



# KĀNUN-E PARVAREŠ-E FEKRI-E KUDAKĀN VA NOWJAVĀNĀN IV. INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

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### iv. International Film Festivals

Kanun organized its first international film festival for children (*Noḡostin festivāl-e bayn-al-melali-e filmhā-ye kudakān o nowjavānān*) in 1966, its first official year. The objective, apart from Iranian participation in the international promotion of children's films, was to familiarize and encourage Iranian writers and filmmakers with films aimed at younger audiences. Thus a rich world of various schools and styles of filmmaking (live, puppet, and animation) with excellent production values was presented each year—an admirable achievement in a conventional children's film market almost totally dominated by Disney Studios.

Films (short and feature length, live, puppet, or animation) from Europe, especially from eastern socialist countries, where filmmaking for children was as developed and respected as that for adults, as well as submissions from the National Film Board of Canada, were included in the different categories in



competition.

Many world-renowned puppet, animation, mixed live and animation style, feature, and documentary film artists and masters such as Hermina Tirlova, Raoul Serve, Saul Bass, Karel Zeman, Burt Hanstra, Jacques Tati, John Halas, Richard Williams, and Jiri Skolimovski were invited to include their films in competition on the occasion of their retrospectives, or they were asked to participate as International Jury members for the film festivals.

Among today's active and well-known Iranian filmmakers, many have mentioned Kanun's children's film festivals as their first "film school" when asked about their break into the profession (see below, v).

Hazhir Daryoush was the founder and author of the festival regulations and organized the first three editions of Kanun's International Film Festival for Children and Young Adults, which continued for 12 years from 1966 until its last edition in 1977. As director of the Festival, he invited Parviz Davā'i, a writer/translator/film critic, to assist him. Davā'i's valuable contributions to the Festival continued after Daryoush left the office following the 3rd edition in 1968. Davā'i continued his assistance during the 4th and 5th editions with Parviz Fatureči as director, and again from the 6th to the 8th editions, when he himself became director of the Festival. Upon his suggestion, Fereydoun Moezi Moghadam (Mo'ezzi Moğaddam; 1940-), who had assisted him for three editions, was invited by the managing director to take over the office when Davā'i left for Prague on a film study project for Kanun in 1973. Davā'i's contributions to Kanun also included scripts and short stories that were adapted into films.

Films accepted in competition were divided into four general age categories: films for children between 6 and 10 years of age; films for children between 10 and 14 years of age; films for teenagers between 14 and 18 years of age; and films for general release. (According to festival conventions, films for general release were those which had broad, deep artistic and humanistic qualities, suitable for all ages.)

The Festival also held an International Conference on the Problems of Production and Distribution of Films for Young People and an "Exhibition of Film Posters from Poland" with over 100 posters on display at Tehran. In two other sections, Information, and Special Presentation or Retrospective, the Festival also increased its side programs, and in the last editions younger or



adult Iranian amateur filmmakers had the chance to see works such as “World Traditional Music and Folk Dances,” “The Ballet Films of Soviet Union,” “Family Films,” “Film Animation in Hungary,” “Best of Zagreb 74,” “Visit the World,” and “Nine Years Bests.” In addition, the Festival screened homage or retrospective programs for the likes of Jacques Tati, Karel Zeman, Laurel and Hardy, Norman Wisdom, and many others.

The painter/sculptor/decorator ‘Abd-Allāh Ḥājiqorbāni, a Fine Arts graduate (MA), was commissioned to create the Festival prize sculpture. He produced “The Golden Statue of the Festival,” inspired by the Kanun logo, “The Bird.”

The Festival organization gradually enriched its film archives. Special children’s-week programs were simultaneously organized on the occasion of Kanun’s yearly film festivals, at first exclusively in Tehran’s movie theaters, and then year by year branching out to more and more provinces, thanks to the film archive increasing the prints of Kanun’s own productions, donated copies, or purchased titles. Twenty-five countries participated in the first edition of the festival in 1966, but the event did not include a single film from Iran. The first Festival was organized at the Plaza Movie Theater in Tehran.

The 12th edition of the Festival (1977; [Figure 7](#)) included the participation of 34 countries and 216 film submissions. The selection committee narrowed the entries to 66 films from 19 countries for the official festival, among them six Iranian films, of which five were produced by Kanun, including “Summer vacation” (*Se māh ta’īli*), a feature film directed by Šāpur Qarib (his second feature film for Kanun).

The number of movie theaters participating in the festival’s programs also increased from one in the festival’s first year (1966) to 11 in Tehran and over 100 movie theaters in 45 cities and towns across the country by 1977. Over time, the Film Production Department of the Ministry of Culture and Art, as well as the film-producing center of the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) organization, began to also make films for children, primarily to establish a presence at the Festival, which had become a prestigious international film event; in the long run, however, children’s television hours were also enriched by the rise in Iranian-made films for children.

Kanun succeeded, at Festival demand, in offering cheaper tickets by convincing the Ministry of Finance to allow tax-exempt tickets for children’s-week programs. Kanun even agreed to rent a couple of showings for



children's-week programs, paying movie theaters in a few towns with a high per capita quotient of the poor, so that free films could be made available to the neediest children, who were taken from schools to the movie theater; for many, it was their first experience of watching a film on a movie screen (e.g., in Kāš, Zābol, Zāhedān).

The 12th edition of the Festival in 1977 was the last one held prior to the 1979 Revolution. The last pre-Revolution director of the Festival, F. Moezi Moghadam, proposed the postponement of the 1978 edition, and for the Festival's budget to be donated by Kanun towards reconstruction operations in the wake of the devastating earthquake in the Bu'in Zahrā county in southern Qazvin Province.

The Revolution halted the Children's Festival for some years, but once the revolutionary administration established complete control of all educational and cultural institutions, many film festivals resumed. Once the festivals restarted, the Children's Festival submissions (both live and animation) were required to observe strict Islamic codes, which had a negative and censorial impact on its local and international participation, as well as its content.

The pre-Revolution International Film Festival for Children and Young Adults, which was among the best, if not the best international children's film festival, promoted and encouraged world film production for young people ("International Film Guide," *Annual Book of Reports on World Cinema*, ed. Peter Cowie, various editions in the 1970s). It was managed by Hazhir Daryoush, 1966, 1967, 1968; Parviz Fatureči, 1969, 1970; Parviz Davā'i, 1971, 1972, 1973; and F. Moezi Moghadam, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977.

*The film archive.* The Festival organization also constituted a film archive for Kanun. It collected Kanun's own film productions (originals, negatives, working copies, sound tapes, and printed copies for projection, in collaboration with the Film Production Department), and also a number of prints that were entrusted to Kanun by producing countries or producing companies after each festival, for non-commercial or teaching use only. Following Article 10 of the Festival regulations, it was required that the print of the Grand Prix film be donated by its producer to be kept permanently in the archives of the Kanun for non-commercial use.

The Festival also enriched the archive by researching suitable films for teaching and for projection in non-commercial events. The archive included



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both artistic and family films, such as the complete collections of “The Hungarian Animated Films for Children” (with the exception of two missing reels) and of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, as well as a selection of feature films, including Italian neo-realist masterpieces such as Vittorio De Sica’s “The Bicycle Thief” (*Ladri di biciclette*). The film archive, by the 10th edition of the Children’s Film Festival, was capable of making over 50 traveling packages for free screening across the country, with Kanun’s own produced films and its non-commercial collections. Kanun’s cross-country network of cultural centers was the executive body of the children’s week film program in collaboration with the Festival’s film archive.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See at end of part IX.