

## Call for Papers

### The Indo-Persian Musical Confluence

A program of online events held by the University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Ethnomusicology, Summer 2020 – Winter 2021

Sponsors for this program so far include the Mohindar Brar Sambhi Chair of Indian Music, the Department of Ethnomusicology, the Eleanor and Jahangir Amuzegar Chair of Iranian Studies and the Program of Iranian Studies, the Center for Near Eastern Studies (CNES), and the Center for India and South Asia (CISA), UCLA.

#### Description:

The *sitar* and *setar* are the foremost classical instruments of India and Iran. They are seen by most people as being distinct instruments from different countries and traditions. However, they share a common ancestry, and their name is in fact the same word (Persian, سیتار). It was transliterated into English in slightly different ways during colonial times. As we scratch just beneath the deceptive surface of Indian and Iranian music, we find the rich confluence that is the Indo-Persian world, a realm of connected histories and creativity, and a space to imagine new ones.

Indo-Persian studies emerged in the eighteenth century in the context of European colonialism and has come to deal with a large area in Asia which Marshall Hodgson called the Persianate world (Hodgson 1974). Indo-Persian cultural exchange dates back to antiquity. In ancient Persia, legend has it that by the request of Bahram V (r.420–438), twelve thousand musicians were sent from India to Iran, and there are still tribes of musicians in southwest Iran that believe they immigrated from India. However, it was when Mahmud of Ghazni (r.999-1030) extended his territories to India, introducing Persian language and Islam to the Indian subcontinent, that a sustained period of rich cultural exchange began. The Indo-Persian territory at its zenith extended to China, Eastern Europe, and Northern Africa. Cultural syncretism developed in these vast areas not just through the official language and religion of the courts – Persian and Islam – but through trade, wandering Sufis, Persian poetry, scholars, and musicians, engendering deep and long-lasting connections.

In North India, this Indo-Persian confluence is evident in genres such as *khyal* and *tarana*, and in the iconic classical instruments, the sitar and sarod. *Raga* was developed in new ways through the connection of music, astrology and Unani medicine in Mughal India (Brown 2010), and present-day *tala* is a hybrid of accentual and syllabic forms, likely emanating from the Indo-Persian confluence (Clayton 2007). The influence of Persian language, poetry and scholarship in Indian Sufism is immense, with, for example, many Persian texts included in the repertoire of *qawwali* (Qureshi 1986). It is also apparent in shared poetic conventions which extend beyond classical forms and into vernacular genres, with imagery, metaphors, and phrases shared between Persian and Indic songs. The Indo-Persian connection is manifested in the urban and classical

music of Afghanistan, and musical cultures in various regions such as Baluchistan and Kashmir. It is also important to note that having Persian as the common language for writing and communication, scholars in Iran/Central Asia and India were able to read Persian books on the two major traditions of Indian and Persian music. Through the original writings on Persian music by immigrant scholars in India such as Seyf-Jām of Herat, Qāsim ibn Dust-Ali of Bukhara, and Hossein Zahiri from Isfahan, Indian scholars were able to have direct encounters with Persian music. Indian music was also able to make an impact back on music in Iran by such routes. For example, the symbolic mode derivation in Persian texts, in which each of the six *āvāz* generated two *maqams*, seems to be an influence of the Indian music system of six *ragas* which each had five *raginis*.

Indo-Persian musical connections remained active into the early-to-mid twentieth century, when Iranian musicians travelled to India and produced records. The Parsi community – Persian Zoroastrians who had immigrated to India – maintained connections with Iran, and the first Persian talkie movie, *Dokhtar-e Lor*, was produced in India by the Zoroastrian community. In Afghanistan, Ustad Sarahang (1924–1983) studied music with Ashiq Ali Khan of India’s Patiala gharana and became a legendary Afghan musician. In Iran, Indian musicians were invited by individual patrons up till before the 1979 revolution, and as a part of the cosmopolitan Shiraz Festival.

Historically, rulers patronized musicians and artists from across this region and syncretism flourished. However, the era of nationalism ushered in a quite different perspective, one focused on purity of tradition and a concern with what is ‘native’ to a place. While the Indo-Persian confluence has given birth to and enriched north Indian art music, this history is downplayed in India, and mythical origins in India’s ancient, pre-Islamic past are emphasized instead. In Iran, the influence of Indo-Persian cultural exchange on music is admittedly less than in India, but it has been little explored. New borders have divided India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran into highly separate zones, obscuring the wealth of connections of the past. Nevertheless, in recent decades, new relationships between musicians have emerged in the form of ‘world music’ and fusion projects. Most notably, two renowned musicians from Iran and India, Kayhan Kalhor and Shujaat Hussein Khan, initiated a collaboration, *Ghazal*, that lasted for two decades and resulted in a series of tours and albums over the past twenty years. In India, the emergence of Sufi music as a craze amongst upper middle-class urbanites has also framed these traditions in new ways (Manuel 2008).

