



Interview: Keyhan Kalhor – p. 51



Music in the Age of Sassanid – p. 25



Shamlou – p. 39



Shafa In His Own Words – p. 55

# Persian Heritage

Vol. 5, No. 20

Winter 2000

**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK** 6

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** 8

**NEWS BRIEFS** 12

**COMMENTARY** 17

**Confessions of A Temporary Mute** 18

*By: Shahrokh Ahkami*

**Culture of Paradoxes — Iranian Women & the IRI** 22

*By: Karim Mansouri*

**Voices of Iranian Teens** 24

*By: Chris A. Khatami*

## THE ARTS

**Music in the Age of the Sassanid Dynasty** 25

*By: Ghassem Talebzadeh*

**A Time For Drunken Horses — Interview** 28

*By: Jamsheed Akrami*

## YOUR PERSIAN HERITAGE

**Interview with Sa'id Khadiri** (By: A. Lotfalian) 32

**A Pearl of A Great Price — Part 4** (By: David A. Yeagley) 36

**Shamlou** (By: M. K. Sadigh) 39

**The Crusades** (By: David Yazdan) 42

**Morteza Pashai — A Migratory Bird** (By: Roxana Azimi) 47

**Shab-e Chelleh** (By: Massoume) 48

**The Relationship Between the Persian and Roman Empires** 49

*By: F. A. Sadeghpour*

**The Ballet Goes Persian** 50

## FEATURE

**INTERVIEW WITH KEYHAN KALHOR** 51

*By: Shahrokh Ahkami*

**SHOJAEDDIN SHAFI IN HIS OWN WORDS** 55

**BOOK REVIEWS** 54

## OUTSIDE YOUR HERITAGE

**THEATRE REVIEWS** 60

**Gambler or the Fool?** (By: Perry G.) 62

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Has there ever been a time in your life when you determined that you disliked someone, without having ever met them? Someone, whose mere thought of or sound of their voice and name causes your blood pressure to rise? I have and I am sure most of us have experienced the same feeling, especially when the person is a politician, movie star or holds another prominent position. I now ask my readers for advice on how I can overcome this.

One individual who, through the years, has continued to instill these feelings in me is Mr. Yasser Arafat. Perhaps it is because of his unshaven face, head dress and stark military uniform so unlike what I am accustomed to seeing on other military leaders from Iran, Europe and the Arab nations. His appearance, in my mind, does not reflect the power he has, as a leader for a nation — a leader, who represents his people in their fight for freedom and independence. Also disturbing to me is the way he speaks. And, I question his remarkable ability to remain alive despite the circumstances around him, colleagues disappearing and accidents.

For these reasons, I have always looked at him with suspicion. Often, I would scold myself and remind myself that what he is doing and how he looks, or, for that matter, handles himself, is not my business. Yet my dislike for him continued. Why does it matter to me if he is good or evil? What business did I have to be concerned for their fight for freedom, equality and life, when Palestine is not my country? Why am I constantly anxious about the Palestinians and the people of other Arab countries? After all aren't these the same Arab governments that butchered the young and old, men, women and children in Iran, destroyed so much of the land, burned the refineries, and dislodged people from their homes forcing them to relocate in the desert? Aren't they the same Arab governments who without a thought destroyed human lives with bacterial and chemical warfare? Yes! So, why is it that I feel such a passion for these Arab people and have very little concern with what is going on in Afghanistan, the genocide of a race that speaks your own language? There is not a tear shed for them or an article written on their behalf. Their voice, if any, is a soft whisper. I have no answer to my questions, yet I constantly search for an answer.

I apologize to you for having diverted from the purpose of this editorial, which is a discussion of Mr. Arafat, and interestingly enough, a recent interview he had with Christiane Amanpour. I have always respected and admired her for her talent as a news correspondent and the fact that she has never denied her Iranian heritage, even at a time when being Iranian was a negative. So proud is she of her heritage that she filmed a documentary in Iran where she took her viewers on a tour of her home as a child. It was now in semi ruins. She was obviously disturbed by what she found, yet her fond memories as a child in Iran are remembered with affection.

Knowing this I was quite astounded by what I heard in a brief interview between Ms. Amanpour and Mr. Arafat on CNN. The topic was peace between Palestine and Israel and the dividing of Jerusalem. In a response to her question on the division Mr. Arafat responded with a question, "if they wanted to divide Washington, D.C., what would your reaction be?" Ms. Amanpour without hesitation stated that she was not American. When he asked her what she was, she declared that she was a British subject.



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**PUBLISHED BY:**

**PERSIAN HERITAGE, INC.**

A corporation organized for cultural and literary purposes

Cover Price: \$4.00

Subscriptions: \$16.00 per year (domestic);

\$28.00 per year (foreign)

The questions continued and Mr. Arafat was becoming terribly irritated. She however, kept pushing. In response to another question posed by Ms. Amanpour, Mr. Arafat admitted that he is worried and nervous about his people and his land. He is determined to fight to the finish for what he and his people believe to be their rights. He then turned to Ms. Amanpour and asked if her people were in the same position as his, how she would feel and what she would do as a leader. Ms. Amanpour in a very cold manner responded by telling Mr. Arafat that she had no people.

Mr. Arafat's face changed first to disbelief of what he heard and then he became angry. He brought to her attention that not more than a few sentences ago she informed him of her British citizenship. He could not understand how she could make such a statement. With that he declined to continue with the interview and removed his microphone. Suddenly my feelings for this man changed. I no

longer despised him. Despite of what he as a leader had done to Iran, and his relationship with Saddam Hussein (I believe to this day that he was hoping that a victory for Hussein would mean that part of the Persian Gulf area of Iran, Khuzestan, would become another "Arabestan"), he had one character absent in many world leaders — integrity. He is not afraid to speak the truth, to stand up to the press and other nations regardless of the consequences. He is not afraid to die for his country, his cause or his people.

Isn't it ironic how the scale of my feelings have shifted? Mr. Arafat, in my mind, is no longer the monster some believe him to be. Suddenly I find myself admiring the one I despised, and questioning the integrity of the one I admired, Ms. Amanpour. How strange I thought, that she declines "having people." How shallow she is to discard her British and Iranian heritage. Unfortunately, the likes of Ms. Amanpour exist in all cultures and societies including Iran. They

exist at all financial, economic, professional and social levels. Like the capon that is hunted, they cover their heads hoping that they will not be found or recognized. Eventually, the hunted capon is found and plucked from its hiding place. How he/she will prevail, remains an unanswered question.

And so ... I may not need the help of my readers to overcome my earlier shortcoming. I think I just found my answer. It is a rule that has been passed on through the centuries and one that we shall continue to violate ... "don't judge a book by its cover." Maybe by applying this simple rule the world will reach harmony. Maybe by not reacting quickly or baselessly we will be able to understand one another's positions. Maybe this understanding will lead to peace and unity. Maybe peace and unity will lead to world stability.

