

Homayoun Shajarian & Dastan Ensemble

Performers:

Homayoun Shajarian	Avaz (vocal)
Hossein Behroozinia	Barbat (short-necked lute)
Hamid Motebassem	Tar (long-necked lute)
Said Farajpoori	Kamancheh (spike fiddle)
Pejman Hadadi	Tonbak & Dayereh (percussion)
Behnam Samani	Daf, Dammam & Kuzeh (percussion)

Part 1:

Mayeh-ye Dashti (Modus Dashti)

Composition: Hamid Motebassem

1- *Tasnif-e Asheghaneh*

Poem: Hamid Motebassem

2- *Saz & Avaz, Boe-ye Eshgh*

Improvisation

Poem: Saedi

3- *Tasnif-e Ghizhak-e Koli*

Poem: Shafiei Kadkani

4- *Mastaneh* (Instrumental)

5- *Saz & Avaz, Kamand-e Zolf*

Improvisation

Poem: Hafez

6- *Tasnif-e Zehi Eshgh*

Poem: Rumi

Part 2:

Mayeh-ye Esfahan (Modus Isfahan)

Composition: Said Farajpoori

1- *Eshtiagh* (Instrumental)

2- *Saz & Avaz, Khorshid-e Arezoo*

Work: Homayoun Shajarian

Poem: Fereydoun Moshiri

3- *Tasnif-e Chin-e Zolf*

Poem: Attar Neyshabouri

4- *Saz & Avaz, Eshgh-e Pak*

Work: Homayoun Shajarian

Poem: Fereydoun Moshiri

5- *Tasnif-e Asrar-e Eshgh*

Poem: Hafez

6- *Saz & Avaz, Delshodeh*

Improvisation

Poem: Araghi

7- *Tasnif-e Vatan*

Poem: Siavash Kasraei

Dastan Ensemble founded in 1991 is the most prominent classical Iranian music group of today. The ensemble comprised of five virtuoso instrumentalists, who provide a fresh approach to Persian classical music on Barbat (short-necked lute), Tar (lute), Kamancheh (spike fiddle) and Percussion.

Dastan Ensemble has been presented in countless international cultural centers and important festivals world-wide including:

Fez- Festival (Morocco), Theatre de la Ville (Paris), World Festival of Sacred Music the Americas (Los Angeles), Romaeuropa-Festival (Roma-Parma), The First UK annual Festival (London), Kölner Philharmonie, KIT-Tropentheater Amsterdam, Orange county Philharmonie, Rikonsertene (Oslo) and Alcala de Henares Festival (Spain).

Discography:

The Ensemble has recorded the works of its own composers as well as others including:

Booy-e Norooz (The Scent of New Year) with the vocalist Iraj Bastami

Saaz-e No, Avaz-e No with the vocalist Shahram Nazeri

Safar be Digarsoo (Journey to the Beyond) with the vocalist Shahram Nazeri

Hanaie (Shade of Henna) with the vocalist Sima Bina

Se Navazi-e Dastan (Journey To Persia) instrumental music featuring Pejman Hadadi, Hossein Behroozinia and Hamid Motebassem

Shurideh (Love Struck) with the vocalist Parissa. Winner of the title "Musical Shock" in the music journal Le Monde and the recipient of the 2003 Best Music of the Year Award from the French Ministry of Culture

Gol-e Behesht (Flower of Heaven) with the vocalist Parissa

Loulian with the vocalist Shahram Nazeri

Mah Aroos with the vocalist Sedigh Tarif

Darya-ye Bi Payan (Endless Ocean) with the vocalist Salar Aghili

Homayoun Shajarian is a Persian classical music vocalist, as well as a Tombak and Kamancheh player. He was born (21 May 1975) in Tehran in a music-dedicated family. He is the son of Mohammad Reza Shajarian, who is in turn the grand master vocalist of traditional Persian music. He began studying knowledge of technique and rhythm under supervision of Nasser Farhangfar, master of Tombak, at the age of five. Afterwards, he also continued learning Tombak under Jamshid Mohebbi's supervision. He commenced learning Persian traditional vocal Avaz under father's supervision and gained knowledge of Avaz techniques and voice-producing. Simultaneously, he attended Tehran Conservatory of Music and chose Kamancheh as his professional instrument as well as being tutored by Ardeshir Kamkar. He joined Ava Music Ensemble in 1991. He accompanied father, Hossein Alizadeh and Keyhan Kalhor in concerts of Ava Music Ensemble, playing Tombak. From 1999 on, he started accompanying father also on vocals. He has performed in several famous festivals including Fez Festival (Morocco), Kölner Philharmonie, New York World Music Institute and Paris Theatre.

