

The Poetics of Persian Music:
The Intimate Correlation between Prosody and Persian Classical Music

by

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Abstract

Throughout most historical narratives and descriptions of Persian arts, poetry has had a profound influence on the development and preservation of Persian classical music, in particularly after the emergence of Islam in Iran. A Persian poetic structure consists of two parts: the form (its fundamental rhythmic structure, or prosody) and the content (the message that a poem conveys to its audience, or theme). As the practice of using rhythmic cycles—once prominent in Iran—deteriorated, prosody took its place as the source of rhythmic organization and inspiration. The recognition and reliance on poetry was especially evident amongst Iranian musicians, who by the time of Islamic rule had been banished from the public sphere due to the sinful socio-religious outlook placed on music. As the musicians' dependency on prosody steadily grew stronger, poetry became the preserver, and, to a great extent, the foundation of Persian music's oral tradition. While poetry has always been a significant part of any performance of Iranian classical music, little attention has been paid to the vitality of Persian/Arabic prosody as its main rhythmic basis. Poetic prosody is the rhythmic foundation of the Persian repertoire the *radif*, and as such it makes possible the development, memorization, expansion, and creation of the complex rhythmic and melodic compositions during the art of improvisation.

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Dedication

To my dad who taught me my first poem

Introduction

Throughout the history of Iranian arts, poetry has had an intimate relationship with developing and preserving Persian classical music, especially after the emergence of Islam in Iran. For poets in Iran (as elsewhere), the challenge has been to transform words into subject matter that is both exquisite in *form* and substantive in *content*. This transformation of words into verse that captivates both form and content requires a vision and a unique perspective by the poet to create rich themes, one that necessitates years of formal mastery. With music and poetry sharing “elements of sound appealing to the ear in the order of time” (Raymond 1904:2), Persian classical music has gravitated towards poetry rather than a preference for prose (Shaffie-Katkanie 2007:35).

The content of Iranian poetry has traditionally employed complex and detailed techniques to create works intertwined with mystical narratives, Islamic symbolism, and a fostering of social virtues. The underlying theme here has been the exploration of divine values, one that emphasizes devoutness, social order, and awareness of the supernatural. At the same time, ideas such as the desire for the beloved and the joy of intoxication have given the poetry a unique Persian dimension to represent human nature, human desire, and the search for meaning. This Persian perspective, one that parts from religious and supernatural motives, questions the existence and purpose of humanity. As a result, Iranian poetry stems from contradicting artistic perspectives amalgamated to form a more powerful artistic experience. This Persian/Islamic fusion is evident in the works of many eminent Iranian poets. For instance, the medieval poet Omar Khayyam used Islamic mystical themes and the intoxication caused by the beloved to

create celebrated poetry, illuminating his own Islamic spiritual conformity while at the same time questioning the very existence of humanity, his devotion and his basis for existence.¹

An important aspect of Persian poetry employed in music is its content. Content offers meaning to the poem that appeals to the ear; it is the magnitude of the ideal represented by the poet through a fluent and orderly fashion construction of words. For the critical audience of Persian classical music, the content of poetry is powerful and provocative. It addresses relevant—but often taboo—themes of religion, politics, and social issues. This spiritual and humanistic aspiration of Persian poetry (content), combined with the mastery of prosody (form) is elegantly explored by master musicians—often the vocalist(s)—to create effective forms of musical expression. It is important to realize that “both music and poetry juxtapose elements that are referential, mimetic, or conceptual with purely formal patterns that are largely independent of external meanings” (Kramer 1984:5). In Iranian art, poetry and music are to be appreciated collectively; music is admired for its natural rhyme as well as flow and poetry for its harmonious tune. As the musicologist Lawrence Kramer notes:

In both arts, the alliance of connotative and combinatory features become significant in two ways: intratextually, through allusion, generic affiliation, and the play of stylistic codes; and intertextually, through rhythmic design and the play of likeness and difference among particulars. Even by omission these elements are always interlaced with each other, and what I call their “play”—their suppleness, inventiveness, balletic energy—joins the sensuous and emotional satisfactions of music and poetry to the play of critical intelligence. (1984:5)

The “allusion and generic affliction” of Persian poetry and music have created “stylistic codes” that have been cherished for generations, effectively conveying poetic themes through the sophisticated mastery of music. These compositions are traditionally viewed as transcendent and

¹ Omar Khayyam (1048-1131 AD), was an Iranian poet, and philosopher. He is celebrated for his sophisticated literature in various fields, including music.

emotionally meaningful to audiences over many generations. The interrelated content of Persian poetry to music has provided musical performers, especially in the vocal styles, a unique aesthetic quality requiring a high level of vocal technique, control of dynamics, and keen sense of narration that transfers elegantly over to the instrumental style. The content of poems during a musical performance has been central to this process, often driving audiences and musicians into states of trance-like behavior.

No matter what the content of the poem symbolizes and represents, however, without the underlying mastery of proper forms, Persian poetry is ineffectual. Metaphorically, the rhythmic flow of a poem (form) must continually float, much like a stream that naturally runs down-hill. In other words, poetry needs to be musical; it needs to rhyme and be organized in a harmonious fashion so that it is both pleasant to the ear and flows naturally within determined forms. The importance of this stream-like but rule-based form is due to the dependence that music and poetry exert on the immediate, perceptible organization of the flow of time (Kramer 1984).

The content of the poems often engages the audience, becoming a significant part of a performance that delightfully combines Persian music with poetic subject matter. Significantly, however, the form employed in a poem is a large determinant of the way a musical performance unfolds. This vital and often neglected role of poetry reveals, above all, the rhythmic structure and the flow of Persian music. This thesis argues that Persian poetic prosody (the form each poem presents) has supported Persian classical music with an advanced level of versatility and complexity in its melodic development, rhythmic structure, and improvisation. The form of this prosody provides the music a dimension that is often overlooked; it is, simply stated, the underlying rhythmic organization.

Consequently, prosody becomes the driving force that dictates the improvisation or composition of melodic motives. Persian music for the unfamiliar audience is often perceived as rhythmically unstructured; this assumption is incorrect, as poetic prosody constantly provides the fundamental rhythmic pulse throughout any given performance. This interweaving presence of poetic form in music also advances the memorization of the *radif* (Persian repertoire), which is transmitted orally. Therefore, pedagogical training for the student is dependent on the poetic forms. To ignore the importance of the form is to neglect how the fundamental rhythm of Persian music is structured, as well as what creates the order of melodic organization, contributes to the ability to memorize a melody, and, most importantly, understand improvisation which is the basis of any Persian musical performance.

This thesis consists of five chapters, each chapter expanding on the importance and the interrelationship of prosody to Persian classical music. Chapter One consists of a historical survey of the rhythmic content of Persian music. It analyzes various rhythmic patterns from the pre-Islamic era through to contemporary practice. By reviewing a range of rhythmic cycles—especially prominent throughout the mediaeval era—I argue that Persian music gradually abandoned cyclic practices in favor of unmeasured rhythms, or simple duple and triple meter. More importantly, the complexity of rhythmic cycles was steadily replaced by the sophisticated poetic forms in music. This transformation from complex cyclic thinking illustrates the gradual eminence of prosody as the driving force behind rhythmic structure. I argue that this transformation was largely a result of the antagonistic—often stemming from religious attitudes and viewpoints—standpoint towards music that led the way for prosody to become a vital medium for music to be orally transmitted. Musical elements thus began to be passed on through the reliable and “pious” medium of poetic prosody. Prosody steadily became a significant tool

for music memorization and developing repertoires, as well as establishing its patterns as the fundamental blueprint for improvisation.

Chapter One asserts that while Islamic clergies had a relatively easy time eradicating instrumental music from the public arena, its complex notions such as cyclic practices of rhythm, poetry thrived anyway and became the sole means for oral transformation. Poetry became an instrument for facilitating the fortitude of music. It was a vehicle used by the masses, whether it was a recitation of a poem in a bazaar or private gatherings of artists to preserve and enjoy a rich tradition. Moreover, in this chapter I will discuss two Iranian medieval scholars who began to write in their treatises about the special bond that was formed between music and poetry. It is their view that it is practically impossible to recite a particular poem in more than one proper form that is tuneful to the ear, due to its underlying arrangement of prosody. In other words, since Persian art music relies almost exclusively on its vocal component, it became vital for music to follow the same rhythmic nuances depicted through prosody.

The second chapter explores the chronological advancement of poetic styles and their schools of philosophy in Iran. As the practices of rhythmic cycles declined, poets and their poetic styles increasingly became known by the Iranian public. The poet and professor of Persian literature at University of Tehran, Mohammed Reza Shaffie-Katkanie, states that “poets started to recite their own poems with a pleasant voice Other than the message the poems represented, the poetic prosody needed to be articulated in orderly fashion...this often involves some form of a chant or a hum for the poems to be the most effective” (2007:36). According to Shaffie-Katkanie, many poets had at their disposal individuals who recited their poems, known as *ravie*. A *ravie* represented a poet and the poems musically. Each *ravie* needed to be musically gifted, often requiring a suitable vocal range and comfort at playing a musical

instrument. The connection of the poets to a *ravie* illustrates the close historical bond between poetry and music. At times it might be inconclusive to argue when poetry inspired musical compositions, but one can conclude with confidence that the form or the rigid structure of prosody has been the central driving force in music for at least for the past three centuries.

Chapter Three examines in detail the structure and organization of Persian prosody. Here I analyze the science of prosody and the poetic meter that transforms words into harmonious rhythmic couplets. There are two general divisions into units that entail vowel and consonant or syllabic units, whereby each is given a certain temporal value. These units of time create long and short constituents or pulses. The longer pulsations are recognized as the main rhythmic units, or *ozan asalie ya bahor*. The shorter units of time are referred to as the minor rhythmic units, or *ozan farie ya manshat bahor*. Each poem consists of both major and minor units, integrated depending on the prescribed poetic structure. In fact, the possible number of variations of long and short rhythmic units exceeds well over one hundred and sixty in length. While the likelihood to break from a particular poetic form (prosody) is uncommon during certain sections of a music performance, the abundance of poetic meters and the format by which a Persian musical suite is organized allows for breaks in which the musician can explore different forms of prosody. This can be referred to as a form of rhythmic/prosody modulation. The possible maneuvering through the existing models of poetic prosody creates vast variations and complexity in Persian music, which benefits the musicians during improvisation.

The fourth chapter investigates the construction of prosody in contemporary Persian classical music. After establishing the importance of prosody as the basis for rhythmic drive and variation in Persian music, it is vital to explore practical examples used by musicians. This chapter first examines the most important component of Persian music, the *radif*. Knowledge of

the *radif* is fundamental to gaining musical proficiency and is the key to improvisation. This discussion analyzes three different *radif-ha* (Pl. *radif*), all in *dastgah homayon*: the vocal *radif-ha* of Masters Mahmood Karimie and Abdullah Davami, and the instrumental *radif* of Master Mirza Abdullah. *Dastgah* (pl. *dastgaha*) consist of smaller parts known as *gusheh*, adhering to modal or melodic principles that are distinct and defined by a set of melodic contours (*mayeh*). By exploring *dastgah homayon*, I will trace particular patterns of prosody that are the fundamental bases of rhythmic value in Iranian music, and conclude that these poetic forms are the underpinning component of rhythmic constructions in any given *dastgah*. In addition, I will examine a performance of a master percussionist, the late Hussein Tehranie, to further show that instrumental improvisation is also dependent on the rigid patterns that the poetic prosody exhibits. This chapter concludes by discussing my own experience as a music student—a short ethnography of my own musical journey—and later as a performer. By writing a short ethnography I hope to reveal the reliance and the importance placed on prosody in both the pedagogical training, as well as the complex process, of improvisation.

In Chapter Five I discuss the marriage of oral music—including that of prosody—and Persian classical music to that of the modern approach over the past century. This chapter is divided into three sections: traditional, modern, and contemporary. Even though various factors have contributed significantly to the evolution of the oral tradition in Persian classical music, the modern emergence of specific spatial entities and their configurations in Iranian society have had a vital impact on reshaping the musical practice. This reshaping of tradition has created a hybrid tradition of old and new. This chapter examines the traditional, as well as the novel, systematic models correlating the oral tradition (including poetry) to music in pedagogical training, performances, private functions, and conservatories. This chapter examines the pedagogical

methods employed during each time period, and how spatial configurations play an important role in the memorization and reliance on the tradition of poetic prosody to transmit the *radif* orally.

The Importance of Poetic Form to Music

Over the past fifteen years I have gradually learned the complex tradition of the *radif* from various master musicians in Iran. Even though at the present time there are written scores of the *radif* that are widely available, the common consensus amongst master musicians is to memorize these rich repertoires orally. This elaborated form of oral pedagogy consists of years of practice (often extending well beyond ten years) with regular revisits to each *dastgah*. The first time I was about to learn a small part of a *dastgah* from Master Lotfi I vividly recall him saying, “in order to learn the melody and build [improvise] on it, you need to remember the poetry that complements the music” (1997: personal communication). Back then I did not recognize how valuable the implementation of prosody for pedagogical training was; little did I know that it is also the key component of the language of improvisation.

This lack of acquaintance with prosody is evident even in Iran; I have noticed that many of the pupils of master musicians—even the advanced students—exhibit little knowledge in understanding and recognizing this intimate relationship. There are different reasons for disregarding the role of prosody as the fundamental rhythmic drive behind Persian music. First, it is important to admit that not every professional musician knows this complicated art and its science comprehensively. This is the reason why only a handful of master musicians are famous for their command of improvisation in the present day. It is also important to realize that with

the influences of modernization, including the introduction of Western musical elements of music into contemporary Iran, less attention has been given to the importance of prosody as the vehicle for the memorization and improvisation of music. There are currently various forms of transmission to assist students; many favor recordings to learn and convey the *radif* over traditional oral training. However, I believe the most important aspect is the lack of scholarship that highlights the connection between poetry and music. This has created inadequate knowledge for Persian music and prosody amongst its audiences, many students, and even some professional musicians, whose limited access to master musicians with such knowledge has hindered their understanding of this relationship.

This lack of scholarship relating the science and patterns of prosody to music is evident in the ethnomusicological scene in Iran. For instance, after a comprehensive search at the music library in the University of Tehran last summer, I was only able to find two books by Mohammed Reza Shaffie-Katkanie. Subsequent to discussing the lack of information with various university professors and master musicians, they unanimously directed me to medieval treatises to seek the connection between the two arts. This paper does highlight the work of two medieval scholars, but they are difficult to understand and have no practical examples for the contemporary practice of Persian music. Persian music and the art of poetry have changed over time; even though the works of the medieval scholars are valuable, their relevance to contemporary practice of the *radif* remains insufficient. What became apparent after my search in various libraries is the considerable amount of work scholars have produced on prosody from the field of literature. In tandem with medieval philosophers and poets who have discussed the science of prosody in detail, this field has addressed contemporary scholarship that has explored this complex art. Moreover, there are many classes on the structure of prosody at the University

of Tehran in the literature department, while the music students have remained unfamiliar with this subject matter through their years of vocal and instrumental study.

The connection between prosody and Persian art music—the art form with which I began my professional journey in music—is admittedly complicated. I hope, nevertheless, that this thesis is a beginning that can lead to a better understating of what prosody is, how it functions as the underlying rhythmic structure of Persian music, how it assists in the transmission of the oral *radif*, and the way it is utilized during an improvisation.

Chapter One: A Historical Survey of Rhythmic Schemes in Iranian Music

The objective of this first chapter is to highlight isolated fragments of evidence found in Iranian musical sources which illustrate that much like Iran's neighbors—who are better known for their rhythmic complexity—Persian musicians also enjoyed variations and complex rhythmic practices at one time in history. However (and especially) from the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722) on, urban and folk musical styles (to a lesser degree) radically changed in Iran. The most noticeable and profound alterations can be witnessed in the rhythmic characteristics of Persian music. Even though no actual composition has survived, a simple comparison can be made between the complex rhythmic thinking of scholars before the Safavid era and that of much simpler practice, often in duple or triple meters, embedded in Persian musical styles over the past three hundred years. Although the meter appears to become simpler when compared to earlier cyclic rhythmic complexity, this chapter argues that Persian art music and especially its rhythmic characteristics steadily shifted from a cyclic notion to a complex set of roles governed by the presence of poetic/prosodic form. Most scholars believe this shift was gradual; the transformation is historically best evident from the Safavid era onwards.

Two prominent Persian musicians, Darioush Tali'e and Mohammed Reza Lotfi, have differing views on this issue. Darioush Tali'e believes the Safavid Dynasty and their ultra-conservative religious viewpoints played a major role in distorting the ancient Persian rhythmic cycles. This conservative perception was due to the socio-religious doctrine of sinfulness and immorality towards music which was evident at this time; as the result, poetry started to gather momentum and became the only connection to music. On the other hand, while Mohammad Reza Lotfi agrees with the pivotal role the Safavid Dynasty played, he does not consider this dynasty as the sole reason for the discontinuity of the rhythmic tradition in Iran. Lotfi's view is

that numerous factors have been involved over the span of seven hundred years, calling it a gradual and slow process (an opinion that I share). Master Lotfi's notion is more acceptable for various reasons, including the prominence of many renowned poets throughout Iranian history which will be discussed in Chapter Two. Poets within this rich tradition either created their own schools of thought and aesthetics or followed more prominent schools of poetic thinking. It is safe to assume that poetry slowly became *the* revered art form in Iran, influencing other disciplines along the way. Therefore, poetry in general must have had a great impact regardless of the socio-religious conditions amongst the public. With this in mind, I intend to outline the main medieval Persian rhythmic characteristics and to point to the gradual rise of poetic forms or prosody in Persian music, highlighting the Safavid Dynasty as a pivotal point of transformation.

Pre-Islam

There is little evidence of musical activities in the pre-Islamic era, with almost no documentation on the rhythmic features of the great Persian empires. What is known to scholars is that ancient Persian rhythmic characteristics are assumed to have developed from the music of urban and courtly traditions (Lotfi 1997:21). The first substantial historical evidence of rhythm is connected to the Sassanian Dynasty (224–651 CE).² The few extant rhythmic features are known to have existed in military marches as well as sporting events; the latter might have been included ritual, much like the modern gymnasium practice known as *zur-khane* (House of

² Emperor Kherson II (ruled 591–628) was a patron to many musicians; the more famous musicians included Nakisa, Sarkash and Barbad.

Strength)³ where exercise is accompanied by a drummer (Lotfi 1997:23). The most well known evidence of rhythmic practices by pre-Islamic musicians is evident in the elaborated announcement—by playing loud drums throughout the villages and communities—of the Persian New Year, *nouroz*⁴ (Lotfi 1997:23). By striking the drum, the New Year was declared to a community or a village, and the celebrations would then begin.

Another form of musical organization that seemed to have been followed during the pre-Islamic era is of Zoroastrian influence. The sacred text known as Avesta is written in the Avestan scripture and follows a poetic pattern consisting of divisions which incorporate long and short patterns (Shaffie-Katkanie 2007). Shaffie-Katkanie believes it is highly possible these rhythmic patterns, almost in verse-like structures, were used during musical ceremonies of the court or religious events (Shaffie-Katkanie 2007).

The Establishment of Islam in Iran

The Arab conquest of the Persian Empire began in 642 and ultimately resulted in the incorporation of the Iranian nation within the greater Islamic Empire.⁵ Almost all musical evidence known to scholars is found in treatises, the great majority of it written in the language of the court, Arabic. This is also an important time, since the Arabic world introduced the Persians to various rules and regulations of prosody and poetic meter (Shaffie-Katkanie 2007). It

³ *Zur-Khane* is an important source for looking back at rhythmic values of Iranian music, dating well back to the pre-Islamic Iran.

⁴ *Nouroz* is the traditional Iranian New Year holiday celebrated in Iran and some surrounding regions.

⁵ Due to the gradual demise of the second Caliphate, Abbasid Dynasty (750AD–1258AD), their relocation of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad, Iranian political and cultural influences began to show some dominance in the Arab world.

is believed that many of the poetic elements present today in Iranian music have been amalgamated and given a more rigid structure by its Arabic counterpart. This notion will be discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Three, but one could point to the beginning of Islam as the start of a strong relationship between prosody and music.

One of the first illustrations of rhythmic construct in Persian music is found in the writings of the philosopher and musician al-Kindi (801AD–c866AD). Al-Kindi was the first theorist to discuss rhythm; in particular, the “central connection between the various rhythmic cycles known as *iqa’at*” (Wright 1966:29). The *iqa’at* is thought to be a systematic classification of rhythm during the late Umayyad⁶ era (680AD-750AD) (Wright 1966:29). The “inclusion of the variations *thaqil* (heavy/slow) and *khafif* (light/fast) within the character of certain cycles allows for the understanding that not only were the cycles distinguished by groups like the melodic modes,” but also that the identity of the cycle was perhaps significant in stylistic approaches by the musicians (Wright 1966:29). The division of rhythmic values illustrates that each cycle had a specific characteristic and function in Iranian musical practice. This perception hints at the notion that the medieval rhythmic characteristics of Persian music were consciously chosen for a specific function where each cycle might have served as a significant component in the performance, much like its modal counterpart. It is unclear to what extent poetry and its form had any direct effect on the music at this point.

Furthermore, rhythm was associated with a specific melodic cycle, much like Indian musical practice, but this concept is completely lost in the contemporary repertoire of Persian music. The notions of *thaqil* and *khafif* are only known by *tombak* (percussion) players in Iran

⁶ The Umayyad Dynasty was the first Muslim dynasty (680AD-750AD). The Umayyad Dynasty settled in Damascus, which eventually became their capital city.

today and are mostly interpreted as musical dynamics. Yet, Al-Kindi clearly points to fast and slow tempos as the flow or driving force behind the music, in contrast to melodic gestures that are seen as the decisive steering force in Persian music at present.⁷ Thus, from al-Kindi's writings the conclusion could be drawn that Iranian music at one point must have had both elaborate rhythmic cycle formations as well as distinctive tempos, all associated with different principles in performance practice, perhaps totally independent of its melodic formations.

