

JOURNAL

SDC

WINTER/SPRING 2017

TAZEWELL THOMPSON

THE WORK I MUST DO

BROADWAY ASIA

WITH JOHN RANDO +
MARC ROUTH

DIRECTING AT THE LA PHIL

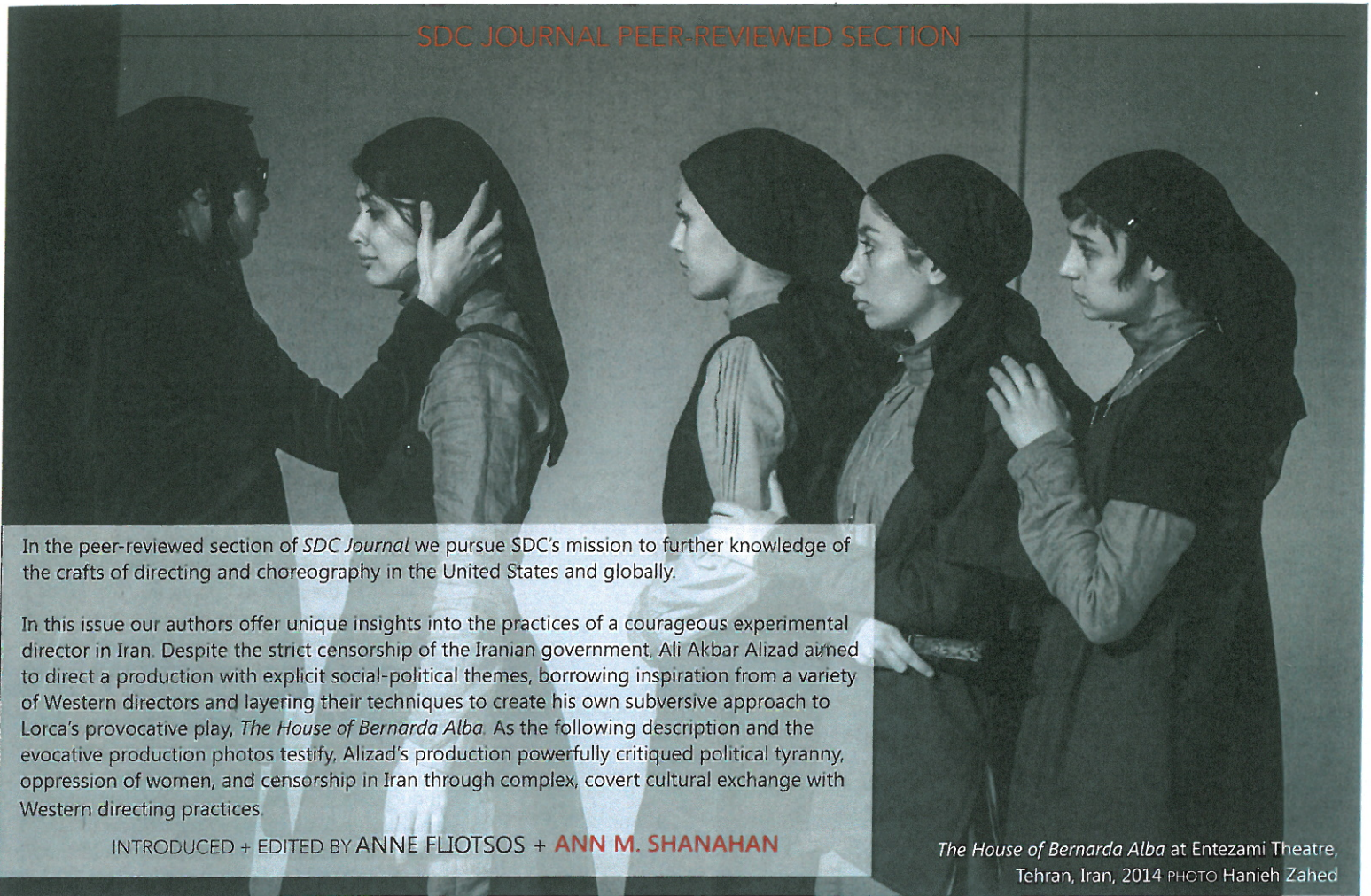
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PEER-REVIEWED SECTION

DIRECTORIAL COURAGE IN IRAN

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In the peer-reviewed section of *SDC Journal* we pursue SDC's mission to further knowledge of the crafts of directing and choreography in the United States and globally.

In this issue our authors offer unique insights into the practices of a courageous experimental director in Iran. Despite the strict censorship of the Iranian government, Ali Akbar Alizad aimed to direct a production with explicit social-political themes, borrowing inspiration from a variety of Western directors and layering their techniques to create his own subversive approach to Lorca's provocative play, *The House of Bernarda Alba*. As the following description and the evocative production photos testify, Alizad's production powerfully critiqued political tyranny, oppression of women, and censorship in Iran through complex, covert cultural exchange with Western directing practices.

