



ĀVĀZ

ĀVĀZ, in modern Persian “song” (of any kind) or, more broadly, “music.” In use it thus resembles Arabic *ġenāʿ* (singing), which has “stood for both “song” in particular and “music” in general” (Farmer, *History of Arabian Music*, p. 152). The word is derived from OIr. *vač-* “to voice, utter, speak,” and is related to Av. *vač-* “voice,” NPers. *vāža* “word, vocabulary item” (see J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Berne and Munich, 1959, I, pp. 1135-36).

Āvāz as a musical term has three basic meanings: (1) The classical vocal style of Iran, which is based on the elaborate modal system called *dastgāh* and sung mainly to classical Persian verses. (2) “Tune.” This term is used to denote an auxiliary mode in the *dastgāh* system. *Āvāz-e Abū ʿAṭā*, *āvāz-e Afšārī*, *āvāz-e Daštī*, *āvāz-e Bayāt-e Tork* and *āvāz-e Bayāt-e Ešfahān* are used in contemporary music theory (R. Kāleqī, *Naẓar-ī be mūsīqī*, p. 111). However, some music theoreticians such as ʿAlī-Naqī Wazīrī use the Arabic term *naġma* (melody) in this sense, as in *naġma-ye Daštī*, instead of *āvāz* (ʿA. Wazīrī, *Āvāz-šenāsī*, p. 35). Use of the Persian term *āvāz* (in Arabic *āwāz*, plur. *āwāzāt*) for secondary mode is old, going back to the 7th/13th-century theoretician Šafī-al-dīn ʿAbd-al-Moʿmen Ormavī. In his *Ketāb al-adwār* (633/1235?), he mentions six *āwāzāt*: *Kavāšt*, *Kardāniya*, *Salmak*, *Nowrūz*, *Māya*, and *Šahnāz*. In this sense, the term *āvāz* is almost equivalent to the Arabic terms for “branch mode,” such as *šoʿba* (plur. *šoʿab*) or *farʿ* (plur. *forūʿ*) (Farmer, op. cit., pp. 203-05). (3) Most importantly, *āvāz* is used to specify the unique rhythmic texture of the non-metric vocal style of Iran. In this sense, instrumental music, which has



been developed primarily as accompaniment to the *āvāz* per se in the *dastgāh* system, might well be called *āvāz*, provided that it is executed in non-metric *rubato* style. In particular the term refers to improvised passages following the original vocal style and adapting it into the instrumental version. In this context, the term *āvāz* is contrasted to *zārbī*, which is characterized as a section played in a fixed meter (usually with the *tonbak/zārb* or drum accompaniment). Since the *bī-zārb* (non-metric) rhythmic texture predominates and constitutes the main body of the so-called *dastgāh* music, the term *āvāz* is sometimes used in the sense of “classical Iranian music,” both vocal and instrumental. On the other hand, *āvāz* may be contrasted to the term *tašnīf*, which generally implies a kind of strophic song composed in a fixed meter. The *tašnīf* also presents a striking contrast to the *āvāz* in respect to the verses employed. The verses sung in the *āvāz* are usually composed in the *arūz* (q.v.) system of Arabo-Persian versification, whereas those employed in the *tašnīf* are often non-*arūz* poems which are sometimes called “syllabic” verses (*aš'ār-e hejā'ī*).

Rapport with the poetic meter. In the *āvāz*, the *gāzals* of Ḥāfez and Sa'dī and the *maṭnawī* of Rūmī are among the most frequently sung verses. As far as the non-metric portion is concerned, theoretically a verse composed in any kind of poetic meter may be sung. However, in practice, some special meters are preferred: *Mojtatt-e moṭamman-e maḵbūn-e maqṣūr* (∪ - ∪ - / ∪ ∪ - - / ∪ - ∪ - / ∪ ∪ - // bis) and its variations; *Hazaj-e moṭamman-e sālem* (∪ - - - / ∪ - - - / ∪ - - - / ∪ - - - // bis); *Hazaj-e mosaddas-e maḥḍūf* (∪ - - - / ∪ - - - / ∪ - - // bis); *Hazaj-e moṭamman-e aḵrab-e maḵfūf* (- - ∪ / ∪ - - ∪ / ∪ - - ∪ / - // bis) and its variations; *Ramal-e moṭamman-e maḥḍūf* (- ∪ - - / ∪ ∪ - - / ∪ ∪ - - / ∪ ∪ - // bis) and its variations; *Ramal-e mosaddas-e maḥḍūf e maqṣūr* (- ∪ - - / - ∪ - - / - ∪ - // bis); and *Možāre'-e moṭamman-e aḵrab-e maḵfūf e maḥḍūf* (- - ∪ / - ∪ - ∪ / ∪ - - ∪ / - ∪ - // bis). The meter of *Motaqāreb-e moṭamman-e maḥḍūf-e maqṣūr* (∪ - - / ∪ - - / ∪ - - / ∪ - // bis) is also sometimes found in the *āvāz*. The particular reference for the *Mojtatt*-type meters is rather easily explained. The combination of short and long syllables in this poetic meter coincides exactly with that of the musical meter called *Kerešma* (Example 1).

