

## Music and Morality

### *The Recovery of a Nation, c. 1880–1940*

The modern need for music to embody the unique history and cultural strength of the Iranian nation brought with it a unique framework for moralization concerning the proper nature of musical structure and performance. Every aspect of music's performance had the potential to improve or harm the nation: to solidify, improve, or defile Iran's unique national character. The power of the *radif-dastgah* tradition was not cosmological as the twelve-*maqam* system's had been. Its power was humanistic, originating from and relating to the particular character of a particular human population. The connection between music and the nation meant that music could maintain, advance, or hurt national character. On this basis, the morality of every aspect of the *radif-dastgah* tradition concerned how it would benefit or harm Iran and its people. In a world where Iran struggled to survive against the power and influence of Europe, the question of how to rediscover and maintain authentic Persian music was a question of improving Iran's cultural position in the world. It inspired impassioned moral discourse as musicians pursued different ideas about the best way to perform music in support of Iran, through the creation and maintenance of Persian music with a proper Persian character.

During the twentieth century, musicians involved in the *radif-dastgah* tradition often self-identified their moral positions as either maintaining or modernizing traditional culture.<sup>1</sup> The key to Iran's cultural survival could be maintaining the music labeled "authentic Persian music" in a form that represented Iran's history. Traditionalist practices in the *radif-dastgah* tradition thus became stereotyped as remaining as close to the original seven-*dastgah* practice of the Qajar era as possible. Conversely, the key to Iran's cultural survival could be to make changes to improve the Persian music tradition, which was not historically sufficient to sus-

tain Iranian culture in the modern world. Both of these positions pointed to Iran's Persian history as the source of their logic. While maintaining it implied that the original Qajar-era tradition needed to continue as it had been since the nineteenth century, changing the tradition could also be cast as simply rediscovering Iran's lost Persian music history, for which the *radif-dastgah* tradition could not fully account. Failing to maintain authentic Persian musical practices could hurt Iran. Failing to revive Persian music in relation to the nationalist narrative of Iran's historic golden age and modern decline could also hurt Iran.

While the moral positions of traditionalists and modernists often had different musical goals within the *radif-dastgah* tradition, they operated within the same assumptions about music's relationship with culture. Both sides tried to occupy the moral high ground of maintaining or improving Iran's national culture, and both critiqued the morality of the other for failing to sustain Iran's authentic culture. Musicians could also change their minds about music's correct moral path, as they continued to evaluate the progress of the nation and how music could best facilitate national progress.

ʿAli Naqi Vaziri voiced his opinions about the best moral path for music in Iran extensively. His particular approaches to changing music in Iran also attracted vocal criticism because many musicians saw him as changing Iranian music in ways that harmed the authentic character of the nation. One of his most passionate critics was the poet and *tasnif* writer ʿAref Qazvini. Both of these participants in the tradition voiced strong opinions about what music should be vis-à-vis its nation, and passed strong moral judgment against musical expression that did not conform to their standards of national progress. Their conflicting moral arguments highlight the exact importance of the *radif-dastgah* tradition in the context of the Iranian nation, and the notion of a polarized modernist-traditionalist discourse surrounding the *radif-dastgah* tradition. Music had the power to give Iran a proper national existence in the modern world. Yet how it could do this was not an agreed-upon fact. It was, however, something to be extensively discussed and argued, as the future of the Iranian nation was at stake in its musical structure and performance.

#### ʿALI NAQI VAZIRI VS. ʿAREF QAZVINI

ʿAref Qazvini was born in 1882 and died in 1934. Vaziri's life was much longer than that of his poet nemesis. He was born in 1887 and did not die until 1979. Vaziri spent his very long life building institutions he believed improved music education, while also speaking at length on his ideas about exactly how music had to be dealt with in order to ensure its moral benefit to the nation. Vaziri made statements about music's morality in his teaching texts, speeches, and articles produced over decades. ʿAref wrote about his ideas on these same subjects in the much more

limited context of his *divan*, though he wrote with the same passion displayed by Vaziri, and took contrary positions on how the *radif-dastgah* tradition could best support the nation. While the arguments of Vaziri and ʿAref follow a modernist vs. traditionalist framework in many ways, they demonstrate the breadth of cultural considerations modernity presented in considering the best moral direction for indigenous music in the modern world. Both asserted that Iran had a great culture grounded in ancient times and both insisted that music could either benefit or harm this ancient culture. They differed in how they thought Iranian culture could best benefit from its music, but their moral outrage stemmed from the notion that Iran had already imperiled its existence by not maintaining its culture (including music) throughout history. In making decisions about how to address this problem, all decisions about how to make music had moral implications for the nation as a whole. Both Vaziri and ʿAref were concerned about maintaining the integrity of Iran in the modern world, and both dwelled extensively on how music could best revive the greatness of Iran in modern times.

ʿAref was a famous poet, singer, and composer both during and after Iran's Constitutional Period. He started studying to be a mullah, but he eventually rejected this path and moved from his home in Qazvin to Tehran. He worked briefly in the Qajar court, where he first had contact with the court musicians performing in the *radif-dastgah* tradition. Like other long-term servants of the Qajar court, ʿAref went on to a successful performance career within the public at large. In addition to being a famous poet and singer, he was a vocal political militant. He spent some time in exile in Istanbul with other anti-Qajar militants around 1916, and openly spoke out against dynastic rule in favor of the sovereignty of Iranians writ large.<sup>2</sup> The *tasnif* he composed were often highly nationalistic, and many of them remain part of the *radif-dastgah* tradition today. His politics defined his *tasnif* compositions, which were often specifically critical of the dynastic elite, and adoring of the Iranian nation suffering under their despotic rule. ʿAref cast himself as the voice of the Iranian people, advocating for the ancient Iranian people who were the heart of the Iranian nation.

