



News in Brief

Tehran Ensemble to Compete In China Event

Tehran Vocal Ensemble will compete at the 6th World Choir Games 2010 in China performing a selection of Iranian folk pieces.

"We are rehearsing folk music from Gilan, Kurdistan and Fars provinces as well as the some chamber choir pieces for competing at the event," the ensemble's conductor Milad Omranlou told Mehr News Agency.

He went on to say that the ensemble faces some financial shortfalls for their sojourn in China, but Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has promised support.

The ensemble won a Golden Diploma in Italy's 8th International Choir Competition and Festival of Jazz, Gospel, Pop, Secular and Sacred Music.

It also won a golden medal in the Mixed Choir Category of the 11th International Folksong Choir Festival and two medals at the 2nd Asian Choir Games that took place in South Korea earlier this year.

Billed as the world's biggest choir competition, the World Choir Games will be held from July 15 to 26 in Shanghai, China.



Allen to Direct 'Crazy'

Tim Allen is one of America's favorite comics. He's the guy who parlayed years of standup into the top-rated 'Home Improvement' sitcom and 'The Santa Clause' and 'Galaxy Quest' films.

So why does the 56-year-old funnyman turn all serious when asked about his latest project? Maybe it has something to do with his level of involvement.

Allen makes his directorial debut in the comedy 'Crazy on the Outside', which opens Jan. 8. He also stars in the movie, AP reported.

"I've got a lot on the line here. I financed this thing—private financing," Allen said. "I used Kevin Costner's model. He helped me through this—on how to direct it, how to put it out."

Besides Costner, Allen also consulted with director Barry Sonnenfeld and read books on directing written by Francis Ford Coppola, an Allen favorite.

Not only did he seek out advice from industry pals about working behind the camera, Allen also persuaded friends to get in front of it.

Sigourney Weaver, who worked alongside Allen on 'Galaxy Quest', and Allen's 'Wild Hogs' co-star Ray Liotta have prominent roles in 'Crazy', which also features Kelsey Grammer and Julie Bowen.

Liotta said the 'Crazy' set was "loose and fun." "He surrounded himself with great people," Liotta said. "If he called me again, I would definitely do it."



Macedonia Displays Excavated Artifacts

The Macedonian Information Agency reported that Elizabeta Kaneska-Milevska, Minister of Culture, opened Sunday the annual exhibition of artifacts excavated at archaeological sites throughout Macedonia in 2009. Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski, also attended the opening of the exhibition which took place at the Museum of Macedonia.

A total of 9,800 artifacts excavated at 18 archaeological sites throughout Macedonia are displayed in the Museum of Macedonia, in the framework of the third archaeology exhibition, ArtDaily said.

The display includes items from Ohrid's Gorna Porta, Isar Marvinci, Stobi, Carevi Kuli, Heraklea etc.

Museum director Meri Anicin-Pejoska and director of the Cultural Heritage Protection Office Pasko Kuzman attended the exhibition opening.

"Traces left by past civilizations are the only witness of our past and an inseparable part of our existence. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to attend the third annual exhibit of most valuable artifacts excavated in 2009," said Gruevski to the Macedonian Information Agency in his welcoming speech.

The amount that was excavated this year is small. There is a lot more to be done. The Government will continue to support national-wide excavations, because artifacts are national and cultural treasure. In 2010 we plan to continue our support in this field, stated PM Gruevski after the opening at the Museum of Macedonia. Asked whether some of the artifacts could help in strengthening country's position in the name dispute with Greece, Gruevski said it could be the case only if the argument of facts prevailed in the name talks. "Unfortunately, Greece negotiates with the argument of power," the PM stressed.



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Photo shows a tile workshop in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi province. (Photo by Mohammad Adibi)



'Passion of Hussein (AS)' in French

A book named 'The Passion of Hussein (AS)' by Saeid Mousavi was recently published in French.

Musavi, an Iranian student residing in France, compiled the book featuring the events of Ashura, the divine revolution of Imam Hussein (AS), and its universal significance, Mehr News Agency wrote.

Ashura is the day when Imam Hussein (AS) and his seventy-two companions were martyred on the 10th of Muharram.

The book contains six chapters describing



the major characters involved in the battle of Ashura, and reviews the reasons behind this epic, as well as its political and social achievements.

His motive on choosing the events of Ashura was to clarify the issue of Karbala and its history and to introduce the major characters of this great movement to French citizens.

The book cover is decorated with an outstanding painting by master Mahmood Farshechian entitled 'Evening of Ashura'.

Guenter Grass's Stasi Files to Be Published

A new book showing the huge lengths the East German secret police, the Stasi, went to in order to spy on Nobel Prize-winning author Guenter Grass will go on sale in March, his publisher said Tuesday.

The Stasi first began to keep tabs on Grass, Germany's best-known post-war writer, in 1961 when he wrote an open letter attacking the construction of the Berlin Wall by the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR), the book shows, AFP wrote.

"Grass was unbelievably well known in the GDR. His books were banned for decades, but everybody knew him. He often visited the GDR and people would say, 'That's Grass,'" said Kai Schluter, the new book's author.

But when Grass, whose best-known book 'The Tin

Drum' had come out in 1959, visited East Germany, where he would give readings, the Stasi would attempt to follow his every move, giving him the code name 'Bolzen' ("bolt").

"Grass was completely surrounded by spies when he came to the GDR. All his official interlocutors were IMs, 'unofficial employees' (spies), all of them," said Schluter, who went through over 2,000 Stasi files to compile his book.

"Whether they were from writers' associations, publishers' representatives, state representatives, theatre people ... he was completely surrounded. This really surprised me," Schluter told Radio Bremen in November.

"From the moment he crossed from West Berlin at the Friedrichstrasse border crossing point until he left again,

he was monitored the whole time. He says he never noticed."

These informers would then tell a Stasi officer what Grass, now 82, has said and done, which would then be meticulously recorded in documents that after German unification in 1990 were opened to the public.

Schluter said that he was of particular interest to the Stasi because unlike other "easy ideological targets" like West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer, Grass, as an active supporter of the Social Democratic Party who backed party icon Willy Brandt's election campaign in the 1960s and 70s, was seen as a more insidious threat.

The book, 'Guenter Grass im Visier—Die Stasi-Akte' ('Guenter Grass in the Cross Hairs—the Stasi Files'), is published by Christoph Links Verlag.

Weather

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