



## 'ABDALLĀH, MĪRZĀ

---

'ABDALLĀH, MĪRZĀ (ca. 1259-1337/1843-1918), a well-known court musician and master of the *setār* and *tār* (plucked long-necked lutes). His musical repertoire (*radīf*) is considered to be the main source of contemporary Persian classical music as taught in conservatories and universities in Iran.

Mīrzā 'Abdallāh was part of a family of musicians. His father, 'Alī-Akbar Farāhānī of Arāk, came to Tehran and became a prominent court musician and performer on the *tār* during the reign of Moḥammad Shah and Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah (J. During, p. 142). Gobineau during his visit to Tehran about 1855-58 witnessed 'Alī-Akbar's performance and counted him among the great artists of the world (Gobineau, p. 441). After the early death of 'Alī-Akbar, his nephew and student Āqā Ġolām-Ḥosayn became his successor as a *tār* performer in the court. Āqā Ġolām-Ḥosayn also became the stepfather to 'Abdallāh and Ḥosayn-qolī, the two younger sons of 'Alī-Akbar. 'Abdallāh studied the *tār* first with his older brother Ḥasan (Kāleqī, I, p. 102). He and his younger brother Ḥosayn-qolī eventually studied with Ġolām-Ḥosayn and became successful court musicians.

The students of Mīrzā 'Abdallāh include Mahdī-qolī Hedāyat, who transcribed the *radīf* of another student, Mahdī Ṣolḥī. This *radīf*, known as "Radīf-e Montazam-al-ḥokamā" is one of the major sources of the published Ma'rūfī *radīf* (Kāleqī, I, pp. 106-07; idem in *Maḡalla*, p. 19). The *radīf* of another student, Ebrāhīm Qahramānī, has been recorded by Nūr-'Alī Borūmand and used for music instruction in Tehran University. Other influential students include Sayyed Ḥosayn Kālifa, Abu'l-Ḥasan Ṣabā, and Ḥājj Āqā Moḥammad Īrānī



Moĵarrad. Of Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh’s four children, Aḥmad ‘Ebādī is known as a master performer on *setār*.

Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh collected and organized the melodies of his contemporaries and added them to the *radīf* of his father. Colonel ‘Alī-Naqī Vazīrī transcribed this *radīf*, working with Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh over a period of one and a half years (Kāleqī, II, pp. 44-46). He freely taught this *radīf* to all his students, regardless of their ability. He did this in reaction to the guarded attitude of musicians toward teaching others, an attitude which he felt was endangering the Persian music tradition.

The music tradition that is taught in the National Conservatory and Tehran University has been attributed to Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh (Kāleqī, I, pp. 102, 442; Khatschi, p. 1; Zonis, pp. 39, 190); and also to ‘Alī-Akbar (During, p. 142; Ney-Dāvūd, interview, 1976). Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh’s *radīf* is the oldest documented version of the seven *dastgāh* system. This system, developed in the nineteenth century, is thought to be a rearrangement of the older twelve *maqām* system. The tradition is known by Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh’s name due to his extensive work in collecting, arranging, and teaching his *radīf*. The present published version of the *tār radīf* collected by Mūsā Ma’rūfī is based on the *radīf* of Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh and Āqā Ḥosayn-qolī and two of their students, Mahdī Šolḥī and Darviš Kān (Kāleqī, 1340, p. 19).

Existing works of Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh include the Vazīrī transcription of the Dastgāh Čahārgāh, the *radīf* of Montāzam-al-ḥokamā’, and the *radīf* of Qahramānī. “Rāk-e ‘Abdallāh,” one of the *gūšas* (pieces) of the Dastgāhs of Māhūr and Rāstpanĵgāh, is found in both the vocal and instrumental *radīf* and may be attributed to him. In addition, there are a number of recordings of his *tār* performance listed in the 1906 Catalogue de Disques Persans de la Compagnie The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd. (pp. 3, 14, 30). Some of these recordings are still extant.



---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

J. DURING, “Éléments spirituels dans la musique traditionnelle iranienne contemporaine,” *Sophia Perennis* 1, no. 2, Autumn 1975, pp. 129-54.

J. A. GOBINEAU, *Trois ans en Asie*, Paris, 1905.

R. KĀLEQĪ, “Moḵber-al-salṭana Hedāyat: dānešmand-e mūsīqī-šenās,” *Majalla-ye Rādīo Īrān* 61, Šahrīvar 1340 Š./1961, pp. 18-19, 30.

Idem, *Sargodašt-e mūsīqī-e Īrān* I, Tehran, 1333 Š./1954; II, 1335 Š./1956.

Kh. KHATSCHI, *Der Dastgah*, Regensburg, 1962.

M. MA'RŪFĪ, *Radīf-e haft dastgāh-e mūsīqī-e Īrānī*, Tehran, 1973.

E. ZONIS, *Classical Persian Music*, Cambridge, Mass., 1973.