

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

PERSISTANCE DU TALFIQ, AMBIGUÏTÉ DU TALFIQI : ÉTUDE DE LA POPULARITÉ
D'UNE NOUVELLE CATÉGORIE DE MUSIQUE EN IRAN APRÈS LES ANNÉES 1990

THÈSE

PRÉSENTÉE

COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE

DU DOCTORAT EN COMMUNICATION

PAR

SIAVASH ROKNI

OCTOBRE 2024

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

PERSISTENCE OF TALFIQ, AMBIGUITY OF TALFIQ: A STUDY OF THE RISE IN
POPULARITY OF A NEW CATEGORY OF MUSIC IN POST-1990'S IRAN

DISSERTATION

PRESENTED

AS PARTIAL REQUIREMENT

FOR DOCTRATE IN COMMUNICATION

PAR

SIAVASH ROKNI

OCTOBER 2024

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL
Service des bibliothèques

Avertissement

La diffusion de cette thèse se fait dans le respect des droits de son auteur, qui a signé le formulaire *Autorisation de reproduire et de diffuser un travail de recherche de cycles supérieurs* (SDU-522 – Rév.12-2023). Cette autorisation stipule que «conformément à l'article 11 du Règlement no 8 des études de cycles supérieurs, [l'auteur] concède à l'Université du Québec à Montréal une licence non exclusive d'utilisation et de publication de la totalité ou d'une partie importante de [son] travail de recherche pour des fins pédagogiques et non commerciales. Plus précisément, [l'auteur] autorise l'Université du Québec à Montréal à reproduire, diffuser, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de [son] travail de recherche à des fins non commerciales sur quelque support que ce soit, y compris l'Internet. Cette licence et cette autorisation n'entraînent pas une renonciation de [la] part [de l'auteur] à [ses] droits moraux ni à [ses] droits de propriété intellectuelle. Sauf entente contraire, [l'auteur] conserve la liberté de diffuser et de commercialiser ou non ce travail dont [il] possède un exemplaire.»

REMERCIEMENTS

La rédaction d'une thèse est comme un marathon car elle demande de la persévérance et sans une communauté qui croit en toi et qui t'encourage, sa réalisation n'est pas possible. Cette recherche est le fruit de presque sept années de travail au cours desquelles j'ai eu le privilège d'être entouré par une communauté qui m'a soutenu et encouragé dans les meilleurs moments autant que dans les moments de doute. Je tiens maintenant à remercier ceux et celles qui ont été là tout au long de ce parcours.

Mes remerciements les plus chaleureux vont à mon directeur de la thèse, Oumar Kane, pour sa patience, son précieux encadrement et ses conseils avisés tout au long de ce parcours académique. Je suis également reconnaissant envers les membres du jury, Babak Rahimi, Nahid Siamdoust, Martin Lussier et Will Straw, pour leur expertise et leurs évaluations constructives. Mes remerciements et mon affection vont à ma famille, mes parents et ma sœur Sara, pour leur soutien constant et leur encouragement.

J'aimerais remercier plusieurs membres du milieu universitaire avec qui j'ai eu des échanges enrichissants notamment Anouk Bélanger, Éric George, Julien Rueff, Houchang Chehabi, Roham Alvandi et Laudan Nooshin. Également, je souhaite exprimer ma reconnaissance envers les collègues qui ont enrichi ma vie universitaire à l'UQAM : Bachir, Myriam, Hélène, Justine, Val, Sam, Amandine, Anne-Sophie, Karelle, Camille, Cynthia, Edouard, Lena, Lilian, Martin, Nina, Patrick, Philippe-Antoine, Radhanta, Simon, Ugo, William et la Sophie jann (quelle avantooor).

Je voudrais également exprimer ma gratitude à tous ceux qui ont été là pour moi dans les moments les meilleurs et les pires : Lil, Jenn, Jasprit, Shannon, Jordi, Chris, Amanda, Jana, Daniel, Laurence, Magali, Majid, Elen, et bien d'autres.

Finalement, il convient de souligner l'appui de deux institutions sans qui cette thèse n'aurait pas vu le jour. Je remercie le Fonds de recherche du Québec en société et culture, qui m'a permis de financer trois années de cette recherche. Je remercie également le Syndicat des professeures et professeurs enseignants de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (SPPEUQAM) pour son soutien financier lors de la dernière année de rédaction de cette thèse.

سیاوش

DÉDICACE

À tous et toutes le musicien.ne.s Iranien.ne.s

À femme, vie, liberté

TABLE OF CONTENT

REMERCIEMENTS.....	iii
DÉDICACE	v
LISTE DES ABRÉVIATIONS, DES SIGLES ET DES ACRONYMES	x
RÉSUMÉ	xi
ABSTRACT	xiii
INTRODUCTION	15
CHAPTER 1 BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSIC AND POLITICS IN IRAN	24
1.1 Music and the Islamic golden age	25
1.2 The Safavid period	25
1.3 The Qajar Period (1789-1925).....	26
1.4 The Pahlavi period (1925-1979).....	29
1.4.1 Music during Reza Shah Pahlavi.....	30
1.4.2 Music during Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.....	32
1.4.3 Music and the 1979 revolution	34
1.5 Conclusion.....	36
CHAPTER 2 MUSIC AND CULTURAL POLITICS AFTER 1979 REVOLUTION	39
2.1 Music in Islam	41
2.2 Organizations that managed music in Iran after the revolution	48
2.2.1 The Cultural Revolution Council (CRC).....	48
2.2.2 The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance	49
2.2.3 The Organization for the Mobilization of the Oppressed	50
2.3 Music in Iran after Khomeini's death	51
2.3.1 Rafsanjani, reconstruction, and music	51
2.3.2 Khatami- the rejuvenation of music and the cultural thaw	54
2.3.3 Ahmadinejad, Rohani- Once listened, you can't un-listen it!	58
2.4 Conclusion: discipline, cultural policy, and censorship in Iran	62
CHAPTER 3 PROBLEMATISING CULTURE, MUSIC AND TALFIQI.....	64
3.1 Iranian Culture and the debates surrounding tradition and modernity	64
3.1.1 Authenticity: Al-Ahmad and Shariati, Culture and Islamic Ideology.....	64
3.1.2 Soroush and the superiority of Islamic Culture	65
3.1.3 Shayegan and the clash between tradition and modernity	67
3.2 The literature on music in post revolution Iran.....	68

3.3	Conclusion and central question of the thesis.....	70
CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK		73
4.1	Locating <i>Talfigi</i> as a cultural practice.....	73
4.1.1	Cultural studies and the importance of understanding culture.....	73
4.1.2	Culture as everyday practice	76
4.1.3	Bourdieu and the question of judgement and taste	77
4.1.3.1	The idea of field	77
4.1.3.2	Habitus and the way practices become part of the ordinary life.....	78
4.1.3.3	Capital and its different forms.....	79
4.2	Culture of resistance, defiance, and persistence	81
4.3	<i>Talfigi</i> as a category and a constructed discourse	82
4.4	Problematizing <i>Talfigi</i> as a category	84
4.5	Conclusion.....	89
CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY		91
5.1	Historic formation of <i>Talfigi</i> as a music category	91
5.2	The way <i>Talfigi</i> music is discussed in the Iranian media.	93
5.2.1	Overview of the themes.....	97
CHAPTER 6 HISTORICAL ROOTS OF <i>TALFIQI</i>		101
6.1	Roots of <i>talfig</i> in Iran.....	101
6.2	<i>Talfig</i> and the radio.....	103
6.3	From National to Popular	104
6.4	The 1979 revolution and the return to authenticity.....	107
6.5	From <i>talfig</i> to <i>Talfigi</i>	109
6.6	Late 1990's, early 2000's and the rise of unofficial music	112
6.7	Namjoo and <i>Talfigi</i>	113
6.8	Post-Namjoo and the rise of <i>Talfigi</i> as a popular form of music	115
6.9	Conclusion.....	118
CHAPTER 7 THE WAYS IRANIAN MEDIA DISCUSS <i>TALFIQI</i>		119
7.1	Definition of <i>Talfigi</i>	119
7.1.1	Generic definition of <i>Talfigi</i>	119
7.1.1.1	Defining <i>Talfigi</i> as Fusion	119
7.1.1.2	Historic roots of <i>Talfigi</i>	122
7.1.2	<i>Talfigi</i> as a category	124
7.1.2.1	<i>Talfigi</i> is a practice, not a category.....	124
7.1.2.2	<i>Talfigi</i> as a category is wrong.....	126
7.1.2.3	<i>Talfigi</i> is miscategorised.....	128

7.1.2.3.1	Distancing from <i>Talfigi</i> as a category	128
7.1.2.3.2	Incoherence in aesthetic similarities.....	132
7.1.2.4	<i>Talfigi</i> must be recategorised.....	135
7.1.3	<i>Talfigi</i> as an ambiguous terminology	138
7.1.3.1	<i>Talfigi</i> has no clear definition.....	138
7.1.3.2	<i>Talfigi</i> as a new black box.....	140
7.2	Ways of doing <i>Talfigi</i>	143
7.2.1	Respecting the boundaries of <i>Talfigi</i>	143
7.2.1.1	Correct way of doing <i>Talfigi</i>	143
7.2.1.2	<i>Talfigi</i> must be practice with proper knowledge	146
7.2.2	Innovation and challenging boundaries in <i>talfigi</i>	147
7.2.2.1	Relationship to innovation and experimentation	148
7.2.2.2	Relationship to tradition	152
7.3	<i>Talfigi</i> as a music scene	155
7.3.1	<i>Talfigi</i> as a local trend	155
7.3.1.1	Connecting to younger audience	155
7.3.1.2	Approaching new audience with <i>talfigi</i>	158
7.3.2	<i>Talfigi</i> and trends towards globalisation.....	159
7.3.2.1	Need for being part of a global trend.....	159
7.3.3	Need for becoming official.....	162
7.3.4	An alternative to pop music.....	163
7.4	Miscellaneous findings	164
7.5	Conclusion.....	167
CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION.....		169
8.1	Discursive development from <i>talfigi</i> to <i>Talfigi</i>	169
8.1.1	Modernising tradition and the practice of <i>talfigi</i> before the 1979 revolution	170
8.1.2	The 1979 revolution and the return to tradition.....	173
8.1.3	The birth and evolution of <i>Talfigi</i>	176
8.1.4	Unofficial music scene, <i>Talfigi</i> , and the search for identity	180
8.1.5	Commercialisation of <i>Talfigi</i>	182
8.2	<i>Talfigi</i> and <i>talfigi</i> in the Iranian media	183
8.2.1	The definition of <i>Talfigi</i> and how it is understood	183
8.2.2	The practice of <i>talfigi</i>	185
8.2.3	<i>Talfigi</i> as a music scene.....	187
8.2.4	Miscellaneous.....	189
8.3	Conclusion.....	190
CHAPTER 9 AMBIGUITY AND TALFIQI		195
9.1	Towards a theory of ambiguity.....	197
9.1.1	Equivocal Character of ambiguity.....	197
9.1.2	Paralysing Character of ambiguity	199
9.1.3	Cryptic character of ambiguity	201

9.1.4 Conclusion 206

GENERAL CONCLUSION 208

ANNEXE A CORPUS FOR CHAPTER 6..... 217

ANNEXE B CORPUS FOR CHAPTER 7 219

REFERENCES 225

LISTE DES ABRÉVIATIONS, DES SIGLES ET DES ACRONYMES

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CPDM: Center for Preservation and Dissemination of Music

CRC: Cultural Revolution Council

ERSHAD: The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance

IRGC: Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps

RSAF: The Revolutionary Songs and Anthems Festival

HCCR: Higher Council of the Cultural Revolution

IRIB: Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting

RÉSUMÉ

Après la révolution de 1979 en Iran, le nouveau gouvernement a commencé à mettre en œuvre différentes mesures de disciplinement culturel afin de façonner une nouvelle société basée sur l'interprétation de l'islam chiite. Il s'en est suivi une quasi-interdiction non seulement de l'écoute de la musique, mais également de la vente d'instruments et de CDs ainsi qu'une interdiction totale des performances publiques. Après la guerre Iran-Iraq (1980-1988), Khomeini a publié une fatwa religieuse ambiguë autorisant la vente d'instruments de musique dans le pays à condition qu'ils soient utilisés conformément à la loi islamique (la charia). Avec l'élection de Mohammad Khatami en 1997 et les politiques de dégel culturel qui ont suivi, davantage de genres musicaux qui n'étaient pas autorisés dans les années 1980, tels que la musique pop, ont commencé à être acceptés. Cependant, d'autres musiciens ont eu des difficultés à faire accepter leur musique par des institutions telles que l'ERSHAD, chargées de réguler la culture en Iran. Plusieurs de ces musiciens ont commencé à utiliser le terme *Talfiqi* (fusion) pour décrire leur musique afin de faciliter le processus d'obtention d'autorisations pour enregistrer et se produire.

Cette thèse examine l'essor de la musique *Talfiqi* (fusion) en Iran au milieu des années 1990 et montre comment l'ambiguïté de cette catégorie musicale (*Talfiqi*) et la pratique musicale de la fusion/hybridation (*talfiq*) ont été utilisées comme un outil créatif permettant de négocier avec les limites imposées par le régime iranien en ce qui concerne les différents types de musique autorisés dans le pays. La thèse, qui se situe dans le domaine des études culturelles, soutient que le *Talfiqi* est une pratique culturelle de négociation progressive et qui cherche à modifier la perception du gouvernement iranien en ce qui concerne la musique autorisée. Dans les premiers chapitres, la thèse utilise une analyse historique pour retracer comment la pratique du *talfiq* dans l'histoire moderne de l'Iran a été utilisée pour négocier la division traditionnelle entre tradition et modernité en Iran et en proposant de nouvelles façons d'aborder la musique et de construire l'identité. Avec la méthode d'analyse de contenu mobilisée dans les chapitres suivants, la thèse montre comment les musiciens, les chercheurs en musique et les journalistes en Iran perçoivent et parlent du *Talfiqi* et le situent dans le panorama musical iranien aujourd'hui. Cette thèse soutient que l'utilisation de l'ambiguïté en tant que tactique de négociation culturelle est partie intégrante de l'habitus de la négociation culturelle en Iran. Elle montre également que le *talfiq* est utilisé comme une tactique de persistance

par les artistes iraniens qui utilisent l'ambiguïté en réponse à la politique culturelle ambiguë de l'industrie musicale et à la nécessité de résister à la dichotomie tradition/modernité. La persistance, et non la résistance, permet de voir que les musiciens iraniens ne cherchent pas nécessairement à résister au système, puisqu'il est impossible de localiser l'intention de résister. Ils se font plutôt une place dans le système en articulant de nouveaux sons qui repoussent les limites des catégories sonores acceptées dans le pays.

Mots clés : Iran, Talfiqi, musique fusion, études culturelles, culture populaire iranienne, hybridité, ambiguïté, persistance.

ABSTRACT

After the 1979 revolution in Iran, the new government began to implement different cultural disciplination so to shape a new society based on the interpretation of Shia' Islam. What followed was an almost complete ban on not only music listening, but also on the sales of instruments, CDs, and public performances. After the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Khomeini released an ambiguous religious decree that allowed the sales of musical instruments in the country so long as they were used in accordance with the *Shari'a* law. With the election of Mohammad Khatami in 1997 and the cultural thaw policies that followed, more genres of music that were not permitted in the 1980's, such as pop music, began to be accepted. However, other musicians had difficulties having their music accepted by institutions like ERSHAD that police culture in Iran. Many of these musicians began using the term *Talfiqi* (fusion) to describe their music to facilitate the process of gaining permission to record and perform.

This thesis looks at the rise of *Talfiqi* (fusion) music in Iran in the mid-1990's and shows how the ambiguity in both this music category (*Talfiqi*) and the practice of fusing/hybridizing (*talfiq*) has been used as a creative tool that negotiates with the limits set by the Iranian regime on permissibility of different kinds of music in the country. The thesis positions itself within the field of cultural studies and argues that *Talfiqi* is a cultural practice that has been slowly negotiating with and changing the perception of the Iranian government with regards to accepted music. In the first chapters, the thesis uses historical analysis to trace how the practice of *talfiq* in modern history of Iran has been used to come to terms with the traditional division between tradition and modernity in Iran. It then shows how *Talfiqi* came at a precise moment with the vision of blurring this division by embracing both tradition and modernity and proposing new ways of approaching music and constructing identity. Through the usage of content analysis in the following chapters, the thesis shows how musicians, music scholars, and journalists perceive and talk about *Talfiqi* and locate it in the Iranian music panorama today. This thesis argues that the usage of ambiguity as a cultural negotiation tactic is part of the habitus of cultural negotiation in Iran. It also argues that *talfiq* is used as a tactic of persistence by Iranian artists that applies ambiguity to respond to the ambiguous cultural politics of the music industry and the need to contend with the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity. Persistence, not resistance, allows to argue that Iranian musicians are not

necessarily working to resist the system since one cannot locate the intention to resist. Instead, they are making room for themselves in the system by articulating new sounds that push the limits of the accepted sonic categories of the country.

Keywords: Iran, Talfiqi, fusion music, cultural studies, Iranian popular culture, hybridity, ambiguity, persistence.

INTRODUCTION

I was introduced to music at the age of seven, when my parents enrolled my sister and I into a music class at a makeshift music school in an old rundown house in Tehran. This may seem like an insignificant act for many who read this thesis. However, there is much politics in this first sentence. As a seven-year-old, I was completely unaware of its potential consequence, as we discreetly would enter the music school and were told not to tell our friends about what we did. Yet, the politics in the act of sending one's child to music school in the 1990s was in the fact that music was almost completely banned in 1979 when the then supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, compared music to opium in a sermon addressing the employees of radio in the country. From 1979 until 1989, most forms of music were banned from the public. These included sales of music instruments and equipment, most public concerts, the act of listening to music in public, and teaching music. The eight-year war from 1980-1988 did not help music and musicians in the country, as music was to be put on pause during the time of the mourning of the death of hundreds of thousands of people (soldiers and civilians). In 1989, Khomeini issued a *fatwa*¹ authorising the purchase of musical instruments stating that "there are no objections to the purchase and sale of instruments serving a licit purpose" (Youssefzade, 2013, p.39). The history of music after the 1979 revolution in Iran changed after this statement, as it was an ambiguous statement that was enough to be interpreted as a decree to allow some forms of music in public. In other words, an ambiguous statement that did not mention music itself was the reason why I was able to go to a makeshift music school to hammer on a few xylophones and a blow into a recorder in 1990, a few months after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini.

¹ A religious decree.

Albeit shy at the beginning, I continued going to music classes weekly. A year later, when the first cassette and CD stores began to pop up, I passed by a shop blasting Peruvian music in my neighbourhood of Ekbatan. I bought my first cassette then and there and went home and listened to it over and over, soon imitating the music on a Yamaha soprano recorder that my parents bought me as part of following the Orff method². I played and rewound that cassette so much that it jammed multiple times in the tiny single cassette radio player that my dad used to listen to the BBC radio, tuning into the AM waves at night, trying to get a sense of what is happening in the world, since the news in Iran was mostly censored. Two weeks later, I surprised my music teachers by playing the song *El Condor Pasa*, a zarzuela composed by Daniel Amos Robles of Peru in 1913, on the recorder. This was at a time when concerts were scarce and the only access to music was to listen to it privately on cassette tapes. The irony of my music experience as a child was that I performed in front of a large audience at the age of 8, playing *El Condor Pasa* at the Bahman Cultural Center, before even experiencing a live concert as an audience.

