

A London concert presented by the Toos Foundation on 26th April

Gulpā, a bright face in the music of Iran

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On Sunday afternoon the 26th of April, Gulpā's concert together with Hushang Zarif the famous Tar player will take place in London.

This concert is one of the many programs that are supported by the Toos Foundation. The Toos Foundation under the management of Miss. Jamileh Kharrazi has presented various arts and

culture events in London, which has received warm reception by the Iranian communities.

Gulpā is famous enough and there is no need for introduction. This master of music who invented a new style in the Iranian music has been active in this profession for over five decades and at least three generations have listened to his voice and enjoyed his music. His voice revives sweet memories for the young and the old.

Gulpā was born in an art-loving family. He learnt the art of singing from his father who was also familiar with traditional Iranian music. Gulpā was blessed with a very nice and dynamic voice. After learning the elementary techniques in the art of singing from his father, he became a student under the supervision of the great master Nur 'Ali

Khan Brumand and learnt the meters and prosodies in music, becoming a mature singer in his adolescent. Among other masters who also had an impact in Gulpā's learning there was Adib Khansari, who had somewhat introduced a new technique in singing. There are many who believe Gulpā's style in music is the same as the Adib's style. However, Gulpā, created a new style in singing not previously heard. He created a different tune, a tune that penetrates the hearts of the listeners, and at the same time blends with mystical themes, a tune that is very difficult to duplicate.

However, apart from this obvious ability, another outstanding point about Gulpā is the variety of music he employs which never tapers the audience. Gulpā began his activities in music since 1961 in the National Iranian Radio. Although he claims, the first song that he sang was in the *Gulhā* program named: "*Mast-i Mastam Saqiya Dastam begir*" whose poet was Bizhan Taraqi and most probably it would have been the first song that was aired, and sang by Gulpā. It was few moments after the New Year 1339/1961 that this song was aired by radio and Gulpā also sang a poem from Hafez prior to the lyric.

This song attracted too many attentions, people liked it very much. Soon after, young Gulpā registered his name alongside with the masters of music such as Qavami, Khansari, Banan and Marziyya.

After almost five decades, Gulpā still sings as nice with the same old attraction in his voice. To explain about his techniques and singing requires great amount of time, thus, we defer that to another occasion. We will now reveal a previously conducted interview to further familiarise the readers with the Iranian music.

Q-What was the reason you joint the *Gulhā* program?

A-Every Friday nights we used to gather in Mr. Nezam Sultan Khajeh Nuri's house who was the Iranian Ambassador to Italy just before the revolution. He was a humble person and a Dervish following the order of Safi 'Ali Shah. Some very famous artists would gather there. One night I was there together with my master Mr. Brumand; luckily, Mr. Pīrnā was present too. When I sang a piece with my master Mr. Brumand it sounded pleasant to Mr. Pīrnā and I was subsequently invited to the *Gulhā* program. In those days there were

only three famous singers in the Immortal Flowers program, Mr. Qavami, Banan and Khansari. I became the fourth.

Q-What was the first song you sang in the *Gulhā* program?

A-The first song was called: "*Mast-i Mastam Saqiya Dastam begir*" whose poet was Bizhan Taraqi.

Q-How did the recordings take place in those days?

A-We used to attend at the Studio no 2 in the central building of the radio, which was located in Ark circus in Tehran and the programs were recorded live.

Q-What impact did the *Gulhā* program have on music of Iran.

A-In my opinion the *Gulhā* programs rescued the Iranian music. Meaning, all the famous masters, and singers were hand picked.

Q-Did your involvement in the programs have any impact on the quality of your works?

A-When I was first invited to sing in the *Gulhā* program; Mr. Mushir Humayun who was the head of music in radio approached me and said: If you want to sing in these programs your work must have

originality and novelty. It was due to this fact that all my music was somewhat different and was more in the line of lyrics.

Q-Did you play any role in choosing the music or the lyrics?

A-Yes, I chose my own music and my own lyrics; the choosing of the players was also up to me.

Q-What special memory do you have from the *Gulhā* program?

A-It was before the time of recording for the second program with Mr. Yahaqi, Sharif and Eftetaħ when we contacted Mr. Pīrnā saying that we were ready to record. We were set to go to the studio at night. I sang a song in *Abu 'Ata "Del be suda-yi tu bastim khuda midanad"*. When we finished recording I saw Mr. Pīrnā standing outside with Rushanak and they both had tears in their eyes. Mr. Pīrnā said: you have tonight

brought us closer to God. This was the sweetest memory I had.

Q-In what level do you see yourself in the music of Iran?

A-Of course, this is a question which must be asked of the people and those more qualified. I must first talk about techniques of singing; a good singer must first learn the rules of meters and prosodies before he can even start. Later, as time goes by he gains more experience and adds some of his own initiative to his work. Of course, redoing the works of the old masters bears no novelties. Because, they must have performed the pieces with the best of their abilities during their time and duplicating such work requires no talent at all, anyone can do it. However, if a student never exceeds his master then there will never be any progress. As for my standards, well I better tell you about what Mr. Khaleqi told me. He once said to me that one day Mr. Pīrnā said to him that he had found a beautiful flower. Khaleqi asked him: where did you find this flower? Replied Mr. Pīrnā: Although this flower's name says otherwise, but I found him here in Tehran. His name is Akbar Gulpāyğani and everyone knows him as Gulpā, he

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then played a tape of my voice to prove his point.

Who is Gulpā?

Gulpā was born in a family in which everyone had relatively good voice. He says: I have five brothers and one sister all of whom have good voices. Singing is in our genes, my grandfather and father both had good voices. Due to the request of his father Gulpā began singing when he was young and learnt the techniques under his father's supervision. He says: Like my brothers I had a good voice. I started to learn the meters and tunes with my master Mr. Brumand.

Mr. Brumand was a prominent figure in the Iranian Music and played many instruments. Gulpā studied for six years with Mr. Brumand and following that started self tutoring. I must also add Mr. Khansari was a great master to me too. After finishing his primary school in Farhang School he continued his high school studies in Badr and Nezam School and later, he entered the civil servant's school and subsequently, became a banker.