



Interview: Robert Mondavi – p. 45



History of Persian Music – p. 24



Interview with Farhad Ghiaï – p. 28



Shafa In His Own Words – p. 51

# Persian Heritage

Vol. 6, No. 21

Spring 2001

<b>FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>LETTERS TO THE EDITOR</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>NEWS BRIEFS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>COMMENTARY</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>A Tribute to Women</b> (By: <i>Elham Ezzati</i> )	17
<b>Will An "Iranian-American" Ever Run for Presidency?</b>	18
By: <i>Christopher A. Khatami</i>	
<b>CIA &amp; Iran</b> (By: <i>Amanollah K. Riggi</i> )	19
<b>THE ARTS</b>	
<b>Ali Mahdavi's Offertory</b> (By: <i>Roxana Azimi</i> )	21
<b>Poetry</b> (By: <i>Mahmood Karimi-Hakak &amp; F. A. Sadeghpour</i> )	23
<b>History and Characteristics of Persian Music</b>	24
By: <i>Ghassem Talebzadeh</i>	
<b>YOUR PERSIAN HERITAGE</b>	
<b>The Odyssey of A Fallen City</b>	33
By: <i>Karim Mansouri</i>	
<b>Trials and Tribulations of An American-Born Persian Girl</b> (By: <i>Mana Tahaie</i> )	36
<b>Identity, Ethnicity &amp; Territorial Integrity</b>	37
By: <i>M. K. Sadigh</i>	
<b>The Relationship Between the Persian and Roman Empires</b>	42
By: <i>F. A. Sadeghpour</i>	
<b>Shojaeddin Shafa In His Own Words (Part II)</b>	51
<b>FEATURE</b>	
<b>INTERVIEW WITH FARHAD GHIAÏ</b>	28
By: <i>Kamshad Raiszadeh, M.D.</i>	
<b>INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT MONDAVI</b>	45
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	34
<b>OUTSIDE YOUR HERITAGE</b>	
<b>THEATRE REVIEWS</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Gambler or the Fool?</b> (By: <i>Perry G.</i> )	60

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Another Noe Rouz (New Year) is upon us and with it we celebrate the sixth anniversary of *Persian Heritage*. I, along with my staff extend our warm wishes to all of our readers and those who have supported us through the years. Without you and our dedicated staff there would be no *Persian Heritage*, we are forever grateful. And, to Iranians throughout the world may this new year be filled with good things.

Over the past few months a number of events have occurred that have sparked my interest as a subject for this issues editorial. There was the incredible Presidential election in the States, mad cow disease and the phobia it has created, the earthquake in India, the imprisonment of Iranian writers and journalists and the protest against their arrests, and so many more. Should I have picked one of these events, I suspect I would have ended up the subject of criticism. All of these topics are quite depressing and who wants to be depressed as we enter into a new year. It is a year, I hope, that will bring a better life for all.

To find a topic I looked in the archives of *Persian Heritage*. I wanted to find a subject that was universal to all Iranians regardless of where they live, and whether or not any progress had been made for its solution. One common denominator I found was the turmoil amongst Iranians outside of Iran (regardless of their reasons for leaving) and who they should pledge their allegiance. Should we place our concerns, resources and energy with the sixty million Iranians in Iran who suffer from social, economical and political turmoil? Or, support the millions of Iranians who now call somewhere else home? After some research I realized that there has not been a resolution to this conflict.

While thinking about this conflict, I ironically received three consecutive calls from three lifetime friends. From our conversations I realized the false perception they have of me as a person and more importantly as the editor of this magazine. Each of them is involved in individual or small group efforts to give something back to Iran. One is with a group whose mission is to build schools in the rural villages of Iran. Another is raising money to buy computers for selected students. The other, with a group, has raised money for the children who have been orphaned by the earthquake. Though I admire these humanitarian efforts I begin to question the long lasting purpose of these individual events. I began to wonder if these actions are in a small way meant to lessen the guilt felt for leaving Iran or a reason to stay attached to a country that is no longer home.

I verbalized these concerns to one of my callers and this opened up a lengthy and heated discussion. He believed that my feelings were a way of my avoiding helping my country and countrymen. He believed *Persian Heritage* was my way of raising my social prestige. Concerned and somewhat offended by these allegations, I began to question my purpose as the editor of this magazine. If a friend of so many years questions my intent with *Persian Heritage*, then what is the impression of strangers? I could not understand how my friend could think that my goal was to raise my social status. By making this statement, he completely discounted the hours of sacrifice that our dedicated staff devotes to this publication and he discounts the financial challenge of this magazine. Could he really believe that the sacrifices we have all made are legitimized by his belief that I have gained a higher social position. To this, I respond as follows. If, as he says, I am in a higher social position because of the magazine, then I am grateful and thankful to those who have so elevated me. Personally I do not see this. To me the most treasured benefit I have received as editor is the self satisfaction that the magazine has been instrumental in possibly perpetrating Persian heritage and culture in those who were beginning to forget and has given comfort to those who have left Iran, our aged community, who long to touch the soil of their homeland. If the magazine has placed me in a leadership position, I am grateful that the burdens my staff and I have been through have been acknowledged. No one, other than our families, is aware of the hours that the magazine requires. No one is aware of the constant financial turmoil we face to keep the magazine viable. Most are unaware of the physical labor we have endured to save a dollar to keep the presses going. It is only because of these sacrifices, subscriptions, advertisements and donations that this magazine remains in existence. And, I have pledged to the community that I will do all in my power to keep it alive. I hope that by the end of this editorial we understand that only through commitment to our heritage that *Persian Heritage* can remain their personal vehicle for keeping our culture alive.

I seem to have gotten off track so I will return to my earlier conversation with my friend. After hearing about the schools and computers I asked him a few questions. Why does he believe it is his duty and not that of the government of Iran to build schools? Does he truly believe that the government does not have the means to build schools in these rural areas? This simply cannot be the truth when the government has financially supported the Hezbollah and



## Persian Heritage

www.mirassiran.com

**Persian Heritage, Inc.**

110 Passaic Avenue

Passaic, NJ 07055

E-mail: [ahkami@mirassiran.com](mailto:ahkami@mirassiran.com)

Telephone: (973) 471-4283

Fax: (973) 471-8534

or: (973) 574-8995

**EDITOR:**

**SHAHRUKH AHKAMI**

**EDITORIAL BOARD:** Dr. Mehdi Abu-Saidi, Shirin Ahkami, Bahasadch, Dr. Mahvash Alavi Naini, Mohammad Bagher Alavi, Rozana Azimi, Dr. Talat Basseri, Mohammad Ali Dowlatshahi, Mehdi Ebrahimi, Mohammad H. Hakami, Arbabali Lofallani, Shahn Moshirpour, K. B. Navi, Dr. Roshro Pakbaz, Dr. Homayun Rahmani, Farhang A. Sadeghpour, Mohammad K. Sadigh, Ghahreman Suleymonpour, Dr. David Yeagley.

**MANAGING EDITOR:**

HALEH NIA

**ADVERTISING:**

LAURA HOCT AND TERRY RUSSELL

The contents of the articles and advertisements in this journal, with the exception of the editorial, are the sole works of each individual writer and contributors. This magazine does not have any confirmed knowledge as to the truth and veracity of these articles. All contributors agree to hold harmless and indemnify *Persian Heritage* (Mirassiran.com), *Persian Heritage*, Inc., its editors, staff, board of directors, and all those individuals directly associated with the publishing of this magazine. The opinions expressed in these articles are the sole opinions of the writers and not the journal. No article or picture submitted will be returned to the writer or contributor. All articles submitted in English must be typed.

The appearance of advertising in this magazine does not constitute a guarantee or endorsement of the products by *Persian Heritage*. In addition, articles and letters published do not reflect the views of this publication.

All requests for permissions and reprints must be made in writing to the managing editor.

**PUBLISHED BY:**

**PERSIAN HERITAGE, INC.**

A corporation organized for cultural and literary purposes.

Cover Price: \$4.99

Subscriptions: \$16.00 per year (domestic);

\$28.00 per year (foreign)

Typesetting & Layout: FARHAD PAKSHIRERZ

the Palestinians and recently have given a ten billion dollar loan to Syria (that is not to be paid back in needed dollar). Could it be that the government has turned a blind eye to these small humanitarian efforts of outsiders to avoid their obligation to their citizens. The possibility that any of these situations exist frightens me. I then asked him if he truly believed that these beautiful humanitarian efforts could impact the enormous problems that Iranians in Iran face?

I could tell by his sighs that he was upset with my position. To this I responded with sadness in my heart, "My dear friend the time has come for us to realize that we are no longer visitors to a strange land. Our roots are taking hold in this foreign soil, that is not foreign to our children or theirs to follow. It is time for us to leave the politics and business of Iran to the people of Iran. Our efforts must now be placed in the nurturing of these roots so that Iranian Americans, Iranian Canadians, Iranian French, etc. will be able to prosper and excel in their new homes. We must ensure that they do not suffer the same hardships that we faced as immigrants. We gain nothing by arguing over whose cause has more importance, we need to cease unilateral efforts and unite our now dispersed community. If we build strong organizations, then we will soon realize the social, economic and political power needed and owned by other ethnicities. We need to support our political candidates and organize

effective lobby for our causes. These are the actions that will enable us to change things for all Iranians including those in Iran, no man is an island."

