



NEY-DĀWUD, MORTEŽĀ

NEY-DĀWUD, Morteżā (b. Tehran, 1279 Š./1900; d. San Francisco, 10 Mordād 1369 Š./31 July 1990), celebrated composer of music and performer and instructor of the *tār* (a plucked long-necked lute, q.v.). He is most fondly remembered for training a number of outstanding musicians, particularly [Qamar-al-Moluk Waziri](#), and gratefully praised for his endeavors to produce recordings of the entire repertoire of traditional Persian music.

Morteżā Ney-Dāwud was born into a Jewish family of professional musicians. His father, Bālā Khan, who was a performer on the Persian chalice drum (*tombak*), associated with musicians of his time, who frequented his house. Morteżā, therefore, acquired a taste for music from early childhood and began playing on the *tār* without the aid of a tutor when he was very small. Morteżā's father did not wish his son to become a musician, but when he noticed the determination and native talent of the youthful Morteżā, he took the boy to Ramazān Khan Du'l-faqāri, one of the pupils of the master musician [Āqā Ḥosaynqoli](#), the celebrated leading *tār* maestro, to teach him the basic principles of playing this instrument. Morteżā progressed rapidly and, a short while (two years, according to [Kāleqi](#)) later, Du'l-faqāri took him to the master musician himself. He studied with [Āqā Ḥosaynqoli](#) until the latter's death in 1916, when he joined the music classes of another master musician, [Ġolām-Ḥosayn Darviš Khan](#) and became one of Darviš Khan's outstanding students, receiving from him the symbolic gold battle-axe (*tabarzin*), with which Darviš Khan used to honor an outstanding student ([Kāleqi](#), p. 438-39; [Sepantā](#), p. 169). Ney-Dāwud eventually established a music school in Tehran, which he called



School of Darviš (Madrasa-ye Darviš) in memory of his late mentor, Darviš Khan, who had been killed in an automobile accident in 1926. There the *tār*, the *setār* (another long-necked lute, q.v.), the violin, and traditional vocal style (*āvāz*, q.v.) were taught. A number of best-known instrumentalists and vocalists, such as Qamar-al-Moluk Waziri, [Moluk Žarrābi Kāšāni](#), and Ḥosayn Sanjari, received their training in this school and admittedly owed their success to Ney-Dāwud's training and encouragement (Naširifar, pp. 38-40). He was also the first music instructor of the distinguished vocalist [Ġolām-Ḥosayn Banān](#), when the latter was only eleven years old. Ney-Dāwud was able to persuade Banān's father to let him train the talented youngster.

While teaching music and administering his school, Ney-Dāwud also engaged in giving concerts in the accompaniment of the then most celebrated female vocalist Qamar-al-Moluk Waziri in Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Mashad, and Hamadān. In 1940, he joined other master musicians as a member of the music personnel of Radio Tehran, which had recently been established, and his performances were broadcast live for the next ten years. He, however, withdrew from the radio program in 1951 and confined his public activities to administering his music school and running his business interest. His last public performance was in 1959, when he gave a concert in memory of his favorite student, Qamar-al-Moluk, who had just passed away.

Ney-Dāwud's greatest service to Persian music is arguably the arduous task of playing the entire repertoire of Persian music and having it recorded on tapes, a labor of love that he undertook in his declining years. At the invitation of Radio Tehran, Ney-Dāwud attended the studio of Radio Tehran every single day for a year and a half despite his advanced age and performed on the *tār* a total of 297 melodies (*guša*), embracing all modes (*Dastgāh*) of Persian music (Behruzi, pp. 74, 76). He concluded this great task in 1976 without accepting any financial compensations. A copy of these tapes is in possession of his family in the United States.

Performing style. Ney-Dāwud was one of the most outstanding performers on the *tār* in the traditional style. His strumming was smooth, euphonious and resonant, particularly distinguished for his technique of playing with tremolo (*riz*). His performance fully conveyed the aesthetic effect of the traditional music and demonstrated masterful expertise in accompanying the vocalist and responding to his/her various modulation and yodelling (*tahrir*). He was also a proficient composer, particularly in creating rhythmic pieces. His compositions, such as preludes (*piš-darāmad*; see [DARĀMAD](#)) and songs (*tašnif*,

q.v.), were melodious and refreshing and are still being played and appreciated (Sepantā, p. 169). He was very adept in selecting the right musical piece for the occasion and was extremely brisk while playing it on the *tār*. He was well known for his swift strumming, appropriate utilization of pauses, and for performing lengthy melodies on the low-pitched string. He was also distinguished for improvised rhythmic solos (*čahārmežrāb*; Mo'assasa-ye farhangi, p. 9)

Compositions. When Ney-Dāwud was studying with Āqā Ḥosayn Qoli, Persian music was basically confined to the traditional vocal performance and the playing of melodic pieces (*guša*). Darviš Khan, on the other hand, was a master of creating rhythmic pieces and composed a good number of preludes that served almost the same function as overtures do in Western music (Ḥaddadi, p. 103). Ney-Dāwud, who was a pupil as well as a disciple of Darviš Khan, strongly advocated the addition of *piš-darāmads*, *čahārmežrābs*, *rengs* (dance pieces) and *tašnifs* to a full performance of music, and also composed many such musical pieces in his life-time. He immigrated with his family to the United States in 1980. He is buried at Colma Cemetery near San Francisco. The following is a short selection of his compositions: *Morğ-e saḥar*, a song in the Māhur mode, with lyrics of Moḥammad-Taqi Malek-al-Šo'arā Bahār (q.v.), still one of the most popular songs in traditional music. *Ātaš-i dar sina dāram jāvedāni*, in Dašti mode, performed with Pežmān Baḳtiāri's lyrics by the vocalist Qamar-al-Moluk Waziri. *Šab-i yād dāram ke čašm-am naḳoft*, in the mode Šur and Šahnāz *guša*, performed with the lyrics of Sa'di by the Qamar-al-Moluk (Meškin-qalam, pp. 112-14; Sepantā, pp. 170-71)

For a music sample, see [Neydāwud – Māhur](#).

For a music sample, see [Afšāri](#).

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