



MUSIC IN THE PAVILION

Arcana New Music Ensemble: After Shiraz

February 3, 2023



Featured image: *Mantra*, for two pianos: Karlheinz Stockhausen (composer), Alfons Kontarsky, Aloys Kontarsky (pianists); Saray-e Moshir, Shiraz (Iran), 1972; courtesy Stockhausen-Stiftung für Musik / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

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Preconcert talk led by Dustin Hurt with Sepehr Pirasteh
and
Armaghan Fakhraeirad

Anahita Abbasi (1985): ***Seven Impressions***

Alize Rozsnyai, soprano
Andy Thierauf, percussion

Farzia Fallah (1980): ***Posht-e Hichestan***

Nicholas Handahl, flute

Sepehr Pirasteh (1993): ***Rubáiyát***

Tom Kraines, cello

Aida Shirazi (1987): ***ephemera***

Jonathan Leeds, clarinet
Andy Thierauf, percussion

Ashkan Behzadi (1983): ***Agony, Rage of Forgotten People, Elegy***

Carlos Santiago, violin



Arcana New Music Ensemble

Founded in 2016, the Arcana New Music Ensemble is a group of Philadelphia-based musicians dedicated to presenting interesting, beautiful and unconventional music in interesting, beautiful and unconventional places. Built on a flexible roster of 25 musicians, Arcana performs a range of repertoire. Composers featured in recent programs include Julius Eastman, Morton Feldman, Galina Ustvokaya, Pauline Oliveros, Tom Johnson, Moondog, and James Tenny. Arcana has performed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fleisher Art Memorial, The Rotunda, The Kitchen (NYC), and collaborated with Variant Six, Prometheus Chamber Orchestra, and Pig Iron Theater Company.

<https://www.arcananewmusic.org/>

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PROGRAM NOTES

Drawing inspiration from archival exhibition catalogs of the Shiraz Festival in the Van Pelt collection, this concert features music by contemporary Iranian composers. Throughout its run from 1967 to 1977, the Shiraz Festival was host to an array of contemporary classical and avant garde composers from Europe and the United States. Among them were Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis, Olivier Messiaen, Bruno Maderna, John Cage, David Tudor, and Morton Feldman. A significant arts center, which was to include electronic music and recording studios, was planned as an outgrowth of the festival. While the complex politics of the Shah's regime and the approaching revolution brought these developments to an end, the festival had broad and lasting impacts on contemporary and experimental music in Iran. This program includes music by Iranian composers, several generations removed from the festival, all living in exile, whose work is an example of this enduring legacy.

Anahita Abbasi (1985): *Seven Impressions*

“The only journey is the one within” (Rainer Maria Rilke)

Seven Impressions is an observation of an inner pilgrimage. A journey of thoughts and various stages of emotions in search of oneself. Overcoming the obstacles from the internal and external world is not easy, but we are all seeking to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through personal experience. As the 13th-century Persian poet Rumi said: ...”it is a way to the heart of hearts, to the utmost direct intense experience of one’s sacred identity”... The 7 sections/impressions in this piece are based on and inspired by Ritual ceremonies in Mithraism.

Farzia Fallah (1980): *Posht-e Hichestan*

The title of the piece comes from a poem by Iranian poet Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980). Posht-e Hichestan, a poetic combination of words, means “behind a place that does not exist” or “behind the place of nothingness.” Fragments of various poems from a cycle occur in the piece, spoken or whispered in the original language (Persian). As such, they have been used exclusively as sonic elements, in an attempt to reflect the content of the poems on a different level in the music. The harmonics, microtones, fragile and brittle multiphonics, subtle rattling noises, air sounds in different timbres and text fragments are interwoven into a single entity, so that the piece formally flows under one arc into time.

Sepehr Pirasteh (1993): *Rubáiyát*

Rubā`iyāt refers to a specific form in Persian poetry in which the poem consists of four stanzas. In this piece, each movement has four sentences that are derived from Dastgah Bayat-e Tork in Iranian traditional music. Although the name of the whole piece captures a specific formal structure in Persian classical poetry, these movements should be performed freely and less related to the general idea of the poetic structure.

Aida Shirazi (1987): *ephemera*

Ephemera is about the emergence of a few ethereal and short-living ideas that shimmer in space, intermingle and morph into each other in time. The ethereal quality of the work is emphasized by the breathiness and fragility of the musical ideas, resulting from the incredible versatility of the clarinet and percussion in producing noise and pitch. I took advantage of the potential of both instruments to create constant friction between timbre and harmony and provide impetus in the absence of a pulse in the piece.

Ashkan Behzadi (1983): *Agony, Rage of Forgotten People, Elegy*

On 12th June 2009, the tenth Iran's presidential election was held and 80 percent of the voters participated in the election. The following day, after the announcement of the results, millions of Iranian all around the country, especially in the capital Tehran, protested peacefully shouting: "Where is my vote?" But, the peaceful protests clashed with security forces including police and Basiji militia, and lead to death, exile, imprisonment, and torture of hundreds of students, journalists, human right activists, politicians, and common people. The problem is still unsolved and people still protest to get back their votes.