Of course, this is not something that will be accomplished overnight. But, it will never be achieved through the organization of poetry nights and other events that are exclusive to Iranians. Our celebrations and events must be on a larger scale. Our non Iranian neighbors must be stripped from their misconception of Iranians as a people and a nation. Like it or not this can only be done through well thought out organizations, and through political leaders and the media. We should not be satisfied by communication only within our community. We must communicate with the world. Please do not get me wrong. Our smaller organizations are important, but they lose their importance when they cease to grow and develop. We all must understand and know when the time is right to unite ourselves with other organizations, rather than spin off into yet another organization because of disagreements.

As I stated earlier, it is believed that I started this magazine to inflate my ego. I can assure you that this is far from the truth. Our goal has always been to be the communication vehicle for the Iranian community. A vehicle that allows us to converse and find each other, and our voice to the

world. This magazine was started because we are proud of our culture and were distressed that our children were ignoring or forgetting their roots. *Persian Heritage* is not my magazine, it is *our* magazine. A journal where we can read about our accomplishments regardless of their magnitude. A journal where we can realize our mistakes and not be embarrassed. A journal where we can revel in the glory of our history and culture. These, and no other reasons are why this magazine was developed. But this magazine and others like it will soon become extinct if forced to compete with others whose missions are for personal rather than general gain.

I fear that the dilemma we initially faced at the beginning of this article has not yet been solved. I trust that we still do not know where our duty lies or do we? Are we beginning to understand that "charity begins at home," that "the light which could be used at home is forbidden to be donated to the mosque."

As the buds begin to open so too let us open our eyes and realize that there is much work to be done. But our goals can only be achieved with a strong voice, a voice that comes from the mouths of many, not one!

Happy New Year.

Shahrokh Alavi

## Best Wishes to Persian Heritage

### Vitafol-PN<sup>®</sup> Prenatal Caplets

*The Smallest Complete Prenatal Vitamin  
Ensuring the Health of Mother and Baby*

Prescription Vitamins, Nutritionals and  
Ethical Pharmaceuticals

Everett Laboratoris, Inc.  
West Orange, NJ 07052

Our knowledge of ancient Persian music is based exclusively on testimonies and bas relief, gathered by archeologists. With the passage of time, these discoveries have led to different views and opinions. A group of scholars consider the Iranian Plateau's civilization as complementary to that of Mesopotamia's regions.

There is no doubt that in the middle East, the inhabitants of different regions used the same instruments in the same period. Generally speaking, aside from these instruments, which were varieties of flutes and harps, there existed no other advanced instruments among the Jewish, Egyptian, Phoenician, Babylonian, Persian and Indian peoples.

These instruments were comprised of wind instruments, such as double-piped flutes, and percussion instruments. From the bas-relief discovered in the ruins of Susa as well as those of Koul-e Feron one can conclude that as early as 2600 BC, there were musicians who played lutes and tambourines.

As a result of the discovery of more advanced instruments, Persian society was considered more Advanced than Assyrian society. It is a fact that whatever traces remain of Persian art in the neighboring countries, these traces were left either by victorious Persian armies in the course of their conquests, or by aggressors who invaded the country. For most of its history, Iran has been at war with its neighboring nations, therefore, the use of wartime, musical instruments was common.

According to Clément Huart, from: the dawn of history. Music was highly valued among Iranians and was performed during religious and sacrificial ceremonies, as well as festivities. Herodotus writes about ancient Persian clergy, their hymns and their praise and adoration of God.

Religious ceremonies and rituals, festivities, prayers and audiences with the King were all accompanied by music. Religious hymns that can still be heard in the Zoroastrian temples of Parsis of India and in the Gathas Book of Avesta, are the finest vestiges of ancient Persian hymns.

In the excavations that took place in the "Tchaghamsih Hills," two American archeologists were able to present to the world a document which bears witness to the fact that Persian music dates back to five thousand years. This document is a tablet which shows the world's most ancient orchestra. It is the oldest document showing an organized orchestra, in the sense that the lute and drum musicians are performing together with a singer and other musicians. The tablet resembles down to the last detail of today's Persian orchestra.

Two distinguished archeologists, Professor Delugaz, professor of the University of California, who died during the excavation, and Professor Helen G. Kantor of the University of Chicago, attach a great importance to this tablet. The tablet adds to our knowledge of the life and artistic conditions of that period. The picture shows a group of musicians in an orchestra. Included in this illustration, there is a large harp, underneath the harp player, a second person is sitting in front of a semicircular chapped object similar to a drum. A third person is holding two horn-shaped instruments. Behind this person is the profile of a man kneeling holding his right hand to his ear to better hear his voice. This is a practice commonly used in Iran today.

Another document at hand is the *Shahnameh*, the book of Kings, the immortal poem of Ferdowsi. This book undoubtedly is the best epic and heroic book of Iranians. It is the most eloquent history of ancient customs, traditions and language of ancient Persians that exists today. Certainly it can be used as a



## HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSIAN MUSIC

BY: GHASSEM TALEBZADEH

sound and valid reference on art and Culture of ancient Persia. It is also a wonderful reference book on the musicology of Persian music. The *Shahnameh* gives the names and types of instruments and how they were made. Our knowledge today of the names of many musical instruments of ancient Iran, such as "Kus" (drum), "Ney" (flute), "Jarang" (an instrument that made a jingling sound), "Darây" (bells), and "Karnâ" (trumpet or horn), all of them war instruments, or the names of other instruments such as "ud" (lute), "Barbat" (harp, lyre) or "Tanbur" (a kind of guitar or lute), we owe it to the *Shahnameh* and other books by our great poets. In Persian culture, music and poetry are indivisible and at all times music and poetry have gone hand in hand. Let us recall that poems were always recited accompanied by music and song. It is for this reason that in the Persian language the verb "sorudan" is used for writing poems and the word "sorud" means tune, melody or song.

After the conquests of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, the

Hellenistic culture found expression in Iran, even though the influence of that country had already shown itself in Greece. In any case, Alexander seems to have adopted the Persians Neghareh (Kettle drums) and Dohol (drums) to intensify his military music. We get some brief mention of Persian music from Greek authors, such as Herodotus in 5th BC. and Xenophon some half-century later. They tell us of the temple music of the Achaemenid Magi's and about Median court musicians.

As the annals attest, the succeeding Sassanid Dynasty (224-642 AC) was a glorious period for music and musicians. Scenes on the Tagh-e Bostan Rock reveal different instruments like the Sornay, a mouth-blown instrument, the Rabab (Tanbour), Barbat (which is equivalent to a guitar) and finally, a Pandor and Lute.

Famous musicians signalized this period. Among them were Bârbad, Nekissa, Shirin, Azadeh, Bâmshâd and others. Bârbad is credited by the Arab historian, Al-Massoudi (d957) with having devised the Seven Royal Modes. They were possibly identical with those mentioned in the 10th century by Mohammad al-Kharazmi. These modes are the survivors of the siderial modes or scales of the ancient Semites of Babylonia and Assyria, who accepted the doctrine of the harmony of the spheres and that of the Ethos. They thought the music or rather sound was as much a cosmic principle as the Primary Elements, humors, seasons, etc., all of which were linked with the planetary system.

Among the early Persian kings and rulers, as told by some Arab writers, the Tathir (Ethos) or cosmic influence of music was a part of a governmental procedure. Every Persian and Arab treatise on the practice and theory of music deals with Tathir (Ethos). Particular modes were used at specific hours of the day, week, and month each for a specific purpose. After the Arab conquest of Persia in the 7th century, the musical system was divided among the Iranian singers and composers of the early Islamic period. Ebrahim Museli (d810) and his son, Es'hâq Pupil, Zaryâb, a singer, poet and composer who worked at the court of Ommayyads in Cordova, were among the many who transmitted Persian musical theories to countries like Spain.

Abol Faraj Esphahâni (d697) wrote a book named "Al Aghâni," which contains tales on musicians. The book is a pleasant source of information on music as well. This being the period of Hârun al-Rashid and Ma'mun's caliphate. We can see a differing of opinions between the Iranian and Arab theorists. In the 9th century came another scale, the Khorassanian or Khorassâni.

Farabi (d950) the philosopher, physicist and theorist, started important studies into the Iranian modes and determined the intervals relating to the tanbur of Khorassan and Baghdad. These studies were essential to this period since this was the beginning of a new musical theory in Iran; a theory which was completed later by Safi-ad-din and his disciples. Farabi redeveloped existing theories already in use in the Islamic society. The development of these theories allowed the basic rules to be generally applied to music.

