my loyal soldiers.
Pashootan: What a warm welcome after missing you for three falls!
Esfandiar: I can call the moles to play the lyre for you! Esfandiar’s palace is always dark, Esfandiar, king of the hell.

Pashootan: Seems I galloped from Balkh to Gonbadan for such a warm welcome by my brother!

Esfandiar: What a swift-footed horse my brother! ... Three falls running! How delightful! ... A strong desire to visit your brother made you come this way? Amshaspandan elevated the Balkh to the sky or evil Gonbadan destroyed the castle? (Yelling), Thou, Kaboudan! Amrod ... New Amrods for Pashootan, who has suffered the hardship of travelling to reach the seat of the king of darkness (Omid, 1994, p. 15–16).

Based originally on ancient philosophy (about 150 BCE), eclecticism is not based on a specific design, but rather a selection of doctrines that looked plausible from existing philosophical beliefs. This philosophy is becoming increasingly popular because it relies on the concept of combining styles and forms based on an artist’s specific aesthetic; for instance, Vakhtangov’s combination of Stanislavsky’s psychological realism and Meyerhold’s theatricalism. “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” depicts Iranian culture and combines the traditional elements of Shahnameh with the style of Western theater. Neither a single style nor method is sustained, because the methods and styles vary according to the artist’s special aesthetic.

5. General plan of the play
The nine aforementioned proposed taxonomies have been deduced by reviewing universal knowledge in addition to examining Iran’s theatrical developments and activities. This knowledge would not be adequate or possible without having an understanding of eclecticism in Iran. “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” is influenced by Western theater in terms of the patterns of traditional plays containing Shahnameh. These traditional patterns, therefore, act as catalysts in the creation of the new work.

In this paper, “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” has been described to gain an insight into eclectic theater. This study revealed that the characteristics of Iranian theater develop gradually. Following the West’s introduction of theater to Iran, the artists of ritualistic theater expressed their opinions about the new phenomenon. This led to a change in the taste of the Iranian audience; they became more interested in watching new dramas that were based on Western theatrical experiments. Actors were expected to use new theatrical methods, while their traditional theater audience was maintained. Consequently, many groups of artists emerged based on eclectic theater. Some of these artists have continued to adopt eclectic theater, and to produce works of art according to their aesthetic principles.

“Kaboudan and Esfandiar” was created using the theatrical model of dramatic storytelling; however, it is not considered to be a ritual play. The director of this play created a new work following Shahnameh using his new aesthetic of artistic principles. The play’s combination of naqqali, an element in Iranian traditional play, with elements of Western theater facilitates the current study’s analysis using the framework of Iranian and Western culture. The dramatic structure of “Kaboudan and Esfandiar” is based on a cause-and-effect relation. Each dramatic action has a reason behind it, which the reader or audience can identify while reading the play-script or watching the play. For example, the audience or reader can understand the capturing of Esfandiar in the Gonbadan fortress (as a place), for the purpose of his discovering the truth in the Gonbadan cellar, Pashootan’s arrival, and the fighting with Touraine.

When traditional performance elements are incorporated into the play’s structure, the traditional emotion fades away and the connection between the audience and actors of the play is lost. For example, players in Iran used to act Shahnameh by naqqali. In the play, a connection was built between the players and audience because of the ritual and traditional performances. The audience shared in the sorrows and joys reflected in the play. Conversely, it is impossible to compare a traditional performance, like the narration of Shahnameh by naqqali, with Western theater elements. Nevertheless, rituals and traditions can be maintained and revived in a contemporary setting. In other words, if Iran’s traditional theater forms are studied and investigated based on...
global scientific principles, the forms and contents of Iranian theater would be understood as being similar to those in other geographical-cultural locations. Thus, in this case, the way has been paved for comparative studies to be conducted, while conversely, Iranian theatrical forms have been made more clear and researchable.

