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## Jazz and Its Social Meanings in Iran From Cultural Colonialism to the Universal

LAUDAN NOOSHIN

### Setting the Scene

July 10, 2000. A hot summer evening. An excited crowd, mainly young people including many fashionable young women, heavily made up and wearing the latest “Tehran Chic,” wait outside the Ebn-e Sina Cultural Centre in Shahrak-e Qarb, a well-to-do neighborhood in west Tehran. The “jazz” concert by the band Imaj is scheduled to start at 7:00 p.m., but at 7:15 p.m. the doors are still closed. Eventually, the doors are opened and the audience streams in to the small concert hall. The sense of anticipation is palpable; concerts like this don’t happen very often. As we enter the hall, we’re handed a concert program, and I notice that almost all of the pieces listed are cover versions of Western pop and rock songs, including numbers by Paul Simon, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney. Very little “jazz” seems to be on the program. The musicians walk onstage to an ecstatic reception. As the first piece starts—an instrumental version of John Lennon’s “Imagine”—Ayatollah Khomeini and the conservative Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei look down from their portraits above the stage, as they do in every public hall in Iran. Concert hall officials also keep watch from the side to make sure that order is maintained and no one tries to dance to the music.

LAUDAN NOOSHIN, field notes

How is it that musical styles acquire particular social meanings in specific times and places? In the case of the above extract from my field notes, why should the term “jazz” have been applied to a concert in which very little jazz was performed? In this chapter, I explore various aspects of jazz and its social meanings in Iran from the 1950s onward, focusing in particular on the period of cultural liberalism that followed the election of the reformist president Mohammad Khatami in 1997. When Euro-American popular music continued to be branded as a form of cultural imperialism, jazz remained largely outside this category. Instead, the positioning of jazz since the late 1990s has served to define its meanings largely through the metaphors of music “as art” and, more recently, as a form of “universal” musical expression.

The ideas presented here have emerged somewhat tangentially in the course of my long-term research on Iranian music: first, in my work on the processes of creative performance in Iranian classical music (*musiqi-ye asil*), I was struck by the ways in which musicians would invoke parallels with jazz in our discussions; second, in more recent research on Iranian popular music, I have been intrigued by the somewhat ambiguous position of jazz within official discourses.<sup>1</sup> I was interested in whether there might be a connection between these two. What I present here is not a history of Euro-American jazz in Iran but an exploration of what jazz as a musical genre has come to mean in Iran.<sup>2</sup>

### Jazz in Iran: 1950s to 1979

Alongside other forms of Euro-American popular music, jazz (or *jāzz*, as pronounced locally) was introduced to Iran after World War II as a result of the policies of westernization and modernization pursued by the regime of the shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (r. 1941–79). Such policies aimed to transform Iran into an industrial, capitalist, and largely urban and secular nation state, and they were strongly supported by many European countries and the United States, for whom Iran represented a ripe market as well as a supplier of oil and a military policeman for the region.

By the 1960s, a great deal of popular music from Europe and the United States was available and well known in Iran. In addition, a local industry also emerged at this time, producing a new kind of westernized and mass-mediated Iranian pop music that was heavily promoted by the government and eventually came to dominate Iran's soundscapes. Compared to pop music, jazz was fairly peripheral. Recordings of artists such as Louis Armstrong were commercially available and were also broadcast on the radio. Some American and European artists traveled to Iran. Max Roach, for example, is reported to have visited Iran in the late 1950s and worked with Iranian drummers, including the renowned Hossein Tehrani and his pupil Jamshid Chemirani. Duke Ellington also toured Iran in 1963, performing in Esfahan and the southern Gulf city of Abadan, home at that time to a large community of Americans and Europeans working in the oil industry (Sadighi and Mahdavi 2009), and Benny Carter performed in the Teatr-e Shahr in Tehran in 1971.<sup>3</sup> And from the 1960s, a few local bands emerged. Armenian musicians such as the brothers Hovik and Rafik Davudian and pianist Aram Stepanian were particularly active in the small jazz scene, which consisted largely of performances in chic hotel lobbies or nightclubs rather than formal concerts. The American musician Lloyd Clifton Miller set up a jazz band at the American School in Tehran

when he first arrived in Iran in 1957; when he later returned to the country in 1970, he played in the Iran-US Society band, which included the Davudian brothers and performed in some of the international hotels in Tehran. Significantly, Miller was invited by the state broadcasting organization, National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT), to present a weekly television jazz show (presented under the name Kurosh Ali Khan); he also produced a series of documentary films on jazz history for television screening.<sup>4</sup> NIRT also had a jazz orchestra at the time, conducted by Marcel Estepanian.<sup>5</sup> Despite these high-profile programs, however, jazz remained a minority interest, and listening to jazz was generally regarded as a somewhat intellectual, middle-class pursuit.<sup>6</sup>

### The 1979 Revolution and Its Aftermath

By the late 1970s, Iran's underlying political tensions had led to widespread social unrest. Given the growing gulf between the wealthy westernized elite and the majority of the population, for whom many basic social needs were not met, the shah's ostentatious spending on his own household and personnel, his suppression of political dissent, and the general perception of him as a political puppet of Britain and the United States alienated large sections of the population and created the conditions that eventually led to his overthrow in the revolution of February 1979. The Iranian Revolution had profound repercussions throughout the Middle East and beyond, the effects of which can still be felt today. One of the most salient aspects of the revolution in the context of the current discussion is the assertion of national identity and self-determination in reaction to a perceived loss of identity during the previous several decades. Indeed, even though Iran was never colonized by a European power, writers such as Halliday (1996, 73) have likened the 1979 revolution to anti-colonial independence movements elsewhere. Above all, the events of 1979 and their aftermath should be understood as a reaction to what preceded them. The revolution was brought about by a broad anti-monarchy coalition of leftist, nationalist, and religious organizations with overwhelming popular support, and it was only in the power vacuum that followed the departure of the shah that religious groups gained the upper hand, leading to the declaration of the Islamic Republic in April 1979, two months after the revolution (see Keddie 1981, 1995; Parsa 1989; Farhi 1990; Wright 1990; and Katouzian 2003).

One of the most urgent priorities for the postrevolutionary regime was the establishment of Islamic law, something that had significant repercussions for music, which for centuries had occupied an ambiguous position in the

eyes of religious authorities. This imperative converged in quite specific ways with another: the need to be seen pursuing an anti-Western, anti-imperialist agenda. The new theocracy tolerated certain types of music (religious music, Iranian classical music, and regional folk musics) but imposed a complete prohibition on Euro-American popular music of all kinds and Western-style Iranian pop. The reasons for the ban were twofold: first, pop music was closely associated with the previous regime and had, by the 1970s, become a prominent symbol of the shah's modernization project; second, with its allegedly crude lyrics and particularly the sensuous dance movements associated with Iranian pop, this *musiqi-ye mobtazal* (cheap or decadent music) was deemed to represent the worst of Western cultural hegemony (expressed as *tahājom-e farhangi*, cultural imperialism or cultural invasion) and was presented as un-Islamic and potentially corrupting to young people by the government.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the banning of popular music came to symbolize both the Islamic and the anti-imperialist credentials of the government (see Youssefzadeh 2000, Nooshin 2005a, and Nooshin 2005b).

