

Institution: City University London
Unit of Assessment: 35 Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts
Title of case study: Disseminating Iranian musical culture in Britain
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Music at City University London has long demonstrated a commitment to ethnomusicological outreach. This is particularly manifested in the extensive research of Dr Laudan Nooshin which has facilitated access to and understanding of Iranian music and culture in Britain and internationally. The primary channels through which impact has arisen from this research comprise: educational work with schools; a wide range of print and broadcast media; consultancy work for a range of organisations and festivals; and performance work in a variety of different contexts. Overall, the impact of Nooshin's research has enhanced knowledge of a rich, historically-rooted culture and acted as a counterbalance to the often negative representation of Iranian culture in the British and international media. In particular it has influenced attitudes and perceptions of musicians, scholars, readers and listeners; enriched the cultural lives and aesthetic experiences of children and adults in a range of performance and multimedia contexts; enhanced knowledge and understanding in different educational environments; and contributed significantly to the preservation, renewal and interpretation of Iranian musical heritage.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Nooshin's research dates back to the 1980s but has been undertaken at City University London since 2004, when she took up her current Senior Lecturer post. The research has involved several periods of fieldwork in Iran, extensive work with Iranian communities in the UK and analysis of digitally-mediated Iranian music, generating insights into both contemporary and historic forms of Iranian music cultures in Iran and around the world. It has focused on two main areas: 1) creative processes in Iranian classical music, specifically how musicians conceive creativity, the nature of the creative process itself and the relationship between improvisational and compositional practice; and 2) popular music and youth culture in Iran, specifically the ways in which popular music has, since the 1979 Revolution, served as an arena for negotiating ideas about national identity, hegemony and resistance and youth empowerment. Nooshin's research into Iranian classical music is the first to engage perspectives from critical theory and postcolonial studies and to examine the relationships of power embedded in the musical system and its central repertoire. Her work on Iranian popular music has also contributed significantly to the development of what was previously a largely unresearched area. Overall, this research has enhanced knowledge of a rich, historically-rooted culture and acted as a counterbalance to the often negative representation of Iranian culture in the British media. Educational and other dissemination have served to generate public discussion and promote greater understanding and cultural tolerance.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nooshin L. (2013). Two Revivalist Moments in Iranian Classical Music. In C. Bithell & J. Hill (Eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Revival and Post-Revival Music Cultures</i>. New York: OUP. Nooshin L. (2011). Hip-hop Tehran: Migrating Styles, Musical Meanings, Marginalised Voices. In J. Toynbee & B. Dueck (Eds.), <i>Migrating Music</i> (pp. 92-111). London: Routledge. Nooshin L. (2009). "Tomorrow is Ours": Re-imagining Nation, Performing Youth in the New Iranian Pop Music. In L. Nooshin (Ed.), <i>Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia</i> (pp. 245-268). Farnham: Ashgate Press. Nooshin L. (2009). Prelude: Power and the Play of Music. In L. Nooshin (Ed.), <i>Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia</i> (pp. 1-31). Farnham: Ashgate Press. Nooshin L. (2008). The Language of Rock: Iranian Youth, Popular Music, and National Identity. In M. Semati (Ed.), <i>Media, Culture and Society in Iran</i> (pp.69-93). New York: Routledge. Nooshin L. (2005). Subversion and Counter-subversion: Power, Control and Meaning in the New Iranian Pop Music. In A. J. Randall (Ed.), <i>Music, Power and Politics</i> (pp231-272). New York: Routledge. <p><i>Evidence of quality:</i> all of the publications have been through rigorous peer review. Further evidence of quality can be provided in the international standing of the publishers (OUP, Routledge, Ashgate); the eminence of other contributors (Stokes, Baily, Shelemay in Nooshin 2009; Cohen, Robins, Finnegan, Stokes, Baily in Toynbee and Dueck 2011; Kartomi, Slobin in Bithell and Hill 2013); and the many positive reviews by distinguished scholars. One such example by Semati (2008): '<i>In her brilliant article, Nooshin highlights the universalising discourses that have</i></p>

emerged among rock musicians and which are projecting new understandings of national identity (International Journal of Communication, Nahid Siamdoust, University of Oxford).

