



MAJD, LOṬF-ALLĀH

MAJD, Loṭf-Allāh, the celebrated *tār* (a plucked long-necked lute) performer known for his brilliant virtuosity and distinctive style (b. Sāri, Māzandarān, 1296/1917; d. Tehran, 1357 Š./1978).

Majd was fascinated with music from his early childhood, spending most of his time fiddling around with a battered old *tār* that he had found in the storage room of their house at the expense of attending to his school assignments. This caused his father to take the instrument away from him, but he eventually returned it to him when Loṭf-Allāh pledged that he would concentrate on his studies and would play the *tār* only in his spare time, and, what is more, that he would never go to a music class or take lessons from any music instructors (Naṣrifar, p. 15). From that time on, Loṭf-Allāh doubled his endeavors to create melodious sounds and to gain the command of the strings of his instrument. Every time he heard a song played on a phonograph, he committed it to his memory and then tried to play it on his *tār*. He gradually improved his own competence and before long achieved dexterity in playing it.

In 1944, Majd joined the Society for National Music (Anjoman-e musiqi-e melli), which had been founded by Ruḥ-Allāh Kāleqi for the preserving, disseminating, and teaching of Persian music. There, he developed some understanding of the basics of musical notation and, as a result of his daily contact with masters of music, his performance of the *tār* became increasingly more mature and sophisticated so that he soon developed his own distinctive style of playing it. He soon was acknowledged as a master instrumentalist with



a brilliant unique style, although he had never had a mentor or received any formal instructions (Nawwāb-e Ṣafā, p. 391).

Majd joined the music program of Tehran Radio in 1944, and was one of the first musicians to participate in the program called *Golhā*, which was initiated by Dāwud Pirniā (q.v.) on the radio in 1956 in order to illustrate the thematic relationship between music and poetry in Persian culture. His performances in the various pieces of this program are considered among the best long-lasting works on the *tār*.

His compositions were merely the external manifestation of his own feelings. Majd was a prominent self-taught, innovative instrumentalist who did not emulate the performing style of any senior master, although touches of the exquisite style of ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Šahnāzi might be discernable in a few pieces of his. His music was merely the reflective manifestation of his mood and inner feelings at the time (Nawwāb-e Ṣafā, 1998, pp. 388, 393). He was particularly creative in the execution of rhythmic phrases and pieces with masterful strumming and swift use of the plectrum (*mežrāb*). He was one of the most distinguished improvising masters of Persian music and, by his own admission, always played, without any predetermined plan, under the influence of his own emotions at the time of performance (Nawwāb-e Ṣafā, p. 393). Esmā‘il Nawwāb-e Ṣafā has compared Majd’s individual strokes (*tak-mežrāb*) to the gentle drops of rain and his improvised rhythmic pieces (*čāhārmežrāb*) to downpour. His musical performances reflected the ups and downs of his own life, sometimes causing a sober mood and at other times creating sheer joy” (Nawwāb-e Ṣafā, p. 393).

Majd did not engage himself much in composing song (*taṣnif*) music. . Among his works in this genre are *Dur az rok-e tābān-aš* and *Omid-e del*, with the lyric by ‘Ali Mo‘ayyad Tābeti, are well-known. He concentrated his creative energy on playing the *tār*. His left a large number of *chāhārmežrābs*, dance music (*reng*), and other melodious pieces, most of which are considered among the most beautiful rhythmic works in the repertoire of Persian musical.

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