

Saturday, February 13, 2010, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Masters of Persian Music

Three Generations

Hossein Alizadeh	<i>shour angiz, tar</i>
Kayhan Kalhor	<i>kamancheh, five-string kamancheh</i>
Hamid Reza Nourbakhsh	<i>vocals</i>
Fariborz Azizi	<i>bass tar</i>
Siamak Jahangiri	<i>nay</i>
Pezhham Akhavass	<i>tombak</i>
Hamidreza Maleki	<i>santour</i>

PROGRAM

Instrumental improvisation	Hossein Alizadeh, <i>shour angiz</i> Kayhan Kalhor, <i>five-string kamancheh</i>
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INTERMISSION

Hengam ke Gerye midahad saz† (<i>tasneef</i>)	Poem by Nima Youshij
<i>nay solo</i>	

This piece is dedicated to the memory of the renowned Iranian composer and santour player, Parviz Meshkati (1954–2009).

Sobh-daman† (<i>tasneef</i>)	Poem by Shafi'i Kadkani
<i>kamancheh solo</i>	

Sougvaran-e Khamoush‡ (<i>tasneef</i>)	Poem by Shafi'i Kadkani
<i>tar solo</i>	

Chahar-mezrab† (*va Avaz*)
tar and kamancheh duo

Az Dowlat-e May (<i>tasneef</i>)	Poem by Medhi Akhavan-e Sales
<i>saz and avaz</i>	

Yar Amadast (<i>tasneef</i>)	Poem by Salman Savoji
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† composed by Hossein Alizadeh

‡ composed by Kayhan Kalhor

Cal Performances' 2009–2010 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Hengam ke Gerye midahad saz

Poet: Nima Youshij

Translators: Philip Grant & Shervin Emami

As the instrument weeps
This smoke that is the character of the cloud behind it
As the indigo of the sea's eye
Out of anger the fist strikes a face
From that late journey that left me
That gave the woman's flirtatious glance and the instrument's coquetry
I have on familiar pretexts
Captured an image of her
But what weeping, what storm?
Silence is a night everywhere alone
A man on the road plays the *nay*
And its voice rises dejected
I am another one alone, whose eyes
Stir up a storm of tears
As the instrument weeps
This smoke that is the character of the cloud behind it
As the indigo of the sea's eye
Out of anger the fist strikes a face.

Sobh-daman

Poet: Shafi'i Kadkani

Translators: Philip Grant & Shervin Emami

Caspian waves from the corner clad in black
The wounded thicker and the plants, all are silent.
Look! Those dark blue garments, horizon of the fierce morning,
Are the soul of the garden, that from this corner are clad in black.
What a spring it is, O God! That in this desert of melancholy
Tulips are the mirror of the blood of Siavash.
Those ruined flowers scatter in the wind
Lifeless from the wine of the chalice of martyrdom,
May their name be the holy spring of the drunkards' midnight
That it not be said they have been forgotten,
Even if from this most venomous of poisons that has passed through the garden,
The crimson spring flowers have all fallen lifeless.
Once again in your bloody step, O soul of spring,
Thicket with thicket, the trees all embrace one another.

(Please turn the page quietly.)

Sougvaran-e Khamoush*Poet: Shafi'i Kadkani**Translators: Philip Grant & Shervin Emami*

Your mourners, all of them, are silent today,
When insolent mouths, all of them, roar aloud.

If they silently sat mourning you, it is fair
That they should be, all of them, terror-struck at the gathering of terrible beasts.

Alas for this hypocrite people who in this two-faced city
Are, all of them, by day sheriff and by night wine-sellers.

...

O whichever drop from the horizons of whichever cloud, rain down!
Thickets and gardens, all of them, are listening to your voice.

Although the taverns have been closed and friends and fellows today
Have, all of them, sealed their lips, and cry out not,

Yet from loyalty long suffering libertines
Will never again drink not save in your memory and your name.

Az Dowlat-e May*Poet: Mehdi Akhavan-Sales**Translators: Philip Grant & Shervin Emami*

Wine's realm bestows upon me tonight another mood
Now laughter on my lips, Now tears in my eyes

Anywhere I wish I leap I shine
Like a butterfly, I have a wing and a feather

O heart, what news with you that tonight you wax madder?
I too have news of the cruelty of your moon

Until the moon reappears—a cry of loneliness
I shall reluctantly share my secrets with the stars.