ʿAli Naqi Vaziri came from a family of activists and military men. The son of the women's activist Bibi Khanom, Vaziri followed his father into the military, where he served in the Cossak Brigade for a time and achieved the rank of colonel. While ʿAref undertook a customary religious education, Vaziri studied in Europe, and generally occupied a position closer to European influence in Iran. His time in the Society of Brotherhood seems to have been crucial to his perceptions of the *radif-dastgah* tradition's importance in relation to Iran. The Society of Brotherhood no longer existed by the time he opened his own private music school in 1923, which spurred him to start another private group for music performance called Klub Musical in 1924. After the fall of the Qajars, Vaziri held multiple positions in the government of Reza Shah. In 1928, he was appointed head of the Government School of Music (*Madreseh-i mūsīqī*).<sup>3</sup> In 1935 he became professor of literature and aesthetics at the newly established University of Tehran. Though

Vaziri remained a professor at the University of Tehran for the rest of his life, he gained and lost various other government appointments between 1940 and 1946. These included an appointment to Iran's National Radio High Council of Communication and a brief reappointment to head the Government School of Music, which had been renamed the Conservatory of Music (*Honaristān-i mūsīqī*).

ʿAref first published his *divan* as a modern autobiography in 1924, with his collected poetry spread out between stories about his life, his broader philosophies, and perspectives. In it he wrote about his philosophies vis-à-vis those of Vaziri within his collection of texts he wrote for his *tasnif*. ʿAref directly addressed Vaziri in his writings, criticizing him as immoral for changing the music tradition in dangerous ways. Though Vaziri was an active music teacher, performer, and composer for most of his life, most of his discourse on the subject of music and its role in bolstering the nation was confined to writings and speeches from before 1950. He spoke with the greatest intensity on this subject from the 1920s to the 1940s. ʿAref's criticism thus came quite early in Vaziri's public career.

Vaziri himself tended to make more general moral criticisms of bad music and the dangers of failing to develop proper musical expression in Iran, rather than criticizing specific musicians by name. While Vaziri's training in European music had important implications for his career as a composer, it was the philosophical ideas of Europe that framed his understanding of the *radif-dastgah* tradition and music's overall impact on the morality of the nation. In this context, ʿAref was not merely suspicious of Vaziri's musical inclinations. Though ʿAref's philosophical and political positions were dependent on many concepts emanating from Europe, he saw Vaziri's more explicit adoption of European philosophies as a threat to Iran's national integrity.

#### VAZIRI: THE MODERNITY IN THE ANCIENT

Vaziri valued the *radif-dastgah* tradition as the remnants of Iran's great Persian music history, much of which he thought had been lost for lack of proper preservation and teaching methods. In considering how to restore some of what had been lost, Vaziri focused on the idea that the *radif-dastgah* tradition contained ancient Iranian scales that had survived since before Islam. He aligned the notion of Iran's ancient music with Europe's notion of classic societies and traced Iranian music's initial origins to the Achaemenid period. This allowed him to cast Iran's great history as an extension of music history in ancient Greece. Vaziri bemoaned the perceived loss of ancient Iranian music, but also claimed that the *radif-dastgah* tradition contained some of these ancient Iranian scales essentially unchanged since ancient times.<sup>4</sup>

Vaziri believed that this ancient period of Iranian musical domination was briefly interrupted after the rise of the religious tendencies of the Ummayyad Caliphate, but quickly returned under the rule of the ʿAbbasid Caliphate. On this

basis, he also connected modern Iranian music to the early Islamic treatise-writing tradition. In his first teaching manual, Vaziri claimed that the intervallic structure of Iranian music in his day followed the exact rules for intervallic structure outlined by al-Farabi.<sup>5</sup> While tracing Iranian music back to pre-Islamic times, Vaziri also described the *radif-dastgah* tradition as following the rules of intonation described by ‘Abbasid and post-‘Abbasid authors who wrote about music—including al-Farabi, ibn Sina, Urmawi, and Maraghi.<sup>6</sup> He further referenced the Iranian legacy of these early Islamic music writers when he stated in reference to the *radif-dastgah* tradition that Iranian music was directly tied to the music discussed in these older texts. This concept of Iranian music history allowed him to state that “our music today is a music of a thousand years of which the elements of it have not been touched.”<sup>7</sup>

Vaziri established the value of indigenous Iranian music based on a belief in its ancient origins and authentic Iranian character since pre-Islamic times. The questions of morality he raised concerning Iranian music thus related to the failure of Iranians to properly preserve their ancient music until the modern era, and the need for Iranians to recover the principles of their ancient music culture as part of their larger societal efforts to improve Iran’s cultural strength in the modern world. Despite his assertions that the *radif-dastgah* tradition contained remnants of ancient Iranian music, Vaziri recognized the disparity between ideas about music expressed by writers like al-Farabi and Maraghi and the modern practice. He complained about the loss of much Iranian music, noting that many ideas about music discussed in early Islamic times “remained in the corner” unused.<sup>8</sup> In discussing Iranian music from the early twentieth century, he also contradicted his assertion that Iranian music had been preserved since ancient times, noting that “there is nothing in the hands of the people from before the last fifty years; and if something from before the Constitutional Period exists, it is only in the minds of a limited number of older people.”<sup>9</sup>