INTRODUCED + EDITED BY ANNE FLIOTSOS + **ANN M. SHANAHAN**

The House of Bernarda Alba at Entezami Theatre, Tehran, Iran, 2014 PHOTO Hanieh Zahed

A CASE STUDY OF DIRECTORIAL COURAGE: AN IRANIAN DIRECTOR'S SUBVERSIVE PRODUCTION OF LORCA'S *The House of Bernarda Alba*

BY JOIE MIROUX + **PETER ZAZALI**

Bernarda Alba: "In the eight years this mourning that will last, the wind from the street shan't enter this house." (Lorca 21)

Written two months before his brutal death at the hands of Spain's Francoist regime in 1936, Federico Garcia Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* simultaneously addresses themes of authoritarianism and the oppression of women. Set on the rural estate of the titular character, the play centers on Alba's tyrannical treatment of her five daughters, with the youngest (Adela) responding to the repressive situation by committing suicide. *Bernarda's* "house" is a site in which individualism and freedom are rejected in the context of a patriarchal society in which a woman's self-worth is attached to her husband. Having lost her second husband, Alba orders an eight-year period of mourning over the household, a decree that disallows her daughters the right to freely express themselves or make personal decisions. Denied their individuality, the young women are casualties of her hard-hearted dictums and unwavering commitment to tradition. It is a domestic sphere rife with subjugation and death.

A reaction against the totalitarianism of Francoist Spain, Lorca's play and its sociopolitical themes continue to resonate today, as noted by Spanish theatre scholar Gwynne Edwards, who posits *Bernarda Alba* "as the expression of a fundamental and universal conflict between those life enhancing and life denying that have been at the heart of human experience from time immemorial" (Lorca xxix). Thus, the play can be seen as a call for sociopolitical change in the face of dictatorial rule, a theme germane to Iranian director Ali Akbar Alizad's decision to stage the work in February of 2014. Alizad explains:

The eight years of mourning in *The House of Bernarda Alba* reminded me of all the fear and misery cultivated by the eight years of [Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad's presidency. I wanted to showcase the damage that he had caused, specifically those related to women's rights and their oppression and exclusion from the sociopolitical discourse of our country.¹

Just as Ahmadinejad's regime terrorized Iranians from 2005 to 2013, Alba likewise lords over her daughters for a period of eight years. This contextual similarity between the play and the Iranian dictator prompted Alizad's courageous endeavor.

Our aim in this essay is to shed light on the creative and personal courage of one of Iraq's most provocative stage directors by presenting his working processes in the context of a subversive rendering of the play that tacitly criticized the Ahmadinejad regime. We begin by providing a contemporaneous overview of Iran's sociopolitical situation, before examining Alizad's approach to staging *Bernarda Alba* in a production that was as daring in its theatrical form as it was in its controversial content. In doing so, we address his multifaceted approach to rehearsals, which included techniques from Bogart, Brecht, Stanislavsky, Meisner, and Wilson.²

ALIZAD'S *Bernarda Alba* IN CONTEXT

Alizad is currently a lecturer in cinema and theatre at Tehran's Art University, where he received his BA and MA during the 1990s. He began directing professionally in 1991 with Iran's Aeein and Leev theatre companies, before founding 84Theatre in 2006, an organization dedicated to producing and reimagining the work of foreign playwrights in political ways. Indeed, Alizad sees theatre as a catalyst for social change, with his cause especially focused on Iran's negation of democracy, censorship of free speech, and marginalization of women. For example, under Ahmadinejad, he witnessed "the brutal censorship of art works, books that didn't get a publication permit, and the *Ershad* patrol arresting women for breaking Islamic codes," thereby inspiring Alizad to adopt a Theatre for Social Change model, albeit one created in the key of subtlety and coded meanings.³

Ahmadinejad was the sixth president of the Islamic Republic of Iran and arguably the most controversial in the nation's history. In June of 2009, a majority of Iranians voted to end his vile administration, which was fraught with draconian restrictions and censorship. Hopes were high for a change in power, as people voted in great numbers. Less than two hours after the polls closed, however, devastating news overcame the country: Ahmadinejad was reelected with over seventy percent of the vote, an outcome mired in chicanery and fraud. To confirm the rigged election, Iran's state-sponsored television declared it a landmark victory for Ahmadinejad and his coercive government. During the subsequent four years, his regime reached its highest levels of totalitarianism and brutality, with the Iranian Guard executing protestors, imprisoning political activists, shutting down media outlets, and censoring artistic activities. Similar to the environment of *Bernarda Alba*, a wall of isolation enveloped the country. Entangled in an austere situation with little tolerance for civil disobedience or criticism of the government, the entire country silently mourned those who had sacrificed their lives for freedom and democracy.