Ibrahim Inn al-Mahdi (779–839) emphasized a more liberated rhythmic conception throughout his writings (Wright 1966:29). Al-Mahdi focused largely on stylistic disparity more than the analysis of different rhythmic cycles (ibid.29). When used in relation to Umayyad musicians or scholars like al-Kindi, the distinction between heavy (*thaqil*) and light (*khafif*) appears to have suggested a greater diversity in its structure and forms, giving more freedom to improvise. It seems that there was freedom of expression as to the extent and the dynamics of each *thaqil* and *khafif* (Sawa 1989:133). Perhaps musicians had some liberty with regards to employing various elaborations and rhythmic ornamentations. Another interpretation amongst scholars is that the “simpler” form of the rhythm was associated with Persian music, by involving greater freedom in interpretations and flexibilities of its rhythmic practices (Sawa 1989:133). Al-Mehdi's view of rhythmic liberty might still be thought of as a legitimate factor in the practice of the *radif*'s rhythmic structure, “characterized by a quantity of amorphous sections that permit improvisation” (Nettl 1974:17). Possibly such an interpretation and approach to the rhythmic thinking of the *radif* might have been a factor, causing various interpenetrations as to the sequencing and “motific” patterning. These motific patterns are seen

⁷ It should be mentioned that over the past ten years, such masters as Bahman Rajabie have tried to give Persian percussion—especially the *tombak*—a more involved character and increased freedoms. Such perceptions as part of performance practice, however, are not common.

today in the *radif*, where they employ a considerable amount of cyclic patterns in their organization. Another possibility is that gradually musicians started to depend on poetic meter and the possibility of improvisation allowed the fusion of different forms of poems bridged by musicians.

From the thirteenth century onwards, further Persian influence was only to be expected. The Abbasid revolt began in Khorasan, and the shift of the capital eastwards from Syria to Iraq symbolized a new cultural as well as political balance in which Persian contributions would become more prominent. Although occasional references are made to a number of musicians singing or playing together (most commonly in unison), the norm for the Abbasid court performances remained the solo singer accompanied by an instrumentalist (Wright 1995:465). Despite signs that emphasized rhythmic considerations, accompaniment on percussion instruments appears to have been the exception rather than the rule (ibid.467).

There are also references, mostly in poetry, to the aerophones *nay* (end-blown flute), although it is not certain whether these terms were identified with the modern presentation of these instruments. Among melodic instruments plucked chordophones generally predominated; among them the *tambour*—a long-necked lute—gained increasing popularity, being identified particularly with certain Persian provinces in north-eastern Iran. It is worth noting that many of the melodic instruments, including the *tambour*, still survive today. Most likely they were not structured differently, and the principle function and performance characteristics would certainly have been similar. Thus, it is tempting to assume that the same melodic instrument in use currently might have had a more complex rhythmic role. Therefore, the question of instrumental adaptability cannot likely be seen as a significant factor in the lack of rhythmic

variations in the contemporary repertoire of Persian music. This notion also allows the question as to why the melodic instruments—and, perhaps, the modal system—did not change as severely as the rhythmic philosophy of the Persians. Can we assume that prosody simply replaced the musician's desire from that of cyclic thinking?

A New Vision

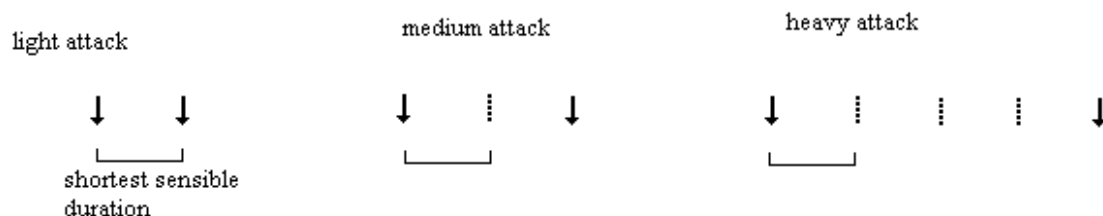
In spite of al-Kindi's wide-ranging and exploratory treatises, it is the works of the great philosophers who succeeded him that contain the most sustained and elaborate rhythmic analyses in Persian music. In fact, nothing in the preceding works of scholars covers the scope and intellectual rigour of the *Kitab al-musiqi al-kabir* (Great Book on Music) of Al-Fārābī' (d 950). Al-Fārābī' dedicates a substantial amount of this book to the theoretical treatment of rhythm. The dedication of Al-Fārābī' and other philosophers to rhythm must signal its importance to the melodic repertoire at the time. Al-Fārābī' in fact wrote many books on music, three of which deal with the subject of rhythm. Even though he did not invent the art of *iqa* (*iqa* are rhythmic modes or rhythmic patterns used in Arabic music, and at one time a known concept in Iran), his work far surpasses the preceding theories in its depth and detail. It is also important to note that Al-Fārābī' was the first scholar to discuss—although only briefly—the connection between the form of a poem and music.

Al-Fārābī's theories on rhythm are some of the most complete, in-depth, and detailed theories on the subject. They are based on his firsthand experience of musical practice, grounded in his expertise on theory, mathematics, and logic. Al-Fārābī' describes rhythmic principles by

the fundamental notion of attacks (*naqara*) and durations that divide them. An attack such as bowing the *kamancheh* or plucking the *sehtar* is considered timeless in itself and marks the beginnings of an envelope of sound.⁸ Duration thus exists between two timeless attacks (see Figure 1.1). In “measured” genres the occurring durations are finite multiples of a basic unit of time known as *aqsar-zaman-mahsus* (shortest perceptible time).⁹ Attacks are therefore categorized by the duration that follows them. Al-Fārābī’ utilized phonology to account for the duration of the quickest detectable time as well as mnemonics for diverse forms of attacks (Sawa 1989:389). This notion by Al-Fārābī’ can be thought of as a starting point of scholarship, which integrates elements of form (and later prosody) in music. It closely resembles the syllabic units used in contemporary discussion of prosody (see Chapter Three).

Light attack is known as *naqara khafifa*, notated by the short syllable *ta*. The light attack is separated from the next attack by the shortest perceptible unit of time (Sawa 1989:389). Medium attacks, known as *naqara mutawassita*, are notated as either *ta* or *tan* and are divided from the next attack by double the shortest audible time. A heavy attack is known as *naqara thaqila*, which is notated as *tan*. This attack is separated from the subsequent attack by four times the shortest perceptible time (Sawa 1989:389).

Figure 1.1 Al-Fārābī’s division of attacks.



⁸ The concept of timeless attacks separated by durations comes from Euclid’s geometrical postulate regarding separation of points by a line, lines by surface, and surfaces by volume. This is also very similar to South Indian concepts of “time marking” (2005 Trichy Sankaran, personal communication).

⁹ This concept is similar to ‘*matra*’ in South Indian music (2005 Trichy Sankaran, personal communication).

Al-Fārābī describes the essential role of *īqa* as one that creates “the movement of attacks separated from each other by equal durations in consecutive and equal time periods” (ibid.389), meaning cycles consisting of a number of successive and comparable attacks can be grouped in consecutive order. This notion or concept of fundamental *īqa* can be thought of as musical meter. Three groupings of fundamental *īqa’at* (musical meters) are classified based on the kind of attack utilized. For example, a *light (khafīf) īqā’* consists of *light* attacks. Al-Fārābī also introduced the concept of a disjunction or separator (*fāsila*) in a fundamental *īqā’*. Each cycle of a fundamental *īqā’* is separated from the subsequent cycle by a time disjunction with “a duration double that which exists between two (fundamental) attacks in the cycle” (Sawa, 1989: 39).

The fundamental forms of *īqā’* are only basic theoretical forms and general formulas; as a result, they are “artless” and dry. Al-Fārābī introduced sixteen variation and embellishment techniques, which he used to arrive at the particular *īqā’āt* (sing. *īqā’*) in practice. These particulars constitute the concept of rhythmic modes (Sawa 1989:46). In short, these techniques apply variations by:

- Adding or subtracting timeless attacks
- Adding or subtracting durations
- Repetition of parts
- Combining cycles
- Succession of cycles
- Tempo changes
- Timbre and dynamic changes

Al-Fārābī’s sixteen ornamental techniques follow a prosodic structure that will be examined in detail in Chapter Three. These ornamental techniques borrowed many elements and

concepts from prosody and Qur'ānic sciences. Al-Fārābī intended these techniques for “synthesis as compositional techniques” as well as “for understanding how performers altered composed pieces during performance” (Sawa 1989: 46). In other words, these processes served as both compositional and improvisational techniques, as well as analysis. I will look at the possibility of applying these techniques for analysis of the current practice of Persian music in Chapter Four.

After Al-Fārābī

Sheikh Safi ad-din Is'haq Ardabili (1252-1334) defined rhythmic cycles in two ways. One was to divide a circle into the same number of segments as there were time units and add symbols indicating those normally sounded (Wright 1995:465). The other was modeled after the standard conventions of poetic meter in prosody, employing such mnemonics as *ta* or *na*, equivalent to one time unit, or *tan* or *nan*, corresponding to two time units (ibid.467). This poetic approach further divided the rhythmic cycle into two, three, or four time units, where *ta* and *tan* always started at the first down-beat, *na* was associated with the middle section of the count, and *nan* the final section (Lotfi 1997:321). The utilization of prosody by Ardabili is thought to be closely related to modern practices. His use of rhythmic divisions is similar to the long and short syllables and vowels that will be discussed in Chapter Three. In fact, before notation became common for *tombak* compositions, it was customary to practice and teach percussion instruments in such a manner. About fifty years ago, Masters like Hussein Tehranie used the same procedure in his pedagogical training for pupils. For Ardabili and his contemporaries, representations like “[*tanan tanan tananan tan tananan*] suggests a division of

[3 + 3 + 4 + 2 + 4]”, where the beginning “down-beat time unit is always emphasized and sounded, the final beat is almost always unheard, and the beats in between are generally left up to the discretion of the performer” (Wright 1995:465).

Interestingly, even today in the contemporary training of the *radif* the same method is used. The famous *gusheh* of *kershmeh* is always memorized as [*tanan tanan ta na nan nan*], modeled after the pattern *hazar mar-tabah bah bah* (Persian poetic literature has various classification for systematically naming the poems) as a guide, regardless of what *dastgah* the *gusheh kershmeh* is to be played in. While the exact correlation of Ardabili’s system between prosody and rhythm may be impossible to be proven with certainty, it is noteworthy to highlight that the same methodological approach in expressing rhythmic quantities has been passed down through the centuries. This notion by Ardabili does illuminate that prosody steadily had gained a closer connection to pedagogical practices and improvisation.

Safi al-Din Ardabili might have been one of the first scholars to discuss and elaborate on rhythmic cycles and their variations in great detail. His creative use of syllables as a tool for notation brings some clarification as to the methods in which percussion would have been utilized and emphasized, and also how contrasts in timbre would have been employed. The question arises, then: how and where would they be implemented, and how independent were these rhythmic underpinnings in relation to practice and the melodic counterparts? Although many such questions exist, the conclusion can be made (with some confidence) that a strong rhythmic tradition existed in Iran regardless of its exact nature. It is also interesting to note that some of the names of the cycles, such as *ramal*, are used in contemporary *radif* of Persian music. The contemporary *gusheh* of *ramal* might very well contain traces of its former rhythmic cycle,

or perhaps the name *ramal* (in Farsi geomancy) has a broader significance within the musical tradition.

Many of the melodic modes such as *bayat-i Isfahan*, *zabol*, or *bayat-i shirz* are named after cities and regions, but there is no proof that they are specific to the area. The great majority of these modes were known by musicians throughout different provinces in Iran. However, there seems to be regional presences when it comes to rhythmic cycles. Safi al-Din acknowledged clearly that the “Arabs made use of all Persian cycles (with the exception of *fakhiti*), while the Iranians preferred *thaqil al-ramal* and also *fakhiti*, though much less than the Arabs” (Wright 1995:465). Yet such regional dissimilarity almost certainly developed into a lesser known practice: a cycle like *darb al-fath*, created by ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Maraghi in Tabriz (d.1434), was known both by Al-Ladhiqi and his contemporaries in different regions of Iran (ibid.465).

After al-Farabi, other theorists and musicians wrote on *iqā* including *Ibn Sina* (d. 1037), *Ibn Zayā* (d. 1048), *Ikhwan al-Safa* (eleventh-century), *Safi al-Din al Urmawi* (d. 1294), and *Abd al-Qader al-Maraghi* (d. 1434). In time, some changes occurred in the name of modes and new modes were created, but mostly Al-Fārābī’s notation system was used. None of these theorists, however, came anywhere close to Al-Fārābī’s achievements, and that is why I use his rhythmic analogy in Chapters Three and Four.

Safavid Dynasty and Shi’ism

Since the beginning of the sixteenth century and the reunification of Iran under a highly “nationalistic” Safavid dynasty (1501–1722), Persia gradually became more segregated from the

rest of the Middle East where the Turkish Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) rule was dominant. The Safavid dynasty established Shi'a¹⁰ faith as the state religion, thereby creating an even greater separation from other Muslim states. What is of more significance is that the Shi'a religious leaders generally maintained a hostile attitude towards music: the clerics viewed music with suspicion, as its effect on the listener cannot be reasoned or theologically explained (Shafi'i Kadkani 2000:87). Thus, due to a religious society, music was generally seen as an accompaniment to frivolity and merriment, which could lead to impiety. The consequence of such proscriptive attitudes towards music was a gradual decline of musical scholarship from the Safavid era on (ibid.88). Within urban settings music was drastically reduced, gradually becoming a private, quasi-clandestine art where solo performance, improvisation, and a strong reliance on poetry became dominant features.

Perhaps the term *motreb* (a person who brings joy)¹¹ started to get its negative social connotation from this point forward; previous to the Safavid dynasty, many of Iran's great poets like *Hafez*¹² spoke highly of the role of *motreb*, even referring to them as the ones with the divine spirit (Lotfi 1997:51). Yet there is a strong shift in the usage and presentation of such characters during the Safavid era, which still has lingering effects on the contemporary viewpoint of Iranians. Interestingly, the word *motreb* was mostly associated with percussionists, and even until the late twentieth century *tombak* players were not fairly represented and seen as degraded in the eyes of "modern" society. From this point on, contemporary scholars of Persian music agree that the main sources of rhythmic continuation in Iran are primarily carried out in the folk tradition, religious activity such as *taziyah* rituals (religious drama), social gatherings like *zur-*

¹⁰ Shi'a Islam, is the largest minority denomination based on the Islamic faith after Sunni Islam.

¹¹ *Motreb* is literally translated as "musician" (the one with *tarab*, joy), but, nowadays mostly a "popular" musician, a negative perception since the nineteenth century and almost always a reference to *tombak* (percussion) players.

¹² Hafez-e Shirazi (1310-1379), was a Persian mystic and iconic poet.

khanah (House of Strength), and later in the development of the musical repertoire the *radif* (ibid.52).

At first glance, these sources of music tradition seem to have their roots in the tradition of cyclic thinking, but each style relies on and is built upon the lyrical tradition, known as *avaz salarie*. *Avaz salarie* places the poetry and the vocalist as the focal point (Lotfi 1997:387). *Avaz salarie* does refer to the vocal dominance in the practice of Persian music, but it also refers to the reliance on poetry as the driving force, even in solo improvisational performance. As noted, the *radif* is full of poetic prosody. Furthermore, the strong poetic influence also enabled a greater freedom in melodic discovery as well as experimental exploration by the instrumentalist who either had to accompany the vocalist or paved the way for the song to commence. It is also important to mention that with the dominance of prosody in the past century, the instrumental soloist has started to become an unaccompanied practice based on improvisation, one that is separate from the vocal discipline. In fact, Hossian Alizadah, one of the contemporary masters of Iranian music, has been advocating such a movement where an instrumental (both melodic and percussion) field could be created, totally independent of the vocal *radif*, with a heavy reliance on the knowledge of prosody. Therefore, the notion that the instrumental repertoire relies heavily on Persian poetry is evident and advocated by various master musicians.

Before discussing the common practices of the past three hundred years, I must first discuss a significant element that started to become accepted in Persian music during this period. The notion of sorrow and sadness that is now associated with Persian art music is believed to have originated, or at least became part of the performance practice, during the Safavid era (Shafi'i Kadkani 2000:52). The concept of grief and sadness in music has many interpretations,

and it clearly revolves around personal taste rather than a stylistic phenomena. But there is a strong belief among many scholars, including Mohammed Reza Shajarian, that today's classical repertoire which came to existence over the past two hundred years exhibits countless elements of sorrow (Shajarian 1995:31).¹³ In Persian music these elements have favored an emphasis on lyrics, the vocal tradition, and the instrumental repertoire, which has ultimately detracted from the cyclic tradition in existence prior to Safavid. The lament associated with Iranian music might have caused such prominence in both the melodic and vocal traditions. This notion is definitely seen in religious practices, and similarly in the Persian classical style where poetry is so central.

As important as the notion of lament has been in the spread of the poetic rhythmic tradition in Iran, it cannot be the sole reason. Persian poetry and its poets have always utilized the concept of sorrow and sadness in their writings; therefore, this perception must have existed—at least partly—before Safavid control. Also, Iran has had a history of torment and hardship, thus the concept of grief is nothing new in its history, and it has always been shared in public life. For instance, during the Abbasid it was the fragmentation of Iran by the Arabs; by the Safavid era people were concerned about religious totalitarianism, and ever since the nineteenth century the common theme has been nationalism and the longing for freedom. In fact, a survey of Persian poetry manifests many of these struggles, and since poetry and music are literally inseparable, it must have exerted itself to a great degree on medieval Persian music as well. The following section highlights this connection by discussing the most common source of public performance practices experienced by every Iranian today. Since the performance of the *radif* was not largely a public spectacle, it is only mentioned in brief in the following section, and extensive details into this important performance practice is provided in Chapter Four.

¹³ Many scholars including Mohammed Reza Shajarian related the notion of sorrow in Persian music to the socio-political history of Iran, and inseparable from the masses.

Religious Ritual

Considering its context and performance, Islamic music can be divided into several branches since the early Safavid dynasty: *ashura* music, *tazieh* (Passion play), prayer recitation (a form of music for many), and mystical music (*sufi* or *dervish* gatherings) which strongly relies on the recitation of poetry. In this classification system both the *ashura* and passion play serve an important role in the Shia sect, and have been strictly implemented by various rules as well as clerical heads in Iran. The composition of these lamentations is known to vary in different regions of Iran (Yarshater 1962:71). Some of the religious lamentation music originates directly from Iranian classical music of Safavid, and others follow the folk tunes of the region, while in some areas both the traditional music and local songs are used simultaneously (Yarshater 1962:71). The music in the ceremonies follows two categories based on the rhythm—or, more accurately—the pulse of the poem. Normally the lamentation starts with songs which have less speed and are dynamically softer, but once the expression of grief gains speed the tempo increases rapidly; one piece is then always immediately followed by another to maintain the level of energy. The rhythm also follows various forms of duple or triple meter, including 4/4, 2/4, 6/8, and 6/4. Furthermore, at least one percussionist accompanies the singer in order to keep the flow of rhythm and organize the mourners. Some of the percussion instruments common in the *ashura* are *naqareh* (timbale) and kettledrum. *Naqareh* has been known for its association with religious and war rituals, dating back to pre-Islam.

Taziyah literally means mourning, lamentation, and commemoration in a form of a liturgical play. *Taziyah* is known to have become part of the *ashoura* ritual during the Safavid dynasty (Shafi'i Kadkani 2000:89). The music is comprised of two different categories: lyrical

chanting, and singing accompanied by instruments (Shafi'i Kadkani 2000:90). Once again, poetic form and content are central to these plays. These two aspects of music are closely interconnected with the text and various forms of the drama. The lyrics are usually short poems, known to have been written by poets within the past three hundred years. The music is syllabic, and even though it is not thought highly of, the poetic rhythm plays a significant role in these ceremonies. Other religious ceremonies that involve musical gestures are *noheh*, *rozeh khani*, prayer chanting, and Iranian *azan*, all strongly tied to a vocal genre where rhythm plays an underpinning role through the art of prosody.

Social Rituals

There are numerous social activities that involve the use of music in Iran, many which engage tribal or regional customs. *Zur-Khanah* was established as a sporting institution throughout Iran; the name can be translated as “house of power” and it is devoted to both physical and spiritual development. This sporting ritual exercise is organized around the beats of a large wooden drum (*tombak-i zur-khanah*) and the chanting of verses from the *Shah Namah*¹⁴ by the *naghar* (translated literally as “the narrator,” but here referring to a singer). *Shah Namah* is known for its sophisticated and elaborate form of prosody. The music performed by the *naghar* in the *zur-khanah* might be an interesting window into what Persian rhythms might have been like.

¹⁴ *Shah namhe*, commonly known as “The Book of Kings.” It is an immense poetic work, written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi. It is thought that the *shah namhe* was completed before the year 1000 CE.

The tradition of *zur-khanah* historically extends beyond the *Safavid* dynasty where, consequently, many of its rituals practices have been saved under the umbrella of sporting event (Shafi'i Kadkani 2000:96). Shafie Katkanie notes: "during the Safavid, *zur-khaneh* started to become one of the only few public domains where the Persian language and rituals stayed partially intact after Islam" (ibid.94). Persians once again had to be on the defensive and protect their culture, and this had a profound effect on the culture as a whole (music was no exception). The rhythmic patterns found in *zur-khaneh* also suggest much more complex arrangements than that of classical Iranian repertory, using uncommon meters such as 10/8, 12/8, 22/16, and 20/16. This is not to say that common Persian meters such as 2/4, 3/4, 6/8 and 6/16 are not used in *zur-khaneh*, but the question remains: Where do these uncommon rhythmic compositions come from, since they are not found in the folk or classical tradition today? Are they part of a cyclic thinking or a unique use of prosody? Furthermore, these rhythmic values in *zur-khanah* are unlikely to have been adopted from foreign musical influences. If this was the case, the result would have been evident in other musical styles in Iran as well. Also, *zur-khanah* started to be viewed as a symbol of a "nationalistic" struggle for the Persians with this association; it would be safer to assume that the preservation of traditional features would have been at the forefront and the fundamental goal.

