

CHAH / BADAN

(The Well / The Body)



A theatre production directed by Hossein Zoghi
Written by Mahsa Mohebbali

1. Introduction and Artistic Statement

What is the play about?

CHAH/BADAN is a theatre production built around a visceral monologue that explores the history of the oppression of women across different cultures. At its core, the play stages an ontological conflict: the struggle between the female body and a patriarchal system that seeks to define and control it.

Core Metaphors

The play is built around **two central metaphors**:

- **The Well (Chah)**: Represents the *archive of repression*, the historical space of silence and the unmarked grave of Tahirih Qurratu'l-Ayn (1817–1852), the visionary Persian poet and pioneering feminist. The well (*chah* in Persian) is both the prison cell awaiting today's women activists and a symbol of the dark side of the binary logic imposed by the patriarchal gaze (body versus reason, passion versus *logos*).
 - **The Body (Badan)**: The ultimate site of resistance. Through this performative act, the production reveals how women's bodies have been forcibly reduced to passive texts, while also celebrating how they have been reclaimed through acts of radical self-affirmation, becoming powerful revolutionary manifestos in the spirit of *écriture féminine*.
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Central Narrative

The play argues that the struggle for bodily autonomy and sovereignty is an ongoing, transhistorical and profoundly disruptive act. Throughout the performance, the actress embodies figures ranging from Medea and Antigone to Tahirih, whose public unveiling in 1848 amounted to a radical rejection of *sharia law*. Every act of defiance, such as Qamar-ol-Moluk Vaziri performing unveiled on an Iranian stage, emerges as a powerful testimony rising from the well of history.

2. Structure of the Piece

Genre: A monologue with performative elements, structured in two parts. The production combines an intense physical theatre performance with a formal and theoretical discursive dimension.

Cast: One female performer. The actress embodies a series of historical and mythical figures, including Tahirih, Medea, Antigone, Qamar and the contemporary dissident woman, transforming their individual experiences into a collective political statement.

Technical Crew: One technician responsible for all technical cues, sound operation and lighting changes.



Phase I: The Monologue (encarnación y testimonio). La intérprete participa en un intenso ejercicio de teatro físico y dramático, transitando entre distintos personajes dentro de la estructura simbólica del pozo (Chah). Esta primera parte se centra en el trauma personal e histórico, utilizando objetos y testimonios.

Phase II: The Performative Act (Prayer, Body, Manifesto). The performer deliberately breaks the dramatic frame, reclaims her position before the audience, and presents a transhistorical thesis on women, leading the production towards its climactic conclusion.



3. The Stage Space

The scenography adopts an intimate, circular configuration, placing the audience around the central action. This arrangement is designed to evoke a sense of confinement—a courtroom, or perhaps a clandestine gathering where anger is summoned and given voice.

The Tens, The Well: Four large white fabrics suspended from a single overhead point form a conical structure above the stage. Together they evoke the khimeh (the tent of the Conference of Badasht), the veil (hijab), the well (Chah) and the prison cell, creating a poetic metaphor for confinement.

Ritual Objects: An archive of memories and suppressed histories. Dolls and toys evoke Medea's murdered children as well as lost innocence. A wooden staff functions as a ritual object, a platform for prayer, and a symbolic device that recalls scenes of violence and torture.

4. Technical Rider

Microphone and Microphone Stand: Required for the offstage voice that embodies the detached authority of the oppressive power. This element is essential, as it not only interrupts the action but also structures the progression of the monologue.

Sound System: The sound design is inspired by traditional Persian music, reinterpreted through a contemporary lens.

Lighting: Flexible and adaptable. The lighting alternates between bright general illumination for moments of revelation, such as Tahirih's unveiling, and subdued, restrained lighting that conveys the oppressive atmosphere of the Well (*Chah*).

"Our bodies, repressed throughout history, have become the enduring archive of resistance."



5. Production Credits

Directed by: Hossein Zoghi

Written by: Mahsa Mohebali

Performed by: Mireia Illamola

Original Music: Marc Naya

Set Design: Carlos Gallardo

Lighting Design: Mario Andrés Gómez

Photography & Video: Júlia Girós

Produced by: Associació Panorama 180



This production was developed as part of the NO CALLAREM Barcelona Artists at Risk Artist Residency Programme.

With the support of:



Hossein Zoghi

Hossein Zoghi (Tehran, 1980) is an Iranian theatre director, actor and journalist.



For many years, he has developed his career within Iran's independent and underground theatre scene. His productions primarily address politically and socially sensitive issues in Iran and across the Middle East, often incorporating references to banned Iranian political and social figures. In his stage practice, he seeks to combine elements of Persian theatrical traditions with contemporary performance languages.

As a result of his work on political subjects, particularly after directing a production devoted to Mohammad Mossadegh and the 1953 Iranian coup d'état, he was barred from participating in the country's official theatre circuit. Despite this, he continued to stage a number of productions clandestinely in Tehran.

The pressures of censorship and repeated bans have profoundly shaped both his theatrical practice and his journalistic career.

As a journalist, he has worked for numerous Iranian media outlets and served on several editorial boards. His professional trajectory has been marked by persistent persecution and by the repeated closure of newspapers and publications with which he collaborated.

Mahsa Mohebbali

Mahsa Mohebbali (Tehran, 1972) is an Iranian novelist, literary critic and screenwriter, widely regarded as one of the leading voices of the third generation of contemporary Iranian fiction.



She gained widespread recognition with works such as the short-story collection *Lovemaking in the Footnotes* and the novel *Don't Worry*, both of which received the prestigious Houshang Golshiri Literary Award.

She has also established a successful career as a screenwriter. She has written several screenplays, including the films *Ages of Love (Doran-e Ashighi)* and *19*, which have received awards in Iran and at international film festivals.

Her work is characterised by a critical and courageous perspective, as well as a deep engagement with younger generations, gender issues, social crises and the realities of the queer community in contemporary Iranian society.

Don't Worry, published in the United States under the title *In Case of Emergency*, was selected by *The New Yorker* as one of the best books published in the United States in 2022.

Because of the critical and subversive nature of her work, Mahsa Mohebbali has for years been subjected to constant surveillance and intense pressure from the Iranian security forces.

Touring Budget

This production has been developed by **Associació Panorama 180**, a non-profit organisation that collaborates with the international **Artists at Risk (AR)** network by hosting international artists at risk through the **NO CALLAREM Barcelona Artistes en Risc** Artist Residency Programme.

Bookings for this production are managed by Associació Panorama 180, which is responsible for the overall production of the performance and for coordinating the artistic and technical teams involved in its presentation.

Our mission is to create new opportunities for artists at risk by enabling them to rebuild their lives through artistic creation and cultural exchange. By presenting this production, cultural organisations actively affirm their commitment to artistic freedom, human rights and the defence of democratic values.

Production & Distribution

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**Performance followed by a post-show discussion
with Hossein Zoghi and Mahsa Moheballi.**

**2.080,00 €*
(VAT not included)**

* Please note that the performance fee may be adjusted depending on touring requirements, including travel, accommodation, per diems and other logistical considerations. We would be pleased to provide a tailored quotation based on your venue and specific requirements.