



A brief look into the history of a hundred years of hits in Iran

A) Before Sheyda

Like many other kinds of art, there are no precise dates recorded for the appearance of short lyrics, and as who composed the first hit. The history of short lyric composition goes back as far as the Sassanid era and court composers such as Bārbud, who had been a musician and a string player at the court of Khusraw Parviz. He played and sang his poems with string instruments such as “Barbat”. He has been frequently named in the Persian literature texts.

Among the Arabic literature, and after the influence of Islam, the prosody and meters of the poetry became popular amongst the Persians. There have been scattered references to the history of short lyrics since, and up until the Qajar period. Like, *Harara Gu’ī* which in literary terms means the poems composed and sung by the ordinary people and amateurs. In the old texts, the hits were referred to as two couplets or Quatrains.

In any case, what has today survived of these facts, and has reached us, are the formal

literature and the classical formats. Those poems were sung alongside with music. However, the ones that have been outside these formats have not survived. Only those couplets and quatrains composed by BabaTahir can be a source of reference at this stage.

B) The first period (1872-1941)

What we know of the short lyrics today is owed to the blessed memory Sheyda. He, without a doubt is the contemporary founder of short lyric composition. He began

composing lyrics with special delicacy and care giving his poems the meaning of literature. The oldest and the most famous lyrics we have today were composed by Sheyda, lyrics such as, *Emshab Shab-i Mahtabe*, *But-i Chin*, *Dush Dush*, *Aqrab-i Zulf-i Kajat*, *Shab-i Vasl*, *Selsele-yi Mu-yi Dust*, *dar Fekr-i Tu Budam*, and so on...

Before Sheyda, lyrics had no literary contexts, being sung by illiterate singers and tramps.

Aref Qazvini, says about Sheyda: Sheyda made some significant changes to the lyrics,



most of his works were ravishing, he played instruments and mostly composed at midnights in his solitude. Aref Qazvini,

became quite popular due to his patriotic songs and was welcomed by the majority of public. There have been 29 lyrics left behind by Aref and the most popular ones are as follows: *Aman Aman*, *Eftekhar-i Afaq*, *Az Khun-i javanan-i Vatan* *Laleh Damideh*, *Nang-i An Khaneh Ke Mehman ze dar-i Khan Beravad*, *Az Kaf Raha Shud Qarar-i Del*, *Che Shurha*, *Gerye Kun*, *Bahar-i Delkash*, and so on...The other lyric writers of the period were Bahar and Amir

Jahed. Amir was a talented musician and most of his poems were sung by *Qamar al-Muluk Vaziri*. Furthermore, Malik al-Shu'ara was also one of the best lyric writers of his time. He has also left some very beautiful poems behind such as, *Murgh-i Sahar*, *Ze Man Negaram*. Most of these songs were recorded in India, Germany, and Lebanon.

C) The second period

With the commissioning of the radio in 1941 and after the social, political, cultural changes in Iran, music and lyric writing find another way of flourishing. During this period, radio was the most efficient medium and was available to almost everyone. Hence, played an important role to promote and preserve the literature, culture, and the classical music of Iran.

In 1957, with the efforts of Davud Pirnia a radio program titled, the immortal flowers were introduced. These programs were aired regularly until 1979. It was devoted to the Iranian Classical Music. The most important musical works of classical significance were introduced via this program. Those classical music were very popular during their times and they still are.

From 1946, the art of cinema was formed in a professional fashion. It began during the 40s and what was later called movies was formed during that period. One of the bestselling movies during the 40s was a film made by Dr. Kushan titled: "*Tufan-i Zendegi*" the film is based on a love life of a member of the Symphonic Orchestra of Iran. The lyrics, played in this film were composed by Khaliqi, and the singer was Banan. The mixture of music with the movie became an inseparable element ever since.

In the beginning the music and lyrics were sung by professional singers and the music were composed by masters. However, later through the decades this changed and the professional and original singing was replaced by something less elegant and literal. Unfortunately, the media also promoted this kind of music thus it found its way into the music industry of Iran, and stayed ever since. This situation became so serious that eventually; whenever a movie was made the main actor would somehow find his way into the clubs and played a part in either singing or listening to such music.

D) The third period (1972-1979)

In line with the current of the Iranian cinema industry in the late 40s, a new change took place in the lyric writing in Iran, which was later called "New Lyric Writing". Many consider the famous lyric of "Two Fish" by

Shayar Qanbari which was sung by Googoosh and the music composed by Babak Afshar the start of this novelty.

This lyric was written in the winter of 1971 and was produced in spring 1972. It became very liked and popular. Others soon followed suit and this kind of hits became popular attracting warm receptions. The New Lyric Writing became a new fashion and thus separated itself from the chain of classical music, finding its way into the hearts of the nation. This kind of music also penetrated the cinema industry and stayed there since, some very memorable songs and movies of that nature are left behind.

E) The fourth period (1979-today)

In fact, this period can be referred to as continues current of the third period. What can be seen as the true reason behind such continuity are the political, social, economic,

and cultural changes of the country. The important events of this period are listed below:

- The appearance of the *Gulhā* programs, in which the difference between lyric writing, singing, and the type of melody composition can be clearly noticed. The most significant period for the two different groups in music can be seen during 1977-1984.
- The Sheyda group under the leadership of M. Lutfi in 1976.
- The Aref group under the leadership of H. Alizadeh 1977.
- During 1982-1998, the pop music and in general lyric writing ceased in Iran. During this period what was imposed on the nation as Iranian music was the kind government chose and they were accompanied with pictures of nature, such as the forest, rivers

and so on...of course this kind of music did not meet the approval of the public and was discontinued.

After the end of 1972, considering the political and cultural atmosphere of the country, most of the musical activists migrated to other countries, and those who stayed in the hope of improvement eventually gave in and surrounded to exile. Of course, some stayed behind and continued to improve on their previous works.

The mass of the Iranian community in L.A. and their needs for the Iranian music was the cause for the singers to continue their line of work in exile. However, the quality of their works was never the same as before. The end of the 80s was the beginning of a new era for some modern singers based in L.A. who were born there and could hardly speak their native language, this however, became

somewhat popular amongst those generations and by the time the master of classical music came to realise the extent of the damage done it was too late.

Of course, there are many issues in connections with Los Angeles music and their methods of composition and their impact on the traditional music of Iran.

However, there is neither time nor the need for such assessment at this stage.