Persian theorists were certainly in the forefront as exponents of Arabian musical theory as seen between the 9th and 11th centuries. Writers such as Mohammad Zakanya (dc 923) influenced the progress and evolution of Persian music. Avicenna (980-1037), the philosopher, physician and an important musical theorist, mentions the corresponding "Tathir" of twelve primary modes — Rahâvi, Hosseini, Râst, Bousôligh, Zangouleh, Ashshâgh, Hedjâz, Arâgh, Esphahân, Navâ, Bozorgue and Mokhâlef — which corresponds to each month of the year. We

know, however, little about their formation. We should also note here that some newer instrumental types were coming into use would appear from Avicenna. He refers to the Shâhroud as an archlute of wide gamut, the Salbâgh, which was clearly the Greek Symbyk and Senj (symbal). The names of great virtuosi fill the annals of this period, such as the poet Roudaki, the minstrel of the Samanid Nasr II (d 942), Farrokhi, (d 1038) the harpist from Ghazney, and Kamâl al-Zaman, the lutanist of Sultan Sanjar Shah Seljuqi (d 1157). On the other hand, music was nurtured in the Sufis' communities. Here, it was taught that listening to music, "Samâa," was a means of rising to ecstasy, through the portals of which ultimate reality could be reached.

Under the Gurhid, Khârazmid and Timurids rulers between the 12th and 15th centuries, music flourished. In this period, theorists who played a part in the evolution of Iran music were Ghotbed-din Shirazi and Abol Ghâder Maraghi. Maraghi's works became the accepted textbooks throughout the Islamic east, especially his "Jami al Alhan." In this work can be found the earliest examples of notated Persian music, and other contributors like Fakhr-ed-din Razi, and probably the greatest of all, Safi-ad-din

***The music performed in "Ta'zieh" was essential in keeping the traditional music of Iran alive, because it required rare classical vocal and musical talents. Paradoxically, the religious performance protected the classical profane of Iran.***

or Mavi (d1274), author of "Kitab al Adivâr" and "Risâlat al Sharafiya." Safi was the theorist who regularized the "systematist theory" which Sir Hubert Parry called "the most perfect ever devised" and this held sway together with the simpler Pythagorean system until the 17th century. These writers not only wrote about the treatise on music about musical modes but also included valuable sections on instrumentals, and the instruments most in use — such as the Oub, "Moghni," "Chang," "Ghânun," "Gheychak," "Pisha" and "Ney-e-Siyah." Elsewhere, various types of "Tanbur," notably the Toud with two strings, the "Do-târ" and "Seh-târ" with three strings, are also discussed. From these treatise one is able to appreciate the heights to which the art and science of music had risen in Iranian lands. In them is to be found the precise notation of every mode called "Dastgâh." There were twelve principal modes called Âvâzât, which are described by Safi-ed-din Urmavi.

By the 14th century, the modal system was extended by the admission of branch modes, called "Sho'bé" or "Sho'abat," of which there were twenty four. Then came further accretions in the derived mode called Gusheh, which began in the 15th century. Two centuries later, there were forty-eight Gushehs.

We know that Persian prose became more rhetorical at this period. The more ornate music, called Magsh, was more favored at the time and was its tonal counterpart.

The Timurid regime was ending even though the court of its last ruler, Hussein Mirza Baggharâ (1506), was the center of music. With the rise of the Persian dynasty of the Safavids, came a renaissance of the arts, including music. That which was of alien origin fell into disuse. With the Safavid Dynasty came invention of new musical instruments such as the "Chârtâr" (a four-stringed instrument) and "Shesh-târ" (a six-stringed instrument).

European travellers, like Contarini, Raphaël du Mans, Chardin and Poulet, gave a fair idea of the state of Persian music in the 16th to 17th centuries.

According to Chardin, the systematist theory of Safi-ad-din was still in use. The practitioners, however, were using the simpler Pythagorean scale of twelve semi-tones to the octave. Men were considered the best singers, and the "Ud" (lute) and "Kamaneh" (spiked viol) were the most favored instruments. These are what we see earlier in a painting of musicians at the court of Shah Safi (1629 - 42), to which Ney (flute) and Dayereh (tambourines) are added. In the same period the Chang and Agri fell into disuse. By the 19th century, many types of instruments, such as the "Ud," "Rabâb" (guitar), and "Ghânun," disappeared from the orchestra, but here was a renewal of instruments such as the "Kamaneh," "Tar," "Dombak" and "Tarabanguiz."

The "Ta'zieh," a religious Shi'ite drama (the only form of theatre which existed in the Islamic world, created at the end of the 18th century and grew in importance in the 19th century) was a complete spectacle. It included music, singing, and grand productions. These performances essentially told the trials and tribulations of Himen Hossein, grandson of the prophet Mohammad. These productions were a popular religious drama similar to those of the passion/miracle plays performed in Europe in the middle ages. The Ta'zieh also performed secular plays and comedies which were presented in a round theatre (or arena) called a "Tekyeh."

The principle instruments used in these productions were basically percussions, such as "Tabl," "Dohol," "Kus," "Neghareh," "Senj," "Sheypur" (the fanfare) and the "Karnâ" — this latter is like the alpenhorn made of bambou. All of them were played entirely by men.

The music performed in "Ta'zieh" was essential in keeping the traditional music of Iran alive, because it required rare classical vocal and musical talents. Paradoxically, the religious performance protected the classical profane of Iran.

Mid-century European influence also began to play its part in Persian music. The seeds were sown by the military bands — drums and fifes — on the European model. In 1850, Nasser-ed-din Shah employed a French "chef de music" named Bousquet to lead his

guards. European instruments were introduced. These Persian military bands gave concerts in public and attuned the Persian ear to the Occidental tempered scale. The first Persian national anthem was composed in 1873, for the occasion of the Shah's first visit to Europe, by Lemaire, a professor of music at the High School of Dâr-al-Fonun. Later, this section became the "Madrese-ye Muzik," the first school in Iran to teach European music.

In spite of this Occidental impact, there was still a keen demand for the traditional art, and there were many enthusiastic virtuosi. Among the old and contemporary singers and musicians, the following saberguarded the traditional art: Sheikh Mahmud Khazâneh, Tâherzadeh Mohammad Reza Badi, Abdollâh Davâni, Mahmud Karimi, Gholam Hossein Banân, Egbal Soltan, Badi'zadeh, Taj-e Esphahân and Golpâygâni. And among the instrumentalists and improvisers of the Do-târ. The following did likewise: Ali Akbar Farâhâni, Agha Gholâm Hossein, Mirza Abdollah, Darvish Khân, "du santur" Soma ol-Molk, Soma Hazur, Habib Samuî, Pâyvar, "Do-târ" Gholam Reza Shirazi, Mir Ali Borumand Musa, Ma'rufi, Morteza Ney-Dâvoud, Ali Akbar Shahnazî, du "Seh-târ" Ahmad Ebâdi, Hossein Khan, Rokn-ad-din Mokhtârî, Asghar Bahâri, Nâyeb Assadollah, Kasâi du Kamâneh, Morâdi du Zarb, Hâdji Khan, Hossein Tehrani.

In a picture painted by Kamâl-al-Molk there is a representation of a number of musicians from the court of Nasser-ad-din Shah. These instrumentalists, called "Amaleh-e Tarab" (workers of joy), were, like many musicians, supported and patronized by the kings of Iran. This festive music, which opposed religious or Radif's erudite music, was incorrectly named court music. Other enthusiastic virtuosi were Abolhassan Saba and Ali Naghi Vaziri. The latter played the Târ and violin. He was the first person to transcribe in Western musical notation, which until then was handed down orally.

Vaziri is the most important of the early 20th century Persian music writers on this subject. His views on the subject, his treatise — "Ta'limat-e Music" (Lessons in Music) — and a textbook of the Târ, "Dastour-e Tar," are widely read. He methodically wrote that the "hengâm" (octave) consists of 24 quarter-tones. This means every tone (called "pardeh") comprises four quarter-tones, every semi-tone (called "nim-pardeh") and each

quarter-tone (called "rob-e-pardeh"). These Iranian modes in this period are called "Âvâz," which is conceived in two disjunct tetracords called "dâng." Together, "Sho'abât," "Gushehs" and the "Âvâz" are called Dastgah. When this is followed from beginning to end, it is called "Radif." Given the closeness between poetry and music in the Iranian culture, the rhythm of the music is in perfect harmony with prosody named "Arûz."

In the late 1900's, Vaziri, who received a European musical education in France and Germany founded an orchestra in Tehran on semi-Occidental lines. It was comprised of violins, flutes, piano and the "Tar." In doing this Vaziri tried to establish certain parallels between Iranian and European music. He also invented the words Koron and Sori. Koron relates to the quarter-tones descending and Sori relates to the quarter-tones ascending.



