

mêhr theatregrôup

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Amir Reza Koohestani

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Biography

Amir Reza Koohestani was born in June 8th, 1978 in Shiraz, Iran. He was 16 when he began to publish short stories in local newspapers.

Attracted to cinema, he took courses in directing and cinematography in 1995 and created two unfinished films. After a brief experience as performer, he devoted his time to write his first plays: *And The Day Never Came* (1999), which was never performed and *The Murmuring Tales* (2000) which received attracted critical acclaim in Tehran, during the 18th International Fadjr Theatre Festival.

With his third play, *Dance On Glasses* (2001), in tour for four years, Amir Reza Koohestani gained international notoriety and found the support of several European theatrical artistic directors and festivals. Then followed the plays *Recent Experiences* (from the original text by Canadian writers Nadia Ross and Jacob Wren, 2003); *Amid The Clouds* (first European coproduction with Kunstenfestivaldesarts and Wiener Festwochen, 2005); *Dry Blood & Fresh Vegetables* (a twenty minutes performance, 2007) and *Quartet: A Journey North* (European coproduction, 2007), all of them successfully welcomed in Europe.

Amir Reza Koohestani was also commissioned by the Schauspiel in Köln, where he wrote and directed *Einzelzimmer* (2006), and by the Nouveau Théâtre de Besançon, with Japanese director Oriza Hirata and French director Sylvain Maurice, to create the play *Des Utopies ?* (2009) on tour in France and Japan.



*“You’ll see: Amir Reza is someone warm, open, direct.
He does not complicate simple matters and does not
simplify complicate matters.”*

Frie Leysen

Hassan Madjoooni in *Ivanov* © Abbas Kowsari

After some years of study in Manchester, Amir Reza Koohestani has returned back to Tehran since July 2009 and created the play ***Where Were You On January 8th?*** performed in La Colline - national theatre, as part of Festival d’Automne in Paris in 2010, and after an European tour.

Biography

Today, despite finishing his military service, Amir Reza Koohestani is presenting in Tehran, the adaptation of ***Ivanov*** by Anton Chekhov.

Ivanov

(2011)

original play by
Anton Chekhov

text and direction by
Amir Reza Koohestani



© Abbas Kowsari

Credits

production manager & director's assistant **Mohammad Reza Hosseinzadeh**
video **Hessam Nourani**

with **Vahid Aghapour** *Comte*, **Ali Bagheri** *Kossykh*, **Reza Behboodi** *Lébédev*, **Saeid Changizian** *Borkine*,
Fatemeh Fakhraee *Marta*, **Negar Javaherian** *Sacha*, **Fariba Kamram** *Zina*, **Hassan Madjooni** *Ivanov*,
Mohammad Reza Najafi *Doctor*, **Mahin Sadri** *Anna*

show in persian with surtitles

production **Mehr Theatre Group**
Creation in Tehran, Iranshahr Hall, October 2011

company and tour manager **Pierre Reis**

running time **2h30** (10 minutes interval)

*Show available
on tour starting from
Spring 2012*



Where Were You On January 8th?

(2009)

text, set design and direction by
Amir Reza Koohestani

© Mohammadreza Soltani

sounds & music **Martin Shamoon Pour**
production manager & director's assistant **Mohammad Reza Hosseinzadeh**
technical director & video **Hessam Nourani**

Credits

with **Saeid Changizian** *Ali*, **Fatemeh Fakhraee** *Fati*, **Negar Javaherian** *Sara*, **Elham Korda** *Sogol*,
Ahmad Mehranfar *Abdi*, **Mahin Sadri** *Shideh*

show in persian with surtitles
surtitles technician **Negar Nobakht Foghani**
translation from Persian to English **Vali Mahlouji**

production **Mehr Theatre Group**
Creation in Tehran, Iranshahr Hall, December 2009
with the support of the **Dramatic Arts Centre (Tehran)**

company and tour manager **Pierre Reis**

running time **1h20** (no interval)

*Show available
on tour*

“Each sign is important in Koohestani’s theatre, whose evocative power is even stronger as it points out the unspoken and the restraint.”

Hugues Le Tanneur
in **Les Inrocks**



© Mohammadreza Soltani

Overview

January 8th, midnight, a suburb of Tehran, it snows. Four young women are rehearsing Jean Genet’s play *The Maids* in a house.