Vaziri tied the loss of much ancient Iranian music in part to a lack of motivation and a decline in Iran’s national character over centuries. From his perspective, Iranian culture had failed to invest in its music and the moral character of its musicians. This resulted in only a small number of people involved in the *radif-dastgah* tradition preserving only a small amount of ancient Iranian music. Vaziri complained bitterly about what he saw as the low quality of music performance in modern Iran overall. He stated that most musicians barely had any musical ability: they were like grapes struggling to enter even the early stages of development but never ripening. Vaziri described many musicians as being tainted with the problems of gambling, alcohol, and lust, and admonished the unsophisticated parties of the lower, uneducated classes.<sup>10</sup> Vaziri generally categorized music as either good, sophisticated, and moral or bad, unsophisticated, and immoral. He classified most Iranian musicians of his time within the latter category, but placed the *radif-dastgah* tradition in the former category alongside the more dominant

music of Europe, which he thought of as international music. In Vaziri's opinion, international music was not beholden to any one culture, and could be used anywhere. It was not inherently harmful to indigenous music and could even be used to improve the cultural standing of music in any nation.

For all his praise of ancient Iran, Vaziri spoke of modern Iran as a lazy nation and spoke of Iranians in modern times as having a lazy soul. He believed the reason that music in Iran did not receive the exalted status that it had in Europe was because his contemporary countrymen slept too much and did not pursue work with any seriousness.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, while Vaziri perceived the successful nations of Europe to be full of people working hard to achieve their goals, he complained that modern Iranian society had abandoned these tendencies and become fatalistic. He tied this idea to his complaints about low-quality music in Iran, which he saw as decreasing Iran's standing in the modern world.<sup>12</sup>

Besides the problem of motivation and laziness, Vaziri blamed the perceived loss of most ancient Iranian music on the poor teaching and preservation methods that were indigenous to Iranian history:

Despite all of the efforts of Iranian teachers [Maraghi et al.] one may accept that the method of teaching and learning of ancient music was very difficult and it is the same method that is still common today: the students must kneel on two knees for many hours in front of the master, and obtain the learning of the melodies one on one. Of course because of this arrangement and its great difficulty, many of the melodies were lost because they were not written in notes.<sup>13</sup>

Based on what he learned in Europe, Vaziri was able to conclude that Iran had a great ancient culture, including music, that had been lost over time as a matter of moral decline and lack of consistent preservation. He did not see written notation as a foreign imposition on the *radif-dastgah* tradition, but rather as a neutral tool of teaching and preservation that could have prevented Iran's musical and cultural decline. While he believed Europe had done a superior job of maintaining their culture, which had resulted in their cultural and musical dominance throughout the modern world, he did not believe it was desirable or even possible for Iranians to abandon their culturally determined musical destiny. Iranians needed to revive and cultivate their indigenous music as a matter of their own cultural strength. Insisting on this fact, Vaziri stated that

Music is not like a hat and clothes, which anyone can change and imitate as they like. Music is a demonstration of feelings and emotions. Our music must be a demonstration of our morals and our tastes. Familiarity with European music must not be a cause for us to deprive ourselves of our national art. . . . That which we lost in the past we must find again.<sup>14</sup>

In charting the path for the contemporary success of Iran vis-à-vis European cultural hegemony, Vaziri positioned the preservation of unique Iranian musical features as paramount because of their unique ability to embody the essence of the

Iranian nation. Conversely, he saw the seven *dastgah* of the Qajar courts as mere remnants of what Iranian music had been, which lacked the systematic, prescriptive framework for music that he believed was the basis for ancient Iran's music. In light of the correlation between Europe's economic and cultural hegemony and their use of systematic musical structures, Vaziri took the idea of creating some semblance of systematization for the *radif-dastgah* tradition as being both a revival of ancient Iranian music principles and a form of productive modernization. This was the philosophical basis for his systematization of the quarter tone and his specific method of extracting scales from the *dastgah*.

Vaziri attempted to balance the idea of maintaining the unique reality of Iranian civilization with more general principles of what made a culture a superior civilization. He spoke of Iran needing to reestablish its former cultural greatness but he also spoke of a more general moral revolution that needed to occur in order for Iran to regain its former glory.<sup>15</sup> At the heart of this revolution was the notion of art and the modern concept of art as a transformative force within society. As one of the fine arts (*ṣanāyī-i ẓarīfeh*), music was not merely a form of entertainment or intellectual amusement. It was, rather, a significant force that could shape society for the better. In using this force in specific ways, Vaziri believed that Iranian society could be improved very quickly on a mass scale.

