

Persian Music Meets West

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ABSTRACT

I have based my bachelor Thesis on the presentation of a completely different musical world, compared with the western musical world, which is Persian Music. As a Persian, I started to study music as a Persian *Setar* player; then I followed my musical experience through western classical music by playing classical guitar. As an ambition I have always thought about how to express Persian music in an understandable way for that of non-Persians. In this thesis I began with a short history of Persian music and then presented Persian Music features such as: Musical intervals, rhythms, instruments, improvisation, and also embellishments which have a great role in Persian Music. At the end I have mentioned some of efforts to implement Persian music on western musical instruments and at last I have represented two of my own compositions in Persian Music for the Guitar to compare the two completely different worlds. I also performed a Persian Music concert both on *Setar* and *Guitar* and put the DVD of the performance as an appendix.

Keywords: *Dastgah*: In Persian music they use the term *Dastgah* for mode.
Gushe: there are some melodies to perform a *Dastgah* called *Gushe*
Radif: is a series of melodies including *Gushes* to perform the Persian Music
Dastgahs

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1 INTRODUCTION

It has always been such a controversial subject: how to arrange/compose Persian music for western Well-tempered instruments, because of the Persian music features which are completely different from that of western music, considering its irregular intervals including quarter-tones or let's say three quarter-tones and how to employ the harmony concept in Persian music.

Several years ago when I started to play *Setar* I wished to represent Persian music also for other than Persian people; when I found the Guitar I thought this one could be the solution. Then I tried to translate my homeland music to the western musical language. I decided to take some very nice Persian melodies and arrange them somehow in a way which could be understandable for both Persian and non-Persian people. For sure, by omitting the Persian music irregular intervals it was impossible to recite all of the Persian music expression. In order to show these matters I organized a Persian music concert and played some pieces on the *Setar* and then I played two of my own composition in Persian music on the Guitar.

The piece *Bakhtiari* is composed in *Homayoun Dastgah* and based on a *Bakhtiari* folk song: "*Dast be dastmalom nazan*" it goes through some variations and reaches to the one *Azeri* mode and back to the *Homayoun* at the end.

In the piece *Mo'alef* I have used some folk music and composed the whole piece around them; the first one is the *Moalef Gushe* in *Homayun* mode then there is a modulation to *Dashti* mode and it reaches the *Deylaman Gushe* and back again to the *Mo'alef*; In addition I have used some special techniques to resemble some Persian instruments like *Setar* and *Ud* .

2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

We do not know very much about the earliest Persian civilization music. Great music scholars like Farabi (tenth century), Ebne-Sina (eleventh century) and Sa-fioddin Armavi have left us very important musical knowledge, but there is not any credible document before Farabi. The Persian Empire of Achaemenian dynasty (550-331 B.C.) has revealed almost nothing about their music. But Greek historians have written some about Persian music; as Herodotus mentioned the religious rituals of *Zoroastrians* which involved a chanting of sacred hymns and Xenophon in his *Cyropedia* speaks about the martial and ceremonial music of the Persian Empire.

The first documents from the Persian music which have come to us are from the Sassanian Period (A.D. 226 642). In the court of Sassanian they hired musicians such as Barbod, Nakisa, Ramtin and... Barbod the most illustrious musician in the court of Chosrou 2. Numerous stories have been told about his skills as a performer and composer, he organized a musical system containing seven modal structures known as Royal tones (Xosrovani), thirty derivative modes (Lahn) and three hundred and sixty melodies (Dastan). The numbers correspond with the number of days in a week, a month and a year. (Farhat 1990, 3)

After the Arab invasion of Persia, for almost six centuries Persia was nominally in the framework of the vast Islam Empire; Arabs found a more advanced culture compared with that of their own. Persian musicians were imported to any corner of the Islam world. When the seat of the Caliphate moved from Damascus to Baghdad, within the former Persian territory, Persian musicians and scholars in all fields became the dominant figure in the formation and development of Islamic culture. (Farhat 1990, 3)