*Shahrokh Alavi*

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One of the most splendid pages of the Persian art history is that of the Sassanid era, music, one of the core elements of that civilization, blossomed under Sassanid sovereigns. One can say Persian music, as we know it, is a legacy of that dynasty.

Promotion of the arts, including music, was quite vigorous during this time in history, as substantiated in books and manuscripts of the period after Islam. Even four-hundred years after the Arab Conquest one can find the marks of the policy of promotion. Various songs and melodies were passed on from generation to generation hence creating a foundation for times to come.

According to period historians Sassanid kings held skilled musicians in high esteem. In his book, *Morouj-al-Zahab* Massoudi explains, "The Musicians of King Shahpoor's court were among the best and most skilled of the artists of this era. They rehearsed in especially designated chambers in the palace." Elsewhere he writes, "While Ardeshire Babbakan, founder of the Sassanid Dynasty, assigned members of his court to positions of power and status, he gave minstrels and musicians a prominent place of their own. Ardeshire's successors continued to preserve the status of artists." The splendor of Ardeshire's court inspired numerous arrangements, one of which is called "The Throne of Ardeshire."

Ardeshire Babbakan, founder of the Sassanid dynasty, often required the presence of court musicians when receiving high ranking officials and military personnel. During his time, musicians enjoyed increased importance and respect.

Bahram Goor was also among the Sassanid kings for whom music had great value. He elevated the status of musicians more than any of his predecessors. Hamdolah Mostoffi writes, "During the reign of Bahram Goor entertainers prospered immensely, so much so that no player would be satisfied even at one hundred Derhams per day." The reader would be interested to know that a single Derham held great monetary value in those times.

Under Bahram Goor's rule all classes of people enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and well-being. By his decree all people were to work and labor one half day and to rest and play one half day. Especially assigned agents of the court were ordered to search for individuals who lived in poverty and to inform the King of their difficult predicament. It is said no Persian lived in poverty and destitute during his reign.

Minstrels of the Bahram Goor court accompanied the King everywhere even on hunting trips. In a painting from that period, Bahram's hunting adventures have taken him to a lagoon; while his musicians and singers are portrayed playing and singing in a nearby boat. Elsewhere, Massoudi writes about royal feasts and the habits of the kings, "...When the King sat down to be entertained, his jesters and servants would each take their places and would await, motionless, a signal from the stage manager who determined the nature and sequence of the performance.

Accounts of this chapter in history attest to the fact that the musicians of the Khosroe Anoo-Shiravan period enjoyed lesser importance. Arthur Christiansen, the famous Persian expert who has written extensively in Farsi, asserts, "Sassanid kings always eat twenty meters away from their subjects. At the ten-meter point, a curtain was hung. At the curtain, a slave referred to as 'Khoram Bosh' was responsible for signaling yet another slave to make this ceremonial announcement: 'Protect your head and beware of what you say as you are in the company of royalty.'"

In Al-Massoudi's *Chronicles of Ardeshire Rabbakan* we read, once a beautiful slave girl falls in love at first sight when she catches



## MUSIC IN THE AGE OF THE SASSANID DYNASTY

BY: GHASSEM TALEBZADEH

a glimpse of the young Ardeshire, singing to the beat of his drum during an outing. In another thesis from the Sassanid period, called *Khosroe Kovattan & Reedak* (which according to one account discusses Anoo-Shiravan and according to another account discusses Khosroe Gobattan and Reedak), Anoo Shiravan asks Reedak about music and mentions various instruments, such as the Tanbour, the Barbat and the Ney. "Best of all is the harp when accompanied with sweet songs of slaves," he declared.

Thus we can see that music was not merely a superficial diversion; rather musicians had a presence in all aspects of life and in all segments of society. In fact, *Principles of Monni & Mazda* speak to the prominence and eminence of musicians in society. One of the four fundamental tenets of this treatise is the value of musicians.

The reign of Bahram Goor also witnessed the discovery of a treasure associated with the age of sun worship and the religion of Mithra. The treasure inspired a song called "Treasure Hunter" or "Treasure Hunters." Though this song is often men-



tioned among Barbode's compositions, it is in fact associated with Bahram Goor's time. Barbode himself speaks of it briefly in his "Si Lahn" collection. Famous Persian poet, Manouchehri has written extensively about Barbode's "Si Lahn."

Bahram Goor had abundant enthusiasm for poetry and often recited it. His appreciation of poetry is noted in Ferdousi's *Shah-Nameh*, the most celebrated of Persian epics. Therefore, as indicated earlier, we may conclude that poetry and music are two inseparable elements throughout the history of Persian civilization and art. Poetry is recited with the accompaniment of music to this date.

Music reached its highest and most illustrious point during the reign of Khosroe Parviz. It is this period from which the most number of documents and accounts of ancient Persian music is available. Works of Persian poets and authors mention various tunes and songs; associating the compositions with the Khosroe Parviz period. This era, as that of Bahram Goor, created a favorable atmosphere for the development and cultivation of artistic talent and interests. Khosroe Parviz himself was a music enthusiast. His court enjoyed numerous performances by Barbode, Sarkesh, Nakkeesa, Azadeh and Bomshod, among others.

Much of the songs and melodies left to us from that time period are in fact works of the above artists, especially those of Barbode. Music flourished to such an extent during this time that many traveled from neighboring countries and from as far away as Arabia and the Byzantine to study music.

Great poets and authors of Persia, namely Ferdousi, Nezami Ganjavi, Manouchehri and Arab historians like Massoudi and Sa-Allebi unanimously deem Barbode to be the most important and prominent musician of the Khosroe Parviz time and of the Sassanid dynasty.

Barbode's name was the subject of many interpretations. Arabs called him Pahlahbode. Among Persians he was known as Barbode Jahromie. Some manuscripts refer to him as Fahrbole or Pahlbode. In the Pahlavi language he was called Pahlpat. He was known to be from Marv (a city in northern Persia), but according to many other written accounts, Jahrome was his real home where he was known as Barbode of Jahrome. This musician whose name is an indelible part of Persian music history is

also the subject of heart-warming stories. Ferdousi gives detailed accounts of his compositions in the *Shah-Nameh*.