Many pop musicians left Iran, and Los Angeles eventually became home to a large diaspora community and an expatriate pop music industry. Despite the official ban, however, many people in Iran continued to listen to popular music in private during the 1980s and 1990s, both Euro-American and Iranian, the latter including recordings from before 1979 as well as those imported from abroad through the flourishing black market. Indeed, with predictable irony, popular music became more desirable by virtue of being banned: many people, particularly the young, relatively affluent urbanites from areas such as North Tehran, wanted to listen to this music precisely because it was prohibited. Although it seems that significant numbers of people privately agreed with some of the meanings the government attempted to attach to this music—popular music as a symbol of Western imperialism, cultural decline, and so on—such meanings were simply unable to compete with the quite different meanings that the music had for young listeners in particular: popular music as an expression of youth, of the outside world, and of freedom (see Nooshin 2005a).

While the ban was aimed primarily at mainstream pop music, the authorities made few stylistic distinctions, and jazz was therefore affected as well. It is not easy to ascertain the status of jazz in the 1980s and early 1990s, how much activity there was and the extent to which people listened to jazz in private as they did pop. It certainly did not acquire the kind of subversive caché that pop music had at this time. With its relatively low profile and select audience before 1979, it seems that jazz more or less disappeared or went underground, and this is certainly an area for further investigation.

### The Khatami Period: Partial Legalization

All of this changed in May 1997, when a former minister of culture and reformist candidate, Mohammad Khatami, was swept into power in a historic landslide victory in Iran's presidential elections. Promising greater openness internally and a reestablishment of Iran's international relations, the mandate that Khatami received indicated overwhelming support for change. While limited in his ability to make fundamental political reforms, Khatami's term of office (1997–2005) saw far-reaching changes in the cultural domain, following the rapid growth of a civil society infrastructure and associated social discourses in the early 1990s. One of the most remarkable changes was a relaxation in government policy toward music, particularly pop music. After banning it for almost twenty years, the government reversed course in the spring of 1998 and authorized certain types of pop music, ushering in a new, local pop music industry. And rather like the release of a spring that has been held down by force, local pop exploded with a momentum that was hard for the government to control. By the year 2000 (only two years after legalization), pop music was everywhere in Tehran and the provinces, increasingly upbeat, some of it aurally indistinguishable from the (still illegal) *Los Angelesi* pop produced in the diaspora. It was hard to believe that only a few years earlier pop music had been entirely absent from the public domain in Iran.

The reasons for the change in government policy have been discussed elsewhere (see Nooshin 2005a, 2005b, 2008) and are not within the scope of this chapter. It is worth noting, however, that the legalization fueled an intense public debate over pop music and whether it represented a symbol of freedom and (largely youthful) expression or was simply a form of Western cultural hegemony; much of this debate was aired through articles in the national press. What I want to consider here is the selective nature of the legalization. While certain types of popular music became legal again, much remained prohibited, including Iranian pop produced in the diaspora or from before 1979, local Iranian rock and other alternative music,<sup>8</sup> and Euro-American popular music, all of which continued to be available through the black market, satellite television, and, by the early 2000s, the Internet.

Questions of legality and illegality in Iran have long been notoriously fluid. In the absence of laws permitting or prohibiting specific kinds of music, what was and was not allowed in the early years after the revolution depended on the pronouncements of influential clerics. With the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (*Vezārat-e Farhang va Ershād-e Eslāmi*) in 1987, following a complex series of ministerial amalgamations,<sup>9</sup> all public performances and commercial recordings, including those imported

from abroad, required a permit, and the success or otherwise in securing one became the main touchstone of legality. While specific procedures have changed over the years, the process of applying for a permit continues to be lengthy, stressful, and often problematic (see Youssefzadeh 2000). The other main government body that deals with music, the national broadcasting organization Sāzmān-e Sedā va Simā-ye Jomhoori-ye Eslāmi-ye Iran (usually abbreviated Sedā va Simā), is independent of the Ministry of Culture and has the authority to make its own decisions on what can be broadcast on radio and television. The distribution of power in relation to music policy leads both to struggles between these bodies and to some of the many paradoxes in Iran's public soundscapes. For instance, musical instruments are still not shown on television, despite being legally available and openly on view at concerts and in music shops.<sup>10</sup>

Euro-American popular music in the broadest sense (pop, rock, blues, techno, soul, hip-hop, metal, and so on) continues to be prohibited, but a few styles, notably jazz, have eluded the ban. This dichotomy first caught my attention during the summer of 2000, when the new liberalism under Khatami was starting to take effect. Perusing the shelves of music stores, I found a number of recordings by Euro-American jazz artists from the 1940s onward, typically well-known musicians such as Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Keith Jarrett. Particularly common were recordings by Kenny G, a musician who is very popular in Iran and whose music I even heard on the radio from time to time. I later discovered that the Ministry of Culture had, as early as 1994 (three years before Khatami's election), produced a series of cassettes featuring musicians such as John Coltrane and Miles Davis.

I was intrigued. Why were jazz recordings allowed, promoted even, when permits were denied most forms of Euro-American popular music? While jazz was not the only exception to the general prohibition, it was perhaps the most noticeable. Other exceptions included flamenco, another immensely popular style. Indeed, a few flamenco musicians have visited Iran, including guitarist Juan Martin, who performed to an audience of 3,000 in the grounds of the Niavaran Palace in Tehran in September 2004.<sup>11</sup> Other popular artists whose recordings are openly on sale in music shops include the Greek singer Yanni and the Gipsy Kings. And since the late 1990s, radio broadcasts by Sedā va Simā have included recordings by Richard Clayderman as well as instrumental arrangements of songs by pop and rock stars such as Rod Stewart and the Rolling Stones. Bookshops also sell sheet music of songs and albums such as Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, as well as published collections of translated song lyrics (without the music) by singers and bands including Queen, Bob Marley, Tracy Chapman, and Bob Dylan. I found these exceptions to the ban

fascinating and wondered what they meant. Was there some significance or logic in what was allowed and what was not, or were these anomalies simply indicative of the more liberal policies of the government after 1997 and the inconsistent loosening of central control? As already noted, one often comes across such apparently paradoxical situations in Iran, which often result from contestation between different government bodies, whether at central or local level, as seen for instance in the case of concerts permitted by the Ministry of Culture but prevented from going ahead, often at the last minute, by local officials, or in the already mentioned policy differences between the Ministry of Culture and Sedā va Simā.