It was not until I moved to Dubai that I experienced my first live music event, where my first music friend and future band mate, Kaveh, and I attended a Def Leppard concert. At the time, I would go back to Iran to escape Dubai's heat and visit my family and friends every year during the summer. It was during one of those visits that I experienced my first concert in Iran by going to see the band Avizheh with Kaveh. This was an unbelievable experience; I was seeing a live concert in Iran, an experience that was unheard of through my upbringing in Iran in the time when any form of expression of joy was met with arrest and punishment by the morality police³. I was awestruck by the band as their music travelled between Western and Persian music styles constantly. Was it jazz?

² The Orff Schulwerk is a method of teaching music to children developed by musician and composer Carl Orff.

³ This will be explored in the thesis.

Was it rock? Heavy metal? *sonati*⁴? The concert was promoted as a *Talfiqi*⁵ music concert. What I did not know then was that decades later, I would spend 7 years of my life exploring what this term means, how it came to exist in the lexicon of Iranian music panorama, and how it is discussed as a music category in the country.

I moved to Canada in 2003, never to return to Iran. I studied classical flute performance for two years before getting discouraged for reasons beyond the scope of this introduction. I was physically disconnected from Iran, but the Internet kept me connected to the country as I kept in touch with friends, followed trends, and actively read in Persian so to not forget my mother tongue. I crossed paths with the term *Talfiqi* again when I began following Mohsen Namjoo's⁶ works on the Internet in early 2000's, as he started releasing music videos on YouTube. His version of *Talfiqi* was nowhere near Avizheh, as his music was breaking orthodoxies and proposing new ways of thinking about the relationship between mixing Persian classical music, Western music, and Persian poetry. His music was also coming out at a time when musicians in Iran were beginning to share their music online instead of going through the arduous process of gaining permission for their music from ERSHAD (Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance), the ministry in charge of approving all cultural products that are to be distributed publicly in the country. I finished my bachelor's degree at Simon Fraser University during this time, conducting a small project on underground music in Iran with Dr. Daniel Ahadi, a senior lecturer at the time. That project inspired me to apply for my MA to SFU, Ryerson (Toronto Metropolitan now), and Concordia for conducting research on the underground music scene in Iran, an endeavor that was unfortunately fruitless, as the three

⁴ *Sonati* is the Persian traditional music. I will be discussing it in depth in this thesis.

⁵ *Talfiqi* roughly translates to fusion in English. It is a name given to the practice of *talfiq* which is a verb that means to mix or to hybridise. In this thesis, the word *Talfiqi* is written with an upper-case T because it is a noun while the word *talfiq* is written with a lower-case t because it is a verb. This is done purposefully to distinguish the two from one another.

⁶ I will be discussing Mohsen Namjoo in detail in this thesis.

universities rejected my application. This was when I moved to Montreal, learned French, and applied to UQAM to do my MA about protesting crowds of the 2009 Green Movement in Iran, an idea that was inspired from Roman Onufrijchuk's lectures on myths and communication at SFU, where he explored theories on crowds and their relationship to studies of mythology and social psychology.

After finishing my MA at UQAM, I began to explore the future of my research. Music came back to me, and I determined it was time to mix passion with research and pursue the subject matter that has been following me like a shadow since childhood. At the time, a new generation of *Talfigi* musicians were gaining popularity in Iran. This time around, their music was approved by ERSHAD, making way for the new generation that offered a style of popular music different from the pop music genre that had established itself as the dominant genre of music in Iran after Khatami's cultural thaw policies in late 1990's and early 2000's⁷. What was also intriguing about *Talfigi* was that it was constantly pushing the boundaries that were set by ERSHAD in terms of the type of music that is allowed to be distributed publicly in the country. I saw this as I followed *Talfigi* from almost its inception as a terminology for describing music. Moreover, the musicians that were part of this new generation of *Talfigi* musicians were around my age. They experienced the same awkward introduction to music by attending makeshift music schools in the 1990's and studying the Orff method. Thus, this research was personal as I may have been one of those musicians if I had stayed in Iran and not moved across two continents.

This research is about *Talfigi* music, a category of music that appeared in the mid 1990's as music began to be reintroduced in Iran gradually and a new music industry began to be established. As I showed in the first three pages of this introduction, while I was mostly not in Iran, this music

⁷ This will be explored in detail in the thesis.

followed me all the way to Montreal. More importantly, *Talfigi* was intriguing for me because it is an ambiguous terminology (fusion) that refers to the practice of *talfig* (fusing), common to any form of music. Moreover, the place of music in Islam and how this place is interpreted in post-1979 revolution Iran is a subject that carries its own ambiguities that will be discussed in this thesis. I began this research with the observation that ambiguity plays a role in negotiation and change in the music panorama in Iran and *Talfigi* has been able to be part of this negotiation because of its inherent ambiguity. In what follows, I will introduce this thesis by briefly describing each chapter and what they contain.

I begin this thesis by briefly discussing the history of music and politics surrounding music in Iran before the 1979 revolution. The chapter begins by talking about music in Iran before the introduction of Islam. Here, we look at the first traces of music in Iran and what the historians know about music in ancient Iran. The chapter continues with a conversation on music in Iran during the Islamic golden age, referring to research that was conducted by Iranian Muslim scholars on music during this period. It then discusses the shift in attitude towards music in the country with the rise of the Safavid dynasty as music loses its status as an art form during this period. Next, we look at the status of music during the Qajar period as discourse on modernisation is introduced in the country at the same time as Western music and instruments are introduced to the country. The chapter continues with a discussion on Pahlavi dynasty by looking at cultural policies and relationship to music during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi and Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. The chapter concludes by looking at music and its role during the 1979 revolution as well as what followed the revolution.

The second chapter of the thesis looks at the relationship between cultural politics and music after the 1979 revolution. It begins by problematising the status of music in Islam and the kind of music that is or is not allowed in Islam. In doing so, it problematizes how cultural policy around music in

Iran is shaped. It then looks at the organisations that are mandated to manage music in Iran and the way they operate, clarifying the structures that are put in place by the government of Iran to censor music and filter what can or cannot be publicly distributed. It then goes through the history of changes in cultural policy with regards to music in Iran after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. This period is separated by each Iranian president from 1989 onwards, as the president is responsible for appointing the Minister for the Ministry of Culture (ERSHAD). The chapter ends by looking at the changes in the dynamics of cultural discipline regarding changes in cultural policy in the country.

The third chapter focuses on problematising culture and its relationship to music. It begins by looking at theoretical debates surrounding culture by Iranian scholars and how these debates are limited to the dichotomies between tradition and modernity. The chapter then looks at the literature written about popular music in Iran and shows how the literature lacks a critical discussion on *Talfigi* music. It then goes to justify why *Talfigi* music needs to be studied and understood within the research on popular music in Iran; concluding by stating the central question and supporting questions of the thesis.

The fourth chapter formulates the theoretical framework that is used to answer the central questions of the thesis. It locates *Talfigi* within the field of cultural studies and looks at theories in English and French language. It begins by looking at the Birmingham School and its emphasis on how everyday cultural practices and popular culture can be located as places where slow cultural change happens. It then looks at Michel de Certeau's theories on culture as everyday practice and how everyday practices function within structures that are put in place by power. It follows by exploring Pierre Bourdieu and his ideas surrounding how taste is shaped. It then looks at culture within frameworks of persistence, resistance, and defiance as different forms of implementing change.

The chapter concludes by placing *talfiq* as a practice and *Talfiqi* as a category within the framework of a cultural practice and a cultural category that can negotiate with the dominant power.

The fifth chapter is the methodology chapter, and it is divided into two sections. The first section details and justifies the methodology used to conduct a historical analysis of how the practice of *talfiq* in the modern history of Iran has changed over time and how the term *Talfiqi* emerged at a particular historic period in Iran in relationship to the socio-politico-cultural changes in the country at the time. It then details the methodology used to understand how *Talfiqi* is discussed in the Iranian media. The section details the software that was chosen to conduct this research and the categories that emerged from using this methodology.

The sixth chapter details the results of the historical research conducted to trace the practice of *talfiq* in Iran and the emergence of the category of *Talfiqi* at a particular time. It begins by looking at the roots of the practice of *talfiq* in modern Iran at the introduction of Western music and instruments in the country at the end of the Qajar period. It then goes through different stages of *talfiq* in the country from the Qajar to Pahlavi periods. Next, it discusses the way *talfiq* was approached at the beginning of the 1979 revolution and continues to demonstrate how the term *Talfiqi* emerged in the mid-1990's in the country. The chapter continues by looking at the rise of unofficial music and how the term *Talfiqi* re-emerged from this music scene. The chapter concludes by looking at how *Talfiqi* came to be seen as a new category of music from mid-2000's onwards.

Chapter seven presents the results of the content analysis research conducted on the way *Talfiqi* music is discussed in the Iranian media. It contains citations that are meticulously chosen to broadly demonstrate the subject matters discussed in the Iranian media. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the definition of *Talfiqi* and presents the ways different stakeholders define, or refuse to define, this category of music. The second section focuses on the

practice of *talfiq* in relationship to the category of *Talfiqi* and looks at the ways *Talfiqi* is and perceived to be practiced in the country. The last section looks at *Talfiqi* as a music scene. Here, the research demonstrates the way *Talfiqi* is seen as a broad interlinked category that connects multiplicities of musicians who not only see their musical practices as local, but also global practices.

Chapter eight provides a detailed discussion on the results of this thesis. It begins by showing how the historical analysis provided in the thesis determines that *Talfiqi* emerged as a result of a discursive development at a particular time in Iran. It continues by looking at how *Talfiqi* slowly became part of the official music lexicon as the category became more commercially viable. The chapter then looks at how the practice of *talfiq* and the category of *Talfiqi* are discussed in the Iranian media. It observes the significance of how *Talfiqi* is defined by different stakeholders, how the practice of *talfiq* is perceived, as certain ways of doing *talfiq* are favoured over others. This also means that certain tastes dictate the good versus bad *Talfiqi*. The chapter continues by exploring the relationship between *Talfiqi*, local/global dynamics, and the music genre as a commercial category.

Chapter nine focuses on the original contribution of this thesis to the field. It looks at the relationship between the idea of ambiguity, the category of *Talfiqi* as an ambiguous category, and the practice of *talfiq* as an ambiguous practice. It begins by framing ambiguity as a theoretical concept and then looks at three characteristics of ambiguity and their relationship to *Talfiqi*. These include the equivocal, paralysing, and cryptic characters of ambiguity.

The last chapter concludes this thesis. It begins by summarising the findings of the research and answer the research questions. It discusses the contributions of this research by looking particularly at the concept of ambiguity and how it is problematised in this study. I then present the pertinence

of this research in communication studies and how it contributes to specific fields of popular music studies, Iranian studies, and the area of Iranian popular music studies. The chapter then addresses the limitations of the research and discusses how some of these limitations were addressed in this research. I finally provide recommendations about how this research and its theoretical contributions can be expanded and used in future research. The chapter ends with a reflexive look at the woman, life, freedom movement and the role music played in this movement, paying particular attention to how the findings in this thesis can be applied to this movement.

I hope you enjoy reading my thesis.

سیاوش

CHAPTER 1

BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSIC AND POLITICS IN IRAN

In this chapter, I provide a historical context of music in Iran and explain key concepts regarding Persian Classical music, also known as *sonati* music. I then look at the relationship between politics and music as a cultural practice before the 1979 revolution in the country. I conclude by pinpointing the struggle between tradition and modernity with regards to understanding music in Iran.

The earliest historical records of music in Iran dates to over five thousand years ago in which an illustration on a piece of pottery depicts what is believed to be the oldest record in the world of a concert (Siamdoust, 2017). In other words, this art form has been practiced by the people in the region for thousands of years. As an ephemeral art form, music usually leaves no visual trace. However, we can find writings about music in historical accounts of Greek historians such as Herodotus and Xenophon, who discuss the chanting of sacred hymns, as well as martial and ceremonial music during the Achaemenid dynasty (550-330BC) (Farhat, 1990).

The first document on Persian music comes from the Sasanian period, where it is said that the emperor Xosro Parviz (AD 590-628) was patron to numerous musicians in his court (Farhat, 1990). After the conquest of the Persian empire by the Arabs in AD 642, Persian cultural practices, including music, were carried out “within the framework of the vast Moslem empire” (Farhat, 1990, p.3). For instance, Persian musicians were “imported into every corner of the Moslem world [...] [and] Persian musicians and scholars in all fields became the dominant figures in the formation and development of Islamic culture” (p.4). This was predominantly because of the development of a large library by the Abbasid dynasty (AD 750-1258) and the creation of the House of Wisdom, a hub for scholars to conduct research and exchange knowledge on diverse subjects, including mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, history, poetry, and music.

1.1 Music and the Islamic golden age

Some of the first documents written about music in Iran and the surrounding region date to the music-focused research conducted during this time. Among Persian scholars, music was considered as a field of knowledge, alongside other sciences such as medicine and philosophy (Siamdoust, 2017). The system by which music was understood and performed at the time was the *maqam* system⁸. The system is still being used for teaching, learning, and performing music in much of the Arabic speaking world and some non-Arab speaking countries such as Turkey.

Many music theorists of the time were of Persian descent, writing extensively on music theory and developing music notation methods. For example, music theorist Abu Nasr Farabi's writings on "scales, intervals, modes, rhythm and the construction of instruments became the basis for the writings of all Moslem theorists who followed him" (Farhat, 1990, p.4). Other important Persian scholars writing about music theory included Abu Ali Sina (also known as Avicenna in the Western world), Saffiaddin Ormavi, Qotbaddin Mahmud Shirazi, and Abdal Qader Maraqui. The last two scholars likewise contributed to developing music notation systems. One known as the ABJAD system, a music notation used mainly for analysing music rather than having a written record of music for performing a piece (Yarman, 2007).

1.2 The Safavid period

Music scholarship in Iran continued its development until the arrival of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722). This coincided with the second phase in the history of music in Iran, when music lost its

⁸ *Maqam* is a system of understanding, learning, and performing music that is common in Near East, middle east, Anatolia and many parts of the Arab world. It is a system of melodic modes. They have "many features such as unequal and microtonal intervals, special pitches, and they also reflect the specific music cultures, i.e. *maqam* music cultures" (Yöre, 2012, p. 267). The development of a *maqam* depends on two main factors of space (tonal) and time (temporal). Thus, the "structure of a *maqam* depends upon the extent to which these two factors exhibit a fix or free organization" (Touma, 1971, p. 38).

status as an art form due to the institutionalization of Shi'a Islam as the country's official religion (Siamdoust, 2017). It is here that we see one of the first attempts of an institutional power interfering with the legality of music in public. During this time, music and other arts were promoted within a religious framework (ibid.). However, while predominantly removed from the public sphere, music was still being performed and worked on in the private spaces and the "proscriptive attitude of the Shiite clerics and their measure of dominance in the social affairs of the country may have been largely responsible for this musical stagnation" (Farhat, 1990, p.5). During the Safavid period, we see the influence of politics in music, directly linked to an interpretation of religion that seeks to isolate music by pushing it into private spaces.

Another important aspect of musical history during this period is that Iranian musicians began to modify the *maqam* system to cater to the needs of Persian Classical music. During this time, a new terminology called *Dastgah* began to circulate among music scholars and musicians, slowly departing from the systematic understanding of Persian music within the *Maqam* system (Asadi, et. al., 2007, p.1). The term was first used in mid-17th century to describe "a factor in the *maqam* system" (Asadi et al., 2007, p. 6). It then gained more prominence in the late 17th century as "a criterion to organise aspects of (*maqam*) musical system" by way of introducing four cycles accommodating several modes in the *maqam* system (ibid.).

1.3 The Qajar Period (1789-1925)

This period sees a musical resurgence due to the support of the Qajar court for the art form (Siamdoust, 2017). Two main developments were important during this period: the maturation of the *dastgah* system that led to the development of *Radif*, and the introduction of the Western music system in Iran.

During the Qajar dynasty, the *dastgah* system matured and slowly separated itself from the *maqam* system by expanding from 4 to 12 different types of *dastgah*. This became the main system for organising music (Asadi, et. al., 2007, p.4) in Persian music, and underwent an “internal reformulation leading to the distinction between primary and secondary *dastgah*” (ibid.). The secondary *dastgah* was later renamed *avaz*. In the early 20th century, the idea of *radif* as “prescribed sequence of melodic modes and collection of a series of *gusheh* into seven *dastgah* and five *avaz* was formulated” (ibid.). An important aspect of *radif* is that it was distinctly developed to cater to the particularities in Persian music and was designed with melodic motifs that were gathered from melodies passed through oral traditions from many generations across the country.

Another notable aspect is that *radif* came to existence during a rise in nationalism in the country. This period, before and during the constitutional revolution of 1906, tried to distinguish Iranian national identity from other cultures in the region, such as Turkic or Arab ones (Chehabi, 1999; Tavakoli-Targhi, 1990). Part of this separation was due to the discourse around the Arab invasion of Iran (633 to 654 AD). The subsequent domination of Islam in the country put a pause in the natural development of the country toward a modern society. *Radif* played a role in systematising musical traditions of Iran, which predates the invasion of Islam, in such a way that it became seen as a national symbol of Iran. In a way, it was a cultural practice untainted by Islam, having continued through oral traditions across generations.

It is not a surprise, then, that *radif* music’s *tasnif* form became the song form of choice for composing protest songs during the constitutional revolution. In this period, prominent musician Abolghasem Aref Qazvini created *Tasnifs* in support of the constitutionalists (Siamdoust, 2017). These are some of the first songs for the purpose of protest in modern Iran. Thus, *Radif* played, and continues to play, an important role in expressing Iranian identity and distinguishing it from

the identities of neighbouring regions. Iranians remain protective of *radif* and its importance as a Persian-specific artistic practice.

Another major development in music during the Qajar period was the introduction of Western music. This began with the creation of the official music school called “State Music School” at the Dar al-Fonun (first university in Iran) by Alfred Jean-Baptiste Lemaire. Lemaire was given the responsibility to train the Iranian military band as well as to compose the first Iranian national anthem. The school became known as the Music School in 1918 and was dedicated to training uniformed military students to play in military bands. Western classical music came to be presented as the modern way of understanding music.

Lastly, several key cultural practices and technologies from the West were introduced during the Qajar time, fostering an economy of music beyond the era’s usual court performance for musicians. First, the introduction of gramophone and the commercial gramophone recording provided an avenue of music sales (Aghamohseni, 2014, p. 76). Artists could now distribute their music and have their music known among larger audiences. Another great change that allowed for musicians to become independent from the court was the holding of public concerts. These concerts were “created to emulate Western culture by both musicians and the audience, which was mainly composed of a middle class interested in experiencing music in public concerts similar to those in Western societies” (p.77). Musicians also started performing in smaller venues such as cafés, bars, and restaurants. Consequently, music slowly gained respectability, including legitimacy as a viable job option, as a musician’s income possibilities expanded from solely court musician work to performing and teaching music.

