

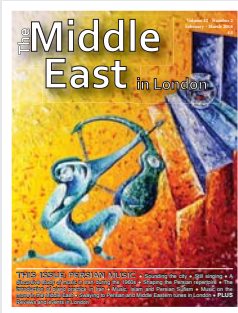
# The Middle East

Volume 12 - Number 2  
February - March 2016  
£4

## in London



**THIS ISSUE: PERSIAN MUSIC** • Sounding the city • Still singing • A discursive study of music in Iran during the 1960s • Shaping the Persian repertoire • The introduction of piano practice in Iran • Music, Islam and Persian Sufism • Music on the move in the Middle East • Swaying to Persian and Middle Eastern tunes in London • **PLUS** Reviews and events in London



Aida Foroutan, 'Protest', 2002. No. 14 of a series of 28 paintings called *Women's Life*, 2001-2015. Oil on canvas. 80 x 80 cm. Image courtesy of the artist

Volume 12 - Number 2  
February – March 2016

#### Editorial Board

Professor Nadje Al-Ali  
SOAS

Dr Hadi Enayat  
AKU

Ms Narguess Farzad  
SOAS

Mrs Nevsal Hughes  
Association of European Journalists

Professor George Joffé  
Cambridge University

Ms Janet Rady  
Janet Rady Fine Art

Mr Barnaby Rogerson

Ms Sarah Searight  
British Foundation for the Study  
of Arabia

Dr Sarah Stewart  
SOAS

Dr Shelagh Weir  
Independent Researcher

Professor Sami Zubaida  
Birkbeck College

#### Coordinating Editor

Megan Wang

#### Listings

Vincenzo Paci

#### Designer

Shahla Geramipour

*The Middle East in London* is published five times a year by the London Middle East Institute at SOAS

#### Publisher and Editorial Office

The London Middle East Institute  
SOAS

University of London  
MBI Al Jaber Building  
21 Russell Square  
London WC1B 5EA  
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)20 7898 4330  
E: [lmei@soas.ac.uk](mailto:lmei@soas.ac.uk)  
[www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/](http://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/)

ISSN 1743-7598

# The Middle East in London

## About the London Middle East Institute (LMEI)

The London Middle East Institute (LMEI) draws upon the resources of London and SOAS to provide teaching, training, research, publication, consultancy, outreach and other services related to the Middle East. It serves as a neutral forum for Middle East studies broadly defined and helps to create links between individuals and institutions with academic, commercial, diplomatic, media or other specialisations.

With its own professional staff of Middle East experts, the LMEI is further strengthened by its academic membership – the largest concentration of Middle East expertise in any institution in Europe. The LMEI also has access to the SOAS Library, which houses over 150,000 volumes dealing with all aspects of the Middle East. LMEI's Advisory Council is the driving force behind the Institute's fundraising programme, for which it takes primary responsibility. It seeks support for the LMEI generally and for specific components of its programme of activities.

LMEI is a Registered Charity in the UK wholly owned by SOAS, University of London (Charity Registration Number: 1103017).

### Mission Statement:

*The aim of the LMEI, through education and research, is to promote knowledge of all aspects of the Middle East including its complexities, problems, achievements and assets, both among the general public and with those who have a special interest in the region. In this task it builds on two essential assets. First, it is based in London, a city which has unrivalled contemporary and historical connections and communications with the Middle East including political, social, cultural, commercial and educational aspects. Secondly, the LMEI is at SOAS, the only tertiary educational institution in the world whose explicit purpose is to provide education and scholarship on the whole Middle East from prehistory until today.*

### LMEI Staff:

**Director** Dr Hassan Hakimian

**Executive Officer** Louise Hosking

**Events and Magazine Coordinator** Vincenzo Paci

**Administrative Assistant** Aki Elborzi

### Subscriptions:

To subscribe to *The Middle East in London*, please visit: [www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/affiliation/](http://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/affiliation/) or contact the LMEI office.

### Letters to the Editor:

Please send your letters to the editor at the LMEI address provided (see left panel) or email [lmei@soas.ac.uk](mailto:lmei@soas.ac.uk)

### Disclaimer:

Opinions and views expressed in the Middle East in London are, unless otherwise stated, personal views of authors and do not reflect the views of their organisations nor those of the LMEI and the MEL's Editorial Board. Although all advertising in the magazine is carefully vetted prior to publication, the LMEI does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of claims made by advertisers.