Ali, Fatima’s fiancé, who is doing his military service in the police, joined them. He is not supposed to be there, but Fati insisted. Defying the law that forbids a soldier to carry a weapon in a private place, he promises the Duty Officer to return to the police station before dawn. The snow stopped him. Abdi has also joined the rehearsal. They are forced to spend the night in this house.

The next day, when Ali wakes up, he is alone and his weapon has disappeared.

But the house is not the place of the plot, nor the weapon the real issue.

The play weaves a series of phone conversations after that night. Implicitly, the dialogues evoke the current situation of young people in Iran seeking ways to be heard.

A central figure in theatre in Iran, Amir Reza Koohestani, writer-director has enjoyed success in Europe since 2002. He recently collaborated with Oriza Hirata and Sylvain Maurice in the creation of the show *Des Utopies ?* Between symbolism and realism, never ceasing to escape the limits imposed by censorship, his work holds up a mirror to his society in the face of the audience.



Des Utopies ?

(2009)

text and direction by
Sylvain Maurice, Orika Hirata
and **Amir Reza Koohestani**

with **Reza Behboodi, Nadine Berland, Cécile Coustillac, Saeid Changizian, Ryuta Furuta, Yoko Hirata, Minako Inoue, Elham Korda, Éric Petitjean**

Credits

artistic associate **Yann Richard**
Amir Reza Koohestani's artistic assistant **Mahin Sadri**
set and lighting designer **Éric Soyer**
assistant lighting designer **Jean-Pierre Michel**
costumes **Marie La Rocca**
sound **Jean De Almeida**
videos **Renaud Rubiano**

production **Nouveau Théâtre de Besançon - CDN, Agora planning Ltd., Mehr Theatre Group**
coproduction **Tokyo International Arts Festival**

A project figuring in 2008 in the programme of European Intercultural Dialogue / supported by CULTURESFRANCE (agency of the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture and Communications, in charge of developing links between the world's cultures) / supported by Région of Franche-Comté (local authority), the Japan Foundation, Tokyo International Arts Festival, ONDA (National Office for Artistic Diffusion), the Credit Cooperatif (bank) and the the artistic support of Jeune Théâtre National.



© Élisabeth Carecchio

“...an atmosphere of incredible sadness, culminating in a slide show in black and white, variation of absence.”

René Solis
in **Libération**

Overview

The writing of *Des Utopies ?* was shared: Amir Reza replies to Oriza, who himself replies to Sylvain. They followed the same dramatic constraints: nine actors, three with each nationality, a forty minutes play written by each of the two guest writers / stage directors. Acting as host, Sylvain Maurice was responsible for staging the prologue and the epilogue. In the Prologue, the Theatre Director makes an inaugural speech to start these Cross Cultural Exchanges. His address, first coherent, changes little by little, as if the words themselves were rebelling against this doublespeak. This is a way to point out the difference between these political speeches that trace the intellectual heritage of France on the international scene back to the Age of Enlightenment and the truth behind, showing a darker and more selfish reality.

Oriza Hirata, in charge of the first part, wrote a storyline about a small heterogeneous group composed of the Iranian hotel owner and his wife, Japanese investors, French tourists and the hotel staff. On Christmas Eve, they find themselves together in a ski resort near Tehran.

Amir Reza Koohestani presented the backstage version of Oriza's play as a counterpoint of what is staged in the first part. A chaotic backstage where actors whisper together in 4 different languages - French, Persian, Japanese, English - between entrances and exits imposed by the fragmentation of the scenes of Oriza's play, thus revealing relationships and conflicts.

As for the epilogue, a travel into the future, in the ruins of the Theatre where *Des Utopies ?* was programmed. This will be a kind of political fantasy.