From the sixteenth century to almost the beginning of the twentieth century, musical scholarship seems to have suffered a decline. During the period of Shiite ascendancy, however, the musical performance was patronized by the imperial court and by the nobility both in the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722) and the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925). In fact the twelve Dastgah were presented in the Qajar period, but on

the other hand musicians were isolated and the music was under a cloud of suspicion. British orientalist writer, Edward Brown, has written: Sultan Ibrahim-Mirza was a poet, industrialist, calligrapher and musician who was killed by his brother Shah Ismaeil second Safavi in the year 1976. (Farhat 1990, 17) (Khaleqi 1955, 18)

At the time of Nasereddin Shah (1264H.GH), Amir-kabir who was the prime minister of Persia, established the *Darolfonun School*. When Amir-kabir knew about the academic education system in Europe he decided to improve the education system in Persia and to study new sciences like engineering math and new medical sciences in order to train specialists in these categories as well as army officers. He hired teachers from Austria and France. Unfortunately he was fired from his job by the conspiracy of the courtiers, sent to the *Kashan* and killed there. Anyway, some years later, when there was a need for the military bands, the music school in *Darolfonun* was established. In this school they hired a French musician: Jean Babtiste Lemire and two Austrian musicians. The aim of this school was to train wind musical instrument players for military bands and trainers to manage these bands. In this time the first music theory book was published for the students, translated from Lemire's lessons to Persian with the original French texts. Later more European teachers were hired to teach *Solfège* and *theory*. It should be mentioned that Jean Babtiste Lemire for the first time, wrote some Persian songs for Piano, at the period of Mozaffar-eddin Shah.

This music school had been a part of the Darolfonun School but later it worked under the culture minister and gained the name: Music School which was the first academic organization in musical education. (Khaleghi 1955, 164)

In the beginning of the twentieth century, during Pahlavi's dynasty (1925-1979), modernization and westernization led such musical happenings as establishing the Tehran conservatoire and symphony orchestra besides traditional music concerts. After World War II musical life in Tehran in particular was comparable to that in large European cities; a very active opera company, a fine symphony orchestra, a ballet company, chamber music groups, music festivals and concerts by visiting international artists provided a crowded musical life for the capital.

Since the revolution of 1979, music has been placed once more in a position of disfavour. Only a certain amount of music activities which are in the service of the state's ideology promotion is being encouraged. (Khaleghi 1955, 170) (Farhat 1990, 17)

3 PERSIAN MUSIC TYPES

In fact there are two main distinct types of Persian traditional music: rural folk music and urban art music.

The folk music of Persia has a great variety because of its population and diverse ethnic groups, and the Traditional Persian Art Music is a body of pieces which have been transmitted from generation to generation by the memory of a limited number of musicians and it included 12 *Dastgah*. These are modes and they have nuclear melodies which the performers perform and modulations, so called *Gushe*, which any performer can freely improvise through.

For sure the folk music of different parts of Persia is also subjected to definition by the *Dastgah* concept, but it consists of particular songs, like any other kind of folk music.

3.1 Persian folk music

Iran is such a vast country with many ethnic tribes of people who live in different parts of the country and each ethnic group has its own culture and music. The music of each part of Iran varies with the language and dialect of the area. Persian folk music consisted of certain songs which could be used in weddings, funerals, religious events, harvest, fishing or...it can only be sung by a singer or played on an instrument or in an ensemble depending on the situation.(Farhat 1990, 2)

Among the Persian folk music types we can name for example *Azeri, Kurdi, Baluchi, lori, Gilaki, Mazani, Khorasani, Qashqai, Torkman*, folk music of southern Iran and more.

It is very easy to find the roots of rural traditional music in the folk music. In fact musicians have gathered the *Dastgahs* by collecting *Maqami* music from different parts of Persia.

There are a great amount of very beautiful tunes in Persian folk music which some Persian and non-Persian composers have used in their compositions, and which

musicians have arranged some nice melodies for different instruments, singers and other ensembles, including traditional Persian or other western ensembles.

