



Silken Veils

Painful and beautiful theatre from actress and puppeteer Leila Ghaznavi



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By [Evan Beswick](#)

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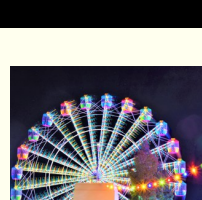
"Iran", Leila Ghaznavi's character Darya tells her jilted (and never seen) fiancé Ahamad, "is not an exotic land of milk and honey. It holds just as much beauty as it does pain." It's this dichotomy that is written into every level of this performance – in its relationships, its politics and its evocation of memory. Fundamentally, this is a performance in which the beauty of its careful choreography and Rumi-inspired language is matched only by the viciousness of the memories the central character has attempted to escape.

Particularly successful is the use of puppetry – both marionettes and shadows. Memories of Darya's mother and father are re-enacted using the marionettes, while at the same time those characters are played by live actors that appear solely in shadow behind a screen. It's a neat effect, allowing memories to appear both distant and oddly present. It also permits some inspired imagery. Darya's father, puffed up with the overblown rhetoric of ideological zeal, appears looming and out of focus, only to be brought down to human size by a tender word from his wife.

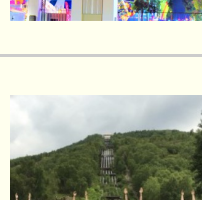
There's the odd weakness: a little too much suspension of disbelief is required to accept not only that Darya and her fiancé know next to nothing about each other on their wedding day, but also that Darya would spill all so offhandedly. The line between the petulant childishness of her young self and the psychological trauma of the grown up is sometimes poorly differentiated. But Ghaznavi more than compensates for this with her vivid puppetry, creating a truly moving artistic response to Iran's '79 revolution.

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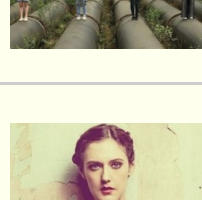
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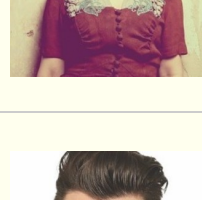
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