The Qajar period saw the rise of nationalism and the search for practices to express Persian national identity. The development of the *radif* in this period and the development of a specifically Persian

logic of understanding music was a form of realising one's authentic identity. At the same time, the introduction of modernity and Western music to Iran brought new language and systems of understanding music completely different from that of *radif*. This period marks the beginning of the encounter between tradition and modernity in music. The interaction between these two ideas continue to this day in Iran, taking many different forms since the Qajar period.

1.4 The Pahlavi period (1925-1979)

During the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979), the two kings of the dynasty, Reza Shah (1925-1941) and Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), led Iran through several projects of state-sponsored modernization that changed economic relations, social institutions, and cultural patterns of the country (Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 73). These projects aimed at modernising the Iranian society economically, socially, and culturally.

Economically, the modernity project consisted of grand initiatives that created jobs and unified the Iranian workforce. These projects included the development of national railway, the national road system, land reforms, and plans such as national taxation (Abrahamian, 2008). Socially, welfare plans such as social services, poverty alleviation projects, and universal health care projects were implemented, especially during the Mohammad Reza Shah period as part of the White Revolution⁹ (Harris, 2017). In the cultural realm, a cultural modernization project was implemented with the aim to distance the Iranian culture from the Islamic roots of Iran and to create a narrative around the pre-Islamic Iran. The objective here was to construct an Iranian identity based on the ancient Persian identity, moving away from Islamic identity by relating modernity to the glorious pre-Islamic past. The intelligentsia articulated this idea earlier during the constitutional revolution of

⁹ White revolution is related to a series of reforms implemented by Reza Shah Pahlavi from 1963 until the revolution in 1979. It included rapid modernisation of many industries, development of several social programs, nationalisation of several natural resources such as water, and the implementation of the land reform program. For more information, consult [Abrahamian, 2008](#); [Amanat, 2017](#); [Ansari, 2007](#).

1906 (Tavakoli-Targhi, 1990). However, both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah took the concept further, using it as their principal discourse for constructing their version of nationalism and a rationale for modernising Iran. This project of dynastic nationalization began with Reza Pahlavi, who ordered the use of “Iran” as the country’s name “in order to establish a particular historical narrative which would connect the modern state to its Aryan past” (Ansari, 2007, p. 103).

1.4.1 Music during Reza Shah Pahlavi

Changes in the economics and politics of music during the Qajar and early Pahlavi period allowed musicians to be less dependent on the royal court and to find different ways of financing their lives. Non-governmental modernization such as gramophone recording and distribution, public concerts, and private lessons (Aghamohseni, 2014, p. 77) afforded new freedoms for musicians to be more materially independent and try novel ideas. Moreover, from the Pahlavi era onward, governmental interventions began to shape and influence the modernization of music in the country.

During the reign of Reza Shah, governmental and non-governmental factors helped modernise music in Iran. The emerging middle class began to benefit from gramophone record production. Although, on May 6, 1928 regulations regarding gramophones were ratified by the Shah out of concern over the new technology (Aghamohseni, 2014). These regulations required “all gramophone record manufacturing companies to obtain special permissions from the police department for their recording and the artists participating in it” (Aghamohseni, 2014, p.83). Thus, as the product increased in popularity and accessibility, the government saw the need to control and censor it. The radio was another important technology that heightened interest and consumption of music. The first radio station in Iran was established in 1940 (Amin, 2015). The technology was greatly promoted by Reza Shah for propaganda purposes. For example, “hymns like Praise of the Shah, Love of the Shah, and Endeavour were performed live during the inauguration of the Radio in Iran” (Aghahoseini, 2013, p.87).

Beside the impact of technology on music in Iran, several key policies were established during this time (Aghahoseini, 2014). First, the Shah passed a law to teach music in every high school in the country. The idea behind this move was to create a generation of Iranians who learned music through the scientific method. The Shah gave that responsibility to Al Naqui Vaziri, a classically trained musician with an interest in finding a middle ground between traditional Persian and Western music. By 1935, the Shah appointed German-educated Iranian violinist Gholamhoseyn Minbashian to replace Vaziri. This was not an accident since Minbashian's vision of music education focused on eradicating Iranian classical music from the music curriculum, in favour of Western classical music. As time passed, Minbashian's responsibilities grew. First, he became responsible as the head of the State Department of Music, established in 1938, tasked with the "composition and publication of musical pieces and songs, the completion of books in accordance with the principles and regulations of modern music, and the popularization of Western music" (Aghamohseni, 2014, p.86). Minbashian also formed the musical committee under the Organization for Public Enlightenment (Sazman-e Parvaresh-e Fekri) with the aim of improving the nation's music through "the popularization of scientific music" (ibid.). Not surprisingly, the majority of the musical programs aired in Iran at the time consisted of Western music (Aghamohseni, 2014, p.87).

The emerging tension during the reign of Reza Shah was the beginning of the clash between two forms of art, *Sonati* music versus Western classical music. Vaziri attempted to legitimise *Sonati* music academically by using the language of Western classical music to show that it has merit to be learned and analysed from the Western classical music standpoint. Moreover, Vaziri sought to mix the Dastgah system of music with the tonal music system in order to create a mix between the two worlds. For him, both systems were equally important, and he aimed to combine them to create something new. Minbashian, on the other hand, saw the *Sonati* music as an outdated endeavor because of the success of Western music, including ideas such as polyphony, equal temper, and the

construction of harmonies. For Minbashian, *Sonati* music was considered inferior to classical music, and had to be left in the sidelines. This was indeed a war of positions, as Gramsci would call it, to gain legitimacy over the future of music in Iran. This trajectory fit the Reza Shah's plan to modernise Iran as Vaziri and Minbashian presented two contrasting ideas about the Iranian musical identity: modernising existing traditions in Iran versus completely abandoning tradition and focusing wholly on moving towards modernity.

Reza Shah Pahlavi's rise to power in 1926 began a new era in Iranian history, one that altered the trajectory of music in the country. He was probably the first person to regulate Iran's music industry by controlling the recording industry, managing radio content, and creating and managing the music curriculum in educational institutions. While he wanted to support an approach closer to Vaziri's by modernising traditional music of Iran, he ended up embracing the attitude of abandoning tradition, aligning with Minbashian's argument by embracing Western music.

1.4.2 Music during Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi

During the 1960s and 1970s, Mohammad Reza Shah continued in the footsteps of his father through a "drive to expand the three pillars that held up his state: the military, the bureaucracy, and the court patronage system" (Abrahamian, 2008, p.123). This also included a great deal of modernization of the state and nationalization of many cultural institutions, including the National Radio and Television Company, as well as the National Film Company (Abrahamian, 2008). He also promoted his version of national identity on the national media, which sought the adoption of many European cultural practices together with the integration of pre-Islamic Iran. By the 1960s, Iran saw the rise of a new lifestyle closer to that of the West. Moreover, the expansion of a middle class and the rise in the price of oil gave the Shah a great deal of spending power (Abrahamian, 2008, p.127). The first national cultural policy in Iran during Pahlavi dynasty was developed during

the 1960s under the direct order of Mohammad Reza Shah. This policy was indeed part of the Shah's movement toward modernity and Westernization (Bihnām, 1973).

In 1966, Mohammad Reza Shah approved a text outlining "general directives concerning the coordination of cultural activities in the public sector, the need for which, after many years of government action and in view of the advent of a new economic and social era for the country, was strongly felt" (Bihnām, 1973, p. 15). The text was concerned with "the importance of disseminating a culture based on national continuity but meeting the needs of people who have to live in a changing society" (Bihnām, 1973, p. 16). The cultural policy during this time focused on ways to assimilate foreign cultures while preserving national identity (Bihnām, 1973, p.14).

Bihnām (1973), the sociologist responsible for writing a report for UNESCO on the cultural policy in Iran, continues by looking at the objectives of the Iranian cultural policy at the time. These objectives were: 1) Taking an intermediate course between complete rejection or complete imitation of Western values and cultural practices; 2) Developing artistic creation and form considering the changes in the world culture; 3) Spreading culture through the development of cultural centers and mass media. The body responsible for implementing these objectives was the Ministry of Culture and Arts. The body supervising the implementation of the cultural politics in the country was The Higher Council for Arts and Culture, which included the following members: "the Minister of Culture and Arts, the Minister of National Education, the Minister of Information, the Minister of Science and Higher Education and sixteen sociologists, economists, psychologists and artists, appointed for four years by royal decree" (Bihnām, 1973, p. 20).

A dilemma in constructing such a policy was determining the level of involvement in the decision making as to which cultural products were accepted or not. Therefore, policy was approached through a central governmental body, the Ministry of Culture and Art, which aimed to "achieve the

decentralisation of cultural affairs” in the country (Bihnām, 1973, p.16). Ironically, the blueprint of cultural policy aimed to decentralise creation while centralising and controlling its distribution publicly, since “the State cannot remain entirely uninvolved in the content of culture, for it is responsible for protecting the social order and the freedom of the individual, and it is its duty to safeguard the cultural heritage in the face of the increasingly rapid and uniform development of world culture” (Bihnām, 1973, p. 17). Such an attitude toward culture proved problematic because the state considered itself responsible for controlling and managing the type of cultural products produced and distributed in public. Inadvertently, the music industry, like other industries, started being controlled and filtered by a governmental institution whose job was to ensure that what was produced did not conflict with the Shah or its modernity project.

1.4.3 Music and the 1979 revolution

The Achilles heel of this era’s approach toward music and arts was that it wanted to modernise cultural policy by allowing diversity and decentralisation in cultural production, while keeping control over the cultural production and distribution by centralising this process. The final years of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran saw rapid changes in music and music consumption. First, the record industry diversified greatly, allowing Iranians to be exposed to a diverse array of music from around the world. Music also found its way to films, as many artists wrote and performed soundtracks for films being produced in Iran. Second, with the opening of cabarets and cafés, live music was greatly popularised in Iran’s night life. Third, with the popularisation of television and an increase in the number of televisions in Iranian households, music found its way to television with music programs that introduced new acts, such as the *Rangarang* program (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994). The advancement in the technologies of production and distribution of music, the diversification of milieus for being exposed to music, and the easier access to music from around the world gave rise to different forms of hybridisation in music during this period.

Another important development in music in Iran was the development of popular music. This form mixed elements of Persian entertainment music with Western popular music (Breyley & Fatemi, 2015). For example, it used polyphonic orchestration techniques from jazz and classical music with melodic motifs written in modes close to Iranian *dastgah* systems. This period also saw drastic changes in classical music, with a rise in important composers mixing classical music and its theory with the traditional *Dastgah* system in Iran, an endeavor built upon Ali Naqi Vaziri's hope of modernising *Sonati* music. These include artists such as Samin Baghcheban, Morteza Hannaneh, and Hossein Dehlavi, among others. Lastly, *Sonati* music's relevancy was impacted by these changes, becoming less popular as the priority shifted to Western music. Attention to Westernised Iranian pop music in radio and television increased, thus shifting audience's tastes towards Western music aesthetics (Bastaninezhad, 2014). In order to preserve and promote the tradition of Persian music, the Center for Preservation and Dissemination of Music (CPDM) was created in the National Radio and Television of Iran in 1968 (Aghamohseni, 2022), soon becoming the leading organization of influence in the *revival movement* in Iran (Rastaq, 2014). The movement sought to return to the traditional ways of *Sonati* music performance and education, opposing the modernization of *Sonati* music movement that began at the end of Qajar and beginning of Pahlavi periods.

On the cusp of the revolution, different art forms became political, and music was no exception. From one side, popular musician Dariush Eghbali, as well as the trio of Farhad Mehrdad, Shahyar Ghanbari and Esfandiyar Monfaredzadeh, began producing and singing protest songs that contained political undertones. From another side, different revolutionary groups began creating choir music that either copied or were heavily influenced by revolutionary songs from South America. The aesthetic of this music was a mix of choir consisting of mostly men, an orchestra that played music with march (2/4) rhythm, and Persian lyrics (Balafkan, 2018). One such example is the song *Bar Paa Kheez Az Jaa Kan* (Rise and de-route), re-writing the lyrics to the song El

pueblo unido (Oh People, Unite) by Chilean composer Sergio Ortega. However, the group that was most influential in shaping the protest music of the time was that of the Chavosh ensemble. The Chavosh ensemble consisted of musicians who were part of the CPDM and who were dissatisfied with the direction of the organisation since it did not allow the musicians to take political positions or write music with political perspectives. This resulted in the mass resignation of the musicians from the organisation and the creation of the Chavosh ensemble (Rastaq, 2014). The ensemble used the traditional song form of *Tasnif* with political lyrics. This effort was particularly important since it continued the tradition of political song writing in Iran that goes back to the constitutional revolution. As Mokhtari and Azadehfar (2022) argue, Chavosh's music "includes components that are related to the 'modern discourse' on the one hand and to the 'traditional discourse' on the other [...] as it is a synthesis of modernism and traditionalism discourses between the middle of Nasser period in the second half of the 19th century and the Islamic Revolution in 1979" (Mokhtari & Azadehfar, 2022, p.71). This shows us that even the Chavosh ensemble, a group seen as individuals who believe in the return to an authentic way of doing music, mixed different traditions in their music.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a historical context of music in Iran with a specific look at the relationship between politics and music as a cultural practice before the 1979 revolution. We began by seeing how music was among the subjects of study during the Islamic Golden Age, when many Persian scholars studied it and contributed to theorising it. While scholarship on music progressed as Persian musicians began to distance themselves from the *maqam* system, the attitude towards music shifted in the Safavid period as the rulers began to have a different interpretation of Islam, seeing music as problematic and in conflict with their interpretation of the *Shari'a* law. The Qajar period ushered in a resurgence of music as the Qajar rulers were more appreciative of the art form. The period saw the maturation of the *Dastgah* and the introduction of Western music and musical

instruments. It also saw the beginning using music, and specifically the *Tasnif* song form, as a political practice with the works of Aref Qazvini. Lastly, the gramophone technology was introduced during the Qajar period, allowing musicians avenues of income, becoming less dependent on the court.

The Pahlavi period was divided between the Reza Shah Pahlavi and Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi periods. Here, we saw the impact of the country's rapid modernisation not only on the economy and politics, but also on its culture and cultural policies. The Reza Shah Pahlavi period included direct governmental interventions to shape and influence modernisation of music in the country. We looked at how policies regarding music education and radio programming shaped the music tastes promoted at the time, as Reza Shah slowly shifted the responsibility for creating music education curriculum from Vaziri (who wanted to modernise Persian music) to Minbashian (who saw Persian music as something to be left behind). Thus, music politics and music policy were both shaped by the tension between tradition and modernity. During Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's reign, the importance of cultural policy making increased, shaped by the Shah's vision of continual modernisation and Westernisation of Iran. This led to the creation of a cultural policy that aimed toward decentralisation yet controlled and managed the distribution of culture publicly.

This period also led to the diversification of music in-country given growing access to the global market as well as communication technologies such as television. This diversification also diversified Iranians' music tastes, as less of the population was interested in traditional music and was more attracted to different forms of popular music, especially the new Persian pop music. Moreover, this style was also supported by the Iranian media, especially television, as it fit the Shah's vision to modernise Iran. The chapter also showed how the new music continually sought to mix elements from Western music with those of Persian music. At the outset of the revolution, music played an important role in communicating the messages of the revolution. All forms of art,

including music, became political and used creative expression to communicate the messages of the revolution. Music played an important role in this endeavor and different forms of music articulated the grievance of the Iranian population. One politically minded and successful group was Chavosh, whose aesthetic and message were one of returning to the authentic. The next chapter explores why this direction was important and how the idea of returning to the authentic shaped the revolution of 1979.

CHAPTER 2

MUSIC AND CULTURAL POLITICS AFTER 1979 REVOLUTION

In July 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini said the following about music in a speech to state radio employees:

“One of the things that intoxicate the brain of our youth is music. Music causes the human brain, after one listen to it for time, to become inactive and superficial and one loses seriousness ... there is no difference between music and opium. Opium brings a sort of apathy and so does music. If you want your country to be independent, from now on you must transform radio and television into educational instruments- eliminate music” (Khomeini quoted in Siamdous, 2017, p.6).

As a result, the government restricted many types of music. Moreover, concerts were banned and the “payment of musicians was illegal in terms of the religious law, *Shar'ia*. The very act of signing a document mentioning the word 'music' was considered a sin (*mas 'iyat*)” (Youssefzadeh, 2000, p.38). Meanwhile, music continued to exist even though its existence was threatened with brute force. Hemmasi (2011) explains this the best referring to the quote by Khomeini that I mentioned above:

“Despite the unequivocal tone of Khomeini’s statement, the restrictions did not apply to all kinds of sound art, but *musiqi*, an Arabic term of Greek derivation that refers to nonreligious sonic forms of questionable morality. Among those forms and styles initially considered irreligious, profane, or otherwise incompatible with the ideals of the fledgling Islamic Republic were Iranian art and folk music, as well as urban entertainment music played by *motreb*, or professional entertainers, music associated with cafés and cabarets, sometimes called *kafe-i*, and Westernised, mass-mediated popular music (*musiqi-e-pâp*) from both inside and outside of the country” (p.88)

As one of the first statements about music, this statement gave the green light to neglect and, to an extent, eliminate many forms of music from the public domain, including national radio and television. According to Hemasi (2011), “following this pronouncement, musical activity was

dramatically curtailed and heavily restricted on state radio and television” (p.88). Most non-religious forms of music, including Western or Western-style music, were banned. Moreover, any form of music used as entertainment, including *motrebi* music, was also banned (Breyley & Fatemi, 2015; Hemasi, 2011; Nooshin, 2005a; Siamdoust, 2017). Meanwhile, the regime harshly cracked down on distribution and consumption of any form of music that was not approved by the ministry of culture. The government “prohibited the importing of foreign cassettes, video tapes and recorders. The state regularly deployed its forces, at the time known as the *komite* or just *basij* (“committee” or “volunteers”), to confiscate such equipment from cars and homes, punishing the owners with lashes or fines” (Siamdoust, 2017, p.7).

After the revolution, the revolutionaries occupied the radio and television and began “‘cleansing’ them of staff and programming that were deemed un-Islamic” (Siamdoust, 2017, p.88). They then started broadcasting revolutionary songs, one of which was “Iran, Iran” by Fereydon Khorsnud. The song was a march played by orchestral instruments and a men’s choir, praising God and the revolution. Surprisingly, this and many other revolutionary songs were exempt from the category of music given their revolutionary nature. After the assassination of Morteza Motahari (1 May, 1979), one of Khomeini’s disciples, the revolutionaries in the state media produced a song in his honour, titled Shahid-e Motahar (Pure Martyr). This time around, the instrumentation was no longer an orchestra and a choir. Sung by Mohammad Ali Golriz, the song included traditional Persian instruments, such as Tonbak and Tar, and melodies that resembled the traditional Iranian *Sonati* music. The song was controversial at the time among more conservative supporters of the Islamic Republic, the hezbollahi (literally meaning “the party of God”), who considered it disrespectful to sing in remembrance of a martyr of the revolution. However, upon meeting its composer, Khomeini gave his blessing by stating, “I could not stop my tears upon hearing this song. I do not cry much but I cried when I heard your song. This is the best and most beautiful music that I have heard and if you continue like this, I will support you” (Khomeini quoted in Siamdoust, 2017, p.90). Khomeini’s approval there gave the green light for other songs to be written during the Iran-Iraq war. It also reinforced *Sonati* as a serious type of music, upholding the revolutionary values of returning to the authentic subject.