This is one of the most typical rhythmic patterns of Iranian music. This distinctive rhythmic pattern is held so important in the *āvāz* that it appears at various points. The so-called *Šāh-gūša* (king *gūša*) has usually a section named *Kerešma* which is performed with a more or less clearly fixed metric rhythm. This rhythmical meter serves as relaxation and diversion to set off the non-



metric *āvāz* texture which is rather serious and tight.

The preference for *Hazaj*-type meters may be explained in terms of their relationship to folk verses and songs. The meter of *Hazaj* and its variations are among the ones most frequently found in folk poetry such as *do-baytī* and lullabies (*lālā'ī*). The meter of *Hazaj-e mosaddas-e maḥḍūf e maqṣūr*, which is the meter of *do-baytī* (or *čār-baytī* in regional dialects), is particularly often sung in the *āvāz-e Daštī*, which is closely associated with Iranian folk tunes.

Ramal-e mosaddas-e maḥḍūf e maqṣūr is the meter of Jalāl-al-dīn Rūmī's *Maṭnawī-e ma'nawī*, couplets from which are often sung in the *āvāz* of *Afšārī*, *Bayāt-e Turk*, *Abū 'Aṭā (Gabrī)*, *Daštī*, *Šūr*, *Bayāt-e Eşfahān*, *Māhūr*, and of *Segāh (Moḳālef)*. A few other *Ramal*-type meters such as *Ramal-e moṭamman-e maḥbūn-e maḥḍūf-e aslam* are frequently found in the *gāzals* of Ḥāfeẓ and Sa'dī, which are most favorably sung in the *āvāz*.

There are some other types of poetic meter which are associated with the specific *āvāz*: *Motaqāreb-e moṭamman-e maḥḍūf-e maqṣūr* is the meter of Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*, and of the *Sāqī-nāmas* of Ḥāfeẓ and Rażī-al-dīn Artīmānī. Verses chosen from either book are sung in the *āvāz*. When these verses are sung in more or less fixed meter, this meter of *Motaqāreb* is usually treated in the unique rhythmic mode of duple (or square) meter (Example 2).

The verses sung in the *gūša* entitled *Čahār-bāḡ* are composed in the poetic meter called *Kāmel-e moṭamman-e sālem*, a not very popular meter in Persian literature. The verses *Če šavad be čehra-ye zard-e man, naẓar-ī ze rāh-e ḳodā konī, . . . /* by Aḥmad Hātef Eşfahānī (d. 1198/1783-84) are among the few examples.

Rhythmic characteristics. The most distinct rhythmic factor in the *āvāz* of course comes from the verse. Thus, the rhythmic organization of the *āvāz* is primarily based upon the poetic meter of the *arūz* system, which is a recurrent cycle of short and long syllables. The pattern and length of a poetic meter, once chosen, remains constant as a kind of rhythmic mode; however, the stress accents of words chosen in a line do not necessarily follow those of the model. "The contrapuntal interplay between the stress patterns of a meter and the stress pattern of normal speech makes for a much needed variety in a strait-jacket of strict quantitative meter" (Yar-Shater, "Affinities," p. 72). In a way, the *āvāz* melody reinforces features of the poetic meter, elaborates it, and gives rise to the mood of the verse. However, its resultant rhythmic texture is



rather complex.

