

“Jane” and *Gulhā*



During the *Gulhā* celebration event in London, which we wrote about last week we encountered an American researcher who had spent years of her life on the classical music of Iran and in particular the *Gulhā* programme gathering an invaluable collection. This individual is Jane Lewisohn and she has had a close professional relation with the Toos foundation and also acted as a speaker on the event. After all this, due to the rush of getting the news to the *Nimrūz* office her name was missed out. Now with apologies to Mrs. Lewisohn and as a gesture of good will hereby, we publish pieces of her discussions about her and her relation with the Iranian music.

To start with, Mrs. Lewisohn, how did you become familiar with Iran and its music?

My husband and I have been interested in Persian music since we were young.

We both studied literature of various nations as well as Iran's in art schools since the 70s. We studied Sa'di, Hafiz, and Mawlavi (Of course, in translation) and we realised that the Persian literature is something else. These poems are of a different kind. Therefore, we decided to travel to Iran, learn the language, and read this extraordinary literature in its own language. She adds on, those days were different than today now every library has its own special shelves of Rumi—references were limited. That was the reason we traveled to Iran and in the Pahlavi University of Shiraz began to learn the language.

Jean and her husband stayed in Iran for six years and after learning the language they moved to study the literature of Iran. She says: during my stay in Iran I also grew a custom to the *Gulhā* programme which we could listen to on the radio in those days.

The blend of a good poem with a matching music was the main reason that the programme of *Gulhā* was somewhat different than other programmes; hence, attracting my attention. The poems played in the programme were chosen from different poets of Persia, but somehow, there was a special coordination between them, that would increase the value of the programme. This harmony and coordination were the mere reason that Jane decided to conduct her research, an academic research, which was not done before. Not only her research met the approval of the University, also the National British Library decided to offer their financial backings to conclude the programme under the name of “imperilled archives”.

I am drunk, and intoxicated!

Jane adds on that through out her research she met the members of the Pīrnā family along with other artists and musicians who had close working relation with the *Gulhā* programme. Jane, does not think that the new poetry of Iran in any way compares with its classical poetry: These modern poems—those that have been composed from the mid twentieth-century onwards—are so much like the European poetry. The new poetry of Iran is like a reminder of our own poetry! And that does not have the same attraction and taste as the classical poetry of Persia.

Jane, expresses that the celebration event of the *Gulhā* programme that

was put together by the Toos foundation and Miss Jamileh Kharrazi, was a valuable work and she regrets that most of the artists of the *Gulhā* programme who were specially invited for such event for one reason or another did not attend. Jane remembers one of the great lyric writers of the *Gulhā* programme “Mr. Bizhan Tarraqī” who regrettably passed away recently: I met Mr. Tarraqī too, I interviewed him, and he was a great and kind man. He had sweet memories of Davūd Pīrnā, Parvīz Yāḥaqī and other artists...although he was ill (about two years ago), yet he was very hospitable.

He accepted us and with patience and kindness answered all my

questions and satisfied my curiosity.

We know that the famous lyric of “I am drunk! O Saqi, hold my hand” was composed by Tarraqī and Gulpāigānī had sung that in his own special way, they were all in a banquette and all warm headed! Mr. Tarraqī attempts to get up a few times but he does not succeed eventually, he calls Gulpāigānī saying: I am drunk and intoxicated! Hold my hand” (*Mast-i mastam dastam begir*) this sentence was recorded on their minds and soon would find its own music.