Yar Amadast*Poet: Salman Savoji**Translators: Philip Grant & Shervin Emami*

My soul dances—but has the beloved come?
My eye leaps, truly the time of the visit has come.

Tears come to my eyes, kissing the dust of her path;
On my lips it would seem my soul likewise for this has come.

Until I have seen your good face, the auspicious day I have not seen;
Separated from you, day to me, like night, dark has become.

Though thence a gentle breeze has passed to me,
Up from every vein like claws a hundred piteous cries have come.

Day to my eyes from sorrow like night black has become;
Into my fancy that time of those locks and that visage has come.

If troubles are too much, Salman, go, be a butterfly;
To men have in love great troubles come.

Masters of Persian Music: *Three Generations*

Persian Classical Music

From high mountain ranges to vast desert plains and fertile coastal areas, Iran is a land of contrasts. Iranians often explain the profound spirituality of their music and poetry as a response to this landscape as well as to the country's turbulent history, marked by successive invasions from the ancient Greeks onwards. Rooted in a rich and ancient heritage, this is a music of contemplation and meditation which is linked through the poetry to Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam whose members seek spiritual union with God. The aesthetic beauty of this refined and intensely personal music lies in the intricate nuances of the freely flowing solo melody lines, which are often compared with the elaborate designs found on Persian carpets and miniature paintings.

Developed at the royal courts of Iran over many hundreds of years, Persian classical music is of indeterminate age. The sparse documentary record dates it back to the pre-Islamic era before the Arabic invasion of 642 AD, and later medieval treatises written during the golden age of Middle Eastern scholarship mention names of pieces that are still performed today, but the extent to which the music has changed over time is not clear.

Until the early 20th century, Persian classical music was largely restricted to the royal courts, but with the declining influence of the monarchy following the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, the music found a new setting in small, informal gatherings at the homes of musicians and aristocratic supporters of the arts. Although still very much a private and elite affair, this marked the beginning of an increasingly public presence, which gained momentum with the arrival of sound recording, broadcasting (Radio Tehran was established in 1939) and European-style public concerts (from the first decade of the 20th century, but regularly from the 1930s onwards). By the 1960s, Persian classical music had become available to a wide audience, but at the same time the growing pace of modernization and Westernization in Iran created a demand for all things Western—including

Western music and Western-style Iranian pop, which seemed to be more in tune with people's increasingly modernized lifestyle—and Persian classical music gradually became sidelined as a minority interest. Many fine classical musicians were performing and recording at this time, but in the context of a society which seemed little interested in its own culture, it is not surprising that many of these musicians became preoccupied with trying to preserve the musical tradition rather than exploring new ways of developing and enriching that tradition. The headlong rush into modernization and Westernization reached crisis point in the late 1970s and eventually culminated in the Revolution of February 1979. One of the most interesting aspects of post-1979 Iran was a "return to roots" reawakening of national consciousness in which Persian classical music played a central role. Such was the popularity of this music that by the mid-1980s—and despite the many religious proscriptions against music-making and the long period of austerity during the Iran-Iraq war—Persian classical music had attracted a mass audience of unprecedented size, with many young people in particular learning the music.

Persian classical music has experienced significant changes over the last 20 years, partly through a new confidence among those musicians willing to explore new musical avenues. The music you will hear tonight is deeply rooted and imbued with a sense of tradition and continuity, but at the same time they speak with a contemporary voice.

The Musical Tradition

Creative performance lies at the heart of Persian classical music. The importance of creativity in this music is often expressed through the image of the nightingale (*bol bol*). According to popular belief, the nightingale possesses the most beautiful voice on earth and is also said never to repeat itself in song. A bird of great symbolic power throughout the Middle East, the nightingale represents the ultimate symbol of musical creativity. To the extent that Persian classical music lives through the more or less spontaneous re-creation of the traditional repertoire in performance, the music is often

described as improvised. The musicians themselves talk freely of improvisation, or *bedabeh navazi* (literally, "spontaneous playing"), a term borrowed from the realm of oral poetry and which has been applied to Persian classical music since the early years of the 20th century. Musicians are also aware of the concept of improvisation in styles of music outside Iran, particularly in jazz and Indian classical music. But as in so many other "improvised" traditions, the performance of Persian classical music is far from "free"—it is in fact firmly grounded in a lengthy and rigorous training which involves the precise memorization of a canonic repertoire known as *radif* (literally, "order") and which is the basis for all creativity in Persian classical music.