Sa-Allebi discusses Barbode and Sarkesh, who was one of the most talented musicians of the Khosroe Parviz court and writes the following about the relationship between the two artists: "... Sarkesh was in charge of the minstrels who performed at the private gatherings of the Khosroe Parviz court. One day he was informed that a young Marvian who was blessed with a

***Great poets and authors of Persia, namely Ferdousi, Nezami Ganjavi, Manouchehri and Arab historians like Massoudi and Sa-Allebi unanimously deem Barbode to be the most important and prominent musician of the Khosroe Parviz time and of the Sassanid dynasty.***

beautiful voice and played the Oude masterfully, had arrived in the palace and wished to be received by the King as a new court minstrel. Distraught and frantic by the news, Sarkesh resorted to every means at his disposal to keep the young man away from the King. He bribed the servants and members of the court and requested of the King's friends and guests never to speak of the young man. Learning of this development, Barbode immediately contrived a clever plan. At the garden where the King sometimes took leisurely walks and feasted on food and drink, he bribed a guard to allow him to climb a tall tree so as to have a clear view of the grounds. On the day of the King's visit to the garden, Barbode dressed in a green color garment, took his Oude in hand and climbed on a cedar tree and hid among the branches. Just as the King raised his cup to his lips, Barbode began playing his instrument and singing a very soothing but simple song; which proved to be very effective. The song was called "Yazdan Afareed." Overjoyed and intoxicated by the sound he had heard, he inquired the name of the artist and all began searching for him. No one discovered his hiding place. The King took another cup in his hand. This time Barbode began singing another song; this one more intriguing, named "Partou Khar" or "Partou

Khavar". Khosroe was mesmerized by this song and announced, "I am all ears". Once again, he ordered a search for the mystery singer. Once again, they failed to find him.

Finally, Khosroe lifted his third cup when Barbode began playing again; and this time sang a song called "Sabz Andar Sabz," an improvisation alluding to his hiding place. Khosroe sprang up to his feet and declared: "This song undoubtedly comes from an angel which God has sent for our pleasure." Then he asked the performer to come into view. Barbode descended the tree and threw himself at Khosroe's feet. The King honored him and inquired about his circumstances. Thereafter he made him a courtier and appointed him the head of court musicians. Barbode was the only man who could deliver the news of the death of Shabdeez, Khosroe's black stallion. He managed this grave task through a song he composed solely for this purpose.



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On the subject of Kkosroevani odes and the Kkosroevani name several theses and articles offer interpretations. Massoudi writes, "Kkosroevani meant happy song. All these tunes were played in groups of seven. Therefore they were called seven-Khosroevanis.

In Poetry & Music of the Sassanid Era, written by Abbass Eghbal Ashtiani, Khosroevani is explained as follows: "Kkosroevani is a song created by Barbode, the minstrel, whose words rhymed, consisting of only eulogies and praises, hailing Khosroe Parviz and void of any story in verse" (from the *Encyclopedia of Farhang Jahangeeri*).

There are a variety of accounts regarding the circumstances of Barbode's death. Sarkesh and Barbode were both among the greatest musicians of Khosroe Parviz court. Jealous of his superior talent and the attention he received from the King, Sarkesh poisoned Barbode. Devastated by Barbode's death, the King learned that Sarkesh had a hand in the tragedy. He told Sarkesh, "I enjoyed Barbode's singing and equally appreciated yours but you have now taken away half of my pleasure, hence you deserve to die. To this Sarkesh replied, "You would have nothing left to enjoy if you order my death." Upon hearing this logic, the King forgave Sarkesh and spared his life (from *Music Magazine*).

Few of Sarkesh's compositions and works are available today; though he enjoyed equal status as Barbode in literature. It is widely believed that he was a Greek singer whose real name was Sergius. In Persian Sergius is pronounced Sergeesh and/or Sargash. If in fact this name was of Greek origin, it is possible that it became rather a common name after the invasion of Persia by Alexander the Great. At any rate, Sergius resembles Roman names rather than Greek names.

Among Sarkesh's existing works is a composition called "Jameh Darran." According to the legend when it was first performed, the audience became so electrified and excited, they tore off their clothes! In Persian modes, Jameh Darran is a part played in Afshari, Homayoun and Esfahan. (*Hoffez & Music* by Hassan Ali Mallah)

Other professional musicians of the Sassanid period, who were contemporaries of Bahram Goor and Khosroe Parviz, are Ramteen, Azadeh, Arezzou and Bomshod. Three hundred and sixty songs are identified as those of this period; each corresponding to a day of the calendar. Sadly, only a few of their names are known. Great Persian poets frequently mention songs and scores of this era in their poems and often credit Barbode for the beautiful compositions.

In his poetic tributes, Manouchehri names many of the remaining musical scores of the Sassanide period; however one cannot trust all are ancient names. Another poet registering names of musical works is Nezami Ganjavi. He applauds Barbode for these arrangements though many of them may have already existed in the preceding centuries. Nezami adds other names to the list: Farokh Rooz, Farokh Rooe and Sabz Dar Sabz.

It is not in the interest of this essay to associate names with artists and to compare the same in the works of the great poets. However, a thorough study of ancient Persian music would require a comprehensive comparison and investigation of the linguistic origins of names based on sufficient documentation; resulting in an independent and lengthy report. For instance, in order to research and elaborate on the "Keen-eh Siavash" or "Keen-eh Iraj," one must examine the ancient history of Persia, its wars and the aftermath of a host of other events. Only such an exercise can provide future scholars and researchers with a solid foundation based on which further discourse can develop. ■

## NIGHT SILENCE DESERT

The music of Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Kayhan Kalhor come together in this wonderful CD. The inspiration of the music is Kalhor's love for Khorassan which he sees as a part of Iran that links so many musical traditions of the country. Though elementary in form, having no orchestration, the sounds made by the musicians with nine instruments, creates the illusion of a symphony. One can, through the sounds, imagine a night in the desert. This is curious since Khorassan is not located in a desert region. "NIGHT SILENCE DESERT" is an excellent example of traditional Persian instruments. Besides the musical offering, is the ability to clearly hear each instrument speak to the listener and create their own story.



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# A TIME FOR DRUNKEN HORSES

A New film by Bahman Ghobadi

"Most of my fondest memories date back to my childhood. Although I endured a great deal of hardship and misery as a child, my early experiences in life are so special to me that I consider my childhood the best period of my life. In fact, all the short films I have made so far are drawn from my childhood."

## An Interview with Bahman Ghobadi

By: Jamsheed Akrami

The story takes place in a remote, mountainous area near the Iran-Iraq border in the Kurdish region of Iran. Ayoub, a hard-working adolescent, along with his two sisters and two brothers live a harsh life of economic deprivation. Their mother is dead and their smuggler father is away. Every day Ayoub and other village boys compete for a trip to a small town, where they are used for an assortment of odd jobs, including smuggling goods under their clothes.

Ayoub and his impoverished family face a new hardship when the local doctor tells them their handicapped brother, Madi, is critically ill and will die unless they take him to town for a hospital operation. Although they are told the operation will prolong Madi's life for only a few months, the family is determined to help Madi. Ayoub hopelessly tries but fails to raise money. His elder sister, Rojin, agrees to marry an Iraqi Kurd across the border on the condition that the groom's family pays for her brother's operation in Iraq.