Quartet: A Journey North

(2007)

text by

Amir Reza Koohestani and Mahin Sadri

set design and direction by
Amir Reza Koohestani

© Pedram Harbi

sound creation **Ankido Darash**

production manager & director's assistant **Mohammad Reza Hosseinzadeh**

technical director & video **Hessam Nourani**

Credits

with **Baran Kosari** *Negar*, **Hassan Madjooi** *Shamsollah*, **Attila Pessyani** *Fathollah*, **Mahin Sadri** *Shideh*

show in persian with surtitles

surtitles technician **Negar Nobakht Foghani**

production **Mehr Theatre Group**

coproduction **Wiener Festwochen, Theaterformen, Holland Festival, Kunstenfestivaldesarts**

Creation in Tehran, November 2007

with the support of the **Dramatic Arts Centre (Tehran)**

company and tour manager **Pierre Reis**

running time **1h20** (no interval)

*Show available
on tour*



*“No dramatic effects, or revolutionary messages.
Just a few pieces of life murmured, humbly,
jealousy, madness, doubt, shame and tradition.
With speed and precision.”*

Catherine Makereel
in Le Soir

© Shokoofeh Hashemian

Overview

This documentary-style performance takes up deep into the motivations of the human mind. Based on the chilling, true stories of two Iranian murderers, *Quartet: A Journey North* resembles a cool, detached police investigation.

Beneath television screens projecting their own faces, four actors are sit back to back and address the audience from their own isolated spaces, offering interwoven accounts from the two murderers and two relatives of the victims.

Quartet: A Journey North asks the question: what is it that makes an ordinary person become a murderer?

Dry Blood & Fresh Vegetables

(2007)

text and set design by
Amir Reza Koohestani

direction by
Amir Reza Koohestani and Mahin Sadri

© Pierre Reis

technical director & video **Hessam Nourani**
graphism **Pedram Harbi**
music **127 band** / www.127band.com

with **Fatemeh Naghavi, Negar Javaherian**

production **Meeting Points 5** / www.meetingpoints.org
company and tour manager **Pierre Reis**

running time **25 minutes**

Credits



Overview

With *Dry Blood & Fresh Vegetables*, we are privy to the disarming casualness of a telephone conversation between a middle-aged mother and her daughter, a young woman not yet in her thirties. Set to the rhythms of seemingly unrehearsed exchanges, the marrow of life, writ large and small, unscrolls. They discuss motherhood and grandchildren, people around them, womanhood, streets in their neighborhood, life in Tehran, and the war in Iraq.



Amid The Clouds

(2005)

text, set design and direction by
Amir Reza Koohestani

© Abbas Kowsari

Credits

music **Ali Bahrami**

light design **Farshid Mosadequ**

production manager, director's assistant & stage manager **Mohammad Reza Hosseinzadeh**

director's assistant **Mahin Sadri**

with **Baran Kosari** *Mother / The Girl*, **Hassan Madjoooni** *Imour*

show in persian with surtitles

surtitles technician **Negar Nobakht Foghani**

translation from Persian to English **Vali Mahlouji**


Amid The Clouds was written in 2004 during a residency at the Royal Court Theatre in London in the frame of "The 2004 International Residency for Emerging Playwrights" and created at the Kunstenfestivaldesarts the 8th May 2005.

production **Mehr Theatre Group** coproduction **Wiener Festwochen, Kunstenfestivaldesarts**

company and tour manager **Pierre Reis**

running time **1h20** (no interval)

*Show available
on tour on March and
April 2012*



“Here, Koohestani the director brings to his own script almost unbearable poignancy.”

Fiona Mountford
in *Evening Standard*

© Shokoofeh Hashemian

Overview

There exist voices that can pierce the still night.

They seem visceral and primitive; resonating from the dawn of time.

These voices are laden with the memories of people forced off the land on which they live; forced to continue in a place unknown to them, in a language strange to them. These are the voices that speak in *Amid The Clouds*.

In this piece, the young author and director Amir Reza Koohestani blends the rhythms of Persian narrative tradition and the stark reality of a refugee camp. He does so in an attempt to convey the contemporary situation in his native, unadorned and concentrated; giving space for that which is central: the birth of narrative.

On stage stands a large water-filled table and it is here Imour and Zina meet, both on their way to the Promised Land.

Zina is pregnant, hoping to give birth and seek asylum on the opposite side of the English Channel. Imour is consumed by his attempts to silence the atrocious memories that haunt him.

Their flight forces them both to confront who they really are.



