

## Director's note:

In my point of view, one of the most effective ways to establish intercultural communication is the thought the translation and adaptation of dramatic literature. The theater is probably the most suitable platform for visualizing abstract elements of a culture, as a system of beliefs and values.

As an artist who has lived more than 10 years in diaspora, I find my way of expressing myself and contributing to socio-cultural activities by presenting part of my culture that is less known to the rest of the world. The process of selecting an original dramatic text and transferring that to the target culture requires a full understanding and accurate knowledge of both cultures. I was fortunate to meet a brilliant group of actors and designers on this path who were not only of great assistance in helping me understand unfamiliar parts of the American culture, but they were also very keen and enthusiastic to get to know the Iranian culture.

Among the Iranian dramatic literature, Bahram Beyzaie's plays, although rich in cultural semiotic, discuss universal themes. Aurash, like other works by Bahram Beyzaie, is an attempt to generalize a story and bring it out of the barrier of a given date and geography even if it is a mythical date. The character of Aurash is an earthly man who was doomed to convey the burden that is entrusted to him by the mythical Aurash. He, unlike the mythical Aurash, does not have any sacred and divine power and is relying on human weaknesses and powers to do heroic work.

In the process of translation and adaptation of this play on stage, we tried to create a medium for the audience to relate to these characters regardless of the culture they belong to. However, we are at the beginning of our intercultural theatre journey and certainly, your comments and suggestions will be a great help to find the right way.

-Nikta Sabouri



## Translator's note:

Despite Bahram Beyzaie's Aurash having been regarded as a classic of Persian literature and drama since its appearance nearly seventy years ago, this is the first complete English translation of the work.

Beyzaie's texts prove an especial challenge to replicate in English. As an expression and celebration of Persian cultural identity, Beyzaie's writing omits any and all Arabic words and letters from his use of Farsi, creating a distinctive literary style sounding much like Middle Persian, but with his own contemporary reinvention of the language. This is roughly the equivalent of an English-speaking author writing a new play using only words from before the Norman Conquest.

In translating Aurash, it was our hope to be as faithful as possible to Beyzaie's original text while providing an English approximation of his time-sweeping use of language. Because English has evolved more dramatically than has Persian over the past millennium, restricting our translation to using language from before the Norman Conquest would have resulted in a text largely indecipherable to a contemporary audience, and it also would have been impossible to translate Beyzaie's words accurately and faithfully. We decided the most effective approach was to limit ourselves to using words in use before 1900 (and usually much earlier than that) and to create a text that sounds vaguely akin to an English medieval ballad without tarrying from a literal translation of the original Farsi.

It should also be noted that, language aside, the unusual structure of the original Aurash text poses some intriguing challenges for production. On the page, Aurash doesn't even look like a play; while the piece is divided into scenes, the text is written in a continual array of prose with some text in brackets but no obvious use of stage directions. The work's subtitle, Narration for Narration for Naqqali and Other Performances, indicates that Beyzaie intended for this piece either to be performed by a single narrator in the tradition of Naqqali storytelling, or to be read or fully performed by multiple actors in a more conventionally dramatic production (as in this production). As such, which parts of the text are to be read, acted out, narrated, sung, or left unspoken as stage directions are up to each production of Aurash. Beyzaie's Narration for Narration is thus somewhat of a flexible document, a poetical jumping-off point for a wide variety of performance styles.

Though too often neglected or dismissed as only appealing to certain parts of the world, we feel with every fiber of our being the culture of Persia is the culture of us all, and we hope that in this work of Persian cultural celebration you might discover themes and experiences decidedly American in spirit. Let us become united when for too long we have been lethally divided.

