

Israel in 1978. This led to an aid-driven prosperity that culminated in high single-digit growth in the 1970s and mid-1980s. The flow of aid entrenched the dependency mentality and a sense of false prosperity among Jordanians. The economic crisis has persisted with deepening poverty and unemployment among the masses. In December 1999, Shair was appointed as a member of the Economic Consultative Council (EEC) formed by King Abdullah II to monitor the implementation of vital economic, social, educational, and administrative reforms that could lead Jordan into the twenty-first century.

#### THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE

In many parts of the Middle East, Shair has been recognized for his outstanding professional leadership and achievements, excellent public service, and generous support for education. According to a review of Shair's book,

"By not following the usual pattern of patronage and favours, Shair applied a fresh kind of ethic in an environment with a loosely-structured business ethic. . . . This is quite an extraordinary tale and a very original prism through which to read the turbulent post-World War II history of the Middle East. At the same time we see the growth, despite all the odds, of one of the world's great engineering and business enterprises in a narrative of epic and inspirational proportions" (*Kisostomus*).

#### LEGACY

Shair's legacy and generous contributions have been recognized in the field of education and politics. The American University of Beirut's Suliman Olayan School of Business launched the Kamal Shair Strategic Leadership Executive Program, a pioneering program into the world of leadership education in the Middle East. Shair received national honors from Jordan and Lebanon.

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*Rasheed Olaniyi*

## SHAJARIAN, MOHAMED REZA (1940–)

Mohamed Reza Shajarian is an Iranian singer generally acknowledged by critics to be the greatest living male singer in the classical tradition of Persian music. He played a major role in moving the musical policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in a less hostile direction in the mid-1980s, and regularly gives concerts both inside and outside Iran. He has recorded numerous albums. DVDs of many of his concerts are also available commercially.

#### PERSONAL HISTORY

Shajarian was born on 23 September 1940, in Mashhad, the capital of the northeastern Iranian province of Khorasan. His personal history illustrates the difficulty of being a musician in a society in which the dominant religion is Twelver Shi'ite Islam.

**Twelver Shi'ism and Music** Twelver Shi'ism, the religion of most Iranians, frowns on music more than Sunni Islam, as its *ulama* (Islamic clerics) deem the enjoyment of music to be conducive to sinful desires for wine and illicit sex. However, this disapproval did not prevent many Iranians from cultivating a rich musical heritage that reaches back to pre-Islamic times. Before recent changes in interpreting Islamic teachings, twentieth-century musicians had to practice their art discreetly, at court, or in the privacy of their homes. Within Iran's capital, Tehran, attitudes gradually became more liberal beginning with the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, but in many provincial centers hostile attitudes persisted. One such city was Mashhad, the site of Iran's major religious shrine, the mausoleum of Imam Reza, whom Twelver Shi'ites revere as the eighth legitimate successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Mashhad is home to many seminaries, and millions of pilgrims from around the world visit it each year, giving the city an aura of piety in which music cannot thrive in public.

In classical Persian ensembles—typically consisting of a drummer, two or three instrumentalists, and a singer—it is the singer who plays the most important part, the lyrics consisting of the poems of the great medieval Persian poets such as Hafiz, Sa'di, and Jalal al-Din Rumi. The vocal techniques and musical modes used in this tradition are the same as those employed in reciting the Qur'an and in the regular call to prayer (*idhan*). This commonality is one of the factors that has allowed secular music to survive in the face of religious disapproval. Mohamed Reza Shajarian's career is a case in point.

## BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

**Name:** Mohamed Reza Shajarian

**Birth:** 1940, Mashhad, Iran

**Family:** First wife, Farkhondeh Gol-Afshan, divorced; three daughters, Raheleh, Afsaneh, and Mozghan; one son, Hodayun; second wife, Katayun Khonsari; one son, Rayan

**Nationality:** Iranian

**Education:** Teacher training college, 1960

## PERSONAL CHRONOLOGY:

- **1960:** School teacher in Khorasan province
- **1965:** Moves to Mashhad
- **1967:** Moves to Tehran, becomes employee of National Iranian Radio and Television; begins career as independent musician
- **1977:** Resigns from Iranian national radio
- **1979–1982:** Stops singing publicly because of government opposition
- **1982:** Resumes singing in public, although not at public events
- **1985:** Issues first audiocassette
- **1999:** UNESCO confers upon him the IMC-UNESCO Music Prize

**Shajarian's Early Years in Mashhad** Shajarian's grandparents on both sides were music lovers. His paternal grandfather was gifted with a beautiful voice and enjoyed singing. By contrast Shajarian's father, a real estate agent, was very pious and frowned on music for religious reasons. Thus he did not allow a radio in the house, as the religious authorities had forbidden owning a radio because music was broadcast over it. But having a good voice too, he cantillated the Qur'an and taught this art to a circle of students, including his son. By the time he was twelve, Mohamed Reza Shajarian was invited to recite the holy book on Radio Khorasan.

After finishing high school in 1958, Shajarian attended a teacher's training college. Upon graduation in 1960 he became an elementary school teacher in a village near Mashhad. Having left the stifling atmosphere of home to live in the college's dormitory, he felt free to pursue classical Persian music, known as the *radif*, helped in this study by the college music teacher. He also learned to read notes and started playing the *santur*, a kind of hammer dulcimer. In the same year he married a fellow student with whom he

was to have four children, three daughters and a son. In 1965 he moved to Mashhad and to Tehran in 1967.