"Modern" Iran

The period following the Safavid gave rise to performance practices in which the individuality of modes became subordinated to a system where modes were linked into groups known as *radif*. This systematic approach of twelve *dastgah*, which signify the contemporary

classical tradition, is largely known as a nineteenth-century phenomenon. One of the “most striking characteristics of the Persian vocal style *radif* is its unique rhythmic texture of unmeasured rubato” (Tsuge 1970:206). It must be clearly understood that the *radif* has nothing to do with the *iqā* system, but the two are connected by the common Arab/Persian versification system known as *aruz* (prosody) (ibid.206).

Persian classical poetry is deeply rooted in conventions and rules of prosody, rhymes, and verbal instrumentation. All the elements of poetry are manifested in Persian art music. The medieval Persian poet Hafez said, “writing poetry is like stringing random pearls,” meaning that the particular beats, though they may shed some light on the meaning of the poem, are really not essential or sequentially specific to its essence (Shafi’I Kadkani 2000:21). Persian music certainly illustrates the existence of hidden relationships between the meters of poems as vital and significant as any musical tool employed.

Chapter Two: The Music of Iranian Poetry

For those who master the art of Persian music, its connection to the conventional schemes of prosody has gradually become one of the most relevant aspects of aptitude and comprehension. The ongoing relationship between prosody and music can be tracked as far back as two thousand years before the commencement of Islam in Iran, where numerous sacred scriptures illustrate particular forms of prose and precise rhythmic organizations (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007). In spite of this, the introduction of Arabic culture to Iran steadily created rich hybrid schools of Persian/Arabic poetry. As the case might be with any invading authority, some of the introduced cultural perceptions were considered foreign to Iranians. As a result, the conventions of prosody pioneered by the Arabic scholars became a process-in-the-making in Iran, taking centuries to cultivate and eventually leading to the advancement of unique blends of Persian/Arabic content in poetry.

For musicians in Iran, the ongoing merger between Persian/Arabic poetic meters has been a pragmatic progression, which has created “*definite* [standard] forms of traditional practice throughout centuries of performative schooling, instruction and training” (Lotfi 2003:23). For the Persians, an affluent poetic tradition has always influenced its music; for instance, “the rich sources of complex patterns of verses and rhymes represented in the pre-Islamic sacred texts have served as the rhythmic organizations for musicians such as Barbad and Nakisa”¹⁵ (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007:21). Nevertheless, the implementation—and, at times, the embrace—of Arabic poetic structure has created an eloquent oral tradition in Iran, a tradition that encourages individuals to memorize and correctly recite poetry. This practice of persuading and promoting

¹⁵ During the Sassanid dynasty (224 to 651BC), three famous musicians worked in the king’s court. Although limited musical knowledge is known of them, today in Iran the individuals *Barbad*, *Nakisa*, and *Ramtin*, are known as the forefathers of Persian music.

the oral tradition of poetry can even be seen today, where children from an early age (often elementary schools) are required and encouraged to memorize and recite poetry. As a result of this traditional perspective, the resultant forms of Persian/Arabic rhythmic schemes have become intimately connected to oral tradition, especially that of Iranian musical practices. This chapter examines the historical fluidity of Persian poetry, what I have named the music of poetry. Through the oral medium of musical harmonization, especially singing and collective reciting, a valuable and inspiring imaginative combination of music and poetry has been generated. It is one that has allowed for poetry to be revered and its musical tradition preserved intact. Poetry cannot exist without synchronization or a refrain (or even a melody), while Persian music is implicated in the structure of Persian poetic prosody.

When surveying Persian classical poetry, one notices an intimate resemblance to its Arabic counterpart. It closely follows a mutual rhythmic science of prosody. Iran was under Arab domination—many consider it an occupation—for more than three hundred years, during which time Arab control led to the embracement and, at other times, a forceful incorporation of different Arabic conventions and beliefs. For instance, Arabic became the language of the court and many scholars began to read and write in Arabic, while Farsi was preserved and maintained as the common language for social interactions. Therefore, it is no surprise that distinctive elements of Arabic literature, including vital parts of its poetry, are vibrantly present in its Iranian counterpart. The same situation also holds true for both Persian and Arabic music, where many melodic motives or intervallic practices of the Arabic modal system can be found in the contemporary *radif*. For instance, a variety of *gusheh*, such as *hajaz* in *Avaz Abu-ata*, closely follow the Arabic *magham* (modal) system. In fact, *Avaz Abu-ata*, which is one of the main components of the *radif*, is commonly known as *avaz-i Arab* in Iran (the Arabic *dastagh*).

Why did the (gradual) implementation of Persian/Arabic patterns of verse and stanza become strongly favorable amongst Iranian poets? It is important to realize that one of the first cultural elements in Iran to be affected by the introduction of Islam was the transformation of Farsi into Arabic, especially within intellectual circles (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). Even today, Farsi consists of many Arabic words, lexicons, and syntheses. Arabic became the language of the court, nobles, and scholars for more than three hundred years after the invasion of Iran by the Arabs (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). During the medieval era for many Persians, Arabic was representative of a complex structure—resembling that of the desire by many Middle Eastern scholars of the time to discover and solve complicated philosophical or geometrical problems—and one that was difficult to master. Yet, the Arabic language was also considered by many in the region to characterize a romantic form of interaction—a language that “mesmerized and captivated its audience by its beauty” (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:18). The dual notion of complexity and romantic representation of the Arabic language was implemented to a certain degree in Persian poetry (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:18).

For Iranian scholars, Arabic was seen as a complex precedent for the poets to convey different Islamic philosophies in their creation of verses and stanzas. While the poets incorporated this complexity as part of their new Persian/Arabic artistic revelation, the romantic notion of Arabic was limiting. The average public was only familiar with the vernacular language (Farsi). Thus, the romantic representation of Arabic had to increasingly give way to the utilization of denser and more complicated sets of rhythmic schemes. In Iran, it is unanimously believed that Persians used the complexity (prosody) of the Arabic poetry, while abandoning its meaning and aesthetic ideals (the romantic notion) in search of a “novel Persian voice” (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:12).

In addition, the public preferred poets to use the vernacular language, and at times even the folk dialect. The implementation of the native language created a distinctive and effective idealistic vehicle to convey messages of nationalism or *Persianess* (i.e., the *shahnameh* by the medieval poet Ferdowsi).¹⁶ This intricate desire by the poets to continually craft complex sets of rhythmic schemes (often based on complex Arabic conventions), and also to form a unique Persian voice, resulted in widespread popularity and yearning for the public to understand and memorize Persian poetry ever more rapidly. This aspiration to admire poetry by Persians is unmatched in any other artistic discipline in Iran (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007).

The relation to a particular form of Persian/Arabic prosody has often witnessed poets staying true to a known tradition that was handed down to them for generations. The tradition that was conveyed from a master poet to the disciples consisted of a certain form of rhythmic structure (poetic schools). Yet, the traditional schools were altered by individual poets who were able to create novel arrangements of prosody due to their individual innovativeness and creative ability. As a result, the conventions of poetic forms and the development of prosody have been a historical amalgamation of tradition and originality by Persian and Arabic scholars.

Regardless of this transformation that has altered prosody, rhythmic combinations of Persian/Arabic prose have also served as an important source for oral traditions (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007). Through poetry music was memorized, improvisation was made possible, and—most significantly—Persian musical elements were preserved during centuries of unsympathetic socio-religious doctrine which ordered the disbandment and forbade the enjoyment of its melodies. Moreover, through the practice of music a more constructive and indispensable role

¹⁶ Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Firdawsi (940–1020 AD) was known for his mystical poetry in *shahnameh*, an Iranian epic, that depicts various mystical heroes and Persian triumphs. *Shahnameh* is viewed by Iranians to have been the savior of Farsi during the domination of the Arabic language in Iran, thus Firdawsi is thought of by Iranians as the father of the modern Persian language.

was created for poetry; due to the harmonizing character of music (especially vocal arts) in poetry, poems started to convey a more effective and provocative connotation for its audiences. At the same time, the vocal performance of poetry added a higher degree of sophistication, especially concerning the aesthetic value each poem represented.

Poet Musicians

At the outset, the close connection between music and poetry can be demonstrated by the knowledge and ability which poets possess as moderately accomplished musicians (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). For Persian poets, music was never viewed as a separate component, one fitting as accompaniment to poetry, but rather as an essential part in the transmission and development of poetry. For poets, "prosody constructed a knowledge of rhythm, one that harmonized words into prose, creating a musical flow, that made words into inseparable streams of music and poetry" (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). Therefore, music and poetry have always been inseparable components; both have intensified audience emotions, complemented each other with rhythmic alternatives and adaptations, and enhanced the transmission or the development of one another.

The history of Persian literature is full of brilliant poet-musicians who widely referred to musical instruments and modes. It is known that the "Persian poet Rudaki (858-941 AD) played the *chang* [an ancient harp/lyre] brilliantly and sing his own poetry" (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:23). This was common practice; poets were accepted into the elite society for their uncanny ability to create prose and, at the same time, they *always* presented these poems through a musical medium. Poetry was consistently recited or sung in a musical mode, no matter if the listeners

were eagerly waiting in the bazaars or if the poems were performed graciously inside a king's court yard (Lotfi 1977).

In the first chapter I focused on the rhythmic cycles of medieval Iran; however, one must recognize that gradually the Arab influence on Iranian music became, to a large degree, vocal. The vocal influence on music was taking shape parallel to the impact that Arabic prosody was beginning to exert. The attention to the importance of vocal styles in Persian music placed a strong emphasis on the *proper* recitation and singing of poetry. The dependence on the vocal music, the suitable articulation of the words and phrases in a poem, stressed a heavily reliance on the structure of the prosody. Therefore, it is vital to recognize that in order for the poets to present their poems in public arenas (even private gatherings), the majority of them needed to demonstrate a respectable degree of ability as a vocalist. Those poets incapable of good vocal ability—one could argue that any poet must have been knowledgeable of different musical elements, regardless of the vocal ability, otherwise it would have been impossible to create high-quality poetry—made use of individuals who possessed a suitable vocal range, known as *ravie* (a person who sings or recites) (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). Accordingly, as demonstrated above, the influence of music on poetry and vice versa, both in its historical context and in contemporary practices, has resulted in the amalgamation of the two artistic disciplines, intensifying and enhancing the effectiveness for the audience in many performative stages. Yet, prosody functions as a controlling mechanism in the intensity and moderation of the rhythmic flow of Persian music, on which the melodic motives are developed.

Due to the connection, even dependency, of the rhythmic foundation of Persian music to the poetic schemes, it is easily perceived that prosody plays a vital role in shaping the rhythmic characteristics of music. While both arts originated from the same derivation of artistic

philosophies and rhythmic thinking, many Persian literature scholars agree that prosody plays an important role in the formation of rhythmic variations in the Iranian musical repertory, or the *radif* (Lotfi 1997). Likewise, master musicians agree that without the “incorporation of prosody into Persian music, the music would have been significantly different,” while in all likelihood poetry—albeit most likely less effectively—would have continued on as the result of the same Persian/Arabic philosophy (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007:21).

Medieval Musicians and Prosody

Alongside the examination of complex rhythmic cycles (discussed in Chapter One), music scholars began to converse on and contemplate the steady growth and influence of poetry on Persian music (Lotfi 1997). Medieval scholars, such as Abu Faraj al-Isbahani (284-360AD), recognized “scanning the poetic measures, clear and articulation of the words of the sung poetry” as one of the most crucial musicianship skills of a good vocalist (Sawa 2002:172). The development of *aruz* (prosody) systems dates back to the medieval Arab world during the golden age of Islamic culture in the early Abbasid dynasty. Al-Khalil, b. Ahmad al-Farhudi (718-786AD), is considered the “father of Persian/Arabic prosody.” He is known as the pioneer, a polymath who devised a prosodic system for Persian/Arabic poetry known as *aruz* (also written as *arudh*). Even though Persians slightly modified Arabic prosody throughout history, Al-Khalil’s theory is still prevalent to a very large extent. Despite the absence of some elements in current practice of poetic structure, the importance of the science of *aruz* as a vital part of the study of traditional Persian poetry has not been diminished through the generations in Iran, though new poetic styles have since flourished.

An important question needs to be asked: Why did Persian poetry begin to have such a strong influence on the music of Iran? Although this matter is hardly discussed by any scholars and/or music masters in Iran, I believe the influence that poetry has exerted on music stems from two equally important factors. The first factor—often neglected altogether—is Persian poetry’s deep aesthetic characteristics, which serves as the ultimate platform for all Iranian art to be modeled after. Historically, poetry is revered as the artistic disciple to strive towards; it regularly initiates and sets the standard for other artistic discipline to follow, both in its content (i.e., philosophical view points) and its structure (i.e., prosody). The second factor that was alluded to in the first chapter is the dependency of music on poetry as an agent for memorization and preservation, due to the socio-cultural factors which originated from the negative viewpoints towards music.

Poetry became the only art form that was largely unaffected by the religious doctrine of wickedness that was typically aimed towards the arts, especially music. As a result, poetry became the only “acceptable” vehicle to be transmitted orally amongst the masses. This transmission assisted not only with the philosophical aspects of Iran and Islam, but in the case of music, it preserved many rhythmic structures and melodic motives that were embedded within each poem. Poetry’s aesthetic quality, and also its uncensored form of oral endorsement within the public arena, became the dominant source of musical knowledge. It is also important to recognize that poetry was most likely the only possible and rational option for musicians to compose their works accordingly.

Moreover, one cannot overlook that prosody possesses very complex and integrated rhythmic characteristics, and the implementation of such diverse metrical schemes creates intriguing musical compositions. These complex alternatives allow for rhythmic variations and

easier memorization, which ultimately informs musicians' conceptual frameworks and provides freedom and the ability to improvise. It is also important to recognize that while poetry is embraced within various disciplines of Iranian art, it is best manifested through the vocal performance of music. This amalgamation of artistic disciplines often brings out a profound level of emotion and sentiment in its audience, due to a direct and effective presentation of the poems influenced by the music.

Thematic Forms of Persian Poetry and Its Music

Muhammad Reza Shafi'i Kadkani explains that during the medieval Islamic era various Greek philosophers and their viewpoints on poetry were translated and closely studied by Persian scholars (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). He states that "the medieval scholars had the viewpoint that Farsi closely resembled, and was integrated thoroughly with the Arabic language. Therefore, the Greek perceptions on poetry became ever more vague and formless for it to be implemented in Iranian literature" (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:14). Moreover, Shafi'i Kadkani also elucidates the close relationship between Arabic and Persian verse, stating that Persians held "a great importance and relevance for the Arabic structure of poetry and its complexity of the form" (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:14).

However, according to Shafi'i Kadkani, Persians did favor the Greeks in the "thematic representation of poetic form" (2007:14). The thematic portrayal of each poem becomes significant for its musical makeup and certain forms of performance practice which have been employed historically. Each thematic representation was assigned its own unique rhythmic

scheme to best represent its socio-cultural relevance, as well as to remain performable (for recitation or singing) for its oral transmission.

For Persian scholars, poetry consisted of four distinct styles of thematic representation, each based on a certain form of narration and rhythmic composition. Shafi'i Kadkani has divided the Greek influence on Iranian *shari* (poetry) into four distinct categories: *haamasie* (epic or heroic), *namayashie* (dramatic), *talimie* (educational), and *ghanaie* (lyrical) (Shafi'i Kadkani 14:2007). Each category greatly influenced the public, due to its representation as a Persian nationalistic ideal or as a cultural treasure of mythical tales and moralistic stories, all unique and close to the heart of Iranians. This thematic division or premise for poetry provided a distinctive Persian aesthetic within the arts, which became disengaged from the Arabic understanding of poetry. This exclusive perception of poetry by the Iranians, which I have called Persian/Islamic—alongside the limitations music also took on—allowed poetry to dominate the oral perception of musical knowledge and flourish as its rhythmic scheme. At the same time, all these thematic forms of poetry were best represented to the public through various vocal styles of music, which were chanted, recited, or sung.

Shari-e Haamasie

Shari-e hammasie (epic poetry) often centers on a battlefield or an enormous predicament (often entranced in a nationalistic theme) that by the end presents the triumph of a heroic figure—it is the prevailing of a “true” Persian icon or the homeland’s brave persona. The hope of the nation and their aspiration to fight the enemy (the immoral), intruders, and monster-like mythological characters are all overcome through the actions and strength of the valiant heroic

character in these poems. The encounters of the epic persona and the achievement of this heroic individual often provokes the yearning and nostalgia for the model nation, through the inflaming of the ambitions or the desires to construct an ideal Persian society. *Shari-e hammasie* represents an objective view of the society (a historical aspect), and the subjective viewpoints of the poet are hardly presented (Shafi'i Kadkani 15:2007). The themes of these poems offer an inspiring epic story, which needs a creative and innovative mind to develop the mythical scene and each character. The stories never center on individual desire—on no account are they based on the poet's life or an individual account—and they build on the moral and cultural aspects of the nation.

Shari-e hammasie features a mythical narration that has strong ties to various ethnic communities or nationalistic affairs. It creates a heroic individual that is always victorious; good will always overcome and defeat evil. More importantly, *shari-e hammasie* corresponds to different moralistic and philosophical accounts that depict proper individual behavior, especially during times of peace, in order to bring health and prosperity to the country and family (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). The historical nature of these poems also sheds light on the public perspective on matters such as creation, life, death, religion, or patriotism (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). *Shari-e hammasie* continues to be considered a cultural treasure of Iran; in fact, it is unequivocally agreed by Iranians that it was the iconic poet Firdausi's (discussed earlier in this chapter) writings of such epic poems that revitalized, or even rescued, Farsi from the occupying domination of the Arabic language.

As an extremely popular style of poetry that has always been cherished amongst the masses, *shari-e hammasie* has played a vital role in the transmission and preservation of musical motives, especially its rhythmic features (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). This is due to the nature of

their fluent rhythmic construction, enabling audiences to enjoy and memorize these verses orally with relative ease (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007). These poems were part of sporting events, where singing and drums always accompanied the occasion (see *zor-khanah* in Chapter One). *Shari-e hammasie* has historically been popular in various *naghale khanie* (a drama or operatic form of reciting and acting of the poems). *Naghale khanie* featured an individual who acted and recited *shari-e hammasie*. This form of operatic play captured the attention of the public, especially the children, where the singing of the poems was intertwined with appealing narrations of heroic plots, as well as the reenactment of each scene by the same performer. It should also be mentioned that due to the various implications of ethnic and nationalistic bonding embedded in these poems, epic poetry became a kind of slogan against the Arabic presence in Iran. And in order to preserve the *Persianness* these poems were cherished and often sung and recited in their characteristic rhythmic scheme, which in turn created and provoked a great degree of sentiment and emotion.

Namayashie

Namayashie, or dramatic poetry, depicts a historical or imaginary occurrence of human endeavors (Shafi‘i Kadkani 29:2007). The subjective role of the poet is limited in *namayashie* poems in an attempt to connect human life to its nature, past experiences, and, most importantly, moralistic concerns and questions (Shafi‘i Kadkani 29:2007). *Namayashie* poems always revolve around an event as its main source for discussion and examination, through which individual actors offer different perspectives on the issues. Due to the subjective interpretation and interactions of each individual, freedom for contention and claim is created (agreement or

disagreements are allowed to create a form of rhetoric), where the topics challenged are given a unique perspective by each actor through their own rationalization—and, at times, lack thereof—and reasoning.

Namayashie poems became extremely popular for two reasons. First and foremost, they depicted various relevant concerns that resonated with Persian audiences. The topics were pertinent and emotionally provoking as subjects which the public easily related to—the poems spoke of their daily life and their day-to-day predicaments (Shafi‘i Kadkani 29:2007). These issues were discussed in intellectual circles, taught to students in schools, and even shared in mosques. They were basic guidelines to improve the morals of society. Historically it becomes evident (from the endorsement of poetry by the public, and especially towards *namayashie* poems) that the Arabic occupation and its socio-cultural thinking had limited influence due to its foreign nature. Therefore, a Persian perspective, which ultimately found its influence and effectiveness through poetry, easily replaced and became the new advocate for morals and philosophy.

The appeal of *namayashie* poems gave way to the creation of theatrical dramas based on the subjects of these poems (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007). These staged shows employed actors who dazzled the audiences and, more importantly, the audiences were expected to learn from these plays. The connection of poetry to music here is clearly evident, where the actors recited and often sung verses of poetry throughout the acts (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007). Master Mohammed Reza Lotfi believes that these stage shows have been one of the saviors of Persian music. He claims that “countless elements which exist in the contemporary *radif* had their origin in these acts; the performances preserved through the plays were often conducted by accomplished musicians who sang and acted out the sense” (1997:23).

Talimie

Talimie (educational) poems, at times resembling *namayashie*, introduce the audience to didactic goals. They can be considered guidelines for individuals to model their behavior and perceptions towards this world, and to achieve a superior position in the next life. *Talimie* poetry consists of two types. The first form exemplifies various arrangements in lieu of good deeds and piety as its main educational component, whereas in the second style the ultimate Truth and the essential merit of aesthetic values and its connection to human morality are simply outlined for individuals to follow (Shafi'i Kadkani 29:2007).

This tradition of poetry has had a profound effect on various spiritual and mystical orders such as *sufi* and *dervish* denominations in Iran. As discussed in the first chapter, *sufi* rituals held in places of worship known as *khanagha* allowed for an intimate setting for its audiences and performers to reach a state of ecstasy. In order to reach this trance-like position, *sufis* are deeply affected by the vocal performance of the *talimie* poetry, alongside a lone instrument, often a drum or a lute-type instrument. The tradition of *khanagha* has continued for centuries; many contemporary master musicians also believe that vital elements of Persian music have been transmitted orally, and have been safeguarded for generations in such contexts (Lotfi 1997).