Outraged by the eight years of oppression during Ahmadinejad's presidency, Alizad initially tried to produce *Bernarda Alba* in 2011 as a deconstructed work of political subversion. He saw Lorca's play as a way to expose the atrocities of Iran's dictatorship, stating, "I was looking for a play that could articulate and demonstrate the pathetic sociopolitical condition of Iran." He commenced rehearsals in July of 2011 in an obscure warehouse with the intention of performing the work at Tehran's Shahid Bheshty University. A few months

into the process, Alizad received notice from an "anonymous caller" that "the warehouse was to be destroyed and had to be emptied immediately without further explanation," thereby canceling the production for the near term. Implicit in this unforeseen circumstance was the Iranian government's censorship of a production deemed unacceptable for public consumption on the grounds that it challenged Iran's authoritarian leadership.

Censorship is a way of life in Iran. "Its existence is undeniable," Alizad claims, as restrictions against artistic expression are implemented through shutting down productions or exhibits, banning literature, and the overarching threat of arrest and imprisonment. In fact, we had to take precautions throughout our interview process for fear that Alizad's words in print might somehow get back to Iranian authorities and result in his detainment. Arguably, the government's most egregious atrocities in recent history occurred during its crackdown against the Green Movement in 2009, when protesters challenged the fraudulent results of Ahmadinejad's reelection. In response to the fraud, scores of political activists comprising the Green Movement protested Ahmadinejad's alleged victory, causing many of them to be detained, imprisoned, and tortured. Iranian officials responded to the uprising by shutting down the epicenter of the movement, Tehran University, in an attempt to prevent protestors from organizing and presenting their message. The gates to the university were blocked off and "hundreds of officers stood guard" as part of the government's attempt to "block passers-by from seeing anything inside" (Worth and Fathi).

The government's thwarting of democracy and free speech was common throughout Ahmadinejad's presidency, with the most heinous crimes occurring on the heels of his reelection. In one such instance a twenty-year-old undergraduate, Ashkan Sohrabi, was "shot three times in the chest during a peaceful demonstration" (Worth and Fathi). In a more publicized tragedy, Neda Agha-Soltan was cast into international martyrdom when her brutal slaying at the hands of the Iranian National Guard was captured on a disturbing YouTube video.⁴ Having perished during a peaceful protest, the twenty-six-year-old came to represent the Green Movement's cause against the brutal authoritarianism of the Ahmadinejad government.

Alizad was determined to remount *Bernarda Alba* in a way that reflected Soltan's courage, stating, "For me, Adela's character in *The House of Bernarda Alba* symbolizes Neda's resistance, her rebelliousness, and the fight for the rights of Iranian women." After the shut down of the

warehouse, determined to resume work on Lorca's play, Alizad commenced rehearsals in 2013 at the Entezami Theatre of Iran, where he would ultimately present the production eight months later. Though the political risks were palpable, he remained steadfast in challenging the brutality, censorship, and oppression of Iranians—especially women—at the hands of their government. Alizad explains, "I wanted to address issues of torture, both physically and mentally, within the power structure of the Islamic government of Iran and the effect it has had on Iranian women." Thus, the stage was set for his remarkable and courageous use of theatre on behalf of social justice.

APPROACHES TO STAGING

A seventy-seat blackbox space, the Entezami was an ideal venue for the theatrical experiment that Alizad attempted with *Bernarda Alba*. For fear of governmental retribution, the production was not publicized and there were no reviews. Nonetheless, roughly one thousand spectators attended the production, which was performed in Farsi and ran for seventeen performances during February of 2014. Alizad claims the reception was "generally mixed, with some spectators shocked by the production's coldness...Many thought it to be powerful, moving, innovative, and successful in questioning the Iranian government's treatment of women." Audiences responded to Alizad's Brechtian approach, which connected Alba's treatment of her daughters with the atrocities leveled against women and protestors by distancing viewers from the action enough to critically analyze its political content.

Despite his goal of challenging Iran's sociopolitical circumstances, Alizad had to be sensible and guarded in his aesthetic choices. Claiming to use "hidden messages displayed in an alternative manner," he exposed the "patriarchal and cultural hegemony" of Iranian society by departing from the realism implied by Lorca's introductory stage directions and by applying a variety of subtly contradictory approaches. In addition to Brecht, he used techniques from Bogart's Viewpoints, Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Actions, and Wilson's imagistic theatre. Alizad states:

I selectively applied each of these techniques to the rehearsals and throughout the process I came up with my own system of directing. By stripping the play of its realism, we could get at the idea of the work, which was to display the misery and fear that Iranians experienced under Ahmadinejad.



