

“*Gulhā Programme*” and the continuous effort of Jane Lewisohn in perseverance of the greatest phenomenon in the culture of Iran

A complete collection of the *Gulhā* programme compiled with the help of the British Library and the assistance of Jane Lewisohn is now made available to the enthusiasts.

In the afternoon of the 26th of April a special event for commemoration of the *Gulhā* programme took place in London, which received a vast reception by the admirers of literature, poetry, and music. In this gathering which was arranged with the initiative and the effort of the Toos foundation under the management of Miss. Jamileh Kharrazi numerous artists and men of importance who were involved in the programme on the radio Iran were present. Among those faces, there was Jane Lewisohn the British researcher who is fluent in Persian language and shows great interest in the culture and the music of Iran. Her vast efforts to compile and preserve the works of great artists who have been recorded in the *Gulhā* programme and in addition she has done extensive research in the same field and the result is soon to be published as a book.

During the start of this event in London, our Journalist M. Husain-pour



has conducted an interview with Mrs. Jane Lewisohn, details of which are as follows:

- **Mrs. Lewisohn, I have heard that in connection with the *Gulhā* programme you have done years of research and extensive studies in this field. Please tell us why this project started and what attracted you towards the *Gulhā* programme and also how can we obtain copies of your work?**

During the years 1973 to 1979 I was in Iran and used to enjoy

listening to the *Gulhā* programme on the radio, later during the years 2004-05 when I started to digitally record the tapes of the *Gulhā* I realised that there has been no research or studies on this area and when approached the great masters of music in Iran and put the question to them my assumption was confirmed and that no one had also access to the archive of the *Gulhā* programme. For this reason, I began to look for financial aid via the University and on this path the National

British Library due to their schemes in preserving imperilled archives and putting them under their protection in the library and the University offered the financial sanction needed to conduct the research. I had a discussion with them emphasising that the *Gulhā* programme is an important programme and that it plays a vital role for the Iranian music if not the world, because this kind of music is facing danger of ruin due to the poor conditions of the tapes, and if not saved in near future they will be lost forever. Therefore, they must be preserved and kept in the treasury of the world music. They also agreed with my point of view and sanctioned the financial support required for the project, after that I traveled to Iran and met a lot of people including the admirers of the *Gulhā* programme, seeing many archives and meeting with Pīrnā's family. They gave me a lot of support and encouragement expressing great pleasure to know that an international institution such as the National British Library is interested to

save and preserve a programme such as the *Gulhā* introducing it to the world.

Shortly thereafter, and due to meeting different individuals, visiting numerous institutions slowly, but surely I began to gain access to the archive of the *Gulhā* programme. On this path most of all the lovers of this programme allowed me access to their own private archives. In line with this action and at the same time I made an effort to trace and find those individuals whom at that time used to work with Mr. Pīrnā then with Mr. Ibtihāj and Mr. Mu'āri and so on... also those who were the producers of the *Gulhā* programme to arrange an interview with them. "Their interviews are also available to the public", taking me some 2.5 years to complete, at present an entire copy of these interviews is registered at the British Library waiting to be explored. It is hoped that these records which I began collect since 1975 become available to the general public and the universities in a better and broader manner.

- **Would you be participating in the upcoming event on the 26th April in London which is being arranged by Toos foundation?**

My acquaintance with this foundation began with the start of a programme called "A hundred Years of Hits" (*Ṣad Sāl Tarānih*) with the effort of Miss. Jamileh Kharrazi and Mrs. Pazhuhish where I attended, and it was glorious and excellent. Afterwards, Miss. Kharrazi on behalf of the Toos foundation approached me and showed interest about the "Immortal flowers" (*Gulhā-yi Jāvīdān*) that they would like to have a programme about *Gulhā* as well, and I stressed out that should there be a need for my assistance, I would be more than happy to help. Thus, I have cooperated without hesitation with this foundation since, of course, the major efforts lie with Miss. Kharrazi.

- **In your opinion has *Gulhā* had any impact on the world music?**

Definitely, for two reasons: firstly, at the time of performing those programmes most of the masters of

music were present who were aging and eventually and reaching their retirement, for example, Mr. Şabā, Adīb Khānsārī, M. Maḥjūbī, Ḥ. Yāḥaqqī and others like them who have been the founders of the Iranian music and the request and invitations of Mr. Pīrnīā to record their works was the reason that today their works are registered in the history of music and is made available to all and the generations to come. The masters who participated in the initial programmes of *Gulhā* learnt what they knew entirely different than those of today and had their works not been registered in the programme they would have been forgotten forever. *Gulhā* was a bridge filling the gap between the pre-Net music and the post-Net music which is considered vital in the music transformation of Iran.