Like other Middle Eastern traditions, Persian classical music is based on the exploration of short modal pieces: In Iran, these are known as *gushehs*, and there are 200 or so *gushehs* in the complete *radif*. These *gushehs* are grouped according to mode into 12 modal "systems" called *dastgah*. A *dastgah* essentially comprises a progression of modally related *gushehs* in a manner somewhat similar to the progression of pieces in a Baroque suite. Each *gusheh* has its own name and its own unique mode (but is related to other *gushehs* in the same *dastgah*) as well as characteristic motifs. The number of *gushehs* in a *dastgah* varies from as few as five in a relatively short *dastgah*, such as *Dashti*, to as many as 44 or more in a *dastgah*, such as *Mahur*. The training of a classical musician essentially involves memorizing the complete repertoire of the *radif*. Only when the entire repertoire has been memorized—*gusheh* by *gusheh*, *dastgah* by *dastgah*—a process which takes many years, are musicians considered ready to embark on creative digressions, eventually leading to improvisation itself. So the *radif* is not performed as such, but represents the starting point for creative performance and composition.

There is very little documentary information before the middle of the 19th century, so the history of the *radif* is quite speculative. The evidence suggests that for many generations each *ostad* (master teacher) would have developed his own individual repertoire of pieces based on a broad tradition shared with other musicians. These versions of the traditional repertoire were passed down orally from one generation to the next, each generation

developing its own variants. Around the middle of the 19th century, there were moves to standardize the repertoire, and Ali Akbar Farahani (1810–1855), master of *tar* (plucked lute) at the court of the Qajar monarch Nasser-e Din Shah (c.1848–1896) in Tehran, is credited with organizing the diverse materials of the traditional repertoire into a coherent structure in which modally related pieces (the *gushehs*) were grouped together into the 12 *dastgahs*. It was also around this time that this repertoire acquired the name "*radif*" Farahani's work was completed after his death by his son, Mirza Abdollah (1843–1918), and this particular version of the repertoire came to be known as *radif-e Mirza Abdollah* ("Mirza Abdollah's *radif*"). A proficient performer, Mirza Abdollah was also active as a teacher, and was more aware than most musicians of his day of the importance of transmitting the repertoire to the next generation. Many of his numerous pupils became prominent musicians and they, in turn, taught this *radif* to their own pupils. There are, in fact, a number of different *radifs* in existence today (including interesting regional variations), mostly rooted in a shared tradition and each one usually associated with the particular master who developed it. Indeed, students of Persian classical music are often expected to learn a number of *radifs* of different schools (*mektabs*) of with a series of teachers in order to consolidate their musical knowledge. At the same time, in the course of the last century, Mirza Abdollah's *radif* (as developed and transmitted, and later recorded and published by his pupils and grand-pupils) attained authoritative status, particularly in the version taught to many contemporary musicians by Ostad Nur Ali Borumand at the University of Tehran in the 1960s and 1970s.

A performance of Persian classical music is usually based in one of the 12 *dastgahs* (although there is a technique known as *morakkab navazi* by which musicians can move between different *dastgahs* using shared *gushehs* as "bridges"). The musician (or musicians in the case of a group performance) selects a number of *gushehs* from the learned repertoire of the chosen *dastgah*, and presents these in turn, using each one as the basis for improvised performance. This progression of *gushehs* takes the music gradually away from the opening "home" mode of the *dastgah*, through a series of increasingly more

distant modes and usually tracing a rise in pitch until the music reaches a climactic point (*owj*) towards the end of the *dasgah*. This is followed by a release in the final cadential section, known as *forud* (literally, “descent”), which returns the music to the home mode of the *dasgah* to end the performance. The resulting arch-like shape of the complete *dasgah* provides the music with much of its dynamic energy. The length of a performance can vary a great deal depending on the context, the number of *gushehs* selected by the musician and the extent of the musician’s improvisations, but most performances nowadays are between 30 minutes and an hour long.