Vaziri discussed art as the ultimate goal of musical expression, which served the greater good of society and benefited society's spiritual life. He stated that "The word *art* (*ṣon'at*) is explained in a complete way as the means of life itself. . . . It feeds, educates, advances, and elevates the soul of humanity."<sup>16</sup> He asserted that "[music] does work in the ear and the soul of humanity. . . . Sophistication, character, emotion, and heart are completely involved in it."<sup>17</sup> Within this definition of music's role in society, Vaziri believed that European countries had achieved social superiority over other civilizations, and they had achieved this in part by prioritizing music and art in general within everyday life. He praised France, noting that "In civilized countries like France the spiritual life takes precedence over the physical life of the body. During leisure time, they are listening closely to music."<sup>18</sup> The strength of art to elevate the human experience beyond basic physical needs could thus provide a means for a culture to survive even in the midst of great social disaster and suffering. He described Germany after World War I as being in a state of physical desolation and poverty, but because they did not abandon performing and attending music concerts at least twice a week, they easily survived because music sustained them even more than food.<sup>19</sup>

In equating the consumption of music as art with the investment in a nation's spiritual needs and physical survival, Vaziri valued music as a fundamental necessity for the success of the nation. In speaking about the importance of art Vaziri stated:

It is the most precious among the works of humanity, and the nation that does not make an effort in the permanency of its art is causing permanent weakness in its na-

tionality. . . . Art is the greatest work of humanity's endeavors. Art is the best educator of morals. . . . Art is the monument of the labor of every nation's great ancestors and one of the most precious things that one must take pains to do; and the attention of every nation must be used in order to promote and sustain it.<sup>20</sup>

Vaziri believed that investment in art determined the success of a nation, positioning the spiritual success of art as the determinant of a nation's success in the physical world. This meant that art had a positive affect on the economy. To cite examples of this he spoke of the great wealth artists could generate. Examples he cited of this included Georges Bizet, who accrued much wealth from his popular opera *Carmen*, and the great wealth of the famous Italian singer Caruso.<sup>21</sup> He used these anecdotes to connect the spiritual activity of art to economic success.

Based on his experience in Europe, Vaziri set out to improve the cultural, moral, and economic standing of Iran via the cultivation of indigenous music as art, which could elevate Iran's existence to the level of a civilized nation like those in Europe. At the heart of Vaziri's crusade to cultivate great Iranian art in the name of bettering the Iranian nation was his investment in music education. Vaziri had three goals in increasing music education in Iran. First, he believed that making music education available to as many people as possible would ensure that Iranians had the spiritual education that music provided, which would in turn create a more civilized Iranian society. Second, he wanted to spread a more systematic, rigorous approach to Iranian music in order to elevate more Iranian music to the standard of fine art. Third, he wanted Iran to make use of as much of its artistic genius as possible to the benefit of the nation, and this genius could only be discovered with education. In explaining how education in general and music education specifically improved society Vaziri wrote:

Education represents the intellectual and practical exercises that connect humanity to the outside world and make them familiar [with the world]; it brings progress, advancement, and achievement so that maybe humanity will eventually arrive at the highest level of eternal happiness. This education in the world of today has two parts. One is the aspect of education that is for material progress. . . . The other is the education for spiritual understanding and moral progress, meaning it works for familiarity with the peace of conscience and the life of humanity; those schools [of education] include literature, music, painting, and other [arts].<sup>22</sup>

In imagining how art education in Iran would improve its standing in the world, Vaziri stated that "Today in Iran we need art and we especially need fine art and educated art (*ṣon'at-i 'ūlūmī*) that not only works from the standpoint of cultivating the souls of the nation, but also works so that it has influence in other nations, until finally it comes to comprise the education of the entire world."<sup>23</sup>

It was in emphasizing how fine art was a true source of the moral path that Vaziri tied notions of great spirituality and morality to vague notions of respectable beauty. Hence he judged art that met his concept of respectable beauty to be



moral and spiritually uplifting for the nation, while judging art that fell outside of this category to be morally questionable and having a negative impact on society. Vaziri emphasized this point to his students in his teaching manual for violin: "Once the artist knows that beauty and goodness are one, it is clear he has arrived at the top level of his purpose; and it is in this instant that he becomes an educator of others. He must join the cause of moral education."<sup>24</sup>

Vaziri's conception of how music could improve the moral and spiritual condition of a nation was also closely tied to his ideas about music's ability to promote national unity and build national sentiment. He referred to his first music school and any similar modern institution of music education as "a treasure of national emotions and the propagator of the spiritual properties of one nation among all nations. It is the conduit of humanity wherever it comes into existence, the creator of emotions and good works, which creates conscientious artists (*honarmand*) that are the spiritual educators of the nation."<sup>25</sup> In declaring artists to be the "spiritual educators of the nation" Vaziri proclaimed artists to carry a great amount of power and responsibility in society. From this perspective, Vaziri saw encountering music in a casual way as unacceptable and morally negligent.

The dual conception of artists as spiritual educators of the nation and Iran as a once great nation that was now in decline greatly influenced Vaziri's instruction for music students. In his teaching texts for violin, tar, and setar, Vaziri emphasized training and hard work, giving students drills to practice, and insisting that they dedicate at least half of their practice time in a day to exercises, rather than actual pieces of music. He also emphasized the need for daily practice, even suggesting that the student practice twice a day. Additionally, Vaziri stressed that students should not move quickly through the study of music, but rather study every aspect thoroughly and judiciously.<sup>26</sup>

Vaziri emphasized the importance of art education for the entire nation. He discussed opening a music school for orphaned children in Iran, citing the amount of great genius discovered among even this population and the great benefit that Iran was missing by not cultivating art education among orphaned children. Vaziri also specifically addressed the need for women to be taught music. In emphasizing the extreme importance of women's education in the arts, Vaziri noted their special role in educating the nation, referring to them as "mothers of this country's future" and emphasizing that "the first education of the people is still while they are in the laps of their mothers. [Women] are the basis of all people's tender emotions and feelings."<sup>27</sup>

