

Musical Terminology

Pitch: a tone in music

- Fundamental element in melody and harmony
- **Melody:** any selection of pitches in *succession* that is “meaningful” to someone or a group of people
- **Harmony:** several pitches performed *simultaneously* to form a chord; relationships between various chords...
- Much of Middle Eastern music: **“melodically” oriented** rather than “harmonically”

Scale: set of pitches used in making melody

- **Heptatonic:** seven-note scale
- **Pentatonic:** five-note scale
- Other possibilities....
- **Tetrachord:** a four-note scalar segment (much of M.E. music based on combination of tetrachords)

Mode: set of pitches with ideas of:

- Tonal center/s
 - **Tonal center:** a pitch you keep coming back to
- And... possibly a **melodic shape** to be used in composition and improvisation (“melodic mode”)
- Different from “scale”
- **Maqam:** generic word used for concept of melodic mode in M.E. musical cultures
 - ...but other words also used

Beat or pulse: smallest unit of time in music

- **Rhythm:** organization of time in music
 - All musics have some sort of “rhythm”
 - **Irregular rhythm:** *Irregular* grouping of beats. Commonly referred to as “free rhythm.”
 - **Regular rhythm (Meter):** *Regular* grouping/units of beats

-
- ❖ Many genres of music by various ethnic & religious groups in M.E.....

Iranian Classical Music

Multi-dimensional character of Iranian classical music

- A common language used in:
 - Azan (call to prayer)
 - Ta'zieh (Islamic street musical drama/opera)
 - Ancient aerobics exercises
 - Music for Sufi gatherings
 - “Art” music
 - Light entertainment
 - Comical music
 - Street calls(encouraging people to eat various delicacies sold on street stands)

*At the heart of performance practice of Iranian art music is the concept of dastgah

Dastgah

- Collection of short melodic and rhythmic formulas (called Gusheh), that work as basic structure for improvisations and compositions
- 12 dastgahs in Iranian classical music (according to some musicians and scholars)

Radif

- Total repertoire of Dastgahs
- Refers to the set up of Gushes of one Dastgah
-other meanings

Gusheh:

- Short “pieces”/formulas used as models, or “concentrated raw material,” for improvisation and composition
- Are meant to work together in one Dastgah, and as bridges between Dastgahs
- Gushehs in one Dastgah are related:
 - ...in terms of selection of pitches
 - ...and a final return to the mother Gushe (Daramad)
- ...There are various types of Gushes

A typical performance

- ❖ Currently: Many experiments, fusions, added Western elements, etc....
- ❖ ...so.....it is hard to speak of a “fixed” way of performing

But traditionally:

1. Based on a Dastgah
2. Incorporates compositions and improvisations based on melodies of Dastgah in free and regular rhythms
3. Idea of question and answer between vocalist and instrumentalist(s), or between instruments
4. Instruments imitating vocal timbres and techniques
5. Melodies deeply based on and related to rhythms of Persian classical poetry
6. Concept of “Hal” (spiritual meditation/presence)

*****Listen: Typical performance in Dastgah Homayun (focus on changing of Gushehs)**

*****Listen: Composed song in Dastgah Homayun (focus on changing of Gushehs)**

- **Tasnif:** Composed song form (regular rhythm): key to recognizing Dastgahs

Translation of Tasnif in Dastgah Homayun

1) The one who wishes my disappearance and I want her well-being,
Whatever she does in the way of showing off her beauty no one will reproach her.

2) She will give off no fruit to any one, it is a garden for the seeing only,
The apple of the tree of her tall body, can only be gazed at.

3) I wished I could see her in the Day of Judgment once more,
So that I could take the burden of her sins!

.....

Links for further exploration

- refer to this link for information on Iranian classical musical instruments (tanbur does not belong to this category, rather to musical practice of a particular region in Iran)

http://www.dejkam.com/music/iran_traditional/instruments/

- example of instrumental performance in Iranian classical music

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk1d8Ny0jmE>