### Local Jazz since the Mid-1990s

Besides the importation of jazz recordings and occasional radio broadcasts of music by Euro-American jazz musicians, a number of Iranian jazz musicians have been active in Iran since the mid-1990s. One of the best-known Iranian musicians to have worked in the jazz idiom is multi-instrumentalist Peter Soleimanipour, whose band Atin received the first permit after the revolution, in 1994. In June of that year Atin performed a series of concerts at the Bahman Cultural Centre<sup>12</sup> in Tehran, and the program included pieces by Astor Piazzolla and the Gipsy Kings, as well as by Soleimanipour himself and other members of the band.<sup>13</sup> Best known as a saxophonist, Soleimanipour draws on a wide range of influences, both from Iran and elsewhere, and he is keen to avoid being pigeonholed as a jazz artist.<sup>14</sup> This breadth was evident from the start with Atin, which included two guitarists playing in flamenco style, Shahin Alavi and Emad Bonakdar, and *tabla* player Darshan Jot Singh Anand, and continues to be apparent in Soleimanipour's most recent album, *Egosystem* (2003). Soleimanipour (pers. comm.) cites among his influences American jazz musicians such as Miles Davis, Pat Metheny, and Keith Jarrett; British multi-instrumentalist John Surman; Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek; Swedish pianist Esbjörn Svensson; Latin American musicians Heitor Villa-Lobos, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Egberto Gismonti, and Astor Piazzolla; and the Spanish band the Gipsy Kings. Following the breakup of Atin, Soleimanipour worked with and led a number of bands in 1995 and 1996, playing jazz standards and cover versions of pieces as well as his own compositions. In 1998 he released his first album, *Javānehā*, in collaboration with guitarist Behzad Mirkani. In the years that followed, Soleimanipour worked with several bands, including a group of three diplomats at the French Embassy in Tehran who happened to be amateur jazz musicians, and the Persiko Trio, which later became a quartet and eventually a hextet. After spending a month in Europe



in 2000 trying to promote Persiko's music, Soleimanipour returned to Iran and started work on a new album, *Egosystem*, which was released in 2003.

In the summer of 2008, Soleimanipour was still active in Tehran, working with the fusion band Fihmafiḥ and his workshop-based Peter Soleimanipour Ensemble. One characteristic of the alternative-popular-music scene in Iran, much of it focused in Tehran, is the circulation of certain key musicians, many of them self-taught, and the relatively frequent formation and disbanding of groups with the same musicians often coming together in different combinations. The lineup for *Egosystem* is a case in point. The bass player, Babak Riahipour, is one of the most sought-after bassists in Iran and plays with a number of rock and pop bands. In the 1990s, Riahipour was a member of Avizheh (discussed below), as was one of *Egosystem's* three percussionists, Ali Rahimi, who currently plays with the Nour Ensemble, a group that performs a fusion of Iranian, Kurdish, and medieval European music.<sup>15</sup> Another of *Egosystem's* percussionists, Kasra Ebrahimi, is a member of the Behna Ensemble.<sup>16</sup>

In describing his music, Soleimanipour uses the term *talfiqi* (which translates as "fusion"), although his music is strongly rooted in jazz traditions, as indicated by his main musical influences cited above.

Everything is *talfiqi*. I prefer not to categorize my music since categories raise expectations. . . . I really don't find any need to position the music that is created inside me by capturing the whole or parts of a musical idiom, let's say jazz or whatever, and talking about it as if it is jazz and nothing else. I believe that today's world benefits from a borderless musical communicative potential within which any kind of definition will fail due to the constant shifts that musical paradigms are experiencing. (Soleimanipour, pers. comm.)

The avoidance of borders and categories lies at the heart of *Egosystem*, which brings together diverse musical elements including African and "Latin" rhythms and fugue. The final track, however, shows where the true heart of the music lies: "Alblues" is a tribute to Miles Davis, a reinterpretation of the classic "All Blues" from Davis's 1959 album *Kind of Blue*. An example of *Egosystem's* eclectic musical palette can be heard in the seventh track, a piece entitled "Shâdi" (Joy). The track begins with a gentle ostinato on acoustic and classical guitars, leading to the entry of the solo soprano saxophone at 0:10 and a quasi-Celtic folk-style rhythmic pattern, with parallel thirds and sixths and somewhat reminiscent of the sound of a barrel organ (motif [i]). The first main section (A) begins at 0:31 (repeated 0:55) with a drawn-out lyrical melody on saxophone, and indeed the solo saxophone dominates the melody line for most of the rest of the piece. Various percussion instruments also

enter the mix at this point, including triangle, the *uduh* vessel drum (of West African origin, adopted by a number of Iranian percussionists in recent years) and electronically generated instruments; all the instruments on this track are performed by Soleimanipour himself. At 1:17, the saxophone presents a contrasting idea, in the manner of a chorus, rising at the end to a statement of the “barrel organ” motif (i) at 1:52. The next section (B) heralds a quasi-oriental sound, heard on the guitars even before the saxophone enters at 2:05, and it is here in this middle section that the saxophone starts to explore and improvise around the basic ideas expressed in section A. The chorus returns at 2:49 and is followed once again by motif (i). Section C (3:33) begins with a beautifully syncopated dialogue between the guitars, and here Soleimanipour’s influence from Latin American musicians such as Gismonti and bands such as Inti-Illimani is clear. The saxophone reenters at 4:01 and after a brief *ritardando* there is a reprise of section A (4:11) and the chorus (4:33). This time, however, the chorus leads not into motif (i) but into an extended outro with improvised saxophone and a guitar passage (5:44 to 5:56) that includes some new ideas, some of them with a hint of Avizheh’s music. The passage eventually resolves to motif (i) (6:15), which is repeated as the tempo increases until the end of the piece.

Overall, “Shâdi” has a strongly lyrical and folk feel, combined with the various eclectic elements mentioned, but there is little in the musical language to identify it as Iranian: like many alternative musicians in Iran, Soleimanipour wants his music to be enjoyed *as music* rather than as an expression of nation, and he avoids the kinds of essentialized categorization implied by such expression. On the album cover, he explains the title in relation to broad concepts of humanity: “*Egosystem* is a book of musical lyricism composed in appreciation of those human inter-ego and intra-ego relations that lead to beauty.” Interestingly, the verbal and musical discourses of the album contrast with the visual image on the cover, a traditional gelim carpet, which unambiguously ties the music to Iran.

*Egosystem* was released on Hermes, an innovative and pioneering local label that has played a crucial role in making available what, for want of a better term, might be called serious alternative music in Iran—everything from film music to experimental free improvisation. Since its establishment in 1999, Hermes has promoted local jazz musicians and facilitated and recorded collaborative work between Iranian musicians and visiting jazz musicians from outside Iran. Indeed, Hermes is to date the only label in Iran to have released jazz and jazz fusion albums,<sup>17</sup> including *Paris-Tehran Project* (2004) and *Spring in Niavaran* (2005) as well as *Egosystem*.<sup>18</sup> In 2006, Hermes collaborated with the UK-based world music magazine *Songlines* to publish

**MUSIC CORNER**  
گوشه موسیقی

منوی چهارشنبه  
یک فنجان موسیقی  
A Cup of Music

موسیقی جاز معاصر (۲)  
Contemporary Jazz (2)








FIGURE 4.1. Program for *A Cup of Music* (2008).