LONDON  
MIDDLE EAST  
INSTITUTE

SOAS University of London

100 Years



LONDON  
MIDDLE EAST  
INSTITUTE  
SOAS University of London  
100 Years

#### LMEI Board of Trustees

Baroness Valerie Amos (Chair)  
*Director, SOAS*

Professor Richard Black, SOAS  
Dr John Curtis  
*Iran Heritage Foundation*

Dr Nelida Fuccaro, SOAS

Mr Alan Jenkins

Dr Karima Laachir, SOAS  
Dr Dina Matar, SOAS

Dr Hanan Morsy  
*European Bank for Reconstruction  
and Development*

Dr Barbara Zollner  
*Birkbeck College*

#### LMEI Advisory Council

Lady Barbara Judge (Chair)

Professor Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem  
H E Khalid Al-Duwaisan GVCO  
*Ambassador, Embassy of the State of Kuwait*

Mrs Haifa Al Kaylani  
*Arab International Women's Forum*

Dr Khalid Bin Mohammed Al Khalifa  
*President, University College of Bahrain*

Professor Tony Allan  
*King's College and SOAS*

Dr Alanoud Alsharekh  
*Senior Fellow for Regional Politics, IISS*

Mr Farad Azima  
*NetScientific Plc*

Dr Noel Brehony  
*MENAS Associates Ltd.*

Professor Magdy Ishak Hanna  
*British Egyptian Society*

HE Mr Mazen Kemal Homoud  
*Ambassador, Embassy of the Hashemite  
Kingdom of Jordan*

Mr Paul Smith  
*Chairman, Eversheds International*

#### Founding Patron and Donor of the LMEI

Sheikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber  
*MBI Al Jaber Foundation*

# Contents

## 4 EDITORIAL

## 5 INSIGHT

**Sounding the city: Tehran's  
contemporary soundscapes**  
*Laudan Nooshin*

## 7 PERSIAN MUSIC

**Still singing: female singers in  
contemporary Iran**  
*Parmis Mozafari*

## 9

**A discursive study of music in  
Iran during the 1960s**  
*Mohammadamin Hashemi*

## 11

**Shaping the Persian repertoire**  
*Houman M. Sarshar*

## 13

**The introduction of piano  
practice in Iran**  
*Maryam Farshadfar*

## 15

**Music, Islam and Persian  
Sufism**  
*Terry Graham*

## 17

**Music on the move in the  
Middle East**  
*Ilana Webster-Kogen*

## 19

**Swaying to Persian and Middle  
Eastern tunes in London**  
*Roya Arab*

## 21 REVIEWS

### CD

**Rhapsody of Roses: Persian  
Classical Music from the 1950s**  
*Pejman Akbarzadeh*

## 22 BOOKS

**Iranian Classical Music: The  
Discourses and Practice of  
Creativity**  
*Stefan Williamson Fa*

## 23 BOOKS IN BRIEF

## 26 IN MEMORIAM

**Homa Nategh (1934-2016)**  
*Touraj Atabaki and Nasser  
Mohajer*

## 27

**Khodadad Farmanfarmaian  
(1928-2015)**  
*Ramin Nassehi*

## 28 EVENTS IN LONDON

*Roya Arab* gives a brief tour of the Persian and Middle Eastern music scene in London

# Swaying to Persian and Middle Eastern tunes in London



© Public Domain

Hossein Alizadeh in concert with Hamavayan Ensemble London, November 8, 2015. Courtesy of Fariborz Kiani, Nava Arts UK

London has a thriving live music scene, and Persian and Middle Eastern music is not left out: it is facilitated by a host of musical venues and festivals spread across the city, various societies, institutions and concert organisers. Together they serve an international audience living, visiting and studying in London. A major part is played by the educational institutions teaching, disseminating and providing a performance platform, such as SOAS which acts as a major venue for visiting artists and students to perform, as well as other ethnomusicological courses being taught across London (at City University, Goldsmiths, Kings College and Royal Holloway) which also play their part in spreading the region's music.

