



## KĀLEQI, RUḤ-ALLĀH

**KĀLEQI, RUḤ-ALLĀH** (b. Kermān, 1324/1906, d. Salzburg, Austria, 21 Ābān 1344/12 November 1965; [Figure 1](#)), Persian music educator, composer, and music scholar.

He was from a well-educated middle class family. His father, Mirzā ‘Abd-Allāh, was a civil servant who was appointed to various posts in provincial capitals. He was secretary to ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mirzā Farmānfarmā (q.v.), the governor of Kermān Province when Ruḥ-Allāh was born, but shortly thereafter the family moved back to Tehran.

Mirzā ‘Abd-Allāh was an amateur musician who had learned to play the *tār* (a Persian string instrument) from such famous musicians as [Āqā Ḥosaynqoli Šahnāzi](#) and [Ġolām-Ḥosayn Darviš Khan](#). Ruḥ-Allāh’s earliest exposure to music was by way of his father’s casual *tār* performances at home. As a child, he was, however, more fascinated by the sound of Rokn-al-Din Moktār’s violin, which he heard on rare occasions. He was fifteen when he finally received his father’s consent to begin musical studies as a violin pupil of Mirzā Raḥim Khan, a well-known *kamānča* player. Raḥim Khan was one of the very few Persians at that time who were also proficient violinists (Kāleqi, I, pp. 56-58, 297-98, II, p. 2).

The formative event of Kāleqi’s life was his meeting, in 1923, with ‘Ali-Naqi Vaziri (Waziri), who had just returned from Europe. Vaziri had spent five years in France and Germany studying Western musical theory and composition. Prior to his European sojourn, Vaziri was already known and



respected as a virtuoso *tār* and *setār* player. But it was his Western musical education that endowed him with a greater breadth of musical knowledge and a level of authority not enjoyed by any other Persian musician of the time. Moreover, Vaziri was a naturally dominant personality, possessing of exceptional energy and charisma. Ḳāleqi's encounter with him in 1923 was the determining factor in the young man's decision to make music his life's career. He was among the first group of students who enrolled in the music school (Kolup-e musiqi) that Vaziri had just established. Ḳāleqi was to become a life-long disciple, devoted friend, and associate of Vaziri, who was his elder by nearly twenty years and lived some fourteen years after Ḳāleqi's death in 1965 (Ḳāleqi, II, pp. 1 ff., 33-36, 66-67; Behruzi, pp. 65-68; Sepantā, 1990, pp. 136-38).

As a music student, Ḳāleqi advanced rapidly. Within a few years, he became an assistant to Vaziri, and was placed in charge of some of the courses at the music school, particularly subjects concerned with music theory and harmony. He also managed to finish ordinary secondary school education at [Dār al-Fonun](#), receiving his diploma in 1930; and, in 1934, he received a Bachelor's degree from Tehran's Teacher Training College (Dāneš-sarā-ye 'āli), majoring in philosophy and literature.

In 1935 Ḳāleqi entered the employ of the Ministry of Education (Mallāḥ, *Kayhān*, 10 September 1999). This corresponds with the period when Vaziri, having been dismissed from the directorship of the government music school (Madrasa-ye musiqi-e dawlati), temporarily suspended his public musical activity. In 1941, following the invasion of Persia by the Allied forces and the abdication of Reżā Shah in favor of his son and heir to the throne, Moḥammad-Reżā Shah, Vaziri was placed in charge of the Music Administration (Edāra-ye musiqi-e kešvar), a department created in 1938 in the Ministry of Education (Wezārat-e farhang) to oversee music publications, and into which the former Madrasa-ye musiqi had been incorporated. He asked Ḳāleqi, who had been for some years in the employ of the Ministry of Education, to join him as his second in command (Ḳāleqi, III, pp. 27-28, 31 ff., 51-53; "Honarestān-e Musiqi," p. 8; Behruzi, I, pp. 538-40; Nur-'Ali Borumand, apud Şafwat, p. 65). In 1946, the changing political landscape in Persia once again resulted in the removal of Vaziri, which prompted Ḳāleqi to leave the Music Administration as well (Ḳāleqi, III, pp. 42-45). This time, Vaziri, who was nearly sixty years old, chose to retire from public life. Ḳāleqi, on the other hand, only forty at the time, continued to remain very active in music both as composer and educator.



One of Kāleqi's most important contributions to the musical life of the capital was the founding of the Society for National Music (*Anjoman-e musiqi-ye melli*) in 1944. In this enterprise he had the cooperation of a number of other well-known musicians, including Abu-al-Ḥasan Ṣabā, Musā Ma'rufi, Ḥabib Samā'i, Loṭf-Allāh Majd, and Ḥosayn-'Ali Mallāḥ. The Society had an orchestra composed of native and Western instruments and gave its first public concert, under Kāleqi's direction, on 24 Ordibehešt 1323/14 May 1944. It also published a quarterly music magazine called *Čang*, of which only four issues came out in 1946-47. Kāleqi's most enduring legacy was his move, in 1949, to transform this Society into the fully accredited Conservatory of National Music (*Honarestān-e musiqi-e melli*) under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. For ten years, Kāleqi acted as the Director of this Conservatory and was able to assemble a large teaching staff which included some of Persia's most respected musicians (Kāleqi, III, pp. 79 ff., 118 ff.; Behruzi, I, pp. 544-46).