Upon the bridal party's arrival, the groom's mother refuses to accept Madi, and after a heated argument, they give a mule in compensation to Rojin's family. Ayoub joins a group of smugglers to cross the border into Iraq to sell the mule for Madi's operation. The freezing, snow-covered mountain terrain in the war zone is so treacherous that the smugglers have to intoxicate their horses to move them.

**How did you come up with the idea for *A Time for Drunken Horses*?**

The film is loosely based on a story I used for one of my short films as well. That film, *Life in Fog*, was made almost by accident. I was supposed to make a film about a military operation when I ran into a boy who had lost his parents and had a tough time making a living. I called my producer and told him I wanted to change my subject. He agreed, and I made *Life in Fog*. Although that film won many national and international awards, not too many people saw it. That's why I decided to use the same premise of hard working border kids and develop it into a feature film.

**You started shooting the film with a different title: *Arbaba's Acorns*. What did that title mean?**

Arbaba is a beautiful border mountain that is used by the smugglers to cross into Iraq. I used acorns as a symbolic reference to the kids who, under trying circumstances imposed on them, have become so tough and hardened.

**Why did you change the title?**

I wanted to bring attention to the suffering of the poor horses as well. They are



forced to carry heavy loads over the uphill mountain paths in extremely cold weather. Since they normally refuse to do so, the smugglers intoxicate them by mixing their water with vodka. This is totally inhumane.

**And I understand you had originally conceived a different ending.**

Yes. For a while, I was thinking about ending the film at the border hospital.

**The locations and the weather must have made it hard to shoot the film.**

It took me two years to shoot the film.



I wanted to make the whole film in a cold and snowy winter, but the 1999 winter saw very little snow, and I was not happy with the way some key scenes had been shot. The more I looked at the film during the editing, the more I felt dissatisfied. So, I decided to wait for the following winter to re-shoot two scenes the way I had envisioned them.

The film's producer, The Farabi Cinema Foundation, that had been very cooperative throughout, decided to back out of the project rather than wait for a delayed completion. I needed to raise enough money to buy them out and finish the film on my own.

To do this, I had to sell my family belongings and borrow money from friends and relatives, who in turn had to sell their belongings to fund the film. I feel so indebted to these people, without whose help this film would never have been finished. Somehow all the difficulties we experienced behind the scenes seemed to find their way into the film and infuse it with a sense of desperation it really needed.

***What is the main attraction of Kurdistan as a location for you?***

With the kind of budgets I have for my films, I can only make them in Kurdistan. The people are so supportive. They really mobilize themselves to help. Maybe they appreciate the fact that I am the only Kurdish filmmaker. Besides, my stories are all about them, the people I have known all my life. So, it's natural that I make my films in Kurdistan. Besides, I love to do stories in difficult weather conditions, which is not too hard to find in Kurdistan.

***How did you find your non-actors? What are they doing now?***

They all live in the same village in Baneh, where the film was shot. In fact, some of the kids are from the same family. They have no electricity, no television sets, and no modern means of comfort. That probably sounds awful from our point of view, but they are perfectly happy with what they have. Despite many hardships, they still enjoy their lives. They are



all doing fine now. I visit them every two months or so and live with them for a while.

***You'll shoot your next film in Iraq's Kurdistan. How's the relationship between you and the Iraqi Kurds?***

To me the Iraqi Kurds are the same as Iranian Kurds. In the film, the Iraqi Kurds are seen alongside Iranians in the Bazar scenes. There is a friendly relationship between the Kurds of Iran and Iraq right now. Just like you see in the film, some times we have marriages between Iranian and Iraqi Kurds.

***How was the film received in Iran?***

It's been only shown in Kurdish towns so far, and the reception was quite warm and enthusiastic. It actually exceeded our expectations. In some towns, they had to add extra screenings to accommodate the people who were anxious to see the film. It will open in the rest of the country soon, and I hope the non-Kurdish audiences will react to it just as warmly.

***You worked with Abbas Kiarostami as an assistant. Did you feel his influence when you made your own film?***

I learned so much from Mr. Kia-

rostami, and it was a real honor for me to work with him. But I think I have different sensibilities as a filmmaker.

The issues I am preoccupied with, and the way I approach them are different. Mr. Kiarostami even generously offered me an idea for a script called THE HONEYBEE, but after thinking about it seriously, I decided I just couldn't do it. I have a natural tendency to make intense films. I don't think you will see a shot in my film that'll remind you of Mr. Kiarostami's work.

***Was he interested in you because he was shooting in Kurdistan?***

Well, I was the one who contacted him and asked him if I could be his assistant on the project. He graciously accepted, and I consider the days I spent working with him among my most memorable days. I worked not only behind the camera, but also in front of it. I was the man in that ditch!

***You also acted in Samira Makhmalbaf's Blackboards.***

Yes. Initially, I was not supposed to act in that film. I was an advisor to Mr. [Mohsen] Makhmalbaf. But they could not find the actor they were looking for, and asked me to do the part. I accepted out of respect for Mr. Makhmalbaf, but the whole experience didn't turn out the way I had expected.





## Dr. Sa'id Khadiri

### Music Educator, Pianist & Composer

Interviewed by: A. Lotfalian

Translated by: Gita Khoroushi

Before the 1979 Revolution, Dr. Khadiri established the Music Education Department at the University of Tehran and Music Centers for Children throughout Iran.

Dr. Sa'id Khadiri is one of the many Iranian scholars who left Iran after the social and cultural upheaval of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. He was a pioneer in introducing music educators training based on new scientific methods. In addition, Dr. Khadiri made learning and playing musical instruments popular among children and young adults through the establishment of Music Centers for Children and Young Adults, and providing students with the free use of instruments and lessons. The ability to provide free lessons and instruments was funded by the National Iranian Radio – Television Organization of Iran.

Dr. Khadiri, who has been a Northern Virginia resident for many years, spends his time pursuing his first love of music, that is, providing private piano lessons to Iranian and American students. Aside from his successful piano practice, Dr. Khadiri writes piano compositions. From 1978 to 1980, Dr. Khadiri was elected and served as a member of the Board of Directors of the International Society for Music Education (ISME). He is also an active member of the Virginia Federation of Music Clubs, Northern Virginia Music Teachers Association, Music Teachers Association, and the Springfield Music Clubs.