Vaziri had many opportunities to put his education policies into practice via his private teaching and official positions granted him by Reza Shah. In addressing his successes in the Reza Shah's Ministry of Education, Vaziri summarized the ultimate goal of his efforts in art education: "It is hoped that the Iran of today, like in very ancient times when it was the mother of the fine arts in the East, will again obtain its high status."<sup>28</sup>

Despite his belief in the importance of the *radif-dastgah* tradition to the survival and success of Iran—and despite his initial interest in teaching it broadly as part of improving Iranian culture—Vaziri came to be known as an ostensibly European-style composer in the mid- to late twentieth century. While he worked to cultivate his own style of “international music” that reconciled tonal harmony with the quarter tones he greatly valued as uniquely Iranian, a European aesthetic came to define his oeuvre as a composer. Yet promotion of purely European music aesthetics was not the goal of Vaziri’s work as an educator of the Iranian people. Vaziri’s efforts in education pushed for an improvement in Iranian society via a more fully restored Iranian music tradition. While he also felt that an investment in international music was essential to bolster Iran’s artistic efforts, he believed very strongly in cultivating indigenous Iranian music. His work in education demonstrated his interest in the *radif-dastgah* tradition and his belief that it had an important role in educating the Iranian nation, even beyond purely musical concerns. His work in education was as much about improving the character of the Iranian citizenry as it was about creating high-quality musicians. Vaziri saw no separation between these two goals, and the *radif-dastgah* tradition was something that both Vaziri and his students taught as part of a larger project focused on strengthening Iranians as a nation.

#### ‘AREF QAZVINI: SAVING THE NATION FROM VAZIRI

Vaziri’s many publications and official administrative positions in Iran’s system of arts administration allowed him to spread his ideas about the *radif-dastgah* tradition as well as art in general far and wide in Iran’s education system. Vaziri was a prominent figure in the artistic life of his nation, yet his philosophies of art were not the only philosophies being cultivated in Iran. Vaziri had detractors who disagreed with his ideas. As the twentieth century progressed, much music-making in Iran turned toward fully Westernized aesthetics and against indigenous aesthetics completely, a position Vaziri opposed. In other cases, Vaziri’s ideas could be treated as too influenced by Europe and too removed from authentic Iranian culture. ‘Aref was one of the earliest to express the latter criticism clearly vis-à-vis his own ideas and philosophies in relation to the *radif-dastgah* tradition. The poet-musician expressed very strong nationalist ideas regarding Iran, and Vaziri himself praised ‘Aref specifically because he assisted in building up Iranian society by composing patriotic songs.<sup>29</sup> ‘Aref, however, saw Vaziri as a threat to the integrity of Iran and its unique cultural heritage. Both musicians felt strongly that Iran had to maintain and bolster its unique music culture of the *radif-dastgah* tradition in order for Iran to be successful in the modern world. Yet they did not agree on how best to use the *radif-dastgah* tradition toward this goal.

Like Vaziri, ‘Aref was dismayed at the perceived decline of the Iranian nation from its great civilization in ancient times. The goal of ‘Aref’s *tasnif* was in part to

create Iranian cultural unity, something he saw as lacking in the modern world, even as it had been foundational to the existence of Iran since ancient times. In discussing the importance of his own music in creating Iranian identity, he directly stated:

I composed patriotic (*vaṭānī*) tasnifs because not one Iranian of ten thousand individuals knew what the homeland (*vaṭan*) was. They imagined that the homeland was only the city or village where they were born. It was in such a state that if, for instance, a person from Kerman went to Isfahan and he did not enjoy it there, with absolute homesickness he would sing, “my heart is not happy being away from home.”<sup>30</sup>

Both ‘Aref and Vaziri used music to unite the nation as part of a vision to restore Iran’s cultural strength in modern times. Much of the disagreement between ‘Aref and Vaziri lay in their differing ideas about who and what was to blame for the decline of Iranian culture and how best to recover from it. Vaziri saw Iranians as having declined into a subpar state of existence over the centuries through their own thoughts and actions. By contrast, ‘Aref saw the Iranian people as being only partially responsible for Iran’s historic decline and socioeconomic problems. To a large extent, ‘Aref held Iranians blameless in their own demise, blaming instead the corruption of dynastic rule and the contemporary Qajar rulers, as well as the evil hegemonic oppressors from outside of Iran who stole Iran and ruined its former glory. In contrast with Vaziri, ‘Aref believed that the Iranian people would thrive as soon as they realized their own unity of purpose and escaped the repression of monarchy and foreign hegemony.

‘Aref wrote his critique of Vaziri in his preface to his collected tasnif, where he specifically chided Vaziri for teaching the seven dastgah in a way that was very different from how ‘Aref understood it based on the teachings of its initial progenitors. He wrote as if he was speaking directly to Vaziri. For instance, when ‘Aref criticized Vaziri’s first teaching manual he stated:

Before you went to Europe, you stole from the deceased Mirza ‘Abdullah—who is worthy of being called the first teacher of the twentieth century—the names of Iranian melodies (*avāz*) according to his teachings (*dastūr*). . . . You abruptly wrote a book referring to Iranian music. You recorded the opposite [of Mirza ‘Abdullah] there, but this nation will not carelessly forget [Mirza ‘Abdullah]. . . . Basically, you wanted to efface the music of Iran and forget it; are you ridiculing great individuals of his type and the deceased Mirza Husayn Qoli?<sup>31</sup>