The Conservatory's curriculum covered both the practical and the theoretical aspects of musical studies. Tuition was provided for everybody studying any Persian musical instruments of the classical tradition; students of Western instruments that had found wide application in Persian music, such as violin, clarinet and piano, were also enrolled tuition-free. On the theoretical side, Vaziri's theories on intervals and modes of Persian music, and the traditional precepts of the *dastgāh* system were the essential components of the course. In addition, Western musical notation, solfeggio, and tonal harmony were also taught. Subjects outside of music considered essential for a comprehensive education, such as language, history, geography, and mathematics, were also included in the curriculum. The Conservatory accepted both male and female students from the fifth grade through the six years of secondary school.

During the 1950s Kāleqi was also active as producer and conductor of music programs for Radio Tehran. He was a member of Radio's Music Council and, for a number of years, the head of Radio's Persian Music Department. He was the innovator of a very popular weekly program of music and poetry called *Golhā-ye rangārang* "Multicolored flowers" (q.v.). The Golhā, as it was lovingly known, brought to a vast listening audience quality performances by the country's best performing artists. Kāleqi was the conductor of the orchestra that participated in this program. Golhā featured compositions by a number of contemporary figures, including Kāleqi himself. He composed both vocal and instrumental pieces and made numerous arrangements of works by other musicians, past or present, who did not have the needed skill to notate or



orchestrate their own pieces. Included in this category were arrangements of old *tašnifs* (ballads) of two poet-musicians of the early 20th century, Abu'l-Qāsem 'Āref (q.v.) and 'Ali-Akbar Šeydā.

From the mid-1940s to the end of his life, Ḳāleqi was the foremost spokesman for the cause of national music. He was the undisputed successor to his mentor Vaziri, who no longer seemed interested in holding the center stage in the musical life of the country. In certain respects, Ḳāleqi was perhaps an even more effective champion of a modern and progressive movement in Persian music. Whereas Vaziri had been the uncompromising pathfinder and leader, Ḳāleqi was a more tactful guiding light and thereby less controversial. He had a gentle, sensitive, and unassuming personality; while resolute in his convictions, he was never aggressive.

For a number of years, before his untimely death, Ḳāleqi was in poor health. He suffered from peptic ulcer. Eventually, he traveled to Austria for treatment, where his daughter, Golnoush (Golnuš), was a music student at that time. But the surgery performed in a Salzburg hospital was unsuccessful and led to his death there.

*Works.* In his remarkable career, Ḳāleqi, a devoted musicologist and teacher, made significant contributions (1) as music educator and administrator, (2) as composer and arranger, and (3) as scholar and writer on music.

1. Although it was Vaziri who pioneered the idea of a methodical approach to the study of Persian music, the use of musical notation, and the importance of theoretical studies combined with practical, it was through the Conservatory founded by Ḳāleqi that these ideas gained wide acceptance and application. He ran the Conservatory with due respect for all his staff members, some of whom were men much older than he and with considerable reputation. As a teacher, he was patient and caring. He was particularly adept at communicating to his students techniques of harmony and counterpoint—concepts that are fundamentally alien to native music. The objective was to impart sufficient knowledge so that they might be able to compose Persian music with some harmonic texture.

It was through Vaziri's teaching that admiration for the polyphonic richness of Western music was transmitted to some of his pupils. Both Vaziri and Ḳāleqi believed that Persian music can be made compatible with polyphony of some sort, and that the addition of harmony can be a source of its enrichment. In



order to make the application of harmony workable in compositions that were rooted in Persian modes, Vaziri had devised an artificial twenty-four quarter-tone octave scale and had proposed that all Persian intervals be formed by multiples of the quartet tone. This is a serious distortion of the reality. In fact, most intervals in Persian music are unstable; they tend to fluctuate slightly in size according to different modes, the type of instrument that is used, or indeed the taste of the performer. Although there are intervals other than the semitone and the whole-tone, no interval of Persian music even approximates a quarter-tone and, therefore, multiples of something that does not exist by itself cannot be taken as a logical basis for a musical system. Nevertheless, from all evidence, Kāleqi also believed in the validity, or at least the usefulness, of the quarter-tone theory.

