



ČAHĀRGĀH

ČAHĀRGĀH, the name of one of the twelve *dastgāhs* (modes) of traditional Persian music in the 14th/20th century, evidently derived from its position among musical scales or the fret locating its fundamental tone or tonic (Mallāḥ, p. 200). The term was already known in the 9th/15th century, when it evidently referred to a *maqām* (Ar. “key”) of Persian music (e.g., Marāḡī, p. 70). The *maqām* Čahārgāh in 20th-century Arabic music ordinarily has a scale close to that of a Western major scale; the Turkish *makam* Çargah is similarly constructed. In Persian music, however, a similar unit became the basis for a larger grouping that at some point began to be performed in consistent succession and combination. Čahārgāh thus became one of the *dastgāhs*; although it is mentioned in sources of the early 14th/20th century (Khatschi, pp. 7, 79), it probably did not achieve its position as one of the principal *dastgāhs* in Persia until after 1320 Š./1940. Examination of recordings suggests that it continued to increase in importance until about 1975. Many composed pieces in the Persian classical tradition—*pīš-darāmads*, *tašnīfs*, *čahār-mežrābs*—are cast in Čahārgāh, as are songs in the popular repertory.

The scale of Čahārgāh is consistently described as being like a Western major scale, except that the second and sixth degrees are lowered a quarter-tone: the tone-interval sequence of the scale, beginning with the tonic, is thus 3/4, 5/4, 1/2, whole, 3/4, 5/4, 1/2. In actual practice, however, there is considerable variation in the intonation of the intervals, especially in the second and sixth degrees, which are sometimes rendered as much as a quarter-tone lower or higher than in the defined sequence, thus occasionally corresponding to a



Western major scale. Čahārgāh also has in common with the Western major mode that the third and fifth degrees of the scale are emphasized.

The *dastgāh* of Čahārgāh has other important distinctive features, including a characteristic musical motif (6-5-6-5-6-5-6-1-6-1), which always appears in its initial section (*darāmad*) and sometimes elsewhere as well; a tendency to emphasize the tonic more than is common in some other *dastgāhs*; and a distinct musical character or mood. This mood is usually described as epic (*ḥamāsī*) and heroic (*pahlavānī*), but Čahārgāh is also considered one of the two more joyous *dastgāhs* (the other being Māhūr). The very popular wedding song “Mobārak bādā” is sung in Čahārgāh. Most important, this mode has a group of subdivisions, *gūšas*, which appear in the various sequences of the *radīfs* (canons of instrumental melodies) of Persian music. Chief among them (after the characterizing *darāmad*) are Zābol, Moḳālef, Ḥešār, Maḡlūb, Mūya, Maṣūrī, Ḥodī, Pahlavī, and Rajaz. Frequently the *darāmand* itself includes a rhythmically distinct section in the *kerešma* meter and a metric tune called Zangūla (also called Pīš-zangūla), which is reminiscent of the American song “Yankee Doodle Dandy.” Ḥešār and Mūya are modulatory *gūšas*, departing from the basic scalar pattern of Čahārgāh. Virtually all these *gūšas*, with the same names and general melodic outlines, also appear in the closely related *dastgāh* of Segāh. Several other *gūšas* of Čahārgāh also appear in other *dastgāhs* of the Persian *radīf*. The various published *radīfs*, like those of Mūsā Ma’rūfī, Abu’l-Ḥasan Šabā, and Maḥmūd Karīmī, as well as the available recordings of Nūr-‘Alī Borūmand’s *radīfs*, generally agree on the context and on the order, though the position of Mūya varies somewhat.

Structured series of recordings made in the 1960s and 1970s (see Nettl and Foltin; Nettl, 1987, pp. 43-64) make it possible to give an account of the characteristics of *āvāz* (nonmetric) performances of Čahārgāh. Various sequences are possible. For example, although the *darāmad* is virtually always first and Zābol second, there is less consistency among the succeeding sections, except that Maṣūrī, if it appears, is usually last. Ḥešār and Moḳālef are partly complementary, one of them being always present; when both appear they are played successively. Ḥodī, Pahlavī, and Rajaz, which, in contrast to the other *gūšas*, are semimetrical, are almost always grouped together. The most popular *gūšas* in order of frequency are *darāmad*, Zābol, Moḳālef, Ḥešār, Maṣūrī, Maḡlūb, and Mūya.

Performances of Čahārgāh differ from those of some other *dastgāhs* in that the *āvāz* is usually divided into several sections, each clearly based on one *gūša*. In



some performances the section based on the *darāmad* is by far the longest and ensuing sections are presented in order of decreasing length; in others an approximately equal amount of time can be devoted to each of the *gūšas*. In a quite different type of structure there are two major sections, each beginning with a long *gūša* (usually *Mokālef* after the *darāmad*), followed by a short rendition of one or two other *gūšas*. Although the *āvāz* is improvised, individual musicians do develop characteristic patterns and apparently plan their performances; there are certainly characteristic structures.

The tendency to devote a section in the *āvāz* clearly to material from one *gūša* is typical of *Čahārgāh*, *Segāh*, and *Māhūr*, in contrast, for example, to the *dastgāh* of *Šūr*, in which materials from various *gūšas* may be started in quick succession and mixed order.

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

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

For a music sample, see [Dastgāh-e Čahārgāh](#).

For a music sample, see [Heṣār – 1](#).

For a music sample, see [Heṣār – 2](#).

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

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