In this statement ‘Aref rebuked Vaziri for his approach to the seven dastgah, which was focused on scales rather than the melodies of the dastgah. ‘Aref accused him of stealing the music of Mirza ‘Abdullah and Husayn Qoli, and using it to create a wholly different type of music that was a disgrace to the original tradition. ‘Aref complained that Vaziri treated the radif-dastgah tradition as if it had a very limited emotional range in comparison with European music. He complained that Vaziri had described Iranian music as sounding inherently sad. Vaziri had said this and blamed the persistent sadness of Iranian music on Iranian

history: the fall of Iranian civilization and years of Arab domination.<sup>32</sup> He even described his interest in a full systematic use of quarter tones as coming from his interest in increasing the emotional diversity of Iranian musical expression as an aspect of reestablishing the strength of Iranian civilization.<sup>33</sup> In the course of demeaning this idea, 'Aref asked:

From the twelve dastgah of music, which were organized according to the twelve houses of the zodiac before the coming of the Arabs [and] of which one aspect has been totally lost and these six or seven remain—in Mahur, from the beginning of the daramad of the dastgah of Mahur through Delkash and Iraq . . . which one of the melodies of it is sad? What part of Chahargah is sad? Or Segah?<sup>34</sup>

In the midst of criticizing Vaziri, 'Aref connected the seven dastgah of his time to the twelve-maqam system of premodern times even as he acknowledged that the dastgah of Mirza 'Abdullah could not possibly be a full embodiment of this older system. Like Vaziri, 'Aref believed much of Iran's Persian music had been lost to history. But he believed that Vaziri's actions to address this loss of music and music culture were detrimental to Iranian culture. In explaining that Vaziri went too far in changing the original seven dastgah, 'Aref quipped with a short poem: "I give you the axe to chop wood; I did not say to chop down the wall of the mosque."<sup>35</sup> 'Aref believed Vaziri had taken some ideas that might be useful in some capacity, but by applying them with vigor to the sacred radif-dastgah tradition of Mirza 'Abdullah, he did harm to Persian music and Iranian culture.

'Aref emphasized the importance of how the seven dastgah represented music handed down to the modern era from the ancient past. For 'Aref, maintaining the seven dastgah in the most ancient form would preserve the integrity of the Iranian nation. 'Aref attacked Vaziri for being too Europeanized and pushing too many European ideas onto the radif-dastgah tradition, while ignoring the customary seven dastgah that 'Aref associated with authentic Iranian identity:

Dear Professor! In the same way it is not possible for the language of one nation to change to a foreign language, the music of one nation is not changeable and variable. . . . Oh friend! Choose perfection or life! These two guests cannot be contained in the same house.<sup>36</sup>

Even though Vaziri expressed similar sentiments as this statement from 'Aref, Vaziri believed that the historic legacy of Persian music could be reconstituted more completely with some changes to the radif-dastgah tradition. 'Aref disagreed and thought that changing the radif-dastgah tradition could damaged the integrity of Persian culture. Vaziri sought to create a more perfect Persian music, but to 'Aref this was not possible even if it seemed desirable. Whatever musical remnants remained from Iran's Persian past had to be largely maintained as they were in order to preserve the remnants of authentic Iran's music.

Both Vaziri and 'Aref embraced the notion that musical expression was determined by the parameters of a given nation, and thus was an inherent aspect of that

nation. 'Aref specifically referred to music as "a distinguished object and a racial indicator, educator, and agitator of the national soul. And every nation that has a soul [but] does not have this life-giving force does not have the truth of life."<sup>37</sup> 'Aref believed that a particular nation needed to make efforts in its own indigenous music in order to be successful in the modern world, but Iranians needed to be very careful about introducing innovation in these efforts, because many innovations could harm the authenticity of the music, and by extension they could harm the nation itself. While complaining directly to Vaziri, 'Aref promoted maintenance of the Qajar court tradition without any significant analysis or systematization of the original seven *dastgah*. Mirza 'Abdullah and Husayn Qoli represented the authentic Iranian tradition that was as close to the ancient Iranian music as could be found in the modern world. It was better to preserve this music as it was, rather than to go searching for alternative methods of reconstituting Iranian music via alterations to the original seven *dastgah*.

On this basis, 'Aref greatly resented Vaziri's treatment of the *radif-dastgah* tradition and his teaching of it. Vaziri believed that his analysis and systemization of the seven *dastgah* merely revealed what was inherent in Iranian music from ancient times. 'Aref saw him as an innovator who must be stopped from ruining the only authentic music Iranians had. In citing models to emulate, 'Aref praised specific musicians with strong connections to the nineteenth-century Qajar court: the *kemancheh* player Husayn Khan Isma'il-Zadeh (th. 1890) and Husayn Qoli's son, 'Ali Akbar Shahnazi (1897–1985). 'Aref praised Isma'il-Zadeh for playing an "ancient instrument of Iran" while Vaziri "trained two hundred students of the violin but did not train even two individual students of the *kemancheh* so that later this instrument would be lost."<sup>38</sup> While 'Aref accused Vaziri of killing the traditional bowed string instrument of Iran even as Isma'il-Zadeh tried to preserve it, he also accused Vaziri of dismissing 'Ali Akbar Shahnazi as "nothing." 'Aref protested this greatly, asserting that there had been no better *tar* player than Shahnazi since the instrument had been invented.<sup>39</sup>