4. Details of the impact

The research expertise which has underpinned impactful activities is as follows: in-depth specialist knowledge of musical styles, structures and processes has informed a variety of creative outputs; extensive familiarity with various repertoires has enhanced knowledge and understanding in different educational contexts, including the support of school curricula; expert knowledge and musical insight have been disseminated through media work and other critical commentaries; and the understanding of and sensitivity to Iranian music and culture has raised cultural awareness and acceptance among others both in the UK and internationally. There are four major dimensions to the impact:

a) *Educational work with schools - The Shahnameh Project*: Between November 2011 and May 2012 Nooshin initiated and led a collaborative outreach project with the Education and Community Department at the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO). The project also involved one of the LPO's partner organisations, the Bridge Project (an organisation providing free music tuition to children who might not otherwise have the opportunity to learn an instrument). The Shahnameh Project introduced key stage 2 children (ages 7 to -11) to Iranian music and culture through several workshops and teacher-led activities, including working with composer David Bruce on a specially-commissioned piece for orchestra; Iranian instruments and narrator; and *Prince Zal and the Simorgh*, which was premiered at two LPO BrightSparks schools' concerts at the Royal Festival Hall on 23rd May 2012. The LPO reaches about 15,000 children annually through its BrightSparks concerts. The majority of them have not previously experienced a live orchestral performance. The story on which the piece was based was selected by Nooshin for its contemporary social relevance. The performances involved 53 key stage 1 (ages 5 to 7) violinists from two south London primary schools (Ashmole and Jessop); Iranian musicians Arash Moradi and Fariborz Kiani; storyteller Sally Pomme Clayton; and members of City's Middle Eastern Music Ensemble. The concerts were attended by 4,658 key stage 2 children and 75 teachers. Initial workshops were held at Ashmole and Jessop Schools in the autumn of 2011, involving around 120 children, during which Bruce developed initial ideas for his piece. He worked closely with Nooshin, learning about Iranian music styles, structures and processes, particularly in relation to the role of improvisation. Bruce is a successful British composer with an international profile whose previous work with the LPO and recent children's opera production at the Royal Opera House made him particularly suitable for the project. The school sessions included whole school assemblies at which the Iranian musicians, City music students and storyteller Sally Pomme Clayton performed, introducing Iranian music and culture through one of the stories from the epic *Shahnameh*. The majority of children attending the assemblies had not seen or heard the Iranian instruments before. Nooshin also wrote a Teachers' Guide, introducing Iranian modes, rhythms and instruments as well as broader cultural issues and including practical classroom activities. The Guide was available through the LPO website, together with relevant sound examples. Additionally, two INSET training sessions, led by Nooshin and Patrick Bailey (LPO Education and Community Department) and attended by 35 teachers, were held in April 2012 to assist teachers in preparing pupils for the concerts.

The reach and significance of the impact can be judged from the attendance figures, qualitative feedback from post-concert teacher questionnaires and interviews with the Bridge Project and the LPO Community and Education Department. Teachers provided qualitative feedback on how the children benefited from the concert, workshops and classroom activities, for example: *'The children enjoyed hearing the story set to music and left humming various tunes. They noticed the Iranian instruments and benefited from seeing real live musicians.'* and *'The Bruce piece served as a model for pieces the children put together the following week. The children's performances were of a high standard, no doubt as a result of the previous week's visit to the Royal Festival Hall.'*

The Teachers' Guide and INSET sessions received similarly positive feedback, highlighting ways in which the project facilitated cross-curricular work with subjects such as mathematics; art; literacy; geography; personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) and citizenship education, as well as developing music-specific skills in listening, performing and composing: *'My colleague and I LOVED the Teachers' Guide; coupled with the INSET training session. It is possibly the best resource we've ever been provided with for an educational visit. I played audio clips that were recommended in the pack, did the activities based around the map and Iran's location and talked*