- Richard Saul Chason

# Aurash

By Bahram Beyzaie

**Director** Nikta Sabouri

**Translators** Richard Saul Chason & Nikta Sabouri

**Movement Director/ Choreographer** Jani Monet Rodrigues

**Music Director** Farzin Dehghani

**Musicians** Farzin Dehghani, Afarin Nazari

**Costume Designer** Andrew Child

**Light Designer** Sam Tompkins Martin

**Graphic Designer** Parastoo Aslanbeik

**Stage Manager** Briana Clarke

**Production Manager** Hani Bakhshaei

## Meet the Actors:

**Jani Monet Rodrigues** is honored to work again with Nikta Sabouri on another one of Bahram Beyzaie's epic works. Last year she performed a leading role in Nikta's production of *Death of Yazdgerd*, and is excited to participate in *Aurash* both as an actor and as a Movement Director/Choreographer. Jani has very much enjoyed learning about Iranian history, literature, music, and storytelling traditions during this process and has become an avid Beyzaie fan for life! Her other more recent acting and dance credits include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Apollinaire Theater Company), *A Very Queer Christmas* (Open Theatre Project), *Carmen* (BYSO), *Compound Fractures* (Two Sharp Quills), and Boston Theater Company's educational Shakespeare tour.

**Richard Saul Chason (translator)/ Shaoul Rick Chason (actor)** is an actor-playwright, dramaturg, and baritone. This is his second production with this company, having appeared as the Miller in last year's *Death of Yazdgerd*. Other local credits include Brutus in *Julius Caesar* (Praxis Stage); *The Blind Owl*, *Shahnameh: The Tale of King Zahak*, *Fish Trees*, *The Ice Box*, *The Apartment*, *The Golden Shower* (Boston Experimental Theater Company); *Macbeth* (Bay Colony Shakespeare Company and It's a Fiasco); *DREAM* (Atlantis Playmakers); *American Moor*, J.A.S.O.N. (OWI); *The Cellos' Dialogues* (Boston Conservatory); *Singing Bones* (Fool's Journey); *The Werewolf*, *La Zombiata* (Wholetone Opera). As a playwright, his play *The Golden Shower* was produced by the Boston Experimental Theatre Company and his Berlin; or, *the Part of You That Wants It: A Musical Comedy Love Story (Written by Accident)* was produced at Central Square Theater. This is his first translation.

**Rachel Leigh Richter** is thrilled to be a part of this brilliant passion project. Her previous credits include Ophelia in *Hamlet*, and Calpurnia in *Julius Caesar* (Praxis Stage); Bianca in *Othello* (Dream Role Theater); Antonio in *The Tempest* (Clark University); and three seasons as a Youth Underground Ambassador at the Central Square Theatre. She also spent a semester in London at the British American Drama Academy.

**Eric McGowan** has been undergoing temporary dissociative breaks from reality (also known as "acting") for over 20 years. Since graduating from Holy Cross in Worcester (where he also got his first professional acting role as Francis Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Eric has acted in Boston area productions ranging from Shakespeare and other classics to new plays, working with companies such as Praxis Stage, Apollinaire Theatre Co., Flat Earth Theatre Co., and Anthem Theatre Co. Eric has also taken classes at Shakespeare & Company as well as Stella Adler Studio in New York City. Eric is thrilled to be working with such a fantastic cast and crew!

## Naqqali (Iranian Storytelling)

**Naqqali** is a traditional Iranian form of storytelling in which a narrator (Naqqal) tells the mythical and folkloric stories of Persia with variance in tone, expression, gestures, and movements. In this dramatic form of storytelling, Naqqals play several roles during the narration and their performances are accompanied by musical instruments. A professional Naqqal is a skillful actor with the ability to improvise and captivate the audience.

## Terminology

**Mehr ( Mithra):** Mehr is the ancient Indo-Iranian divinity of covenant and oath, the protector of truth, and symbol of the sun, a mediator between God and humans, bearer of light. The word Mehr has come to mean love, affection, kindness, friendship, mercy, sympathy, knowledge, and prosperity.

**Nahid ( Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā) (Anahid) (Anahita):** Anahita or Nahid is the oldest Iranian goddess, as the divinity of 'the Waters' (Aban) and hence associated with fertility, healing and wisdom.

**Shahbaz:** a giant bird, larger than any other. It is the name of a fabled bird.

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# Aurash

by Bahram Beyzaie

directed by Nikta Sabouri

Translated by

Shaoul Rick Chason & Nikta Sabouri

March 5, 6 & 7th, 2020

Boston Playwrights' Theatre

*Who is Aurash? Who was unknown at dawn and now  
the eyes of the cosmos are upon him!*