This meant that music was allowed so long as it was serious (not provoking joy) and served the purposes of the revolution. Music could now be used as a tool for praising the victory of the revolution, calling the Iranian population to join the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). During this time, the *noheh-khoon* (religious eulogists) and *maddah* (panegyrists) played an important role in shaping the official public soundscape of the Iranian musical experience. As Joolayee & Entezari (2021) argue, the government's cultural focus at this point was on training and disciplining those in charge of the culture and reassuring their spiritual health (p.152). Thus, the system wanted to ensure that those in power to make decisions with regards to culture were spiritually in line with the values of the system. While part of this endeavor was to establish the Islamic values of the revolution in the country during this period; another part was to prepare to export revolutionary values to the outside world (Joolayee & Entezari, 2021, p. 159).

The drastic shift in the new regime's attitude toward music led to many changes. First, many of those who worked in the music industry before the revolution, including singers, composers, and producers, left the country, with the majority of them moving to Los Angeles' Orange County region (Hemmasi, 2020). There, a new Iranian music industry emerged, and the Iranians inside and outside of the country became the consumers of this industry's cultural products. Second, music production in Iran was drastically reduced because the means of production of music within the country was mainly controlled by the government during the 1980s. This included radio and television studios. Finally, the attitude of the government towards production and consumption of cultural products created a black market in-country. This market was largely a distribution market, mainly of Western music and Los Angeles Iranian Pop music.

This begs two main questions. Firstly, why was music so contested? And secondly, how was culture, and in our specific case music, managed politically? To answer these two questions, I will begin by looking at the way music in Islam is interpreted. I then look at the how these interpretations and institutionalizations have functioned in the last 40-odd years in.

2.1 Music in Islam

The Quran does not mention music explicitly even though many Islamic scholars have contested the status of music (Robertson, 2012; Siamdoust, 2017). As I mentioned earlier, music was studied

as a scientific subject during the golden age of Islam. Thus, the artistic practice was not understood as problematic during that period. The main argument against music in Islam comes from the verses in the Quran which advise Muslims to abstain from “lahw al-hadith” (idle talk) which “conservative Islamic scholars have interpreted to mean music, espousing the view that music is ‘futile folly’” (Siamdoust, 2017, p.7). Many prominent Muslim scholars, however, have viewed music favourably. During the Islamic Golden Age, many scholars taught music alongside other sciences to their students. The conclusion of one of these scholars, Ghazali, is that the intention of the listener determines his/her reception to a piece of music. For these scholars, music is not inherently sinful, yet is deemed problematic when used for a sinful purpose.

In Shi’a Islam, the Ayatollahs (Islamic religious scholars) are seen as figures that can interpret the Islamic *Shari’a* law to answer questions regarding how a pious Muslim should act in relation to different hypothetical situations. As discussed earlier, Khomeini had a similar position towards music by arguing that “the nature of music’s influence depends on the basic intention of the listener and the purpose for which it is used” (Siamdoust, 2017, p.8). Hence, Khomeini places the “responsibility for discerning the effect and hence permissibility of different kinds of music on the individual” (ibid.). How about other religious scholars? What do they think of music? Most of Iran’s respected Ayatollahs have their own websites and answer questions posed to them online. In her research, Robertson (2012) posed a question concerning the legitimacy of music in Islam from different religious scholars. According to her, most of the scholars gave “similar responses and all these responses were typed and formulaic except for (Ayatollah) Ardebili (p.29). Here is the response of Ayatollah Ardebili in Robertson’s (2012) book:

“Listening to any kind of contrived music, that which is suitable for amusing and fun parties, for example, is not permitted and you must judge this for yourself based on the ruling made by your trusted religious scholar/expert” (Ayatollah Ardebili in Robertson, 2012)

Seyed Ali Khamenei (2000), the Supreme Leader, also has written on the subject of music. In *The Cultural Viewpoints of the Leader of Islamic Republic of Iran*, Khamenei dedicates a very small section of his chapter “Art” to explain his views on music. Quoting Rouhollah Khomeini, he begins by stating that Khomeini said, “songs accompanied with certain kinds of music are not unlawful” (Khamenei, 2000, p.117). From there, he argues that:

“a song with proper content and accompanied with mild music is not unlawful. But an obscene music with inappropriate content is sacrilegious. Of course, I should say that music generally removes seriousness from the mind, song also definitely has a similar nature unless its content is such that it prevents this removal of seriousness. The recitation of the Quran enlivens what is recited, highlights it in man’s view, instills every word into man’s mind” (Khamenei, 2000, p.117).

What is interesting about this quote is the difference in the definition of music versus song. Song is a form music. However, in this quote, they seem to be two different things. Khamenei clarifies the difference between these two terms in the following way:

“I should also add that what is unlawful in Islam is profane singing, not music. Music is any song or voice that is produced by vocal cords in larynx or by an instrument in a calculated manner. What is unlawful is a particular kind of music, that is, profane singing” (Khamenei, 2000, p.118).

Khamenei addresses the topic of profane singing using the term *ghana*. The term is also used by Khomeini to explain the difference between lawful and unlawful music. Khamenei states the following about *ghana*:

“Profane singing (*ghana*) which is unlawful in the Islamic *Shari’a*, indeed refers to content not to form. Basically, when you are searching for instances of profane singing (*ghana*), you should study the song with regard to its content does not form to ascertain whether it is lawful or unlawful. If the song expresses a monotheistic issue in its content, it is not unlawful. But if you express an unlawful issue in the firm and sober tone of Homayoun (A Sonati music *dastgah*), it is unlawful, it is *ghana*” (p.118)

This adds another layer of confusion to our understanding of the lawfulness of music. From what is said, the musicality of music (its form) is not an issue but the content of it (what is said in the lyrics) can determine whether something is *ghana*. At the end, Khamenei further muddles the distinction around the lawfulness of music in Islam:

“The reason for the differences of opinion on the issue is that we do not have clear versus or traditions about the nature of profane singing. Hence, *fiqh* (jurisprudence) reasoning on profane singing differs from person to person [...] so far as music is concerned, I must confess that we do not have a clear answer to it, at least I do not have. In the past [and even now] I used to stress songs meant for licentious parties are unlawful. During those days we used to think that songs are particularly meant for lascivious parties. But how about certain kind of musical divisions? How about the tunes of *shur*, *abu ata*, *homayoun* (all part of Iranian *sonati* music)? All those who have sung something, have sung within one of the 12 tunes. Hence, it is not unlawful and basically music refers to these melodies and special rhythms. These are not unlawful unless some unlawful items are incorporated into them” (Khamenei, 2000, p.118).

As we see, the discussion on permissibility of music in Islam is ambiguous because it can be interpreted in any different ways. There seems to be certain terminologies that need to be defined from the start to better understand the nuances to the relationship of the Iranian government with music:

1. Music: Only Khamenei defined this terminology in the discussion that we have had. In this definition music lies under the category of song since it is “a song or voice”. Moreover, there is an intention in the manipulation of sound in a “calculated way” in the definition of music. This leaves a very large repertoire of music un-categorised. For example, what about improvisation? Improvisation is a vital part of music from around the world including *sonati* music. Is that considered music? What if the music was based on chance? For example, the composer John Cage proposed the idea of “chance music” by leaving the composition open to change in the future. This way, a song is never played the same way twice. Is this considered music in the definition of music by Khamenei. These are two of the many examples that we can think of to show the ambiguity in the definition of music by Khamenei.

2. Song: This terminology seems to be used interchangeably with music. Furthermore, it seems that it has more weight since it is an umbrella term whereby music is included as part of song. This creates another ambiguity since we are not sure if there is an actual difference between the two and how such difference could be distinguished clearly.

3. *Ghana* or *Ghina* (غناء): The term has two meanings in Arabic. The first is wealth or riches, and the second is singing or vocal. When it comes to the interpretation of music in Islam, Khomeini and Khamenei have two different interpretations of the term. For Khomeini, *ghana* is singing that can be provocative. The type of provocation that comes from the singing would determine if it is acceptable or not in Islam. Some forms of *ghana* are acceptable. Other forms, such as provocative music with lyrics that contain sexual content, may not be acceptable. Khamenei, on the other hand, refers to *ghana* as profane music. In his view, *ghana* is in the content of the music, rather than its form. The definition of content and form here are not clear either. What is the content of music? Is it only the lyrics, or do we look at the melodies and musical structures as well to determine the content? What is form? Is it the genre of music? Is it the rhythm? Wouldn't the rhythm be both content and form, since it forms the music's rhythmic structure, becoming part of the music's content? All these questions, along with the determination of lawful versus unlawful *ghana*, complicate our understanding of the kinds of music accepted in Islam.

4. *Tarab* (طرب): The term in Arabic literally means music. It also refers to the feelings associated with joy, such as being delighted or thrilled. In Arabic, three-letter words are usually root words, and other words are built from these root words. For example, the term *motreb* (مُطْرِب) is a derivative of the root word *tarab*, meaning singer or vocalist. However, when it comes to interpretation by religious authorities such as Ayatollahs, the term *tarab* takes a completely different meaning. Therefore, when Khomeini talks about music that is *motreb*, he is really referring to the Iranian context of *motreb* and its relationship with Islam since the beginning of its appearance in the early Qajar times. Moreover, *tarab* refers to the feeling provoked by music more than its literal translation as the Arabic term for music. We see here that the translation and interpretation of Arabic words take their own Iranian specificity when they are used by the Ayatollahs. In this case, Khomeini's use of the terms has historical context in the Iranian history of interacting with entertainment music. Again, the terms remain ambiguous because it is hard to evaluate the way music influences each person. The interpretation of how music influences a person is left to the rational decision of an individual or *Urf*.

5. *Urf* (عُرف): The Oxford dictionary of Islam defines *urf* as the "unwritten customary law" (Esposito, 2004, p. 6) in contrast to written law. Hafiz Abdul Ghani (2011), uses Ibn Abedin's

definition by referring to it as “a state which is firmly established in hearts and appeals one logically” (p.178). The term refers to three legal categories: 1) The way common people maintain order; 2) The decisions of a ruler or a person of authority; 3) The practices of local courts (Esposito, 2004, p.6). While *urf* is not part of the Islamic jurisprudence, the practice of using “socially accepted practices” is encouraged in the Quran (Esposito, 2004, p.328). *Urf* becomes an important part of the jurisprudence when there is no explicit explanation in the Quran. Hence, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) has “relied heavily on *adat/urf* to formulate cultural rules (e.g., dress, mannerisms)” (ibid.). This, however, does not clarify what Khomeini means when he leaves the decision making on the matters concerning music on *urf*. What traditions and customs are he referring to? Which Islamic leader’s opinion does one have to accept? What method does one have to use to reach the decision of whether *urf* accepts certain music or not? The questions pertaining to the place of *urf* in deciding the lawfulness of music in Islam are plenty. From one side, *urf* gives agency to the individual experiencing music to choose whether the music they are experiencing is lawful or not. From another side, the reference to *urf* expands the scope of factors that must be considered in accepting or rejecting certain music based on customs of a particular region or group. The challenge, however, is that Khomeini is not clear as to what he means by *urf*. What customs? This leaves a large gap in interpretation of accepted music.

6. Maslahat (مصلحة): Khomeini uses this term in his response to Hashemi Rafsanjani when he is asked about his opinion on the music played on the radio and television. In fact, Khomeini’s use of the term is not limited to the context of music. The term can mean a thought or action that is for the benefit of the greater good. It is normally translated as Expedient or Expediency. The terminology plays an important part in the debates over governance in the Islamic jurisprudence. At the beginning of the revolution, Khomeini established the Expediency Council where the term Maslahat was first used as a principle in the Islamic Republic’s governance structure (Nachman, 2018). There is no agreement on the definition of the term. For Ghazali (d.1111), it is a tool that needs to be used to achieve the goals of law which is to prevent harm and promote benefits to the world. Islamic scholar Rashid Rida (1856-1935) affirms the importance of Maslahat as a governance tool but warns of potential to be abused by corrupt leaders (Nachman, 2018). Until Khomeini’s theory of governance, Maslahat was mostly avoided by Shi’a jurists (ibid.). Khomeini used Maslahat as a protective tool for the security of the Islamic Republic. He “transformed the

traditional application of Maslahat by subordinating theological percepts by national interests, and thus politics” (Nachman, 2018, p.4). In his letter to Khamenei, the current supreme leader, he wrote:

“The Islamic state is a branch of the absolute trusteeship of the prophet [...] and constitutes one of the primary ordinances of Islam, which has precedence over all other derived ordinances such as prayer, fasting, and the pilgrimage” (Khomeini in Nachman, 2018, p.5)

Nachman argues that this statement makes “Maslahat not only as a claim to authority over which jurists might contend but also as a concept affirming the Islamic Republic’s sovereignty free from traditional legalist interpretations of Islamic governance” (p.5). Hashemi Rafsanjani, first Chairman of the Iranian Parliament (1980-89), former President of the Islamic Republic (1989–1997), and former Chairman of the Expediency Council (from its establishment in 1989–2017) links Maslahat with *Urf* by arguing that the two tools are important parts of the governance in the Islamic Republic because of “the fundamental dependency of the common good on the Republic’s welfare” (Nachman, 2018, p.5). What Maslahat does is to override the *Shari’a* law by considering the benefit of a law for the common good. Nachman (2018) explains this very thoroughly:

“This suggests that parliament has the prerogative ‘to elucidate the concept of “republic” in the apparatus of jurisprudence and the thought of the Imam [Khomeini]’. Or, in other words, the parliament can come to a conclusion vis-à-vis legislation whereby a law might be passed if it maximises maslahat and diminishes mafsada (corruption), even if it contradicts a primary ordinance of Islam (ḥukm awwaliyya)” (p.6)

By relying on Rashid Rida’s “principle of warding off the injurious and preserving the beneficial” (Nachman, 2018, p.7), using Maslahat allowed the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish a governance system that could bypass religion and leverage ambiguity. This meant that it became a legislative tool that is marginal and yet essential to the existence of the Islamic Republic (ibid.). In other words, Khomeini understood that governance must not be stopped if a modern case has not explicitly been explained in the *Shari’a* law. This matter separates the Islamic Republic from most Islamic countries that based their governmental law on *Shari’a*.

There are several key ambiguities that need to be addressed here. First, it is not clear what music in Islam means. Further, it is not clear if music is even related to the idea of playing instruments or singing. It seems that the moment a voice and poetry is included in music, the assessment of music changes. Second, when distinguishing what is or is not Islamically acceptable, certain red lines must not be crossed. However, even these lines are not always clear. For example, the idea of joy in music is not clearly explained, since the interpretation of joy depends on the audience's perception of music that may or may not bring them joy. Moreover, the joy in question is unclear. What kind of joy? Third, the idea of *Maslahat* further complicates our discernment of which music is accepted in Islam, since a music might be deemed acceptable—even if it is not acceptable in Islam—so long as it serves the purposes of sustaining the state.

As such, the relationship between Islam and music in Iran is an inherently political relationship. Interpretations of what music means, and its acceptability depend on how that music might help serve the state's longevity. This dependence brings me to the next section of discussion, on the relationship between culture, politics, and music before and after the revolution.

2.2 Organizations that managed music in Iran after the revolution

2.2.1 The Cultural Revolution Council (CRC)

The first step to implement the Islamic ideology through broadest media came in 1980 with the cultural revolution. Between 1980-1983, the new government established the Committee for the Cultural Revolution (CCR), tasked with reviewing all the University coursework and assuring its compliance with the *Shari'a* law. Thus began a project of cultural disciplination that used different governance mechanisms to implement certain cultural practices. The committee "ordered the closure of all universities from May 1980" (15 Khordad 1359). On Khomeini's order, a committee of seven members formed the CCR in May 1980 (Khordad 1359) for the purging of un-Islamic students from the universities. In 1984, the CCR was upgraded to the High Council for the Cultural Revolution (HCCR) (*Shura-ye 'ali-e enghelab-e farhangi*) (1363). According to Soroush, some 700 of 12,000 university lecturers and assistants (*kadr-e 'elmi*), and about 200,000 students were dismissed during the cultural revolution" (Razavi, 2009, p.6).

The Higher Council for the Cultural Revolution saw culture as the most vital part of the revolution since they saw the 1979 revolution as a cultural revolution. In the document titled The Principles of Cultural Politics of the Country (ERSHĀD, n.d.), available on their website, the council states the following:

“Cultural politics is the policy of the Islamic Republic. The Islamic Revolution means that the Islamic culture must become the pillar and root of all individual and societal aspects. Therefore, it must not be forgotten that the Islamic revolution, in reality, is a cultural revolution” (ERSHĀD website, Free Translation)

The Council’s unequivocal language tells us about the importance that was and continues to be given to culture. After the revolution, all forms of modern popular culture were banned because they were seen as symptoms of impurity (Khosravi, 2008). Hence, the “entire industry of popular culture went underground or into exile” (Khosravi, 2008, p.19). The body that began to formulate the cultural policy of the regime was the CCR.

2.2.2 The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance

The project of revamping the culture moved to a new phase when on March 2, 1986 the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (ERSHAD) was established as an institution to ensure that all forms of public publications (art, media, literature, etc.) were in line with the morals of the revolution and the *Shari’a* law. At the same time, we see the emergence of a new set of vocabulary whereby the influence of foreign culture (*farhang-i Biganenga*) needed to be addressed through “cultural reconstruction” (*nowsazi-ye farhangi*) (Youssefzadeh, 2000). This vocabulary, continuing the tradition of Westoxification as a sickness, incorporated medical terms, mixing the language of health problems with cultural politics, whereby the “nation’s purity and health are demolished by “cultural microbes” (*mikrobha-ye farhangi*), penetrating the nation’s body and cause “cultural injuries” (*asibha-ye farhangi*). Accordingly, to immunise the nation, the regime emphasises the necessity of a “cultural vaccination” (*vaksan-e farhangi*) to protect the youth from cultural colonization (*tahajom-e farhangi*)” (Khosravi, 2008, p.22).

The organization’s music department functions as follows (Youssefzadeh, 2000):

- Protection and support (*hemayat*): This function provides the musician with “an official affiliation in the form of a card allowing them to work in this capacity” (p.43). In practice, such card has never existed (*ibid.*).
- Guidance and orientation (*hedayat*): The musicians receive guidance to preserve their music and safeguard the authenticity (*esalat*) of their culture (*ibid.*)
- Supervision and control (*nezarat*): This includes the control of all marketable sound productions by a) controlling recorded music and issuing permits for distribution b) issuing permits for teaching c) organising musical events such as festivals and concerts d) through other projects such as “creating a museum of musical instruments”.

