



(LAS 5259)

AFGHANISTAN MUSIC FROM KABUL

Recorded by Verna Gillis
From the Lyrichord Archive Series

Afghanistan, whose previous name was Ariyana, was so named about a century and a half ago by King Ahmad Shah. Afghanistan shares borders with China, India, Pakistan, Iran and Asiatic Russia. In ancient times these borders were crossed many times by the routes of commerce and conquest. Now Afghanistan is about to become the air route link between the western world and China. Thus Afghanistan is an important link in the chain of cultures binding Europe and Asia together. Musically, the link can be heard by listening to pieces from various regions of Afghanistan. The western and northern music is dominated by Near Eastern or Central Asian styles, while Eastern Afghanmusic is heavily Hindu oriented. The musical instruments also show this interlocking of cultures.

Afghan instruments are basically simple, made up mainly of strings and drums. The string instruments most frequently used are the tanbur, a plucked, fretted lute with drone strings, the rebab, with three pairs of melody strings and ten sympathetic strings, the sarinda, a bowed, three stringed lute, and the delruba, similar in shape to the Indian sitar but smaller and bowed.

The drums of Afghanistan can be divided into two groups: single membrane instruments of Persian origin with a goblet shaped body called zerbaghali, and double membrane instruments of Indian origin such as the tabla, or the two headed dhol which is an Afghan originated instrument. There is also a vertical flute with six finger holes called the tula and the Afghan dotar, a three stringed lute which is plucked.

Afghanistan, with a total population of between 16 and 17 million, has two official languages: Dari, from Old Persian, and Pashtu, which is an Afghan language. Around 8 to 9 million inhabitants speak Pashtu and all of the songs on this record are in the Pashtu language from the province of Nangahar, approximately 75 miles southeast of Kabul. The capital of Nangahar is Jalalabad.

THE TRACKS

Track 1 - 4:01 Delruba and Zerbaghali played by Gholam Nabi and Malang.

Track 2 - 6:01 Rebab and Dhol played by Ustad Mohammad Omar and Ghulalahm

Track 3 - 2:14 Tula (flute) and Zerbaghali played by Ghulam Haidar and Malang

Track 4 - 3:10 Tanbur and Zerbaghali played by Abdul Majid and Malang

Track 5 - 3:26 Deruba and Tabla played by Ustad Gholam Nabi and Mohammad Asef.

This song is a national melody called “Anar Anar” which refers to the pomegranate fruit that comes from Khandahar. The implication is actually to the roundness of the fruit and the similarity to the breasts of the beautiful young women from that region.

Track 6 - 3:16 Sarinda and Dhol played by Gholam Hassan and Faiyaz Mohammad

Track 7 - 5:10 Typical Love Song sung in Pashtu by Kamar Gul Zalhail from Nangahar.

Musicians: Harmonium - Mohammad Zakhail; Tabla - Popal; Clarinet – Master Ahmad Baksh (from Pakistan).

“My love for you is so precious,
don't take it so for granted.
I am so excited by my love for you
that from far away I imagine I hear your footsteps.

Wherever you go
I can feel your presence.
I am waiting for you.
Your love is like a flame that surrounds me
And I can't escape or I would burn myself.”

Track 8 - 5:03 Jalalabad Wedding Song sung in Pashtu by Kamar Gul Zakhail.
Musicians: harmonium - Mohammad Zakhail; rebab (tuned Do-Fa-La-Do) -
Ustad Mohammad Omar; tabla - Ghazi; tanbur (tuned Do-Mi-Sol-Do) - Sarwar.
Outside of Kabul, in the provinces, it is very difficult for a young man or
young woman to get away alone, without a chaperone, to meet with each
other. One of the many schemes used to counteract this custom, slow to
die in Afghanistan, is that both agree to fetch water from the well or spring
at the same time and thus steal a few minutes in relative privacy. This
song is about a young woman who is waiting for her boyfriend who had
promised to come to meet her but he is not there. She laments this fact as
she fills up her pot with water and carries it away on her head.

Track 9 - 2:07 Dotar and Zerbaghali - played by Kadim and Malang

Track 10 - 2:48 Dhol solo with Harmonium

Track 11 - 3:20 Lovesong from Nangahar sung in Pashtu by Mr. Nahmattullah
Musicians: harmonium - Mohammad Zakhail; rebab – Ustad Mohammad Omar;
tabla - Ghazi.

This is in the special Pashtu rhythm of 4/4.
“Oh my dear, I love your charming dark eyes,
I hope you have not forgotten me.
Come here so I can see you.
Why are you so shy?”*

*The man sees his girlfriend working in the fields and although she has
agreed to meet with him she now appears afraid to do so.

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