Recent Experiences

(2003)

original play by
Nadia Ross and Jacob Wren

adapted and directed by
Amir Reza Koohestani

© Foad Mokhberi

Credits

stage design **Amir Reza Koohestani**
director's assistant **Mahin Sadri**

stage manager **Pierre Reis**

with **Baran Baniahmadi, Saeid Changizian, Sahar Dowlatshahi, Mitra Gorji, Foad Mokhberi, Setareh Pessyani**

show in persian with surtitles
surtitles technician **Mahin Sadri**

production **Mehr Theatre Group**
company and tour manager **Pierre Reis**

running time **1h20** (no interval)

*Show available
on tour*

“Each woman’s character is taking shape with an inflection of voice, a smile, a frown, it’s nothing, it’s strange and even more confusing that this Western history is played by veiled women with beautifully eloquent faces.”

Martine Silber
in **Le Monde**



© Foad Mokhberi

Overview

A long table on stage, surrounded by chairs and the audience.

We have not gathered here to eat but to listen and what we hear are the stories of ordinary people.

Koohestani has said that he is interested in a man as it and he does not need interpretations nor commentaries in art. That is why his theatre is simple and immobile.

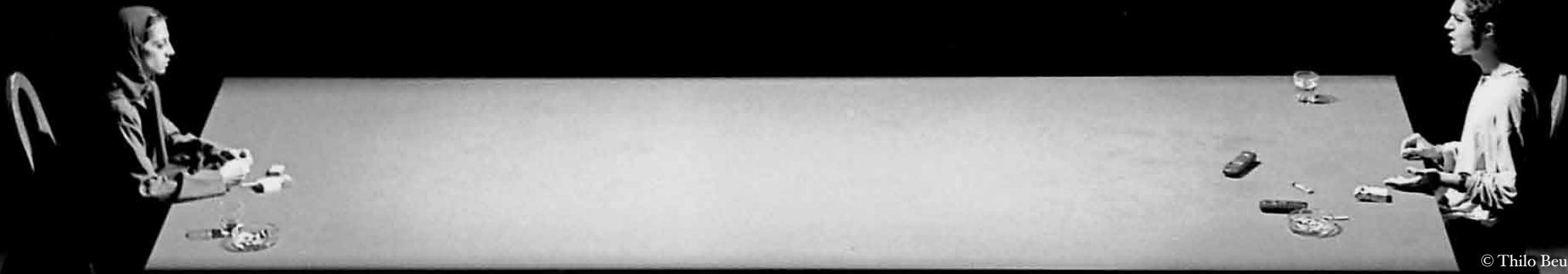
Recent Experiences tells the stories of one family during four generations. These are ordinary people and everyday stories which have happened on the background of the century’s big events.

Koohestani’s actors do not try to be their characters but to lend their voices for them.

Dance On Glasses

(2001)

text, set design and direction by **Amir Reza Koohestani**



© Thilo Beu

Credits

choreography **Ehsan Hamet, Mohammad Abbasi**
director's assistant **Mahin Sadri**

musics *Host Of Seraphim* by **Dead Can Dance**, *Orion* by **Metallica**, *Thousand Years* by **Sting**
vocal composition **Ali Moini**

with **Zohreh Mansour Abadi, Ali Moini**
dancer **Mohammad Abbasi**

show in Persian with surtitles
surtitles technician **Mahin Sadri**

production **Mehr Theatre Group** coproduction **Kunstenfestivaldesarts**
created in Shiraz, Iran in 2001

company and tour manager **Pierre Reis**

runing time **1h20** (no interval)

*“After Bonn and Moscow,
Dance On Glasses
has left Brussels
in tears at the last
Kunstenfestivaldesarts.”*

Jean-Louis Perrier
in *Le Monde*



© Thilo Beu

Overview

The man and woman are seated, each at the far end of a four meters long table.

Spectators in the audience sit facing one another listening to them.

They are just talking. He keeps asking: “Are you afraid when you dance on the glasses?”
The more he hassles her the more she withdraws; the more he tries to trap her the more she runs away.

Dance On Glasses is the third play by Amir Reza Koohestani.

His writing is new, vivid and sharp: passion for giving everything hides the desire to control it all; persistent refusal reveals the hunger to be free.

Even if it means getting lost.

It might be an Iranian story, but the battle is universal.