فهرست قطعات امروز  
جماً به مدت ۲ ساعت

نام قطعه	ش
Have you heard?	۱
Rahu	۲
Her wild ways	۳
Nanda	۴
Sueno con Mexico	۵
The Last Romantics	۶
Return to Forever	۷
Love in Berlin	۸
On Stream	۹
Arch Dance	۱۰
Endless	۱۱
Minor Blue	۱۲
Modul 13	۱۳
Detach	۱۴
Ostad	۱۵
Modul 33	۱۶
Sukra	۱۷
Sleep safe and warm	۱۸
When we were free	۱۹

**یادداشت**

Robert Miles ۲۱	Miles Davis ۱۱	Jean Luc Ponty ۱
Gary Burton ۲۲	Gary Burton ۱۲	New Age Jazz ۲
Stadium-filling Concert ۲۳	Al Di Meola ۱۳	Minimal Jazz ۳
Ornette Coleman ۲۴	Return to Forever ۱۴	Realtime ۴
Krakow ۲۵	Stanley Clarke ۱۵	Latin Jazz ۵
Dave Brubeck ۲۶	Ambient Jazz ۱۶	Jazz Fusion ۶
Andrej Vajda ۲۷	Hilliard Ensemble ۱۷	Bill Evans ۷
Krzysztof Kieslowski ۲۸	Officium ۱۸	Art Tatum ۸
Musical Concepts ۲۹	Catalonia ۱۹	Bud Powell ۹
	John McLoughlin ۲۰	Herbie Hancock ۱۰

برای موسیقی، حرمت قایل باشیم...

the first non-English edition of the magazine, in Persian. In 2007, Hermes also established a weekly series called *A Cup of Music* in the former Cinema Jomhoori in central Tehran. Each Wednesday, listeners heard a program of recorded music by a particular musician or based on a theme, with program notes also provided. The series was partly intended to compensate for the poor state of public music broadcasting in Iran at the time. In the summer of 2008, a number of sessions were dedicated to jazz, including one on the music of Keith Jarrett, another on Miles Davis, two on contemporary jazz (see fig. 4.1), and one on Scandinavian jazz.<sup>19</sup>

Another pioneering band was Avizheh, which described its aim in a leaflet as “blending Iranian musical traditions and jazz-rock.” Established in 1997 by four musicians—Ramin Behna (jazz pianist and keyboardist trained in Germany), Babak Riahipour (electric bass), Pedram Derakhshani (*santur* and *setār*), and Reza Abai (*kamāncheh* and *qeychak*)—and with the support of Sedā va Simā, by 1998 the group had expanded to nine members. Avizheh’s music was an interesting, and quite original for the time, fusion of traditional sonorities, modes, rhythms, and instruments (particularly the distinctive sound of the *qeychak*, a folk bowed lute rarely heard outside regional rural traditions) with those of rock and jazz. Between 1998 and 2001 the group

The image shows three staves of musical notation for the electric bass part of the opening of Avizheh's "Nonavā". The first staff starts with a tempo marking of quarter note = 66. The key signature is D minor (three flats) and the time signature is 2/4. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The second staff continues the melody with some syncopation. The third staff shows a first ending and a second ending, with the text "etc." following.

EXAMPLE 4.1. Notation of the opening of Avizheh's "Nonavā" (electric bass part), from 0:00 to 0:59.

gave a number of public performances, starting in November 1998 with nine sold-out concerts at the Arasbaran Cultural Center in Tehran (extended from the original four nights due to demand), which were recorded and released the following year as the album *The Arasbaran Concert*. An earlier album, *Nakhostin* [First], had already been released in 1998 by Soroush, a media company affiliated with Sedā va Simā, and a third, *Avizheh*, was released in 2000 after the band decided to sever ties with Sedā va Simā and work independently. In another indication of the interconnected nature of the alternative music scene "personnel," (rather in the manner of an extended family), Avizheh's publicity brochure was produced by Peter Soleimanipour, a graphic designer as well as a musician.

In contrast with the music of Soleimanipour, Avizheh's music has a strong local flavor, heard particularly in the band's instrumentation and use of melody and mode. "Nonavā"<sup>20</sup> (New *navā*), for instance, uses a combination of Iranian instruments including *santur* (hammered dulcimer), *nei* (end-blown flute), *qeychak* and *daff* (frame drum), with electric bass, piano, keyboards and drum set (track 11 of the CD accompanying this book). The title refers to a reworking of the classical Iranian mode *navā*, the pitches of which accord more or less with a natural minor scale with a slightly raised sixth degree. "Nonavā" begins with a slow introduction with the main melody on electric bass (see ex. 4.1), joined at 1:00 by *santur* and *nei* and accompanied by strummed chords. This introduction establishes a motivic pattern comprising stepwise movement up the first three degrees of the scale (f, g, and a-flat), which forms the "cell" from which much of the rest of the melody is derived. A *ritardando* and brief flourishes and tremolos on *santur* (1:25) lead into the main piece (1:30), beginning with a strongly rhythmic, syncopated ostinato on piano and keyboard that is maintained through the rest of the piece. The

main melody (section A) enters at 1:46 (repeated 2:11) and is played on santur and nei, accompanied by keyboards, bass, and drum set. In contrast with the first section, the next (from 2:30) has a Euro-American jazz sound, featuring an improvised piano solo (accompanied by bass guitar and drums) starting at 2:37 and continuing to 3:09, where the santur takes over the jazz-style soloing over the same ostinato, reintroducing local color once more. Section A returns at 3:39, eventually leading into a solo passage on qeychak (from 4:07), with its velvety nasal sound, starting slowly and moving into a faster rhythmic passage from 4:23. With the qeychak solo, the music modulates away from the main navā scale such that c becomes the tonal center and the basic motivic “cell” shifts up (to c, d-flat, and e-flat), with a distinctive semitone between the first two degrees of the scale. This section is repeated on nei (from 4:38) leading to a reprise of section A (5:03) and a return to the home mode. The final outro section is strongly rhythmic and features a few seconds of daff solo just before the final chord. Other than the passage from 2:30, “Nonavā” retains strong local associations in its sounds, mainly through the instrumentation as well as its motivic and modal character, which together give the music a feeling of being rooted in Iran, in contrast to the later music of Soleimanipour as heard in pieces such as “Shâdi.” Avizheh’s music was the first attempt to fuse the sounds of jazz-rock with those of Iranian music.