**Medical Financial Services Inc.**

**BILLING SERVICE  
FOR PROFESSIONALS**

P.O. Box 1247  
Toms River, NJ 08754

**Phone: 732-349-3838**  
**Fax: 732-349-2233**  
email: medfinserv@aol.com

Farabi in the 10th century wrote about the tablature, the tuning of the strings and the name of each interval based on the positioning of the fingers on the handle of the Tanbour. He defined the position of quarter-tones between each finger by raising and lowering the fingers along the strings. Every position has a particular stylistic letter in the Arabic alphabet. In the 13th century, Safi-ad-din, whom I have already mentioned, wrote a melody with letters of the Arabic alphabet and numbers which functioned as musical notes. Here, Persian and Islamic music began to take on its first written musical notation. Certain instrumentalists, however, being illiterate could not read Safi-ed-din's learned method. Therefore, the oral transmission remained in use until Vaziri. After Vaziri, A. Saba, a violin, Se-târ and Kamâncheh virtuoso, and M. Ma'roufi, master of the Târ, reconstituted the radifs of traditional Persian music for the violin and Târ, into the present European musical notation.

In conclusion, we can see that throughout time, Persian music has influenced many cultures and nations and has likewise been influenced. There has been changes in the popularity of particular instruments, as in any country that is trying to develop the arts. Since Vaziri, however, and probably the first European influences, there have been many outstanding musical theorists who have contributed to the advancement of Persian music. We cannot stop here. We must use the richness of the past to develop, expand and revitalize Iranian music by using today's universal methods and technics, thus enriching Persian music. This, in turn, will reflect the real heroic and mystic emotions of our Persian poets such as Ferdowsi and Hafez. ■

**Pfizer Pharmaceuticals  
is a proud supporter of  
Persian Heritage Magazine**

**Pfizer Specialty**



**Hilton**

**Fort Lee George Washington Bridge**

It happens at the **Hilton:**

***Business Meetings  
Social Affairs  
Deluxe Accomodations***

**Tel: (201) 461-9000**

**Fax: (201) 585-9807**

**2117 Route 4 Eastbound, Fort Lee, NJ 07024**

The Hilton name and logo are trademarks owned by Hilton © 1999 Hilton Hotels

**BEST WISHES  
TO  
PERSIAN HERITAGE**

**Lilly**

**Eli Lilly and Company  
Lilly Corporate Center  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46285**

**www.lilly.com**

# INTERVIEW WITH FARHAD GHIAÏ

## of HEYDAR GHIAÏ AND SONS, INC.

By: Kamshad Raiszadeh, M.D.

Mr. Farhad Ghiaï-Chamlou is one of the most admired and well-known architects of Iranian descent. His work can be seen throughout the United States and Europe, and includes apartment buildings, luxury villas, hotels, international resorts, and major waterfront recreational centers. Farhad (Yves) Ghiaï's work has been published in some twenty local and international magazines and newspapers. In 1997, the City of San Francisco officially proclaimed October 26<sup>th</sup> Heydar Ghiaï and Sons Day. Mr. Ghiaï is also a guest lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley, a member of the U.S. National "Who's Who" list, and a member of the French *Ordre des Architectes*.

His father, the well known architect Heydar Ghiaï-Chamlou, designed the Senate building in Iran, the Palaces of Farahabad and many other public buildings in Tehran. For his numerous contributions, he is often referred to as the father of architecture in Iran. His talents have been inherited by his children, Farhad, Parviz and Mehdi. All have followed in their father's footsteps. Mr. Farhad Ghiaï had an early apprenticeship in architecture, mysticism, poetry, calligraphy, and philosophy under his father's tutelage. He then went on to Paris, and then New York to complete his architectural studies. Since then, he has practiced architecture based on the fusion between the futuristic, the historical, and the mystic/poetic.

One of Mr. Farhad Ghiaï's renowned projects includes the Hotel/Casino built in Costa Rica called the Village of Flower. This hotel is complete with spas, conference rooms, stadiums as well as luxury accommodations, yet fuses traditional Persian symbols with modern architectural styles. Taking inspiration from the Palace of Alhambra in the South of Spain, Mr. Ghiaï interjects Iranian/Eastern symbols into Western architecture. In a recent project, a villa built in the suburbs of San Francisco, he uses the romantic nature of Iranian poetry combined with architecture. In the center of the building is a garden where small pools of water come together forming one large pool. These pools of water emphasize the old philosophical and spiritual importance given to symbols such as water and the sun. The purity, wisdom and rejuvenation symbolized by water and the sun are common themes in all of his work. The shadows of adjacent structures reflect in these pools and symbolize the Chehel-Sotoun of Isfahan. Outside of the villa he has placed columns reminiscent of Persepolis. He uses mirrors and reflections of objects in the villa, such as the reflection of the moon in the large pool. A tour of this villa, not unlike many of Mr. Ghiaï's creations, gives you a feeling of going back to old Iranian philosophies and traditions.

*PH: Please start by introducing our readers to your firm, Heydar Ghiaï and Sons.*

**GHIAÏ:** Heydar Ghiaï and Sons is part of a consortium of firms owned by the family. Heydar Ghiaï and Sons is the architectural firm, Ghiaï Development is the development arm, and HandyAll.com is a new .com associated with the firm within the construction industry. The idea is real estate development from A to Z. Heydar Ghiaï and Sons is the architectural firm, a continuation of my father's work in Iran.

*PH: Your father was known as the father of modern Iranian architecture. Tell us more about your father and his career.*

**GHIAÏ:** He started studying architecture in Paris at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts where he studied architecture for 10 years, until he got a Doctorate. He also won several prizes at Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts. These prizes were never given to a foreigner in those days. But they considered him so brilliant that they gave him the honorary prize of Prix de Vienne. He then went back to Iran, and happened to be the only architect, modern architect, in Iran. There were no others. In a matter of two or three years, he became well known in his profession and to the public at large because of the buildings he designed. People would pay to see his buildings before they were completed. Eventually his designs became so famous that he was summoned by the King to design a new Senate House. From there on, his career went to different scales.

He became a Professor at the University of Teheran, and started designing some thirty villas, hospitals, embassies, recreational centers, cinemas, and office buildings. Heydar Ghiaï, known as the father of modern architecture in Iran, trained three generations of architects. He has received many honorary titles from the Shah. He became "Adjudan" Architect to the Imperial Court, which in French is "Aide De Camp."

His life was very tumultuous. There were ups and downs. He decided to continue his ambitions through his sons. He helped us establish our presence in the United States, and when he passed away in 1985, I decided to change the name of our group to Heydar Ghiaï & Sons in his memory.



**PH: Who is involved in Heydar Ghiaï and Sons?**

**GHIAÏ:** Ghiaï & Sons is mostly me. In the other groups, the development groups, in addition to my involvement, are my brother Claude, Allain, mother are involved. I'm heading the architectural firm, and I'm the one most active in that firm. The others are working within the construction industry.

**Father's Influence**

**PH: Your father's influence and works were obviously a big springboard for the rest of your life. What did your father teach you?**

**GHIAÏ:** I was born and raised in an atmosphere of an architectural firm. When I was in Iran, I spent all of my time during school breaks in my father's firm. He gave me complete freedom in the office. I would attend meetings. This was obviously an opportunity for me to grasp all aspects of the profession and to understand the contents of the books and magazines I worked with every day. The people I was socializing with every day were either his students or employees. That was a major influence. Other influence was my father's direct influence in trying to inject into architecture such things as poetry and mysticism. He interconnected watercolor, architecture, calligraphy with architecture. I learned traditional Persian calligraphy. I learned watercolor from him. My father taught me all these things.

**PH: Which of these teachings and philosophies did you expound upon in your own work?**

**GHIAÏ:** The study of calligraphy, Persian calligraphy. Our calligraphy is very much like Chinese brush painting. This discipline is not just the means of drawing, it's a means of concentration.

Much like yoga or meditation, these arts foster control of your hand or your brush, and result in control of intricate shapes, such as curves, which need to be placed precisely where they are.

Each curve is unique. A line, a straight line, can be made longer or shorter, but the curve has many intricacies, which you cannot alter without changing the character of the curve. So the control of the hand and the mind is what I took most from this discipline, and transcribed it into my original sketches, for any buildings that I do. It is the mastery of curves, which I used in my own work.



**PH: Do you think that your work differs from your father's?**

**GHIAÏ:** My father's work is more poetic, more romantic. My work is more mystical and spiritual. Even though my father was very much in tune with mysticism, his work reflects more of what in painting would be the equivalent of impressionism. It may be a little more difficult to understand, but my work is more Zen, or more surrealist. My creations may be considered a little drier, but they function to transcend your mind into a different level. My father's buildings had some of these qualities, but overtones of his poetic and romantic characteristics were clearly revealed in his work.

**Poetry, Mysticism**

**PH: What about poetry, mysticism? How do you feel that your spirituality has impacted your architectural style?**

**GHIAÏ:** My first experience with mysticism happened at age fourteen. I went one night to Sadd-e-Karaj in Iran. At that time, Karaj was not developed. We had a little chalet in the middle of the mountains. It was the only chalet on that mountain. If you know the skies in Iran, the effects of the dry weather, how the stars

come out, the emptiness, and the snow as a background, then you can understand a little bit of the magical atmosphere that exists. On the trips I was accompanied by friends who were into mysticism. They were philosophers and poets. One night, they explained to me what mysticism is, and made me feel it. In that ambiance is when it struck; a light just came out. From that time on, I could actually better communicate with my father who already based a lot of his philosophies on Persian Mysticism. So, I applied that to my architecture. I will give you an example, so as not to make it too esoteric: The idea of trying to stretch your view to the horizon with various spaces. The idea of having transcendental spaces by having double or even triple

spaces on the ceiling, for instance, is to direct your view upward very much like in a cathedral. Or to direct your view outward onto the horizon. You want to try to be taken away from the mundane existence into another state of mind, true space. That is the essence of mysticism in architecture. It's not like I put poetry on the walls. On a more deep level, through architectural designs, I am trying to create spaces that reproduce the essence of mysticism and how it affects your mind.