In the midst of praising musicians who 'Aref thought represented a greater commitment to the original seven *dastgah*, 'Aref ultimately positioned himself as the supreme defender of the tradition going forward. In describing himself as both a musician and *tasnif* composer he asserted that

I more than anything else have an interest in the music of Iran and I have the truth of the mastery of it; and as long as I live no one has the ability to take this truth away from me. . . . They know me—the one who strives hard to be most learned in this art—and because of that the Iranian blood courses through the veins of the youth and they are following my pure emotions. They know my interest is only in national spiritual matters, which led me to write these lines [of *tasnif*].<sup>40</sup>

In this way, 'Aref presented the music of Iran as something that possessed an unalterable truth, which he preserved and Vaziri distorted. 'Aref positioned him-

self as representing the interests of the Iranian people, while positioning Vaziri as an interloper, who was changing Iranian music to conform to an imagined perfect ideal based on foreign ideas he learned in Europe.

## CONCLUSION

The significance of the diametrically opposed discourses of Vaziri and 'Aref is both the shared basis of their disagreement and the strong moralistic dimensions of their positions. Both 'Aref and Vaziri were invested in the preservation of Iran's cultural integrity. Both saw the radif-dastgah system of their time as the remnants of Iran's great historic past and believed that keeping the cultural artifact of the dastgah alive was key to ensuring Iran's future existence and integrity. Conversely, neither 'Aref nor Vaziri believed that the seven dastgah associated with the musicians of the Qajar court was a complete record of Iran's past musical glory. The dastgah passed down from Mirza 'Abdullah and his brother Husayn Qoli only represented a certain portion of Iran's musical past. Though Vaziri never criticized any musician by name in his speeches and writings, he did harshly criticize the music culture of Iran as generally being insufficient to maintain a culturally relevant music that could sustain the integrity of the Iranian nation. 'Aref understood that Vaziri learned to look down on his fellow Iranians while in Europe. Knowing this, 'Aref lashed out at Vaziri because 'Aref saw him as the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing. Vaziri claimed to have the best interests of Iran at heart, but 'Aref saw all of his work as killing the Iranian nation by twisting and distorting its authentic musical heritage.

Conversely, Vaziri did not see his ideas as particular to European societies, but rather as universally applicable and useful for increasing Iran's standing in the modern world. He also did not advocate for the abandonment of Iranian music. Like 'Aref, Vaziri believed that abandonment of Iranian music would be to the detriment of Iranian society, and teaching the radif-dastgah tradition as Iranian music comprised much of his first major work in the public sphere. The radif-dastgah tradition was the only music of Iran Vaziri considered to have strong cultural standing for the nation. It therefore became the most important music to be strengthened and disseminated in the name of creating and re-creating Iranian culture. Vaziri saw the lack of attention to music in his nation as hurting the nation's moral and cultural development in the modern world. He sought to improve the morality of Iran by more fully reconstituting proper Iranian music and spreading knowledge of it throughout the nation.

While differences in their education informed their differing positions on the correct moral path for the radif-dastgah tradition, Vaziri and 'Aref also occupied different positions within in the radif-dastgah tradition. Though they both composed, 'Aref was primarily a poet and a singer, and Vaziri was an instrumentalist. As the first person to provide a functional model for dastgah modality that substituted scales for the individual gusheh themselves, Vaziri's approach to teach-

ing the *radif-dastgah* tradition largely focused on standardizing features of pitch in relation to instruments. He focused on scales more than *gusheh* and he also tended to focus on fully metered types of instrumental pieces in his beginner and intermediate teaching, because he felt that pieces metered without the influence of poetry (*pish-daramad*, *reng*, and so on) were more accessible, while the unmetered melodic structures common to the poetry-based vocal *gusheh* in the seven *dastgah* represented a more advanced repertoire that students should learn later in their studies.

While he reduced the centrality of these vocal/poetic *gusheh*, he also failed to acknowledge their basis in classical Persian poetry, which 'Aref considered the very heart of Iranian civilization. 'Aref saw Vaziri's failure to connect the *radif-dastgah* tradition to the classical Persian poetry of the *gusheh* as one of his greatest moral failings. 'Aref specifically complained that Vaziri turned his back on "seven hundred years of the great poetry of Iran—the type written by Sa'di, Hafez, Ferdowsi, Nazami, and maybe two thousand other poets."<sup>41</sup> As a poet and singer, 'Aref had a particular vested interest in the idiosyncratic organization of the *radif-dastgah* tradition created by the individual progressions of *gusheh* in each *dastgah*, which were dominated by vocal-poetic *gusheh*. Preserving the poetry of the *gusheh* was at least as important as preserving their music in relation to bettering the Iranian nation. From this perspective, to ignore and forget ancient Persian poetry was a sin against the nation, both immoral and unconscionable.

While many aspects of Vaziri's analysis of the *dastgah* would come into popular use, a constituency of musicians remained dedicated to keeping their music more closely aligned with the Qajar version of the tradition, which came to be associated with the *radif*. 'Aref cited Shahnazi as an example of what would become identified as the traditionalist approach to the tradition in the twentieth century. Ahmad Ebadi, the son of Mirza 'Abdullah, also followed in the more traditional line of Qajar practice, according to what 'Aref outlined in his *divan*. As the twentieth century progressed, there were both practitioners of the tradition that had learned and taught in the conservatory or the university and those who had learned primarily or solely through private instruction. There was never a fully accepted, standardized approach to teaching or playing in the *radif-dastgah* tradition, yet variations in practice followed differences in opinion concerning the most authentically Iranian way to perform the tradition.