Discography:

Nasim-e Wasl

Na-shakiba

Showgh-e doest

Naghsh-e khyal

Dastgah poetry in music

“Of the hundred melodies he played, he chose thirty sweet-sounding songs”, reported the twelfth century epic poet Nizami, describing the performance of thirty songs (alhan) and a hundred melodies (dastan-ha) at the pre-Islamic Sassanid court.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, musicologists wrote magnificent, systematic treatises on music that remain undisputedly authoritative to this day. For the most part, the music has been passed down through the generations from master to pupil (sineh be-sineh: “from breast to breast”). In the nineteenth century, a form of traditional art music (radif) developed, whose range of melodies and improvisations have been transcribed and notated and in which a certain cross-fertilisation with European culture is evident.

The radif is based on various modes (dastgah-ha). Dastgah – the tonal anchor of traditional art music – consists of dast (hand) and gah (place, time). In other words, depending on the sequence – how or where the hand is placed or the time selected for the music – contemplative or emotional responses are triggered. We discover the realms of the dastgah by wandering through its many picturesque places (gushe-ha). The gushe-ha

themselves are based on just three or four notes, and develop from these only to return to the starting point (forud). A dastgah cannot be performed without gathering and coordinating these elements.

Improvisation is a central tenet of Iranian music. The performance of a dastgah, which is improvised ad hoc, is shaped by the mood of the musician and the sensitivity of the listeners: it is a reciprocal dialogue between the meditation of sound and the implosion of silence.

“How many more words will you waste, O Sa’di, on the science of music? The secrets of the heart are revealed only to the ear of the soul” (Sa’di, 13th century).

There are seven primary modes or dastgah-ha, from which five secondary modes (avaz-ha) are derived:

dastgah-e Shur

awaz-e Abu’ata

awaz-e Bayat-e Tork

awaz-e Dashti

awaz-e Afshari

dastgah-e Homyun

awaz-e Esfahan

dastgah-e Segah

dastgah-e Chahargah

dastgah-e Nawa

dastgah-e Mahur

dastgah-e Rastpandjgah.

Of course, various dastgah-ha can be mixed together. This is known as morakkab-chani and morakkab-navazi.

Each dastgah has a specific tonality that makes the mind sing and the feelings dance: Mahur conveys serene boldness, Chahargah subdued joy. Shur – a broadly sweeping dastgah – is majestic and earnest, while Dashti and Afshari represent deep sadness. Segah leads into a mystic dimension and Homyun induces sweet melancholy.

A dastgah is made up of five parts which can be varied in any way: pishdaramad (introduction), chaharmezrab (rhythmic), avaz (singing), tasnif (song), reng (dance). The most important traditional Iranian instruments are the tar, the setar (long-necked lutes), the barbat (short-necked lute), the kamancheh (upright spike fiddle), the nai (flute), the santur (dulcimer), the tonbak (drum) and the daf (frame drum).

Iranian music includes court music, rural melodies (motreb), mystic songs of the Dervish order (khaneqah), and especially folk music and religious music: passion plays (ta’ziyeh), tales of the suffering of martyrs (rouzeh and nouheh). All these forms are inter-related, influence each other and nurture each other and are closely related to the dastgah. It is this many-faceted interaction that makes Iranian music so rich: “No player plays this melody, no nightingale can sing it” (Sa’di).

Persian poetry is a shared cultural heritage that is also an expression of the experiences of real life. The Divan of Hafis is in every home. It is a book of wisdom that people consult, love and recite. Hafis is “the tongue of the concealed”. His Divan can be opened at any page to reveal mysteries, advice and prophecies.

At gatherings, people often indulge in a poetry game (mosha'ereh) involving two sides. One begins by reciting a verse. The final letter of that verse has to be taken as the first letter of the opponent's verse.

Poetry pervades all walks of social life. Goethe wrote "We shall say little of these poems, for they are to be enjoyed, and we are meant to be in harmony with them".

The expression of mystic love in Persian poetry is so charged with eroticism that it is difficult to distinguish between earthly and divine love. This ambiguity can even extend to subject and object. Candle and moth, rose and nightingale, wine and inebriation – to name but a few – are among the literary idioms that are the heart of the language. The poetry is carried by this range of associations. Decoding it reveals archetypal images.

In the Middle East, music and poetry are inextricably linked. Both contain melody, rhythm, tonality and silence. Poetry is nurtured by rhythm and by the magical sound of music, while music is nurtured by the succinctness and tangible structure of poetry. We may speak here of the music of words and the grammar of music – a vibrant aesthetic symbiosis. Inseparably interwoven, they are in dialogue with one another.

Shams Anwari