2.2.3 The Organization for the Mobilization of the Oppressed

CCR and ERSHAD were two institutional bodies that used modern forms of discipline in order to institutionalise new forms of knowledge and cultural practices. CCR became the body that researched and established cultural policy while ERSHAD applied the policies proposed by CCR. Another force implemented the revolutionaries, namely the *basij*. The Organization for the Mobilization of the Oppressed (*Sazman-e Basij-e Mostazafan*) is a para-militia organization that was created by the order of Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution, with the goal of “confronting internal and external threats to the revolutionary regime” (Golkar, 2011, p. 13). The force was established in 1980 to recruit all Iranians who support the regime. With the first goal of recruiting twenty million body army, the organization began establishing bases in every mosque.

After its establishment, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) announced that it would begin training the members of *basij*. When the war began, *basij* played a critical role in recruiting and organising volunteers, as well as deploying them to the war front. *Basij*'s efforts extended beyond recruiting volunteers for war. One of the main tasks of the force was, and still is, to function as a morality police (Golkar, 2011). The group implements a strategy called *Amr-e be Maruf va Nahy az Monkar* (commanding the right and forbidding the wrong). It is “a Qur’anic commandment that encourages all Muslims to do what is good=right and prohibits them from that which is wrong=evil, not only in social relations, but also in political relationships, such as that between citizens and the government” (Golkar, 2011, p.208). The principal forms part of the Islamic Republic’s constitution,

obligating all Muslims to “implement this order to prevent un-Islamic behavior” (ibid.). While their activity as moral police were better institutionalised after the war, the role of *Basij* as the moral police has been present since the revolution’s onset.

2.3 Music in Iran after Khomeini’s death

In 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini decided to “go back on his absolute ban on music by issuing a *fatwa* (a religious decree establishing the licit or non-licit character of an act) authorising the purchase and sale of instruments” (Youssefzadeh, 2000, p. 39). Khomeini died in the same year, replaced by Ali Khamenei, the current Supreme Leader of Iran. As I mentioned previously, Khomeini took a severe stance on music, considering it “the machinery of the royal regime” that could “corrupt the nation and deprave the young generation” (Siamdoust, 2017, p.87). However, before his death, he stated that the sale of musical instruments is not prohibited so long as the instruments do not serve illicit purposes (Youssefzadeh, 2013, p.39). This left an ambiguous gap and many unanswered questions: How is the permission for sales of musical instruments related to music itself? What was music? What wasn’t music? What was illicit music? And, more importantly, how was this determined? All these questions were left unanswered. Each president elected after Khomeini’s death brought a different vision of how to deal with culture, further influencing the cultural politics of music in Iran. In the following sections, I briefly talk about the evolution of presidents’ attitudes on culture and how those attitudes were reflected in the cultural policy of the country.

2.3.1 Rafsanjani, reconstruction, and music

The presidency of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani followed the war and its devastating effects on the moral and economic well-being of Iranian society. Rafsanjani was elected with the mandate of reconstructing the nation, and he posed himself as the Leader of Construction (*Sardar-e Sazandegi*). He began his mandate with a very neoliberal economic agenda, using privatization as a tool to restart the economy. One of Rafsanjani’s main discourses was his attention to the idea of experts. He believed that the religious values of the Islamic regime will not be impacted if the government used the knowledge of experts for the advancement of the society. To do this, he operationalised the notion of *maslahat* to justify that the end justifies the means. In other words, using expert knowledge trumps the interpretation of *Shari’a* law because it is beneficial for the stability of the Islamic Republic. He used the same idea in his approach on culture and cultural affairs during his

presidency by emphasising how cultural affairs must be “handled by experts, not by the clergy” in order to “increase cultural openness and tolerance” (Maghazei, 2014, p. 8). As such, those authorized to judge the permissibility of cultural products came from the cultural industry, instead of just having backgrounds in religious knowledge. During his presidency, Rafsanjani appointed Mohammad Khatami, an unknown cleric at the time, as his Minister for Culture. Khatami was indeed responsible for some of the cultural openness of Rafsanjani’s era pertaining to cultural productions in Iran.

Khomeini’s statement about music eased the way for the establishment of music education. With the development of conservatories, parents of young kids could now send them to learn music. Hence, the 1990s saw an easing of “control on music making as music classes were permitted again (and the music Department of Tehran University was reopened) and restrictions were gradually lifted on other musical activities” (Nooshin, 2005, p.245). The 1990s also saw technological transformations around music access and consumption. Mansouri (2011) observes that the increased use of computers and CDs during this era “eased access to all varieties of Western music, from trailblazing giants like John Lennon and Roger Waters to bad-boy maestros such as Johnny Rotten and Metallica, on to Eminem and Snoop Dog”. Meanwhile, the 1990s also saw the introduction of satellite television. This allowed many Iranians to gain very low-cost access to a variety of television channels from outside of the country. When the regime was faced with the rise of satellite television in the country, the parliament of Iran passed a law to ban the technology completely, only to find that the implementation of the law in a large scale was nearly impossible (Alikhah, 2008). In the end, such laws never stopped the access to satellite technology.

Another important project during the Rafsanjani era was restarting the local music industry. One of the ways the government contributed to this was by re-naming The Revolutionary Songs and Anthems Festival (RSAF) to Fajr Music Festival. The RSAF, created in 1986, hosted 12 ensembles in its first year. The theme of the festival, as seen in the title, was focused primarily on revolutionary songs. Re-naming it to Fajr Music Festival made room for other genres of music. By 1992, the festival became an international festival, at a time when it was the only musical event of its kind in the country. Nowadays, it is the largest international music festival and the most prestigious in the country.

Although pop music was banned in the country since the 1980s, the LA pop music was successful in penetrating the illegal music market. While the *Basij* cracked down on its consumption and distribution, the Ministry of Culture began to introduce state-sponsored pop musicians. Much of the first wave of 1990s music was from sound-alike pop musicians, imitating the sounds of LA pop music while changing the content of their music to adapt to the values of the Islamic Republic. One of the main motivations here was money. Since the LA music scene was already popular, investors in the pop music scene in the country saw a guaranteed return on investment if they produced music that sounded like the LA music. As Sadighi and Mahdavi (2009) suggest:

“[...] the unstable economy was not conducive to long-term investment by those in the music business. As such, producers sought out projects that could bring short-term returns. The easiest sell was music exploiting nostalgia for pre-revolutionary pop, and so voices of many singers who broke into the scene during the early 1990s closely resembled those of exiled or departed counterparts” (Sadeghi and Mahdavi quoted in Breyley et.al., 2015, p.160).

At this time, it appeared that the restriction on music was slowly changing, while the emphasis was kept on the lyrical contents of the music produced. As Breyley et.al. (2015) states, the permit system of the Islamic Republic resembled that of Shah’s regime. However, the “councils and committees set up in the 1990s required what they read as ‘decency’ in pop lyrics and musical styles. Most ‘successful’ performers within this new official system have been solo male vocalists” (p. 161).

Incidentally, *Talfiqi* emerged as an important musical category during this period. Many Iranian musicians and music lovers were getting tired of the LA pop genre and its aesthetics. This meant that the sonic diversity of music in the mid to late 1990s was very limited when it came to Iranian-produced music. Despite of the emphasis on ‘decency’ in music, it was also complicated to decode what ‘decency’ entailed. The ambiguity in what could be accepted by the ministry of Culture in Iran persisted. What was clear, however, was that music could be accepted so long as it had some elements from *sonati* music while avoiding sounds that are too Western, or too exciting. This idea of exciting was also complex since its interpretation depended on personal taste more than an objective rubric. Hence, *Talfiqi* became the ambiguous umbrella term that allowed for new sounds

to enter the sonic sphere of the country. This category produced an Iranian sonic identity based on the hybridization of many musical elements and genres and allowed the exploration in genre mixing and identity constructions that went beyond the simplistic dichotomies between tradition and modernity. Hence, *Talfigi* was successful in removing the divisions between high and popular/low culture by looking at such attitude as divisive and baseless, re-negotiating accepted music and blurring the boundaries of accepted versus not accepted music. This power also allowed it to find creative ways to innovate new sounds and produce new musical identities.

2.3.2 Khatami- the rejuvenation of music and the cultural thaw

The Khatami era is probably the most well-documented era of the post-revolution history of the music industry in Iran, for two primary reasons.

First, the Khatami administration had a positive attitude towards music and culture in general. During his administration, we saw a policy of cultural relaxation that created a freer cultural atmosphere. This period is normally known as the period of cultural thaw in Iran. This thaw ushered in a great deal of creativity in music, as well as the rise of permitted pop music (*pop-e mojaaz*) with its own identity, rather than imitating pre-revolutionary pop musicians. Musical group Arian became the first pop band after the revolution, and Shadmehr Aghili became one of the first pop stars of post-revolution in Iran (Nooshin, 2005a). Arian's significance included the participation of female instrumentalists who also sang as background vocals with the band, something unheard of at the time. Khatami's cultural politics was based on his two main philosophical principles: respecting the rule of law and promoting what he coined the "dialogue between civilizations". In this sense, Khatami looked to implement Iranian Shi'a versions of cultural production, which in turn fostered a new homegrown music industry.

Second, changes in communication and recording technologies saw the rise of a homegrown unofficial music scene in the country. First, Iranians began using recording software as bootleg versions, as most of this software was available for a low cost¹⁰. Through these music recording programs many Iranians could record music in their own homes with professional proprietary

¹⁰ Iran does not adhere to international copyright laws.

software. Meanwhile, throughout the country, we saw the rise of the number of music studios. Khatami's presidency likewise coincided with the rise of Internet use in Iran. The confluence of these factors created a new generation of musicians and a new music scene with its own identity by late 1990s.

Khatami's discourse came from a broad concern over two main issues: the re-interpretation of Islam and its role in governance, and the relationship between tradition and modernity. The Rafsanjani era saw the formation of an intellectual Iranian reform movement which "changed the terms of public discourse from the ideologically closed post-revolutionary worldview grounded in the concepts of *bazghasht be khish* (return to [one's] roots/self) and *gharbzadegi* (Westoxication) to an open-ended, pragmatic politics dedicated to principles of *azadi* (liberty) and *jam'eh-e madani* (civil society)" (Mirsepassi, 2010, p.110). As Mirsepassi argues, the election of Khatami and the beginning of reform era was "a striking political event preceded by a molecular war of position, or a long struggle for hegemony over meanings and values within the public sphere conducted non-violently through newspapers, organizations, and private discussion groups (that is, the organs of civil society as means)" (p.113). On the first point, the re-interpretation of Islam, Khatami relied heavily on the notion of *jame-eh sazi* (civilization building) while he introduced the notion of *goftegooye tamadonha* (dialogue among civilizations) as his new approach to confronting the complex relationship between tradition and modernity.

One of the most important intellectuals of this movement is Abdolkarim Soroush. As a close friend of Ali Shariati, and a member of the cultural revolution council during the '80s, he took an approach different from his predecessor in understanding Islam. Soroush made a significant contribution by looking at Islam from hermeneutics perspective. In separating Islam as religion from Islam as knowledge, he shifted the understanding of the latter from something that is fixed to an ever-evolving knowledge in the historic context of its interpretation. This meant that "while religion itself does not change, human understanding and knowledge of it does. Religious knowledge is but one among many branches of human knowledge" (Vakili, 1996, p. 4). Therefore "all interpretations are bound by the era in which a religious scholar lives, and by the degree of advancement of the human sciences and religious studies within this era" (p.5). Through this articulation, Soroush problematizes the notion of Islamic ideology. He defines ideology as a social and political

instrument consisting of “a systematised and ordered school of thought that situates itself as a guided action and acts and a determined factor in political, social, and moral positions” (p.6). In fulfilling these guiding roles, Soroush argues, ideologies must provide a simplistic worldview and a competing ideology. Hence, he critiques Shariati’s notion of Islamic ideology since such ideologization of religion reduces the complexity of religion and religious knowledge to a fixed ideological worldview.

President Khatami came to power with a discourse less hostile toward the West, with a shift from cultural authenticity to two central notions of *tamadon sazi* (civilization building) and *goftegooye tamadonha* (dialogue between civilizations). On the first point, Khatami aligned with Soroush’s critique of ideology by arguing that “Islam transcends ideology, and, therefore always has the potential to create a new civilization” (Masroori, 2007, p. 177). These new civilizations come from two fronts. The first is the re-interpretation of Islamic knowledge so it can respond to the challenges of today’s world. The second is through creating dialogue between civilizations. Khatami, just like Soroush, shifts the conception of Islam from the sphere of public to that of private by arguing that “the only secure way of understanding God is through the heart, not the mind, through direct experiential contact, not intellectual” (Khatami in Masroori, 2007, p.178). Khatami envisioned the new civilization as an Islamic civil society guided by Islam, where the rule of law and the rights of the citizens under the law are respected and guaranteed. He saw freedom as the blueprint for the building of this new Islamic civil society.

Khatami’s presidency saw the proliferation of the Internet in a large scale. Internet access in Iran was first provided in 1992 (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010). The number of Internet users in the country increased through the 1990s and 2000s from 2000 people in 1996 to 23 million in 2009 (ibid.). During the Rafsanjani era, many Iranians began to purchase computers and learned how to use them. As mentioned in the previous section, because of the lack of copyright regulation in the country, most important software was available in the technology market in Iran for a fraction of a cost. The technology was “first promoted by the government to provide an alternative means of scientific and technological advancement during the troubled economic period that followed the Iran-Iraq war” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 38). The Iranian regime surprisingly “allowed commercial and educational sectors to access (the internet) without interference” (p.38). An important aspect of

Internet infrastructure in Iran is that the majority of Internet Service Providers are commercial businesses (Rahimi, 2008). Hence, unlike many other Middle Eastern states, such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, the Iranian state “has actively participated in its development” (p.41). For about a decade, the technology developed without much interruption since “it was not until 2003 that the Iranian government produced any systematic strategy to block Internet websites or filter content” (p.41). This was a reactionary response, since the government began surveilling dissident bloggers, arresting and imprisoning them to remove the bad elements from the web (Rahimi, 2008).

These factors led to two important movements in Iran. The first was new advancements in the local music industry. For twenty years, this music industry predominantly consisted of pop music singers who sounded like those in the LA industry. While some argue that this government initiative was a way to compete with the LA music scene, others see this as the reaction of those who financed music in the country, since the sound-alike musicians were more likely to become popular in Iran, with voices familiar to the Iranians inside Iran (Breyley & Fatemi, 2015). However, during Khatami’s administration, the music industry experienced a revitalization thanks to changes in cultural politics that allowed more diversity in culture. The second was the rise of unofficial music and bands in the country. This coincided with proliferation of the Internet. Many musicians, especially those who played genres such as rock or rap, did not see any hope in getting permission from the ERSHAD to distribute their albums legally. Thus, they produced and distributed their music online for free, beginning with the release of O-Hum’s album *Nahal-e Heyrat* in 2000 and continuing henceforth as a music distribution practice amongst Iranians in Iran. Some rock musicians were able to pass ERSHAD’s censorship by introducing their music publicly as *Talfiqi* instead of calling it rock, such as Barad’s 2003 self-titled album, a mix of rock music and the folkloric music of the south of Iran.

Khatami’s presidency proved to be a mixture of ups and downs. Though successful in relaxing the restrictions on the acceptance of cultural products in the country, he also faced major criticism by more conservative groups. Khatami was not able to fulfill many of his election campaign promises, partially due to the limitations of his power under the constitution and partially because of his ideological inconsistencies and ambiguities of wanting to Islamise liberal notions such as freedom,

the rule of law, and popular sovereignty (Masroori, 2007, p. 190-1). After his presidency, the “disillusioned reformist students could no longer stay on the party and fractional politics track when they discovered that most of the routes of reform were legally and practically closed” (Mohammadi, 2007, p. 623). This allowed a relatively unknown faction of conservatives to slowly gain power in the city of Tehran under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s leadership as mayor of Tehran.

2.3.3 Ahmadinejad, Rohani- Once listened, you can’t un-listen it!

In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came into power as president. Ahmadinejad’s attitude towards politics and culture was in great contrast to his predecessor’s, including new limitations and obstacles from the government in terms of acceptance of cultural products. This time around, however, the “relatively free cultural atmosphere that had been created for music was hardly reversible” (Maghazei, 2014, p. 8). On one side, Iranians’ approaches to accepted cultural products and accepted cultural practices changed during Khatami’s 8-year presidency. Meanwhile, the music industry had become a lucrative industry with its own musical identity and stars. During Khatami’s era, many companies began expanding their businesses to accommodate the demand for in-country music recording and publication.

This period heralded several key issues. First, under the power of the new regime, the number of albums published, and concerts performed were restricted. A 2008 report produced by the Office of Cultural Studies for the Ministry of Education in Iran, titled *The situation of art in Iran (3): A short analysis of the situation of music (Politics and goals 1370-1385)* (Fathi, 2008), demonstrates this drop in music production and concerts during the Ahmadinejad administration. Second, the administration reverted to promoting more conservative culture by involving the *Basij* into the cultural milieu. The *Basij*’s role in delivering cultural policy expanded during the Ahmadinejad era. Lastly, a crucial document on engineering culture in the country was commissioned by Ali Khamenei (Supreme Leader) to the Higher Council of the Cultural Revolution (HCCR) in 1386 (2007), two years after the first mandate of Mahmood Ahmadinejad’s presidency. Titled *The Cultural Engineering Map of the Country* and published in 1392 (2013), this document maps out the blueprint of the cultural policy of the country until 1404 (2025). In 120 pages it lays out the goal of redesigning and improving the country’s cultural plan (HCCR, 2013). The HCCR devised a *Special Council of Cultural Engineering* in 1386 (2007) who consulted “300 experts and

researchers directly and 2000 of them indirectly” (HCCR, 2013, p.10) to write this document. One could speculate that it was commissioned two years after the end of the presidency of Mohammad Khamati, whose cultural policies led to the normalisation of cultural practices that were prohibited prior to his presidency.

This watershed document consists of seven chapters. The first chapter focuses on defining the report’s terminologies, including terms such as culture, national culture, popular culture, engineering of culture, and cultural engineering. The second chapter concentrates on the fundamental values that the document upholds. The third chapter gives the visions of how culture should be understood by 1404 (2025). The fourth chapter outlines the major cultural goals that the country’s different cultural and governmental institutions must follow, with each goal involving multiple organizations. The fifth chapter outlines the cultural priorities that the country must focus on, including a ranking of ten strategic axes in different fields as well as proposed investments based on the time-sensitivity of the goals. The sixth chapter lays out the mandated grand strategies. Finally, the seventh chapter presents the institutional structures to operate together to shape the country’s cultural system.

