



ḤOSAYNQOLI, ĀQĀ

ḤOSAYNQOLI, ĀQĀ, Persian musician (b. Tehran, 1270/1853, d. Tehran, 1334/1916; [Figure 1](#)), the son of Āqā ‘Ali-Akbar Farāhāni, who was the most famous *tār* (the chief Persian plucked instrument) player at the court of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-96). The father’s *radif* (repertoire) passed down to his sons, and it is considered to be the wellspring of Persian traditional music. Losing his father when he was still quite young, Āqā Ḥosaynqoli was instructed by his elder brother, Mirzā ‘Abd-Allāh. Later both brothers were taught by their cousin Āqā Ġolām-Ḥosayn, who married their mother, the widow of Āqā ‘Ali-Akbar, and thus became their stepfather. Āqā Ġolām-Ḥosayn was not a very giving teacher; he was reluctant to pass on to others all the intricacies of his technique. Yet the two brothers managed to learn from him the basics of the twelve collections known as seven *dastgāh* and five *āvāz*. It is the melody models (*guṣā*) in these collections, as taught by Mirzā ‘Abd-Allāh and Āqā Ḥosaynqoli, that constitute the *radif* of today’s Persian classical music (Kāleqi, I, p. 114; Caron and Safwat, p. 220).

Āqā Ḥosaynqoli started giving lessons together with his brother, and subsequently he organized a class of his own. He is reputed to have been an exacting teacher, who insisted on daily practice (‘Āref Qazvini, p. 146; Kāleqi, I, p. 114). Both brothers played at the court of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, a great amateur of their art, which was not true of his successor, Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah (r. 1896-1907) who had no ear for music (Sepantā, 1990, p. 49).

Āqā Ḥosaynqoli was an outstanding *tār* player, reputed to be the greatest master of his time (Hedāyat, p. 10). His performances were considered both



technically brilliant and artistically exquisite. The regularity and force of the down and up strokes (*rāst* and *čap*) of his plectrum were much admired (Kāleqi, I, p. 131). He used a five-string *tār* and disapproved of the addition of the sixth string (tuned an octave above the lowest string, acting as a drone)—an innovation which is attributed to Darviš Khan. The six-string *tār* is, in fact, the only kind of *tār* known in living memory (Caron and Safwat, p. 169).

Dust-‘Ali Khan Mo‘yyer-al-Mamālek (q.v.) made the first recordings of Āqā Ḥosaynqoli’s music on a phonograph (*dastgāh-e ḥāfeẓ al-ašwāt*) during the friendly gatherings in his house, before there were any commercial gramophone records in Iran. These are among the earliest works of the master, and they seem to have been made during the late 1890s (Sepantā, pp. 50, 54).

Āqā Ḥosaynqoli traveled to Paris with Bāqer Khan Rāmešgar, a *kamānča* player, As‘ad-Allāh Khan, a *tār* and *santūr* player, Sayyed Aḥmad Khan, a singer, and Moḥam-mad Bāqer, a drummer, to produce gramophone records of their work (Kāleqi, I, p. 133). The most famous of these are some *guša* of the *dastgāh-e šūr*, recorded on one side, and the *moḳālef-e segāh*, on the other. At the end of the *šūr*, the master says: “May the art of these nimble fingers be preserved, Āqā Ḥosaynqoli” (Sepantā, 1987, p. 146). His music has indeed been preserved; in 1994 some of these records were issued on cassettes (Rajā‘i, 1994). On his return from Paris, Āqā Ḥosaynqoli spent a month in Istanbul, where the Iranian minister, Reżā Khan Arfa‘-al-Dawla, encouraged him to give a concert. Half of the proceeds of this concert was awarded to the Iranian school in Istanbul (Kāleqi, I, p. 134).

Āqā Ḥosaynqoli married twice; his first wife, Sakina, gave him two daughters. She is said to have been a *tār* player, gifted with a mellifluous voice, and to have had a great knowledge of the whole *radif*. She seems to have exerted a great influence over her husband (Mašhun, II, p. 573). After her death, Āqā Ḥosaynqoli married again, and begot three sons—Moḥammad-Ḥasan (died in infancy), Akbar Khan Šahnāzi (died 1984), and ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Šahnāzi (died 1948). These two were the true heirs of their father’s and grandfather’s art. They played a major role in passing it on to the new generation of traditional Persian musicians.

During his lifetime Āqā Ḥosaynqoli instructed many disciples, among whom the most famous are: Arfa ‘-al-Mamālek, Ġolām-Ḥosayn Darviš Khan (q.v.),



Mirzā Gōlām-Rezā Širāzi, Bāšer-al-Dawla, ‘Ali-Naqi Waziri, ‘Ali-Moḥammad Behzādi, Moḥsen Mirzā Zelli, and Mortazā Naydāwud.

The famous Persian poet and songwriter ‘Aref Qazvini wrote in his *Divān* (p. 354): “After Mirzā Ḥosaynqoli, the *tār* has more or less lost its light . . . Its greatest master has disappeared, and it would take nature many centuries to create a comparable prodigy.”

For a music sample, see [Hosaynqoli – Shur](#).

For a music sample, see [Hosaynqoli – Hajiani](#).

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

For a music sample, see [Bayāt-e Kord](#).

For a music sample, see [Ḥosayni \(2\)](#).

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