*about oral stories and the children also painted their own Simorghs.'; 'The concert and resource pack provided a rich 'text' as a basis for our Literacy work. It exposed children to a new culture. Their listening skills were developed by using Prince Zal's theme to understand how a character changes over the course of a story. And the concert inspired the children in their own music-making. The information about the instruments and drumming rhythms were useful in music and maths lessons.'; 'We used the drumming patterns from the resources pack in a Mathematics lesson, working out which numbers could be made by adding strings of 2s and 3s. Lots of children subsequently identified the concert as their favourite trip of the year!'; 'The week before the concert we used the story in our Literacy lessons. The children were really engaged with the story and produced some really good writing. This meant that they were familiar with both the story and music, which enhanced their enjoyment and engagement at the concert.'; 'The background work to Iranian rhythms was an excellent introduction and proved a good basis for percussive activities in school. We composed our own music to the Prince Zal story using the Iranian modes and rhythms. Great fun!' and 'The children created their own compositions based on the some of the rhythms they had heard using ideas that we were shown in the teachers' session. The music produced was very good.' Pupil responses were equally positive: 'From the story I learnt that you cannot be cross with someone forever. You need to forgive. If you have something you should be grateful for it because you may regret it if you're not.' (PSHE and citizenship education); 'I liked the *daf* best. It was noisy. I wish they would come to our school.' The Bridge Project also reported that: 'This was a very successful project on many levels. It was good for the children to work with adults and other young people outside their sphere; it's an encouraging validation to have young professionals come into their school and invest time in them and to have a piece written especially for them. The real value of having City University involved was bringing diverse elements to the collaboration in a way that we haven't seen before and which provided so many different types of role models for the children.' They also commented on the value of the project to the children in performing in a professional setting on stage at the Royal Festival Hall and being able to 'experience making music in such a large ensemble and to feel that they're contributing something of worth. For these children from these schools and at this age it's the kind of memory that will remain with them forever. They will also identify these experiences, and the people they are making music with, with Iran and as they get older and engage more in current affairs that will be for them a really positive memory of things Iranian.'*

Composer David Bruce provided further evidence of the impact of the project in the form of personal testimony: 'The project helped spread ideas and understanding about Iranian culture and music to everyone involved. From talking with Laudan and reading the materials she gave me I gained a more fine-grained understanding of the music of the region. I also gained understanding of some of the techniques of Iranian classical music, the concepts of *gusheh* and *dastgah* and the way a scale might, for example, emphasize a particular pitch other than the root.' Bruce has since drawn on these ideas further in his compositional work, including in the piece 'Cut the Rug', commissioned by Yo Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble and premiered in New York's Carnegie Hall on 16th October 2013.

b) *Print media.* Nooshin has contributed to several high-profile publications aimed at the general public, including *The Rough Guide to World Music: Africa & Middle East*, London: Rough Guides, 2006 ('Iran: The Art of Ornament', pp.519-32); *Songlines: The World Music Magazine* (two features and 15 CD reviews since 2008; average international circulation 20,000 per issue between 2008 and 2013); and *The Middle East in London* magazine (circulation 800 per issue). Nooshin has also written CD liner notes for prominent Iranian vocalists Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Shahram Nazeri (*Without You: Masters of Persian Music*, World Village USA, 468011, 2002; *Faryad: Masters of Persian Music*, World Village USA, 468023, 2006; and *Through Eternity: Persian Devotional Music*, Sounds True USA, STAM112D, 1999). All of these came about through invitation and Nooshin's recognised expertise in the field. Those published before 2008 are still on sale and in wide public circulation, both in the UK and internationally.

c) *Broadcast media and performances.* In February 2008 Nooshin appeared by invitation on the BBC Radio 3 programme *World Routes* (average audience 88,000, source: RAJAR) reviewing current Iranian music CDs. Her research has also raised the profile of musicians about whom she has written, particularly outside Iran, thus impacting on CD sales and audience-generation. Many musicians have acknowledged this. Iran's foremost pop group, Arian Band, posted information on