The report looks at culture through lenses of engineering and medicine and defines culture as collections of systems. I highlight those terms since the document persistently attempts to diagnose or pathologize problematic cultures in the society and uses techniques in engineering to fix those problematic cultural areas. This document is preoccupied with fighting what it calls “soft war” by gaining “soft power”. The “soft war” is the cultural war that the opponents of the regime are accused of waging against the Iranian regime. The solution to this “soft war” is the gaining of “soft power” from within, to counter the effects of the “soft war”. The report also focuses heavily on the notion of Islamic-Iranian national culture and gives higher value to this concept than terms such as popular culture (HCC, 2013, p. 16). It places great importance on respecting the fundamental values of Islamic-Iranian culture based on the principles of Islam and the *Shari’a* law. Here, Islamic ideology is ever-present in the language, with terms such as ‘authenticity’ and Islamic values appearing with great frequency. The document also ignores any form of cultural diversity, focusing instead on constructing a homogenous culture. The best form of culture, according to the document, is expressed as Islamic-Iranian culture, forgetting all religious minorities of the country, as well as

those who do not believe in any religion. Thus, the report's aim is to engineer a homogenous culture rooted in what the document calls Islamic-Iranian culture. What is fascinating, and likely a reoccurring theme in this thesis, is how the homogeneous values proposed in the document are, in fact, ambiguous. In reality, we do not know what an Islamic-Iranian culture is and what it entails. Moreover, the document's discourse asserts that decisions must be carried out based on Islamic values, with consideration of national and global situations, without clarifying what these considerations are and how they shape decision making. This governmental document creates ambiguous language in its efforts to portray an incoherent ideological vision of relevance locally and globally.

While cellphone and Internet use began during Khatami's administration, Ahmadinejad's era saw a rise in the technologies' proliferation. This caught the government off guard during the 2009 *Green Movement*¹¹ when citizens uploaded cellphone videos of protests to YouTube and protestors used Twitter to update the world about the events in Iran. After the Movement, the government began a great number of Internet censoring initiatives, including blocking applications and websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. A detailed report of the structure of Internet censorship titled "Cultural censorship in Iran: Iranian culture in a state of emergency" is available online (Robertson et al., 2011). The censorship provided a business opportunity for those exploring or engaging in e-commerce. While different in cultural policy, Ahmadinejad's administration had a similar attitude towards economics as Rafsanjani. Rafsanjani saw liberalization of the markets as a solution for boosting the country's economy. Indeed, during this time, the number of private banks in the country rose greatly and their influence expanded to many different parts of the economy (Harris, 2017). Private banks undertook the development of interact technology in Iran during the Khatami era. During Ahmadinejad's administration, they expanded this technology to allow for online transactions. Hence, Ahmadinejad's era ushered in e-commerce business. This rise in private investment, coupled with the advancement in e-commerce technology, initiated a technology boom in Iran.

¹¹ The *Green Movement* was the post-electoral protest movement following the announcement of the results of the 2009 election in favour of Mahmood Ahmadinejad, a result contested by many. The movement began in Tehran and continued in other cities in the country and was the first major protest movement in Iran after the 1979 revolution. It's innovative use of Twitter and YouTube to share information about the protests led it to be named the Twitter revolution.

As Joolayee & Entezari (2021) argue, the government during this period focused on the country's economic aspects while it promoted a liberal-nationalist ideology, as well as aggressive and confrontational positions with those who critiqued it; two examples of these are national newspapers and the confrontation with House of Cinema. That said, the government did not seem to have any particular vision for culture, instead acting reactively to any form of practice that it deemed unfit. Another important point that shaped Ahmadinejad's presidency was the implementation of the cultural engineering policy that was created and recommended by the Expediency Council (Joolayee & Entezari, 2021, p.162).

The state of music since 2013 remains under-researched. Anecdotal accounts point to the rise in the number of approved albums, as well as an increase in permitted concerts. Many Iranian bands who reach stardom have begun to tour other countries in Europe, Canada, and the United States. While it began during Ahmadinejad era, the e-commerce business expanded even further during the Rouhani era. Music websites, including Beeptunes.com (equivalent of iTunes), Navaak.com (equivalent of Spotify), aparat.com (equivalent of YouTube), and iranconcert.com (equivalent of Ticketmaster) now facilitate access to Iranian music by expanding the official music industry into the Internet. They also provide special content not available on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) networks. For instance, one can watch full concerts of government approved bands on aparat.com, yet on official television, broadcasting the performance of musical instruments is still banned. The Rouhani presidency tried to depart from Ahmadinejad's conservative stance on culture by taking a more moderate approach. It did so by "designating a larger budget for arts and culture activities, giving more liberty to the private sector, supporting the rights and wellbeing of artists" (Joolayee & Entezari, 2021, p.154). Interestingly, in both Ahmadinejad's and Rouhani's presidencies, the focus has shifted to decentralising activities, leaving cultural activities, and toward funding the private sector while still controlling the legality of in-country distribution of culture. This approach, in fact, contradicts to the goal of engineering culture, a prominent discourse during these periods. The government wants to control the way culture is envisioned and produced, yet simultaneously wants to rid itself of the responsibility of supporting culture financially and structurally by leaving that responsibility to the private sector.

2.4 Conclusion: discipline, cultural policy, and censorship in Iran

This chapter began with the explanation of the post-revolution shift in attitude towards music, to the point that a complete ban on music was proposed. Although the proposition ultimately did not take hold, the negative attitude towards music led to extreme restrictions on this art form for at least the two ensuing decades. Part of this attitude came from the new regime's anti-imperialist stance towards the West, seeing the popularisation of Western culture in the Iranian society during the Pahlavi period as the cause of losing authentic Iranian identity. In turn, the approach towards culture must be one that focuses on returning to the authentic subject, thereby relying on a strict interpretation of Islamic text by the Supreme Leader (Ayatollah Khomeini at the time) as the guiding principle of the society.

The chapter went on to explore the regime's reasons for limiting music, examining the different interpretations of music in Islam. The interpretation of the type of music that is allowed or not allowed in *Shari'a* law remains ambiguous, with multiple interpretations on the subject co-existing. The chapter then turned to the idea of *maslahat* (expediency), often used as a tool to achieve the goals of the Islamic Republic. The tool is a form of calculating whether following *Shari'a* law in a specific case is more beneficial to the longevity of the system. As such, the Iranian regime has been able to use expediency as an excuse to bypass *Shari'a* law, staying within an ambiguous state in order to rest flexible, adapt to unpredictable situations, and leverage ambiguity to constantly shapeshift.

The chapter then looked at the relationship between culture, politics, and music, considering the structures that manage music in Iran. From the Cultural Revolution Council, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and the Organisation of the Oppressed, implementing Islamic ideology and the regime's interpretation of music was a multi-institutional effort. The chapter concluded with a historical look at each administration's attitude toward music, from 1980 to 2021. The chapter conveyed how the attitude towards music shifted slowly and how each administration proposed its own interpretation of how cultural practices must be interpreted. From the Ahmadinejad administration onward, two almost contradictory elements emerged. On the one hand, the regime established a blueprint for engineering culture out of the fear of the "soft war" waged by the regime's enemies through the development of "soft power". At the same time, it also shifted

cultural production toward privatisation and liberalisation of the cultural industries market. In the next chapter, I will look at how culture is interpreted, problematizing the interpretation of culture in Iranian literature and the reasons why these interpretations are limited.

CHAPTER 3

PROBLEMATISING CULTURE, MUSIC AND TALFIQI

In this section, I begin by looking at the interpretation of culture in the Iranian literature and problematize the notion. I then look at the importance of studying music and specially *Talfigi* music as a subject matter in the context of the limited interpretation of culture.

3.1 Iranian Culture and the debates surrounding tradition and modernity

3.1.1 Authenticity: Al-Ahmad and Shariati, Culture and Islamic Ideology

Rapid modernization during the Pahlavi era faced various criticisms. From a cultural perspective, the most potent critique came from *Occidentosis: A plague from the West* by Jalal Al-Ahmad, who saw the ever-increasing influence of Western culture in Iranian society as a sickness. He popularised the term Westoxification, or Occidentosis, originally coined by Ahmad Fardid, an Iranian philosopher heavily influenced by Martin Heidegger's reflections on modernity, the notion of technology, and the notion of authenticity. Al-Ahmad critiqued what he saw as a blind acceptance of the Western culture, something that sickened the authentic Iranian culture. Occidentosis was "the aggregate of events in the life, culture, civilization, and modes of thought of a people having no supporting tradition, no historical continuity, no gradient of transformation" (Mirsepassi, 2006, p.418). Al-Ahmad saw the consumerist culture as a way of life that created nihilistic individuals, disconnected from their past and blindly following a way of life empty of meaning. He saw the return to Islam as a solution to fill the emptiness caused by consumer culture. In the same line of thought as Al-Ahmad, another thinker of the time, Ali Shariati, took the problem of Occidentosis further with a suggested solution. Shariati offered a theory of Islam as ideology by making "every attempt to construct and popularise a modern Shi'i ideology as a more authentically grounded alternative to existing secular ideologies" (Mirsepassi, 2000, p.114). In *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, Shariati (1980) critiques Western intellectual trends of his time by stating how the materialistic nature of these currents demonstrate the refusal to accept the spiritual dimensions of human beings. In doing so, he argues for a return to the Islamic philosophy as a solution to the weakness of Western ideologies in their nihilistic view of human beings. Shariati

was concerned with how “the human (and particularly Iranian) ‘soul’ within modernity” (Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 117) is being destroyed by modernity and the materialistic vision that intellectuals of 19th and 20th century put forth.

What is interesting to note here are the parallels between these theorists and those of the Frankfurt School. Indeed, a major influence of the reflection behind these Iranian cultural theorists and the Frankfurt school is Martin Heidegger and his arguments surrounding the critique of technology and the return to the authentic. Moreover, both schools sought a way out of the limitations of traditional Marxist theories by finding new ways to re-envision the Left. For the Frankfurt School, the solution was critical theory, while for Al-Ahmad and Shariati, it was Islam as ideology. Hence, while the former warned that ideology was something to be wary of, the other embraced it as a guiding vehicle for moving the society forward. What is important to add about the Iranian cultural critiques of the time was the influence of post-colonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon and his idea of decolonialization. Thus, the ideas formulated during the revolution were, on the one hand, Marxist in their critique of consumerism and capitalism and, on the other hand, postcolonial in their critique of Imperialism and unidirectional globalization.

The challenge with both Al-Ahmad and Shariati’s thinking was that they never specified the implications of an Islamic culture and what authentic Iranian culture really means. This is partly because they both died before seeing the revolution with their own eyes. This ambiguity left the new regime with a very open hand to interpret those ideas. What remained clear, though, was the conviction that Iran’s culture can be tainted if influenced by Western culture.

3.1.2 Soroush and the superiority of Islamic Culture

In *Three Cultures in Iran*, Abdolkarim Soroush (2000) argues that “We Iranian Moslems are the inheritors and the carriers of three cultures at once [...] The three cultures that form our common heritage are of national, religious, and Western origins” (p.156). In terms of national culture, Soroush brings our attention to the importance of the nationalism as a narrative of Iranian history. However, he also gives attention to how the notion of returning to the pre-Islamic Iran as a narrative by many during the constitutional revolution and the Pahlavi dynasty has pinned the national culture against religious culture. This, for Soroush, poses a danger because it constructs a notion

of Pure Persian as a construct in opposition to the “Arab contamination” of this ethnicity. Hence, the solution for those who follow such discourse is a “return to our pure national pre-Islamic culture” (p.158). The second notion of culture for Soroush is that of coming to terms with the Western culture. Here, Soroush spends a detailed analysis on two interpretations of the concept of occidentosis by Jalal Al-Ahmad. The first, as I have detailed in the previous question, is that “the coming of Western customs, manners, and technology, causing our eviction from our native home, the sacrifice of our noble and gracious traditions at the feet of the Western practices and industry” (p.160). The second, Soroush argues, “maintains that our Islamic and native cultures are long past their prime, that they are exhausted and depleted. In this view the Islamic and native cultures are incapable of revival and renewal, having been superseded by the West. For this group *gharb zadegi* means sharing in the historical destiny of the West” (p.161). Hence, Soroush lays out two ways that Islamic culture in Iran has culturally dealt with the West. Surprisingly, Soroush does not really critique or define Islamic culture and states that, “our religious culture goes back thirteen hundred years. Iranians have lovingly embraced, nurtured, and developed Islamic thought and culture, never abandoning it and endowing its literature with new riches. Our folkways and customs, art and architecture, wedding and divorce, education and edification, entertainment and amusement, sorrow and joy, schooling, and literature, all accepted the cast and content of Islam” (p. 162). Soroush’s solution to understanding the Iranian cultural identity is a critique of the “baneful equation of identity with rigidity” (p.163). Hence, he distinguishes “blind emulation and blind rejection” as two pitfalls of extreme approach to cultural identity.

Soroush critiques the rigidity of the nationalist and anti-imperial cultural conceptions in his work and yet his affirmation of Islamic Culture as an accepted culture by most Iranians becomes problematic due to its totalising identification of Islamic identity. While Soroush critiques Al-Ahmad, he still sees Islamic culture and identity as something integral to the Iranian culture. One challenge with Soroush’s argument is the decisive division between nationalist, Western, and Islamic cultures. This is as if these three types of culture cannot coexist together. From this point of view, Soroush’s ideas do not resonate with millennial Iranian society since he is not taking the impacts of globalization and its consequences, namely cultural hybridity, into account.

3.1.3 Shayegan and the clash between tradition and modernity

Dariush Shayegan is one of the most important Iranian cultural theorists. Born in Tabriz, he studied with Henri Corbin at l'université de Sorbonne in Paris. Before the revolution, he created a research centre around the idea of Dialogue among Civilizations. After the revolution, his idea was re-articulated by President Khatami as a discourse to reconnect with the rest of the world. Shayegan's (1989) major contribution to Iranian cultural study was his book titled *Le regard mutilé : schizophrénie culturelle, pays traditionnels face à la modernité*. The book looks at the contradictions between tradition and modernity in "an essay on the mental distortions afflicting those civilizations that have remained on the sidelines of history and played no part in the festival of changes" (Shayegan, 1989, p.vii). For Shayegan, the "non-comprehension" and "non-assimilation" of "modernity at its broadest sense" by non-Western societies has caused these societies a "profound malaise" (Shayegan, 1989, p. 1). Shayegan continues by asserting the opinion that the Eastern societies took a sideline in history by obsessing over God instead of getting actively involved in history by participating in the process of modernity as it was happening. In return, when the West began to interact with Iran and introduce ideas from modernity, "we settled down to consume ideas, objects, and methods whose mechanisms we could barely decipher. We understood that in a world dominated by the power of technology our ancient wisdom, like the Chinese gardener's simple vessel, was becoming increasingly obsolete, while our ideas were falling into disuse" (Shayegan, 1989, p.15). Shayegan continues by arguing that because of the fear of losing identity, many societies, including the Iranian society, have tried to show their relevance in the modern world by arguing that the traditional culture is adaptable to modernity. In other words, there is no contradiction between modernity and Islam. In reality, Shayegan sees a contradiction between these two worlds and suggests that, "instead of just dumping Islam on top of something with which it is incompatible, might it not be a better idea to remove it from the public domain and relegate it to its proper place: as a culture, certainly a rich one, but only a culture, like all the others which have appeared on the planet?" (Shayegan, 1989, p.26). Furthermore, Shayegan sees Islam as the traditional culture and the revolution as a "the product of modernity" (Khosrokhavar, 2004). The contradictions in the way western practices are adopted and appropriated within tradition "introduce a distortion that is based on the unconscious adoption of Western thought and tools in an ambiguous way and marked by the inability to get out of tradition" (ibid.). For him, such contradiction in trying to rationalise the combination of two ideas that are incompatible has caused

what Shayegan calls cultural schizophrenia. Such state has caused the society to have a “mutilated outlook whose vision is altered and twisted as if reflected in a distorting mirror”. (Shayegan, 1989, p.31).

Again, Shayegan’s vision of culture is one that is trapped in the past and that has no room to maneuver because of the way he sees the debate between tradition and modernity as a dichotomy. As we saw in the works of the previous authors mentioned, the struggle to come in terms with contradictions of tradition and modernity have led these authors to be stuck with the idea of either going back to tradition or completely disconnecting from tradition all together. On top of this, what culture means for these authors is reduced to the same limited conception that the Frankfurt School formulated, namely, to see culture as a binary between high versus low culture.

In theorising culture in Iran in the post-revolution context, a critical element remains the formulation of Iranian culture in relation to the tradition/modernity dichotomy. This formulation has resulted in a kind of blame game. One side blames the introduction of modern cultural practices as the cause of damaging the authentic Iranian identity, while the other blames the unwillingness of traditional cultures to accept modernity as the reason behind the lack of progress and advancement to join the globalised world. Both sides propose an either/or point of view on culture, with no compromise between. They likewise base themselves on the assumption that culture is a grandiose project towards authenticity or modernity. Taking such position to culture limits one in understanding the complexities: how culture mixes and molds different practices to produce something unique that embodies the diversity of those practices.

3.2 The literature on music in post revolution Iran

The literature on the topic of music in Iran has been gradually increasing since the early 2000’s. This interest has been largely due to the changes that occurred in the country around cultural policy during Khatami’s presidency. There are three key books that have been written about Iranian popular music. The first book is by Bronwen Robertson’s (2012) with the title: *Reverberations of dissent: identity and expression in Iran’s illegal music scene*. The work is probably the most thorough anthropological research on the unofficial rock music scene in Iran, specifically Tehran in the early 2000s. Robertson interviewed all the major Iranian rock musicians in the city, many of

whom no longer live in the country. She has also attended several unofficial and official music concerts and has detailed her experience in her book. The second is Gay Jennifer Breyley and Sasan Fatemi's (Breyley & Fatemi, 2016) *Iranian music and popular entertainment: from motrebi to los angelesi and beyond*. The book is a comprehensive study of entertainment music in Iran since the Qajar era. The book takes an ethnomusicological approach and looks at the changes in the attitude of Iranians towards entertainment music beginning with the Qajar era. What the book shows is how the motreb and its form of entertainment continued to be seen as a music genre that shaped Iranian pop music. Meanwhile, the craft that came from being a motreb disappeared after the revolution and was completely replaced by what is now pop music inside and outside of Iran. Finally, Nahid Siamdoust's (Siamdoust, 2017) *Soundtrack of the Revolution: the politics of music in Iran* is the most recent book about music in Iran. The book is the most comprehensive analysis of the politics of music in Iran after the revolution and it combines interviews from official and unofficial musicians as well as officials from the ERSHAD. Siamdoust takes a socio-political approach to her analysis by focusing on how the politics of music changed since the beginning of the revolution. The tone of the book speaks of the realities that musicians must face in the country. At the same time, it shows some hopefulness of the future of music in Iran.