(The above notes are written by the composers)



Anahita Abbasi

Anahita Abbasi (world citizen-1985) was born and raised in Iran. In 2005 she moved to Austria and pursued her undergrad at the University of music and performing Arts Graz, where she studied music theory with Clemens Gadenstätter and Christian Utz & composition with Beat Furrer and Pierluigi Billone; while working closely with Georges Aperghis, Franck Bedrossian, and Philippe Leroux. Since 2014, Abbasi is residing in San Diego, USA, and currently finishing her Ph.D. in composition under the supervision of Rand Steiger at the University of California San Diego. Anahita Abbasi's music has been commissioned and performed by distinguished soloists and ensembles such as Mahan Esfahani, Steven Schick, Vimbayi Kaziboni, Rebekah Heller, Sergej Tchirkov, Artyom kim, Ensemble Modern, International Contemporary Ensemble, and many more.



Farzia Fallah

Born in Tehran, composer Farzia Fallah studied music, composition, music theory, and piano before moving to Germany in 2007. She has been awarded several composer residencies and has worked with ensembles such as Ensemble Aventure, Azione Improvisa, Garage, Musikfabrik, New Babylon, oh-Ton, S201, Zafraan as well as Hypercube Quartet, Sonar Quartet and Roche/Zöllner Duo. She is a member of Kollektiv3:6Koeln, founder and artistic director of the project “Mind the gap – Music for horn & viola”, member of tritonus e. V. and a member of Iranian Female Composer Association IFCA.



Sepehr Pirasteh

Sepehr Pirasteh (b. 1993) is a composer and conductor born and raised in Shiraz, Iran. His compositions draw on Persian classical and folk as well as contemporary classical music vocabularies to express his concerns and fears about the political and social realities of the world we are living in. Sepehr's works have been performed by ensembles such as Argus String Quartet, PRISM saxophone quartet, Pushback Ensemble, Unheard-of Ensemble, Orquestra Criança Cidadã, Hole in the floor, fivebyfive, and members of the Fifth House Ensemble. Sepehr's music has been performed in Argentina, Brazil, Iran, and the United States. As a conductor, he has been focusing on premiering new music written by young composers. Sepehr has served as the assistant conductor of the CMU Symphony Orchestra, director of the CMU New Music Ensemble, Pierrot Ensemble, Concert Orchestra, and Vintage community orchestra in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. In 2020 he started serving as the director of Temple Composers' Orchestra (TCO). Sepehr is currently based in Philadelphia and pursuing his Ph.D. in composition at Temple University.



Aida Shirazi

Born and raised in Tehran, Iran, Aida Shirazi is a Ph.D. student in composition at UC Davis, and she works with Pablo Ortiz. Shirazi’s music is described as “well-made” and “affecting” by *The New Yorker*. She holds her B.A. in classical piano from Tehran University of Art (Iran), and her B.M. in music composition and theory from Bilkent University (Turkey). She studied santoor (traditional Iranian dulcimer) with Parissa Khosravi Samani. Shirazi is the winner of Diaphonia and XelmYa+, ACIMC and Bilgi New Music Festival calls for scores. Her music has been featured in MATA, Klasik Keyifler, Sesin Yolculugu, Young Composers, Young Performers festivals in the United States and Europe, and performed by Andrew McIntosh, Lucy Fitz Gibbon, Ryan McCullough, Alexa Renger, Ellen Jewett, Empyrean Ensemble, FOM (The Friends of MATA) and Bilkent Symphony Orchestra. She has attended workshops with Interface Ensemble (2013) and Yurodny Ensemble (2016). Her music for solo instruments, voice, ensemble, orchestra and electronics is often influenced by literature, language, and Iranian classical music.



Ashkan Behzadi

Ashkan Behzadi (b.1983) is an Iranian composer residing in New York City. He is a graduate of McGill University in composition and music theory. Prior to this he also earned a bachelor's degree in architecture from Tehran University. He has studied compositions with Alireza Mashayekhi, Chris Paul Harman, Brian Cherney, Philippe Leroux, Fred Lerdahl, George Lewis and Georg Friedrich Haas. Ashkan's music has been performed by various ensembles internationally, including Divertimento Ensemble, neuverBand ensemble, Exaudi, Wet Ink, Talea Ensemble, Ekmeles, Yarn/Wire, NAMES Ensemble, le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne (NEM), Esprit Orchestra and also featured on such festivals as Mixtur Festival 2017, Mozarteum Dialogues Festival 2016, Creative Dialogue VIII, Manifeste 2014 at IRCAM, CIRMMT New music series, the New Wave Young Composers festival. He has won numerous prizes including 2015 ACF Showcase competition, the Prix de Composition at Fontainebleau in 2013 and SOCAN Foundation awards 2012 and 2013. Ashkan is currently pursuing his doctoral studies in composition at Columbia University.

MUSIC IN THE PAVILION

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2023 Concert Series

Concerts will be held in the Class of 1978 Orrery Pavilion, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, sixth floor on Fridays at 7pm and are free of charge. Join us at 6:15pm for a discussion led by special guest artists.

Trefoil

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Preconcert talk led by Mark Rimple

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