Even today, one of the most pleasant, and essential *gusheh* (“corner” or “small parts” of a *radif*) in Persian music, known as *masnavi*, originated from different *dervish* practices of music chanting or singing. *Masnavi* is a significant example of how *talimie* poems influenced, and at the same time preserved, the oral tradition of Persian music. It must be mentioned that a *gusheh* like *masnavi* is extremely popular, and often the untrained music listener has no difficulty in detecting this melodic motif when sung or even instrumentally performed. As a result, one could

argue that poetry has also gained a level of devoutness in Iranian society, where on the other hand the limitations towards music have historically been extremely effectual. Therefore, the rich tradition of prosody has been well represented in the contemporary *radif*, through the wealth of poetry embedded within each *dastgah*.

Ghanaie

Ghanaie (lyrical) poetry elucidates themes that are subjectively formed; it derives solely from particular conceptions that each poet experiences throughout a life-time. However, these subjective notions need to be developed and analyzed for their larger relevance to the society (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). *Ghanaie* poetry often depict a poet's society and mundane life, as well as themes such as love, morality, nature, religion, and philosophy that are significant to the formation of his/her standpoint (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). In Iran, *ghanaie* poetry is the most favoured category of poetry practiced or written by poets (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007). At times, *ghanaie* poetry influences other forms of poetry, yet its subjective exploration and outlook into various issues sets it apart from the other thematic forms.

Shafi'i Kadkani believes that the popularity of *ghanaie* poetry amongst the public, and also the poets' circles, is due to a "strong bond and durable oral tradition" exhibited by this form of poetry (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:29). This influential bonding can strongly be linked to *Persianness*, which the public saw as their own voice. *Ghanaie* poetry is also the only form of poetry that discussed much more "unpretentious" concepts, rather than the esoteric and unfamiliar issues discussed by other poetic forms. It explores ordinary—relative to the moralistic and the metaphysical—concepts such as the face of the beloved or romantic tales. For

instance, a good example of such mundane subjects can be seen in the poetic book of *Khosrow-o shirn*, by the renowned medieval poet Nezami (a story line that closely resembles the plots of Romeo and Juliet).¹⁷ It must be mentioned that although the subject of *ghanaie* poetry deals with “simple,” daily matters, by no means do these subject matters jeopardize the quality or the complexity of these poems. While the strong connection between *ghanaie* poetry and the public and poets is evident in the popularity these forms of poetry have enjoyed throughout history, Shafi‘i Kadkani explains that its durable oral tradition and its strong connection to music are its main vehicles of transmission. According to him, *ghanaie* poetry became a great source of creative and artistic display for reciting or singing. He even states that the popularity of these poems was similar to the status of folk tunes (2007).

The Music of Poetry

Shafi‘i Kadkani considers the high degree of the effectiveness and the success of the oral transmission of Persian poetry due to its close connection, even reliance, on music (2007:35). He states that “the expression ‘*soot-bastan*’ [to give or build life to a poem through singing] has been a part of Persian poetic tradition from centuries prior to the invasion of Iran by the Arabs” (2007:35). He also notes that frequently poets frequently consulted or referred to musicians in order to create poetry that was suitable and versatile in the practices of *soot-bastan* (2007:35). Therefore, for many scholars such as Shafi‘i Kadkani music played a vital role in the transmission of poetry.

¹⁷ Nezami-ye Ganjavi (1141-1209AD), is considered to be one of the iconic poets of medieval Iran.

According to master musicians such as Mohammed Reza Shajarain, the reason for music embedded in poetry (vocal) not being prohibited by the socio-religious factors in Iran was due to the religious authorities being more concerned with instrumental music, rather than vocal practices (2003). While instrumental music was severely ostracized, various vocal traditions were regularly used for different socio-religious proceedings, including the daily *azan* (the Muslim call to prayer). Different vocal styles were nearly employed as much by clergies and religious authorities to effectively pass their message across as they were by drama players or narrative actors. As a result, poetry was often hummed by many of the public; in fact, singing and memorizing poetry gradually became an important Iranian art form, one that was encouraged and taught to youngsters in various learning institutions.

The inseparable ties between music and poetry seem to have assisted one another; music was preserved by poetry (due to its prosody, becoming the vehicle for musicians to memorize and improvise melodies), and music (especially singing/humming) aided in the more rapid transmission of poetry during a time that communication and media were limited to writings on parchment or skin scrolls. It is widely believed that when the medieval poet Saadi (1184-1283/1291AD) recited a poem, due to its “harmonious tune,” it traveled as far as China through sailors who traded silk and other goods with their Iranian counterparts (Shafi‘i Kadkani 36:2007).

Moreover, many Persian literature scholars point to the connection between music and poetry during the time of the renowned poet Rumi (1207-1273AD). It is known that from the start of Rumi’s profession as a poet, many enthusiasts or devotees gathered in his garden to collectively recite and sing his poems (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007). This act of collective singing is known as *masnavie khanie*. Incidentally, the tradition of *masnavie khanie*—a form of poetry that

consists of two similar hemistiches, each concluding with the same word and rhythmic pattern—has been continued by devotees in Rumi’s mausoleum, various *sufi* gatherings, and as an important part of contemporary Persian music. As stated before, *masnavie* is a famous *gusheh* that is popularly practiced today. The prominent contemporary literature scholar Badi-ol Zaman Frozan-Far states that during Rumi’s time, “there were groups of ‘*masnavie khan*’ who were devotee *sufis*, and their social class as vocalist of these poems were equivalent to those who recited the Quran” (1932:231).

Another key space that was used to advocate and preserve the practices of singing and the group reciting of poetry was an event known as *magles tazkir va vaaz* (gatherings for sermons and for expatiating). *Magles tazkir va vaaz* consisted of podiums for speakers who preached philosophical, theological, or spiritual concepts. Each speaker used the podium to relay a message, be it a theological perspective of good deeds or philosophical views of the daily life (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007). What was of importance in these gatherings was the repeated use of poetry to alert and inform the audience. The poems resonated with great effect amongst an eager audience; speakers regularly made use of their vocal ability to make the poems more effectual for the listeners present in these gatherings (Shafi‘i Kadkani 2007).

Shafi‘i Kadkani emphasized the socio-political role of the speakers in the *magles tazkir va vaaz*, stating that “such gatherings were a great source of political leverage in the society, for well over five hundred years” (2007:43). Therefore, music in its vocal style—perhaps similar to the church chants of medieval Europe—was not seen (at least gradually) as a “treat” by those involved in these socio-religious events when it effectively conveyed their message and preserved their power. Nevertheless, through the interactions of poets and the utilization of poetry in various musical vocal forms, the relevance—regularly witnessed in the provocation of

the public's emotions or sentiments—and the strong connection between the two arts becomes evident. Musical vocabulary, especially the vocal styles, complimented and even introduced an added degree of value and meaning to poetry.

Ravi

The relevance or importance of the function of music for familiarizing the public to poetry can best be demonstrated by the role of *ravi* (a competent vocalist, who recited and sang a poet's work). Shafi'i Kadkani states that "from the dawn of Islam in Iran, poets started to make use of *ravi*, who performed their poems in public venues, and especially in the kings courts, with unique musical styles [presumably different modes and modulations], alongside their distinguished vocal ability" (2007:37). *Ravi* also took on different tasks and were given special responsibilities depending on their music competency. Those who possessed musical ability, especially vocal ability, were often given the task of representing the poets on important occasions, such as at the king's court (Shafi'i Kadkani 36:2007). On the other hand, *ravi* with less expertise in their musical ability and poetic knowledge were often employed to sing in bazaars and in more public venues; they were known as *ravi bazaar-khan* (Shafi'i Kadkani 36:2007).

In fact, many poets such as the medieval lyricist Khaghanie (1121-1190AD) have written poems, deliberating on the eloquent vocal ability of their *ravi* (Shafi'i Kadkani 2007:37). The task of the *ravi* was equal to the fame that the poet gained, and as such were often grounds for contestation and rivalry amongst the poets. Shafi'i Kadkani noted that famous *ravi* employed by the medieval poet Rudaki (858-941AD), who resided in the modern territories of Syria, caused

such animosity and contestation amongst the literary and poetic clique due to his exceptional musical ability that he was forced to return to Iran (2007:37).

Poet's Music

The position of the *ravi* sheds light onto the imperative role that music played in its connection to poetry. In this chapter I have sought to illustrate that throughout the history of Iran, poetry has been musical and vice versa. As mentioned before, each art form is used to enhance and create a more effective representation for its audience. It would be inconceivable to think that poetry would have had the same effect on the public and would have been as easily transmitted orally if it did not utilize musical means such as the *ravi*. At the same time, through many years which music on its merit had to struggle in the public arena—it being seen as an evil and malevolent act—the desire to learn, recite, and sing various poems by the public kept countless elements of Persian music vibrant and alive. Moreover, alongside the *ravi*, some poets are also known to have possessed illustrious vocal capacities. As Shafi'i Kadkani explains, the renowned medieval poet Hafez (1315–1390AD) was known to sing all his *ghazal* (a popular form of Persian/Arabic poetry) in public venues, especially during royal events for kings. The desire to involve and amalgamate both poetry and music must have always existed. In fact, poetry must be rhythmic for it to flow, just as music is shapeless and characterless without the very rhythmic structure found through its bonding artistic discipline, poetry.

Chapter Three: The Essence of Persian Prosody—*Arūz*

This chapter analyzes the fundamental make-up or construction of Persian *arūz* (prosody), its function and its role in Iranian poetry. What becomes essential in the construction of poetry is the consideration of the “rhythmic harmony” through the recurring metrical components by each poet (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:25). This poetic-rhythmic connection is manifested in the interrelationship between smaller units of syllables that collectively make up larger building blocks or recurring cadential sequences, ultimately comprising the metrical values of a given poem. Traditional Persian poetry is always represented as “symmetrical [never consisting of irregular hemistiches] couplets; it also requires to be symmetrical [regular intervals (proportional) throughout a poem] in its rhythmic value, which as a result, forms the fluency and harmony that each hemistich in Persian poetry is known for” (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:25).

Generally speaking, any given poem in Arabic or Persian is organized in its entirety in lines of hemistich (*mesrā'*) of a constant length and meter. These hemistiches are paired in couplets called *bayt* that in turn create units of the verse. The traditional system of prosody is based on the assumption that there are a certain number of major (fundamental) meters, and a certain number of sub-divisions of each of these categories that constitute distinct and complex meters (Elwell-Sutton 1976: 2). Meters are made by repetition of poetic feet, which in turn are constructed from fundamental units of a grouping of syllables (Natal-Khanlarie 2007). The goal of this chapter is to examine the succession of each repetition in the poetic feet, and the resulting sequences that form and construct colourful rhythmic variations in Iranian poetry.

It is important to mention in modern Iran that there have been successful attempts at transcending the limitations of traditional prosodic rules in poetry in the past century. Nīmā Yūshīj (1895-1959), known as the father of '*she'r-e noe* (modern/new poetry), consciously examined original rhythmic variations and novel concepts to create poetry that was not bound to

the rules and concepts of Persian/Arabic prosody. Interestingly, Nīmā himself was a musician, using his innovative formulation of prosody in his musical compositions. This new transcending concept generated advocates who through “breaking the common ‘*arūz* structures in poetry” argued that the meaning of the poems will resonate more effectively with the public, rather than the conventional rules of prosody which are complex and demanding of both the poet and the audience (Hoqūqī 2000: 31). Nīmā’s followers are now the prominent voices in contemporary Persian poetry; while looking for new avenues they also respect and practice the traditional conventions. Despite the current popularity and acceptability of this genre in Iranian classical music, conventional poetry is often used during a performance of traditional vocal music, and *especially* as pedagogical resources for instruction. Having said this, some prominent vocalists have recently started to experiment with using modern poetry in traditional musical settings. However, the essence of Persian contemporary *radif* is embedded in centuries of influence by the Persian/Arabic construction of ‘*arūz*, which is the focus of this chapter.

Units of Grouped Syllables (*Arkān-e aslī* or *Atānīn*)

According to the ‘*arūz* (prosody), every verse ultimately consists of the combination of two parts: *masot* [a “moving” or a lasting sound] (vowel) [M] and *saamat* [a “quiescent” or a short sound] (consonants) [Q]. *Arkān-e aslī* (fundamental pillars, plural of *rokn*), which are constituent elements of the poetic feet, come into being from the combination of the *masot* and *saamat*, therefore, they are various combination of [M] and [Q] (Tsuge 1974: 117). On occasions, however, a verse can consist of the combination or collective length of [M] and [Q] simultaneously, known as an overlong. Therefore the value of overlong is always one and half of [M]. The shortest sound (one of or a combination of short/long/overlong) that has a specific

meaning—often a combination of letters or a fraction of a word, which makes up the declaration—is known as *haaja*. A clear translation of *haaja* is rather difficult; the closest related English concept that many scholars including the Professor of Farsi literature of the University of Tehran Parvis Natal-Khanlarie have used is *syllable* (2007:137). Often Persian scholars explain *haaja* as an “orderliness for a succession of meaningful spoken sound,” one that closely resembles the concept of syllable (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:137). Each *haaja* consists of at least two separate letters, consonants (M) or a combination of consonants (M) and “quiescent” (vowel) consonants (Q). Each *haaja* will always have a central syllable (often a vowel), which pulls the remaining consonants towards it—syllables gravitate toward the main syllable in each *haaja*.

The traditional prosodists never used the concept of short or long syllables (Elwell-Sutton 1976: 3). However, the concept has been introduced and used by modern prosodists, using short (*u*), long (–), and overlong (––) syllables. This system is even in favor amongst musicians who use long and short syllables of the poem to emphasize and teach rhythmic variations. These common concepts for consonants and vowels introduced here are durations for letters in the Persian alphabet, and on their own do not have a particular meaning. These fundamental units (*haaja*) are in fact rhythmic groups of short and long syllables, which correspond to mnemonics using the vowel/consonants [M] and [Q]. These mnemonics are called *atānin* and are arranged in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 The six common *haaja*, including their syllabic combinations and mnemonic durations.

Names of the <i>Haaja</i>	English Names of the <i>Haaja</i>	Syllabic Combination	Mnemonics/Syllabic Duration
<i>Sabab-e khafif</i>	“light sabab”	M +Q	<i>tan</i> (–)
<i>Sabab-e Thaqil</i>	“heavy sabab”	M+M	<i>tana</i> (uu)
<i>Watad-e Mafrūq</i>	“separated watad”	M+Q+M	<i>tanta</i> (– u)
<i>Watad-e Majmū’</i>	“united watad”	M+M+Q	<i>tanān</i> (u –)
<i>Fāsele-ye Soghrā</i>	“small stay”	M+M+M+Q	<i>tanānan</i> (uu –)
<i>Fāsele-ye Kobrā</i>	“large stay” ¹⁸	M+M+M+M+Q	<i>tanānanān</i> (uuu–)

Poetic Foot (‘*Afā’eel-e’Arūzī*)

In ‘*arūz* (prosody), a poetic foot (*joz*’) is made from a combination of the aforementioned *haaja* and their components, as illustrated in Table 3.1. A poetic foot is also represented by specific mnemonics, as shown in Table 3.2.

¹⁸ This is rarely used in Persian language and prosody, and appears mainly in Arabic.

Table 3.2 The names of the eight poetic feet ('*Afā'eel-e'Arūzī*).

Poetic Foot (' <i>Afā'eel-e'Arūzī</i>)	Syllabic Duration	Names of the <i>Haaja</i>	Mnemonics
<i>fā'ūlon</i>	(u --)	<i>watad-e majmū' + sabab-e khafīf</i>	<i>tan tan</i>
<i>fā'elon</i>	(- u -)	<i>sabab-e khafīf + watad-e majmū'</i>	<i>tan tanan</i>
<i>mafā'ilon</i>	(u ---)	<i>watad-e majmū' + 2 sabab-e khafīf</i>	<i>tan tan tan</i>
<i>mostaf'elon</i>	(-- u -)	<i>sabab-e khafīf + sabab-e khafīf + watad-e majmū'</i>	<i>tan tan tanan</i>
<i>fā'elāton</i>	(-u --)	<i>sabab-e khafīf + watad-e majmū' + sabab khafīf</i>	<i>tan tanan tan</i>
<i>mofā'elaton</i>	(u - u u -)	<i>watad-e majmū' + fāsele-ye soghrā</i>	<i>tan tananan</i>
<i>motafā'elon</i>	(u u - u -)	<i>fāsele-e soghrā + watad-e majmū'</i>	<i>tananan tanan</i>
<i>maf'ulāto</i>	(--- u)	<i>2 sabab-e khafīf + watad-e mafrūq</i>	<i>tan tan tanta</i>

These combinations of poetic feet are referred to as *paayah* (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:158). *Paayah* consist of various numbers of *haaja* (syllables), where each *haaja* is then connected to the next sequence, often by a “strong beat” (vowel), or an emphasis on a letter (*takayah*, an accent) to create the poetic foot (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:158). A sequence of *paayah*, which results in the creation of poetic feet, can consist anywhere from one unit (shortest duration) to five units (longest duration) of *haaja*. As a result, from the repetition of a *paayah*, or the poetic

feet, a poetic meter or *bahr* is produced. Therefore, a *paayah* is considered the smallest unit of a poetic meter or rhythm in Persian poetry. Coincidentally, the word *paayah* is also used to describe the smallest constituent of Persian music; it is the smallest rhythmic unit that builds or generates various rhythmic values.

For example, the poetic meter *mafā'ilon* (u – – –), consisting of [*tanān tan tan*], is considered the shortest rhythmic unit utilized in poetry, as seen in Figure 3.1. This example can also be used to shed light on the rhythmic meter of the Persian vocal *radif*, that of the fundamental *gusheh hajaz* in *dastgah abu-ata*, which consists of four repetitions (sequence) of the poetic foot '*mafā'ilon*' in each of its hemistiches (refer to Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 The poetic foot of *mafā'ilo* in the sequence of *gusheh hajaz*.

<i>mafā'ilon</i>	<i>mafā'ilon</i>	<i>mafā'ilon</i>	<i>mafā'ilon</i>
<u>tanān tan tan</u>	<u>tanān tan tan</u>	<u>tanān tan tan</u>	<u>tanān tan tan</u>
u – – –	u – – –	u – – –	u – – –

In the case of *gusheh hajaz*, each repetition of *mafā'ilon* [*tanān tan tan*] is connected to the next *paayah* (the next sequence *mafā'ilon*) through a clear “strong beat” (*masot* “moving” [vowel]). Once a student has learned the correct formation of different poetic patterns and has become familiar with the intervallic pattern of *gusheh hajaz*, the student can then start improvising. Therefore, becoming familiar with the rhythmic pattern of *mafā'ilon* [*tanān tan tan*] is as important as learning its melodic motif.

The Main Poetic Meter in Persian/Arabic Poetry (*Ozan aslaie* or *Bahr Saalim*)

Bahr (poetic meter) comes into existence by the *repetition* of the eight poetic feet—as listed in Table 3.2—in various combinations. There are sixteen fundamental meters—the Persians are known to have created three additional rhythmic prosodies, increasing the total to nineteen—known as *bahr saalim* (main meters or *ozan asalie*; Natal-Khanlarie 2007:167). Each one of the main meters also consists of auxiliary or variations of the fundamental meter (each *bahr* could have as many as five deviations) which are known as *ozan farie* or *manshat bahr* (discussed in the subsequent sections). Every *bahr* has its own specific name. The most prominent divisions of *bahr* were made by the medieval Persian scholar Khalid-bin Ahmad (825-897 AD), who divided the sixteen fundamental *bahr saalim* (main meters) into five different categories, calling each of these groupings a “circle of rhythmic value” (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:167).

The word “circle” seems to have been commonly used by scholars to refer to an entire collection of organized rhythmic patterns (*bahr saalim*) in prosody. These rhythmic entities were altered and changed depending on the poet, philosophy, and even socio-cultural conditions. Moreover, this seemed to have been a fitting replacement once the cyclic formation of rhythm had to be disbanded (see again Chapter One). Ahmad’s division of rhythmic circles is listed below (Table 3.3). It is important to realize that each *bahr* can be further separated into various rhythmic variations which, due to their abundance and complexity, are not listed in this table (some are even forgotten in conventional practice). Ahmad’s rhythmic circle is an outline acting as a main rhythmic blueprint, much like a Persian *radif* is merely a guideline for musicians to base their musical perceptions upon. Moreover, Natal-Khanlarie states that not all the rhythmic values of the *bahr* or “circle of rhythmic value” listed below are actually from Khalid-bin

Ahmad, and other scholars have gradually added to these rhythm divisions throughout centuries of discovery and exploration (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:167).

Table 3.3 Khalid-bin Ahmad's division of the fundamental *bahr* or poetic meter of Persian poetry (Natal-Khanlarie 2007:167).

Circle of rhythmic Value	Names of each <i>Bahr</i>	Divisions of poetic foot (<i>joz'</i>)
<i>Mokhtalfeh</i>		
	<i>Tavil</i>	<i>fa'ūlon+ mafā'ilon+ fa'ūlon+ mafā'ilon</i>
	<i>Madid</i>	<i>fā'elāton+ fa'ūlon+ fā'elāton+ fa'ūlon</i>
	<i>Basit</i>	<i>mostaf'elon+ fa'ūlon+ mostaf'elon+ fa'ūlon</i>
<i>Moatalfah</i>		
	<i>Vafar</i>	<i>mofā'elaton+ mofā'elaton+ mofā'elaton</i>
	<i>Kaamal</i>	<i>mostaf'elon+ mostaf'elon+ mostaf'elon</i>
<i>Mojtalbah</i>		
	<i>Hazaj</i>	<i>mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon</i>
	<i>Ramal</i>	<i>fā'elāton+ fā'elāton+ fā'elāton+ fā'elāton</i>
	<i>Rajaz</i>	<i>mostaf'elon+ mostaf'elon+ mostaf'elon+ mostaf'elon</i>
<i>Moshtabah</i>	<i>Monsarah</i>	<i>mostaf'elon+maf'ulāto+ mostaf'elon</i>

Circle of rhythmic Value	Names of each <i>Bahr</i>	Divisions of poetic foot (<i>joz'</i>)
	<i>Khafif</i>	<i>fā'elāton+ mostaf'elon+ fā'elāton</i>
	<i>Mazarah</i>	<i>mafā'ilon + fā'elāton+ mafā'ilon</i>
	<i>Moghtazab</i>	<i>maf'ulāto+ mostaf'elon+ mostaf'elon</i>
	<i>Sarih</i>	<i>mostaf'elon+ mostaf'elon+maf'ulāto</i>
	<i>Mojtas</i>	<i>mostaf'elon+ fā'elāton+ fā'elāton</i>
<i>Motfaghah</i>		
	<i>Motagharab</i>	<i>fa'ūlon+ fa'ūlon+ fa'ūlon+ fa'ūlon</i>

Revisiting the poetic foot of *mafā'ilo* used for *gusheh hajaz* (Figure 3.1), one notices that it is made up of a sequence of poetic feet (*joz'*) [*mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon*]. This sequence of rhythmic values or *bahr* is called *hajaj*, and it is part of the *mojtalbah* rhythmic circle. Therefore, *gusheh hajaj* in *dastgah abu-ata* is commonly known to consist of *bahr-e hajaj* (the rhythmic value of *hajaj*). If one is to learn this particular *gusheh* (*hajaj* in *dastgah abu-ata*), then a master musician has the freedom to use any poetry he desires as long as it follows the rhythmic pattern of *bahr-e hajaj*. The student will learn that *bahr-e hajaj* will always consist of the rhythmic value of [*mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon+ mafā'ilon*], or, more clearly, it follows a sequence of rhythmic denominations of [*tanā tan tan +tanā tan tan+tanā tan tan+tanā tan tan*]. Therefore, during memorization or even later on while improvising, this particular rhythmic value or its metric sequence is used as the model to construct melodic

motives based on the existing blueprint, that of the rhythmic values in the particular *gusheh hazaj* in *dastgah abu-ata*.