I met Dr. Khadiri in the 1960's in Tehran. He had recently completed his Ph.D. in Music Education and Piano from the University of Heidelberg, Germany and had returned to work as Chief Editor for the *Music Magazine*, which was published by the Ministry of Culture and Arts. At the time, I contributed articles that I had written about various composers' biographies and their compositions. I met and became Dr. Khadiri's friend through his predecessor. Although I spent many years abroad in diplomatic service, I kept abreast of Dr. Khadiri's efforts of promoting music education in Iran. Like many other friends, I lost contact with Dr. Khadiri after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, until a year ago when I learned that Dr. Khadiri and his wife lived near me and my family in the Washington D.C. area. I felt happy to find him, yet regretted that I might have been able to find him sooner.

A. Lotfalian

**Q:** Please tell us how you were drawn to the world of music?

**SK:** I was born in Tehran to a music loving and cultural family. My father was a merchant, but not in the traditional sense. Sixty years ago, there were few Iranian merchants who had pianos in their homes. My father played the piano every morning before going to work. That was my first introduction to music. My father's love of piano was so strong that he took piano lessons from Mr. Mahjooby, who was one of the first musicians to arrange Iranian music for the piano. In addition, my mother played the "tar", a traditional Iranian instrument, during a time when playing musical instruments was not encouraged for women, so it was in this musical atmosphere that I grew up. It wasn't until I grew older and heard classical western music on the radio that I fell in love with classical western music. At the time I graduated from elementary school, there were two Art Music schools in Tehran: one specialized in traditional Iranian music, and the other specialized in international or classical music. I chose to enroll in the Technology School of Art that taught classical music. So, it was at this time when I seriously began to study music. I graduated in 1953 (1332).

**Q:** But your music education did not end here?

**SK:** That's quite right. After graduating from high school, I spent two years teaching music in elementary schools. One of the things that disturbed me was that the music books were not written for or with children in mind. The children showed no interest in the music and lyrics that were chosen for them by the school. It was in this closed atmosphere when I decided to look for better horizons by continuing my music education in Germany.

**Q:** Where did you pursue your studies in Germany?

**SK:** After researching the best institutes for music education, I decided to enroll as a piano and music education student at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. I graduated from the University of Heidelberg with a Ph. D. degree in 1963 (1342) and decided to return to Iran to fill the music education void that still per-

sisted in Iranian Schools. During my years at Heidelberg, I composed numerous pieces for the piano, and in 1962, I gave a recital concert of my composed pieces in Heidelberg which was greatly received by the public.

**Q: What awaited you in Iran?**

**SK:** In Iran, I first returned to work as a Deputy Director of the School of Arts and Music of the Ministry of Culture and Arts where I also worked prior to going to Germany. At the same time, I spent 3 years as the Chief Editor at *Music Magazine* which was published by the Ministry of Culture and Arts. My return to Iran and the commencement of my professional career was a big event, especially since at the same time I got married to my wife whom I had met at the University of Heidelberg. Then, in 1967, as a Fulbright Scholar, I gave several lecture-recitals at American universities and gained first hand knowledge of the American music educational systems. However, my real connection to my profession really began in 1968 (1346) when I began teaching music education and its underlying psychology at the University of Tehran. In reality it was an honor to establish music education as a serious field of study in Iran.

I have to explain that the University of Tehran had provided the following fields of study prior to my arrival: musicology, music composition, and instrumental instruction. However, music education was not recognized as a field of study as it had been in European countries for many years. There is a peculiar method of teaching music education. Although a person may be a great musicologist or soloist, he or she may not be able to use the proper methods for teaching as there are certain methods of teaching music for each age and style of learning. Fortunately, music education was well received as a field of study at the University of Tehran. As such, I decided myself to provide a healthy and strong program for teaching music instructions in Iran. In 1972, I became an associate professor and in 1978 I was promoted to full professor status.

**Q: Was your work limited to teaching at the University?**

**SK:** Not at all. In 1970, I was recruited to collaborate with the National

Iranian Radio and Television network (NIRT) as an executive in the field of music education, based upon my publications, reputation, and the fact that few music education experts existed at the time. As a result, NIRT provided financial support for my creation of the Music Centers for Children and Young Adults which spread throughout the country. I consider these music centers as one of my greatest accomplishments.

**Q: Could you further explain the role of these Music Centers?**

**SK:** Of course. I established the first Music Center for Children and Young Adults with only 11 students, but due to its popularity and the generous financial support of the National Iranian Radio and Television and its President, Mr. Ghotbi and his wife Ms. Shahrzad Afshar, these centers multiplied in numbers. By the time of the 1979 Iranian revolution, we had over 3000 students throughout the country who were learning music and learning to play traditional Iranian, and Western instruments.

The talents of these students were captured by the NIRT on TV where weekly TV shows of student performances were common. As a result, we had produced over 300 video tapes of these performances by the time of the revolution. I regret that I have only one of these tapes in my possession. I have no idea what became of these NIRT tapes after the revolution. Obviously, the new Iranian regime could not show many of these tapes as the performers on the show were not dressed in accordance with the strict post-revolutionary Islamic – wear requirements. In any case, I ardently hope that these tapes were not destroyed, and are still kept at the NIRT archives for future reference.

**Q: Tell us a little about the effect of music education on**

**children and young adults.**

**SK:** Music had many positive effects on that generation of children. As I pointed out before, most of the children belonged to middle class families. Through music education, the children not only learned how to play an instrument, but they also became self-confident and gained a personal strength that healed a lot of their everyday ills.

At the Music Center for Children and Young Adults, we sent a group to various parts of the country to discover instructors for local instruments. These local instruments were then taught at various music centers. Then in 1977, all the children and young adults from the various music centers gave a grand performance at the Tehran City Theater. Fortunately, I have a copy of this performance on stage. If our work had continued, Iranian folkloric music would have received wide international attention.

At the same time, I published some age-appropriate music education books. One of these books was named "Music From The Four Corners Of The World." The lyrics of this book were written by the late national poet, Mr. Fereidoun Moshiri, and Mrs. Azar Aryanpour.

**Q: You trained numerous students and future music teachers at both the Music Centers and at the University of Tehran. Do you know if any of your students, or teachers were able to pursue musical careers after the 1979 Iranian Revolution?**

**SK:** After I came to the United States I corresponded with a number of them. Recently I have learned that the Music Centers were still operating under the greater umbrella of Art Centers/Workshops.

**Q: What is your opinion of**

*I should say that I miss all of my work in Iran, and wish that I could have still served Iranian children and promoted the music education in Iran. It is my ardent hope that music education will be promoted once more in Iran, and that the current musical climate, which is still suppressed, is temporary.*

**Music in Iran after the 1979 revolution?**

**SK:** In the early days of the revolution, many thought that most forms of music would be forbidden or suppressed. However, because music is such an integral part of humanity and of the Iranian culture, the Iranian people fought to make sure that it was not totally forbidden. When some forms of music were forbidden on the radio or television and theatres, the people showed resistance by learning music and instruments in the privacy of their own homes, and soon private lessons became popular. Playing or learning a solo instrument has a different effect on you than playing or hearing an orchestra. In the Music Centers, I personally observed how a simple local instrument could have such a grandiose effect when played in an orchestra.