Besides these three important books, several articles and chapters have been written about popular music in Iran. One of the biggest contributors of literature on music in Iran after the revolution is Laudan Nooshin. She has worked on Iranian classical as well as Iranian popular music in her career as an ethnomusicologist. Her book *Iranian classical music: The discourses and practice of creativity* looks at the changes in the practices of creativity, specifically improvisational techniques, in Iranian classical music and *sonati* music through a discourse analysis of creativity as subject of study (Nooshin, 2015). Her first article about popular music in Iran titled "Underground, Overground: Rock music and youth discourse in Iran" looked at the beginnings of the establishment of rock music in Iran (Nooshin, 2005b). She also published "Subversion and Countersubversion: Power, control and meaning in the new Iranian Pop music" (Nooshin, 2005a). In the book, she looks at the ways pop music, as a genre, was introduced in post-revolution Iran. These two papers gave an overview of changes that came with the change in cultural policy in Iran during the first half of Khatami administration. She then published "The language of rock: Iranian youth, popular music, and national identity" in 2008 where she looked at the discourse of rock music in Iran and

how this discourse generates its own form of national identity (Nooshin, 2008). The paper is a discursive analysis of the content of some of the famous rock music in the country. After pop and rock, she attended to hip hop music and published hip-hop “Tehran: migrating styles, musical meanings, marginalised voices” (Nooshin, 2011). The article explores the reasons behind the rise of hip-hop in popularity in Iran since the mid-2000s and how the music form has allowed reconstructing a sense of connection to Tehran as a place. Nooshin then moved her attention to jazz in her 2016 article “Jazz and its social meaning in Iran: from cultural colonialism to the universal” where she looked at the changes in social meaning of the music genre in Iran since the 1950’s (Nooshin, 2016). In 2017, she contributed to a volume on music in Iran edited by Mehdi Semati with an article titled “Whose liberation? Iranian popular music and the fetishization of resistance” where she critiqued the Western literature’s usage of the idea of resistance to romanticise what is happening in the music scene in the country (Nooshin, 2017). Beside Nooshin, there are sporadic articles on the topic of music in Iran. Maghazei’s (2014) “Trends in contemporary conscious music” provides an overview of changes in cultural policy after the revolution and argues for the usage of the term ‘conscious music’ as a terminology to look at certain trends in unofficial music, including the rise of artists such as Mohsen Namjoo who have a new take on *Talfigi* (Fusion) music. Beside these sporadic articles, the Iranian communication scholar, Mehdi Semati (Semati, 2017), has curated an issue of the *Popular Communication* journal to the topic of Popular music of Iran. Here, we have articles from Farzaneh Hemasi, Laudan Nooshin, Theresa Steward, Erum Nabavi, and Maliheh Maghazaei on topics ranging from Iranian diaspora music, to performing classical music, to hybrid identity construction, to the presence of post-revolutionary female vocalists in Iranian music industry. The next section looks at why *Talfigi* as a process of hybridization is an important object of study for this thesis and what the relevance of this topic is at the time of writing it.

3.3 Conclusion and central question of the thesis

In the past decade, *Talfigi* has risen to prominence as a category in popular music in Iran. Since 2010, a new wave of *Talfigi* bands rose to popularity among Iranians inside and outside of the country. Some of these bands (Bomrani and Pallet) are influenced by Eastern European music genres such as Serbian brass, Easter European Roma, and Klezmer music. Others, such as Kamakan and Damahi, are reviving the folk music of South of Iran and mixing it with jazz and flamenco music. Others, such as Chaartar, have been working with electronic and synthesised sounds. Artists

in other established genres such as pop and *sonati* are also working on their interpretation of *Talfiqi*. For instance, Homayoun Shajarian's, the son of legendary maestro vocalist Mohammad Reza Shajarian, latest live concert was an attempt to produce *Talfiqi-sonati* music. Meanwhile, pop artists such as Salar Aghili and Ali Zand Vakili have been working on producing pop *Talfiqi* music.

Most of these bands came to popularity after the post 2009 election turmoil and are mostly composed of Iranian Millennials. The musicians from this generation of *Talfiqi* music use the Internet heavily to promote themselves, share music, and communicate with their fans. Meanwhile, many of the musicians who began their career in Iran migrated to other countries and began developing their interpretation of *Talfiqi* with both Iranian and non-Iranian musicians. This has expanded the scope of *Talfiqi* as a transnational Iranian musical genre. *Talfiqi* is now an established category of music in Iran and its influence and popularity has already gone beyond its borders. Many *Talfiqi* musicians travel regularly to other countries for international tours. Meanwhile, all these musicians are present and active on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram.

My interest in *Talfiqi* is rooted in the capacity of this music category to act as a cultural discourse that navigates a very complex socio-political situation. From one side, it navigates the politics of music in Iran by presenting sounds that are Iranian and yet connected to global trends. From another side, it negotiates with a very rigidly conservative understanding of Iranian music that is rooted in *sonati* music genre. In this sense, it constructs its own identity as a hybrid transnational Iranian music identity. Studying *Talfiqi* is important for several key reasons. The genre of music is at the crossroad between the politics of the state, politics of music, and formation of new Iranian musical identities. It is walking a delicate line discursively in order to present new sounds that are Iranian in their own ways. *Talfiq* is also important because it is allowing artists from marginal groups in Iran to have a voice in shaping the musical sound of the country. Examples of this are the music of bands such as Kamakan, Damahi, and Leekoo to name a few. Lastly, *Talfiqi* is gaining a global reach and a global audience because of the Internet since those who work in this music scene use the tool to not only have an international presence, but also an image of the Iranian millennial *Talfiqi* musician. *Talfiq*, or fusing, is a process of connection to other cultures through the constant

process of exploration and bricolage. In this sense, I look at *Talfiqi* music as a cultural practice that uses hybridity and bricolage to construct new Iranian music identities.

Talfiqi in post revolution Iran began as a way to diversify Iranian popular music and introduce new sounds to the limited musical soundscape that existed during the 1980's and 1990's. By mid-2000s, *Talfiqi* was no longer limited to the mixing of rock-jazz with *sonati* music. It began to expand its scope as musicians persisted on experimenting and continually trying to fuse different musical elements from different parts of the world together. What this did was to blur the dichotomy between tradition and modernity by embracing both and wanting to add more to the Iranian musical panorama. Considering these aspects, I propose the following questions to answer in this thesis:

How can *Talfiqi* music be located in the Iranian musical panorama in the post-Khatami era?

Supporting question 1: What are the relations between the practice of *talfiq* and the category of *Talfiqi* in the modern history of music in Iran?

Supporting question 2: How is *Talfiqi* music discussed by music critics and musicians in the Iranian media?

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I theorise some of the key concepts that I have presented in my problematic. I begin by problematising the notion of culture and how one can look at it from a theoretical perspective. In doing so, I locate *Talfiqi* as a cultural practice within the theoretical framework of cultural studies. I then focus my attention on the ways music is theorised by scholars of popular music studies and argue that an importance must be given to music from a musicological perspective as much as from cultural studies perspective.

4.1 Locating *Talfiqi* as a cultural practice

4.1.1 Cultural studies and the importance of understanding culture

The Birmingham School emerged from the backdrop of the New Left, drawing on the works of several important intellectuals. Richard Hoggart tended to the long-standing debate on the impact of “mass culture” on the public’s perception of culture (Hall & Cervulle, 2008, p.81). Raymond Williams looked at the unity, instead of difference, between culture and society and made a breakthrough with his work by arguing that one needs to analyze everyday culture to understand society. This was indeed in opposition to his structuralist counterparts who saw ideology as the object of study for understanding how society functions (Hall & Cervulle, 2008, p.82).

One of the fundamental texts in the discipline of Cultural Studies is Raymond Williams’ *The Long Revolution*. In it, Williams expands on his reflections in his earlier book *Culture and Society* by arguing that “we are living through a long revolution [...] it is a genuine revolution, transforming men and institutions” (Williams, 2001, p. 10). For Williams, democratic revolution in modern society commanded “our political attention” and it is a continual project (p.10). The industrial revolution commanded “our economic attention” and was backed by “immense scientific development” (p. 10). The revolution that Williams speaks of when he talks of “Long” revolution is that of cultural revolution. It is a revolution that relies on “the active process of learning, with the skills of literacy and other advanced communication, to all people rather than to limited groups, as capable in importance to the growth of democracy and the rise of scientific industry” (p.11). Williams’ Long Revolution is a more optimistic reading of passive revolution of Gramsci since the

modernity that has come with the “modern prince” have also brought new means of communication that allows the counter-hegemonic “linguistic depository” of the popular culture to be articulated by the people instead of the “organic intellectuals”. The Cultural Revolution, for Williams, is the central role of communication as the means of building common meanings, hence communities, since “the discovery of a means of communication is the discovery of a common meaning” (p.47). Communication, therefore, is central to creative process and to the creation of common experience. As Williams argues, communication “is the process of making unique experience into common experience, and it is, above all, the claim to live”.

Experience, for Williams, is central and the way unique experiences are articulated as common experience is important because “since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings, the thence common activities and purposes” (p.55). Another important point in the Long Revolution is the notion of culture itself. For Williams, culture is neither ideal (as a state of human perfection) nor documentary (body of intellectual and imaginative work). It is social since it is “descriptive of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior” (p.57).

Cultural studies’ relationship to music began with Dick Hebdige’s (1979) *Subculture and the Meaning of Style*. The book popularises the term subcultures in the discipline of cultural studies and looks at the cultural practices of punk youth in post-war Britain. For Hebdige, the punk culture used the technique of *bricolage* to subvert meaning and construct its own identity. The practice of *bricolage*, for Hebdige, was a form of resistance by the punk youth, materialising through the practice itself. A similar argument is indeed made by the French philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984) in his seminal work *The Practices of Everyday Life*. De Certeau attempted to put forward a systematic way of understanding everyday life beyond studying only the artistic products as cultural products. He envisioned the world as *a proper* where those in power (institutionally, physically, etc.) occupy the proper and put forward strategies that directly or indirectly dictates the movement and behavior of users (people) in the proper. At the same time, the way users act and use objects, materials, and spaces around them is not always according to strategies since the ways of using is something that is always subject to creativity and change. The practice of everyday life

is in this dimension of acting according (or not according) to strategies through what de Certeau calls tactics (de Certeau, 1984). Hence, for de Certeau, people are always ‘users’ and the way they use can subvert the order that is created for them by an established power. Again, for de Certeau, *bricolage* is an important practice of subversion because it allows for users to find new ways of making sense of the world around them.

In looking at music in Iran, I use the cultural studies’ approach to understanding culture since it looks at popular culture as a site of different struggles that come together as vehicles of a slow change. With this approach, I look at how *Talfigi* music as a cultural practice in Iran is an amalgam of diverse practices that come together as articulations of difference. According to Rodman (2015) articulation is “the process by which otherwise unrelated phenomena – practices, beliefs, texts, social groups – come to be linked together in a seemingly natural way” (Rodman, 2015, p. 52). Rodman (2015) sees articulation as an important element of cultural studies because the concept breaks from analysis of culture from an essentialist point of view. This locates culture as an unstable process instead of a fixed truth. This is in fact in opposition to the way culture has been analyzed by Iranian scholars that I have talked about early on. This way of theorising takes us away from one Iranian culture to expressions of Iranian cultures by looking at the context and the practices of everyday life in Iran. As Rodman (2015) states “cultural studies recognises that a whole host of things that matter to the analysis of popular music – for example, how meaning is produced, how identities are constructed and maintained, how particular hierarchies of power are maintained through culture – are fundamentally unstable processes” (p.53).

I, therefore, argue that Iranian culture is not within an either/or dichotomy between modernity and tradition but on a both/and spectrum that embodies hybridity to articulate difference and construct identities that breaks from such dichotomy. *Talfigi* is at the forefront of this hybridity in the music scene because it uses *bricolage* to mix the traditional and modern and add many new elements such as re-interpretation of Iranian folk music, the usage of jazz music, and borrowing from other cultures. At the same time, *Talfigi* positions itself sonically by choosing the type of fusing that it needs to do in order to produce its particular aesthetic articulations. *Talfigi*, thus, produces transnational identities through *bricolage* and hybridity. Therefore, *Talfigi* music should be

understood in terms of music as an activity, a cultural practice. Hybridity is at the heart of this cultural practice.

4.1.2 Culture as everyday practice

Having established the theoretical frameworks necessary to address the questions posed, I shall clarify two concepts of political life and everyday cultural practices. The way I conceptualise them is through Michel de Certeau's (1984) notions of proper, strategy, and tactic discussed in *The Practices of Everyday Life* and its relations to the notion of the political and the importance of the enunciation of the political discussed by Jean Francois Bayart within the practices of everyday life.

De Certeau attempted to put forward a systematic way of understanding everyday life beyond studying only the artistic products as cultural products. He envisioned the world as a proper where those in power (institutionally, physically, etc.) occupy the proper and put forward strategies that directly or indirectly dictates the movement and behavior of users (people) in the proper. At the same time, the way users act and use things around them is not always according to strategies since the way of using is always subject to creativity and change. The practices of everyday life are in this dimension of acting according (or not according) to strategies through what de Certeau calls tactics (de Certeau, 1984). Hence, for de Certeau, people are always 'users', and the way they use can subvert the order that is created for them by an established power. Just like the culturalists, de Certeau sees consumption not as a passive act but as a relationship that says something beyond the act of consumption. It is not the consumption that is important, it is the how to of consuming that tells of the power relationships in the practices of everyday life. The practices of the everyday life include the strategies that are deployed by those in power to institute a set of relations and practices as well as tactics that are used by those who are subjugated to question those power relations and practices creatively and opportunistically. The limitation with de Certeau's articulation of strategy and tactic comes from his notion of proper. It is here where de Certeau puts a limitation in the capacity of change in a society. For de Certeau, tactics may be able to undermine strategies and even create new ones. However, the proper is the limit where in the dynamics of tactics and strategy function.

4.1.3 Bourdieu and the question of judgement and taste

De Certeau looks at how tactics play a role in subverting what strategies try to establish as everyday practice. To understand how strategies function and how practice is structured within strategies, the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu becomes pertinent. Bourdieu created a system of understanding the logic of practice in different areas of life by constructing a set of terminologies that operate within a grand structure. Within this structure, what Bourdieu introduces is a way that judgement and taste are constructed socially based on socio-cultural hierarchies. First, I go through these terminologies and explain each individually. I, then, articulate how these ideas come together to form the way something is judged in a society and a hierarchy of taste is formed. The reason I chose Bourdieu is with intent to understand how a new way of categorising music evokes a judgement of taste, and to further explore how this judgement of taste is linked to the discourse surrounding tradition versus modernity in the history of modern Iran broadly and music in modern Iran specifically.

4.1.3.1 The idea of field

This is probably the most umbrella term in Bourdieu's theory, field looks at a specific area of life with its own institutions, structures, rules of the game, and actors. A field consists of a network of positions where “agents and institutions are integrated and interact with each other in accordance with field-specific rules (*règles*), which is why the field represents the more structural part of Bourdieu’s theory” (Walther, 2014, p. 8). Rules, in Bourdieusian theory of practice, are not necessarily laws. They are the necessary codes needed for functioning in a field naturally and fluidly. They are the ways the game of being in a field is played and those who encounter the field must learn to play these ways if they want to stay in the field. Field determines the practices of its agents by determining the roles of the agents. It structures the relationship between its agents through some form of institutionalization process. In other words, it is “the structure of objective relations (*la structure des relations objectives*) between the agents on a field that defines dominant and dominated positions (Bourdieu, 1977) and that determines what agents can and what they cannot do, i.e. which practices are possible and which not” (Walther, 2014, p.9).

The music industry in Iran, for example, can be considered as a field since it has its own actors (musicians, concert halls, distribution channels, production houses, etc.), as well as its own

regulating bodies (ex. ERSHAD). Fields can interact with one another. For example, the field of the state para-militia apparatus can interact with the field of music industry when they intervene in a gathering approved by ERSHAD to shut down the event. However, fields have enough interrelations, network capacity, written/unwritten rules, and spoken/unspoken practices that they can be treated as an autonomous body.

4.1.3.2 Habitus and the way practices become part of the ordinary life.

Bourdieu (2008) never really defines the term habitus clearly. In the third chapter of *The Logic of Practice*, he explains it as:

“Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (Bourdieu, 2008, p.53)

For Bourdieu, habitus is part history and part producer of history. Since “the habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices —more history— in accordance with schemes generated by history” (Bourdieu, 2008, p.54). When Bourdieu speaks of dispositions, he is looking beyond just performances to include attitudes, thoughts, feelings, discourses, and any forms of utterances as part of habitus. On the one hand, habitus is durable because it continues to exist within the duration of a certain time. In this sense, it is structured structures that have existed and continue to exist. On the other hand, it is ever changing and evolving because it functions as structuring structures. This means that habitus is never fixed but changing and adapting to the new situations that it faces based on the previous experiences that it has accumulated. According to Walther (2014), habitus is acquired through two stages of socialization. The first, which is part of a forgotten history that has become part of the everyday life of an individual, is known as primary habitus. Bourdieu (2008) looks at this as the types of practices that were internalised during childhood from experiences that internalise the external “as the parents’ modes of thinking, feeling and behaving that are linked to their position in the social space are internalised in the children’s own habitus” (Walther, 2014, p.13). In other words, primary habitus are implanted in an individual. Because of

this, they are “longer lasting and more decisive” (Asimaki, 2014). Secondary habitus is 'transplanted' since they were acquired by encountering different social fields such as school and workplace. These practices can change more often and be used in different ways to adapt to new situations. Bourdieu does not separate habitus based on the primary or secondary but looks at it as something that has both elements embodied within it. For this reason, habitus is dynamic since it has within it established practices and the possibility for those practices to change over time.

4.1.3.3 Capital and its different forms.

This is an easier concept in Bourdieu's vocabulary to explain and understand. It extends from the Marxist notion of capital, and it aims to include other forms of capital that are used by agents within a field to negotiate their position within that field. The most prominent use of the word capital is to speak of economic capital, and it includes all forms of financial assets that an individual or an organization acquires. In other words, it is the capital that is useful for doing business and functioning in a system financially. Bourdieu critiques the notion of capital in economics because it has “reduced the universe of exchange to mercantile exchange, which is objectively and subjectively oriented toward the maximization of profit” (Bourdieu, 2008, p.46). Bourdieu includes other forms of capital including social, cultural, and symbolic capital in the vocabulary of his theory. In what follows, we explore these terminologies.

The first form of capital that Bourdieu discusses is cultural capital. This notion is not really defined by Bourdieu. Instead, it is explained in three different forms. From my understanding, it is the accumulation of different forms of culture that is inherited from family. This is a very precise definition of culture that does not include street culture, for example. It is institutionalised culture with family being a form of institution. Bourdieu argues that such capital exists in three forms:

a) The embodied state: this is the form of capital that is acquired through a process of embodiment of certain activities. This type of capital cannot be bought. It is acquired through practice and upbringing.

b) Objectivized state: this form of capital is gained through the acquisition of cultural materials (books, films, artwork, etc.). While it is “transmissible in materiality”, it plays a part of gaining embodied culture when it is appropriated symbolically.

c) Institutionalised state: This is the type of capital that is gained by going through certain institutions that accredit an individual of certain competence. For Bourdieu, institutions “institute cultural capital by a collective magic and enable a comparison of qualification holders, e.g., two persons having obtained their diploma from different institutions” (Welther, 2014, p.10).