3.2 Traditional art music in Persia

The tradition of Persian art music embodies in twelve modes: so called *Dastgahs*. Each *Dastgah* contains some certain melodies which a musician can perform entirely, improvise around them or compose some music based on the character of the *Dastgah*. Each *Dastgah* contains some melodies known as *Gusheh* from which it is possible to do a modulation to the other ones. Any performer represents skeletal melodies with great variation, depending on the freedom and his personal interpretation. Within the modal restraints the music is fluid, subjective and highly improvisatory. Therefore the wealth of this music is not in complex rhythmical patterns, nor in polyphony which it does not employ, but in the many modal possibilities and the cultivation of embellished melodies in a very illusive and personal way. Each *Dastgah* has its own proper name and it opens with an introductory piece; a so-called: *Daramad*(entry). Twelve Persian music *Dastgahs* are: *Shur*, *Segah*, *Chahargah*, *Homayun*, *Näva* and *Rast-Pandjgah*. Four of the five remaining are classified as Derivatives of *Shur*: *Dashti* and *Abuata*, and the last one is derivative of *Homayun*: *Bäyate-Efahan*

The pieces which have been collected to represent the skeletal melodies of Persian music *Dastgahs* are called *Radif*. The pieces, other than *Daramad*, in each *Dastgah* are *Gusheh* in which, as already mentioned, it is possible to modulate to other *Dastgahs*. Other Persian musical pieces' terms which are frequently used are: *Pish-Daramad*(overture), *Chahrmezrab*(four strokes, rhythmic instrumental piece), *Zarbi*(Rhythmic), *Reng*(Dance), *Tasnif* (Ballad).(Farhat 1990, 2)

4 INTERVALS AND SCALES IN PERSIAN MUSIC

There are three theories about Persian music intervals. The first one, which was done in 1920 by Ali Naqi Vaziri, identifies Persian musical intervals based on a 24 quarter-tone scale. The second one was done by Mehdi Barkeshli in 1940 and defines Persian music intervals within a 22 tone scale. And a third one was presented by Hormoz Farhat who is representing Persian Musical intervals within five intervals with which all of the Persian Musical modes are constructed and does not recognize any basic scale concept.(Farhat 1990, 7)

4.1 The 24 quarter tone scale

In fact the idea of dividing scales into equal intervals is an outcome of westernization in Persian music. Some of the musicians who studied western music have felt the absence of harmony in their music and they tried to find a solution. In western music, the smallest interval is a semitone. They were aware of the fact that it is not possible to represent Persian music with whole-tones and semitones when their music contained unmistakably some other intervals, so they represented the quartertone as the smallest unit.

Western musical influences begin in Persia by the second half of nineteenth century when Naser-eddin Shah who ruled from 1848 to 1896, visited Europe on three different occasions. He was impressed by the ceremonies where military bands were performing music. After his first tour to Europe he ordered the establishment of a musical school to train musicians for his imperial military band.

This school, which was organized and taught by the French instructors, was Persia's first contact with the occidental music and led to some results such as: through the western musical theory they learnt fixed pitches, major and minor scales, and keys which had no connection with their native music. They found the advantage of music notation which had never been used. Actually there was not any written document about Persian music except of some treatises in medieval times. In the study of harmony they were impressed by the novelty of playing more than one voice at the same time and the need for a methodical pedagogy in Persian music.

Among these students, Ali Naqi Vaziri was the first student who sought a music education in Europe and he studied there for eight years. After returning to Iran, he established a music school of his own and trained young musicians according to western methods. He composed numerous pieces for solo instruments as well as songs and operettas, published some methods for Tar and *Setar* and a book about Persian music theory known as *Musiqi-e-Nazari*. In this book he presented the theory of the 24 quarter-tone scale and wrote about the twelve *Dasthgah* in his personal manner. (Farhat 1990, 8)

4.2 The 22 tone scale

Mehdi Barkeshli was a physicist by profession. His theory is based on the theories of some medieval writers such as Abu-nasr Farabi and Safiaddin Ormavi. In the time of these medieval scholars the Pythagorean intervals of *Limma* and *Comma* were the basis for fretting the musical instruments, the octave contained two *tetrachords* plus a whole tone. Each *tetrachord* consisted of five pitches and four intervals. The five pitches were named after the open string by the name of the fingers which press the string of the *Ud*. If we take the open string C then other fingers could be:

C	D	?	E	F
Motlaq	Sbbabeh	Vosta	Bansar	Xansar

Between the *Motlaq*(open string) and *Sabbabeh*(1st finger) is a whole tone, the position of *Vosta* is subject of controversy, but it could be a minor third (according to some research), from *Motlaq*, the *Bansar* was located on the position of a major third from *Motlaq* and there was a whole tone interval between *Bansar* and *Xansar*.

