

PERSIAN STORYTELLING & EUROPEAN STORYTELLING
(A JOURNEY TO FIND A DIRECTOR'S INNER VOICE)
Thesis by Azadeh Mohammadi Kangarani

The thesis charts Azadeh's development as director and artist, her increasing interest in fusing European theatre with her native Iranian culture, and the political aspect of theatre in general. She describes coming to DAMU with some acting but no directing experience or knowledge of Czech language, and the assignment to direct Brecht's *The Respectable Wedding* in Czech, directing actors in that language, which she considers a failure. All her productions afterwards were in English which is her second language, giving her extra work in terms of production - finding English speaking actors and extra funding for them. They were *Someone to Watch Over Me*, a three person play by Frank McGuinness; *A Moment of Silence* by Yaghoubi, a sort of theatre-within-theatre reflection on Iran history after the Islamic revolution with the playwright interacting with his characters which was her graduation production. After that she did a straightforward adaptation of *Art* by Yasmina Reza with the Erasmus students, first changing gender of all the three characters to female, then in another production having two females and one man in the cast and observing the change in balance in their relationship as a result. And finally, she describes the process of her most radical adaptation so far, that of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, done with just three actors using elements of different types of Persian storytelling and mainly keeping to the story of the Shakespearean heroes from the title. She describes in detail the whole production process, from pre-production (including casting), rehearsals and postproduction process.

From my point of view this thesis is a very honest description of Azadeh's journey to find her own voice as a director, and to define her own theatre theme which is political, very feminine, and an effort to bring together European culture and that from her native Middle East. I think the learning curve is amazing. Since we collaborated on some of her work, it's not my place to comment on it, but from seeing the productions described and reading the thesis, I appreciate her open self-reflection on her development and finding her voice as director. There is a question, though, how far can the culture fusion go in the future, what precise politics and religion are behind her productions, and will be in the future.

I would say that by being able to go from zero ground to various theatre achievements and being able to reflect on them honestly, she deserves a grade A.