The traditionalist-modernist split did not exist as a hard line between one approach or another, but as a gradient with many variations. For instance, though 'Aref praised Isma'il-Zadeh for his commitment to the Iranian *kemancheh* and scorned Vaziri for teaching violin, Isma'il-Zadeh taught at least one violinist with European music training, Rokn al-Din.<sup>42</sup> Even the most Qajar-oriented of musicians did not necessarily scorn or avoid musicians playing European music. Though so-called traditionalists might not agree with Vaziri's particular modal analysis of the *dastgah*, the notion that the Iranian tradition was both a set of distinguishable



melodies and created out of abstract modes—both *radif* and *dastgah*—became standard throughout the tradition. The distinction Vaziri embraced between the modes of the *dastgah* and the *radif* was not an idea he invented. The modality of the tradition would ultimately be pursued by multiple musicians in various ways. Traditionalists focused more on the development of a fully distinguished *radif*, with modality being significant in the context of the *radif*. Traditionalist used both the seven *dastgah* and the *avaz-dastgah* and generally recognized shifts that had occurred in the *dastgah*'s organization. But their choice to make the *radif* central to their practice also introduced its own changes. The search to compile different *radif* from different musicians and ultimately one definitive *radif*—as well as the ability to just play the *radif* and nothing else—represented its own major shift in musical practice and conception.

Being a traditionalist also did not preclude composition. 'Aref's extensive *tasnif* compositions were part of an increase in composition that related to the construction of systematic modality within the tradition. Choices he and others made about how to compose related to which parts of the *dastgah* would be developed as independent modal frameworks. An increase in composition changed the relative importance of different parts of the system. 'Aref engaged in much traditionalist discourse, but even he acknowledged changes to the tradition and engaged in change. Often musicians occupied space between the traditionalist and modernist extremes.

One example of a musician who occupied the ideological and musical space between 'Aref and Vaziri was Abol Hassan Saba (1902–1957). Saba began music instruction at home and eventually studied with Mirza 'Abdullah, Darvish Khan, Shirazi, and Isma'il-Zadeh, among others. A multi-instrumentalist, Saba went on to attend Vaziri's music school and study the *radif-dastgah* tradition as Vaziri taught it, focusing on the violin. Saba worked closely with Vaziri and eventually taught at an extension of Vaziri's school in Tehran established in the city of Rasht.

Saba taught using Western music notation and in many ways conformed to Vaziri's idea of a musician observing the best practices of Iranian music. Despite Saba's apparent modernist turn, his early diverse one-on-one training with Qajar court musicians often gave him unique pathways to innovation that could be perceived as highly traditional. Though he played violin in violation of 'Aref's traditionalist commitment to the *kemancheh*, he played the violin in such a way as to imitate the timbre and phrasing of the *kemancheh*. He compiled his own *radif*, creating a collection of melodies for the *dastgah* that was demonstrably larger than the number of melodies included in earlier documentation of the *dastgah*. Thus, though he clearly added new material to his *radif*, his interest in the *radif* comported with the traditionalists' commitment to the fully formed melodic material of the *dastgah*, which represented the remnants of ancient Iranian music. Thus, though Saba took on much influence from Vaziri and engaged innovation, he came to be broadly regarded as respectful of both traditionalist and modernist



tendencies in the tradition. Traditionalists did not ultimately disdain Saba the way 'Aref disdained Vaziri.

These different negotiations of the categories of traditional and modern represented both aesthetic and ideological positions. Musicians who felt that authenticity was the most important factor in sustaining the nation maintained moral judgment against musicians who prioritized musical sophistication and systematization. Likewise, modernists maintained moral judgment against musicians who refused to consider ways of bolstering an incomplete Iranian music in order to sustain the nation in the modern world. The *radif-dastgah* tradition stood at the center of these moral debates, and its parameters were molded by these different approaches to music's nationalization in modern Iran.

The moral quandary surrounding the *radif-dastgah* tradition developed along very different lines than the moral quandaries debated during the time of the twelve-maqam system. The moral challenges presented by the twelve-maqam system arose from music as an extrahuman phenomenon that could be objectively controlled, yet also had the capacity to enter the human ear and affect a person without their awareness or consent. As something that derived from the realities of the broader cosmos, music could exercise seemingly autonomous power over the whole of humanity. People needed to be knowledgeable and wary of its universal power in order to ensure its proper affect on the human condition writ large.

The moral discourse surrounding the *radif-dastgah* tradition addressed whether or not musical ideas and practices were properly supporting the nation. The question of what made music morally good or bad stemmed from music's relationship to the nation, and the ability of music to help or hurt the nation. In this context, the moral criticism could in some ways be much harsher and extensive. The ability to control music was within the agency of humanity, which made people directly responsible for actively using it in moral and immoral ways. In the world of the *radif-dastgah* tradition, Iranians themselves controlled their own musical destiny as part of their unique cultural basis. Iran's survival in the modern world depended in part on its musical survival, and this was within the control of Iranians. Iranians were in fact uniquely positioned to make the best decisions about the survival of their unique culture. Within this modern reality, musicians had to negotiate their creative choices within the morality of cultural preservation and improvement. This morality derived from music's ability to determine Iran's existence, or its ultimate destruction, in the modern world.