According to Safiaddin Ormavi the intervals between the fingers' positions could be described within *limma* and *comma* in a *tetrachord* were:

Motlaq	Sbbabeh	Bansar
Xansar		

Limma	Limma	Comma	Limma	Limma	Comma	Limma
90 c	90c	24	90	90	24	90

The division of this *terachord* was duplicating for the second conjunct *tetrachord* and the whole tone between *tetrachord* was also two *limmas* and one *comma*, so, the Ormavie's octave is:

$$L+L+C - L+L+C - L - L+L+C - L+L+C - L+L+C - L$$

After several centuries in which no theoretical research was taken, in 1940 Mehdi Barkeshli did a series of tests among the reputable musicians. He recorded some songs in various modes and analyzed them. From the results Barkeshli concluded that the whole tone and semi tone intervals in Persian music are stable and they are the same Pythagorean intervals. The major *tetrachord* is $206+204+89=499$ which is the same as Pythagorean *tetrachord*.

In other *tetrachords* he found three variants of *Db* and *Eb*. These three intervals were 89c, 120c and 180c. By counting them you can see how he introduced his theory of 22 tone scale. (Farhat 1990, 10)

4.3 The theory of flexible intervals

This theory, represented by Hormoz Farhat in the book the *Dastgah Concept*, was opposed to earlier mentioned theories. He frequently mentioned that there is no such an interval smaller than the semi tone. Unlike Barkeshli who made his tests among singers he did the measurements on the instruments: Tar and Setar. He used two Tars and three Setars which were fretted by reputable musicians. As the result, he found the relatively stable whole tone and semitone. The whole tone was approximately the same L+L+C (204 cents); the semitone was never larger than a Limma (90 cents); and intervals which are larger than a semitone but smaller than a whole tone called *neutral* tones are very flexible. He found the smaller *neutral* tone about 135 cents and larger one 160 cents. He also mentioned another unstable interval which is bigger than a whole tone as 270 cents called plus tone. According to Farhat, the scale concept is not employed in Persian music and all

Persian modes can be expressed in a tetrachord or pentachord. “The *octave* is not significant. In certain modes a range of pitches beyond the limits of an octave is needed, as in the higher octave some notes are different from what they are in the lower octave. As you can see the fretting system of Tar and Setar in one octave below, there are seventeen frets in an octave, but no chromatic is used. (Farhat 1990, 15)

C	90 c.
Db	45 c.
Dp	70 c.
D	90 c.
Eb	45 c.
Ep	70 c.
E	90 c.
F	65 c.
F >	65 c.
Gp	70 c.
G	90 c.
Ab	45 c.
Ap	70 c.
A	90 c.
Bb	45 c.
Bp	70 c.
B	90 c.
C	

5. PERSIAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

In this thesis I am not going to present all of the Persian musical instruments but I just want to present some of the very popular instruments which are related to the subject of this thesis.

5.1 Woodwind instruments

NEY

The Ney is probably the oldest pitched instrument known by the human being. The Persian Ney consists of a hollow cylinder with five finger holes and one thumb hole. Sometimes a piece of brass or plastic is placed at the top in order to protect the wood from damage. The Ney player creates the sounds by putting the top of the instrument between his/her lips and blowing into it. The Ney player controls the pitch and tone quality using tongue and lips. The sound range is about one and half octaves, depending on the Ney's length.



5.2 String instruments

TAR



Persian Tar consists of a double-bowl shaped body made of mulberry wood which is covered at the top by a thin membrane of stretched lamb-skin, a narrow long neck ends at an elaborate peg box. The finger board has twenty six adjustable gut frets and there are three pairs of strings which are tuned in unison, only the last string is one octave lower. The tuning system is C, G and C and its range is about two and half octaves. It should be plucked with a small plectrum made of brass or horn.