Although the rich musical connections between South, West, and Central Asia has been partially obscured, a critical mass of scholarly attention to this history had emerged by the beginning of this millennium. Regula Qureshi’s book on *qawwali* was a pioneering study of the quintessentially Indo-Persian Sufi music of India and Pakistan (1986). Najma Perveen Ahmad (1984), Allyn Miner (1993), Shahab Sarmadee (e.g. 2003), and Madhu Trivedi (2012) have all undertaken groundbreaking scholarship on Indian music from Persian texts, and Katherine Brown/Schofield’s works on Mughal India have been particularly transformative of our understanding of the Indo-Persian history of Hindustani music (e.g. 2010). Dilorom Karomat (2006) and Mohsen Mohammadi (2006) have published on musical connections between India

and Iran/Central Asia, and John Baily (1988) and Assadullah Shour (2011) have produced important works on the Indo-Persian synergy of music in Afghanistan. The growing prominence of the topic was marked in India in 2005 when the ITC Sangeet Research Academy in India, in collaboration with several other institutions including UNESCO's International Council for Traditional Music and the University of Amsterdam, held an international symposium in Mumbai titled 'India-Iran: Confluence of Musical Cultures'. Proceedings of this conference were published in a special issue of the *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society* (V 36/37, 2005-2006).

This program of events aims to give a new prominence to the myriad dimensions of Indo-Persian musical exchange, and to examine its contemporary legacy in countries across this region. It seeks to bring together scholars from various disciplines working on musical cultures of India, Central Asia, and Iran, and to enhance collaborations and comparative research. It also aims to promote new musical relationships and associations. We encourage senior and junior academics and musicians, as well as independent scholars and artists, to submit proposals for individual papers, organized panels, performances, workshops, films, and poster presentations that relate musical culture in the Indian subcontinent to Central Asia and Iran.

## References

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Sarmadee, Shahab. 2003. *Ghunyatu'l Munya: The Earliest Persian Work on Indian Classical Music*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research in association with Northern Book Centre.

Shour, Assadullah. 2011. *Kulliāt dar Musiqi va Adabiyāt-i Dari*. Kabul: Saeed.

Trivedi, Madhu. 2012. *The Emergence of the Hindustani Tradition: Music, Dance and Drama in north India, 13th to 19th Centuries*. Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective.

***Deadline for submissions is August 31, 2020 (We may accommodate proposals that arrive after the deadline if possible)***

**Submission format:**

We welcome a variety of formats suitable for online delivery, including

- Individual panels, maximum 2 hours total
- Individual talks
- Performances
- Film screenings, with an introductory talk

Abstracts for submissions should be no longer than 250 words and should be sent to [mohammadim@hotmail.com](mailto:mohammadim@hotmail.com) by August 31, 2020. (We may accommodate proposals that arrive after the deadline if possible). Notification of acceptance to the conference will be sent in September 2020. For questions related to the conference please contact Mohsen Mohammadi at [mohammadim@hotmail.com](mailto:mohammadim@hotmail.com)

English language must be used.

**Advisory committee:**

Mohsen Mohammadi, Project Leader, University of California, Los Angeles

Brian Bond, City University of New York

Anna Morcom, University of California, Los Angeles

Laudan Nooshin, City, University of London

Rahim Shayegan, University of California, Los Angeles

Asadullah Shour, Senior independent scholar of Indo-Persian music, Afghanistan-Canada

Vivek Virani, University of North Texas

## Further information on sponsors

- Established in 2005, the UCLA Mohindar Brar Sambhi Chair of Indian Music supports the performance, study and teaching of the music of India in the UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology. The Indian Music Ensembles focus on the performance of Indian classical music on the sitar and tabla.
- The UCLA Jahangir and Eleanor Amuzegar Chair in Iranian Studies is the director of the UCLA's Iranian Studies program, the home to the largest and most comprehensive doctoral program of its kind in the Americas and is the only one to cover the entire spectrum of Iranian Studies across disciplines, linguistic boundaries and periods. Its distinctive strengths are Old and Middle Iranian philology, ancient Iranian history and religions, archaeology, and the study of classical Persian literature.
- The program of Iranian Studies at UCLA, established half a century ago, in 1963, is the largest and most comprehensive doctoral programs of its kind in the Americas. It covers the entire spectrum of Iranian studies across disciplines, linguistic boundaries, and periods. Among its distinctive strengths is the focus on Old and Middle Iranian philology, ancient Iranian history and religions, archaeology, as well as the study of classical and modern Persian literature. In addition, courses in Judeo-Persian literature and Baha'i history and religion are regularly read in the program.
- The UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology, the largest and first of its kind in a U.S. university, offers courses that cover the music of virtually every region of the world and of many ethnic groups in the U.S., as well as courses on popular music and film music. Ethnomusicology involves the study of all kinds of music from all over the world, using a variety of disciplinary perspectives.
- The UCLA Center for India and South Asia (CISA) supports research, hosts public lectures and workshops, and collaborates with other institutions and centers to raise the profile of South Asia on campus and, more generally, in Southern California. The center's goal is to transform UCLA into one of the leading poles of integrated research activity on India and South Asia in the country through research, collaboration and academic integration.
- For over half a century, the Center for Near Eastern Studies has promoted interdisciplinary study of the Middle East at UCLA and beyond, raising public awareness of the region's diverse peoples and cultures and their relevance to today's world.