



(LYRCD 7235)

PERSIAN LOVE SONGS AND MYSTIC CHANTS SUNG BY SHUSHA

Flute

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Zarb Behboudi

Notes by Maurice Rosenbaum

When I first heard Shusha sing, some three years ago, in a recital of French and English songs, I wrote that she had “the dark beauty of Persia and a voice to match”. Curiously enough, my most enduring impression was of the songs she might have sung: songs in which the warmth, flexibility, wine-texture and precision of her voice might have found the language and the vocal tradition most perfectly suited to her range. Now, drawing inspiration from the roots of her being, she devotes her first LP entirely to Persian songs, thus opening up for us a corner of the Eastern world of which most of us know little. Her song reflects a folk art in the truest sense, an art which sprang from and is still within reach of the simplest people, the distillation of millennia of shared visions. These songs of love, separation, betrothal, sexual symbolism and gnomic wisdom are impeccably sung, some with flute or finger-drum accompaniment, some unaccompanied. This, to me, is one of the joys of listening to the record: to follow the metrical intricacy and melodic subtlety of the songs, the extraordinarily refined melismatic arabesques, the sudden dark rhythms and the sinuous calligraphy of the sound. Note, took the haunting Oriental dry notes so cleanly cut as to continue of their own volition to infinity: many singers can produce a cool, perfect tone, but few can end it, as Shusha does here, leaving the sound suspended in its own silence . . .

1 TOFANG-E-NOQREH (The Silver Gun)
from Shiraz, southern Persia. (2:09)

*They say a man's best friend is his horse.
But I say it's his gun, for what can a horseman do without a gun?
I sold my silver-barrelled gun and bought a brocade gown for my beloved:
she sent it back, refused it, now I have no gun and no love!*

2. GOLE-GANDUM (The Wheat-Flower)
A harvest song, sung whenever wheat is grown all over Persia. (2:09)

*The wheat is in flower, like the girls who sowed it, dancing this way and that.
The moon is shining in the sky, my crop is abundant, my love is beside me.
What more can a mortal want?*

3. VARUN-VARUNEH (The Rain)
A Guilaki song from Guilan, northern Persia. (2:05)

*Her eyes have stung me to death, like a scorpion,
her hair, like a hunter, has captured me;
but she doesn't return my love.
The rain is falling and I am soaked through.
The love of that young girl has made me lose my reason and my religion.*

4. SETAREH-ASEMUN (The Stars in Heaven)
From Shiraz, southern Persia. (1:15)

*The stars in heaven are a replica of this earth
I am the ring and my beloved the turquoise therein
Come, let's play, for life is short, lasts a couple of days
From the day your mother tied you into the cradle,
God tied us, you and I, together.*

5. AY SAR KOTAL (On Top of the Hill)
From Shiraz, southern Persia. (2:29)

*He was a flower, scattering flowers as he walked past
leaving me behind, dazed and bewildered;
he found someone else and left me.*

*Come back! Let's go to the top of the hill together
or to the shrine of Shah Cherath, make a vow
and whoever breaks it will be punished.
I am drunk with live, cut through as by a blade.*

6. DASMALE-HARIR (The Silken Handkerchief)
From Fars, southern Persia. (2:23)

THE GIRL:

Don't touch my handkerchief, it is silken, delicate.

THE BOY:

Your love has driven me mad, made me leave home and go to the capital, Teheran.

THE GIRL:

Tell me, what is your name?

What district do you come from? Who do you know?

THE BOY:

I come from your part of the world, and I know only you.

7. PACHE LEYLI (Darling Leyli)
From Fars, southern Persia. (2:04)

My beautiful Leyli, I have come to take you away; put a necklace of flowers round your neck - tonight you will be beside me. Alas! you have not always appreciated by love, and I may go away, one day.

8. YAR BARDANEH BAMO
I Have Come to Ravish My Betrothed)
A love song. (1:22)

Tonight I am coming to take away my betrothed.
Go and shout it in the streets, so that everyone knows.
I will come with a hundred horsemen; no one can stand in my way.
Heads will fall, swords will be crossed, but she will be mine!

9. LOR BACHE (The Love Youth)
From the Backtiari tribe, southern Persia. (1:38)

*Everything good belongs to the Lors.
The Love youths have such beauty, speak such lovely language,
that not only I, but every star in heaven is in love with my handsome young Love!*

10. LAY-LAY (Lullaby)
From Gorgan, north-east Persia. (2:07)

*Sleep, my flower, my beautiful tulip;
the leopard moans in the mountains; perhaps she is in love with her cousin too?
Sleep, my lovely flower of hazelnut; let your mother work.
My poppy-flower, your father has gone away: God be with him.*

11. DOKHTAR BOYER AHMADI (The Girl from the Boner Ahmadi Tribe)
From southern Persia. (1:52)

*I don't know your name, just that you are the girl from the Boyer Ahmadi tribe.
Come to my house - it will be yours if you want it. The lilac is in flower but my flower
hasn't arrived!
You are a wild bird, flown far away. Don't break my heart, my beloved, my pretty flower
of love.*

12. KUTAH-QAMAT (My Beloved is Short)
From Fars, southern Persia. (2:20)

*You are short, my beloved –
perhaps because you are my life and my life is going to be short.*

*I have come a long way, searching for you, drawn by the beauty of your face, the beauty-
spot on your lip.*

*Now they say you are offering it for sale. How much are you asking? Because I am
bidding!*

*I would like to sit by you and kiss you all the time,
instead of nourishment, day and night,
and just look at you walk, speak, smile, dance . . .*

13. NARGUILEH (The Water-Pipe)
Popular quatrains; the first refers to the smoker's hubble-bubble pipe. (1:39)

*I was a tree in the forest; they cut me down
They cut me down to make a water-pipe from me
So that fire burns always in my head
I want you only, other flowers there are a-plenty
I want the rose, thorns there are a-plenty
I want my flower, to sit by its shadow
Otherwise the shadow of a wall would do.*

14. TO BIO (You Must Come to Me)
From the Mamassani tribe, Fars, southern Persia. (1:32)

*Come back to me, my beloved, you are the only one who can cure my suffering. Deprived
of your presence, I am dying of grief! You are so far away and take so long to come back,
that I shall die without seeing you!*

15. DAREYNE-JAN (Darling Dareyne)
From Mazenderan, Caspian region. (2:40)

*Why have you made me suffer so much that I regret my love for you?
I shan't come to you any more, but I shall repeat your name. I leave now for a faraway
land and bid you farewell.
If you want me to come back, don't cry for me, just pray for me day and night.*

16. MASNAVI (Masnavi is a traditional mystic chant from the Book of Rumi)
A traveller saw Majnun sitting all alone in the middle of the desert. (3:51)

Using a flat surface of sand as a sheet of paper and his fingers as a pen, he was writing
the name of his beloved Leyli over and over again.
The traveller said:

*O mad Majnun! what are you doing?
If writing a letter, who is to receive it? Majnun replied:
I practice the name of Leyli - since I cannot reach her in real union,
I make love with her name.*

CREDITS

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