SETAR



One of the most popular Persian musical instruments is the Setar. This string instrument consists of a small curved body with a lengthy fingerboard and has four metal strings, two single cords and one double which are tuned as C, G and C and the last one, like the Tar, is normally is tuned one octave lower. The word Setar in Persian means three strings and earlier it had three strings; but later a Setar player called Moshtaq added another string, and for this reason the fourth string is named Moshtaq. There are several tuning sets for the setar, depending on which *Dastgah* (mode) is going to be played. It is played by the index finger nail which is sounding mainly two cords, the other one is usually a pedal note and for this reason it should be tuned differently in different modes. Like the Tar, it has twenty six adjustable gut frets and has the same range of two and half octaves.

SANTUR

Santur is a Persian hammer *dulcimer*. It has a trapezoid shaped box made of walnut. The normal eight bridges *Santur* has seventy two strings arranged in groups of four placed on two moveable bridges which should be played by a pair of oval shaped *Mizrabs* (mallet). It has a three-octave range. In order to play in different *Dastgahs*, the *Santur* should be tuned differently or sometimes bridges should be moved. For this reason a *Santur* player needs different instruments to play in different *Dastgahs*. There is also a bigger *Santur* which has eleven bridges and the biggest one it called a chromatic *Santur*, but this last one is not so popular.



KAMANCHEH



The most famous bowed string Persian Musical instrument is *Kamancheh*. The body has a long upper neck and a lower bowl-shaped resonating box made of wood, which is covered with a membrane made from lamb or goat skin. From its bottom protrudes a spike for support while playing. It has four metal strings whose tuning system could be variable. Earlier it had three strings but since the *Violin* has come to Iran, *Kamancheh* players have added the last strings. I should mention that after the *Violin's* arrival to Persia most *Kamancheh* players prefer to play *Violin* instead of this instrument which is more progressed and comfortable

for players; especially because of the skin which makes for some difficulties in tuning and sound quality in different temperature and humidity conditions.

5.3 Drums

Among the Persian drums The *Tombak* is the most popular one, especially in ensembles.

TOMBAK



The Tombak is a single-head goblet drum. Its shell is carved from a single block of wood which is covered with a stretched lamb-skin or goat-skin. It is held horizontally across the player's lap and is played with the fingers of both hands.

6 RHYTHMS

6.1 Rhythms in general

Persian rhythms with its dynamism and great variety create an exciting feeling of coordination within the vital beating of the body of the listeners. These rhythms are in two main groups: first, rhythms which do not come from poems, but which derive from the instrument's possibilities, and secondly, music which is inspired by the ancient dances or pop music. For example, these two rhythms in 2/4 bars



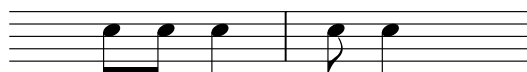
-- Or the rhythm below which is known as *Shir-e-madar*



The second group, which are rhythms inspired by poem rhythms and are mainly in groups of three



There are also some other poetic rhythms, like 7/8 in *Chahrbagh Gusheh* in *Abu-Ata*:



-- Or in this rhythmic formula:



-which are mainly used in the poetic rhythms, but when a musician is going to sing a phrase on this rhythmic pattern, it can be adjusted to his own taste until it could be consider a free rhythm.

Beat is sometimes apparent and sometimes hidden. A musician can be free from the exact rhythms of the note and manipulate the melody to the point that listeners cannot recognize the beat structure.

Earlier, when Persian musicians tried to write down the traditional music, they found that some complicated rhythms were not possible to write using the European rhythm reading, they thought that this could be the mistake of players, singers or even that it derived from Persian music. They tried to simplify them into two and three beat rhythms. Therefore, a big amount of musical pieces lost their characteristics.

But now some faithful musicians attempted to retrieve pure original rhythms which do not correspond with the simple time signatures and tried to correct these mistakes. It is so simple to understand that the time signatures don't not have a great variety which if we skip the complex time signatures (like $3+4=7$ or $3+2=5$ etc.) there is only $2/4$, $3/4$, $3/8$, $4/4$ for simple time signature and $6/8$, $6/16$, $9/8$, $9/16$, $12/8$, $12/16$ for compound time signature. But Persian Music is such a flexible music which is corresponding with the inner beats of the performer than some certain fixed time signatures.