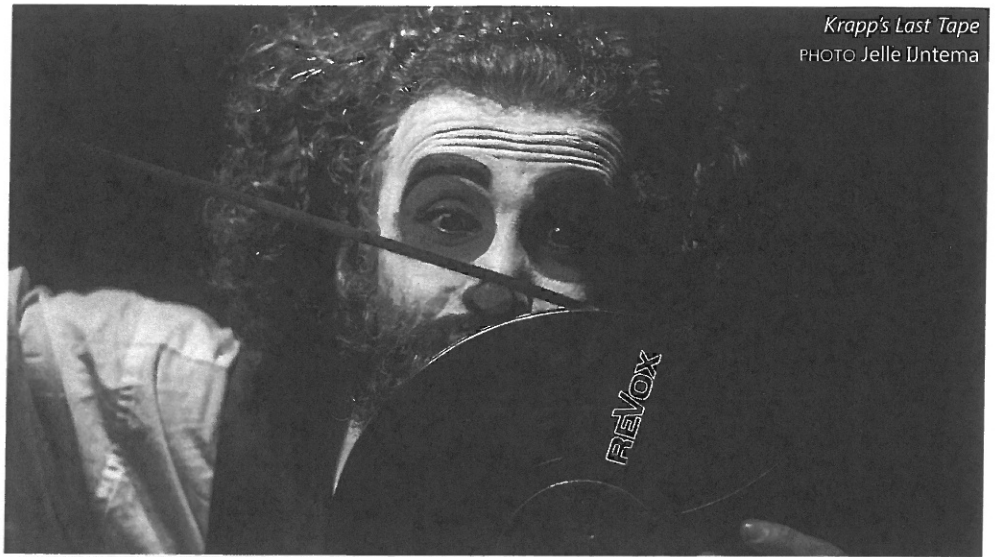
*The House of
Bernarda Alba* at
Entezami Theatre,
Tehran, Iran, 2014
PHOTO Hanieh Zahed

The Theatre of Image: A Physical Approach

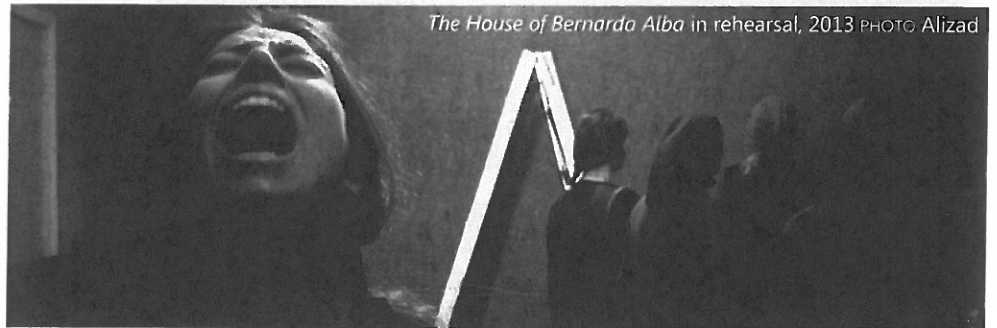
In the rehearsals that began in the warehouse in 2011, Alizad and his cast explored Lorca's play by creating separate acting areas strewn throughout the space: a bedroom for the girls, a dining room, and Alba's office. Using a technique resembling cinematic montage, he staged the script in a nonlinear format, stating, "everything would happen simultaneously and the people would be able to move freely in the warehouse from one scene to another and choose what to see and what not to see." His staging was intended to empower audiences into making personal decisions regarding spectatorship: each theatregoer would in effect have agency in choosing what to see, a subtle juxtaposition to the censorship of the Iranian government. Moreover, his plan to depart from the play's linear dramaturgy in favor of deconstructing the text would presumably disrupt the audience's expectations of seeing a conventionally rendered production; this too would be a subversive attempt to undermine the hegemonic machinations of tradition, theatrically and otherwise. Ultimately, Alizad was ordered to cancel the production on the cryptic grounds that "the warehouse needed to be destroyed."

In 2013, with the Ahmadinejad regime having ended, Alizad again sought to produce Lorca's play. In the two years following his thwarted attempt to do so, he had only staged *Krapp's Last Tape* with members of 84Theatre Company. Thereafter, some company members emigrated abroad while others were conscripted into the Iranian military, thereby leaving Alizad unable to cast *Bernarda Alba* with his usual collaborators. Instead, he chose to work with students and amateur actors in his second attempt.

