

Faramarz Payvar & Ensemble □ – Iran: Persian Classical Music (1974/1991)

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1 *Dastgāh Shur* 10:17 2 *Dastgāh Homayoun* 7:36 3 *Dastgāh Segah* 4:47 4 *Zarb Solo* 4:55 5 *Dastgāh Chahārgāh* 4:54 6 *Dastgāh Māhour* 13:02 Goblet Drum [Zarb] – Mohammad Esmā'i'li Kemenche [Kamāncheh] – Rahmatollah Badi'i Santoor [Santour] – Faramarz Payvar Tar (Lute) – Houshang Zarif Vocals [Singer] – Khatereh Parvaneh

From the old Nonesuch Explorer series comes this album of classical Persian music, originally released in 1974 and re-released on CD in 1991. The album contains a number of nice virtuoso performances on the various instruments of the Persian classical repertoire. The ensemble leader Faramarz Payvar provides some outstanding work on the santur in most of the dastgah performances. Also, the zarb player Mohammad Esmā'i'li performs an amazing solo on his drum, nearly incorporating melody into the work with a single percussion instrument. The tar playing also stands out exceptionally in "Dastgah Chahargah," as Houshang Zarif pumps out an outstanding run on his lute. For a basic overview of Persian classical, this album does a pretty good job of showing off the major instruments and vocals, all with the dastgah framework. At the same time, it's mildly simplistic, as are many of the Explorer series albums. For a newcomer to Persian music, this wouldn't be a bad place to start for a basic overview, though those better acquainted with the basics might prefer a slightly more comprehensive compilation, such as Rounder's Iran installment of the Anthology of World Music. ---Adam Greenberg, AllMusic Review

I think classical Persian music is an acquired taste. When I first bought this album, I thought, "Who would want to listen to this?" Now I listen to it often. The first piece, Dastgah Shur, is subtle and evocative, with odd zither-like sounds that don't seem to conform to Western ideas of music, but become hypnotic. The acoustic parts sound so right to me now, that I regret the

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pieces which are accompanied by singing, which still grates on me a bit. (Perhaps because I don't understand Persian.) If you enjoy music that is a bit out of the ordinary, you might really like this album. Believe me, it grows on you, and I don't mean like a fungus! ---James Kennedy, amazon.com

The santoor is a three-octave wooden-hammered dulcimer with seventy-two strings, which are arranged on adjustable tuning pegs in eighteen quadruple sets, nine (bronze) in the low register, and nine (steel) in the middle register. The santoor can be made from various kinds of wood (walnut, rosewood, betel palm, etc.) depending on the desired sound quality. The front and the back of the instrument are connected by sound posts whose positions play an important role in the sound quality of the instrument. Although the santoor is very old, it was neither depicted in miniatures, nor presented in any other medium until the nineteenth century. The secret of making the trapezoid-shape sound box lies in the quality and age of the wood, as well as in the arrangement of the sound posts which connect the table of the instrument to its back. Santoor is played in India, Iraq, Egypt and some other countries. ---nasehpour.com

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