That both Atin and Avizheh were primarily jazz (rather than pop) bands may have been a crucial factor in gaining permits to record and perform—and, in the case of Avizheh, obtaining official support from Sedā va Simā—in the mid- to late 1990s, well before other groups. While working conditions were hard, as they were for all musicians, being granted a permit was a watershed event. Although both groups have broken up, their pioneering work helped pave the way for an independent alternative-popular-music movement at the end of the decade (see Nooshin 2005a, 2005b). While their presence has not led directly to a significant increase in the number of local jazz musicians, the stylistic broadening of the alternative-popular-music scene has been made possible by the vision of these early groups. Indeed, many of the artists mentioned above, having cut their musical teeth in the early jazz-fusion bands, are still active in the alternative-music scene but have moved on to other styles such as rock or more experimental music. In the summer of 2008, besides the ongoing work of Peter Soleimanipour, the only other active jazz band in Tehran was Abrang, led by Mahan Mirarab on guitar, with Hamzeh Yeganeh on piano, Dara Darai on bass, and Amin Taheri on drums. I attended one of the band’s rehearsals as they prepared for a concert at the Arasbaran Cultural Center, and as they explained to me, they had managed to secure a permit for the performance by using the term “folklore” rather

than “jazz” on the permit application.<sup>21</sup> Fluidity is the name of the game: just as the rules and those who make them change constantly, sometimes without notice, so bands form and re-form, often as a direct result of the social and financial pressures under which they operate, the demoralizing process of applying for (and sometimes failing to secure) performance and recording permits, and the constant drain of young people leaving Iran for a life abroad.<sup>22</sup>

Other than dedicated jazz musicians, many alternative and even mainstream pop musicians also incorporate elements of jazz into their music. Alternative-music band Gabgoo, for instance, led by ex-Avizheh member Reza Abai, draws on elements of jazz, including scat singing, in a broad palette that brings together Iranian music, rock, and world music in a fusion not dissimilar from that heard on *Egosystem*.<sup>23</sup> Among mainstream pop musicians, mega “Islamopop” star Ali Reza Assar has worked closely with saxophonist and composer Fouad Hejazi, whose compositions feature elements of jazz.<sup>24</sup>

It should also be noted that in addition to those mentioned above, there is a small number of Iranian jazz musicians in the diaspora. One particularly interesting vocalist is Cymin Samawatie of the band Cyminology, whose most recent albums, *As Ney* and *Saburi*, were released on the ECM label in 2009 and 2011.<sup>25</sup> Born of Iranian parents and brought up in Germany, Samawatie was initially trained as a classical pianist and now focuses on vocals in a strongly contemporary jazz style using Persian lyrics. The other members of Cyminology, which was formed in 2002, are Benedikt Jahnel (piano), Ralf Schwarz (double bass), and Ketan Bhatti (drums and percussion). The band’s ECM releases have yet to become well known in Iranian diaspora circles, perhaps because the label has not marketed them as specifically Iranian products for Iranian audiences and perhaps because the music itself has relatively little that marks it as obviously Iranian beyond the lyrics. Another jazz musician based in Europe (the Netherlands), percussionist Babak Maddah, retains a stronger local sound in his music, particularly that of the southern Gulf region of Iran, where he was born and raised.<sup>26</sup> While both Samawatie and Maddah have some limited visibility on Iranian diaspora websites, including an interview with Samawatie by the online magazine *Persian Mirror*,<sup>27</sup> neither is listed on some of the main Iranian music websites,<sup>28</sup> reflecting the fact that as in Iran itself, jazz attracts a minority listenership compared with genres such as pop or rock music.

### Official Discourses and the Social Positioning of Jazz

Through its permit system in the mid-1990s, the Ministry of Culture treated jazz as something apart, different from other forms of Euro-American popular

music. This differential treatment continues today to a large extent, although the emergence of an unofficial underground music scene in the early 2000s has had some impact on what continues to be a fluid situation. Jazz has remained immune from—and outside of—the kinds of discourses that have portrayed Euro-American popular music as a form of imperialist hegemony and a symbol of Western cultural decline. Returning to the field notes excerpted at the beginning of this chapter, what I found curious at the time—an event billed as a jazz concert but with little jazz actually performed—has in retrospect started to make more sense. The jazz billing may have been used to help secure a permit during a period when public concerts of popular music were still relatively new and infrequent. As an aside, the most memorable part of the show was the instrumental version of “Imagine” at the beginning, with its unstated (since there were no sung lyrics) but nevertheless implied commentary on religion and nationhood, performed under the watchful eyes of the previous and current religious leaders, Ayatollahs Khomeini and Khomeini. This commentary effectively avoided scrutiny, since one needed to know the lyrics to appreciate the song’s meanings. The decision to begin the concert with this piece seemed to me highly significant.

To shed light on the positioning of jazz, and in particular how it has evaded the charge of cultural imperialism, I am going to return briefly to the postrevolutionary period of the early 1980s and consider some potentially instructive parallels with the case of Western classical music, which in Iran primarily refers to European orchestral music composed between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries (the “Mozart to Mahler” period). At the same time that Euro-American popular music was branded as a form of cultural dependency, both Western classical music and orchestral music by Iranian composers remained largely unaffected. It was not actively supported, and in general the 1980s was a difficult decade for all musicians, even for those playing officially permitted music. The war with Iraq from 1980 to 1988 created conditions of hardship and austerity which were often used by the government as an excuse to restrict cultural activities, and concerts were almost nonexistent. Still, recordings of Western classical music were legally available, and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, established before the revolution, continued to operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, and indeed was used by the ministry to record revolutionary anthems. It is worth noting that Western and Western-style classical music has never been prohibited in Iran.

As with jazz, the case of Western classical music has intrigued me. Why should this music represent any less a form of cultural imperialism than the popular music that was banned for almost twenty years? I would suggest that

the answer to this question lies in competing layers of musical meaning, and here I draw on the work of Timothy Rice (2001) and his use of metaphors in understanding music's social meanings. In the case of Western classical music, its social meanings after the revolution became understood primarily through its status as art, which effectively served to override competing meanings, specifically associations with Western cultural hegemony. As noted earlier, prohibiting popular music allowed the government simultaneously to present itself as being both anti-Western and as upholding Islamic values. What the case of Western classical music suggests is that the most significant distinction was not between what was Western and non-Western, as the political rhetoric might suggest, but between what was regarded as high and low culture, and what concerned the mind and the body. On both counts, Western classical music found itself on the right side of the divide. In relation to the mind/body binary, listening to Western classical music has long been viewed as an intellectual pursuit in Iran, in contrast to popular music, which is closely associated with the physicality of dance, and specifically the erotic sensuality of Iranian dance. Thus, within official discourses Western classical music's status as art overshadowed other possible meanings, and in particular prevented it from being branded as a form of cultural colonialism. By the same token, because it was not prohibited, the activity of listening to Western classical music did not acquire the subversive potential that the consumption of popular music did. Being legal rendered it relatively innocuous.