Ivanov (2011)

. October - November 2011 / Iranshahr Hall, Tehran, Iran

Where Were You In January 8th? (2009)

. 13th and 14th July 2011 / SESC Belenzinho, São Paulo, Brazil
. 8th and 9th July 2011 / Festival Internacional de São José do Rio Preto, Brazil
. 1st to 3rd July 2011 / Theaterformen Festival, Hannover, Germany
. 5th to 17th October 2010 / Festival d'Automne à Paris, La Colline - théâtre national, Paris, France
. 3rd to 6th June 2010 / Wiener Festwochen, Brut Theater, Vienna, Austria
. 29th May 2010 / Festival Extra, Bonlieu Scène nationale, Annecy, France
. 25th and 26th May 2010 / Festival Huis a/d Werf, Theater Kikker, Utrecht, Holland
. 20th to 23rd May 2010 / Kunstenfestivaldesarts, KVS Box, Brussels, Belgium
. 22nd and 23rd March 2010 / Festival Exit, Maison des Arts de Créteil, France
. 22nd January 2010 / Fadjr International Theatre Festival, Tehran, Iran
. 18th December 2009 / Creation in Tehran, Iran (30 shows)

Performances dates

Quartet: A Journey North (2007)

. 11th and 12th December 2008 / Divine Comedy Festival, Krakow, Poland
. 2nd to 6th December 2008 / Barbican Pit Theatre, London, England
. 20th to 22nd November 2008 / Maison des Arts de Créteil, France
. 17th and 18th November 2008 / Le Manège, Maubeuge, France
. 29th to 31st October 2008 / International Stanislavsky Foundation, Moscow, Russia
. 7th to 10th June 2008 / Theaterformen, Hanover, Germany
. 1st to 3rd June 2008 / Holland Festival, Amsterdam, Holland
. 22nd to 25th May 2008 / Wiener Festwochen, Vienna, Austria
. 11th to 17th May 2008 / Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels, Belgium
. November 2007 / Creation in Tehran, Iran

Dry Blood & Fresh Vegetables (2007)

. 29 th and 30 th August 2008	/	Frysk Festival, Leeuwarden, Holland
. 2 nd to 4 th April 2008	/	Festival Exit, Maison des Arts de Créteil, France
. 17 th January 2008	/	Meeting Points 5, KVS Box, Brussels, Belgium
. 24 th November 2007	/	Hebbel Am Ufer Theater, Berlin, Germany
. 17 th November 2007	/	Beirut, Lebanon
. 14 th November 2007	/	Damascus, Syria

Amid The Clouds (2005)

. 15 th to 18 th March 2012	/	Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens, Greece
. 18 th and 19 th May 2008	/	Trafó, House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest, Hungary
. 13 th and 14 th May 2008	/	Comédie de l'Est, Colmar, France
. 27 th to 29 th November 2007	/	Nouveau Théâtre de Besançon - CDN, France
. 25 th and 26 th October 2006	/	Festival Encounters, Warsaw, Poland
. 22 nd October 2006	/	Lugano, Switzerland
. 23 rd and 24 th August 2006	/	Göteborg Dance & Theatre Festival, Sweden
. 19 th August 2006	/	Bunker, Mladi Levi Festival, Ljubljana, Slovenia
. 27 th and 28 th June 2006	/	Festival delle Colline, Torino, Italy
. 22 nd to 24 th June 2006	/	Theatre Bellevue, Holland Festival, Amsterdam, Holland
. 8 th to 10 th March 2006	/	Kampnagel, Festival Polyzentral, Hamburg, Germany
. November 2005	/	City Theatre, Tehran, Iran
. 3 rd to 5 th September 2005	/	Festival La Bâtie, Château Rouge, Annemasse, France
. 28 th to 30 th August 2005	/	Zuercher Theater Spektakel, Zurich, Switzerland
. 13 th to 23 rd July 2005	/	LIFT, Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, London, England
. 7 th to 9 th July 2005	/	International Festival of the Arts, Santarcangelo, Italy
. 2 nd July 2005	/	Belluard Bollwerk International, Fribourg, Switzerland
. 26 th to 30 th May 2005	/	Wiener Festwochen, Vienna, Austria
. 14 th to 22 nd May 2005	/	Théâtre de la Bastille, Paris, France
. 8 th to 13 th May 2005	/	Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels, Belgium