On the other hand it is possible to imagine a melody in $6/8$, but in $6/8$ rhythms which are completely different.

For example:

Mehrabani:

1 Reng



2 Tasnif



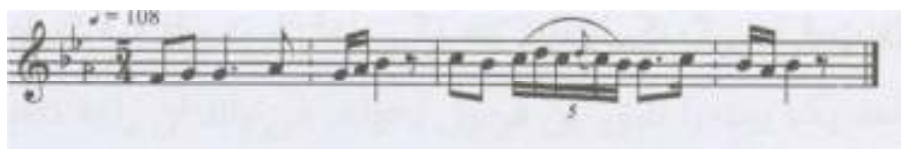
3 Another unusual characteristic



It is so simple that, these beats are not in 3+3 but for example could come as 4+2.
To show how wide a musician's creativity can be, we imagine the same melody in 5/8 and 7/8 time signature:

1. Five beats

A



B



We should not forget that the improvisation role in the rhythm territory is as important as in melody. The singer or player is always free to use improvisation within the rhythm's frame and add embellishments in order to diversify the music.

6.2 Rhythm teaching

In teaching the rhythms in Persia they only play the rhythm. But sometimes they teach the rhythms using simple syllables called “*Atanin*” as in this formula: *tan tanatan*



Or... by using melodic syllables without considering their meanings, as in these two formulas below which are from maestro Hosein Tehrani:

1. *Yek sado biso char*



2. *Bale o bale o bale dige*



And... for complicated ones used some poem. For example:

1. *dowlate eshq amado man dowlate payande shodam*



3. *eshq ajab alami ast*



In some cases they used some comic sentences in order to teach the rhythmic patterns. (Safvat 2009, 159)

7 ORNAMENTS

In fact, one of the most essential characteristics in Persian Music is the development of ornamental musical phrases where their variety and selection is dependent on the skill and taste of each artist. Ornamental musical phrases play a big role in all music in eastern countries. In India they believe that: "*a note without embellishment is like a night without moon, a river without water, a flower without smell or a lady without jewelry*". This poetic description is also true of Persian music and we can say that a Persian musician doesn't play any note without ornaments.

There are two types of ornaments in Persian Music: obligatory ornaments and personal and free embellishments.

7.1 Tremolos

Persian tremolo includes several groups of embellishments. Usage of tremolos in Persian music is sometimes like that of the *mandolin*, to fill the long notes but the point is that in the mandolin they start a tremolo with a strong pluck and then equal up and down fast plucks, but in Persian music after the first stroke there is a very little pause, after which it continues with a very soft tremolo. For example this small phrase in *Kereshmeh Gushe* which we can write simply:



But we should write it:



And we should play it



One other nice, moving tremolo is shown here:



Sometimes instead of staying on one note during its length it is possible to divide the tremolo between the principle note and next one:



The musician is free to add more tremolos by playing them faster and also by giving longer length to some notes, of course when it is possible in rhythm to make a longer tremolo.

7.2 Shalal

It is very usual when we play a plucked instrument to often play the first note of the phrase with three four or even five fast strokes which is called *Shalal*.



Sometimes it is necessary to play these small tremolos before the beat, in order to play other coming notes on time:



In some cases the ornamental notes just come after the principle notes:



Which will be played:



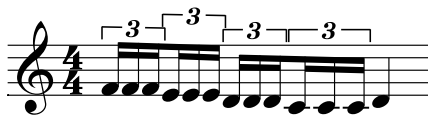
7.3 Added notes and appoggiaturas

In this type one little note will be placed on two principle notes.

If is this phrase is going to be sung:



It should be sung like this:



But instrumentalists not only play each note twice, they also decorate it with *appoggiatura*:

8 IMPROVISATION

Improvisation plays an essential role in Persian Music and it is more based on interpretation of the *Dastgah* feeling and principles which maestros have made. A good improvisation needs good skills on instrumental techniques or singing and complete knowledge of *Dastgahs* and *Avazes*, melody and rhythm structure of their *Gushes*'s and their arrangement order.