A Persian Perspective: Variations (*Ozan Farie* or *Manshat Bahar*)

Meters actually used by poets, as opposed to theoretical meters, are derived from the fundamental meters by various modification processes called “*zehāfāt*” and “*elāl*”. These rhythmic variations—what I consider as auxiliary yet practical metric values (*manshat bahar*)—create deviations and alternative meters within Persian poetry. In Arabic prosody certain alternatives of the poetic meter are allowed in a single poem. However, in Persian prosody the deviations are applied consistently to a meter to create a new meter, and these rhythmic variations are then strictly followed from the beginning to the end of a piece of poetry. This freedom to create new metric variations in poetry has allowed Persian poets to experiment and create complex and intricate poetic meters. This has also allowed Persian music to have various forms of rhythmic values within an “unmeasured” performance, while Arabic music is commonly played within an expected meter. The deviations of Persian poetry from the main rhythmic constituents leading to metric variations or *manshat bahar* are the results of processes affecting the poetic feet, as listed below:

- I. addition of one or more consonants
- II. elision of one or more moving consonants
- III. “silencing” of one or more letters (elision of vowel), or changing a moving to a quiescent

These variations are applied to one of the fundamental pillars (*arkān*) of a specific poetic foot in a poetic meter, which causes the variation of the rhythm to occur. While the list of *zehāfāt* and *‘elāl* differ amongst various authorities, one hundred and sixty eight seems to be generally recognized as the standard. However, all the variations deviate from sixteen common rhythmic meters known as *salsalah* (Elwell-Sutton 1976: 14). Due to such a large number of possible variations that are achievable in Persian poetry, the *‘arūz* (prosody) of a poetic meter can be made quite complicated and its rhythmic alternatives numerous. As a result of these complex combinations of rhythmic values, I argue that a Persian *radif* is comprised of scores of potential rhythmic variations from a given *gusheh* in a *dastgah* to the next, even though at times some scholars, especially in the Western world, point to the *radif* as “non-metrical.”

Moreover, the abundance of rhythmic variations in poetry is a direct result of the *zehāfāt* and *‘elāl* that allows for the freedom to generate combinations of altered poetic feet in the rhythmic structure of music due to centuries of established socio-cultural connections between poetry and music (see again Chapter Two). In the Table 3.4 below, I have created a list of the sixteen central *ozan farie* or *manshat bahar*—which can also be referred to as *salsalah*—and a few of their variations. In this table, I provide examples of *gusheh* that correspond to the proper *ozan farie* or *manshat bahar* in the contemporary Persian *radif* so that the strong connection between poetry and the contemporary *radif* becomes evident. By demonstrating the close relationship between each *gusheh* and a specific poetic *bahar*, I show that the formation of *bahar* (rhythmic meter) in Persian poetry is vital for memorizing a specific rhythmic value, as well as its significance as a component for improvisation (for a detailed analysis of *bahar* in the *radif* see Chapter Four). The examples in the table below are not from one specific instrumental or vocal *radif*, but a combination—a collection of paradigms —of contemporary repertoires, such as

Mirza Abdulah (instrumental), Agha Hossagain Gholie (instrumental), and Abdoluh Davamie (vocal).

Table 3.4 *Salsalah (ozan farie or manshat bahar)*, minor poetic constituents and their relation to contemporary *radif*.

<i>Salsalah (ozan farie or manshat bahar) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar (rhythmic meter)</i>	Syllabic Duration (From Left to Right)	<i>Gusheh/Dastgah in the contemporary radif</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Nokhosat (The First Constituent)</i>	<i>Rajaz</i>	(-U)(- -)(-U)(- -)(-U)(- -)(-U)(- -)	<i>Salmak/Shour</i>
	<i>Ramal</i>	(- -) (U-) (- -) (U-) (- -) (U-) (- -)	<i>Noroz Saba/Mahour</i>
	<i>Hazaj</i>	(- -)(-U)(- -)(-U)(- -)(-U)(- -)(U-)	<i>Aragh/Afshari</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Dovom (The Second Constituent)</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(---) (UU) (- -) (UU) (- -)(UU) (- -)	<i>Daramad bayat Tork/Bayat Tork</i>
	<i>Bahar dovom</i>	(--U) (U--U) (U -) (- U) (U -)	<i>Bayat Raja/Nava</i>
	<i>Bahar Savom</i>	(-U) (- -) (UU) (- -) (UU) (- -) (UU)	<i>Jama Daran/Bayat Esfahan</i>
	<i>Bahar Chahrom</i>	(- - U) (U -) (- U) (U -) (- U)	<i>Daad/Mahour</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Savam (The Third Constituent)</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- - U) (U -) (U -) (U -)(- U) (U -)	<i>Lalie-o Majnon/Abu Ata</i>
	<i>Bahar dovom</i>	(- -) (U U) (- U) (- U) (- -) (U U)	<i>Naghmah/Bayat Esfahan</i>
	<i>Bahar savom</i>	(- U -) (U -) (- U) (- U -) (U -) (- U)	<i>Falie/Mahour</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Chahrom (The Forth Constituent)</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- -)(U -)(U U)(- -)(U -) (U -) (U U)	<i>Nayshaporak/Mahour</i>

<i>Salsalah (ozan farie or manshat bahar) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar (rhythmic meter)</i>	Syllabic Duration (From Left to Right)	<i>Gusheh/Dastgah in the contemporary radif</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- - U - U) (- U) (- - U) (- U) (- U)	<i>Parvanah/Rast-Pang-gah</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Pangom (The Fifth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- U) (- U) (- U) (- U) (- U) (- U)	<i>Bastah Nagar/Abu Ata</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- U -) (- U) (- U) (- U) (- U)	<i>Daramad/Nava</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Sashom (The Sixth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- - U) (- - U) (- - U) (- - U)	<i>Ravandie/ Rast-Pang-gah</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Haftom (The Seventh) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- U -) (- U) (U -) (- U) (U -)	<i>Bastah nagar/Afsharie</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- U) (- U) (- -) (U U) (- -) (U U)	<i>Gharaie/Afsharie</i>
	<i>Bahar savom</i>	(U -) (U -) (U -) (- U) (U -) (- U)	<i>Aragh/Afsharie</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Hashtom (The Eight) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- U) (- U U) (- U) (- U U) (- U) (- U U)	<i>Oaj/Shour</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- - U) (- U U - U) (- U U) (- U)	<i>Rohab/Shour</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Nohom (The Ninth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- -) (- U) (- U) (- U) (- -) (- U) (- U) (- U)	<i>Hajie Hasanie/Dashtie</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- -) (U -) (U -) (U -) (- -) (U -) (U -) (U -)	<i>Chahar gusheh/Shour</i>
	<i>Bahar savom</i>	(- -) (- -) (- U) (- U) (- U) (- -) (- U) (- U)	<i>Razavie/Shour</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Dahom (The Tenth) constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- U -) (- U) (- - U) (- U)	<i>Daramad dovam/Dashtie</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- U) (- U) (- -) (U -) (- U)	<i>Daramad Dashtie</i>
	<i>Bahar savom</i>	(- U) (- U) (- -) (- U)	<i>Daramad Segah</i>

<i>Salsalah (ozan farie or manshat bahar) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar (rhythmic meter)</i>	Syllabic Duration (From Left to Right)	<i>Gusheh/Dastgah in the contemporary radif</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Yazdahom (The Eleventh) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(-U)(U-)(U-)(-U) (-U)(U-)(U-)(-U)	<i>Hajayanie/Dashtie</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Davazdhom (The Twelfth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- U -)(- U)(- -)	<i>Daramad/Afsharie</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- -)(U -)(-U)(-U)(- -)(U -)	<i>Moyah/Sagah</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Sizdahom (The Thirteenth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- U U) (- U U) (- U U) (- U U)	<i>Mokhalaf/Sagah</i>
	<i>Bahar dovam</i>	(- U U) (- U U) (- U U)	<i>Maghlob/Sagah</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Chahardahom (The Fourteenth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- -) (- -) (U- U) (- U U) (- -)	<i>Khara/Shour</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Sizdahom (The Fifteenth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- - -) (U – U) (- U U) (- -)	<i>Mahrabanie/Bayat Tork</i>
<i>Salsalah-e Sizdahom (The Sixteenth) Constituent</i>	<i>Bahar aval</i>	(- -) (U – U) (- U U) (- -)	<i>Zangolah/Bayat Tork</i>

It is important to mention that each poet has some freedom to add or take away from each model of the rhythmic *bahar*. This liberty has been taken in the past by some of the great iconic poets to create even more complicated and complex values. This practice is also common currently amongst master musicians.

Comparison: ‘*arūz* and *īqā*’

In this section I provide al-Fārābī’s vision of prosody and its musical implementation to draw on the similarities and differences between the Persian and Arabic formations of poetic rhythm. It is obvious that the ‘*arūz* and *īqā*’ (the standard Arabic rhythmic meter) systems are very similar in many ways. They are both constructed from fundamental units that are added up to create larger units of rhythm, thus both constitute additive structures (versus divisive structures where larger units are divided into smaller parts). Moreover, both systems introduce fundamental theoretical forms, from which particular rhythms are derived by way of certain variation techniques. This is all in addition to the fact that both al-Fārābī and al-Khalīl (see Chapter One) were educated in the other disciplines and used variation techniques in their theories.

Of particular interest is the use of similar mnemonics, or the *atānīn*. Mnemonics are important tools for pedagogy and practice and are mainly used as a memory aid. It follows that the usage of mnemonics is important, especially in such rich oral traditions, which consequently depend little on written transmission for their artistic disciplines. Therefore, *atānīn* can be used as musical mnemonics reflecting particular characteristics of the musical culture, ultimately sharing a great deal with the poetic structures and phonological characteristics of each language.

Major Differences: Duration

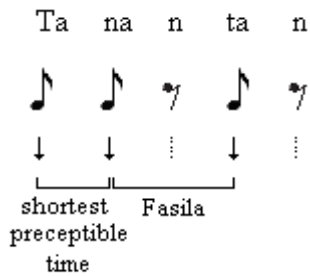
The difference between rhythm in language and musical rhythm is very important in relation to ‘*arūz* and *īqā*’. In “measured” music the existence of a constant underlying pulse or rhythmic grid quantifies the durational values, whereas in speech and, similarly, poetry the

values are not quantified. According to al-Fārābī, the difference between the “free rhythm” genres with “measured” genres is that the durations in “measured” music are finite ratios of the *aqsar zamān mahsūs* (shortest perceptible time) (Sawa 2002: 388). In other words, the exact duration of a long syllable in poetry is not defined. This is an important factor that must be taken into account when comparing *īqā’* and *‘arūz* durational values.

***Atānin* Mnemonics**

Despite the differences mentioned above, mnemonics are useful in practice for several reasons. According to al-Fārābī’s explanation of durations and attacks, an attack followed by the “shortest perceptible time” duration corresponds with a moving consonant (Sawa 2002: 388). As

Figure 3.2 Correspondences between consonants and durations



can be seen in Figure 3.2, a quiescent consonant also corresponds to the absence of an attack or a rest.

Moreover, according to the *‘arūz* two short syllables can replace a long syllable and vice versa (called *idmār* and *‘asb*). In other words, *tana* (u u) can be replaced by *tan* (–).

Theoretically, then, a short syllable is half the duration of a long one. Therefore the short syllable

(i.e., moving consonant) can be used as a fundamental unit fairly justifiably as al-Fārābī has done. As a result, one could conclude that using the *‘arūz* in describing rhythmic elements in vocal and instrumental music is also rational and practical (see Chapter Four).

Historically the units of prosody were used in musical units in notation and description. For example, “the musician and theorist ‘Abd al-Qāder al-Marāghī (d.1436) described a new metric cycle of his own invention (called *ma’atain*) as consisting of 50 *fawāsel-e soghrā* [*tananan*] and two hundred *naqarāt* (attacks)” (Wright 1995:29). As illustrated, the name of the fundamental pillars (*arkān or atānin*) from *‘arūz* has been used to explain an *īqā’* mode. Presumably this cross-reference between the two systems was fairly common. When al-Fārābī mentions “rhythmic parts” (Sawa 2002: 391) of an *īqā’*, he seems to be referring to the *atānin* as well. Though these mnemonics are not used in the formal practice of Persian music, informally certain words or syllable groups are used in rhythm pedagogy. For instance, master *tombak* (goblet shaped drum) player Daryūsh Zargarī used words such as “*yeksad-o bis-o-panj*” (one hundred and twenty five) and “*rūh-e manī*” (you are my soul) as a form of speech mnemonics in his teaching techniques so his students would not forget the fundamental rhythmic structure. Moreover, in recent times there have been some attempts to revive the use of *atānīn*. In *The New Sehtār Methodology* (Mahour 2000) by Master Hossein ‘Alīzādeh, he has attempted to use the concept of *atānīn* loosely for explaining rhythmic concepts.

***Fāsila* (Disjunction)**

The concept of *fāsila* is one of the more interesting concepts in al-Fārābī’s theory. Disjunction is a key element in the concept of musical meter, but can be said to exist in different

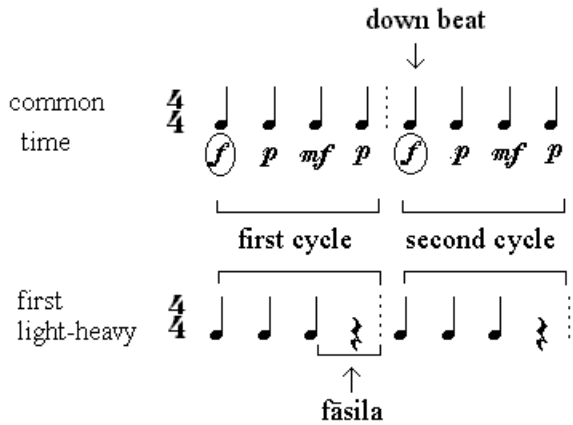
layers of the concept of rhythm in Middle Eastern (particularly Persian) practice. According to al-Fārābī, two consecutive cycles (*īqā'āt*) are separated by a time disjunction “double that which exists between two (fundamental) attacks in the cycle” (Sawa 1989: 39). Therefore, *fāsila* is what indicates the end of one cycle and the beginning of the next, so that a “rest” or absence of an attack that produces a double duration of the final attack of the cycle is what marks the end of the cycle and beginning of the next.¹⁹ This is quite different from the Western notion of prescribed “accent hierarchy,” which indicates the beginning of each measure with a strong attack (downbeat) followed by hierarchies of accentuation (see Figure 3.3).

This disjunction is present in most rhythmic units in prosody as well as musical rhythmic groupings. In terms of mnemonics or syllables, this means that most groups end with a long syllable or a quiescent consonant, which seems to be a characteristic of the Persian and Arabic languages where most words end with quiescent consonants.²⁰ This is supported by the fact that four out of six fundamental pillars (*arkān-e aslī* or *atānīn*) and seven out of eight basic poetic feet (*Afā'īl*) end with a long duration.

¹⁹ Percussionist Bob Becker of Nexus has used this interesting phenomenon in the composition “Clapping Game.” One wonders if he was aware of Al-fārābī’s notions.

²⁰ Tsuge recognized the priority of the *Watad-e Majmū'* (*tanān* or u-) to *Watad-e Mafrūq* (*tanta* or -u) and its significance in the phrasing of the vocal performance of āvāz (Tsuge, 1974:121,175).

Figure 3.3 Comparison of Western notion of meter and al-Fārābī's theory.



It must be noted that the concept of *fāsila* (disjunction) has not been fully recognized by any contemporary music theorists in Iran, and by and large the exact Western hierarchical model has been more commonly adopted (to be addressed in Chapter Five).

Variation and Ornamentation

As mentioned before, variation techniques in ‘*arūz* and *īqā*’ also share many similar aspects. The techniques described by al-Fārābī borrowed many elements and concepts from ‘*arūz* and *Qur’ānic* sciences. Table 3.5 lists some of the corresponding techniques used commonly in poetry and, as a result, were later adopted by musicians in Iran as well as most Arab countries.

Table 3.5 Common variation techniques in *arūz* and *īqā* (Sawa 1989: 39).

<i>īqā'</i>	English Translation	' <i>aruz</i>	English Translation
<i>Tawsīl</i>	Extension of rhythm	<i>Kaff, khabn</i>	Extension of rhythm
<i>Majāz</i>	Extension of syllabus	<i>Idmār</i>	Extension of syllabus
<i>tayy</i>	Diminution of syllabus	' <i>asb</i>	Diminution of syllabus
<i>Tafsīl</i> (of <i>fāsila</i>)	disjunction	<i>tarfīl</i> and <i>tatwīl</i>	disjunction

Variation techniques are a significant part of a musician's vocabulary, especially in an improvisational context. While each *bahar* allows the musicians to improvise—*bahar* is the blueprint to guide and assist a performer—the use of variation techniques is a complicated process gained through years of experience of performance and a thorough knowledge of prosody. This experience creates an added level of rhythmic motion in a musical repertoire that is commonly known as “unmeasured” to the unfamiliar ear. In addition to its use during improvisation, the students are encouraged to learn the fundamental rhythmic values that are the foundation of *bahar* and its correlation to each *gusheh*. This oral repetition of each *bahar* during the practice of the *radif* helps increase the students' memorization skills. The amalgamation of the knowledge of prosody—its practice and constant repetition during years of apprenticeship in learning the *radif*—has given Persian music a tradition which is rich in its oral conventions and

its rhythmic variations. Furthermore, the correspondence between ‘*arūz* and *īqā*’ variations is of special importance, in this case due to the great emphasis on textual contexts in Persian music.

This chapter examined the art of prosody, outlining its rules and regulations. It also analyzed to some degree its connection to contemporary Persian music. In the next chapter I will trace in detail a particular *gusheh* and its connection to prosody, as well as analyze a performance by a renowned percussionist to make aware the connection between Persian music and prosody in the practice of contemporary music.

Chapter Four: The Incorporation of Prosody in Contemporary Music

The previous chapters were dedicated to the reasons why prosody has played such a vital role in the formation and preservation of Persian music through centuries of socio-cultural unpredictability and flux. What is for certain is that music and poetry have drawn on each other—music seems to have benefited more from this interface—to maintain and continue each artistic tradition. Most important is that these two fields have strongly depended on and used the conventions of prosody—especially rhythm—to generate pieces of art. In this chapter, I use the principle rules of prosody from Chapter Three to further prove the connection or, rather, the *strong integration*, by which Persian music has drawn from years of poetic dominance.

Here I will examine in detail a famous *gusheh* called *shūshtarī* found in three different *radif*: one from an instrumental genre, and two from vocal genres. I also analyze a famous performance of the master percussionist Hussein Tehranie to illustrate that not only the melodic, but also the percussive, instruments have a compelling relationship to prosody. In the concluding sections I explain through my own experiences how in contemporary practice prosody plays an important role in both the pedagogical process of learning Persian classical music, as well as in the intricate steps of improvisation. This will be accomplished by taking the reader thorough some important steps of internalizing the poetry and music.

Background on the Musical Repertoire

The contemporary practice of Persian art music mainly consists of improvisation based on a collection of all the musical materials that are learned and internalized through years of oral transmission from a master musician to his or her pupil. These materials are basically a

systematic compilation or arrangement of a melodic anthology in a given repertoire, known as the *radif* (literally translated as “row” or “series”). The *radif* consists of a large number of short melodies called *gushe-hā* (plural of *gusheh*, meaning “corner” or “small parts”) that are combined into the main melodic “order” called a *dastgah* (a system that somewhat resembles the Western modal system, but wrongly referred to as a “mode” or “scale”). There are twelve different sets of “order” or *gushe-hā* in Persian classical music. In the performance of a given *dastgah*, musicians improvise based on the same *gushe-ha* contained in that *dastgah*.

Due to nature of the oral tradition, there are some technical and stylistic differences in each of the *radif-ha* (plural of *radif*) according to a different master’s school of thought—somewhat similar to that of poetic philosophical styles that favor a particular form of prosody. There are also some differences due to the instrumental techniques for which the *radif* is devised as a result of the different capabilities of instruments or the voice. As mentioned previously, improvisational techniques used to derive musical material in a performance from the *radif* are not formally taught, and students simply absorb these methods intuitively through imitation of their masters without being aware of them as such (Zonis 1973: 98). What the ethnomusicologist Ella Zonis neglects, however, is the reliance on poetry that allows for the improvisational techniques to take place. Therefore, mimicking as discussed by Zonis is more about aesthetic details—which are very important—such as ornamentation or vibrato. By no means can the actual rhythmic structure of a *gusheh* be imitated; it must be learned through the knowledge gained from prosody.