The complex detail of the solo melody line is of utmost importance in Persian classical music—there is no harmony as such and only an occasional light drone (in contrast with the constant underlying drone in Indian classical music). As such, Persian classical music was traditionally performed by a solo singer and a single instrumental accompanist—in which case the instrument would shadow the voice and play short passages between the phrases of poetry—or by an instrumentalist on their own. In the course of the last century it became increasingly common for musicians to perform in larger groups, usually comprising a singer and four or five instrumentalists (each playing a different classical instrument). Nowadays one can hear both solo and group performances. The latter often follow a formula by which a performance begins and ends with an ensemble piece (with or without the vocalist) which are generally pre-composed (and often notated) rather than improvised and which frame the largely improvised and unmeasured central part of the performance. In this section, known as *avaz* (literally, “song”), it is still common practice for instruments to take it in turns to accompany the singer rather than play together.

The Poetry

Poetry has played a central role in Iranian culture for centuries. At times when Persian language and identity were under assault, it was poetry in particular which kept the essence of the culture alive. Such a time, still remembered as one of the darkest periods of Iranian history, was the Mongol invasion of the 13th century through which the sufi poet Mowlavi (also known as Jalal-e Din Rumi, 1207–1273) lived. The fact that such a period produced some of the finest poetry in the Persian language is a testament to the passion with which the culture was maintained against the odds. Moreover, it was through the poetry, particularly that of Mowlavi, that the message of mystical sufism found its most potent voice. With religious proscriptions against music, dance and representational art at various times over the past few centuries, the creative energies of the artistically minded have often found an outlet through poetic expression. It will be no surprise then, to find that an art form so imbued with history and which addresses some of the most fundamental and eternal philosophical issues of human existence, should play such an important role in the lives of Iranians today. Poetry is also central to Persian classical music—it is still unusual to hear a performance without a singer—and vocal sections are usually set to the poetry of medieval mystic poets such as Baba Taher (11th century AD), Sheikh Attar (12th century AD), Mowlavi and Hafez (1325–1389) and, less often, to the words of classical contemporary poets.

Notes by Laudan Nooshin, City University of London, from the CD Without You on World Village label.

Sightlines

Saturday, February 13, 2010, 7pm, Zellerbach Hall

Pre-performance talk by Francesco Spagnolo, Director of Research, Judah L. Magnes Museum.
This *Sightlines* talk is free to all event ticket holders.

Masters of Persian Music features two of Iran’s most important figures in Persian classical music touring with the next generation of musical masters. Following previous sold-out tours, this edition of Masters of Persian Music features Hossein Alizadeh, the *tar* (plucked lute) maestro who is considered an inspiration to an entire generation of Iran’s musical culture; Kayhan Kalhor, the *kamancheh* (Persian spiked-fiddle) virtuoso who, through his many musical collaborations, has been instrumental in popularizing Persian music in the West and is a creative force in today’s music scene; and the remarkable young vocalist Hamid Reza Nourbakhsh, leading disciple of the renowned Mohammad Reza Shajarian, who is touring North America for the first time. They are accompanied by Pezham Akhavass on percussion, whose unique approach to rhythm and style has gained him recognition as one of the most distinguished and capable players of his generation; Siamak Jahangiri on *ney*, who has studied with one of Iran’s most eminent *ney* players, Mohammad Ali Kiani Nejad; and Rouzbeh Rahimi on *santur* (hammered dulcimer).

The Masters of Persian Music are managed by Opus 3 Artists, 470 Park Avenue South, Ninth Floor, New York, New York 10016.

