



## DAWĀMĪ, 'ABD-ALLĀH

**DAWĀMĪ, 'ABD-ALLĀH** (b. Ṭā near Tafreš, 1309/1891; d. Tehran, 20 Dey 1359 Š./10 January 1981), a master of classical Persian vocal music with a perfect command of the *radīf* (repertoire), as well as a gifted player of the Persian drum (*tonbak*) and a virtuoso of rhythmic (*zarbī*) pieces and songs (*tašnīf*). His father, Abu'l-Qāsem, was a performer in *ta'zīa* (the Shi'ite passion play) and a singer. Dawāmī received his early education from the village mullas. At the age of nine years he went to Tehran, where he studied at the Tarbīat school. After his graduation in 1325/1907 he was hired by the Ministry of post and telegraphs (Wezārat-e post o telegrāf) but was dismissed seven years later, in 1332/1914, because he had taken unauthorized leave to accompany [Darvīš Khan](#) to Europe in order to produce musical recordings. After his return to Persia he went to work in the Ministry of finance (Wezārat-e dārā'ī), where he remained until his retirement in 1323 Š./1944 ('Askarī; Loṭfī, p. 10; Wayszāda, 1356 Š./1977a; Mašḥūn, p. 47).

Dawāmī did not receive a systematic musical education; rather he learned melodies at first hearing and continued practicing until he could sing them perfectly (Kāleqī, p. 409). He was introduced to the social circles of Tehran by Rokn-al-Dīn Moḳtār, a fellow student at the Tarbīat school and a skilled musician, who admired his singing. In this new milieu Dawāmī met the prominent singer 'Alī Khan Nāyeb-al-Salṭana, with whom he studied for three years ('Askarī; Loṭfī, pp. 10-11; Wayszāda, 1356 Š./1977a). It was also through his association with Moḳtār that he met all the great musicians of the period, including Darvīš Khan, who, impressed by Dawāmī's skill in singing and



playing the Persian drum, invited him to join his orchestra, which included the master vocalist Sayyed Ḥosayn Ṭāherzāda, as well as Mošīr Homāyūn Ḥabīb-Allāh Šahrdār (Wayszāda, 1356 Š./1977a).

In 1332/1914, in response to an offer from the Baidaphon company in Germany, Darviš Khan, Dawāmī, and several other musicians left for Berlin, planning to travel via Russia. Owing to the outbreak of World War I, however, they were forced to stop in Tiflis, where they produced a few recordings, which they sent to Berlin. One of these recordings, of which a copy is kept in the archives of Radio Iran, is a song by 'Āref (Wayszāda, 1356 Š./1977a).

Dawāmī remained actively involved in music, collaborating with Darviš Khan and Ṭāherzāda, until the [coup d'état of 1299/1921](#), when he decided to withdraw from the musical scene. The reason he gave for such an early retirement was his fear that, because musicians were at that time not appreciated as artists in Persia, his public involvement in music could jeopardize his career at the ministry. He later refused an offer to join Radio Tehran (Wayszāda, 1356 Š./1977a). The real reason, however, may have been his voice, which was not much appreciated by the public and had already earned him the nickname 'Abd-Allāh Do-dāng ('Abd-Allāh Two Notes; Šahrdār, p. 39) because of its narrow range.

In the 1950s-70s Dawāmī once again returned to the musical mainstream and made an important contribution by training outstanding students and recording the *radīfs* and *gūšas* of traditional Persian music. In 1330 Š./1951 the Department of fine arts (Edāra-ye koll-e honarhā-ye zībā) initiated evening music classes under the direction of Moḳtār, who invited Dawāmī to teach singing. In 1350 Š./1971 Dawāmī recorded his repertoire of *radīfs* on six tapes, running a total of three hours, for the Ministry of culture and fine arts (Wezārat-e farhang o honar). In 1354 Š./1975 he accepted an offer from the Center for preservation and dissemination of Persian music (Markaz-e ḥefẓ o ešā'a-ye mūs'iqī-e īrānī) to teach singing, which he continued to do until his death. He was also asked by the Center to record any early song that he could remember. His former student the renowned vocalist Moḥammad-Reżā Šajariān was assigned to supervise the recording sessions, which took place during 1356-57 Š./1977-78, but the tapes were never delivered to the Center. Furthermore, Šajariān recorded, and now has in his possession, close to 140 *tašnīfs* sung by Dawāmī (Šajariān, pp. 161-64).

Among the other notable students trained by Dawāmī are Maḥmūd Karīmī,



Marzīya, Kāṭera Parvāna, Parīsā, Ḥosayn ‘Alizāda, Parvīz Meškātīān, and Nūr-al-Dīn Rażawī Sarvestānī (Loṭfī, p. 13; Wayszāda, 1356a; Šajariān, pp. 156-57).

For a music sample, see [Qamar al-Moluk – Magar nasim-e sahar](#).

For a music sample, see [‘Āref – Namidānam](#).

For a music sample, see [Shaydā – az ġam-e ‘ešq-e to](#).

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