For Persian and Middle Eastern music London accommodates both classical and modern, young and old, although in my humble opinion not all with the same frequency or indeed quality. A cursory overview on the Internet of musical events that took place across London since the start of 2015 shows the wide range in age, styles and venues used for musical events. From many restaurants with popular Persian and Middle Eastern music to smaller gig venues and large concert halls sharing popular and classical music, there is always

something going on musically in London. The annual Nour Festival has a cornucopia of the region's cultural offerings which are presented at various venues across Kensington and Chelsea, whilst Shubbak shares Arab culture biennially across London.

When looking at the creation, performance and consumption of Persian and Middle Eastern music, one must also consider the impact from the unprecedented spread of people from these regions in the modern world,

*The exponential growth of diaspora communities over the past 40 years has created a mélange of artistic styles, manners, forms and expressions*

with an exponential growth of diaspora communities over the past 40 years. A survey of demographics looking at Iranian and Middle Eastern people residing outside the region shows an uphill spike in the scale and spread of these peoples across Europe and America since the late 1970s. This has created a *mélange* of artistic styles, manners, forms and expressions within the diaspora community, including those born in the region, those born outside the Middle East sometimes to both Middle Eastern and mixed parentage and not least the Western students, teachers and consumers of the region's music. Together these groups provide fertile grounds for continuation, preservation and experimentation of old and new musical traditions.

On the experiential front, last September there was a night of Iranian music to illustrate the huge range of Iranian musical life produced by Iranians of different ages, genres and varying connections with Iran. This was co-curated by myself and Arts Canteen – which promotes the region's culture – to coincide with the Inside Out Iran art exhibition 4-27 Sept 2015 showcasing young Iranian urban art. It began with Adib Rostami on *kamancheh* (Iranian spiked fiddle) and Pouya Mahmoodi on a specially adapted guitar with moveable frets – allowing quarter and semi-tones – improvising on ancient Persian themes. Then it was the turn of the deeply electronic instrumental composer Pouya Ehsaie who took the audience on an audio/visual electronic Odyssey. All three musicians were born in Iran and reside in the UK. Next, it was the author of this

## *Across London in any given month Persian and Middle Eastern music is performed by native artists, sometimes alongside their Western colleagues*

article – who writes and records English songs – who performed with a nod to the nostalgic state of exile by singing an old Iranian song 'Sultan Ghalbha' from the eponymous movie made in 1968, which the audience gustily joined with the smallest of prompts. Next came an Egyptian Iranian musician Lafwandah, who had never been to Iran, accompanied by her producer on CDJ (Compact Disc Jockey). The night ended with one of the first highly-acclaimed, Western female electronic producers Leila, who at one point mixed a live *santour* (dulcimer) into her electronic world. Leila was born in Iran and has not returned since leaving with her family in 1979. This wide spectrum of musical styles and genres is not just the story of the Iranian musical experience in Europe and America, it also reflects large swathes of the Middle East that have seen their peoples dispersed with some unable to return.

When sitting in the University College London's Logan Hall listening to the Persian maestro Alizadeh (one of Iran's leading composers and musicians, a virtuoso *tar* and *setar* player who has invented two new musical instruments: *sallaneh* and *shurangiz* from the ancient Iranian lute) and his ensemble, I was struck by the reverential silence and the numerous ways in which the audience was absorbing the music. I spent more than half of the concert studying the

audience: different ages and social classes, the hall was packed, some nodding to the poems that moved them, some swaying, some absorbing the music in immovable silence. It had the feeling of a Western classical musical concert listening to an eminent conductor, soloist or a rarely-heard, much-loved composition performed by a renowned ensemble or orchestra. It was, however, tinged with sad political realities that separated many of these people from their countries of origin. There was a melancholic wistfulness amidst the joyous aural celebration that was palpable in the audience's warm and attentive embrace of the musicians on stage.

Across London in any given month Persian and Middle Eastern music is performed by native artists, sometimes alongside their Western colleagues, playing both traditional Middle Eastern and Persian repertoires, Western classical repertoires as well as fusions of Middle Eastern, world music and modern Western-style popular music. In spite and perhaps because of the socio-political context of Persian and Middle Eastern musical performances in London, the range and quality of music performed here competes well with any other metropolis.

*Roya Arab is a musician and archaeologist. She is currently Honorary Research Assistant at IoA, UCL and PhD candidate at City University researching music in Iranian film*



**Adib Rostami and Pouya Mahmoodi performing at Inside Out Iran art exhibition at Rich Mix, London, September 2015**