There are three methods to have a masterly performance of Persian Music

1. Even though it seems that it is not necessary to improvise in order to play the *Radif*, the musician does it in some cases because it is not possible to separate improvisation from Persian music.
2. In playing *Phantasy* music, they use unusual modulations. Performance begins in an accidental point and goes throughout the *Gushes* very freely.
3. *Morakkab-Khani* is a very difficult style when the musician starts in a certain *Dastgah* and then goes through some other *Dastgahs* and at the end goes back to the first one.

With the exception of the second one it is necessary to follow the order of *Gushes*. Improvisation also needs to know the usage of melodies in the modes degrees and, as Persians say, should be a maestro of the rhythm. It is also important to use embellishments based on one's personal sense and logic.

8.1 Improvisation types

There are two improvisation types: the big improvisation and small improvisation. The big improvisation includes spontaneous innovation of the *Gushes* and it needs a very rare skill and inspiration. The small improvisation includes some changes in the embellishments or rhythm but limited in the structure.

8.2 Rhythm changes

It is possible to change the accents without changing the rhythm structure, using a fermata on a certain note and changing the stop points. It is also possible to play a rhythmic melody *rubato* or play a *rubato* melody *in tempo*.

8.3 Melody or song changes

It is possible to use some certain melody or its rhythm, and improvise through to a new melody. It is also possible to use a *Gushe* and change its melodic structure by adding some passing notes or make passing phrases.

8.4 Embellishment changing

Adding or changing Embellishments is another aspect of improvisation and it needs the skill and the good sense of the player.

(Safvat 2009, 153)

9 PERSIAN MUSIC ON WESTERN INSTRUMENTS

So many of the Persian or non-Persian musicians have tried to compose some music in the Persian traditional music modes or use some Persian melodies in their compositions; however, it has always been under question how to express Persian music in western musical system where there are no such intervals as there are in Persian music; the second problem has been the lack of harmony: how is it possible to harmonize Persian music.

While military bands were playing simple European melodies, European melodies, especially march-like melodies became known by Persians ears. Since then, the European musical instruments were played in Persia and Persian musicians liked to perform their national music on them. So, whoever was interested in the violin have chosen their teachers among the *Kamancheh* teachers and they didn't use the rules of violin playing. In the case of the piano, because there were problems playing Persian melodies, for example Mohammad Sadeq Khan, a *Santur* Master, changed two notes tuning in each scale.

Among wood-wind instruments the *flute* was very popular and it was suitable to play Persian melodies because of its nice sound and similarities to the Ney.

“Although there are not Persian musical intervals on the flute, it is possible to play Persian melodies well by changing the lip position and blowing”, Khaleqi wrote in the book “The Story of Persian Music”. The clarinet was also very popular among Persian musicians and they called it Qaraney. (Khaleghi 1955, 178)

9.1 Persian violin

The violin was the most popular western musical instrument accepted by the Persian musician, because there are no frets to make it limited to playing only in the western musical system, so it is possible to play any other intervals including Persian musical intervals.

Persian musicians have invented a completely different style of violin playing so called: Persian violin, as mentioned before.

9.2 Piano in Persian traditional music

The piano has been the most problematic instrument to play Persian music on. As there are fixed intervals and on other hand, it is most often played with two hands and most probably with some kind of harmony.

Some Persian and non-Persian pianists have tuned the piano into Persian music intervals so it was possible to play Persian music. I would say, in this style they only played homophonic and imitated some other Persian musical instruments like Santur and Qanun.

We can name Javad Maroufi and Morteza Mahjubi as the most famous Persian traditional pianists who played piano in this style.

9.3 Solution for the Persian irregular intervals

After a while this kind of piano tuning was out of favor, and some other musicians suggested playing a diminished second instead of an irregular interval in some cases; or even some other irregular intervals just to resemble that missing intervals.

On the other hand there have been some Persian modes which do not include such kind of intervals or it has been possible to replace them with some other, or, let's say the ears changed to accept new intervals instead of the original ones.