*Performances
dates*

Des Utopies ? (2009)

- . 29th April 2009 / Le Prisme, Élancourt, France
- . 21st to 24th April 2009 / Centre Dramatique Thionville-Lorraine, France
- . 14th to 17th April 2009 / Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne - CDN, France
- . 7th to 11th April 2009 / L'Échangeur, Bagnolet, France
- . 3rd April 2009 / Théâtre Granit, Scène nationale de Belfort, France
- . 23th to 29th March 2009 / Tokyo International Arts Festival, Japan
- . 28th January to 6th February 2009 / Nouveau Théâtre de Besançon - CDN, France

Einzelzimmer (2006)

- . November 2006 / Schauspiel, Köln, Germany

*Performances
dates*

Recent Experiences (2003)

- . 6th to 14th April 2010 / Centre Dramatique National, Orléans, France
- . 14th to 16th June 2008 / Festival delle Colline, Torino, Italy
- . 27th and 28th November 2007 / Le Parvis, Scène nationale de Tarbes, France
- . 21st and 22nd November 2007 / Festival Novart, Théâtre national Bordeaux Aquitaine, Bordeaux, France
- . 8th to 18th November 2007 / Festival d'Automne à Paris, Théâtre de la Bastille, Paris, France
- . 27th and 28th October 2007 / Festival Encounters, Warsaw, Poland
- . 1st and 2nd July 2007 / Festival Baltoscandal, Rakvere, Estonia
- . 27th and 28th March 2007 / Maison des Arts de Créteil, France
- . 16th and 17th March 2007 / Le Manège, Maubeuge, France
- . January 2005 / Fadjr International Theatre Festival, Tehran, Iran
- . September 2003 / Theatre City, Tehran, Iran
- . January 2003 / Fadjr International Theatre Festival, Tehran, Iran
- . October 2002 / Autumn play reading season, Tehran, Iran

Dance On Glasses (2001)

Performances dates

. 21 st to 24 th March 2006	/	Le Lieu Unique, Nantes, France
. 2 nd to 5 th November 2005	/	Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, Portugal
. 9 th and 10 th October 2005	/	Riocenacontemporanea, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
. 5 th and 6 th October 2005	/	Cena Promoções, Brasilia, Brazil
. 27 th to 30 th September 2005	/	Le vie dei Festival, Roma, Italy
. 16 th to 24 th September 2005	/	Théâtre de la Bastille, Paris, France
. 7 th to 9 th September 2005	/	Festival La Bâtie, Geneva, Switzerland
. 12 th and 13 th June 2005	/	Festival delle Colline, Torino, Italy
. 6 th to 8 th June 2005	/	Festival TransAmériques, Montreal, Canada
. 2 nd to 4 th June 2005	/	Carrefour International Festival of Theatre, Québec, Canada
. 27 th to 30 th May 2005	/	Wiener Festwochen, Vienna, Austria
. November 2004	/	Festival Mettre en scène, Théâtre National de Bretagne, Rennes, France
. October 2004	/	Le vie dei festival, Modena, Italy
. October 2004	/	Le Manège, Maubeuge, France
. October 2004	/	Maison des Arts de Créteil, France
. October 2004	/	Dublin Fringe Festival, Ireland
. July 2004	/	Belluard Bollwerk International, Fribourg, Switzerland
. May 2004	/	El, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels, Belgium
. April 2004	/	Hebbel Am Ufer Theater, Berlin, Germany
. May 2003	/	5 th International Chekhov Olympiad Festival, Moscow, Russia
. January 2003	/	21 st Fadjr International Theatre Festival, Tehran, Iran
. December 2002 - January 2003	/	Molavi Hall, Tehran, Iran
. August - September 2002	/	Laeigh Hall, Shiraz, Iran
. June 2002	/	Theater Der Welt, Bonn, Germany
. January 2002	/	20 th International Fadjr Theatre Festival, Tehran, Iran
. January 2002	/	Laeigh Hall, Shiraz, Iran
. November 2001	/	13 th South Regional Theatre Festival, Shahrekord, Iran
. October 2001	/	13 th Fars State Theatre Festival, Shiraz, Iran