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Notes
1. Esfandiar is also known as Sfandiar.
2. The Shahnameh (pronounced [ʃaːˈnɑːme] or Shah-nama (Persian: شاهنامه, “The Book of Kings”)) is a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi between c. 977 and 1010 CE. It is the national epic of Iran (Persia) and the Persian-speaking world. Consisting of some 50,000 verses, the Shahnameh tells of the mythical and historical past of the Persian Empire, from the world’s creation until the Islamic conquest of Persia in the seventh century. Today, Iran, Tajikistan, and the greater region influenced by Persian culture celebrate this national epic. The work is of central importance in Persian culture. It is regarded as a literary masterpiece, and definitive of ethnic-national cultural identity of Iran. It is also important to the contemporary adherents of Zoroastrianism, in that it traces the historical links between the beginnings of the religion with the death of the last Sassanid ruler of Persia during the Muslim conquest and an end to the Zoroastrian influence in Iran. Retrieved 23 May 2019 from, http://www.sef.gutenberg.org/articles/Shahnameh.
3. Narration that is known as Naqqali is to narrate a story in the form of poem. Using suitable movements, gestures and expressions in front of the public. Narration is to amuse the audience feeling and affection using an attractive story, suitable expression, having the movements and inducing gesture and dramatic states in control to the extent that viewer may feel the player at any time as the story hero. In other words, narrator should be able to individually play and perform all the story characters.
4. Pardeh-khani is a religious example that Shahnameh-khani is a branch of pardeh-khani are recreational example of dramatic storytelling.
5. A ghaval (singer) is one who sings poems at gatherings. There are also narrators and accompanists, who repeat part of the poem sung by the ghaval, like the traditions in lamentation and prelude to Ta’zieh. In general, a ghaval is a performer, and this action is known as ghavali.
6. Taghdi is a farcical play (mimicry): Farce contains a short and funny story, which begins with a vocal by two or three players, and ends with beating and/or escape and pursuit. Farcical story mimicry, accordingly, which originated from farcical plays between minstrels, had longer stories in which vocalist had more roles. There could be separate vocals in the play, proportionally, but conversations were not made in vocals. Players, who imitated the local accents of residents of villages and cities, created funny situations. For more information, refer to: Beyzaie (2000, p. 159).
7. Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) was an Austrian-born American actor (stage and film) and director.
8. This influential system of dramatic training was developed by Konstantin Stanislavsky, the Russian actor, producer, and theoretician. He developed his method over years of trial and error, beginning c. 1898. It requires that an actor uses his/her emotional memory (i.e., recall of past experiences and emotions) to identify with the character’s inner motivation. This technique was developed in reaction to the histrionic acting styles of the nineteenth century. Noted American practitioners began using the method in the 1920s; these included Lee Strasberg, Marlon Brando, Dustin Hoffman, and Eli Wallach. For more information, refer to: Malekpour, Tazieh Plays, in The Islamic Drama (2005, p. 78–79).
9. Theatricalism first appeared in Russia at a time when realistic theater had reached its peak with the works of Chekhov and Stanislavski. Berthold Brecht inherited this theatricalism and later built his own style, Brechtian theater. For more information, refer to: Cody and Sprinchorn (2007, p. 927) and Farber (2008, p. 35).
10. Leyli & Majnun or Leyli O Majnun (2019) is “a narrative poem of approximately 4,600 lines composed in 584/1188 by the famous poet Nezâmi of Ganja. It is the third of his five long narrative poems known collectively as the Körns (the Quintet).” Layla and Qays, are in love from childhood but are not allowed to unite. Qays (called Majnun, which means “possessed”) is perceived to be mad in his obsession with Layla. Although they attempt to meet, they die without ever realizing a relationship (Encyclopedia Iranica, 2019). Retrieved 16 May 2019, from http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/leyli-o-majnun-narrative-poem.
11. HAMAZR is the name of a book. It is a Zoroastrian–Persian adjective meaning “of the same strength”. Homa” means “all” or “all together” and zor means “strength”. For more information, refer to Dastur Sherviy (p. 305).
12. The Ferdowsi’s Millennial Celebration (Persian: بهی مراسم زیبا به مناسبت گرامیداشتی) was a series of celebrations and scholarly events in the year 1934 to commemorate the thousandth anniversary of Ferdowsi’s birth. The Ferdowsi millennial was held at the initiative of Reza Shah Pahlavi and was announced at the beginning of the year by the
government of Iran. The Millennial Congress convened for 5 days, from 2 to 6 October 1934, in Tehran, and more than 80 notable European and Iranian scholars attended the congress. The celebrations lasted for nearly a month. Various official ceremonies were held simultaneously in a number of European countries including France, Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union, in universities, clubs, and embassies. Also, a number of other countries, including the United States, Egypt and Iraq, held festivities. Retrieved 19 June 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdowsi_millenial_celebration.

13. To’ziyeh is a ritual and traditional performance in Iran. For more information, refer to: Alizadeh and Hashim (2016a). Scripts of To’ziyeh are the official copies of Iranian dramatic literature which reflect the events related to sacred Imams, especially the events of Karbala and problems of the prophets. After Islam, part of Iranian literature has been referred to as ritual performance which is in itself considered as a traditional performance and as Peter Chelkowski put it “Indigenous avant-garde theatre of Iran” (Chelkowski, 1979, p. 1).

14. Verfremdungseffekt is a German word meaning “to be strange to, to keep at a distance, to keep away.” For more information, refer to: Freeman, No Boundaries Here: Brecht, Lauwers, and European Theatre after Postmodernism (2013, p. 230).

15. Balkh belonged to Iran. According to Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh, to travel from the Iranian state of Balkh to Turan, one had to cross the Jihun or Amu Darya, traveling east and north. Balkh used to be part of Iran and Ferdowsi referred to in Shahnameh often. It is located in what is now Afghanistan.

16. The term “Turans” may come from the Iranian-Turan, which means “enemy, non-Iranian countries.” Turan is an Iranian term that applies to the country to the north-east of Iran. The form of the name originates from no earlier than the Middle Persian Period (Brill, 1993, p. 878).

17. Hamovaran is a place that Ferdowsi used in his Shahnameh. For more information, refer to: Zarin koob (p. 19).

18. The Kayanians (also Keys, Kayanids, or Kianids, or Kian) are a semi-mythological dynasty of Persian tradition and folklore which supposedly ruled after the Pahlavids. Considered collectively, the Kayanian kings are the heroes of the Avesta, the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, and of the Shahnameh, Iran’s national epic. Retrieved 20 June 2019 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kayanian_dynasty.

19. Siah Baz is a type of folk play featuring a black-faced harlequin, who stirs the audience to laughter with his amusing ways. Siah Baz and “takhte-hozi,” also known as “nu-haz,” are forbidden Iranian play improvisations. Those plays were common in the past, before modern theatre came to Iran. Today, they might be performed at traditional festivals. For more information, see “Siah Baz, a Forbidden Play” (Farshidi, 2013).

20. Here, fall is meant as the season.

Cover image
Source: Author.

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Alizadeh, F., & Hashim, M. N. (2016a). When the attraction of To’ziyeh is diminished, the community should inevitably find a suitable replacement for it. Taylor & Francis, Cogent Arts & Humanities, 3(1), 1–13.