After a well-attended round of auditions in July of 2013,⁵ Alizad and his cast applied Bogart's Viewpoints, Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Actions, and Brechtian Gestus towards an embodied engagement of Lorca's text. From the beginning of the process, he conceived *Bernarda Alba* as a script requiring performers to have a physical connection to each other and the playing space. Because the actors did not know him or his way of working, he used Bogart's techniques to facilitate an artistic language and working process that "created a harmonious company." The ensemble spent



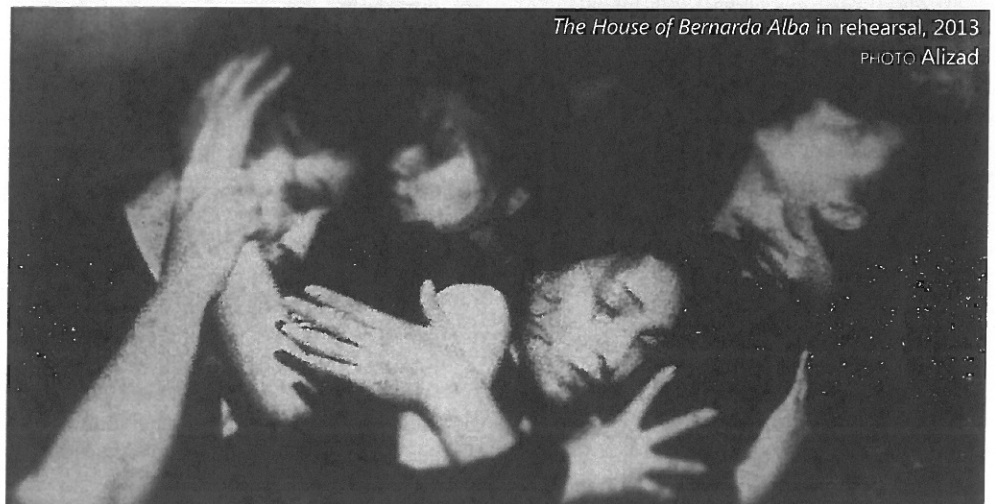
Krapp's Last Tape
PHOTO Jelle DIntema



The House of Bernarda Alba in rehearsal, 2013 PHOTO Alizad



*The House of
Bernarda Alba* at
Entezami Theatre,
Tehran, Iran, 2014
PHOTO Hanieh
Zahed



The House of Bernarda Alba in rehearsal, 2013
PHOTO Alizad

three weeks exploring Viewpoints such as tempo, rhythm, and architecture in developing a synergy between their individual movements, the space, and Lorca's text. Viewpoints were crucial to this process, insofar as they liberated the actors to physically engage the production's mise-en-scene in conjunction with Alizad's vision for the play. In *Viewpoints*, her co-authored book with **Tina Landau**, Bogart argues that her approach "leads to greater awareness, which leads to greater choice, which leads to greater freedom" among the ensemble and its joint relationship with the audience and performance space (Bogart and Landau 19). Instead of conventionally commencing rehearsals with a table read, blocking, and scene work, Alizad challenged the cast to focus on their bodies, movements, and kinesthetic connectivity in exploring the text. One such exercise included his prompting them to enact a scene without speaking by solely communicating through body movements relative to the architecture of the playing space. At the next stage of the process, he gave the actors dialogue from the text and asked them to improvise the corresponding scene, explaining, "I did not let them interpret the scene logically or psychologically. They had to make discoveries based on their physical movements and spatial relationships." In using Bogart's Viewpoints, Alizad effectively "[created] an ensemble and [developed] a physical vocabulary for the world of the play" (Bogart and Landau 121) in departing from Lorca's realistic style towards exploring an embodied, deconstructed aesthetic.

Once the actors established their physical investigation of the text, he employed elements of Wilson's imagistic theatre. Alizad rehearsed each scene not by reciting the dialogue or through psychoanalytic examination of the characters, but by layering the playing space with a storyboard and corresponding images. In asserting, "Everything said on the stage verbally needs also to be shown visually," Alizad echoed Wilson's aim of coalescing the spoken word with theatrical images. Undertaking an imagistic aesthetic while continuing the physical foundation of his process, Alizad incorporated the interrelationship of the actors' bodies as theatrical images that helped to shape the playing space. "What I learned from Wilson was his idea that the visual aspects of theatre should not be subordinated by language," shared Alizad, "but instead be expressed through images that included the physical expressions of the ensemble." This balancing of the visual and physical inspired Alizad's experimentation:

We began rehearsing a scene with a cold reading from the text. Then the process of realizing and visualizing the scene through images would start. We narrated the scene with bodies, facial expressions, movements, and gestures. We would keep repeating this process until I could ensure that the silent images were capable of narrating the story without the need for words.

Only after undergoing this lengthy process of visually constructing each moment of the scene did Alizad allow the actors to speak their lines—one at a time—in stating, "It was after we had ensured the self-sufficiency of the visuality of the scene that we would finally start adding the text."

