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Research Report

Within the first week of my arrival at the site of my field work, I consulted with some key members of the Iranian community in Los Angeles, including the director of the LA Iranian Yellow Pages who also directs a large bookstore. Within days I was afforded the opportunity to attend a small community concert in honor of father's day, held at a synagogue and educational center, that hosted a variety of musicians of this genre of music. Later on, still in the initial stages of becoming familiar with the field site, I was able to meet with the radio host of a local weekly radio show that specifically addresses Persian classical music, who is additionally involved with the Persian Arts Society (that offers classes in Persian classical music) as well as producing such music on cd's as well.

In my meeting and interview with these individuals, in early interviews with other musicians, and in conversations with members of the broader Iranian and Iranian-Jewish community, it became clearer that finding interviewees for initial subject of my inquiry, Iranian-Jewish musicians of Persian classical music, were very few. Of the twenty-four (24) individuals I came to interview during the length of my research in the field, four were Iranian-Jewish musicians or producers. The scope of my inquiry in a sense broadened, by virtue of those whom I interviewed, and by virtue of the topic, which became more generally about the production of Persian classical music in the United States, and Los Angeles and neighboring areas of southern California as a case study. All interviews still maintained, as previously planned, the question about the involvement of Iranian-Jews in Persian classical music, both currently and historically, and thus I was still able to meet my goal of investigating the discourse amongst Iranian musicians about the role of Iranian-Jewish musicians in this genre of music.

In accordance with my proposal, I was able to meet the goals of investigating the activities, repertoires, roles, and meanings involved in the production of Persian classical music amongst an immigrant community in diaspora. I gathered an immense amount of rich and original data through interviews (conducted primarily in Persian), group classes I took on the daf (hand held frame drum), and in attending concerts, the totality of which still needs to be analyzed and transcribed. Interviewees involved those across an

age range of early 20s–60s, from those who emigrated to the U.S. in the 1970's, to those who have come here as recently as two years ago. I interviewed musicians, composers, and producers, and of the twenty-four interviewed, four were women (16.67 %).

Preliminary findings indicate a relatively vibrant culture of Iranian music in Los Angeles, of which Persian classical music is one small, but notable part. There appeared to be a diversity in opinion amongst those I interviewed, notably over the question of how to define Persian classical music itself, in addition to a divide amongst those who produce and perform Persian classical music in its more traditional form, and those who produce and perform Persian classical music in newer forms, e.g. fused with or composed like Western classical music, other world music, and innovative technology incorporated sounds (one producer/musician invented his own technological instrument, one that mirrors initial music input and invites a different musical response). This begins to address the question of whether musical forms change in tandem with migration. Some of those I interviewed were involved with musical forms related to but distinct from Persian classical music, for example Kurdish music or Azeri music, indicating and reflecting Iran's ethnic diversity, and data in the literature that evidence of flourishing and less restricted musical culture and production in peripheral areas of Iran.

Another trend that seemed to emerge was that of long-distance music teaching over the internet (a number of those I interviewed maintain contacts with students and teach them over Skype). Emergent as well, by virtue of many interviewees who had come recently from Iran, was the opportunity to learn about musical activity, vis a vis Persian classical music, in Iran in the past three decades, and the preliminary findings indicate that the learning and teaching (though not as much the performance) of this form of music has increased greatly in Iran. Many musicians of this form of music produce their albums in Iran, though they live here, on account of what was stated as studios better suited for the recording of this kind of music, and lower production costs of producing abroad, with the drawback of no copyright protection here in the U.S. for music produced there. On the other hand, for female singers, it was noted, the U.S. is the only option for producing albums and performing (on account of religious governmental restrictions on solo female singing). Some findings also indicate a relationship between the use of musical production and performance as a means for psychological well-being, and in a number of cases Persian

classical music was employed in the use of therapy, both in individual and group settings locally, with the intended purpose of improving mental and emotional health.

Taleghani funding was absolutely beneficial in enabling me to meet the travel costs of getting to my site of field work, and in supporting me in the operational costs of getting to and conducting interviews, participant observation, and gathering the data that forms an essential part of this ethnographic research.