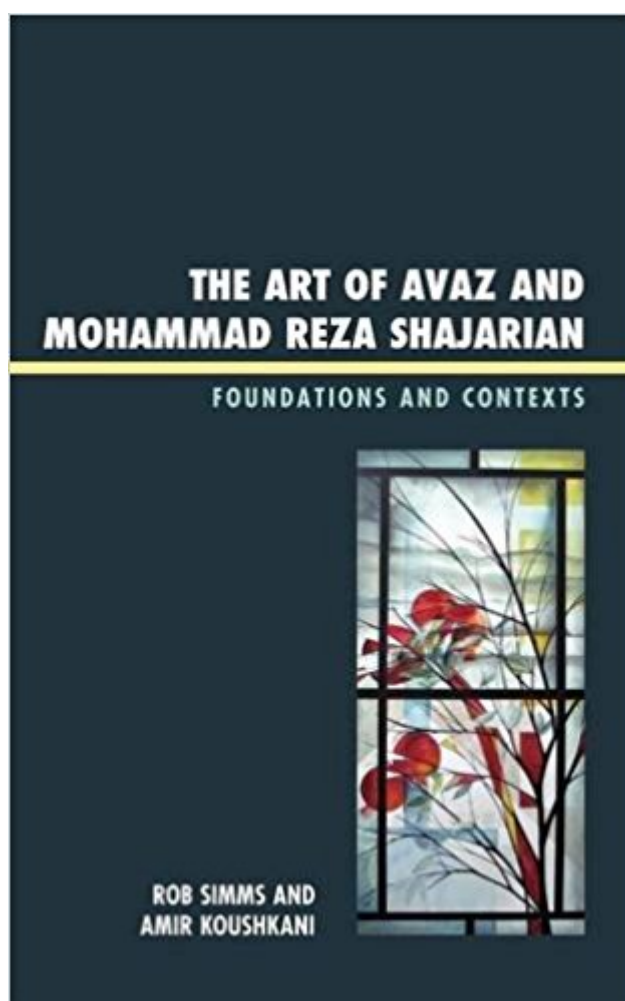


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The Art Of Avaz And Mohammad Reza Shajarian: Foundations And Contexts



Synopsis

The Art of Avaz and Mohammad Reza Shajarian: Foundations and Contexts, by Rob Simms and Amir Koushkani, examines the traditional art of singing classical Persian poetry, as represented by its greatest living exponent. This in-depth study surveys the social and historical context of the twentieth-century tradition of avaz while placing Shajarian's early career within this complex culture, from being a child prodigy of Qur'an recitation in Mashhad to his rise to national prominence in the 1970s. As a globetrotting celebrity who is renowned for singing medieval poetry with impeccable technique and radiant inspiration, Shajarian's life and work provide a compelling case study for larger issues of reconciling tradition and modernity, and the crucial role of the individual in maintaining and renovating traditional art forms. Avaz is discussed in the broader context of Iranian narrative performance traditions, where the performer retells well-known scripts in a way that is appropriate to the audience and the present occasion, spinning the tale to convey a personal message. Shajarian's career also exemplifies the huge changes that Iranian musical culture underwent in the 1960s and 70s. Finally, the study includes a detailed examination of the materials and creative processes of Shajarian's artistic craft, including his acquisition process and training, vocal technique, selection and treatment of poetry, use of traditional musical materials, and his balance of engaging preset materials with improvisation. The Art of Avaz and Mohammad Reza Shajarian is an impressively detailed study of the music, life, and environment of the most influential musician in Iranian classical music of the past three decades.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a welcome addition to the literature, presenting the narrative of Iranian classical music through the life and music of one of its foremost practitioners. Simms and Koushkani have adopted a novel approach, presenting extended sections in Shajarian's own "voice" and weaving this into the scholarly exegesis to create an artful polyphony. (Laudan Nooshin, City University London) The Art of Avaz and Mohammad Reza Shajarian is an indispensable scientific work for gaining a deeper understanding of the relationship between song, poetry, and vocal art, regardless of culture. It is a captivating means of accessing Persian culture through one of its most eminent representatives, who has dedicated his life to the cult of beauty and engaged in the defense of human values. The rigor and the richness of Simms' and Koushkani's method, which contributes techniques for future publications, rests on a "dialogue" between an exceptional master, a chosen disciple, and a fine connoisseur. Throughout the pages, these three roles merge to weave a passionate story, rich in teachings. (Jean During, French National Center for Scientific Research) This is a significant work not only for those interested in Persian music but also for those wishing to understand the culture of Iran in the last one hundred years, and for music scholars focusing on a world perspective of improvisation, musical education, and culture change. As a long-time student of Persian music, I very much welcome this excellent addition to the literature. (Bruno Nettl, University of Illinois)

Rob Simms is a multi-instrumentalist and author of The Repertoire of Iraqi Maqam and co-author (with Amir Koushkani) of The Avaz of Mohammad Reza Shajarian in Iran and Beyond, 1979-2000. He is associate professor of music at York University in Toronto. Amir Koushkani is a performer (solo and in collaboration with other musicians), composer, arranger, and instructor of the traditional Persian stringed instruments tar and setar. He is a Ph.D candidate in ethnomusicology at York University in Toronto.

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