The Theatre of Words

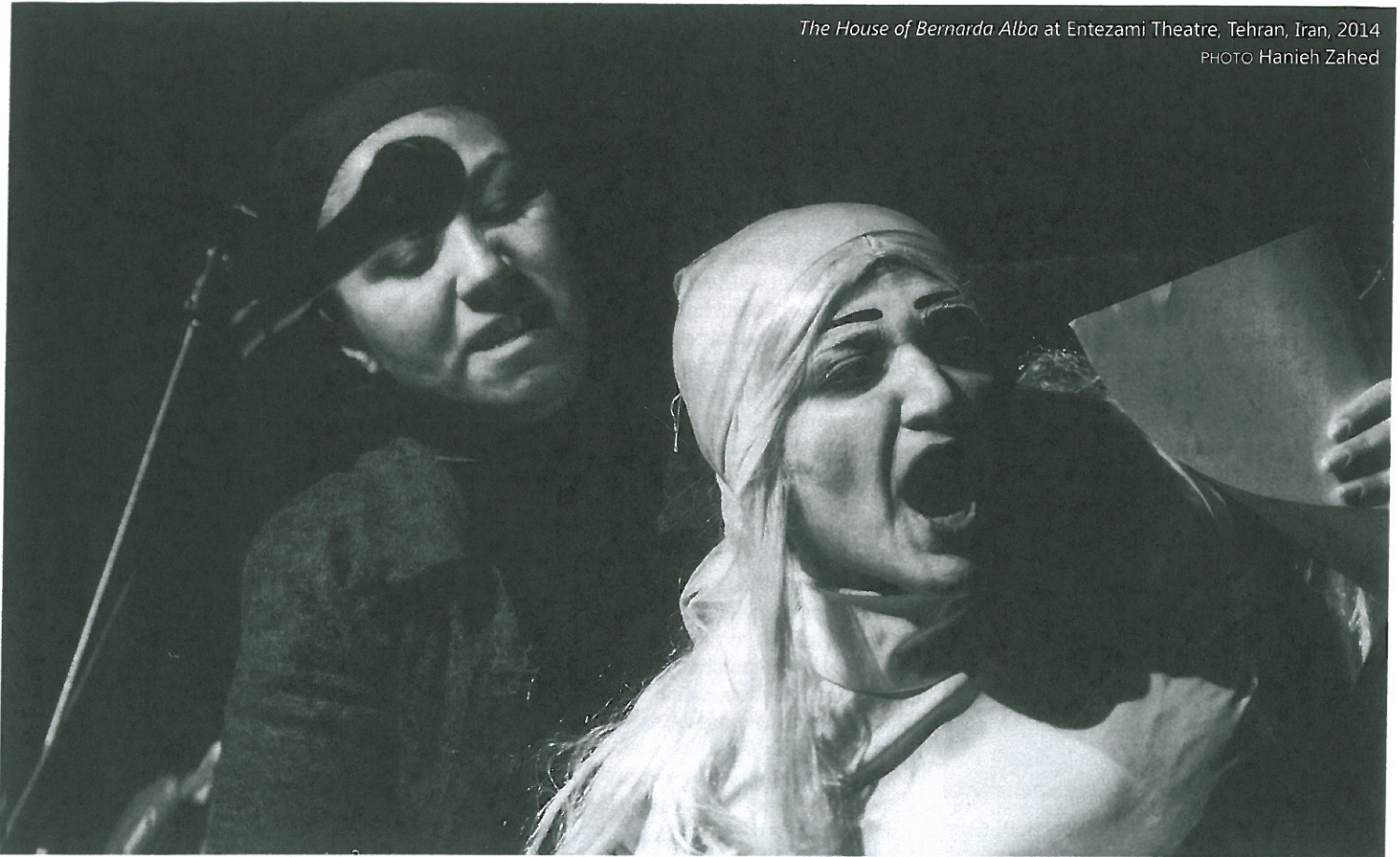
Alizad did not eliminate textual dialogue, but instead reconfigured it within a physical and imagistic aesthetic. In distinguishing his work from Wilson's predominantly nonverbal ethos, he included elements of Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Actions. As Sharon Carnicke posits, "the mental and physical exist as an indivisible whole" (186), and therefore, a Stanislavskian actor's emotional life cannot be divorced from his physical experience. In what at the time was a revolutionary approach to exploring a character, Stanislavsky insisted that every script consists of actions arrived at through the text and subtext. Therefore, a "score" of actions is best discovered through an improvisatory analysis rather than extended discussions at the table (190). Without eliminating the significance of language, Stanislavsky's system consists of improvising the scene by instructing the actors to use their own words in exploring the text. Calling this approach "active analysis," he implemented these improvisations until the actors connected to their character's given circumstances. Stanislavski posits, "While at first the actors trace only the play's broadest outlines, as rehearsals progress, they assimilate more and more of the exact demands of the text: the images, style, and manner of writing" (Carnicke 197).

After improvising scenes, Alizad worked closely with Lorca's words. In doing so, he posed Stanislavsky-based questions to the actors towards forging their identification with their respective characters:

As a woman right now and in such a place like this house are you really willing to endanger your life because of a man? Imagine you were free and could leave your mother's house, what would you do? What would you do if after you got home from rehearsal tonight, your mother informs you that you are not allowed to leave the house anymore.