**PH: What is your opinion on the status of architecture in relation to culture? Does architecture today reflect those ideals?**

**GHIAÏ:** No, obviously it does not. Very few people have the training to even put poetry in their architecture. Clients don't understand it, and very few architects want to.

**PH:** *What feeling do you want to leave somebody who is exposed to your works? Does a person need an understanding of mysticism in order to understand your works?*

**GHIAÏ:** Obviously, like Descartes said, "The more sophisticated the person is, the more knowledge and understanding comes to him." You may know some basic things about wine, so you can appreciate a good glass of wine. If you become a wine expert, then you can appreciate that same glass of wine tenfold. Architecture is no different.

Most of my clients enjoy the feelings of my spaces. Those clients who are more sophisticated, knowledgeable, and literate, and who have had more exposure to Eastern cultures, and love it. The feelings I want to convey in those spaces are very Persian, true Persian feelings. When I say true Persian feelings, I mean the essence of the Ancient Persian Empire; the idea of grandeur, of loftiness and freedom, of spirituality, proportion and refinement, much of which has been lost in contemporary Iran.

**PH:** *This idea of proportion is emphasized in your web site, Ghiai.com. You are quoted as saying, "Proportion is not only a principle of architecture, it is also a principle of life." Could you expound on that statement?*

**GHIAÏ:** Yes. Actually, that is a very easy statement to give concrete examples of. Anything that comes out of proportion in life becomes an aberration. In medicine, a cell that grows and cannot stop is an aberration and becomes a disease such as arthritis or cancer. It is not in balance with the rest of the cell structure. On a very mundane level, a stock that goes up too much is out of proportion. A market or an economy that is too good is out of proportion. In architecture, if an entryway is too big in relation to the rest of the house, it becomes ugly. The same is true in life. The secret of happiness is to keep your life in proportion.

**PH:** *Let's venture into what has been the root of your mysticism and spirituality. You mentioned one event in Iran, but what other things, in your life from adolescence in Iran until now, have had the greatest influences in your life?*

**GHIAÏ:** The first year of University in the States was spent in Houston, Texas. You would think it's the last place that one could get inspired. While in Houston in '77 for one year, I had a very good teacher. This teacher disciplined me in conceptual thinking in architecture. I was living on-campus, and hence did not have all the distractions of a social life or caring about everyday needs. The Houston sky is huge and full of stars. The city relays the feeling of being in the desert. This had an enormous influence in developing my spirituality, because I was alone on this huge campus, under this big sky. I didn't befriend anybody. I was living, breathing and thinking architecture twenty-four hours a day. That is what I believe gave me a second boost after my experience in Iran.

**PH:** *You seem to advocate a way of life that emphasizes getting to know and becoming in touch with oneself.*

**GHIAÏ:** Absolutely. I believe that one's destiny is in one's own hands. You are its creator. As much as it may shock some people, I believe that we are our own Gods.

**PH:** *It's a Sufi feeling, is it not, that God or Khoda is by definition knowing oneself.*

**GHIAÏ:** Exactly. It is truly a Persian principle, which has been twisted and totally demolished throughout the ages, especially during the Islamic ages.

### Modern Cultural Influences

**PH:** *These events and experiences you mentioned, though inspired by your surroundings, were internal, spiritual changes. Have any external features in American or Western Culture influenced your life?*

**GHIAÏ:** Having had a French upbringing, Cartesian thinking is almost a religion. My father also organized his thoughts in an analytical and Cartesian way because of the 10 years he spent in Paris. I developed a love of mathematics and a love of Cartesian thinking and philosophy. Once I had that inspiration, I developed my architectural concepts into logical pieces and use this analytical thinking to bring my concepts to life. The French teaching was a great, great influence.

**PH:** *Continuing on the theme of modern culture, are there more recent changes in the U.S. culture that have impacted architecture such as, the internet, etc.?*

**GHIAÏ:** New trends can be helpful or disastrous. If you treat the computer as a tool, it's very helpful. I use it myself for my website and drawing in 3D. But if I did not have the formal training of knowing how to draw, of knowing how to think, the computer could never help me produce better designs. I am afraid, however, that current education in the United States places too much emphasis on the computer at a very young age. People will become, and are becoming very computer literate yet very illiterate and incompetent. Unfortunately, architecture will suffer from it. The substance and philosophy of architecture are already suffering, and will suffer more and more, as long as people see the computer as anything more than just a tool sophisticated pencil. They treat it almost like a human being, sometimes like a higher being. That is very dangerous, and so I see a downturn, unfortunately, in this country.

**PH:** *What would you say to young Iranian-Americans or Iranian-Westerners about their past and about their culture and how important it is for them?*

**GHIAÏ:** I feel very strongly about Iranian culture and our youth. I am very upset that Iranians deny their past, deny that they are Iranians. I am half-Iranian, and I am making more noise than if I was 100% Iranian. Unfortunately, young people, young Iranians, I know many, are totally degrading themselves to a level of losing all of their identity. They should take advantage of their cultural background, study their own writings in cal-

igraphy, study their own music, traditions and philosophy. When I was a child, I had a teacher who came every night at six o'clock to read and explain Sa'adi and Hafez. It was an extracurricular activity, not school. These cultural activities help give people depth and substance. The other thing they should realize is that Americans or Europeans will not respect Iranians who deny their past. That is something that few people understand. Young people don't understand it at all. If someone of quality in a society senses that you deny your past, they will not respect you. They form the opinion that if you deny your past, you must be ashamed of your past, and if you are ashamed of your past, you must have something to be ashamed of. Maybe his/her background is not so good. You lose their respect. It's as simple as that. What I detest even more are those successful and famous Iranians in the United States who totally deny that they are Iranians. I think it is a sign of a low class people.

**PH:** *I want to shift gears a little bit and talk about the Persian family structure. Each family is different, but most would say that Persian families share a characteristic closeness. Could you speak to this vis a vis your ability to stay as a family, united and in the same field with everybody involved*

**GHIAÏ:** Our family structure was very much like the family house that was designed by my father. That house had five compounds, separated, yet united by a corridor in the back. So, each of the children had their own, say, little townhouse, which was connected to a corridor in the back. We each had our separate door and key and phone number. And, yet, it was all united within the same group. That is the philosophy of our family, which is a very old Persian philosophy of Kings Kourosh and Darius and how they could have empires by having the various kingdoms govern themselves. We have our own independence, each of the children. We were not tied, like many families, by force or by financial bonds. We were given this independence at a very early age, which made us even closer, even

though it may seem as a paradox. So this voluntary bond is one of the secrets of how we stay together. Because we have our independence, we don't get on each other's nerves. Our wives don't get on each other's nerves. We have our own lives. When we get together, it is purely for enjoyment or to discuss ideas. We are not bound by a common property or common corporation, since conflicts can arise when someone has more shares than others or monetary interests become intertwined.

**PH:** *Are there other aspects of the Persian culture that you felt either drawn to or adversed to?*

ners or in and outs. It's basically the organization of the plan. My plans are very clear and simple, in contrast to what a lot of young Iranian architects were doing. They were doing overly intricate things for no good reason and were complicated as opposed to trying to be complex.

**PH:** *This is an interesting difference. The fundamental Persian art of calligraphy and fine miniature art, for example, are very detail-oriented and complex. You are making a distinction between this complexity and newer more complicated works.*



**GHIAÏ:** Yes, it's a major difference. Complicated is something that is unclear. If you look at a Persian miniature, they have a very clear organization. The center medallion, the border, the corners, are very obvious. Now, within that, of course, they decorate. But, it is very calculated and mathematical, geometric. The decoration is just decoration.

**Creative Process**

**PH:** *How does your creative process develop?*

**GHIAÏ:** In contrast to the Persian culture, the French culture is in a way a nonsense culture. It lacks the romantic overtones of Persian culture. For example, Persian music, especially contemporary music, is full of tremolos and exaggerations. French or European music is to the point, you do this, you do that, this follows that. I learned this straight-forwardness from French culture and people, as opposed to Iranians, who are prone to exaggerations and being overly romantic and expressive. I somewhat reacted to that exaggerated and overly dramatic way through my French upbringing by being to the point, not more, not less. That is an influence the French culture had on me, which I also adapted to my architecture. It is a simple architecture. There are no tricky cor-

**GHIAÏ:** The process has several steps. Again, coming from a Cartesian background, I organize things in steps. The first step, when you want to create anything, is to gather data such as historical data and then assess it. Data gathering should be the first step in design regardless of the object to be designed, i.e. a spoon, a car, a building, a relationship or a company.