Since the mid- to late 1990s, when the goalposts shifted and some forms of popular music became legal, jazz has come to occupy an ambiguous, liminal space in which its status as art prevails over its kinship with other forms of Euro-American popular music. At least two factors have apparently helped in this regard. One is the association of jazz with intellectualism, which accrued in the prerevolutionary period; another is the kind of jazz prevalent in Iran since the 1950s—primarily instrumental (without lyrics) and rarely associated with dance. Lyrics have proved problematic for the post-1979 government, particularly since words and poetry have traditionally had such potency in Iran. I have already noted the radio broadcasts of instrumental versions of otherwise prohibited Western pop songs and the instrumental renditions of songs at the July 2000 concert. The kind of Western classical music heard in Iran also tends to be predominantly instrumental rather than vocal. Given the central importance of poetry, and more generally the written and spoken word, in Iranian culture, the absence of lyrics in permitted music may represent a symbolic disempowerment, as though instrumental music is inherently less of a threat and less in need of surveillance or control. Because the permitting process requires separate approval of lyrics and music, each scrutinized



by a different committee, many musicians have chosen to submit purely instrumental pieces for approval. The current Ministry of Culture permit application form has five tick-boxes to indicate the style of music for which authorization is sought, and there is no separate box for jazz; musicians and producers of jazz tend to tick the “classical” box, which for many represents the closest option (Soleimanipour, pers. comm.).

Of course, this privileging of jazz’s associations as art over other possible meanings is clearly evident elsewhere. As Philip Bohlman (1993, 430, n45) has observed, in comparison with other musics of “black” origin such as rap, whose “symbols are literary, ideological, and political, not the depoliticized symbols of a repertory or a musical system,” jazz seems “more easily co-opted to conform to the constraints of an essentialized music” and indeed is often referred to as “America’s classical music.” In the UK, the kinds of venues where jazz is now predominantly performed, its inclusion in the scheduling of Radio 3, the UK’s main serious music channel (and its temporary and contested *exclusion* from the UK’s MOBO—Music of Black Origin—awards in 2006), as well as its entrance into the conservatoire sector and exams syllabi of boards such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and Trinity Guildhall all indicate the validation of jazz as a serious musical genre. In the case of Iran, what is interesting is how such meanings have affected the position of jazz in dominant government discourses.

### Discourses on the Ground: Jazz as Universalism, Jazz as Freedom

So much for official government discourses. What about the ways in which musicians and others think and talk about jazz? In the final section of this chapter, I discuss two metaphoric domains that I have encountered in the course of my work: jazz as universalism and jazz as freedom. In relation to first, there are once again striking parallels with Western classical music, which has long been regarded as a supranational music in Iran, freed from local moorings. Terminology is revealing: for several decades, Western classical music has been referred to in Iran as *musiqi-ye beynolmelali* (international music) or *musiqi-ye jahān* (world music), although this practice has begun to change with the growing awareness of the world music industry and other potential meanings for the term “world music.” Still, Western classical music is to some extent regarded as a “placeless” music, or one that belongs everywhere, which may also go some way toward explaining its differential treatment compared to popular music after the revolution.

My discussions with musicians and others in Iran suggest that jazz is similarly thought of as being universal and able to transcend cultural bound-

aries. This is significant in the context of a country with a sizeable youth and urban population.<sup>29</sup> Many musicians are relatively well educated and from fairly affluent family backgrounds, and they tend to be modernist and internationalist, and often secular, in lifestyle and outlook. Talking to young popular musicians in particular, I found that many sought to disengage their music from the nationalist discourses that have dominated Iranian music for much of the past century. Instead, they position themselves as “global” musicians and invoke universalizing discourses, as can be seen, for instance, in the debate over language choice among rock musicians, some of whom have started to sing in English to reach and appeal to audiences outside Iran (see Nooshin 2008). Similar universalizing verbal and musical discourses were noted above in relation to Peter Soleimanipour’s work. For many in Iran, jazz, with its malleable sense of place, seems to embody a universalist ethos that is very much in the spirit of the times, as evidenced by recent collaborations between Iranian and European, particularly French, jazz musicians. For example, the 2004 album *Paris Tehran Project* documents a concert held at the Niavaran Cultural Center in North Tehran on June 21, 2003, organized by Hermes Records and the Cultural Center of the French Embassy in Tehran to mark International Music Day. The concert brought together the Iranian Shargh Music Ensemble and the France-based Alain Brunet Didgeridoo Orchestra in a largely jazz-inspired collaboration that also included strong elements of world-fusion (Alain Brunet Didgeridoo Orchestra and Shargh Music Ensemble 2004). According to the album notes, the original intention was for the concert to be in three parts, with each band performing separately and then together; the concert turned into what is described as “a complete Jam Concert from the beginning to the end under the name of Paris-Tehran Project.” The performers include *tabla* player Darshan Jot Singh Anand (a member of Atin and also heard on *Egosystem*) and the Iranian musician Morteza Esmaili, who plays *didgeridoo* and *jew’s harp*. Another French-Iranian collaboration, also in the summer of 2003 and cosponsored by the French Embassy in Tehran, took place at the Sa’ad Abad Palace, Niavaran (one of the shah’s former residences, where concerts are held fairly regularly) and involved jazz musician Matthieu Donarier and *nei-anbān* (bagpipes) player Saeed Shanbehzadeh and his band, performing a fusion of jazz and the distinctive music of Shanbehzadeh’s native Bushehr, located in the southern Gulf region of Iran.<sup>30</sup> The 2005 Hermes release *Spring in Niavaran* presents highlights from several concerts held at the Niavaran Cultural Center in May and June 2004, with visiting jazz and folk musicians from France (Christophe Joneau Trio and Hamon Martin Quartet) and Sweden (Bazar Blå, with guest Iranian musicians Ali Boustan on *oud* and Ali Rahimi on *tombak*), and the

Persiano Ensemble with Norwegian clarinetist Kjetil Selvik and Iranian musicians Mohammad Reza Ebrahmimi (oud) and Ali Samadour (voice and percussion). The groups perform separately as well as coming together for several of the pieces. Track 4 (“Ghazal”), described as a “jam session” in the liner notes, is a particularly striking fusion of French-style jazz with Middle Eastern rhythms and sonorities. Another interesting collaboration involves vocalists and sisters Marjan and Mahsa Vahdat, Iranian musicians Atabak Elyasi (*setār*) and Amir Eslami (*nei*), and Norwegian jazz musicians Knut Reiersrud (guitar), Audun Erlien (bass), David Wallumrod (keyboards), and Rune Arnesen (drums and percussion), which led to a benefit concert in the Italian embassy in Tehran in May 2007<sup>31</sup> and the album *Songs from a Persian Garden*. In this collaboration, Persian vocals overlay an accompaniment in which jazz and Iranian music meet but rarely merge in the way that one hears, for example, in the music of Avizheh. The voices tend to dominate the texture and none of the singing is in a jazz style, so jazz elements are confined to the accompaniment and rarely foregrounded. All the lyrics are in Persian, with the exception of track 7, a blending of the Iranian lullaby “Gole Lāleh” and “She’s Got the Whole World in Her Hands.” Of the Iranian performers, only the *nei* player, Amir Eslami, crosses over into the jazz domain. Still, projects of this kind typically convey jazz as a culturally neutral ground on which ideas of universalism and cross-cultural understanding can be played out. Indeed, beyond this, there is even the idea of jazz as something transformative: as the album producer Erik Hillestad (2007) writes in the liner notes, “We need a new image of Iran in our time. We need to see an image different from the one promoted in the Western media,” the implication being that music, in this case, jazz, can play a role in this “image transformation.”