**Shajarian's Career in Pre-revolutionary Iran** In Tehran Shajarian became an employee of the state radio organization and sang with various ensembles using the *nom d'artiste* (pseudonym) of Siavash Bidkani, but he began using his own name in 1971. He studied the *radif* with various masters, in particular Abdollah Davami, an octogenarian master musician who lived as a recluse and generally did not accept students. Shajarian persuaded him to make an exception for him, in return for which he became the master's personal secretary. Davami taught him, among other things, early-twentieth-century *tasnifs*, composed songs that had played a major political role and that had not been performed in decades. At the radio organization, Shajarian also spent long hours listening to old recordings of famous singers of the past to study the subtleties of their art.

The dominant form of classical Persian music played on the radio was a light and superficially modernized genre. To safeguard the classical heritage in its purest form the National Radio and Television Organization established the "Center for Preservation and Propagation of Classical Music" in Tehran in 1967, inviting a number of elderly master musicians to join and transmit their knowledge to a limited number of younger musicians. Shajarian participated in this select group and performed with other musicians at the Shiraz Festival of Art, founded at the initiative of Empress Farah in 1967. These concerts established the presence of classical Persian music in its most traditional form on the serious Iranian concert scene, previously dominated by Western classical music. Gradually Shajarian became a household name among music lovers. In 1977 he resigned his position with Iranian national radio and television agency.

**Shajarian in the Islamic Republic** Shajarian gave a last concert in the autumn of 1979—after the downfall of the shah's regime in the Iranian Revolution and before the seizure of the U.S. hostages in November. The subsequent fall of the provisional government heralded the ascent of revolutionary hard-liners, who gained total control over the state in the summer of 1981. For the first time in Iranian history, Shi'ite *ulama* were now in control of the country, and state cultural policy henceforth reflected their religious doctrine. Music was banned from the public sphere and for three years Shajarian did not perform. He broke his silence at a private concert at the Italian embassy in 1982, as members of the Revolutionary Guards angrily stood guard outside with weapons in hand. In the first half of the 1980s Shajarian recorded a few audiocassettes but it was in 1985 that one was published. Its title *Bidad* was widely perceived as a punning protest against the puritanical policies of the state: While *Bidad* is a piece in the *radif*, it also means

“injustice” and can be interpreted to signify “without (*bi*) voice (*dad*).” This seemed to be a clear reference to the regime’s efforts to silence musicians. The publication of the tape gave rise to a heated debate in parliament in which hard-liners demanded that Shajarian, who denied any political intent, be reprimanded. But the taboo was broken. In 1987 Shajarian returned to the international concert scene performing in Europe, and in 1988 he gave his first public concert in Iran.

The clampdown on music had led to unprecedented public interest in classical Persian music on the part of Iranians. Bowing to the inevitable, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran’s head of state and supreme religious leader, issued a *fatwa* (Islamic religious ruling) in 1988 in which he broke with tradition and declared that music was permitted as long as it was of a kind that did not arouse illicit desires. This excluded pop music, whose continued absence from the public sphere provided a boost to the serious music that Shajarian and other classical musicians performed. Since the 1990s Shajarian has performed regularly outside Iran, to the point where he has been criticized for neglecting his fans within Iran. He has admitted that he prefers giving concerts outside Iran, as in Iran each concert is preceded by bureaucratic aggravation.

Shajarian is a multitalented artist. Although he made his mark as a singer, he also plays the santur (although never in public), is a master calligrapher, and builds instruments. His hobbies include canary birds and gardening, and he is widely respected for his knowledge of flower cultivation.

#### INFLUENCES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

According to Shajarian his parents exerted a major influence on him. His general outlook on life he ascribes to the influence of his father, whereas he credits his mother for having inculcated him with a serious work ethic. Artistically, various master musicians of the preceding generation influenced him greatly—singer Banan, santur player Payvar, and *kamancheh* (spike fiddle) player Ebadi.

Shajarian’s decision to remain in Iran after the Islamic Revolution and defy the anti-musical inclinations of the Islamic Republic by continuing to hone his skills and practice his art played a major part in keeping classical Persian music alive. It is thanks to musicians like him that this genre was not only preserved but also actually popularized: By the 1990s more Iranians were playing Iranian instruments than ever before. Thanks to Khomeini’s liberalizing *fatwas* of 1988, even young men and women from traditional families joined the trend of a renewed appreciation for Iran’s musical heritage.

#### THE WORLD’S PERSPECTIVE

Since 1974 Shajarian has performed outside of Iran. His tours have taken him not only to Europe and North

### CONTEMPORARIES

Shajarian’s belongs to a generation of musicians who together revived classical Persian music while cautiously introducing innovations into it. These include Hossein Alizadeh (b. 1951), a tar and setar player and composer; Mohammad-Reza Lotfi (b. 1947), a tar player; and Parviz Meshkati (b. 1955), a santur player who became Shajarian’s son-in-law. They started playing together in various ensembles (Aref, Sheyda) before the Iranian Revolution and continue collaborating, both in Iran and abroad.

America, but also to South and Central Asia. Of particular poignancy was a concert he gave at the personal invitation of Tajikistan’s minister of culture in 1990 in the capital Dushanbe, a concert that was a major milestone in reestablishing close cultural ties between Tajikistan and Iran made possible by glasnost. In 1999 the secretary general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conferred upon Shajarian the IMC-UNESCO Music Prize, given since 1975 to individuals and institutions whose activities have contributed to an enrichment and further development of music and served understanding between peoples.

#### LEGACY

Shajarian has taught and trained a number of pupils who are now enriching the country’s musical scene. With his perfectionism, seriousness of purpose, and sober lifestyle, he completed the work of earlier musicians who endeavored to confer dignity and respectability on musicians, traditionally a low-status group. For the music lover, his legacy consists of his recordings, some containing pieces and modes unheard in decades and that would have been lost forever had he not taken an interest in them.

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