The second step after that is to formulate your own philosophy. You have plenty of data, say, on how to design a car. A car is an item everybody knows. But, now you have to create your own philosophy. What really is a car? Is it, for instance, a mode of transportation or is it a way for you to have pleasure when you drive. After you form your philosophy, you have to create your own design. This is where inspiration comes in, and that is the most

difficult, unpredictable, and inexplicable part. This third stage is often when schools, especially traditional architectural schools, allow the student to enjoy himself or herself. Take your mind off of the project. Go to the symphony, go to the opera, go get drunk, if necessary. Whatever you need to do to get inspiration, knowing very well that you have stored in your brain all the necessary data. In a way, "when you are looking for certain things, you find it on the streets."

If you look at a certain type of building, for instance, suddenly you see that you see a lot of them. Why? Because you are looking for it. And so, having had all the studying and the data in your mind, as you enjoy yourself and take a distance from the project, somehow inspiration simply happens. That is how it functions with me and a lot of people in the creative fields. Once that inspiration happens, then you have your idea, that is what the French call "le partir" or as the Americans would say, "the concept". From the concept on it is all hard work. You must now develop, refine, and make sure it works. This is the technical part. In a nutshell that is how the design process happens. So for me there is a period of collecting data, the period of thinking about the philosophy, the period of dreaming and then the period of execution.

**PH:** *It seems when you are talking architecture, you could be talking about anything.*

**GHIAI:** You know, in the old days, there were three ways to form a mind, for example the classic European way, is through architecture, medicine and law. These were the only three ways that one could get a good education. Despite all of the specialization and the new technology, I still think that those three fields are what form a mind.

**PH:** *What would you say to architecture students today, about drawing, architecture, and education.*

**GHIAI:** I would say drawing is the most important, and it is for everybody. In Japan, they teach Sumi painting to young children in elementary school every day. Sumi painting is Chinese brush painting. It's a discipline of the mind. To draw is one of the most important things in one's life. It goes beyond just drawing. It's a discipline, as I said. It's learning to

control your hands, which you need when you work with computers, etc. But computer can't teach you control, drawing does. When you draw something, the process allows you to see things. You may look at this fireplace all of your life, but when you sit down and draw it, you will discover a lot more things than you thought you knew about it. So, it's a way to penetrate nature.

**PH:** *I'm switching gears a little bit to the situation of being Iranian or partially Iranian in a foreign land. You talk a lot about some of the advantages, are their drawbacks at times? And why?*

**GHIAI:** I didn't see any drawbacks. During the hostage crisis, I was living in New York. I did not see any drawbacks of being or talking about being Iranian. They noticed I had an accent; I have a little French accent. Despite the accent, I told them I was Iranian. I never had a bad or negative reaction to my heritage. Frankly, I don't know what people are talking about when they say they had a bad experience or reaction, I never did. I find Americans to be very open minded about these things. Possibly because they don't know much. The drawback, if anything, is a reverse drawback, if you will. Having had an Iranian background, like any Iranian who took his background seriously, we are of a higher quality. I believe that. We have more substance. And, so the drawback is sometimes jealousies and misunderstandings of people who don't have that substance. So, in that sense, there is a drawback. In an absolute sense, being Iranian in the West is advantageous.

**PH:** *Do you see other Iranians, other than your family, as part of your future, as part of your community? How does the Iranian community outside Iran and their cohesiveness affect you, or do you find that not important at this point?*

**GHIAI:** No, it is important. I have tried ever since the Revolution in Iran, to assemble Iranians to the best of my capacity. We have a house in the south of France where we have traditional parties every summer open to all Iranians. Every time I have tried to bring a group of Iranians together,

unfortunately, I have failed. I could not get Iranians together without drawing a lot of jealousies and a lot of back stabbing.

**PH:** *So, now you have this platform upon which to, in a way, at least say what you would like regarding this issue. How do you see Iranians coming together and how can you see our attitude as a whole being one that unites?*

**GHIAI:** Well, that's why I am having this interview. I hope that a magazine like Persian Heritage can bring quality Iranians together. I hope that this magazine is one vehicle; I don't know of a better vehicle.

**PH:** *Do you feel it would be better to achieve as individuals or as a group?*

**GHIAI:** I think it's better, to tell you the truth, for Iranians to separately achieve. Iranians are people a little bit like the French, very individualistic. They are very good at doing things alone, extremely good. Teamwork is not so much a national characteristic in Iran. So, having said that, it is best and more logical for Iranians to represent their culture individually, but that doesn't mean that they can not be featured in one place, such as your magazine or others. But when you try to organize them in groups, as I have tried for years, it is difficult.

**PH:** *When you look at your own accomplishments and those of your father, past and present, what legacy would you like to leave to your family and the world.*

**GHIAI:** What I would like to do is to first of all is to continue and not disrupt the line that my father started. Now that I have continued many of father's activities, albeit in a much smaller scale because of the circumstances, I would like to move forward and develop more theories and designs purely my own. My goal is to perpetuate a continuum. It is not just about one individual, me, trying to leave one thing for the world. I think I would have accomplished in my life if I can continue what my father did and develop it one step further, instill this in my children and see them develop it, then I could die happy. ■



The experiences this magazine gives to me are wonderful. It is difficult to predict that an interview such as this one with Robert Mondavi can ever be surpassed. Robert Mondavi is a remarkable man. I was first introduced to Mr. Mondavi over a year ago, not in person, but through his book *Harvest of Joy*. By the first page I sensed a man "extraordinaire." With the turning of each page I felt closer and closer to a man located on the other side of the country. He is what I am trying to be. He is a man who took a dream and turned it into a reality. He is a man who continues, despite the criticism, to pursue new dreams.

This past June, Mr. Mondavi turned eighty-seven years old, rather eighty-seven years young. To him a half a glass of water is always half filled versus half empty. From the minute I walked into his office and shook his hand, I felt a genuine warmth. Completely losing my composure I babbled out, "Mr. Mondavi, you are my idol!" With that he gave me the biggest smile and giant a hug which made me feel special and then I remembered another great man, my dad.

Prior to turning on the recorder we spoke about *Persian Heritage* and my interest in it. I told him that I always wanted to be on the cutting edge of something, and I believed this magazine to be it. He jumped in and said "that is how I felt about wine." To him being on the cutting edge of something is exciting. He was quick to warn, however, that being on the cutting edge of something makes the battle to success much harder.... That was the first of many lessons I was to learn over the next hour. Before we begin the interview I suggest that you read *Harvest of Joy* in its entirety. It is a lesson on life, love, family and of course wine.

*"For me wine has always been something much larger than a business. Wine to me is passion. It is family and friends. It is warmth of heart generosity and spirit. Wine is art. It is culture. It is the essence of civilization and the art of living ... wine is above all else a blessing, a gift of nature a joy as pure and essential as the soil and vines and sunshine from which it springs."* (Robert Mondavi)

**PH:** So, Mr. Mondavi, it all began on June 18, 1913, eighty-seven years ago. You are in incredible physical shape.

**RM:** Well thank you. Actually I am recovering from back surgery. I am happy to say that I am on the mend. My energy level is high and now I am working to build up my strength. I swim every day and do other minimal exercises that I believe to be beneficial. You must always keep your mind and body active.

**PH:** What about eating?

**RM:** Anything and everything just less of it these days. It just doesn't seem that I need three big meals anymore. So I eat when and what I need to. Knowing one's limits keeps you healthy in all aspects of life.

**PH:** When did you first realize your interest in wine?

**RM:** Well the credit has to go to my mother. She introduced my brother and sisters and I to it at a very early age. We were an Italian household and therefore wine was a liquid food. "Wine is Life" Petronius said two thousand years ago and I know exactly what he meant. Wine was not something my family ever abused. In fact never did I see my mother, father, sister, or brother under the influence. We knew our limitations and stayed true to them. I can still recall my first year at Stanford. There was a "beer bash." My goodness they had anything and everything you wanted to drink beer, whisky and gin. I looked on and watched the students drink themselves into intoxication. I saw them become, for lack of another word, "uncivilized", at least for Stanford. I knew then that I would never abuse alcohol. Many people drink to get drunk or others consume alcohol without knowing their limits. This is not the purpose of drinking wine. Wine is to be enjoyed.

**PH:** Your wife, I understand has a tremendous impact on you concerning the arts, is that true?

**RM:** Absolutely! I always knew that good wine and good food were synonymous. What Margrit taught me was that equally important to life are the arts, mu-

sic and theater. That is why, today as you walk around the winery you will see many sculptures and pictures. I thank Margrit for that. She also convinced me to bring the arts, food and wine together in some way to Napa Valley and the world. And we are doing this.

