

Dissertation Synopsis & Completion Timeline

Title Dissensus Dramaturgy: Rethinking the Politics of Dramaturgy in Contemporary Iranian Theatre

Candidate Amin Azimi | **Expected defence** June 2026

Project Overview

Since the disputed 2009 presidential election, successive protest movements—most recently the 2022-23 “Woman, Life, Freedom” uprising—have reshaped Iran’s cultural landscape. Theatre artists have responded by abandoning text-centred realism in favour of fluid, postdramatic, and often underground forms that evade censorship and re-stage public space as political space. I theorize these practices as **Dissensus Dramaturgy**: aesthetic strategies that “redistribute the sensible” (Rancière) by fragmenting narrative, activating site-specific encounters, and foregrounding the body as a locus of soft resistance (Bayat). Analyzing fourteen landmark works by ten leading artists—including Amir Reza Koohestani, Nassim Soleimanpour, Azadeh Ganjeh, and Javaad Alipour—I show how Iranian theatre forges new vocabularies of political aesthetics that reverberate across the diaspora.

Research Questions

- How do contemporary socio-political pressures in Iran foster Dissensus Dramaturgy?
- In what ways do Iranian practices engage and revise Eurocentric postdramatic theory?
- How can a transnational analysis avoid exoticizing Iranian work while situating it within global performance discourse?
- What critical tools does Dissensus Dramaturgy provide for studying theatre under authoritarian regimes?

Methodology

A multimodal approach combines dramaturgical analysis of live and recorded performances; archival research in official and informal repositories in Tehran, Shiraz, Cologne, and Toronto; thirty semi-structured interviews with artists and critics (REB-

approved, anonymised as needed); and participant observation, including nine months as assistant director on *Writing in the Dark* (2010). An iterative, fragmentary writing style mirrors the subject's refusal of linear form.

Original Contribution

The dissertation (1) offers the first book-length English study of Iranian theatre after 2009; (2) proposes Dissensus Dramaturgy as a transferable model for analyzing resistant performance globally; and (3) demonstrates how Iranian artists actively shape—rather than merely adopt—postdramatic discourse. By foregrounding practice-based evidence—scripts, spatial scores, rehearsal videos—the study repositions Iranian theatre as a laboratory for political aesthetics.

Chapter Outline

- **Introduction**—historical context, literature review, theoretical frame.
- **Chapter 1: Playfulness & Erasure**—Koohestani, Yaghoubi; textual voids as revelation.
- **Chapter 2: Site-Specific Mobility**—Rezaee Rad, Ganjeh; urban geography as dissent.
- **Chapter 3: Cosmopolitan Iranian Identity**—Soleimanpour, Alipour; digital intermediality and diaspora.
- **Chapter 4: Entropic Bodies**—Jamali, Dashti; embodiment as radical presence.
- **Conclusion**—Dissensus Dramaturgy as a global framework; future research trajectories.

Progress to Date

- Coursework and field examination completed.
- Prospectus approved June 2025.
- Two of four chapters drafted or underway.
- Ninety per cent of interviews and seventy-five per cent of archival collection completed.

- Conference papers delivered at IFTR 2025 (Cologne) and ECIS 10 (2023, Leiden).

Completion Timeline

Jul – Dec 2025 Finalise Chapter 2 draft; verify informal archives in Tehran and Berlin.

Jan – Feb 2026 Draft Chapters 3–4; integrate committee feedback.

Mar 2026 Assemble full draft; internal CDTPS writing workshop.

Apr 2026 Supervisor sign-off; submit to committee.

May 2026 Committee review; minor revisions; schedule defence.

Jun 2026 Oral defence; deposit thesis with SGS.

Post-defence Prepare journal article from Chapter 2; develop monograph proposal; deliver public lecture via Mir-Djalali Institute.

Fellowship Fit

The Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowship will provide the protected time and travel support needed to complete the remaining chapters, verify crucial archival materials, and finalize the manuscript for defence and publication—all of which directly advance Iranian-studies scholarship and the Institute’s mission.