In this case there was a new style of Persian music created which was neither Persian traditional music nor western music, but a new style of music with Persian taste.

In this new musical style, musicians/composers favored more the folk songs which were more known by the ears and in which there was some kind of certain rhythm and melodies instead of that kind of precise music in *Dastgahi* music. There has been and there still are some popular musicians who perform some Persian folk melodies or songs.

10 MUSICAL EDUCATION

Before the beginning of the twentieth century Persian music education was ornamental; from the very beginning the maestro taught the pupil how to take his or her instrument, then he played some phrases and the pupil should have repeated it and memorized it. Later, the maestro added embellishments and the pupil tried to imitate them and go through different levels of Persian Music *Radif*.

After learning the classical basics, the second step started which was working with rhythm. In this level the pupil should improvise some melodies while the rhythm was going on.

Finally, in the third step the pupil should accompany a singer. It was much higher than the previous level because it needed solo playing. At first the pupil should play an introduction to show the condition of the *Dastgah*, then the singer would begin to sing different *Gushes* and the pupil should accompany the singer in a way that doesn't disturb and during the singer's pauses he should imitate whatever the singer has sung. (Safvat 2009, 233)








When I started to study music the system was much more developed but in some parts there were the same ideas; I learned some lessons by playing some methods which required music reading and after that I could pass to the *Radif* sessions where there was a maestro who was singing the *Radif* and then it was the pupils' turn. They should imitate it and we instrumentalists should accompany them and play something rhythmical between the songs in turn with the other players.

10.1 Notation

European notation came to Persia by the end of nineteenth century and at the beginning it was only used for military music. After that it came to be used in all of the music types.

Before this, there were some efforts at a kind of music notation based on using the alphabets for example, in case of Ud, they use some article name for each finger; but it was not for writing melodies and was only to simplify the descriptions of the musical intervals. Mokhber-o-saltaneh was trying to lead a kind of notation based on the Persian alphabet system so called *Abjad* to write the melody but it

didn't succeed because people believed that European notation which was very developed was more methodical. Before the beginning of the twentieth century there weren't any note names like that of the Europeans. They only said for example: let's play in the *Shur Dastgah*. R. Khaleqi has written some names for Persian notes in his theory book *Musiqi-e-Nazari*, which is not needed to write here. But as it was mentioned in the History chapter, Vaziri invented some symbols added to that of European notation system for the irregular Persian notes which was *Sori* and *Koron*. (Safvat 2009, 235)

Size in cent	-150	-100	-50	0	50	100	150
Accidental							
Alteration	3/4 Down	1/2 Down	1/4 Down		1/4 Up	1/2 Up	3/4 Up
	Flat koron	Flat	Koron	Natural	Sori	Sharp	Sori sharp

Picture is from www.96edo.com

11 PERSIAN MUSIC ON THE GUITAR

In this Chapter I have represented some pieces which I have composed for the Guitar in Persian Music

11.1 *Bakhtiari* for guitar solo

I have composed the *Bakhtiari* piece on a very beautiful folk song “*Dast be dastmalom nazan*”



The theme is from the Persian *Bakhtiari* tribes in *Homayoun Dastgah*. The whole piece is in D *Homayoun* and in order to play it I tuned the 6th string to D, and I begin it with a D major chord by playing a kind of variation on the 4th string on the *Hoamyoun* scale which is:



Then it goes to the main theme and the first variation; after the first variation by using some diminished chord it modulates to an *Azeri* mode and then back to *Homayoun*. The piece finishes with the main theme and a D major chord.

11.2 Mo'aleff for guitar solo

The piece *M'alef* begins with some arpeggios which have come from the main theme in *M'alef Gushe* in *Homayoun Dastgah*.

Arpeggio:



Theme:



It develops to a second theme by passing an E7 chord added F to the second theme. I arranged the second theme on different strings in order to let them ring together, resembling the *Santur* on which all of the notes are ringing continuously, or in other words they don't damp strings after playing it. And then, after repeating the first theme, it goes through the same theme variation in *Dashti* in A; which should be played with the open D string ringing while playing on the third string, resembling the *Setar* in which the second string is all the time ringing as a pedal note. The piece finishes with the opening theme.

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