A large part of Persian art music is commonly known to consist of vast “unmeasured” or, more accurately, “free rhythm” styles of performance known as *āvāz*. “Free rhythm” does not mean a *gusheh* is without a beat or tempo, *but rather* that these rhythmic elements are what I call

“hidden” or “veiled” values that are generated and created through prosody. The Persian *radif* can be said to possess a form of “free rhythm” in that each *gusheh* has its own rhythmic characteristics and a freedom that is derived from its prosody, yet the performer can deviate to some extent from the same prosodic rules to which the *gusheh* is bound in the first place. As a result, rhythmically each *gusheh* differs from the next in the same *dastgah* due to its poetic meter and, at the same time, each musician can deviate rhythmically from another while performing the same *gusheh*.

Another important concept in Persian music is *āvāz*. *Āvāz* is primarily a vocal form where lines of traditional classic Persian poetry are sung to the melodies of the *radif* with the abundant use of ornamentation, especially a melismatic ornamentation called the *tahrīr*. There are also “measured” pieces in a performance, usually accompanied by percussion instruments such as the *tombak* (goblet-shaped drum) and *daf* (frame drum). *Pīsh-Darāmad*, *tasnīf*, and *reng* are the main types within this genre.

***Āvāz* and Rhythm**

Since a selected poem is often used in the performance of *āvāz*, the articulation of the rhythm of the *āvāz* is primarily based on the prosodic structure of that poetry. It is important to note that *āvāz* is one of the most important sections of Iranian music, and that it constitutes the majority of the performance. Ethnomusicologist Gen’ichi Tsuge has examined the structure of *āvāz* based on its prosodic organization. A summary of Tsuge’s conclusions are provided below (1970: 175):

- I. the “rhythmic characteristic of the *āvāz* is primarily based upon the poetic meter of the ‘*arūz* system, which is a recurring cycle of short and long syllables”
- II. the “prime unit of recurrence in the unmeasured texture is the inseparable pair: a short and a long syllable”
- III. generally speaking, a “phrase of music coincides with a foot of the poetic meter, which has usually has one iambic pattern (u–)”
- IV. in most cases the “iambic pattern is found at the beginning of a phrase”
- V. when a “certain number of syllables precede the accent, they are treated as neutral syllables in terms of duration”
- VI. from points IV and V it is “clear that words are usually articulated at the beginning of a phrase; the following syllables may then be prolonged as far as the sustaining energy permits”

At the “end of a phrase *tahrīr* is preferably employed; this must constitute one of the recurring elements of the poetic phrase” (Tsuge 1970:175).

Rhythmic Analysis: *Shūshtarī*

The *gusheh* under examination in this chapter is called *shūshtarī*. *Shūshtarī* literally means “from *Shūshtar*.” *Shūshtar* is a historic town in the southwestern province of *Khūzestān*. *Shūshtarī* is one of the *gūshe-ha* in the *dastgah* of *Homāyūn*. *Homāyūn* is one of the main *dastgāh-hā* of the *radif* of Persian music. To give the reader some idea of its melodic range, the main tetrachord of *homāyūn* (the most identifiable melodic composition which is the *daramad* of

a *dastgah*) can be illustrated as [G (tonic), A-half-flat, B, C]. This short *gusheh* is often played with a distinct rhythmic structure according to the prosodic meter of the poetry used, but this rhythmic structure is not exclusively vocal, as it is used in the instrumental performance of *Homāyūn* as well. The rhythmic structure of this *gusheh* will be examined as it appears in three of the most distinguished renditions of the *radif*: two from vocal genres and one from an instrumental genre. In these excerpts the presentation of prosodic rhythm and applied variations and modifications are examined to distinguish possible *īqā'* or *arūz* variation techniques. It must be noted that melismatic ornaments (*tahrīr*) are not examined here, since this study concentrates on the examination of the poetic meter and the rhythmic structures that correspond to the poetry.

Shūshtarī has been chosen for consideration because it is one of the shortest and “rhythmic” *gūshe-hā* that is performed in both instrumental and vocal *radif*. It also consists of repetitions or sequences of melodic lines providing a good opportunity for the observation of possible patterns of rhythmic difference or distinction. Since the *radif* excerpts under examination are not improvised, there are less variations applied (this is always the case with the *radif* as a guideline, a structure to base a performance on), offering a clear connection to prosody. As a result, the differences between the three relatively dry excerpts of the same *gusheh* can be helpful in recognizing a basic rhythmic structure and some of its variations.

***Shūshtarī* According to the Vocal *Radif* of Master Mahmūd Karīmī**

In Karīmī’s *radif*, *shūshtarī* is sung in two couplets (*abyāt*) from a poem by the medieval poet Sa’dī (1213-1293 CE). It consists of the prosodic meter *bahr-e hazaj-e mosaddas-e mahzūf* (the poetic feet of [*tan tanan tan tantanan tan tantanan tan*]; see Figure 4.1). *Haaj* is one of the

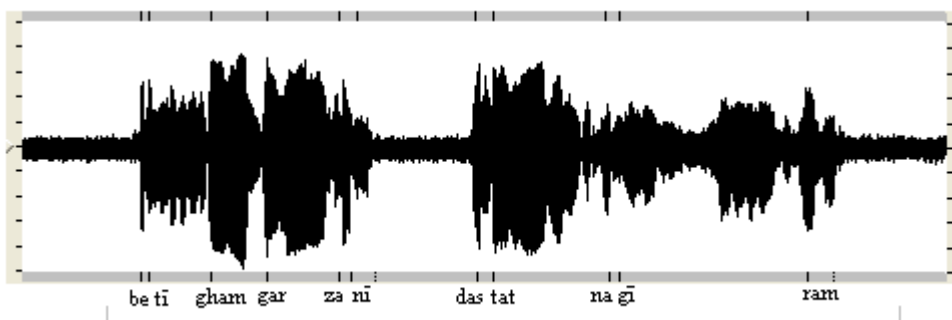
'arūz variations used which consists of the elision of the final *sabab-e khafīf* (a poetic foot consisting of [*tan tanan tan*] rhythmic value) in a hemistich: the last foot has changed from (u - -) to (u - -), a deviation that creates an added level of variety. *Mahzūf* means that the *hazaj* characteristics (poetic feet) have been applied to the poetic meter. This rhythmic characteristic of the couplet consists of two groups of *mafā'ilon* (*tanan tan tan*) followed by one *fa'ūlon* (*tan tanan tan*) in each hemistich. Figure 4.1 provides the pattern of *hazaj* rhythmic value as sung by Karīmī.

Figure 4.1. The rhythmic pattern of *hazaj* and its sequence performed by Master Karīmī.

<i>Mafā'ilon</i>	<i>Mafā'ilon</i>	<i>Fa'ūlon</i>
<i>tan tanan tan</i>	<i>tan tanan tan</i>	<i>tan tanan tan</i>

Since there are two couplets this rhythm is repeated four times, because the poem consists of four hemistiches. Figure 4.2 provides a graphic illustration of the first hemistich performed by Master Karīmī.

Figure 4.2. Master Karīmī's first hemistich of *shūshtarī*



The melody of *shūshtarī* is an ascending-descending stepwise melody that covers a range of a perfect fourth and corresponds directly to each hemistich (only the third hemistich is sung differently, and is not examined here). Table 4.1 examines the durations as they are sung in the melody of *shūshtarī* by Master Karīmī, where they are compared to the durations according to their ‘*arūz*. The durations are grouped in fundamental units of ‘*arūz* (*arkān-e aslī*) separated into long and short syllables.

Table 4.1 Syllabic analysis of *shūshtarī*, sung by M. Karīmī.

Durations according to ‘ <i>Arūz</i>	Tan Tanan (u-)	Tan (-)	Tan (-)	Tan Tanan (u-)	Tan (-)	Tan (-)	Tanan (u-)	Tan (-)
Hemistich 1	u-	-	-	uu ,	-	-	u vvvv	u pause
Hemistich 2	u-	-	-	-- ,	-	-	u vvvv	u pause
Hemistich 3	u-	-	-	u-	-	-,	u vvvv	Vvvv
Hemistich 4	u-	-	-	-vvv ,	-	-	u-	- *

*) Followed by *tahrīr*. ,) Pause vvvv) Melismatic *tahrīr* ornament

Similar to speech, in *āvāz* the durations of syllables are not consistent. However, as shown in Table 4.1, Master Karīmī uses distinctly shorter durations in singing the short syllables, which shows his attention to the prosodic rhythm of the music. Durations also match those of the ‘*arūz* relatively consistently. As examined by Tsuge, most ornamentations and melismas occur at the end of a phrase; other than that, Master Karīmī does not employ many variations to

the rhythm of the prosodic meter. When any rhythmic modification is applied, it is often a melismatic elongation of the last syllable group, which tends not to modify the short syllables. The phrasing of the musical line, however, as can be seen by the consistent placement of pauses, shows a different grouping than what is implied by the poetic feet.

***Shūshtarī* According to the Vocal *Radif* of Master Davāmī**

Master Abdullah Davāmī’s *radif* differs from that of Master Karīmī in the selection of poetry used for different *gūshe-ha*, the length and number of *gūshe-ha* in the *radif*, and some technical and vocal stylistic differences. In this particular excerpt—or any other *gusheh* in the *radif*—even though a different line of poetry is used, the same prosodic meter as that of the poetry used in Master Karīmī’s version applies (*bahr-e hazaj-e mosaddas-e mahzuf*). Table 4.2, provides a syllabic analysis of the four lines of poetry in *shūshtarī* sung by Master Davāmī.

Table 4.2 Syllabic analysis of *shūshtarī* sung by A. Davāmī

Durations according to ‘ <i>Arūz</i>	Tan Tanan (u–)	Tan (–)	Tan (–)	Tan Tanan (u–)	Tan (–)	Tan (–)	Tanan (u–)	Tan (–)
Hemistich 1	uu	–	–	u– ,	–	–	u–	– ,
Hemistich 2	uu	–	–	u– ,	–	–	u–	– *
Hemistich 3	uu	–	–	u–(,)	–	–	u–	–

*) Followed by *tahrīr*. ,) Pause

All four lines outline the same melodic and rhythmic structure where Master *Davāmī* is consistent in rendering the same durations to the syllables and the placement of pauses and lines of *tahrīr*.

The main variation that is examined here is a shortening of duration in the first rhythmic group, called *watad-e majmū’ (tanān)*. The second syllable of each line is shortened, even though the words assume a long setting. For example, in hemistich one the syllable *rū*—normally considered a long syllable—is sung as a short syllable. The first line’s normal prosodic durations are shown below in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 The analysis of the first line of poetry sung by Master *Davāmī*.

Be	rū	yē	del		ba	rī	man	mā		ye	das	tam.
u	–	–	–		u	–	–	–		u	–	–

In other words, the second syllable of *mafā’ilon* (u– – –, or *tanān tan tan*) in the beginning of each hemistich is shortened and sung as *fa’elāton* ([uu– –] or [*tanatan tan*]). This variation is applied consistently through the four hemstiches in this *gusheh*. If applied in ‘*arūz*, the variation would be known as *khabn*. This modification can also be considered a linking or joining variation in *īqā’* called *tawsīl*. The ‘*arūz* variation provides a better explanation in this case, since this example directly deals with words from the poetry. Since all four lines are consistently varied, it could be said that this rendition of the prosodic meter is presented in a *makhbūn* form (see again Chapter Three). In terms of grouping or phrasing, this version is nearly the same as Master *Karīmī*’s version, though the duration of pauses is not always alike.

Therefore, while a different poem is used the rhythmic duration and characteristics are *always* the same. However, a master musician has limited options which can be used to explore different deviations that are unique and result in complicated rhythmic formations.

***Shūshtarī* According to the *Radif* of Mīrzā ‘Abdollah (Instrumental)**

After looking at two versions of a vocal *radif*, I will now analyze the same *gusheh* in an instrumental setting. The *radif* of Mīrzā ‘Abdollah²¹ is the standard *radif* for *tār* and *sehtār*. Though some *gūshe-ha* in this *radif* are presented with a line of poetry to show the rhythm of the *āvāz*, there is no poetry written for *shūshtarī*; various masters use different poetry to teach their students *shūshtarī*'s rhythmic value. The most prominent element in this instrumental *gusheh* is a short motif that is clearly related to the *shūshtarī* of vocal *radif* and that can be recognized immediately. This rhythm will be analyzed as a variation of the vocal *shūshtarī* rhythmic value.

The prosodic meter of vocal *shūshtarī* starts with a *watad-e majmū’* (*tanān* or *u–*). Therefore, to understand the rhythmic components of *shūshtarī*, one must become familiar with the mechanism of *watad-e majmū’*, since this poetic foot is always a part of the standard formation of *shūshtarī* (as shown in Chapter Three). In this excerpt, however, *watad-e majmū’* has been changed to a *sbab-e thaqīl* (*tana* or *uu*), which can be considered a linking or joining variation in *īqā’* called *tawsīl* where the disjunction has been deleted (similar to that of Master Davāmī's rendition). This modification can also be considered an *‘arūz* variation called *khābn*, which consists of shortening the first long syllable. In view of the fact that this example does not deal with words directly, the *īqā’* equivalent is used instead. The result is then subjected to a

²¹ Mīrzā ‘Abdollah Farāhānī (1843-1918) was one of the most prominent figures in compiling the instrumental *radif* as it is known today.

doubling of tempo (*hadr* or *hathth* according to al-Fārābī). His notion of *hadr* or *hathth* has been used relatively loosely here, for al-Fārābī does not mention its application only to a rhythmic group but to the whole *īqā'*. However, al-Fārābī does recognize durational values shorter than a “shortest perceptible time” (Sawa, 1989: 35). This notion is illustrated in Western notation in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 Doubling of tempo or *hathth* in *shūshtarī*.



Moreover, the first two syllables are shortened to such an extent that they resemble a common instrumental anacrusic ornament called *dorrāb*, but the pitches still match the vocal *radif* (A^{half-flat} and B). Due to the relative short durations, it is quite unlikely that such a variation would be applied vocally; as a result, the assumption is that this can only be an instrumental technique.

The next striking variation is the repetition of parts, which play a very important role in improvisation in Persian music. The rhythmic group [*tan tan tanan*], or as referred to by its prosodic name *mostaf'elon*, is repeated just as in the vocal *radif* with almost the same melody (emphasizing the note C repeatedly) and similarly ends on an A^{half-flat}. However, in this case the motif is repeated three times, the last of which is almost an exact repetition of the second group. This sort of expansion of a rhythm cycle is identical to what al-Fārābī describes as *takrīr al-ajzā'*, which is the repetition of parts (Sawa 1989:51). This variation or repetition of a sequence

is illustrated in Figure 4.5. In using Western notation, eighth notes are used to show a short duration and should not be viewed as representing exactly half of a long duration shown by quarter notes. *Takrīr* is the repetition of a part (akin to a poetic foot) which results in an expansion and pattern alteration (Sawa, 2002:391).

Figure 4.5 Variation by repetition or *takrīr al-ajzā'* in *shūshtarī*

(Tana)*	tan tan tanan	tan tan tanan	tan tan tanan	tan
(uu)*	- - u-	- - u-	- - u-	-

* → Double tempo

Another interesting phenomenon is the relative precision of durational values. Compared to the vocal versions, this instrumental rendition is much more “rhythmical.” There is a more consistent flow as there are no pauses in the melody. The melodic pattern is not much ornamented compared to the vocal version, and the pattern is presented with emphasized attacks due to the anacrusic *dorrāb* (an instrumental technique of plucking) ornamentation.

In comparing the exact length of short and long durations, another important phenomenon must be noted that might create misunderstandings, especially regarding the use of Western notation. According to the instrumental notation of *shūshtarī* (Figure 4.5), every short duration (notated as *ta* or an eighth note) is half as long as a long duration (*tan* or quarter note). However, in the instrumental performance of *shūshtarī*, all short durations are played slightly shorter than half of a long duration (the average short duration is about 0.20 sec., and the average long

duration 0.60 sec). This is also reflected in various modern scores in the transcription of the *gusheh* where master musicians often use a sixteenth note to represent the short duration.

Radif and Prosody

By looking at the phrasing of these melodies in the vocal and instrumental *radif*, especially according to the placement of pauses, the general rhythmic structure of *shūshtaī* is based on the division of one group of *watad-e majmū'*, two groups of *mostaf'e lon*, and one *Sabab-e Khafīf* [*tantanan tan tantanan tan tantanan tan*]. The basic melodic structure of this *gusheh* as it corresponds to its rhythmic components is illustrated below in Figure 4.6. As I have stressed, the prosodic structure becomes an important tool for memorizing and improvising within a particular *gusheh* in Persian music. Figure 4.6 also illustrates the relationship between each rhythmic component and its corresponding intervallic formation in *shūshtaī*.

Figure 4.6 The division of the basic melodic structure *shūshtaī*.

<u>tanan</u>	→	A ^{half-flat} B
<u>tan tan tanan</u>	→	C C C C
<u>tan tan tanan</u>	→	C B A ^{half-flat} B
<u>tan</u>	→	A ^{half-flat}

This grouping is not exactly equal to the grouping assumed by the prosodic meter *hazaj-e mosaddas-e mahzūf*, which consists of three groups of *mafā'ilon* [*tan tanan tan*] and one *fa'ūlon* [*tan tanan tan*]. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the grouping prescribed by the prosodic meter can be altered in a musical performance. This is clearly where a musician can take command and create distinctive complex rhythmic formations. Clearly, in a prescribed melody such as *shūshtarī*, as is always the case with the *radif*, this grouping corresponds to the melodic structure of the *gusheh*. Variations applied to the structure in performance also seem to take place according to this grouping, rather than the theoretic grouping of the *'arūz* such as is the case in the instrumental example discussed in this chapter. Therefore, the *radif* serves as a guideline to build both the melodic and rhythmic foundations for what seems to the unfamiliar ear to be “unmeasured” music.

Another important factor to consider is that according to these excerpts from the *āvāz* style, we can observe two common variations including the altering of syllable durations—especially shortening long syllables—and the repetition of parts. As examined, the length of durations in *āvāz* style—even in the instrumental rendition—do not seem to convey any direct proportion between longs and shorts, though the duration of “short” syllables seems to be relatively consistent. In other words, the duration of long syllables, especially in *āvāz*, are quite variable, especially at the ending of a phrase.

“Measured” Music: Meter and Rhythmic Mode

In analyzing *āvāz* we were not directly dealing with an exact pulse or consistent gradations of time, so in order to find possible survivals of al-Fārābī’s concepts of *tqā'* one needs

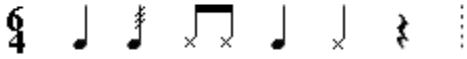
to examine a common rhythmic cycle in the practice of Persian music, often played on the *tombak*. The *tombak* (goblet shaped drum) is the predominant percussion instrument in Persian art music that accompanies all “measured” sections in a performance.

It is often claimed that rhythmic modes do not exist in Persian music. However, there are a number of meters that are most commonly used in Persian music, for which a particular *tombak* pattern is used for marking the cycle. Even though these are not commonly known by formal names, as opposed to *īqā’at* in the contemporary practice of Arab music, they constitute a particular pattern of percussion rhythms and are widely known to musicians. Furthermore, Western meter names have been informally applied to these specific rhythmic patterns. For example, a 6/8 cycle vernacularly called *shīsh-o-hasht*, meaning “six and eight,” refers to a particular rhythmic pattern in that meter comprised of a specific pattern taken from a specific poetic foot. If one considers these particulars as rhythmic modes, one may conclude that the concept of rhythmic mode exists, at least informally, in Persian musical practice due to its strong connection to prosody.

One of these particular rhythms commonly used in Persian art music is a six-beat cycle informally known as *shesh-chahārom* (6/4). The main pattern of this rhythm is shown in Western notation in Figure 4.7.²²

²² *Tombak* playing requires many different strokes creating different timbres on the instruments; they can be simplified into three categories: strokes with an open low sound (called ‘*tom*’), strokes with a closed sound (‘*bak*’), and strokes created by many short consequent strokes, which fill in the duration of the beat (called ‘*rīz*’), shown as a tremolo.

Figure 4.7 6/4 rhythm commonly played in Persian music rendered in Western notation.



As can be seen, the last beat of the cycle is a rest with no articulations, which is a clear demonstration of the survival of the concept of *fāsila* discussed by al-Fārābī. One of the characteristics of this rhythm is an ambiguity in the grouping of the six beats. There is no special emphasis on either grouping as (2+2+2) or (3+3). This might also be another aspect of the concept of meter discussed under *fāsila*, where grouping is identified by “disjunction” as opposed to “accent hierarchy” (refer again to see Chapter Three). Therefore, the 6/4 rhythm under question can be considered a long cycle of five attacks and a disjunction, with no specific “metric” sub-division.

There is also a curious resemblance between this “6/4” and a cycle called *ramal*, described by al-Fārābī as one of the popular rhythmic modes of his time (Sawa, 2002: 392). Figure 4.8, which consists of one heavy attack and two medium attacks with a disjunction, illustrates a similar concept to that of al-Fārābī’s *ramal*. This 3/2 rhythm is considered a derivation from the “first heavy” fundamental *īqā*, which is also called the fundamental ‘*ramal*’ as discussed by al-Fārābī.

Figure 4.8 The division of 3/2, constituting the fundamental *ramal*.



Moreover, 6/4 could be derived from *ramal* using the *īqā'* variation '*tadh'īf*' on all attacks. *Tadh'īf* "consists of inserting a [timeless] attack inside the duration separating two attacks" (Sawa, 2002: 392).

Analysis of a Solo Percussion Performance by Hussein Tehrānī

Having looked at the structure of the 6/4 cycle, I will now examine the variations applied to this rhythm in performance. Table 4.3 shows a summary of variations applied in a solo *tombak* performance by Master Hosein Tehrānī in his Shiraz (an artistic city in south central Iran) performance during a famous summer musical festival. This solo performance is entirely in 6/4 and includes fifty cycles of this meter, which lasted well over five minutes.