It is significant that the very same styles defined primarily “as art”—jazz and Western classical music—are also those that have the strongest international or universal associations in Iran, in contrast to pop and rock music, which are strongly identified with Europe and the United States. Thus, as observed above, even within government discourses one finds that ideas about the alleged universality of jazz and Western classical music appear to override any specific associations with the West, rendering these styles largely unproblematic. The linking of jazz with universality is particularly interesting in light of debates in the mid-1960s in the United States, in which modal jazz became an arena for expressing the growing tensions between “philosophies of universality [on the one hand] and black nationalism [on the other]” (Monson 1998, 163). Similarly, in Iran, discourses around jazz relate directly to the play of local and “global” identities. The idea that jazz embodies some kind of universal placelessness also raises questions about the extent to which an aware-

ness of racial issues informs Iranians' understanding of this music. Opinions are divided. Some musicians I spoke with claimed that jazz is "deracialized" in Iran and that only a minority of people are aware of its African American roots; others claimed that this is not the case, and a few even suggested that official attitudes toward jazz are informed by an element of empathy, a kind of postcolonial identification with the "disempowered." If such empathy holds sway, then it may partly explain one of the other exceptions to the general prohibition of Western popular music—flamenco—as well as the publication of books containing translations of lyrics by Bob Marley and Bob Dylan. As a powerful symbol of cross-cultural dialogue, jazz had even been used by sections of the government: the Tehran-based Center for Dialogue among Civilizations, established during Khatami's presidency and closely associated with reformist ideas, held a seminar on jazz in the late 1990s.<sup>32</sup>

The use of jazz to invoke cross-cultural universalities was something I had encountered in my earlier work on Iranian classical music, from the late 1980s onward. Musicians regularly sought to explain their creative processes for me by drawing parallels with other improvised musics, most often with jazz and also Indian classical music. This was especially evident among younger musicians, who were clearly more aware of and even knowledgeable about musical traditions outside of Iran than previous generations. What I found interesting was less the validity or otherwise of such parallels than the ways in which the discourses allowed musicians to position themselves in a global milieu. The relatively recent concept of improvisation (usually translated as *bedāheh-navāzi* in Persian) among Iranian classical musicians has helped them place their music in a broader context and connect with musics outside their own tradition. Interestingly, Ingrid Monson (1998, 157–59) describes similar ideas at work in the transnationalism of jazz musicians such as John Coltrane and Miles Davis, starting in the late 1940s and reaching a height in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

As well as invoking jazz as a universalizing medium, many of the musicians with whom I spoke—both classical and popular—described jazz and other forms of improvised performance as an expression of freedom. Again, their observation echoed Monson's (1998, 149 and 163) findings: "Improvisation has often been taken as a metaphor for freedom, both musical and social, especially in jazz. . . . That it might be possible to experience or even create freedom through improvisation—a process simultaneously musical, personal, and cultural—was a belief held by many in the jazz world of the 1950s and 1960s. This utopian vision remains prominent in contemporary jazz aesthetics." As I discuss elsewhere (Nooshin 2003, 250–51), the powerful metaphoric association between jazz—and improvised performance more generally—

and notions of freedom has been explored by a number of authors, including John Baily (1999) and Jeff Todd Titon (1992, 11). A good example of this symbolic connection can be seen in the 2004 documentary *Sedā-ye Dovvom* (lit.: “second voice,” known as *Back Vocal*), which focuses on the female voice in Iran. While solo female singing (other than to female-only audiences) has been prohibited in public since 1979, singers are adept at finding loopholes and ways of making their voices heard. One scene in the film shows an excerpt from a concert by the experimental Piccolo Band performing at Tehran’s Fārābi Hall in October 2002; in that clip, vocalist Sara Naeeni’s brief, improvised solo in a jazz-scat style takes on immense symbolic power, creating a space that signifies the singer’s (and listeners’) freedom. Such meanings are clear to the audience, whose response is ecstatic, and Naeeni raises her eyebrows and attempts to contain a smile as she finishes her solo. Thirty seconds is all she needs to make the point.<sup>33</sup>

It is important to note, of course, lest one cast too utopian a light on the situation, that the West continues to hold immense prestige value for Iranian popular musicians and that discourses of universality are not necessarily reflected in musical influences. Such influences tend to depend instead on center-periphery dynamics, as musicians look toward Europe and the United States for their ideas rather than elsewhere, although this is starting to change. Similarly, the question of whether discourses of musical freedom can extend beyond the music itself in any way other than a symbolic manner remains to be seen. What is significant is what jazz as a genre has come to represent.

### Conclusion

The liberal atmosphere of the Khatami period came to an end with the election of the conservative Mahmud Ahmadinejad as president in June 2005. His rhetoric, at least, promised new restrictions on cultural activities, including music, and particularly manifestations of Western culture. Little changed for popular musicians, though: gaining a concert or recording permit had always been a challenge, and even concerts with permits were regularly canceled. In a rather ironic twist, following the disputed presidential elections in June 2009 in which Ahmadinejad was reelected, some musicians, promoters, and others in the arts and cultural sector themselves canceled events as a form of cultural boycott, events that the government would liked to have taken place to present a facade of business as usual. These cancellations included planned performances by visiting European jazz musicians in the autumn of 2009 and spring of 2010.

The story of jazz in Iran is an interesting one. Today, jazz continues to be a minority interest pursued by a small number of musicians, who perform and record from time to time and who increasingly fuse jazz with other musical styles in an eclectic melting pot. While the music itself has remained largely on the periphery—partly because a strong local tradition did not emerge in the way that it has for other popular genres—and largely outside the kinds of discourses that have shaped the cultural landscape of Iran over the last thirty years. The case of jazz is revealing for what it tells us about the relationship between social discourses and the meanings that particular styles and genres acquire in different sociopolitical contexts. In this chapter, I have traced the changing social meanings of jazz, from its intellectual associations before the 1979 revolution to its symbolic associations with Western culture, along with other forms of Euro-American popular music, in the 1980s and early 1990s, to its portrayal as art and as an expression of universalism, and freedom. Jazz in Iran has largely become a universalist, nonracialized form of expression, a kind of *tabula rasa* without the ideological baggage that has burdened other musical styles. It is perhaps surprising that Iranian musicians have not taken the opportunity to appropriate this vacant space and make it their own, as they have with other styles. In the case of rock music, a local tradition has only emerged over the past ten years or so, and hip-hop even more recently, so it is quite possible that a strong local jazz scene may well emerge in the years to come. The question will be how the music and its meanings will be shaped by contemporary discourses. With Iran's recent history of cosmopolitanism, its young people's growing connection with the outside world, the increasing number of cross-cultural and fusion projects, and the burgeoning alternative-popular-music movement, this will certainly be a space to watch.