By asking these questions, which are consistent with Stanislavsky's so-called "Magic If," Alizad wanted his ensemble to create truthfully rendered, multidimensional human beings. Indeed, he claims, "Whenever I thought an actor was not telling the truth, I would provide circumstances that made her think about the situation more seriously and honestly." Only after eliciting an honest response to his queries did Alizad and his cast begin to explore subsequent units of action. Although a time-consuming process, this approach allowed the actors to craft their characters in service of Lorca's play, and by extension, Alizad's vision for the production.

In accounting for the spoken drama, Alizad also incorporated the work of a Stanislavsky disciple, Sanford Meisner. He explains, "I wanted to bring Meisner's exercises into the psychophysical process to open the actors up to one another's listening and affectation." According to Alizad, the repetition exercises caused the actors to overcome mental and physical blocks that can compromise an intuitive connection to their character. In re-appropriating the repetition exercises, Alizad hoped that he and his cast could differentiate honest and artificial responses relative to the play's given circumstances. He recalled, "Sometimes the actors blushed or even teared up because of an honest exchange during the repetition exercises. It was at these moments that I could point out what had previously been superficial for a scene." Although his approach was effective, in assuming the dominant role as the arbiter of truth in these exchanges Alizad was contradicting the ethos he wanted to communicate through his production: the oppression of women at the hands of patriarchal authority. Indeed, the very use of Meisner raises questions about male determinism in the rehearsal studio, a theme eloquently raised by Rosemary Malague in her book, *An Actress Prepares: Women and the Method*, in which she argues "participants are not really free in the repetition exercises. . . . If repetition is meant to release impulse, what does it mean when the only impulse it reliably releases is one of frustration and aggression?" (133-34). In a decidedly patriarchal society like Iran's, women are socially positioned as inferior to their male counterparts and oppressed on a daily basis. Because they are constantly marginalized, Iranian women are likely to unconsciously internalize their subordination in accordance with the hegemonic dictums of a patriarchy. This theme, of course, is at the center of Lorca's play in that it depicts women internalizing their oppressed position in Spanish society, thereby perpetuating their subjugation. While Alizad claims his production "empowered Iranian women's liberation by resisting the status quo," such subversion, as admirable as it was courageous, must be seen in the context of a rehearsal process that at times reflected



the very hegemonic tropes Alizad and his cast sought to question.

After making sure the actors knew their characters and given circumstances, Alizad finished his process by employing Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt*, stating, "personally, I do not like realistic acting, or in other words, the Method, so common in the American theatre. . . . I always like to create a critical distance between audiences and the stage action." As Brecht explains, "[alienation] depends on the exposition demanded by the entire episode, and this is where the theatre has to speak up decisively for the interest of its own time" (201). Thus, using the alienation effect is contingent upon the sociopolitical conditions of both the play's world and that of the audience. Accordingly, Alizad departed from the script's realism, which lends to empathically identifying with the characters, and instead he took a distancing approach to didactically present the theme of authoritarianism. Relying on their reasoning, audience members became "observers standing outside" the action of the play as opposed to becoming empathically engrossed in it (Brecht 37). By de-familiarizing the drama's central theme, Alizad positioned audience members as active partners, encouraging them to think critically in reflecting upon their own sociopolitical condition relative to the characters in Lorca's play. As Brecht states, "the new alienations are only designed to free

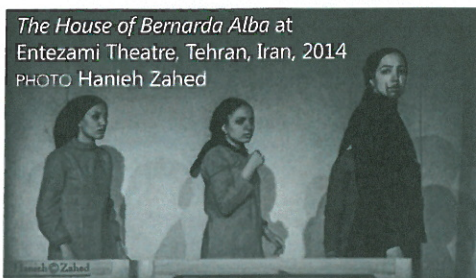
socially conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protect them against our grasp today" (Brecht 192). By producing *Bernarda Alba* for an audience beset by the oppression of patriarchal religious and cultural traditions, Alizad was able to free—albeit temporarily—his actors and audience from these beliefs and behaviors in favor of an intellectual critique of Iranian society.