In addition, we provided music reading and music appreciation classes for our student's parents with the goal that they support their children. In turn, the parents' music appreciation would manifest itself in the children's enthusiasm and excellence in learning their instruments.

**Q:** I know that you have spent

**many years in the United States teaching piano. Tell us a little about your experience.**

**SK:** Music is an important part of life and I couldn't imagine working in any other field. I have two music studios in Virginia: one in Alexandria, and one in Vienna. Unfortunately, there is so much demand, and my schedule is so full that I can't have more than 50 students at this time. Therefore, I have a long waiting list for open spots. As I had done so in Iran, I encourage my students' parents involvement in their children's music education. Some parents are so involved that they also take lessons from me.

**Q:** I would like to ask you to tell us about your life in America.

**SK:** I spent the first six months after the revolution on a sabbatical from the University of Tehran teaching music and world culture at the University of Michigan. I had planned to return to Iran after a year abroad. In all fairness, I have to say that the University of Tehran respectfully asked that I return to my job after my sabbatical ended. However, at

this time the university was closed. Furthermore, my family had already settled in the U.S., and my children were attending school. I didn't want to interrupt my children studies.

At the same time, I personally felt discouraged by the suppressed atmosphere in post revolutionary Iran. Therefore, I decided to stay in the United States. I spent my first years teaching at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Lynchburg College, in Lynchburg, Virginia.

However, since I wasn't fully satisfied with teaching at the college level, I decided to establish my own music studios as I personally enjoy teaching students and rejoice in seeing their musical success.

Some of my students have majored or minored in piano and have received scholarships. Of course, I should say that I miss all of my work in Iran, and wish that I could have still served Iranian children and promoted the music education in Iran.

It is my ardent hope that music education will be promoted once more in Iran, and that the current musical climate, which is still suppressed, is temporary. ■

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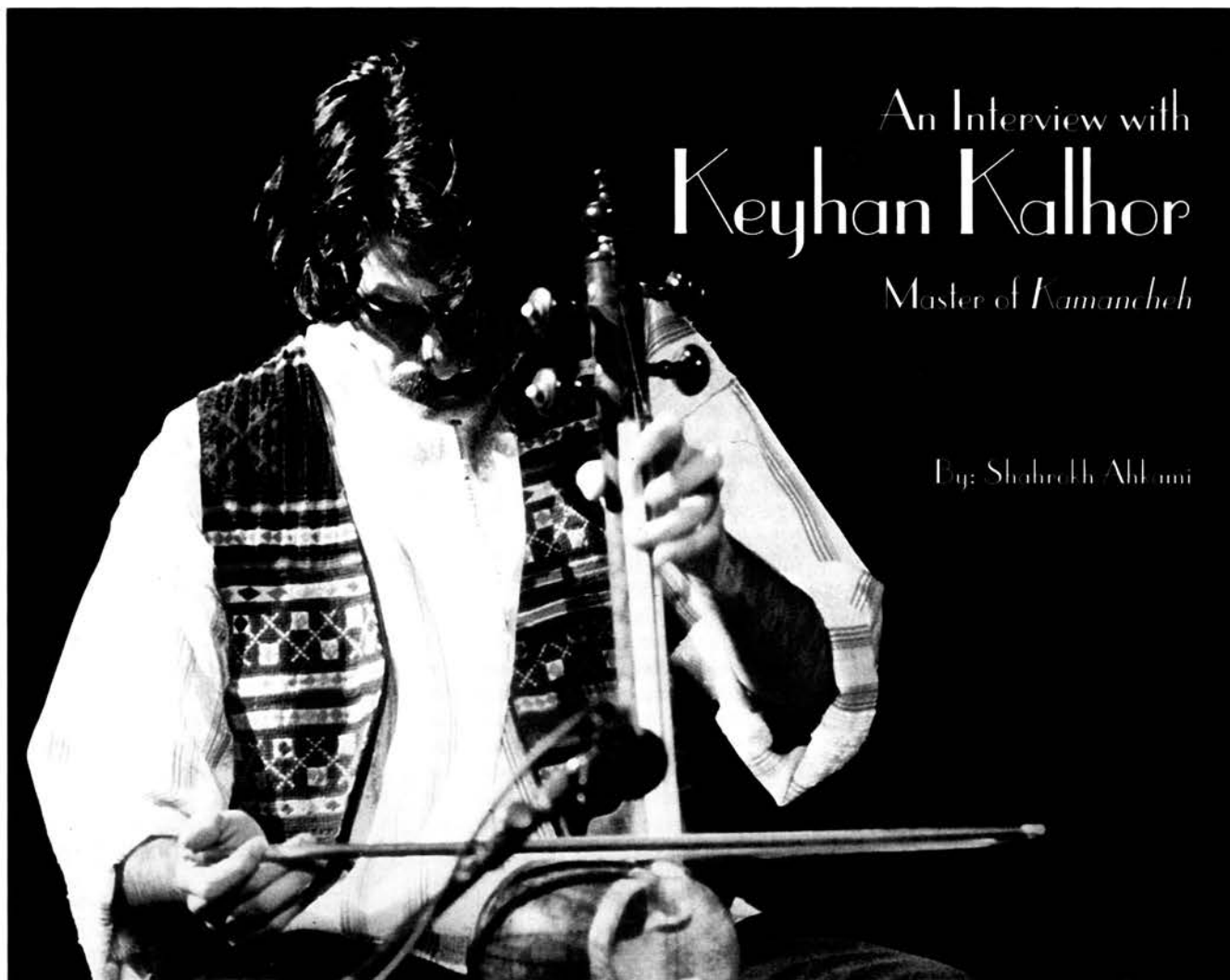
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# An Interview with Keyhan Kalhor

Master of *Kamancheh*

By: Shahrokh Ahlami



Despite his young age, Keyhan Kalhor has been receiving world wide recognition, as a Persian musician. I asked him to share a bit of his life with our readers.

**PH:** *Could you start by telling our readers a little about yourself?*

**KK:** I was born in Teheran, Iran to a Khurdish family who loved music. My interest in music started at age five and by seven I was already taking formal lessons. By twelve, I realized how important music was in my life, so my studies became very serious.

My family then moved to Kermanshah, Iran, where I started public playing on radio and TV. My first job in the business happened at the age of seventeen with the group "Sheyda." From Kermanshah I traveled to

Italy and Canada to continue my studies. I also participated in musical concerts. Today, I remain on the road for nine to ten months and spend the remaining time teaching in Iran.

**PH:** *What instruments do you play?*

**KK:** I play a number including the sitar, but my first instrument and the one that receives most of my attention is the "spike fiddle."

