



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC

Iranian Music Symposium and Performance

with distinguished composer Reza Vali and U of T faculty, students and guests

Panelists: Reza Vali, Nasim Niknafs, Afarin Mansouri, Shahab Paranj, Hadi Milanloo and Kaveh Mirhosseini

Moderator: Farzaneh Hemmasi

2025 University of Toronto New Music Festival

Reza Vali, Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Composition

Norbert Palej, *festival coordinator*

Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 12pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

BIOGRAPHIES

Reza Vali was born in Ghazvin, Iran, in 1952. He began his music studies at the Conservatory of Music in Tehran. In 1972 he went to Austria and studied music education and composition at the Academy of Music in Vienna. After graduating from the Academy of Music, he moved to the United States and continued his studies at the University of Pittsburgh, receiving his Ph.D. in music theory and composition in 1985. Mr. Vali has been a faculty member of the School of Music at Carnegie Mellon University since 1988. He has received numerous honors and commissions, including the honor prize of the Austrian Ministry of Arts and Sciences, two Andrew W. Mellon Fellowships, commissions from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Kronos Quartet, the Carpe Diem String Quartet, the Seattle Chamber Players, and the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music, as well as grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education. He was selected by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust as the Outstanding Emerging Artist for which he received the Creative Achievement Award. Vali's orchestral compositions have been performed in the United States by the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the Baltimore Symphony, the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestra 2001. His chamber works have received performances by Cuarteto Latinoamericano, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, the Carpe Diem String Quartet, Kronos Quartet, the Seattle Chamber Players, and the Da Capo Chamber Players. His music has been performed in Europe, China, Chile, Mexico, Hong Kong, and Australia and is recorded on the Deutsche Grammophon, Naxos, New Albion, MMC, Ambassador, Albany, and ABC Classics labels.

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures. Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

Dr. Afarin Mansouri is an internationally acclaimed composer, curator, and opera artist blending Iranian heritage with Western musical traditions. A recipient of numerous accolades, including the Global Music Award Silver Medal and the Canada 150 Medal, she has collaborated with leading organizations like the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, National Ballet of Canada, and Tapestry Opera. As Artistic Director of Cultureland Opera Collective, she fosters cultural awareness through socially impactful operatic productions, such as *The Echoes of Bi-Sotoon* and *The Refugees*. Her recorded works include the debut album *Dancing With Love*, a collection of Eastern-inspired love songs and audio opera *Little Heart*, both released by Centrediscs. Her compositions, including the orchestral prelude *Mithra* and cantata *Humans Arise!*, amplify voices advocating for justice and women's rights. As an educator, she has taught at institutions such as Wilfrid Laurier University, Seattle opera, Canadian Opera Company. Dedicated to equity in the arts, Afarin continues to innovate through her compositions, and is preparing for a new artistic residency at Tapestry Opera.

Shahab Paranj is an Iranian-born composer, conductor, instrumentalist, and educator, known for pioneering the integration of Persian and Western composition techniques. He holds a BA in Music Composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, an MM from the Manhattan School of Music, and a PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). A virtuoso tombak player, Paranj has performed, recorded, and collaborated with renowned artists worldwide. Praised as "extraordinary" by the *San Francisco Examiner* and celebrated by composer John Adams for his "unique voice," his compositions diverge from traditional Eurocentric conventions, drawing deeply from the rich traditions of Persian music. Recent commissions include works for esteemed ensembles, orchestras, and festivals such as Delirium Musicum, Russian String Orchestra, Intersection Contemporary Music Ensemble, Long Beach Opera, Jâca Duo, Aleron Trio, San Francisco New Music Ensemble, One Great City Duo, MSM Symphony Orchestra, the International Low Brass Trio, the Jacaranda series, and Hear Now Ensemble. Additionally, he composed the original score for *Dressage*, which won the 2018 Berlin Film Festival award for Best Feature Film in the Generation category. As a scholar, Paranj's research focuses on the Iranian Avazi Style, and he has presented on this subject at prestigious seminars, including the SEM, AMS, and SMT 2022 joint annual meeting. His honors include the 2004 Hoefer Prize from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the APSIH Distinguished Scholar Award, and recognition from the Mehr Humanitarian Society (2010) and the City and County of San Francisco (2011). Paranj is the founder and music director of The Iranshahr Orchestra and serves as the artistic director of "*Du Vert à l'Infini*," a contemporary music festival in the Franche-Comté region of France. In 2024, he released his first album as a conductor with Naxos, featuring American soprano Hila Plitman and compositions by Richard Danielpour. He currently serves as the Artistic Director of the Center for Iranian Music and is a faculty member at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music

