

A note from Fozie Majd in English

Fozie Majd

This essay deals with some of my personal observations and reminiscences in relation to music and some events related to it, as I remember, from early childhood years to the end of 1978. The ..emphasis is on western classical music and the role of a few women in this adventure
Before going to school, my mother had taught me to read and write in Persian. She had been taught to play the tar and tonbak and her teacher had been Montazam-ol-Hokama in Ghazvin. In our household, we often had a lady tar player by the name of Sūssi Khanoum, who would stay in our house for months on end before leaving for another household. She was unfortunately blind, and she would sing tasnifs of the late Ghajar and early Pahlavi periods and accompany herself on the tar. As a very young child, before going to school, I had become aware of the sound of the piano in our house, as my two elder sisters were practicing the piano and going to a piano teacher by the name of Madame Rosenblau. She lived on the same street as we did, in a cul-de-sac off Hedāyat two-storeyed house. Mme Rosenblau was german and she had a black grand piano and I was sent to her to learn the piano. To me, she seemed old, but most probably she was only getting on to her late forty's or early fifty's. I was far too young to wonder how she had come to Iran, leading a lonely life. She only taught me for a short period of time as my parents decided to live in Shemirān, in the ..north of Tehran

Years after, when I returned from Europe after nearly eleven years, I somehow presumed that she was not in Tehran, or had died, and I never found out what happened to her, all the why's and where's of her origin. But she left me with the legacy of a leitmotif which until some twenty years ago would haunt me whenever I felt lonely and alienated in a situation; it was an utterly simple and naive tune that would come to my mind, and I would tap it with my fingers. Finally, I found the origin of this desperate tune. It was after the revolution when I began to teach the piano and realized that this tune had actually originated from the Beyer book for beginners. Apparently, Madame Rosenblau was ..teaching from the Beyer book

Another piano teacher I saw during my childhood was in the Jeanne d'Arc school, run by the french catholic nuns. There, one of the nuns by the name of Sœur Anne taught the piano; she seemed very old and in contrast to the friendly and jovial nuns, she was totally detached and ..unapproachable. Her behavior must have upset me, for the lessons stopped soon after
After this primary education, I was sent to a boarding schEnglandengland, graduated from Edinburgh University with a bachelor of music, and returned to Iran to confront a very promising music scene. There were two conservatoires, one for western classical music and the other for Iranian Dastgah music, known as the National Conservatoire. I started teaching History of Western Music, a course consigned to the final year students of the Western Conservatoire. The students were of a mixed lot of girls and boys who would receive the standard 12th-year diploma before entering university. Amongst the teachers, I met Evelyne Bāghchébān who taught singing and ..became active as an opera singer

At the National Conservatoire, a course on Musicology was inaugurated, with a separate title of Institute of Musicology, and I taught Counterpoint there, with the approval of five students in the ..class. Some of those were older than me and are well-known musicians in Iran

The two conservatoires were sponsored by the Ministry of Fine Arts, later known as the Ministry of Culture and Arts. The first opera performed at that ministry was the opera Orpheus and Eurydice, by

Gluck, before the Rudaki Hall was built, with Monir Vakili as Eurydice and Fākheré Sabā as .Orpheus, to an invited audience. I was present at this performance

What I would particularly like to stress is the role of the National Iranian Radio Television, for it has resulted in far-reaching consequences, to mention the two major festivals of arts it created and sponsored and the creation of NIRTV Chamber Orchestra which was certainly of great importance for the few composers who were active in Iran. The major international festival that was started in 1967 was the Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Perspolis that saw a host of internationally well-known composers, musicians, performers, and orchestras from almost all continents, participating and presenting new works. Xenakis' *Persephasa* was commissioned by the festival, and composers such as John Cage, Stockhausen, Messiaen, Maderna took part in it. Some criticized its avant-garde aspects, but have not taken into account the incredible contributions from Asia and elsewhere, ranging from the Gamelon from Bali, India's accomplished master soloists, Iran presenting its last few remaining stands of classical Dastgah music, and also my humble contribution of presenting the music of the provinces.* The other major festival was the Tus-Mashhad festival with an emphasis on .recitations of Shah Nameh (The Book of Kings) and Khorasan's dotar music masters

Another important event was the formation of the NIRTV Chamber Orchestra, which was due to the tireless efforts of Shahrzad Afshar. She was also instrumental in commissioning a few Iranian composers including me to write new works for that ensemble. My *Shabkuk* was commissioned and performed by the NIRTV Chamber Orchestra, in the Shiraz festival (1973), and also *Hell Is But a Sparkle of Our Futile Suffering* (1976) also performed by the same orchestra. All these performances were written about in the many prestigious international presses such as *Le Nouvel Observateur*. After the advent of the Islamic Revolution this orchestra disappeared from the music scene, .however, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra is still functioning though somewhat sporadically

These activities were not confined to the collection of music and introducing the musicians to the .* wider public through festivals, these musicians received a monthly payment from the NIRTV as members of the Group for Collection and Research on Iranian Music, which I headed, and were able to receive this aid from the various branches of NIRTV in the provinces, until the advent of the revolution of 1979. For all these my thanks are due to Reza Ghotbi, the then director of the NIRTV, who provided all the necessary material and chose the sound engineer, the late Mahmud Hangval