Hossein Alizadeh is considered an inspiration to an entire generation of Iran’s musical culture. He was born in Tehran in 1951 and has studied with various masters of traditional Persian music including Ali Akbar Khan Shahnazi, Nur Ali Borumand, Abdollah Davami, Mahmood Karimi and Houshang Zarif. He further expanded his formal education by studying composition and musicology at the University of Berlin. Mr. Alizadeh was awarded a position with the National Orchestra of Iran and later became the conductor and soloist of the Iranian National Radio and Television Orchestra. He founded the Aref Ensemble and performed with the Shayda Ensemble, both dedicated to the promotion and advancement of Iranian classical music. Mr. Alizadeh participated in the orchestra of the Béjart Ballet Company in a performance of *Gulistan*, by Maurice Béjart. In 2000, the Ministry of Culture in Iran declared him the best contemporary artist. He has composed

many works of contemporary and neo-classical Iranian music and published a number of études for *tar* and *setar*. Notable works include *Hessar*, *Ney Nava and Song of Compassion* as well as several film scores such as *Gabbeh*, *A Time for Drunken Horses* and most recently *Turtles Can Fly*. In addition, Mr. Alizadeh has recorded the entire body of the *radif* based on the interpretation of Mirza Abdollah. He has performed extensively throughout the United States, Europe and Asia and has appeared on many radio and television programs around the world. He has taught at the University of Tehran, the Tehran Music Conservatory and the California Institute of the Arts.

Three-time Grammy Award nominee **Kayhan Kalhor** is an internationally acclaimed virtuoso on the *kamancheh*, who through his many musical collaborations has been instrumental in popularizing Persian music in the West and is a creative force in today’s music scene. His performances of traditional Persian music and multiple collaborations have attracted audiences around the globe. He has studied the music of Iran’s many regions, in particular those of Khorason and Kordestan, and has toured the world as a soloist with various ensembles and orchestras including the New York Philharmonic and the Orchestre National de Lyon. He is co-founder of the renowned ensembles Dastan, Ghazal: Persian & Indian Improvisations and Masters of Persian Music. Mr. Kalhor has composed works for Iran’s most renowned vocalists Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Shahram Nazeri and has also performed and recorded with Iran’s greatest instrumentalists. He has composed music for television and film and was most recently featured on the soundtrack of Francis Ford Coppola’s *Youth Without Youth* in a score on which he collaborated with Osvaldo Golijov. In 2004, Mr. Kayhan was invited by composer John Adams to give a solo recital at Carnegie Hall as part of his *Perspectives* series and in the same year he appeared on a double bill at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, sharing the program with the Festival Orchestra performing the Mozart Requiem. Mr. Kayhan is a member of Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project, and his compositions appear on all three of the Ensemble’s albums.

Hamid Reza Nourbakhsh is considered one of today's finest Iranian vocalists. He studied under the supervision of Mohammad Reza Shajarian, a living legend in Iranian classical music. He has performed with renowned artists and groups, including the Shams Ensemble, the Aref Ensemble, the Ukraine Philharmonic Orchestra and the great *santur* maestro Faramarz Payvar. He performed with Kayhan Kalhor at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris and is currently the director of Iran's House of Music.

Fariborz Azizi was born in Tehran in 1961. He has performed *tar* and *setar* for more than 30 years. Before devoting himself to classical Persian music, he obtained a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from Tehran University. He first became attracted to music during his teenage years listening to the radio show Golchin Hafteh. He was heavily influenced by Chavosh musical masters, including Hossein Alizadeh, who has been his master for more than 10 years.

Siamak Jahangiry is a rising star in the world of Iranian classical music. Born in northern Iran, he began playing the *ney* at age 12. He learned first from Abdolnaghi Afsharnia before going on to study with Iran's most eminent *ney* players, primarily with Mohammad Ali Kiani Nejad. He received his degree in music from Tehran University of the Arts and has written a book on the *ney*, its playing techniques in the 20th century and its masters.

Pezhham Akhavass was born in 1980 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in music from Tehran's Sureh University. He began learning youth music theory under the instruction of Naser Nazar at age five. With the support of his father, Pezhham began studying the *tombak* with the guidance of Naser Farhangfar. He also became acquainted with members of the Masters in Persian Music and performed with them both locally and on tour in Iran and Europe. These masters include Kayhan Kalhor and Hossein Alizadeh.

Hamidreza Maleki joins the group for the first time representing the third generation of Masters of Persian Music.