**PH:** *What is a "spike fiddle?"*

**KK:** It is an instrument played with a bough and one of the five to six main instruments heard in classical Persian music. Physically it has a long neck with a bowl at the end where the sound projects from four strings that runs the length of the neck. Some call it the twin of the vio-

lin, but to me the spike fiddle is much older than the violin. But it has been identified as the predecessor of other "bowl" type instruments that migrated from Iran to the rest of the world.

The spike fiddle has been called a variety of names. In Iran and the Arab world it is called the *Kamencheh* or *Kamanchah*, *Kemangeh*, *Kaman* or *Jozeh*. During the Renaissance period the instrument migrated to Europe and took on the name of *Robab* or *Robak* and in France the *Rebak* or *Rebab*. In India it is also known as the *Kamencheh* and in China, the *Erho*. In fact, it is considered the mother of the viola. One must remember that in some countries, the body along with the name the instrument were modified. This was due to the environment and materials available for its creation. In Iran, the Arabic countries, North Africa, Indonesia and India the body of the head is from

a coconut, while Turkmenistan uses pumpkins. But in all of the countries the sound it produces remains constant whether it is used in folk or classical music.

**PH:** *I think you have solved a problem for me. I am often criticized for always eluding to the idea that all things great come from or are made by Iran and Iranians. I believe I can now truly defend my position that the kamancheh is the mother of the violin.*

**KK:** Well I don't know if that position is one hundred percent correct, but most research done on the topic points to the birth of the violin, as we know it, back to the twelfth and thirteenth century and trace it's origin back to Central Asia.

I would also like to note here that the Iranian *Barbat*, called the *Oud* in the Arabic countries also came to Europe from central Asia in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, where it was given the name lute. The *Barbat* is considered the forerunner of all string instruments played with a pick and thought to be the oldest of Persian instruments at thirty five-hundred years. All countries and cultures influence and teach one another, and despite their origin changes, improvements will be made.

**PH:** *Getting back to you, you were very brave in introducing this instrument to "Western" listeners and having them enjoy the music it produces. What sparked this courage and ambition?*

**KK:** As a musician the first person I need to satisfy with my music is me. I know if I enjoy what I am playing and hearing that my listener's will share my emotion and enjoyment. It is most rewarding to be approached, after my concerts, by people who do not speak Persian but are connected to the Persian community in some way be it by parent, marriage friend etc. They tell me that they bring their friends to listen. This is something rewarding beyond the music, it is the mes-

sage behind the music. I want them to listen to the music and hear more than just the sounds. Maybe this is the reason for my success.

**PH:** *Did you have to change the music or format in order to reach this goal?*

**KK:** I did not change the music. What I try to do is make the music a language that my generation will understand. I take the instrument I am playing and look with three perspectives in mind: its position in the past, the present and its position in the future.

You learn always from the past. To know the power and importance of an instrument you must learn about its history. It is my opinion that the best way to learn about an instrument and its music is by listening to those who wrote and/or performed or played the instrument. It is most beneficial to start this learning process at a young age. You cannot become an innovator without knowing the history of its development whether it be in art, literature and yes, music. Knowing its history gives you insight, insight that you can use to your advantage going forward. I don't think I could name any revolutionary, in any action be it painting etc. that did not consume him/herself with learning of the periods that preceded their time.

Believe me, I was not always satisfied when I listened to music, but I always respected the old music masters especially those considered experts with the instruments I play, like Bahari. He was instrumental in the *Kamancheh* becoming a household instrument.

Before him not many even knew this instrument. But he patiently played it and introduced it to society. I remember the first time I saw him on TV playing the *Kamancheh*. I was mesmerized by the power and control of his fingers. That is precisely the reason you must acknowledge the old masters.

I am at a point in my life that allows

me to make adjustments as I go along. Like those before me I must continue to modernize some aspects of the past in order to keep my generation interested. This is a

process that must continue with each generation in the future. If changes or adjustments are not made one will become bored and turn away, we cannot let this happen. To continue to paint the same, recite and write poetry in the same manner or listen only to the old music is narrow minded and often destructive. Applying logic to this, how can one who now uses the technology of today, the cell phone,

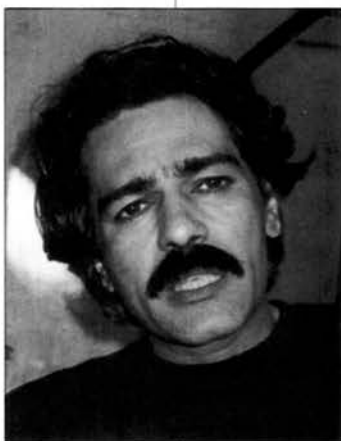
jets and computers to name a few, play the music as it was played one hundred years ago by the masters of that time and expect it to be accepted in the same enthusiasm?

If you look and listen to the music of a century ago and compare it with that of today you will see the adjustments that have been made to adapt it to the present. The students of the past do not play it like their predecessors. For instance, it was Colonial Vazirri who came back and broke the traditional music, the same way Nima did in poetry.

These transitions, as I said, will continue with every period of life. We as artists have the responsibility to remain in contact with the people who appreciate their art. It is a heavy load that we carry and I believe to date we have carried it well.

**PH:** *Until now, most of your CDs are collaborations with non Iranian musicians. Do you think this is because the Iranian musicians are not at an international level or have you not had the opportunity for this, and do you think you will collaborate with them in the future?*

**KK:** I have always worked with Iranian artists. There are great masters in Iran and I do not believe that there is an international level. Unfortunately, however, I live abroad which makes this problematic. My last work, however, was produced with Mr. Shajarian called "Night in the Desert." At the moment I am on tour with Mr. Hossein Alizadeh, Mr. Mohammad



Reza and Shajarian. The music on this CD is classical Iranian music, but you cannot say it is pure because of my style. The goal I have in my music is hidden within the pure classical music.

As to working with non Iranians, yes I have and they have been wonderful experiences. I believe that these collaborations will benefit all. For instance my Iranian and Indian collaborations have brought listeners that might have ignored a pure Iranian music concert. I have also toured with a few Indian artists Shojat Hossein Khan. Again our union attracted a mixed audience. The audience would contain 20-40 percent American, 20-30 percent Iranian and 30-40 percent Indian. It was wonderful to see this diversity and have them get acquainted with each other's music. Working with other musicians from other countries has also a great learning experience.

This was and remains one of my goals in music, to increase the audience is enjoyment of Iranian music and to reach the western audience. I never thought that the west would be interested in our music. As a matter of fact, a few months ago I worked with the Kronis Quartet on their latest CD.

**PH:** *You not only know about music but also you are very knowledgeable in history and literature.*

**KK:** Yes, I believe it is important to know about other art forms. I have written an article on this subject that I hope to publish. If you do not read books of literature and poetry, sees movies and theater or visit museums you will not be well rounded as an artist, you will become narrow minded.