### Notes

1. There has been relatively little research on Iranian jazz or Euro-American jazz in Iran, academic or otherwise. The material presented in this chapter is based largely on primary data collected in Iran between 1999 and 2008, including the (possibly not always accurate) memories of musicians and others, gathered through discussion and personal communication, as well as information available in the national and musical press and on the Internet.

2. While questions of genre definition and boundaries lie outside the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that within the broad (and often contested) category of jazz, the styles most commonly heard in Iran tend to be small ensemble “cool” or “smooth” jazz, usually without lyrics, combined in more recent years with elements of “world music,” as heard particularly in the work of Peter Soleimanipour.

3. Ellington's tour of Iran influenced his 1967 album *Far East Suite*, including the track “Isfahan.”

4. Lloyd Clifton Miller, pers. comm. I am very grateful to Dr. Miller for sharing his experiences with me. Further information on Miller's time in Iran can be found at <http://www.jazzscope.com/VI.html>. Excerpts from Miller's television shows from the 1970s can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUMHL2lW0mw>.

5. Ramin Behna, pers. comm. At the time, a large proportion of musicians involved in the small jazz scene in Tehran were Iranian Armenians. Among his early concerts, Peter Soleimanipour (discussed below) performed in 1996 at the Armenian Club in Tehran.

6. Somewhat confusingly, the term "jazz" is widely used in Iran to refer to a drum set. The term was also applied rather loosely as a musical style in the prerevolutionary period. One of the most popular singers of the early generation of pop musicians, Vigen, who was active from the early 1950s, was referred to (erroneously) as Soltān-e Jāzz-e Iran (The sultan of Iranian jazz). Finally, the term was also used before 1979 to indicate a form of cabaret-style music with somewhat vulgar associations.

7. The term "government" should not be taken to indicate a homogeneous body. Governmental power is notoriously diffuse in Iran, with many, often contesting, power centers. The government was and continues to be highly fragmented, representing a diversity of views, particularly on cultural policy.

8. Much of this music is produced underground (with the exception of a few bands that have managed to secure government permits) and is known variously as *musiqi-ye zir-e zamini* (underground music), *musiqi-ye alternative*, or *musiqi-ye qeyr-e rasmi* (unofficial music). See Nooshin 2005b, 2008.

9. See <http://www.iranculture.org/en/nahad/ershah.php> (accessed January 23, 2010).

10. All terrestrial television channels are controlled by Sedā va Simā. When music is broadcast on television, images of musicians are replaced with pictures of flowers, scenes from nature, and so on.

11. See <http://www.flamencovision.com/concerts.html> (accessed July 12, 2013). Flamenco dancers, however, were not permitted; dance continues to be illegal in public in Iran.

12. Under the enlightened mayorship of Gholamhossein Karbaschi, a number of *farhangsarā* (cultural centers) were established in Tehran from the early 1990s, providing spaces for concerts, exhibitions, and evening classes of various kinds (including music) and generally enhancing Tehran's cultural climate. The first of these cultural centers, Farhangsarā-ye Bahman, was located in one of the most socially deprived areas of south Tehran and played an important role in making cultural activities available, often at minimal cost or no charge, to Tehran's poorest and most religious residents, thus helping to break down some of the class and social barriers that remained very strong in Iran. See Sadighi and Mahdavi 2009.

13. For details about the concert, see Soleimanipour's website, <http://www.petiachio.com/1994.html>.

14. Soleimanipour, pers. comm.

15. For more information about the Nour Ensemble, see the band's website, <http://www.nourensemble.com/default.aspx>.

16. For further details of Soleimanipour's music, see his website, <http://www.petiachio.com/music.html>.

17. Although two other labels, Mahriz and Ava-Khorshid, have released some "fusion" music albums.

18. More information about Hermes is available on its website, <http://www.hermesrecords.com>.

19. A look at the focus of other sessions indicates the breadth of music covered: Ravi Shankar and Vilayat Khan, film music of the 1960s and 1970s, Egberto Gismonti, French chansons, medieval music, and the Chilean band Inti-Illimani. The weekly sessions were discontinued in November 2008 after a fire (of unknown causes) destroyed the building where they took place. Ramin Sadighi (director of Hermes Records), pers. comm.

20. Composed by Ramin Behna. Track 2 on *Avizheh* (2000).

21. However, it is usually impossible to ascertain the precise reasons for performance or recording permits being accepted or rejected, since this information is not provided by the Ministry of Culture. Musicians often second-guess on strategies which may help to secure a permit.

22. As with a number of the musicians discussed in this chapter, Abrang's music can be heard on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7IbZRaAIXc>. With the departure of Mahan Mirarab, Abrang changed its name to Naima and now focuses on playing jazz standards, particularly bebop pieces, as well as what Soleimanipour (pers. comm.) describes as "jazz fusion with Persian traditional and folk music"; see <http://www.last.fm/music/Naima+Persian+Jazz+Band>. The band presented a concert in the autumn of 2009.

23. Gabgoo's music can be heard on YouTube at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRp5mJSP\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRp5mJSP_o).

24. As can be heard, for instance, in several of the pieces on Assar's debut album, *Kooch-e Asheqaneh* (Loving migration, 1999).

25. The band's music can be heard on its website at <http://www.cymiology.de/#/musik>.

26. For more information about Maddah, see his website, <http://www.babakmaddah.com>.

27. See [http://www.persianmirror.com/Article\\_det.cfm?id=1317&getArticleCategory=47&getArticleSubCategory=16](http://www.persianmirror.com/Article_det.cfm?id=1317&getArticleCategory=47&getArticleSubCategory=16).

28. For instance, Iranian.com, <http://iranian.com/music.html>; Radio Javan, <http://www.radiojavan.com>; and <http://www.zirzamin.org>.

29. According to the 1996 Iranian census, 60.04 percent of the population was under the age of twenty-five. Statistics from the 2006 census show a sharp drop, to 50.24 percent under the age of twenty-five. United Nations statistics (most recently available for 2002) give a figure of 32 percent of the population under the age of fifteen. Young adults and city dwellers represent two of the largest sections of Iran's population (Naficy 2002, 55).

30. See Sayyah 2003. I am grateful to Nima Mina for bringing this concert to my attention.

31. The concert raised money for a UN project supporting disabled Iranian and Afghan children in the city of Zahedan, in southeastern Iran.

32. See <http://dialogue.ir/>.

33. *Sedā-ye Dovvom*, 35:26 to 36:23. Naeni was also featured in the 2009 documentary *Na Yek Tavahom* (Not an Illusion). See "Not an Illusion," *IMDb.com*, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2147445/>.

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