Table 4.3. Variations applied to '6/4' as played by Master H. Tehrānī

Cycle	Variation Applied
2, 14, 30, 32, 39	<i>Tadh'īf</i> (fill in or doubling) on beat 3 (3 rd and 4 th attacks)
3, 8, 10, 12, 17, 26	<i>Tadh'īf</i> (fill in) on beat 4 (5 th attack)
4, 5, 18, 22, 35, 36, 42, 43, 47	<i>Majāz</i> (filling in Fāsila), <i>Tadh'īf</i> on beats 3, 4, 5
7, 13, 29, 38, 40, 41, 45, 46	<i>Takrīr</i> (repetition) of inserted rhythmic group foreign to the cycle (4, 3, or 5 times)

Cycle	Variation Applied
9,15,16	<i>Hathth</i> (tempo doubling) of beats 3 and 4.
11, 20, 25, 33, 49	<i>Tamkhīr</i> (replacing medium attacks for all durations) ‘ <i>rīz</i> ’ articulation
23, 24, 48	<i>Tayy</i> (omission of attacks) beats 4 and 5
50	<i>Tartīl</i> (gradual slowing down)

The most commonly used variations consist of *majāz*, *tad’īf*, and *takrīr*. Timbre variations were also frequently used in this excerpt. Interestingly, many of these techniques were discussed by al-Fārābī’ in Chapter Three. Al-Fārābī’s system of variations can be a useful tool in the analysis of these rhythmic components. Each varied cycle can be reconstructed fairly exactly using the basic form of the 6/4 meter. This is not only a helpful tool in this rhythmic analysis, but has even greater use in performance, practice, and pedagogy, especially in a musical culture like Persian music.

Prosody as the Fundamental Rhythmic Constitution

In the course of the two previous chapters the concepts of *īqā’* and ‘*arūz*’ dealing with principles of rhythm in music and poetry (prosody) were introduced. These theories were examined with special focus on the theoretical work of the medieval scholar al-Fārābī.

“Rhythmic groups,” *atānīn* mnemonics, and *fāsila* disjunctions were identified as some concepts in the theories to be used in the analysis in this chapter. These theories were then applied to excerpts of two main genres of Persian art music dealing with what can be referred to as “poetic rhythm”; this was followed by an analysis of a “metered” performance of percussion which traced the survival of some aspects of the theories discussed. *Fāsila*, or “time of disjunction” as discussed by al-Fārābī, was examined as a concept present in both prosody and music, which is a typical characteristic of Middle Eastern rhythm. When excerpts from the practice of Persian music the *radif* were examined, this concept was found in one of the common rhythmic cycles. The particular rhythm that I labelled “6/4” was found to contain the element of *fāsila*, and its resemblance to the medieval cycle *ramal* was also noticed.

Another important concept discussed in this chapter that significantly illustrates the connection between poetry and music was the possibility of the use of variation processes of *īqā’* and *‘arūz* as improvisational techniques in the practice of Persian music. Some of these variations include:

- I. *Khabn*: shortening long syllables
- II. *Tawsīl*: contracting the time of disjunction
- III. *Takrīr al-ajzā’*: repetition of a “rhythmic group”
- IV. *Majāz*: filling in the time of disjunction
- V. *Tadh’īf*: inserting timeless attacks (filling in)

This chapter has demonstrated, through the use of contemporary musical examples, the survival of some aspects of al-Fārābī’s *īqā’* theory and concepts of *‘arūz* in which poetry and especially prosody play an important role. More significant has been their use in the current

practice of Persian music, illustrating that both music and poetry as disciplines have long been interconnected. Whether or not practicing musicians use these notions—consciously or unconsciously—or if these concepts are any closer to the concepts imbedded in actual performance practice throughout the centuries, when compared to that of the Western theoretical frameworks now common in Iran, will be the topic of the next chapter.

Postlude: Experiencing Persian Music

As a postlude to this chapter I hope to use my own journey in becoming a musician—a short ethnography of my own experience—to illustrate the importance placed on prosody in Persian music. As highlighted throughout this thesis, the strong connection that exists between the two disciplines today has served Persian music in both its pedagogical development/advancements and, when looking at the most sophisticated performative aspects, its improvisation. As a music student, I spent the first few years becoming accustomed to the appropriate (elementary) practices, and then gradually moved on to memorizing simple composed pieces. During these basic training periods, learning and remembering the right order of music notes and the proper holding of the instrument were the main goal. Rhythmically the pieces that I had memorized were simple; I always thought that the lack of rhythm was compensated by the rich melodic build-ups that Persian music possesses. After a few years of learning relatively simple compositions and the standard procedures that a music student needs to follow, I began the long journey of studying the *radif*.

I vividly recall my first day of *radif* learning: it was with Master Mohammed Reza Lotfi in California. Being excited, I decided to take my high-quality instrument; I knew that the

melodies were about to get complicated, and, as expected, I needed to spend long hours practicing. Meanwhile, I was also aware of the philosophical narratives behind each *gusheh* that I was going to learn from my teacher. As expected, Master Lotfi started by explaining the purpose of the *radif*, and then each *gusheh* in detail. Initially Master Lotfi elucidated the reasons why a musician performs a particular *gusheh*, discussing the motives when a performer embarks on this journey of choosing a specific *gusheh*. I found myself eagerly anticipating his permission to finally take my instrument out of its case, but that moment never came on the first few days of *radif* learning. After Master Lotfi spent a good portion of the first few classes explaining the philosophical notions engaged with the *radif*, he began—to my surprise—with the survey and study of prosody.

I really had a limited knowledge of poetry, let alone the rigid and complex conventions of prosody. I was not certain—or even convinced—what the reasons were behind Master Lotfi’s dedication teaching me the rules and conventions of prosody. I repeatedly asked myself what the significance of becoming acquainted with prosody might be; he repeatedly stated that a *gusheh* always consists of and is remembered by recognizing its poetic rhythm. After explaining the philosophical aspect of a *gusheh*, Master Lotfi always analyzed two different components that are *equally* important in learning the *radif* which allowed the students to remember its complicated and relative lengthy parts. The first stage is concerned with the melodic characteristics, such as its progress, the home note (loosely conceptualized as tonic), and its cadences. I was able to grasp the melodic section of the *radif* with relative ease; the second section, however, was difficult and also different from any musical practice I had encountered. The second part of learning a *gusheh*—both parts are explained to the student at the same time—

involved a detail analysis of the corresponding rhythmic values, much like the example of *shūshtarī* illustrated earlier in this chapter.

Master Lotfi believes that Persian music can never neglect the importance of prosody. Rhythmic analysis always starts out by simply reciting the appropriate poem, and then asking the student to remember and recite the same poem. For instance, when I learned Master Karīmī's *radif* in *gusheh shūshtarī*, Master Lotfi asked me to continually repeat the two couplets (*abyāt*) from a poem by the medieval poet Sa'dī until he was confident that I had fully memorized this particular poem. At this time, Master Lotfi explained the prosodic meter of *bahr-e hazaj-e mosaddas-e mahzūf*, which is the “real” rhythmic value of *shūshtarī*. This is where I had a hard time understanding the connection—in fact many students have the same confusing experience. I was not sure why or even how to really implement *shūshtarī* poetic components to music. Yet, with repeated practice and an eventual understanding of prosody, it became clear that *shūshtarī* always consisted of the rhythmic groups of *mafā'ilon* (*tan tan tan*) followed by one *fa'ūlon* (*tan tan*) in each hemistich. Gradually, I discovered that reciting a poem related to this *gusheh* helped me remember this and other *gusheh* much more easily. Therefore, during the learning years prosody gradually becomes an important tool in the memorization and maintenance of the proper rhythmic values.

Beyond this stage, it takes years of dedicated practice on various instruments, melodic memorization, and (what is often neglected) an understanding of the importance of the replication of a particular poem and its prosody in order to gain critical insight into the vast experience of improvisation. After becoming a versatile musician on a particular instrument, improvisation is based on the two main components that Master Lotfi always advocates: the complete understanding of rhythmic *and* melodic characteristics of the *radif*. This understanding

accumulates through a lifetime of musical experience. A musician can never neglect both the melodic and rhythmic aspects of a performance if a unique exploration is to be made.

Chapter Five: Modernity and Oral Tradition

Notions of space and the evolution of Persian oral music are rarely discussed together, but spatial elements in today's multi-layered Iranian society have profoundly impacted the oral transmission of music—including that of the transmission of prosody when a *gusheh* is being learned—playing a role in the creation of a hybrid of modernity and tradition. I believe that there are numerous factors that have shaped and even distorted Persian music in the contemporary setting, but I consider the modern spatial configuration of today's Iran as one of the most important and vital aspects in the creation of the “modern” classical music of Iran. This chapter examines the relevance or significance of oral transmission, insofar as they continue to sustain prosody and the *radif*, amongst the master musicians in modern Iran. This will include examining the reliance on oral tradition that has helped connect the two artistic disciplines of music and poetry. I believe that by analyzing the practical pedagogical training, the process of improvisation, and the performance practice of Persian music among “modern” musicians in today's Iran a light can be shed on the magnitude and relevance of oral tradition as a whole and, as a result, on the connection between poetry and music in contemporary settings.

The power of spatial configuration became vividly apparent on a personal level two summers ago (summer of 2008) after a music class I attended with Master Mohammed Reza Lotfi.²³ I was invited to attend a “traditional” concert held in Tehran's historic Vahdat Hall. The hall was built in 1971 to host Western orchestras, ballet performances,²⁴ and Persian classical ensembles, and the government of the time promoted it as an example of the new modern *space* of Iran. While entering the balcony area to be seated, I could not help but notice the two imposing screens situated above the stage for close-up shots of the performers. I also noticed the

²³ Mohammed Reza Lotfi, born in 1925, is one of Iran's contemporary masters of *tar* and *sahtar*.

²⁴ Before the 1979 Revolution, the Vahdat Hall was the home of the National Ballet of Iran.

high-tech lighting and the advanced sound speakers embedded in the ceiling. I found my seat, so far from the stage that I was only able to hear the instruments through the enhancement of microphones.

As a student of oral tradition, I found the experience of the grand hall alienating, foreign from the intimate spaces where I became familiar with traditional Persian music and its oral method of transmission. The special aesthetic quality of traditional Persian classical music once arose from the open spaces of gardens, bazaars, and kings' courts, and the concert hall encounter of music is much different now. What I experienced that night was the impact of spatial evolution on Persian musical tradition. As a traditionally trained musician, I was more powerfully confronted than ever before by hybridism, the evolution of which began more than fifty years ago.

The twentieth century has seen enormous changes in the arts and artistic approaches of Persians, including immense upheavals for oral music traditions. This chapter explores the evolution of Persian oral music over the last half century. This development can be understood in terms of three distinct artistic approaches that correspond to three socio-political periods. Each of the three artistic-social periods in turn coincides with a distinct spatial configuration. This chapter draws the categorization of the first two of these configurations from Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's spatial conceptions as outlined in his book *The Production of Space* (1991). The first of Lefebvre's spatial notions under consideration here is the spiritual and intimate "absolute space." This was the context until the middle of the twentieth century for the traditional approach to Iranian oral music. Lefebvre's second category is "abstract space," an institutionalized spatial configuration that brought about powerful changes to the traditional approach to Persian music, removing students and masters from homes and natural settings and

placing them instead into rigid, impersonal settings. The “abstract space” is powerfully shaped by the state and by governmental institutions. Urbanization, mechanization, modernization, and capitalism created these spaces of musical “professionalism” (the acceptance of financial assets, and fame as the greatest goal), linked to the newly formed places of concert halls, recording studios, and conservatory classes.

Today the musical spaces of Iran have left Lefebvre’s conceptions behind, evolving into a third stage that I define as “transformational” space. This dynamic space is not rigidly defined by tradition or modernity, but is rather space that although necessarily influenced by abstract space, remains non-defined and stimulates opportunities for innovative musical forms. Below I describe the circumstances of the transformations from absolute to abstract to transformational space and the parallel changes in Persian oral music tradition from spirituality and fluidity; to the rigid constructions of modernization, Westernization, and capitalism; and to a new, hybrid space, the context for a unique musical approach consisting of a mix of oral and Western musical elements.

Lefebvre’s Spiritual and Intimate “Absolute Space” (Pre-1953)

Persian music has traditionally been handed down orally from one generation to the next. This traditional approach is often referred to by music scholars as the “authentic” style of Iranian art music (Darvishi 1994b:21). The traditional method was the common practice of the late *Qajar* and early *Pahlavi*²⁵ dynasties. It was founded in the oral transmission of the *radif* (the musical repertoire) from a master to a student. Master musicians held their lessons and practice

²⁵ The *Qajar* dynasty ruled Iran from 1781 to 1925, and the *Pahlavi* dynasty ruled from 1925 to 1979.

sessions in the open spaces of gardens in the summer, and in private homes in the winter. Above all, these were private and intimate spaces, creating a distinct feeling and relationship between the students and the master musicians. The pupils would listen to the master play every day—usually the students sat in a circle on a large rug—and were responsible for memorizing a small part of the repertoire each week, including the recitation of the particular poems. Only when he or she had memorized the entire repertoire, both melodically and rhythmically, was it said that a student was ready to embark on an artistic foray, ultimately improvising based on the oral memorization of the *radif*.

The daily classes of the oral tradition lasted as long as three hours, a central part of the years of commitment by each student to a certain master. The students observed first-hand as the oral tradition evolved both musically and philosophically under the influence of each master's school of music.²⁶ In the first half of the twentieth century, oral methods were the only important source of transmission. The spaces in which this took place are usually portrayed in pictures and narratives as revolving around nature, featuring elements such as water fountains and gardens that used to dominate the open spaces of Tehran and other cities. Persian classical music was inseparable from the “open space of nature, the gardens, and the sound of nightingales” (Darvishi 1994b:11).

For philosopher Henri Lefebvre, space and spatial practices and perceptions are social products, complex social constructions based on values and the social production of meanings. Social space is a social product that embraces a multitude of intersections that give meaning to places, shaping, for example, the perception of the concert hall in Iran today. Lefebvre describes

²⁶ Musically, the philosophical traditions of Iran consist of the Tabriz, Esfahan, and Tehran schools. However, the spiritual aspects cultivated by the masters also arise from various *sufi* traditions.

“absolute” space as “transcendent, as sacred (i.e. inhabited by divine forces), as magical and cosmic” (Lefebvre 1991:234). It was these sorts of “absolute” spaces that shaped and were shaped by the traditional performance practices of Iranian music. They were the home of the “ideal amateur,” a musical concept based around the musician’s spiritual gracefulness in constructing spaces of tranquility, transcendence, and sacredness, a talent frequently considered mystical in its production. The traditional function of Persian music is to present numinous (holy or spiritual) music in order to arouse spiritual emotions in an assembly of listeners with diverse spiritual needs (Lotfi 1997:59). The music always had a *spirit* that was nurtured in intimate spaces (called “absolute” by Lefebvre) amongst acquaintances and associates.²⁷

The traditional spatial dimensions of Persian oral music had an important function. Natural settings and small private gatherings served as a spatial construct for the ritual or occasion of realizing the ideals of the mystics through the ritual of listening, a medium of “pure” musical transmission. In this process, the music became a vital tool enmeshed with the natural and intimate spaces in which it took place, together creating a form of solitude, whether brought about through exclusive performance in the back yard of a house or in the confinement of landscape. Music was meant to stimulate the mind, using the melodic, rhythmic, and stressed repetition of oral performance as a source of spiritual transformation. Lefebvre states that absolute space “has a social existence, and hence a specific and powerful ‘reality.’ The ‘mental’ is ‘realized’ in a chain of ‘social activities’ because, in the temple, in the city, in monuments and places, the imaginary is transformed into the real” (Lefebvre 1991:251). Thus, above all, the oral tradition of Iranian music served a sacred and spiritual purpose, one that was closely aligned with the transformation of the self. In the intimate spaces of social activity, music served as a sacred

²⁷ The motivational forces for the “ideal amateur” musicians were self-entertainment, expression of cultural values, self-cultivation, and the acquisition of virtue.

tool that enriched the soul and protected it from being consumed by the profane aspects of human and social life, such as commercialization and labour production. These intimate spaces became an honorable dwelling place for various groups of performers.

Three main groups of oral performers were dominant in Iran during the early years of the twentieth century, and together can be said to represent the traditional approach to Iranian oral music. Poetry of course served a central function in both the memorization and performance of these groups. The first group consisted of musicians known as *motrabs*, identified throughout Persian society as lower-class musicians. The *motrabs* often sat in the bazaars or main squares in the cities and performed epic stories. This form of theater-music captured the attention of bystanders and people in neighboring shops. *Motrabs* often carried a wooden panel to elevate themselves from the ground for better viewing by the onlookers. They always performed outdoors, and were known as gypsy musicians of Iran—romantic and unbounded musicians, perpetually traveling and never rooted in one place. They were never considered serious musicians and were often poorly regarded compared to the king's musicians, who moved from one place to another (Khalghie 2001:203). Due to modernization, the political turmoil after 1953, economic hardship, and newly forming spatial configurations of housing, roads, automobiles, and even traffic in modern Iran, the *motrabs*' style of music and performance was driven to the brink of extinction.

The second main group of performers of the time included many of the masters who are known today as the great guardians of the oral tradition of the twentieth century. They are well documented in the history of Persian music, but limited their teachings and performances to private and intimate gatherings. It must be emphasized that at this time public performance was not common, and this group almost always performed in private indoor spaces, though

occasionally outdoors in nature, far from the ears of the general public. These musicians were the main source of transmission of the knowledge of the repertoire and of the prosody related to the *radif* to the next generation of master musicians. They were the engine of the continuous creation of the *radif* as well as the advancement of many instrumental techniques.²⁸ It is noteworthy that with the decaying authority of the king following the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, this group of musicians began performing at informal gatherings at the homes of aristocratic supporters of the arts and some wealthy merchants (Lotfi 1997:19). Although these were still very private and exclusive affairs, many writers of the time began to document more performances by these masters, even at times noting related political agendas. The musicians are known to have used the house gardens as a public display of music and defiant messages as part of the Constitutional Revolution. Thus, the musicians started to transform the private spaces to voice their socio-political displeasure of the regime.

Lefebvre's absolute space is best represented in the process of *sama* (to listen) with *sufi* musicians, the third main group of traditional performers. They would perform in any space as long as there was a single person willing to listen, and the setting was intimate and private. Spatially *sufi* music can be considered closely related to what German philosopher Martin Heidegger points to as part of his conception of "dwelling," which means, in part, "to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace" (Heidegger 1971:147). *Sufi* musicians held performances mostly in spiritual spaces such as tombs and shrine halls for occasions such as religious events. The days chosen for musical performances typically coincided with events such as the anniversaries of the death or special accomplishments of the Prophet or the saints. Other

²⁸ The *radif* is a late nineteenth-century phenomenon. The *radif* was created from the modal system known as *magham*. In this system, the artistic taste of a particular master led to the compilation of various *maghamha* (sing. *magham*) in a certain piece of music, creating a unique *radif*.

musical occasions included weekly rituals on Thursdays, which are days of death remembrances, or on Fridays when Muslim weekly prayers are held. These rituals lasted from a half hour to ten hours. For the musicians, the occasions served as a place to *dwell* or to remain in peace (in the Heideggerian sense), a time for the inner self to journey to the unknown and be at peace by singing and playing various instruments.

Each of the three categories of traditional musicians based their music and oral traditions on sacred and ritualistic models, and this resonates closely with Lefebvre’s notion of an absolute space of spirituality and unity. Furthermore, musically the first half of the twentieth century was the time and spiritual space of the “ideal amateur.” Encroaching modernity, however, changed the spatial construction of Iranian society fundamentally, and with that musical thinking. The new spatial configurations were dominated by rigid spaces influenced by Westernization, modernization, and the labour production of goods, where government institutions became panoptical overseers arranging for societal permeation by the almost invisible but nonetheless restrictive web of bureaucratization. Emerging musicians had no choice but to fall under these newly created systematic oversights that soon permeated abstract spatial elements.

Lefebvre’s Institutional, “Abstract Space” (1953-1979)

This dramatic shift in Iranian society began in the latter part of 1953, with the socio-political events of the CIA-backed *coup d’état* in Iran. The *coup d’état* saw the democratically elected prime minister of the time, Mohammed Mosaddeq, ousted in favour of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, commonly known afterward as the Shah of Iran. By late 1953, American influence on Iranian society had grown significantly, based on what Iranians frequently referred to as the

greed for oil. For instance, Americans were responsible for assembling the notorious Iranian secret police (SAVAK), and also for creating modern spaces such as American schools and American recreation clubs where Iranians could experience Western culture first-hand. After this time, “modern” (typically Western) practices began to appear in all realms of Iranian society, endured by some and embraced by others, but eventually welcomed on a larger scale. Rapid modernization generated a demand for the replication of a Western mentality in Iranian music, grounded in Western notation, instrumentation, orchestration, and pedagogical methods. This demand was later echoed emphatically in the foundation of the Music Conservatory of Tehran. Western ways of thinking seemed to be more in line with the public’s ever more modernized daily routine, and their traditional Persian values were fading. This exuberant attention to Western music and methods soon sidelined the traditional oral system in Persian classical music, and the long-established methodology became increasingly marginalized and even trivialized. Attention to modernity forced many traditionalists into an isolated revival mode. Master musicians were forced to invest their time from the isolation of their homes in scattered and strenuous tactics for salvaging the traditional rudiments, rather than surveying new avenues of enriching Persian music (Hannaneh 1989:86).

The influence of the West through modernity caused a shift in which music lost some of the smoothness and serenity of performances in natural spaces, and shifted to the rigid constraints of Lefebvre’s “abstract space.” Abstract space, according to Lefebvre, is the space of accumulation, of wealth and resources: knowledge, technology, money, precious objects, works of art, and symbols. Lefebvre states that “abstract space relates negatively to that which perceives and underpins it—namely, the historical and religio-political spheres” (Lefebvre 1991:50). Through the new modern spaces for music, government supported institutions such as

the Conservatory became the source of ground-breaking musicianship. Concert halls were now advertised as home to advanced models of performance, and nature and private space were criticized as suitable only for the primitive and unadorned music of leisure-seekers and amateurs.