A close examination of several descriptive transcriptions of sung *āvāz* reveals the following rhythmic principles: (1) The primal unit of recurring elements of the unmeasured rhythmic texture is a phrase. The accent of the phrase is an inseparable pair of a short syllable and a long syllable (an iamb). (2) Generally speaking, a phrase unit coincides with a foot of the poetic meter, which has usually one iambic pattern (= the accent). (3) In most cases this iambic pattern is found at the very beginning of a phrase. (4) When certain numbers of syllables precede the accent, they are treated rather as neutral syllables in terms of length. (5) From (3) and (4) it is obvious that words are usually articulated at the beginning of a phrase. Then, the following long syllable(s) may be prolonged as far as the sustaining energy permits. (6) At the end of a phrase, the *taḥrīr* technique (elaborate melismatic singing) is preferred; this must constitute one of the recurring elements of a phrase in *āvāz* (Tsuge, “Rhythmic Aspects,” pp. 223-24).

Form. The close affinity between Persian poetry and *āvāz* is difficult to overstate. The skeleton of *āvāz* form comes from the basic structure of Persian verses: (1) Each line or *bayt* (couplet) consists of two hemistiches of equal length and identical syllabic pattern. (2) In regard to rhythm, a couplet is based on six or eight poetic feet (*ajzā'*) with a caesura in the middle, hence six or eight recurrent accents. This is the core of the *āvāz* which is called *še'r* (verse). The *āvāz* is usually preceded by an introduction called *darāmad*, which is usually sung without verse text as such but with vocables such as *āy*, *ey*, *del ey del*, *amān*, *jān*, *yār*, *jānam*, and *'azīz-e man*.

The singing of the verse is usually followed by an extensive *taḥrīr* to demonstrate the singer's (*āvāzkvān*) vocal technique with vocables, a feature which is very characteristic of Persian *āvāz*. This ornamental vocal technique is such an important aspect of the *āvāz* that no *āvāzkvān* is considered proficient without mastery in it. Each *āvāzkvān* has freedom to create his own elaborate and tasteful *taḥrīr*. Certain styles of *taḥrīr* are called by such appellations as *taḥrīr-e bolbolī* (song of nightingale), *taḥrīr-e čakoši* (brazier's hammer), etc. (Caron and Safvate, *Les traditions*, p. 160).

Thus, the most basic form of the *āvāz* in one *gūša* may be outlined as follows: (1) *darāmad*, (2) *še'r*, (3) *taḥrīr*. However, in contemporary performance practice of the *āvāz*, several (usually two to five or six) *gūšas* are chosen from one *dastgāh*; instrumental sections are inserted; and its overall musical form



has become much more complex. A typical scheme of the *āvāz* in a given *dastgāh* is as follows: (1) *Pišdarāmad*, a “prelude” or orchestral ensemble piece composed in the *dastgāh* with fixed meter. (2) *Čahār-mežrāb*, an instrumental piece performed in improvisatory manner, demonstrating the soloist’s technical virtuosity. It is usually accompanied by a *tonbak* player. (3) *Āvāz*, singing of the verses by a solo singer in the manner of improvisation, going through various *gūšas*. It is the main body of the entire *āvāz* performance. This portion is usually accompanied by a solo instrument such as *tār*, *santūr*, *kamānča* or *violon*, *nay*, or less often, *piano*. (4) *Tašnīf*, a composed song in the *dastgāh*, often featuring characteristics of a particular *gūša*. It has a fixed meter and is accompanied by an orchestral ensemble including a *tonbak*. (5) *Reng*, a dance piece composed in the *dastgāh*, most frequently in the compound duple meter of 6/8 which often appears in the form of 6/8 + 3/4, giving a hemiola effect. It is performed by the orchestra as a finale.

In fact, this format is not too far from the classical Turkish suite called *fasil*, which consists of *peşrev*, *taksim*, *kâr*, *beste*, *ağır-semaî*, *şarki*, *yürük-semaî*, and *saz-semaî* in a given *makam*. The practice of the Azarbaijani *moğām* and ‘Erāqi *maqām* appears to resemble more closely that of the Persian *āvāz*. These musical styles are most probably descended from the *nawba* (or *nawbat*) of medieval Islamic courts, though their evolution and exact relationship can not be determined in detail.

See also entries for each [DASTGĀH](#); MUSIC.

For a music sample, see [Čahār pāra](#).

For a music sample, see [Sāqi-nāme in Dastgāh Māhur](#).

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