



## ŠAHNĀZI, 'ALI AKBAR

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**ŠAHNĀZI, 'Ali Akbar**, (b. Tehran, 1276 Š./1897, d. Tehran, 1363 Š./1984) master musician, renowned teacher, and composer of Persian classical music.

'Ali Akbar was the eldest son of Āqā Ḥosayn-qoli (q.v.) the celebrated master musician and performer of the *tār* (a plucked long-necked lute). His father and his uncle, Mirzā 'Abdallāh, also a master musician, ran a school of music in Tehran. They maintained close ties with many music students, vocal performers, and highly recognized musicians including Bāqer Kamānča-keš and Āqā Reżā Tārzan (q.v.), who were the sons-in-law of the two brothers. Šahnāzi was thus fostered in a deeply musical environment, which allowed him to develop an interest in music from early childhood. He began studying the *tār* with his father at age 10, and continued his studies with his uncle after his father's death. By age 14, Šahnāzi was an accomplished musician whose works were recorded on gramophone records (Sepantā, p. 72), and by age 24, he was already considered one of the most renowned performers of the *tār* in Tehran.

Šahnāzi had a deep passion for teaching music, and for this reason he took over his father's music classes after the latter's death, and took charge of the music school after the passing of his uncle. Under Šahnāzi's leadership, the institute became one of the most successful music schools of the country, where many of the later masters of Persian music, such as 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Šahnāzi, Farhang Šarif, Moḥammad Reżā Lotfi, Ḥosayn 'Alizada, Dāryuš Ṭalāi, 'Aṭā-Allah Čankuk, and Dāryuš Pirniākān received their musical training. (Šad sāl *tār*, p. 3)



When Šahnāzi was young, his style was influenced by the styles of his father and uncle. There is a phonograph recording in Šur traditional mode (*dastgāh*) entitled “Bā yād-e Mirzā Ḥosayn-qoli,” made in the memory of his father, reminiscent of this period. Šahnāzi’s style of performance, however, gradually changed, ultimately acquiring very unique characteristics. The prominent features of Šahnāzi’s style were: 1. frequent utilization of lengthy strumming 2. application of a variety of riz (strumming the same string two or more times in quick succession) with respect to fluidity, intensity, depth and number per unit of time, 3. producing a diversity of nuances (dynamics) by exerting pressure on the tar bridge with the right hand, 4. utilizing frequent “left” (upward) movements with different degrees of intensity and length, 5. striking the wooden resonance case of the tār with the plectrum while performing rhythmic pieces to produce new musical colorings, 6. innovation in fingering, 7. utilization of the same musical notes on different tar strings, 8. performing on two strings simultaneously (Şad sāl tār, pp. 8, 9).

Many of ‘Ali Akbar Šahnāzi’s works, such as pişdarāmads (q.v.), renga (classical dance forms), and taşnifs (rhythmic songs) have survived. Some of his better known works are a pişdarāmad in 2/4 meter in Šur traditional mode, another pişdarāmad in segāh traditional mode which has a double rhythm, a taşnif called “Zad laşgar-e gol” in čāhārgāh traditional mode (with lyrics by Vahid Dastgerdi and the vocal performance of Qamar-al-Moluk Waziri), and another entitled “Be Eşfahān ro” with the lyrics of Malek-al-Şo‘arā Bahār and the vocal performance of Tāj Eşfahāni. There are also a number of surviving recordings, some of which are in Šur mode with the vocal performance of Jenāb Damāvandi, some in Afşāri, Daşti, and Bayāt-e Tork modes with the vocal performance of Ms. Şādeqi, and a number of others in Segāh, Muya, Moķālef, Homayun, Bidād, Leili-wa-Majnun, Şuštari, Baķtiāri and Šur modes with the vocal performance of Eqbāl-al-Soltān Ādar. (Sepantā, p. 172). Šahnāzi’s also contributed to the development of Persian music by devising a supreme mode for the tār, by devising new techniques of playing the tār, and by forging new arrangements for various Persian traditional modes.

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

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

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



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Šad sāl tār*, Tehran, 2001, pp. 8-9.