Nooshin's edited volume, which includes a chapter on their music, on their website (www.arianmusic.com/en). Prominent musician Kayhan Kalhor has used text from CD liner notes by Nooshin on his website (www.kayhankalhor.net/).

d) *Other impact activities include:* Convening a festival of Music in Middle Eastern Cinema, including screenings at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, London (May 2011, funded by LCACE and Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF)); advising IHF on music for a promotional film by Sogand Bahram (March 2011); speaking at and chairing sessions for the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Nur Festival of contemporary Middle Eastern and North African arts (autumn 2012 and 2013); advising film-maker Andrew Smith on a film about female singers in Iran (2013); public workshops and concerts with City's Middle Eastern Ensemble (2008 to 2013) at venues including the British Museum (part of Magic of Persia's Educational Family Weekends), BBC Maida Vale studios (BBC Symphony Orchestra Persepolis Project) and the October Gallery. Most of these activities came about by invitation. Iran Heritage Foundation and Magic of Persia are the primary organisations promoting wider public understanding of Iranian arts, culture and history in the UK. Nooshin's involvement in their activities has contributed positively to their work in this area.

This research has supported the creation of new forms of artistic expression linked to Iranian music; influenced attitudes and perceptions of musicians, scholars, readers and listeners; enriched the cultural lives and aesthetic experiences of children and adults in a range of performance and multimedia contexts; enhanced knowledge and understanding in different educational environments; and contributed significantly to the preservation, renewal and interpretation of Iranian musical heritage. The impact thus relates to several broad areas, including benefits to cultural life, education, economic prosperity, public discourse and civil society; disseminated through a number of channels including educational work with schools; print and broadcast media; consultancy work for a range of organisations and festivals; and performance work in a variety of contexts.

Beneficiaries of the activities detailed include: 1) school children and teachers involved in the Shahnameh Project; 2) BBC Radio 3 listeners; 3) musicians, including those whose work has been promoted through the underpinning research and activities listed; members of the LPO; Iranian musicians involved in the Shahnameh Project; and composer David Bruce; 4) readers of magazines and books directed at lay audiences; 5) publishers, record companies and others benefiting economically from audio and other media outputs; 6) purchasers of music CDs; 7) audiences attending public lectures and film screenings; 8) film-makers: Sogand Bahram, Andrew Smith and those whose work was screened at the 2012 film festival; and 9) Iranians in the UK, through better public understanding of their music and culture. This is a community whose self-esteem is severely affected by British media representations of Iran. One response by a teacher following the Shahnameh Project points to this: '*We had an Iranian pupil, and her family were very excited about the chance to talk about their heritage. She was able to bring her own versions of the stories to read to the class.*' Although this aspect of impact is often subtle and not easy to evidence, the various manifestations of Nooshin's research are nevertheless extremely important in determining how communities view themselves and their places in British society, thereby aiding integration and more positive community relations in a multi-cultural society.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 1) London Philharmonic Orchestra, Education and Community Department.
- 2) Teachers and school children involved in the Shahnameh Project (questionnaires available);
- 3) The Bridge Project (London Music Masters).
- 4) Musicians involved in the Shahnameh Project;
- 5) BrightSparks Key Stage 2 Concert: Teachers' Guide, April 2012 (available on www.city.ac.uk/impact-iranian-music-shahnameh-project)
- 6) BrightSparks concert programme, 23rd May 2012 (available on www.city.ac.uk/impact-iranian-music-shahnameh-project)
- 7) Documentary film: *Making an Impact: Introducing Key Stage 2 Children to Iranian Music* (City University London) (available on www.city.ac.uk/impact-iranian-music-shahnameh-project)
- 8) Shahnameh Project website www.city.ac.uk/impact-iranian-music-shahnameh-project.
- 9) Prominent Iranian musicians
- 10) Arian Band, Iran www.arianmusic.com/.
- 11) *Songlines* Magazine www.songlines.co.uk/.