**PH:** *In what way?*

**RM:** We are building a center where the public will be able to educate themselves on the arts food and wine. It all started about ten years ago when we organized The American Institute of Food and Wine. When I say we I mean Julia Childs, Dick Wolper, Francis Ford Coppola, Alice Waters, Raff, Judge Thomas Kongsard my wife Margrit, myself and others. People ridiculed us over the years, but they began to understand the importance of such an organization. Eventually all agreed to build the center and we broke ground last spring. It is expected to open on Thanksgiving Day 2001. The center is about 80,000 square feet. It has an auditorium that can hold about three hundred people and a kitchen named in honor of Julia Childs. Using her name was quite exciting since she does not allow her name to endorse very much.

**PH:** *I am sure that it is going to be costly, how did you raise the money?*

**RM:** It is costing around fifty million dollars, but it is well worth it. To get the ball rolling I contributed some start up funds and began a huge fund raising campaign. It is going to be something, unique to the world and I am proud to be part of its development. Peggy Loar is the director of the project and is doing a wonderful job.

**PH:** *It sounds like a wonderful center and I wish you great success. You speak with great affection for your wife, Julia Childs and other females you have worked with.*

**RM:** Yes, I admire their strength and drive. In fact, in many endeavors and projects if it were not for the women, I doubt the projects would have ever succeeded. Without women in the world things would be slow to get off the ground. I bet your editor can say the same thing

about your magazine.

**PH:** *Thank you Mr. Mondavi and thank you Mrs. Mondavi for teaching your husband well. But now let's get back to this business of wine. How did you get into it as a business?*

**RM:** My father was involved in a grocery store. It did so well that he sold his shares and bought a saloon. The saloon was also successful until Prohibition in 1919, The Volstead Act- that banned the sale of liquor. He was also the secretary of the Italian Club in Virginia , Minnesota. In order to maintain the Italian way of life he was assigned the duty of buying grapes. Therefore he made frequent trips to California. His first trip was in 1919. He immediately fell in love with this area. He loved the weather, the frontier and the absence of the structured cast system found in Minnesota.

**PH:** *Cast structure in Minnesota?*

**RM:** Yes, back in those days Italians were looked down on especially in Virginia , Minnesota. The ruling class were the Scandinavians. It is alleged that Italians were not allowed to purchase property in certain parts of the state. Though I did not experience this first hand I can remember being called a "WOP" or "DAGO" and that certainly hurt.

**PH:** *Did this impact your life?*

**RM:** Of course it did. It made me want to deny my ethnicity. At home my parents only spoke Italian. I would try to speak only English, I wanted to be like everyone else. Eventually, with maturity you begin to realize that these prejudices are part of life and that it is wrong to deny your heritage. You just have to work hard and rise above them. So yes , before you ask the next question I do appreciate and am proud of my heritage. I am Italian and to be of Italian heritage is to come from a culture rich in tradition, history, art, music, food and of course wine. I learned many lessons regarding ethnicity and culture over the years. My travels have introduced me to many wonderful cultures. It is quite humbling to realize that all cultures are rich in tradition. People all over the world can excel and it is often hard for those less traveled to understand this.

I am sure you have encountered this battle with your magazine, but if you believe in what you are doing, soon others will trust your feelings and join in your beliefs.

So, back to California.... I was a junior at Stanford University. One day my dad came to see me and asked me what I intended to do after I graduated. I said probably go to law school or business school. He then turned to me and said, "Bobby" that's what he called me. "I think that there is a future in the wine business in Napa Valley, because they grow the best grapes." The word "best" was all I needed to hear. Immediately I thought that this would be a terrific opportunity to start with a young industry and grow with it.

**PH:** *Did you change your major?*

**RM:** No, but I did take a few chemistry courses. The wine business and the growing of grapes lays more heavily on the use of common sense. You see I would not consider myself to be more than an average student, but I always had common sense. I have found out through the years that there are many intelligent people walking around, but few with common sense. There are also many visionaries, but few can execute their vision.

**PH:** *But you would need more than just common sense?*

**RM:** Of course you need desire, drive and experience. Those are elements you cannot find in a text book. So after my junior year I spent my summers learning as much as I could about the business of wine and wine making. I took a course with Vic Enriques, a professor of enology at the University of California at Berkeley. I plunged into the world of viticulture. Later I was exposed to Maynard Amerine, who wrote the bible in the wine world, *The Technology of Wine Making*. I also constantly visited with people with knowledge of the industry and as well as the finest wineries in California also known as the BIG FOUR Beaulieu Vineyard, Inglewood, Markham, Martini, Krug. My dream was unfolding.

**PH:** *And it was?*

**RM:** To become a maker of fine wines.

**PH:** *But you were at that point already making wines,*

*weren't you.*

**RM:** No, not at that point. We were in the bulk wine business at Sunny St. Helena, but we were not growing our own grapes. In the course of a year we were producing about 50,000 gallons. This did make us important, but it was not where I wanted to be in the business.

**PH:** *Then what happened?*

**RM:** In 1936, I went to work for a friend of my father, Jack Riorda. He ran Sunny St. Helena, a small bulk wine business. He hired my dad to help him sell his product. They eventually became partners and I became Jack's assistant. He was a terrific bulk winemaker. I worked every part of the St. Helena winery the harvest, crush and wine making. I loved it and knew I found my passion. My friend and teacher Jack passed away four years after the partnership in 1940. His daughter took over his part of the business and I took over the daily operations

**PH:** *How did you finally make the cross over from bulk to fine wines?*

**RM:** Well we got lucky. I heard that the Charles Krug winery was going to be sold. A friend of mine Paul Alexander along with Louis Stralla who was leasing the winery at the time told me this. They also advised me to act fast, since someone else was interested. Paul Alexander was much admired by James K. Moffitt, the owner of Krug. Mr. Moffitt had given Paul the authority to find a purchaser for the winery and he suggested the Mondavis.

I really had to think about what was going on and whether or not we could pull this off. The price of wine at this time 1943 was frozen at twenty eight cents a gallon. I thought by adding bottling that this would make up for any financial cost and increase our profit. After the death of Jack Riorda, however, his daughter took over and did not want to invest in a bottling line. That is what made Krug a more interesting consideration. The land which consisted of 150 acres was going for sale at \$75,000 and it had two homes with sixty to seventy acres set aside for a walnut orchard. So after some serious thinking I knew this was the way to go, but I would have to convince my dad.

One evening with my mother in the

kitchen next to us I mentioned the deal. I told him that Krug had a bottling line and that my calculations showed that we could pay for the winery in no time. We would be able to sell the fine wines at one dollar a gallon rather than the bulk wine that was going for the twenty eight cents a gallon. Well after I made my presentation my dad looked at me and said, "Bobby I am happy the way things are going. We do not have to be bigger."

Of course, I was very upset. There was no more discussion and dad went to bed. Then I went to the kitchen where I asked my mother to help me find a way to change dad's mind and convince him that this purchase was a good idea. The next morning I was at the breakfast table still thinking of how to convince dad. With that he walked in and said, "Bobby, when do we go to St. Helena?" I guess there was some pillow talk between my mom and dad the night before.

**PH:** *So you were one step closer to your dream.*

**RM:** Yes, the next morning we made arrangements to meet Mr. Moffitt. My brother was in the army at the time in Fresno. We contacted him and he was able to get a weekend leave. So we were off to San Francisco. When we arrived Mr. Moffitt directed us into his personal office. As we were talking the phone rang. Mr. Moffitt replied to his caller by telling him that he was sorry he had just sold Krug to Caesar Mondavi. I could not believe what I heard, we had not even exchanged one word about the deal. It wasn't until then that I realized that Mr. Moffitt had all the faith in the world that Mr. Alexander would pick the right family for the sale and he believed we were the ones. The next thing I knew they were talking interest rates and I was already making plans. Later we went to celebrate at The Fly Trap in San Francisco. When we arrived back to Napa I could not sleep for an entire week. I was so excited. You know to dream is easy, turning the dreams into a reality is anything but.

**PH:** *What was the next move?*

**RM:** My dad sold his shares at Sunny and we started building the business of fine wines. All our time was devoted to the process. We used our jug wine to pay for the research we needed to begin producing the finer wines, but we needed to

come up with another name for the wine.

**PH:** *Why distinguish it?*

**RM:** Because on the east coast back in those days the competition was keen and no one was interested in buying fine wines from California. So until we established a reputation as a distinguished producer, to sell fine wines under the same name as a bulk winery would have been our demise.

**PH:** *What do you believe was critical in your success?*

**RM:** Putting money into research and not being afraid to try new ideas. Our wines were winning more gold medals at state fairs than any other producer. So after a distinguished reputation for about four to five years we emerged as the gallon wine business into the business of fine wines.

**PH:** *Was there ever a time when you lost faith in your goals?*

**RM:** No! If you do not have faith in yourself, no one else will have faith in you and it will be very obvious. You must always talk from your heart and use your head to make your dreams a reality and get the people to believe and trust you.

**PH:** *Well it sounds as if you remain on the cutting edge?*

**RM:** In this business you must. I believe in the next ten years we can make as much of a difference in the industry as we have in the last ten years. But, that will not happen if you are not willing to spend the money to stay on the top. Currently we are spending over twenty eight million dollars to build a new winery. In 1966, when we learned that using oak barrels were best to ferment wine we removed the stainless steel barrels and replaced them completely with oak.