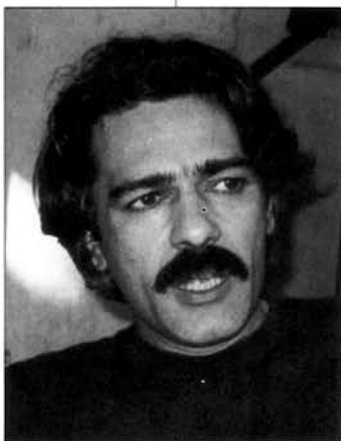
I try to encourage all artists around me to seek additional knowledge on the arts. In Iran I do not allow my students to discuss only the techniques of their instrument. I encourage discussion on a variety of subjects. They need to realize the importance of the future and how the changes and actions we take today will influence their future.... Really the technique of art or music is easy to learn, what it means is far more taxing.

What I mean to say is that there are many who can play an instrument. What

makes them stand out is the thought they have given to their playing and beyond. Unfortunately I think Iranian artists have one fault. We have a tendency to be only involved in the art we perform rather than exposing ourselves to other art forms and artists. We need to communicate to one

another. For example our films have become strong in story, but they often lack a memorable score. This is not a criticism, I am not in a position to do so, it is merely my opinion.

But I have mentioned throughout this interview that I believe knowledge beyond our own expertise will significantly improve our own form.

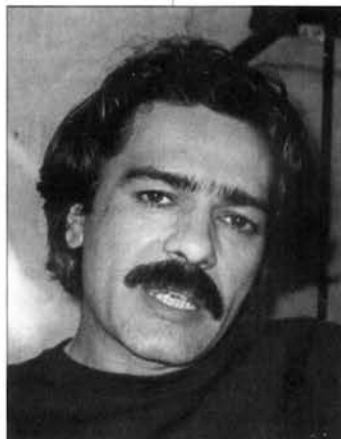


**PH:** *When a listener or visitor comes to a concert hall, despite their heritage, there are many who do not understand or know what they are listening to, do you agree?*

**KK:** Well, if they come to a concert they better know why they are there.

**PH:** *What I meant to ask is many of us go to an opera. Today it is either subtitled or you are presented with a synopsis of the story so that you can follow it.*

**KK:** Yes, that is true. Of course it is better to have some idea of what it is you are listening to. I really believe that most attending a Persian concert have some idea of what is behind the music despite heritage. Persian music has been on the rise in the west over the last fifteen years. There is an increase in CD sales and you can now see a huge collection of Iranian CD's on the shelves with performers having five to six of their CD's represented. This is a result of the efforts of the generation before me and I hope we continue this push for recognition.



**PH:** *Has Persian music reached an international level of recognition?*

**KK:** The world knows Iranian music. Interestingly enough I feel it is Iranians themselves that are less educated about the talent of their musicians and music. We are often passed over when we receive world wide recognition, as compared to the Iranian film industry. For example when Mr. Makhmalbaf and his daughter received Cannes Film Award, the news was a constant on TV, radio and print. On the other extreme when Mr. Shajarian received the Picasso Peace Awards, there was very little coverage. I do not think that there should be such a double standard.

**PH:** *What does the future hold for Persian music?*

**KK:** If it remains in the hands of responsible and serious people, whose interest is beyond financial gain, then I believe there is an excellent future for Iranian music. There is a tremendous need for the world to continue to be educated on the musicians. Also, the music must have a good marketing plan. You are seeing an increase in the Iranian artists coming out of Iran to give concerts. They are being widely accepted by their audiences. Twenty to fifty years ago Persian musicians had no representation at world music festivals. The times have changed and now we are there in significant numbers and not just to fill a space. The music is truly appreciated. Because of the work done abroad our music has a bright future.

**PH:** *Can you tell us about your future concerts and plans?*

**KK:** This fall through winter 2000, I will be on tour with Mr. Shajarian and Mr. Alizadeh. We will be in Europe from September to October and then in the United States January through March. I will then return to the solo concert. In March I will be part of a concert at Carnegie Hall with Yo Yo Man and the NY Philharmonic Orchestra.



## **IRANIAN CITIES — Formation and Development**

By: Masoud Kheirabadi  
Syracuse University Press, 2000

So often the reasoning behind the development of a city is passed over when one discusses its history. Cities all over the world are structured with a purpose in mind. In this book, Masoud Kheirabadi delves into cities of Iran in an effort to understand their development and their impact on Iranian society.

The author acknowledges that the morphology and pattern of cities are not by chance, but thought out to service the cultural needs of its' inhabitants. Mr. Kheirabadi considers Iran to be "an excellent laboratory" for such a study because of Iran's diverse weather and physical structure.

One of the more interesting points of the discussion is of the courtyards. It was originally thought that their purpose was for the seclusion of women. The author disclaims this by showing that courtyards existed prior to Islamic Iran and were present in non Islamic sections. It is quite educational and the reader is certain to be left with an entirely new feeling about the streets they have walked down and took for granted.

## **Seizing An Historic Opportunity — Breaking Through the US-Iran Impasse**

By: Hooshang Amirahmadi  
American-Iranian Council, 2000

This edition discusses the March 17, 2000 conference organized by The American Iranian Council. In attendance this year were Madeleine K. Albright and Christiane Amanpour. Issues at the forefront included the US-Iran impasse, briefings of current events, suggestions on steps to take, the need for increased trade and the concerns of the US for the countries surrounding Iran.

## **RUMI, Thief of Sleep — Quatrains from the Persian Translations**

By: Shahram Shiva,  
with a foreword by Deepak Chopra  
Holm Press, 2000

Normally when one sees a title as above they run in fear, thinking that such a book will be beyond their understanding. Do not run from this book! Mr. Shiva brings the beautiful words of Rumi from **Rending the Veil** to a level that all can enjoy, while staying true to the masters words. The book further gives a little more insight into the life of Rumi. It allows us to know the extraordinary character of this Persian poet. At the same time, Mr. Shiva educates the reader on structure and rhythm that is associated with Rumi. Without question, after reading this collection, you will feel a warmth and a desire to know more about both authors, Mr. Shiva and Rumi.

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## *What Is Love?!*

By: Dr. Hardy M. Dini

*What love is, I do not know  
But I can't cut loose; I just can't let go!*

*I've clung on for so many years!  
I've felt pain; I've shed tears!*

*Alas! Why? I do not know!  
I can't cut loose! I can't let go!*

*Only a fascination by a fire!  
Only a notion of a burning desire!*

*Alas now, I cannot capture!  
All the lost time, all the rapture!*

*Still why? I do not know!  
I just can't cut loose! I just can't let go!*

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