Kaveh Mirhosseini, a Doctoral student at the University of Toronto, is an Iranian composer, conductor, percussionist, and researcher of Iranian folk music. He founded the Tehran Cantus Ensemble, which performed and recorded more than 30 pieces by Iranian Composers in Tehran. He also established MECA (Middle Eastern Composers Association) to collect an extensive archive of Middle Eastern composers, perform their pieces, and introduce a new diversity of composition styles from the Region. He has played in the TSO (Tehran Symphony Orchestra) for fourteen years as a principal percussionist and guest conductor of the TSO and the Iran National Symphony Orchestra in his professional career. Many different orchestras, ensembles, and soloists performed his compositions,

such as the Mili Reasurans Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Hakan Sensoy (Istanbul, Turkey),

Koda Orchestra, conducted by Oguzhan Kavruk (Izmir, Turkey), Annie Kosanovich (Oregon State University, USA), Branka Parlic (Silk Road Music Festival, Serbia), Gokce Bahar Oytun (Istanbul, Turkey), Respina Sting Quartet (Tehran Contemporary Music Festival).

Four Albums released by his compositions:

“Illusion” for Violin & 58 Violin Orchestra performed by Lora Kmieliauaskaite, 2023.

“Illumination” Concerto for Violoncello & String Orchestra, performed by the Cantus Ensemble.

“The Waste Land” for solo Bassoon Performed by Elise Jacobberger.

“Mysticism” String Quartet performed by the Respina String Quartet.

As the artistic director of JAM Music Center in Toronto, He has expanded his profession internationally and received several commissions to record orchestral works by Iranian and non-Iranian composers, such as Christos Hatzis’s *Zeitgeist* and *Winter Solstice*, Reza Vali’s *Zand*, M.R. Darvishi’s *The Lost of Truth*, Mehran Rouhani’s *For Those*, and ...

In 2021, his Cello Concerto “Illumination (Eshragh)” was awarded BARBOD, the essential Iranian musical award.

Farzaneh Hemmasi (she/her) (Ph.D., Columbia University) is Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology at University of Toronto. Her monograph *Tehrangelles Dreaming: Intimacy and Imagination in Southern California’s Iranian Pop Music* (Duke University Press 2020) is an ethnographic account of the Los Angeles-based postrevolutionary Iranian expatriate culture industries. *Tehrangelles Dreaming* won the inaugural Hamid Naficy Book Award from the Association of Iranian Studies. Prof. Hemmasi’s other publications consider Iranian political music and poetry; Googoosh and the political metaphorization of the Iranian female singing voice; and diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in music departments. These have appeared in *MUSICultures* (2022) *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* (2017), *Popular Communication* (2017), *Popular Music* (2017), *Ethnomusicology* (2013), and *Mahoor Music Quarterly* (2008) and several edited volumes. Hemmasi’s secondary interest is using ethnographic methods and community-based research to address diversity, difference, and sound in Toronto. Since 2017, Farzaneh has undertaken a variety of collaborative ethnographic research projects on music, sound, and affordability in Toronto’s Kensington Market neighbourhood. Research topics include revisions to the Toronto noise policy; street festivals and economic / cultural “recovery” after the pandemic; and community-city partnerships to solve neighbourhood problems. This work has been funded by a Connaught Community Partnership Research grant; an Insight Development Grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research; University of Toronto’s Jackman Humanities Institute; the School of Cities and UofT’s Critical Digital Humanities Institute, among others. For more information on her teaching and research, see Prof. Hemmasi’s personal website at <http://www.farzaneh-hemmasi.com>.

Hadi Milanloo is an ethnomusicology doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto. His doctoral research focuses on the music and lives of female instrumentalists of Iranian classical music to explore the intersections of music, gender, and resistance/resilience in Iran. He works towards an ethnomusicological approach that accounts for both aesthetic contributions and social activism of Iranian female musicians. Hadi also serves as the Executive Director of the Canadian Golha Orchestra (CGO). Inspired by the now-marginalized style of the Golha era (1950s to 1970s) and its orchestral music, CGO’s mission is to provide a sustainable platform for re-performing and re-examining Iran’s musical past, as well as imagining its future in an increasingly global and diverse world. Hadi is also a musician and has studied setar and the radif of Iranian classical music with Dariush Talai and Hamid Sokuti, among others.