Abstract space, Lefebvre says, is “political; instituted by a state, it is institutional” (Lefebvre 1991:285). Abstract spaces that met this criteria became the new venues for Iranian music as it shed tradition, moving away from oral music to written scores, incorporating Western instrumentation and orchestral arrangements, and becoming frequently performed in confined spaces such as that of Iranian National Radio in two acoustically-sealed music rooms in Tehran’s government-funded broadcast center. The creation of concert halls was the construction of abstract space, and was matched ideologically by the new phenomenon of public performances in designated areas blocked off by walls to create an “intimate” space, simultaneously keeping people out and allowing for profit through ticket sales. The musical requirements necessary to conform to specifications for the mass production of recordings, a new reliance on a conservatory model for music classes, and the newly founded institution of the fine art department of the University of Tehran were further constraints forcing music to adapt to new institutional spatial surroundings.

Although abstract space blossomed after 1953, it is important to note that even before modernity took shape in Iran, abstract space did exist due to certain cliques of musicians. Not all musicians had the freedom to express their artistic ability at their own will. The *darbar* musicians, for example, were used as labour commodities, representing Lefebvre’s idea of the institutionalism and economical gains related to abstract space. The *darbar* performed folk and dance tunes for the pleasure of the king in the royal courts. As Lefebvre notes, abstract space “embraces the state and bureaucratic *raison d’état*...and the discourse of power” (Lefebvre

1991:308). What separates the traditional musical approach of the court musicians from the modern approach is that the practitioners of the former were not concerned with elements of modernity like written music, and they were closely connected to nature and the spiritual elements of music. However, these musicians had to function in a space based upon the political institution of the king, and abuse and misuse of the musicians' (and dancers') labour was common.

These *darbar* musicians most often lived in the king's palaces and had no identity of their own. They were not allowed to leave the confined spaces of the palace. During the summer months a place known as *jaygah-ie tarab* (the place of joy) was constructed, usually a wooden structure a few meters in diameter for the musicians and dancers to perform on. The *jaygah-ie tarab* was often situated in the middle section of the king's garden. Always consisting of an open space, it was often located adjacent to the king's outdoor throne, overlooked variously shaped water pools, and was surrounded by tall trees to seclude it from the rest of the palace producing an intimate feeling. During the winter months, the musicians had a room exclusively for their use. Most often these rooms were built using geometrically shaped wooden panels based on acoustic principles that allowed the music to be heard throughout the palace. The *darbar* musicians were an earliest instance of music's relation to abstract space. But, as noted above, the mass production of abstract space did not begin until 1953.

The establishment of the modern approach in Iranian music is strongly linked to figures like Master Ali Naghie Vazirie. Vazirie, although already an accomplished musician, went on to spend six years at the Paris Conservatory of Music learning the piano. Vazirie's European experience played a significant role in shaping his methods and philosophy toward Iranian Art Music. In 1958, Vazirie created the Tehran Conservatory of Music, a building that stood in the

upper-class area of Tehran and featured sessional instructors teaching Persian classic music in classrooms with blackboards marked by musical staff notation. Vazirie also had a hand in radio, along with his student Rouhollah Khaleghi,²⁹ for he established the *Novin Orchestra* (Contemporary Orchestra). Most of the musicians who played on the radio were directly under Vazirie's influence. The music was recorded in studios and taped for public broadcast the next day. The musicians were crammed into small rooms with music scores, and were compensated financially for every hour spent at the station.

The modern approach may be most successfully illustrated by Tehran's Conservatory of Music. Vazirie intended for it to have a European style, calling it a "new *space* [emphasis added] of educational model for Iranian Art Music" (Lotfi 1997:21). The Conservatory abolished the long-held oral tradition of the *radif* in favour of written scores, Western theories, and institutionalized organization. Music textbooks were sold in its main lobby, each floor was designated for a specific instrument, and different classrooms operated at different hours. The students were required to learn Western theory and the piano, alongside their selected Persian instruments, and a comprehensive examination was held each year. The Conservatory included a library and a concert hall where many performances were given throughout the calendar year. The bank in the main lobby was handy for the students to arrange tuition finances, and the cafeteria was a place to socialize and eat Western food like hamburgers.

The transition from oral methods to written scores had enormous effects on the students and teachers. Gradually the *radif* and its philosophical underpinnings gave way to generic methods of instructions. Simultaneously, the students became deprived of the true essence (the

²⁹ Rouhollah Khaleghi was a musicologist and composer. He published many books and articles on Iranian Art Music.

tradition) of Iranian Art Music; instead, the Western notation system became their focus. Many, even among the public, began to consider the comprehension of Western notation a measure of a musician's capability. The notion of an accomplished Western-trained sight-reader remains present in Iran today, and the skill is often judged unfairly as a major indication of musical competence.

The establishment of the music department at the University of Tehran in 1961 was also based on Western concepts. The department featured music lecture rooms with grand pianos. The students were required to take part in private piano classes and participate in the Western-style choir in the newly built auditorium. The music department also offered private practice rooms with pianos that students could use without the supervision of a master musician, creating a space in which little attention was given to the *radif* and almost none to the oral tradition (Darvishi 1994a:163). These new spaces disrupted the master-student relationship and the oral transmission of music.

A backlash to these changes, however, was soon to follow. By middle of the 1970s, a group of students from the University of Tehran became increasingly aware of the significance of oral transmission as an essential component of Persian music, such as the importance of prosody. The students became advocates of the older tradition. In order to preserve the oral tradition, they created an institute called *Hafez va Eshaah Moaquié* (The Propagation and Preservation of Music). The institute—although small and frequently discredited by the government—would come to play a powerful role in the training of contemporary masters in the 1970s. Master Lotfi states that the institute became a source of traditional values for those opposing modernization, and a scene of rebellion against the Westernization of Persian music (Lotfi 1997:21). Even the institute could not fully escape modernization or commoditization, for

it had to lease an apartment complex in downtown Tehran. It was also subject to secret police searches as an alleged Marxist organization, a cover-up for the government to control the students' activities in an attempt to preserve abstract space.

Although the center faced undeniable modernizing pressure, it nonetheless became a strong source of the traditional approach. The students and master musicians sat on a rug during classes, classes had no time limit, and no recording devices were used. The center employed various masters with little income and trained many students who are now the contemporary masters of Persian music. Interestingly, the pupils were mostly university students and familiar with Western educational and historical aspects of music. Their musical transformation coincided with a sense of the need to rebalance Westernization in Iran, a reaction increasingly evident in all domains within Persian society as the Islamic Revolution started to progress. The students became ever more involved and more closely associated with the *Hafez va Eshaah Moaquié*.

Mohammed Reza Darvishi³⁰ argues that many of the students' tendencies were the direct result of the general public's resentment toward the Pahlavi regime (Darvishi 1994b:53). The young musicians of the university saw the construction of traditional *space* as their way of protecting their musical culture and standing up against Western imperialism, modernization, and capitalism, all perceived by them as artificial ideologies implemented by the *shah*.³¹

The music students of the center engaged themselves in the oral studies of various repertoire and encouraged their masters to join their defiance. Both the students and their

³⁰ Mohammed Reza Darvishi was one of the first Iranian ethnomusicologists. He is also a well-known composer and a graduate of the University of Tehran

³¹ *Shah* literally means "a king." However, when the term *shah* is used with no specific name following, it indicates Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

masters began holding classes in nature—performing free of charge in gardens and parks—as an attempt to reclaim the voice of lost tradition. In fact, in order to raise awareness and also to revive the forgotten *radif*, the young Hussein Tehrani and Mohammed Reza Shajarain³² performed in various shrines of renowned Persian poets. These performances took place during one of the most prestigious musical festivals organized in Iran to date and drew notable attention from the public and disdain from the government.

To summarize, the late 1970s saw the emergence of a unique group of accomplished musicians who became advocates of the traditional approach, while at the same time through their university education achieving a commanding knowledge of Western art music and a familiarity with the confinement of abstract space. The students represented an early instance of a new spatial configuration that was soon to emerge more aggressively in Iranian society.

Iran’s Hybrid “Transformational” Space (1979-present)

Westernization in Iran continued through to 1979, when the Islamic Revolution changed the face of Iranian music overnight. The upheaval saw the overthrow of Iran's monarchy under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and its replacement with an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the Revolution. The Revolution brought severe cultural shocks, including a rash and hasty ban on all music. The outlawing of music was strongly challenged by public outrage rooted in the resurgence of traditional values. As a result, the Revolutionary clerics eventually conceded and consecrated “good” music. After years of opposing and banning music in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini gave his blessing for Persian classical

³² Mohammed Reza Shajarain is now a well-known vocal master. Hussein Tehrani was an accomplished *tombak* player.

music. He actually classified “good” music and “forbidden” music in his 1982 “Arts and Culture” speech. He described Persian classical music as fruitful, at the same time stating that popular music was Satanic, especially for the younger generations.

The Revolution was in part opposed to Western capital, convinced that foreign interest from the West was sabotaging the minds of the Iranian population. Anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing uses the metaphor of “friction” as a form of resistance to the immense flow of global capital, conflicts, and tensions created through interactions on global and local levels. This form of friction ultimately became the mandate of the Revolution and came to influence musical space. Unable to stop the overpowering influence of Westernization, the Iranian government had no choice but to settle for slowing down the process of Western capital flow—a mostly futile attempt to prevent capitalism from further encroaching on Iranian society. The effects are seen today in the realm of music. The policies do not extend currently to recording media like DVDs, CDs, and iPods which are legal and sold openly, but some musical styles, especially that of Western popular influence, are unlawful.

The most remarkable feature of the Revolution has to be the “renaissance” or “returning to Persian roots” in Iranian society (Griffiths 2006:189). The public’s reaction to music being forbidden by Khomeini Ayatollah resulted in a widespread self-consciousness among the general public of their traditional values, creating support and an appeal for the reappearance of lost oral practices. The resulting surge in popularity of Persian art music became so great that by the early 1980s, irrespective of the Revolutionary clerics’ continuing condemnations of music as a sinister entity—and even in the face of the long phase of government sternness during the Iran-Iraq war—, music had captivated an audience of an exceptional size. The fascination among the younger generation who wanted to be active participants energized and became the new

backbone of the traditional approach. Scholars like Mohammed Reza Shafi-Katkanie³³ refer to the Revolution as allowing a “re-awakening” of Iranian Art Music—especially the oral tradition (Shafi-Katkanie 2000:121).

Nevertheless, the abstract spaces created through modernity are ineradicable. At present, Iranian Art Music incorporates both the oral tradition and concepts from score-based Western art music in training and performance. A hybrid of the two traditions has been adopted, and Iranian oral tradition and the Western notation system now co-exist in the art form that has traditionally been deeply rooted in the discipline of *sinah-ba-sinah* (from one to the other by breath). If Westernization brought forth a production of space that was abstract in its nature, revolutionary Iran saw the growth of what can be called a non-defined, adaptable, transformational spatial configuration that is an amalgamation or bridge between previous spatial forms. It preserves, to a small degree, the traditional approach linked with absolute space but is vibrant in the modern approach of its abstract space.

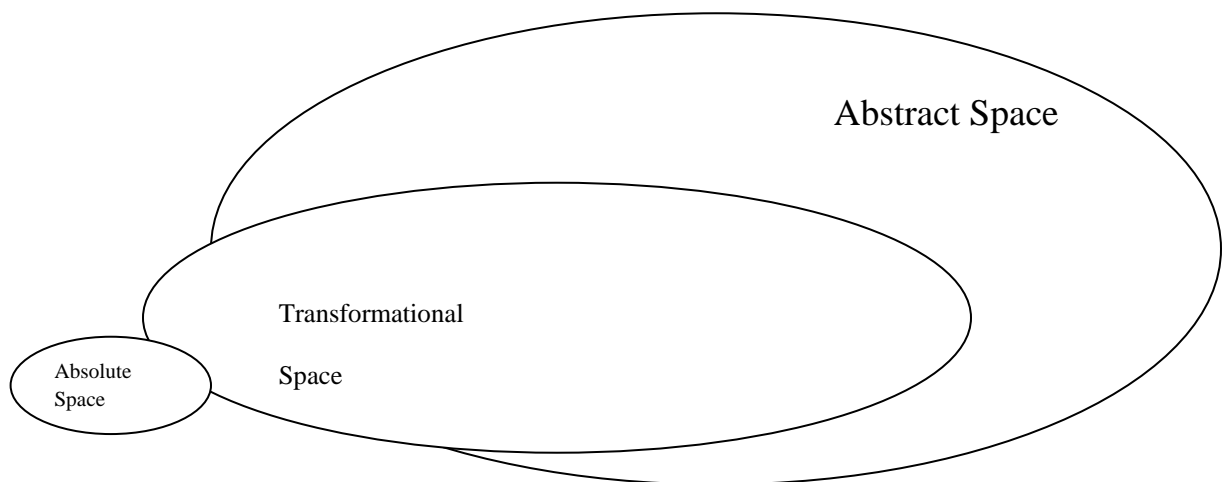
As a fusion of Lefebvre’s two spatial categorizations, transformational space dynamically generates new and boundless hybrid methods of transmitting music. Contemporary musicians in Iran cannot escape strongly embedded abstract spatial configurations. For instance, there are now master musicians who use the modern space of the concert hall but rely heavily on improvisation rather than musical scores to connect to their audience and the tradition of oral music. Classes with Master Lotfi are always orally based, but are held in a recording studio on the fourteenth floor of an apartment complex where each lesson is recorded and memorized later, yet no music is ever written down. The creation of absolute space also continues, mostly in very

³³ Mohammed Reza Shafie-Katkanie is a poet and professor of literature at the University of Tehran.

small gatherings where music can be spiritually uplifting, but the ever more powerful abstract space is expanding and is consequently producing dynamic transformational spaces.

Transformational space is tied inevitably to modernization and will eventually be subsumed by abstract space due to the overwhelming abstract spatial elements at play. Musicians will not be able to escape the realities of modern Iran; the modernizing concept of “professionalism” has already become vital to their and the even the music’s survival. The chain of modernized abstract space is difficult or impossible to break. The musician now must be trained in a conservatory-like institution, perform in a concert hall, gain important financial support from time in the recording studio and even various types of advertisement, and interact through media such as the Internet. All steps in the chain indicate the pull of transformational space toward the rigid spatial constraints of abstract institutions (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 The diagram below illustrates the estimated proportions of spatial production of oral transmission in present practices of Iranian Art Music. Not only is transformational space a revolution phenomenon, it is also a bridge between the absolute and abstract space that are still in existence.



The intractable power of abstract space can be seen clearly in its effects on the students who led the initial backlash against modernization. By the early 1990s the former university students had become masters and were still adamant to resist Westernization and modernization. They formed classes, training centers, and ensembles in what were now cities full of apartment complexes and vehicles, but they concentrated as much as possible on the oral tradition of the *radif*. Their approach paid off to a degree, and in today's Iran there are many young musicians with an excellent oral knowledge of the *radif*. The masters created intimate classrooms outside of the city, and students and masters once again sat next to one another in a natural landscape. The masters also opened their homes to students and performances in order to bring back a sense of absolute space. Public performances were free and many times took place again at the tombs or shrines of the *sufi* saints.

The challenging task of preserving tradition while embracing the modern was present in the student-master relationship. Urbanization changed the conditions in Iranian society, and the increase in students and pressures of modern life meant that masters could not possibly arrange individual classes for all their eager students in their homes every day. Many were forced to separate their private and professional spaces and were forced to use a classroom environment, similar to that of the Western conservatory format. Furthermore, the master's oral transmission of the *radif* became more deeply linked with audio media. Students are now expected to tape their master during a particular class. Due to time constraints, many masters stopped having private lessons entirely, instead relying on master performance classes, sometimes a month apart, and held in huge concert halls and auditoriums.

Master-classes today usually serve a multi-purposed agenda. Topics range from analysis of music to instrumental techniques and, at times, the philosophical aspects of a school.

Interestingly, they are sometimes held in the open spaces of nature, where a sense of tradition can be felt. In addition, modern technology has come to add a vital commercial element to oral transmission over the last fifteen years. Audio recordings, like a master's DVDs, are widely available. The Internet has also become a new space for interaction between a master and students, allowing learners to ask questions and play musical excerpts while the master points out the learning necessities at his own leisure. For instance, Master Lotfi uses the Internet to interact with pupils abroad. The new adaptations and Internet interaction surrounding Persian music have enhanced the responsiveness of musicians, whereby spatial compression has created a new reality of virtual master-student relationships.

The modern approach has become an inescapable part of musical practice in Iran. According to Darioush Talaie,³⁴ Persian music had become “tainted” (Darvishi 1994b:310). In order to create income and attract students, even the most loyal supporters of the traditional approach have no choice but to teach Western theory—especially musical notation. Moreover, with the creation of larger ensembles parts of the performance must be written down—the larger the number, the harder it is for all musicians to meet at one place and memorize the music, thus making written scores indispensable. Also, since music must be recorded in studios and performed in concert halls, written scores have become an efficient way to practice and rehearse individually, since organizing rehearsals for so many master musicians is not practical. Also, music masters need the concert hall to attract enough listeners to make a living. Thus, they have come to rely heavily on abstract spaces such as numerous concert halls and other venues (including television and radio) to accommodate them. The amalgamation and experimental hybridism inherent in these new spaces makes it appropriate to refer to them as

³⁴ Darioush Talaie is a master musician. He is also an ethnomusicologist and music professor.

“transformational” spaces, innovative locations for masters and students to immerse themselves in new and old approaches.

Ironically, in order to preserve the *radif* many masters decided to transcribe the old repertoires. Transcribing is part of the modern approach rather than the traditional, but many of the masters balanced this by adding audio recordings with their transcriptions, including the proper poetry for each *gusheh*. As a result, masters spend many hours in recording studios and with music publishers. These accompanying audio sources highlight the notion that transcription only has significance for preservation, or as a reference resource, and that the appropriate method of learning must remain through oral channels—a notion complemented by the idea of the importance of absolute space. Recording has also improved accessibility, providing a vital tool helping many students in smaller towns in Iran or in the diaspora, to benefit from and mimic their masters. The transformational space of these recordings allows a form of preserving the traditional approach through audio recording and accommodates the mass production and financial profits of the recording, which are not part of the spiritual endeavours of absolute space. The masters have exerted a great effort in preserving traditional values, but the mission has become somewhat unrealistic. Their absolute space has largely slipped away, but they can take solace in the fact that the hybrid transformational space preserves some of its essence.

Although absolute space has been somewhat recovered by the contemporary hybrid approach, the lack of an intimate relationship between a master and students is easily noticeable. The new spaces of modern Iran that allow only limited bonding in master-student relationships have turned many trainees into “robotic” musicians, an idea being reiterated by many masters, including Mohammed Reza Shajarain (Shajarian 1995:132). Students are only required to memorize and reproduce melodies; many have little idea about the relation between music and

poetry, so musical creativity seems to be disappearing. What is apparent is the need to create new spatial configurations where students can flourish through appreciating the significance of each piece orally. The generic assemblage of the *radif* into melodic motif snippets for study has pushed the old philosophical schools toward extinction. These schools need to create new spatial configurations, but this will be very difficult in the contemporary environment where modernized uniformity has become embedded. Lefebvre warned of the power and consequences of homogenized, institutionalized space as abstract space, and in terms of Iranian music he proved remarkably accurate.

The Practical Triumph of Abstract Space

Over the past one hundred years, Iranian art music has exhibited three distinct spatial configurations shaping and shaped by its methods of pedagogical training and performance. I have distinguished three distinct but overlapping periods outlining the evolution of space as it relates to the oral tradition of Iranian music. Each configuration has been molded by the socio-political circumstances of its time. Spiritual absolute space, as described by Henri Lefebvre, was the main venue for the authentic or traditional approach to Iranian Art Music. The embracing of modernity in late 1953 in conjunction with the events surrounding the *shah's* total interest in the West stimulated the rise of a society that aggressively pursued a Western model of musical pedagogy, neglecting home-based learning and resulting in the emergence of the centrality of Lefebvre's institutionalized abstract space. After the Revolution, though, traditional musical thinking witnessed a resurgence, and its reappearance can truly be called a cultural revolution itself. But this social movement has not been enough to eliminate the Westernizing momentum gained prior to the Revolution. And alongside Western elements, other factors such as

globalization and migration (within Iran and abroad) have come to affect the oral tradition. Today, Persian art music employs the practices of both the oral and Western traditions in its everyday protocols, co-existing in uneasy tandem. This has created a new and dynamic transformational space, a type not discussed by Lefebvre, which encourages the creation of new musical forms. Nevertheless, the overpowering nature of abstract spatial entities and the appeal of Westernization and capital flow increasingly pull transformational spaces toward modern configurations. The new spatial hybridism of the oral tradition has become a familiar characteristic of Iranian art music. It is, therefore, now less of a shock to attend a concert and to notice the implementation of both Western and traditional Persian musical approaches.

Ultimately the evolution of oral music in Iranian society is dialectical in nature. The thesis of the traditional approach and absolute space is confronted by the antithetical modern approach and abstract space, resulting in the uneasy marriage of new and old in the hybrid transformational spaces and corresponding musical innovations. This new thesis is fragile and will be re-confronted by the modernist antithesis, leading to the unchallenged dominance of abstract space with pockets of traditional resistance limited to expression simultaneously (and, ironically) as novelties and living artifacts of musical history.

To maintain any hope of preserving fragments of tradition, music classes of the sort given by Master Lotfi organized based on traditional principles may now be more important than ever. Master Lotfi's classes create a feeling of connection with the past, and a sense of the passing on of tradition. But any student looking out the windows of his classroom will see the high rises and traffic and realize quickly and inescapably that Tehran has changed. And when they turn their eyes back indoors, they will see (and hear) that the same thing has happened to the music. Inside they would see Master Lotfi's laptops and recording gadgets, evidence of a steady change

in the master's outlook. Under the current socioeconomic and political circumstances in Iran, the amalgamation or hybridism of Western and Persian musical tradition is deeply embedded. The real question now becomes how to walk the fine line of preventing a complete takeover by abstract space of the oral schemes, while learning what Westernization and globalization have to offer.

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