2. Nearly all of Kāleqi's musical compositions were written within the parameters of Persian modes. Some of these compositions are suffused with a thin harmonic layer based on triadic harmony of Western music. Kāleqi's compositions fall into three categories:

a) *Tašnifs* or ballads, written for voice with instrumental accompaniment, which can be played either by a solo instrument or by an ensemble. Some of these songs are based on classical poetry, for example: *Mey-e nāb* (poem by Ḥāfeẓ), and *Āh-e saḥar* (poem by Foruqi Baštāmi). He also wrote *tašnifs* on works of contemporary poets, for example *Peymānšekān* (poem by Rahi-Mo'ayyeri), and *Masti-e āšeqān* (poem by Nawwāb-e Šafā)

b) *Soruds* or anthems, written for various national events, intended for group singing. The most important of these is *Ey Irān*, a stirring and beautiful patriotic hymn on a highly emotive poem by Ḥosayn Gol-golāb. This hymn became extremely popular after the Revolution of 1978-79 and was consequently banned by the Islamic regime, since it was viewed as too fervently nationalistic and thereby contrary to the ideals of religion as the dominant social force. It remains, however, highly popular among Persian expatriates and has become a symbol of opposition to the clerical regime both inside and outside Persia. Other famous anthems by Kāleqi include *Sorud-e Ādarbāyjān*, *Sorud-e naft*, and *Sorud-e Šir-o koršid-e sork*.

c) Kāleqi made arrangements of a number of folk songs for voice with orchestral accompaniment. Since many Persian folk songs lend themselves easily to adaptation into major or minor tonalities, in these arrangements simple harmonizations are used and work quite effectively.



d) Numerous instrumental compositions, most of which are in the forms of *pišdarāmad* (introductory piece) or *reng* (measured piece), based on the modes and melodic patterns (*māya*) of different *dastgāhs*. The most famous among his orchestral compositions are Rangārang no. 1 in the mode *Bayāt-e Ešfahān*, and Rangārang no. 2 in the mode *Māhur*.

3. After Vaziri, Ḳāleqi was the first Persian professional musician of modern times who ventured into the realm of musical scholarship. In addition to numerous articles that appeared in various Persian periodicals, he published four books:

a) *Nazar-i ba musiqi* (A glance at music; 2 vols., Tehran, 1937-38), a work of musical theory. In this book, the modal system of Persian music, as represented by the twelve modal groups (*dastgāh* and *āvāz*), which contain traditional melody models for extemporization, are explained in great detail. Here Ḳāleqi remains faithful to the theoretical precepts of Vaziri.

b) *Hamāhangi-e musiqi* (Musical harmony; Tehran, 1942), a textbook on practical harmony based on two French sources. The intention in publishing this book was clearly to foster the use of harmony in composition of pieces tied to Persian modal concepts.

c) *Saragodašt-e musiqi-e Irān* (History of Persian music) in two volumes, a major work on the history of music in Persia in recent times. The first volume deals primarily with the 19th century musical developments and gives an account of the main figures of the pre-modern era. The second volume is a personal account of contemporary events dealing in particular with the activities of Vaziri. A third volume, edited by Sāsān Sepantā, was published posthumously in 1998. These books valuable sources of information on musicians of the Qajar period to mid-20th century

d) *Musiqi-e Irān* (Music of Persia; Tehran, 1943) is an historical account of musical life in ancient Persia during the Achaemenid and the Sasanian periods. It is a brief narrative that also discusses the musicological treatises of Islamic scholars in the medieval period. A new edition of his book was published in 1985 with a slight change of the title as *Musiqi-e irāni* (Persian music).

e) Ḳāleqi was a contributor to, and the editor of, a number of books of methods for instruction of musical instruments, including *Dastur-e moqaddamāti-e Tār*



*wa setār* (Introductory instructions for *tār* and *setār*; Tehran, 1951) and *Ketāb-e violon* (Violin book; 4 vols., Tehran, 1951-54). All of these books contain graded pieces for students, from beginners to the more advanced.

Throughout much of the 20th century, to the present time, most musicians in Persia can be identified with one of three groups, representing different ideological persuasions. The three groups may be broadly described as: 1) those who insist on the sanctity of the traditional music, do not see the need for any reform, and resent any alteration in the performance style of the modal system; this group has been increasingly marginalized by 2) those who believe that the traditional music should be preserved and practiced, but also recognize a need for progress through the application of Western techniques for composition of new music within the bounds of traditional modal system; and 3) those who regard the repertoire of traditional music as museum material, worthy of safeguarding, but essentially irrelevant to modern needs. They are primarily interested in Western music and in composition according to Western techniques. This group, in the main, stands apart from the other two.

Vaziri and later *Kāleqi* were the foremost exponents of the second group which has come to dominate the musical life of the country. With increasing public consumption of music, through such media as recordings, radio, and television, the cause of this group has become ever stronger. By the time *Kāleqi* passed from the scene, many of his pupils who had received training in the Conservatory of National Music had become major musical figures. Many others, before the end of the century, had gone through the same basic training and were committed to the ideals of a creative approach to the propagation of national music, which is clearly derived from the teachings of Vaziri and *Kāleqi*.

For a music sample, see [Hālā čerā?](#)

For a music sample, see [Kāleqi, Mey-e nāb](#).

For a music sample, see [Kāleqi, Ey Irān](#).



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