**PH:** *Why is oak more preferable? And aren't they much more expensive?*

**RM:** In answer to your question oak makes a softer more gentler wine. It is a subtle difference and yes, it is an expensive proposition, but I believe this subtle difference will make a big difference in

the long run. What I mean to say is that it may take four to five years for people to notice the difference but if you continue to improve people will eventually realize this difference.

**PH: How was it that you decided to change to oak barrels for fermenting?**

**RM:** Well at the time our wines were very aggressive and were high in tannin. As I traveled throughout the world, people recognized that I wanted to produce excellent wines. They asked me to taste wines fermented in oak and I could immediately notice a difference. It was gentler, friendlier with layers of flavor and lingering taste. Thus I knew the change was imperative if we wanted to compete with the European.

I must interject here that there is nothing wrong with a more aggressive wine, it is simply the personal taste of the consumer. I prefer something that is more balanced and harmonious with food. The consumer is now beginning to understand that subtle wine can be far superior to a more aggressive wine. It is like the difference between classical and jazz, they are both very good, but some prefer to listen to jazz rather than softer music.

So the investment in the oak fermentation tanks, even though they are more costly and harder to maintain than the stainless steel, is what we believe we need to make a difference. And by the way that is what you have to do with your magazine. You have to let your readers know that this magazine is a way of life. You must sell your style and convince your public that it is necessary and interesting. Americans will eventually open their hearts and learn to appreciate your magazine in the same way they learn to appreciate a fine wine. You must always show them how much love you put into your product.

**PH: Continuing on with the technical side what is your opinion of the introduction of the plastic cork?**

**RM:** I believe that it can work, but I am big on tradition. Take the English for example with the marriage of Princess Diane to Prince Charles. The traditional display of that wedding was uplifting to the entire country. So tradition plays a very important part in all aspects of life. Up to

this point in my career I have fought enough against tradition so I am not eager to take another step against tradition. Once the kinks are taken out of the plastic cork it will work as well, if not better. Today you never know what kind of cork you will get. Some can leave a "corky taste" in the wine.

**PH: You said you broke from tradition, can you give us an example of this.**

**RM:** We started using gravity flow filtration. I felt that it settled the wine in a more natural fashion. Settling a wine is similar to raising a child. You can raise them with discipline and love and get better results than raising them with an iron hand. Doing things naturally in the wine business is the key to success. So you must grow the grapes naturally with stress put only on the right areas, pick them when they are naturally mature on the vine and use gravity flow to filtrate rather than force. Add to this your heart and soul. Taking short cuts in this business, and in most aspects of life, will result in your taking three steps forward and two steps back.

**PH: Do you think that the wine makers of the world will ever get it right?**

**RM:** Probably not. This business is 7,000 years old and we keep making the same mistakes over and over again. We are human beings and therefore not perfect. But if you stay with something long enough you will eventually succeed.

**PH: OK, I go out for dinner with a "so called" wine connoisseur. The wine is opened and I am asked to smell the bouquet and tell them what I smell and taste. Is there an easy way for the lay person to distinguish the flavor and taste.**

**RM:** I say make it simple. Drink what you like, like what you drink. What is good to your taste buds is the issue. I use to be able to say that something tastes like peaches, grapefruit etc. but each of us has their own perception of what a peach tastes or smells like. So in the end there is no right or wrong in what you smell or taste. It is an individual taste and preference. For me I like my wine to be harmonious with

my food, therefore I am partial to a less sweet chardonnay. There is a company that produces a very sweet chardonnay. I can't enjoy them. To me residual sugar should not be above 3/4%. Anything above that interferes with my food. I do, however, enjoy a wine that has layers of flavor. This comes from carefully picking the grapes when fully mature. There is a comfort and balance in this type of wine that works with, rather than against the food. At our winery that is something we are always trying to achieve. But it takes time to understand that. Fortunately, we are a family business. In a family business ideas are not forgotten, nor are they compromised or substituted because of money. Our ideas are passed on from generation to generation.

**PH: Do you think that corporate ownership of wineries will change the industry?**

**RM:** Yes and no. Listen we all need and want to make money, without it there will be no business. If you are a corporation you must answer to your shareholders. If such answers result in compromising fermentation etc., then yes it can affect the quality of your wine and your future. You can not cut corners in this business, or for that matter in any business, if you want to have a superior product. You must constantly advance your knowledge as well as invest in the state of the art technology in order to succeed in the future.

Again, when you are a family owned business you have the luxury of making your own decisions and therefore you plan in a different way. At Mondavi we are building and planning for five to ten years from today. Tomorrow's products are a result of decisions made five years ago. We are always looking for and buying land, experimenting and researching. It may take the next five to ten years to realize anything significant but with each finding we will improve. This plan is what has gotten us to the position we now hold in the world today. Again it is the small changes that will make the larger differences.

**PH: What kind of difference?**

**RM:** If you have or when you taste our wines you will find them to have a little more depth. Many people will understand that this wine has charm and au-



thority. If the tannins are too heavy it will be similar to an over perfumed woman. Of course there are individuals who find this acceptable, I do not. Again personal choice.

**PH:** *Most people who do not know much about Robert Mondavi, other than his success in the wine business, think that life has been easy for you. I am sure you have had a number of low points in your life, what is your lowest?*

**RM:** Every time I say this word I still get upset, "warehousing." It was when we were at Krug. At that time we were borrowing very heavily. One day I went to the bank because we had twenty thousand gallons of orders to ship. We did not, however, have the money to immediately pay the bank. I was honest with my banker and they released the wine. I never got a paper to confirm his decision. A few weeks later we were called to the bank headquarters. There they asked me if I took the wine without paying for it. I told them that I had talked to the banker and that he approved it. Again they asked me if it was true that I took the wine without paying for it. He asked me the same question three or four times. Eventually I answered yes. I was then told that we would be warehoused, the house controlled the wine. This was a major blow to my father and brother. To me it was more. I disappointed my family and put them in an embarrassing position. I felt horrible. I remember going into the bathroom and crying. At that moment I made a pledge to myself that I would get us out of this predicament as soon as possible. We did get out of it in one and one-half years. It was also a low point because of the potential impact it would have in our position in the valley. Big companies like Seagrams etc. were moving to the valley. This would mean tremendous competition. We had the edge by having more foresight into the industry, but being warehoused mitigated our edge.

**PH:** *What about a high point?*

**RM:** The recognition by our peers of the quality in our product. We were constantly winning awards at state fairs, without having had any traditional schooling.

**PH:** *Do you have any regrets in life?*

**RM:** No, but it would be great to live my life over with the knowledge I have today. I would have more fun than a barrel of monkeys.

**PH:** *If you were not in the wine business, where or what would Robert Mondavi be today?*

**RM:** Well, I thought I was going to become a businessman or lawyer but I think now that I would choose to be an artist. I would like to paint and be a free spirit. But I am a very happy and fortunate man. I work in a wonderful business and am surrounded by a wonderful family. When I went into the wine business I knew that it would be a good thing for my family. If I developed it properly my business would be something to pass on to future generations.

**PH:** *Have your children remained involved?*

**RM:** When my children were growing up I told them that I would provide them with the best education I could afford and send them to the school of their choice provided they had the grades to get into that school. Once they graduated they were free to go in whatever direction they wanted. But, I always reminded them that the wine business could provide them with a wonderful life. Of course it does not yield the money profits of the new hi tech field, but it can give you a comfortable and rewarding life, if you are successful. I have met some of the most wonderful people from being in this business from all walks of life, food, wine, the arts and now a magazine.

**PH:** *Thank you. So did your children follow your suggestion?*

**RM:** My daughter was set on becoming a teacher and she did. Then she went

to work for Pan American Airlines. My sons then convinced her to come into the business as a sales representative. She wanted to be in California but there was no position open at the time, so we sent her to New York. She did a wonderful job, but she had a rough time. Many a door was slammed in her face. You see at that time California wines were considered to be very inferior. One day she came to me and asked why I put her in such a position. I told her it was because I believed she was the best for that job and she was!!!

**PH:** *So where is she now?*

**RM:** She lives on the east coast with her husband and children heading our public relations. But I do get to see her frequently. She is on the Board of the Winery and the new Center.

**PH:** *Are any of her children interested in the business?*

**RM:** One of her children is showing an interest in the business, which I hope continues to unfold. My son Tim has five children and Michael has two, one of his sons is working here. It has been quite a learning experience for him.

Of course it is my hope that some of the grandchildren will continue in the business, but only if they want to. I hate to be redundant but this is a business that you need to love in order to make it work.

**PH:** *Do you have any closing words for our readers?*

**RM:** I leave with you my thirteen steps of success. Remember you have only one life and you must use every-day of that life to pursue your dreams. You must love what you do. I for sure would do it all over again despite the low points. To me you can't be happier than that in life. And to you and your magazine I wish you the best of luck. Take your dreams and run with them, success is right around the corner. ■

S U B S C R I B E T O

Persian Heritage

CALL: (973) 471-4283