Alizad began by directing the actors to speak their lines as if they were commenting on them, or as Brecht asserts, "acting in quotation marks," towards achieving the critical distancing he sought for his production (17, 142). In order to achieve this exchange, he posed matter-of-fact questions about the weather and such to prompt them to find didactic connections to the characters and given circumstances. For example, he asked the actors to utter their text while adopting a third person perspective. He explains, "I would ask them to describe their emotions before running their lines. For instance, the actress who played Adela would say, 'Adela enters the room and while angry, she says: 'Stop staring at me.' " Such an approach is directly applicable to Brecht's "Exercises for Acting Schools," in which he utilizes techniques ranging from conjuring tricks to coolly reporting on a scene to unodge the actor from empathically identifying with his character (129). Other Brechtian devices Alizad employed included "asking the actor to encounter the

spectators and address them directly, using microphones to didactically present the dialogue, transmitting the stage action with a camera and TV monitor, and delivering monologues while employing long, unnatural pauses" (Alizad). He also added "a sort of cold, coarse and crude violence to the acting," as demonstrated at the end of the performance, when one of the servants rubbed her bloody hands on Bernarda's mouth in a highly stylized—or Gestic—manner to symbolically echo the trope of political violence that has beset Iran for decades. Brecht describes theatrical *gestus* as the "gist" or prevailing "attitude" underscoring a sociopolitical message of significance to a given audience (42). Existing as a stylized acting gesture or an illustrative element of the *mise-en-scene* (placards epically referencing the play's events or chapters), Alizad's use of stage blood was delivered in a Brechtian way.

Perhaps Alizad's most significant use of *gestus* was evidenced by a TV screen in a haunting reference to the death of Neda Agha-Soltan. At the end of Act One, Maria Josefa attempts to flee, prompting Alba to order the servants to lock her up. Upon being apprehended, Maria screams, "I want to leave this place Bernarda! I want to marry by the seashore, by the seashore!" (Lorca 45). As she writhes in pain, one of the servants captures the exchange with a video camera transmitting grainy images of the action to a monitor in what was a codified

reminder of Agha-Soltan's assassination. Alizad explains this choice as "wanting to make a reference to Neda's brutal and unjust death." Indeed, the infamous YouTube footage of Agha-Soltan's bloodied face and lifeless body remains seared in the memories of Iranians. Alizad was determined to "reenact her death on stage!" He echoed her brutal murder again at the performance's conclusion by directing the actor playing Alba to enter with a blood-ridden face after discovering the death of her daughter (Adela) while declaring: "She, Bernarda Alba's youngest daughter, died a virgin. Did you hear me? Silence, I said! Silence!" (Lorca 117). With Alba's appearance suggesting a savage animal having just eaten its prey, Alizad presented her as a soulless dictator not unlike Iran's contemporaneous leadership.



The House of Bernarda Alba at Entezami Theatre, Tehran, Iran, 2014
PHOTO Hanieh Zahed

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of his life, Lorca confessed *Bernarda Alba* was based on horrors that he witnessed while visiting his hometown of Valderrubio:

In the house next door lived Dona Bernarda, a very old widow who kept an inexorable and tyrannical watch over her unmarried daughters. They were prisoners deprived of their free will. And I observed them. It was a silent and cold hell in the African sun, a tomb for the living under the harsh rule of a dark jailer. And so was born... *The House of Bernarda Alba...* (Lorca xxii).

Similar to Lorca, Alizad witnessed the dark and torturous time Iranians endured throughout the eight years of Ahmadinejad's regime. Determined to prompt critical and subversive action against Iran's totalitarianism, which even under Ahmadinejad's successor, Hassan Rouhani, remains "a very sad experience," he continues to produce controversial work that imperils him and his colleagues. At the time of this article's publication, Alizad hopes to stage **Harold Pinter's** *Mountain Language* and fears that "[it] will be censored for its sexual and political subtext." As he did with *Bernarda Alba*, Alizad plans to use a variety of techniques ranging from Bogart to Brecht towards creating a politically subversive production that questions Iran's cultural traditions and oppressive government. Using cross-gender casting, for instance, he wants his audience to critically consider Pinter's play that centers on the Turkish imprisonment of Kurdish rebels, all of whom are men. In doing so, he echoes what Sue Ellen Case describes as "reading against," or disrupting "historical and cultural codes," most especially those pertaining to a patriarchal society (15). Similarly to his *Bernarda Alba*, Ali Akbar Alizad continues to courageously pursue social change in a country where institutionalized oppression makes freedom and democracy risky endeavors. **SDC**

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END NOTES

- 1 All references to Ali Akbar Alizad are from Joie Miroux's interview with him, 20 March 2015.
- 2 Alizad's multifaceted directing style can be likened to what theatre scholar, Sue Ellen Case, calls "guerrilla actions"—multiple approaches to breaking hegemonic control of the means of production. For more on Case, see her text, *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 132.
- 3 In referencing the *Ershad* patrol, Alizad was citing Ahmadinejad's henchmen who harassed and arrested women for donning makeup, being scantily dressed, or failing to cover their hair, all practices inconsistent with conservative interpretations of the Quran.
- 4 To view the graphically disturbing slaying of Soltan, see youtube.com/verify_controversy?next_url=/watch%3Fv%3D76W-0GVjNEc (accessed 4 April 2016). Neda Agha-Soltan was a university student shot in the chest and face during an anti-government protest in Tehran on June, 20th 2009.
- 5 Alizad cast seven percent of those that auditioned. It was clearly a competitive process.

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