On the other hand at the time when the programme was played by the Iranian radio a large proportion of the nation was illiterate and had no access to television or news papers and books, but the only easy way for them to become culturally educated

was through the radio; therefore, *Gulhā* reached the majority of the people educating and introducing them to over 560 poets. One of the University Professors who is still alive and was present at a conference for the writers of the radio at that time, Dr Shāh Ḥusainī said: Professor Jalāl Humā'ī who was an astonishing man of literature of Iran, only knew one sentence of one of the great poets of Persia “Anvarī” let alone the rest of the public! So, this programme had a great impact on the people of Iran with such profound culture.

All the poems that were read in forms of declamations by ladies Rushanak, Pazhuhish, and Parnīān were known among people and memorized and now are blended with their culture.

- **One the interesting points that I notice in the *Gulhā* programme is that both Iranian and Western musical instruments were used, like, Violin, Flute, Clarinet and so on, yet at present they try to preserve the traditional ways in music and at that time there were no**

such boarders. Why do you think that is?

- Truthfully, I have no expertise in this field, but I believe that if you listen to the initial programmes of *Gulhā* you will see that they were only a small group of Iranian musicians of no more than five or six players. Mr. Şabā, Mr. Maḥjūbī, Mr. Tajvīdī, Mr. Varzanda, Mr. Tehrānī. Later gradually, whenever they wanted to fit hits in the programme; because, there was first *Gulhā-yi Jāvīdān* and it had no hits in it, short songs or lyrics practically began with *Gulhā-yi Rangārang* with the help of Mr. Ma'rūfī and Khāliqī hits and lyrics gradually found their way into the programme and this large orchestra was the result of Mr. Ma'rūfī and Khāliqī's efforts.

Later the same orchestra was expanded and western instruments such as the clarinet found their ways in. Let this be said too, that because, Iranians are innovative and originators they adopt very fast, and they turned these instruments into Persian instruments; thus, they were not referred to as foreign,

and if you pay attention to the essays and articles published by the council of musicians in the radio or the articles written by Mr. Khāliqī or Tajvīdī you can undoubtedly see that as they all were educated in the west their intent was to transform the Iranian music without harming its originality; in fact, the sole purpose was to preserve the thrill of their music without paling it.

- **Is your research going to be published soon as a book?**

- Of course, it will be like this, God willing. At present, the University published a CD together with a leaflet as a sample and we like this research to be made available for all Persian speaking people, in particular the lovers of the *Gulhā* programme. However, the size of this work is large, 1500 audio files, over 200 pages of poems, almost 1500 pages of notes and so on... Hence, if published, they will come to 10-15 volumes and to do so it requires time. However, we are

trying to turn this into a reality very soon.

- **We thank you for the efforts and hardship that you have borne in preserving one of the cultural phenomenon of Iran, at least it was you who stepped forward and accomplished this.**

- No I was not alone, this was God's will. It was made possible with the support of the lovers of *Gulhā* particularly, Mr. Pīrnā, their children and their friends and the lovers of music and the culture of Iran, they helped me a lot, I was more an audience rather than anything else.

Jane Lewisohn's further introduction into the collections of *Gulha Programme*

An interview with Jane Lewisohn a researcher in music was conducted on this page last week, which regrettably, some words were missed out. Here are the prints of those missing pieces, after apologies and thanks to Mrs. Lewisohn; we are now following the rest of the interview.

Q. Mrs. Lewisohn, please tell us which organization supported your research on *Gulha* programme?

In the year 2006, the British Library was active in retrieving the imperilled archives and a scholarship was offered to collect



and digitalize the entire archive of the radio programme *Gulha* which was originally founded by the blessed memory deceased Davud Pirnia and was being broadcast from the National Iranian Radio between 1957 to 1977.

This exquisite collection comprised some of the best pieces of music and literature of Iran. This collection contained the works of more than 560 new and classical poets in addition to the works of 240 artists.

In its entirety, over 1315 programmes out of the total of 1488 programmes, "*Gulha-yi Pirnia*" was collected and digitally copied.

Out of the entire programmes of *Gulha-yi Rangarang* approximately, 60 programmes were never recorded or broadcast. Furthermore, over 80 of the broadcast programmes *gulha-yi Javidan* were never recorded. Taking these facts into account the entire number of programmes must have been around 1344, out of which 1315 programmes were successfully collected. This collection which was initially produced by Davud Pirnia consists of "Immortal flowers", "Multi coloured flowers", "The desert flowers", "Green leaf" and "A single flower" together with 202 programmes of "Fresh flowers" produced by Hushang Ibtihaj, is currently being held on a data bank and was registered on 27 May 2008, at the British National Library. In addition to the latter a further copy of this data bank is held and registered at the Washington D.C. Congress Library and the enthusiasts can search for them under the National Sound Archive in the British Library Section. The entire archive of *Gulha* together with its research

and with the support of the Iran Heritage Foundation will be made available on the Internet. For further information please contact jane@golha.co.uk it is worthy of mention that I was involved as a research consultant in a recent event held on 27 April 2009 at the Logan Hall at the University of London and must emphasise that this event was due to the sole initiative and support of the Toos foundation under the management of Ms. Jamileh Kharrazi.