

The Edinburgh Iranian Festival 2015 – a showcase for world class culture



Here are some things you might not know about **Iran**:

- it has a centuries-old tradition of producing intriguing **textiles and beautiful garments** AND a thriving modern **fashion** industry, mixing traditional designs and new ideas to create world class **fabrics, clothes and jewellery**;
- it has one of the world's most important **arthouse cinemas** (Werner Herzog is one of its fans) and its films have won top awards at festivals in Venice, Cannes, Berlin, San Sebastian and London;
- **Persian art** has one of the richest and most diverse heritages in the world – and Iran also has a vibrant **modern art scene**;



Arezoo Symphony Orchestra

- the Glasgow-based **Arezoo Symphony Orchestra** was founded in 2011 with the aim of introducing western audiences to **Iranian classical and orchestral music**;
- there is a **Persian School** here in Edinburgh;
- Edinburgh has its very own **Middle Eastern and Kurdish restaurant**, the **Nawroz** in Potterow.



This week sees the beginning of the **Edinburgh Iranian Festival**, a ten day non-political celebration of history and

culture; one of its aims is to integrate Iranian and Scottish communities through a broad range of events and activities. You can attend a **Persian Chic fashion show** at the **National Museum**, see the work of **Iranian (and other) artists** at **Summerhall**, the **Sutton Gallery** and the **Filmhouse**, and learn how to **bake Iranian bread** at the **Nawroz**. The Sutton Gallery also offers a **Valentine's Day evening of Persian poetry and music**, whilst at the Festival's opening ceremony at **St John's** you can hear the ***Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*** – in Scots!



At **Liberton High School** (home of the **Persian School** on Saturday mornings) you can see the **children's art work** and try an **introductory workshop in the Persian language**. **Word Power Books**, meanwhile, hosts a special book reading for children, at which the authors of ***The Adventures of Sohrab and the Genie*** and ***Persian Nursery Rhymes*** will read from and discuss their work, whilst at the University, **Dr Karen Babyan** will introduce ***Blood Oranges Dipped in Salt***, her book based on the stories and memoirs of Armenians in Iran.



If you'd like to find out more about **Persian textiles**, go along to the **Nomad's Tent** in St Leonard's Lane for **Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood's** talk ***Beyond the Chador***; the Nomad's Tent will also be the venue for **Jila Peacock's Persian Calligraphy demonstration** – you'll even get the chance to create your own calligraphic work of art.



The Friday Mosque of Isfahan, 'The Jewel of Persian Architecture' will be the subject of a talk by **Professor Robert Hillenbrand** at the University of Edinburgh's George Square Lecture Theatre; **Professor Carole Hillenbrand** will be at the same venue to explore the career of ***Nizam al-Mulk 'The Most Famous Persian Vizier'***, who managed to stay in power for

over thirty years in 11th century Iran. But in the ranking of ancient dynasties, few can be topped by the **Achaemenid**, who ruled the biggest empire the world had ever seen – and whose monarchs demonstrated their power by importing a huge variety of exotic wildlife, from Asiatic lions and Bactrian camels to parrots, peacocks and wild jungle fowl. That Iranian Court must have been a lively place – and you can hear all about it in a talk by **Dr Lloyd Llewellyn Jones**, ***Xerxes' Cabinet of Curiosities*** on 11th February.



Meanwhile, the **Filmhouse** is hosting the **2015 Iranian Film Season**; films range from a documentary about **Negahdar Jamali**, who has been making Westerns in Shiraz for 35 years, to ***Taboor***, in which a man concocts an aluminium jumpsuit to protect his hypersensitive body from a daily rise in temperature caused by pervasive electromagnetic waves – and goes out every day to destroy cockroach nests. The **Filmhouse Cafe** is also exhibiting a set of photographs, ***Vividly in Tehran*** by **Laleh Sherkat**, who captures ordinary life in the capital's busy, colourful streets.



Almost all of these events are free (exceptions being the films and the cookery class), so why not take advantage of this opportunity to learn about the culture of a country that few of us have visited? You can find full details at <http://www.ediranfest.co.uk/index.php>, and most events are also listed in [The Edinburgh Reporter's 'What's On' columns](#). The Edinburgh Iranian Festival runs 6th-16th February 2015.