The second form discussed by Bourdieu is social capital. He defines the term as:

"the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition--or in other words, to membership in a group -- which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 2008, p.51)

We can observe certain important elements in the definition. First, social capital is an aggregation of social resources in a form of a durable network. This means that for social capital to be successful, it needs to be capable of calling upon this network and mobilising them in a time of need. In other words, “the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected” (Bourdieu, 2008, p.51). Social capital is a form of capital that needs to be maintained because it is not only possessed, but mobilised when necessary. Therefore, “Social capital can be institutionalised in a title of nobility and requires efforts for its creation and maintain, e.g., by reciprocal invitations” (Bonnewitz in Welther, 2014, p. 10).

Lastly, Bourdieu speaks of symbolic capital. This is the form of capital that is gained by the acknowledgement of the accumulation of multiple capitals. It is the capital that is related to gaining respect and honour among certain groups or publics. This capital is the result of the conversion of different forms of capital to gain legitimacy within a social group.

4.2 Culture of resistance, defiance, and persistence

More recent debates on the topic of culture in Iran have focused largely on the relationships between culture and politics in the country. This concentration on the idea of politics is to be expected, since the circumstances in which people who live in Iran call for the recognition of the politics of culture that has continued to exist in the country. In *Iran: A People Interrupted*, for example, Hamid Dabashi (2008) states that “to me the story of modern Iran is one of defiance and rebellion against tyranny and globalised colonialism” (p.7). Here, the idea is that defiance has been a central theme in the history of modern Iran. Meanwhile, other scholars such as Asef Bayat (Bayat, 2013) argue how the practices of everyday life among people in the Middle East has to be understood as the politicisation of everyday life. In other words, normal acts in everyday life have undertones of political meaning. In *Young and Defiant in Tehran*, Shahram Khosravi (2008) argues how “the Islamic Regime represents a pastoral power, against which the Third Generation has developed a ‘culture of defiance’” (Bagheri, 2018, p. 12). Khosravi’s (2008) argument centers around the idea that the location of struggle in Iran is not between classes but between the Regime versus the youth. In this struggle, the youth, in the actions of their everyday life, resist against the Iranian regime in different ways. What is fascinating about these debates is what remains unsaid: the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. The location of these arguments is no longer within this rigid discourse. These ways of approaching Iranian culture center around the articulations developed in the discipline of Cultural Studies. This said, a certain problem also rises in the theorisation of Iranian culture when it is centered around the notion of resistance.

In “Classy Kids and Down-at-Heel Intellectuals: Status Aspirations and Blind Spots in the Contemporary Ethnography of Iran”, Zuzanna Olszewska (2013) remarks the common tendency of many authors to interpret acts in everyday life as acts of resistance. Bagheri (2018) also critiques the literature about youth in Iran (Bayat, 2013; Khosravi, 2008; Mahdavi, 2009) and argues that these interpretations tend to limit the regard towards Iranian culture by overemphasising the notion of resistance. This leads to the fetishization of everyday culture as constant acts of defiance and resistance. This argument is echoed and pushed further by other scholars, such as Laudan Nooshin (2017), who look at how this fetishization of the notion of resistance becomes a kind of orientalism whereby Western regard towards Iranian music, and culture in general, is reduced to looking at these practices as resistance. This fetishization of resistance is also problematized in Nahid

Siamdoust's (2019) last article where she speaks about the notion of persistence, an idea that we discussed together when we met at the 2018 Iranian Studies Conference in Irvine, California. The problem that rises in understanding the way *Talfiqi* negotiates its place is that the genre of music does not necessarily resist. Moreover, the type of cultural negotiation that happens in the *Talfiqi* music scene is more about persisting on certain positions and messages rather than resisting the authority in any profound ways. In other words, *Talfiqi* musicians position themselves in the social-cultural instead of the political. This is indeed not a problem that can be resolved in this thesis. Yet, it is a problem that I will deal with through theoretical exploration in my thesis by considering the following question: how can we think about everyday culture in Iran critically without reducing it to practices of resistance? In answering this question, I will be looking at the notion of persistence. Persistence is a set of tactics, in Michel de Certeau's sense, that uses and mixes available materials (physical and discursive) to come up with new ways of doing culture that negotiates for its place in the public with power instead of resisting or defying it. Persistence happens through creative ways of using ambiguity as a form of articulation and it achieves its goals through continuity and repetition. This means that those who persist find creative ways of positioning their discourse in the public within the unwritten confines that the power puts forward for them. They also continue their discourse and diversify it so to normalise what power sees as taboo. Cultural Studies is an excellent tool for approaching cultural practices that surround Iranian *Talfiqi* music because it allows us to look at the broad socio-historic context within which this category of music has been evolving.

4.3 *Talfiqi* as a category and a constructed discourse

If we look at the history and development of music in Iran since the Qajar period, we can see the constant recurrence of the division between high and low/popular music. Moreover, this division has always been directly linked to different ways the dichotomies between tradition and modernity have been formulated through the history of Iran. What does this tell us about genre formation in Iran? As a genre of music, *Talfiqi* is connected to a history of musical formations in Iran. This music formation is directly linked to the way popular culture has been approached and to the approach of different governmental powers towards the notions of tradition and modernity. At the heart of this debate has been the notion of authenticity and the different ways of understanding authenticity. In *Categorising Sound: Genre and Twentieth Century Popular Music*, David Brackett

(2016) makes the compelling argument that music genres are historically produced and go through different changes over time. Hence, genres are discursively constructed. While Brackett's analysis looks at the formation of popular genres in American popular music, his essential argument can be used in framing *Talfiqi* as a historical formation. What it tells us about *Talfiqi* music in Iran is that while the category may have been articulated in the late 1990's, it is part of a historic continuation that revolves around the debates surrounding Iranian music identity located in the in-between-ness of tradition and modernity. When looking at *Talfiqi* from this angle, we realise that the category is also a discursive break from the dual nature of argument surrounding tradition versus modernity and the essentialist vision of the arguments surrounding authenticity.

Georgina Born (Born, 1995) also takes the idea of "discursive formation" by Michel Foucault in order to articulate the notion of "music as culture" in a broad sense as "the ensemble or constellation of practices, beliefs, communications, social relations, institutions and technologies through which a particular music is experienced and has meaning" (p.211). For her, music needs an expansion of the conceptual framework of social mediation. This is because of the music's "complex social mediation" (Born, 2011, p.378). Born (2011) argues that music generates "a myriad of social forms" and "it requires a social analytics that encompasses four planes: 1) music produces its own diverse social relations; 2) music conjures up and animates imagined communities; 3) music is traversed by wider social identity formations; 4) music is bound up in the social and institutional forms that provide grounds for its production, reproduction, and transformation. Taking the idea of assemblages by Deleuze, she argues that these planes "enter into the musical assemblage" (p.378). For the sake of this thesis, the relationship between performance and identity will not be explored as much because of the limitations that I have in conducting my field research. An important observation of Born, however, is music's capacity to "animate imagined communities that [...] may reproduce or memorialise extant identity formations, generate purely fantasised identifications, or prefigure emergent identity formations by forging novel social alliances" (Born, 2011, p.381). For Born, music has a power to generate imagined and virtual communities. She refers specifically to the central contributions in "internet-based social networks to the personalization of online identity constructions" (p.381).

Born discusses the contribution of Will Straw (2001) and his idea of scenes as a way to articulate how music constructs communities. Straw critiques the early cultural studies' use of the term "subculture" and uses the term "scenes" as the "cultural space within which a range of musical practices co-exist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation and according to the widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (Straw, 1991, p. 373). Straw's notion of 'scene' helps to locate *Talfiqi* as multiplicities of practices that intertwine and feed from each other to create social coherence. Straw (2001) provides three main characteristics for scenes. Firstly, they are cultural unities with an imprecise and ambiguous boundary. Secondly, scenes are anti-essentializing in the sense that those who observe them need to "observe a hazy coherence between sets of practices of affinities" (Straw, 2001, p.248). Finally, scenes evoke a sense of community, as well as a cosmopolitan lifestyle. In following this definition, I locate fusion music as an Iranian music scene. This music scene has ambiguous boundaries musically and geographically. Moreover, it is anti-essentializing since its aim is to break the traditional visions of finding contradictions between tradition and modernity by going beyond such arguments. Finally, it evokes a sense of community by creating its own musical identities and gathering its own fan base. The internet indeed plays an important role in expanding this community beyond the borders of the country and to an international level. Throughout the history of Iran, technology has played a central role in shifting the production, distribution, and consumption of music in Iran.

4.4 Problematizing *Talfiqi* as a category

As a category of music, fusion is a term that refers to a music that mixes two or more genres of music together. It emerged as part of the language of music categorization in the 1960's and 1970's primarily in the United States to describe music that blurred the lines between principally three genres of jazz, rock and funk (Fellezs, 2011, p.16). In that context, it referred to "a merging of jazz, rock and funk music aesthetics and practices and the subsequent (or better, further) blurring of these large-scale genre boundaries in articulation with other musical traditions" (p.16).

In Iran, *Talfiqi* is an ambiguous term that classifies musical expressions that cannot be defined under the genres that have been commonly recognised by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic

Guidance (ERSHAD) after its establishment in the 1980's¹². Thus, “when one cannot define the genre or the geography of a piece, they easily use the label ‘*Talfigi*’ as a way to settle down on a literature while showing how new forms of experimentation is not only increasing but also are becoming popular” (Naseri, 2015). One way of looking at this is to look at the categorisation of *Talfigi* as a practice of otherisation. Ramin Sadiqi, the head of Hermes records, one the most influential record labels in Iran, touches on this subject by highlighting the economic reasons behind such categorization. He argues that “the reason behind categorising is so that we can find a common literature. But in music, every time something is ambiguous, a black box is created for the music that cannot fit pre-existing categories” (Sadiqi in Nāzemzadeh, 2014). What Sadiqi is articulating is a problem that exists in the literature of music classification. In fact, other black boxes such as world music and underground music play a similar function to that of *Talfigi* in classifying music that plays in between or outside conventional genres. Sadiqi points to how categorising music as *Talfigi* is a way of labeling something that is in between genres. His point of view also matches that of Sutton (2003) who sees fusion as a “term under whose umbrella many disparate styles and practices coexist and interact” (p. 227).

Talfigi becomes possible as a genre through the practice of *talfig*. In this sense, *Talfigi* is as much of a category as it is the result of a process. The French Iranian composer Christophe Rezai, for instance, argues that “one can understand *Talfigi* as a continuous process instead of a genre; this is a process that has existed since the invention of music and is not an event that dates to 40 or 50 years. The practice of *talfig* in music has always been happening and it has been decided to be named as such in a certain time period” (Rezai in Nāzemzadeh, 2014). Rezai is indeed hinting at one of the core issues with *Talfigi* music, namely the fact that the category has emerged within a certain context while the practice, *talfig*, has always been part of the practice of music making and creation. In the context of this research, I recognise *talfig* as a practice that has a direct relationship with creativity and experimentation. In fact, in my view, the defining element of experimentation and creation in music lies in the practice of *talfig*. This is because creation and authenticity are meaningless if one thinks of them as pure products without the context by which they are influenced by. What I mean by this is that the whole idea that any music is pure or authentic is at best misleading and at worst meaningless.

¹² These are namely *Sonati* (Persian art music), Persian folk, Western classical, and pop music.

If we look at the broader literature on the category of fusion, the closest translation of *Talfiqi* in English, we find that its ambiguous definition makes it operate in between spaces. Referring to some of the first musicians who helped pioneer the term fusion in North America, Fellezs (2011) states that “the ‘ain’t jazz, ain’t rock’ musicians troubled genres by staying between them, creating informal, even feral, music practices and aesthetics” (p.5). He goes further by arguing that fusion music operates in the broken middle, giving agency to musicians to push back against conventions since “the broken middle between genres writ large, highlighting the agency of giving individuals in facing the social norms that seek to limit and define them” (Fellez, 2011, p.9). In other words, fusion can be understood in terms of what it is not. It is not jazz, not rock, not *Qawwali* (Soofi music of India), not *sonati*, and so on. Thus, fusion is “inside and outside of genre categories, disturbing assumptions about musical traditions, including the ways in which membership (legitimacy), mastery (authority), and musical values are ordered” (Fellez, 2011, p.5). Moreover, it functions in a broken middle, navigating between conventions while never fully adhering to any of them. Thus, the key importance in understanding fusion is to go beyond understanding what constitutes its content and look at “how a particular idea of a category emerges and stabilises momentarily (if at all) in the course of being accepted across a range of discourses and institutions” (Brackett, 2016, p. 6).

There are certain similarities and differences between the genre of fusion and the category of *Talfiqi* that need to be clarified here. Beginning with the similarities, they both seem to function in the broken middle. In doing so, they push the boundaries of already determined genres and conventions by creating sounds that are unfamiliar and, to some, unacceptable. Another important element here is that *Talfiqi*, just like fusion, must be understood by what it is aiming not to be, instead of what it actually is. It is then easier to understand its delimitations, since this way of looking at *Talfiqi* helps us realise the category it is trying to separate itself from. The difference between *Talfiqi* and fusion is that the latter has been able to establish some boundaries so to be recognised as a genre. To a certain extent, fusion could be seen as a related genre in its approach to mixing jazz and rock music. However, this is always not the case with *Talfiqi*, since the category is used as a sort of otherisation in music categorisation in Iran, whereby anything that cannot be categorised is lumped into this category.

Thus, *Talfiqi* faces similar challenges that fusion music faced in its beginnings in North America: its contours cannot really be defined; it has not stabilised significantly in terms of the types of instrumentation it consistently uses or the musical activities that define its sound; it functions in a broken middle by mixing different forms of musical traditions. Within music in Iran, *Talfiqi* plays an important role by blurring the lines between tradition and modernity, putting into question whether the two are truly polar opposites.

The question that needs to be addressed before concluding this chapter is the following: is *Talfiqi* a genre? As David Brackett (2016) argues, the term genre refers to “type” or “kind”, a grouping of things based on the kind or type that makes them similar in some ways. The debate about music genre in popular music begins exactly at this point because the qualifier by which we group music, while straightforward at the beginning, does not always determine a kind coherence. We can take *Talfiqi* as an example to demonstrate this. When we are speaking of *Talfiqi*, are we talking about a kind of music that has certain instrumental coherence? Are we speaking of a music that has a particular way of mixing different genres of music together (rock and *sonati* music for example)? Are we speaking of ways that these genres must be mixed to be qualified as *Talfiqi*? Moreover, when speaking of *Talfiqi*, what are we referring to and what are we differing from? What I mean by this is that to say a music is *Talfiqi*, we need to refer to specific characteristics that define this type of music. In doing so, we need to also say how this type is different from other types of music. I address these concerns theoretically in the following paragraphs.

In “a theory of music genres: two applications”, Franco Fabbri (1981) defines genre as the following: a musical genre is “a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rule” (p.1). These rules include semiotic rules, behavioural rules, formal and technical rules, social and ideological rules, and economic and juridical rules (ibid.). As David Brackett (2016) argues, Fabbri’s definition of genre includes both formal (musical) and social elements in it. What is challenging with this definition, however, is how it assumes that a genre can be determined with fixed criteria. Moreover, the definition does not really give any agency or role to the audience as a stakeholder in categorising certain music as a genre. The challenge that rises with understanding *Talfiqi* following this definition is that the category of music cannot really be defined by way of formal analysis. For example, there is not coherence between

Bach and Rumi of Davoud Azad and Pepperoni of Bomrani's. The first is an attempt to mix music of Bach and poetry or Rumi through the *talfiq* of *sonati* music tradition and instruments with that of Western Classical music tradition and instruments. The latter is a *talfiq* of bluegrass music and jazz piano with lyrics sang in Persian. The only similarities between these two examples are that they both mix multiple types of music together. However, this is not enough to create a type, or genre, of music. One way to go around this is to think of *Talfiqi* as a broad set of music and then create subsets within this broad definition. Following this idea, Davoud Azad's music can be under the sub-genre of *Sonati-Talfiqi* while Bomrani's music would be categorised as *bluegrass-Talfiqi*. The problem that we may face in this situation is that music genres may not only encompass formal music elements but also other non-musical elements (visual imagery, fashion style, age groups, etc.). Beside music, Davoud Azad's practices as a musician is nowhere near those of Bomrani. Azad is part of more traditional "serious" musicians who would sit down with his instrument and perform in a concert hall, whereas Bomrani is a rock band whose members move around the stage and interact with their audiences completely differently. Moreover, most audiences who attend Azad's performances may not be interested in attending a Bomrani concert and vice versa. Hence, here we see a challenge in thinking of regrouping these musicians in terms of its so called "social" elements according to Fabbri.

In *Banding Together: How Communities create genres in Popular music*, Jennifer C. Lena (2012) proposes a sociocultural classification approach by arguing that "in case of music, stylistic distinctions (between jazz and blues, for examples) organise people and songs within a system of symbolic classification" (Lena, 2012, p.4). Here, genre is not only understood in its formal and social categorisation, but also how they function within a symbolic system, producing a certain idea of coherence in the grouping of music under a certain banner. Lena (2012) defines musical genre as "systems of orientations, expectation, and conventions that bind together industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music" (p.6). Here, we are not far away from Fabbri's definition because Lena is using the term conventions in her definition. However, what is interesting about the definition is the word expectation because it alludes to the idea that there are certain markers that the audience expects to state that certain music is part of a certain genre of music. This means that formal coherence is not the only factor in recognising a music as belonging to a genre so long as certain conventions that are expected are

included in the music. Thus, the convention that there is innovation in mixing some form of Western music practice with Persian music practice may be enough to convince groups (audience, industry, critics) to use the term *Talfiqi* to describe both Davoud Azad and Bomrani.

This brings us to another important point, namely that the relationship between text and conventions by which a genre is recognisable “leads us to consider how a text becomes associated with a genre label in the first place, and how a text achieve legibility, that is, how it becomes capable of being understood as participating in a genre at a given place and time” (Brackett, 2016, p.12). Taking the idea of “differential typology of forms of iteration” from Jacque Derrida, Brackett argues that genre can be tested as stable in the socio-lexical realm when they can be cited out of the context in which they exist. In other words, once “the citation (or non-literal quotation) of socio-musical conventions acquires relative stability and is associated repeatedly with a genre label, it can be quoted (literally) out of context with the quotation then being recognized as a generic reference” (Brackett, 2016, p.13). Going back to David Brackett’s argument of how genres are discursively formed over time, we can add another level of theoretical scrutiny to see if *Talfiqi* is indeed a genre or not. Because research has not been conducted on *Talfiqi* up to this point, we cannot really scrutinize this idea to articulate whether *Talfiqi* is capable to cite itself out of context. What I wish to know by the end of this thesis is whether information will emerge that gives me a clue regarding this notion. Therefore, we can see that at this stage of the research *Talfiqi* cannot be considered as a genre yet. I will conclude this thesis by determining whether *Talfiqi* is indeed a genre. As I further present my research, I will refer to *Talfiqi* as a category and not a genre.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter framed *Talfiqi* as a cultural practice by looking at the importance of cultural practice as a place of contestation and long revolution in a society. It began by looking at the literature in the field of cultural studies. It then expanded the reflection to the idea of culture as everyday practice by Michel de Certeau and the theoretical framework introduced by Pierre Bourdieu about the construction of taste: understanding of the relationship between different forms of capital, as well as how taste and judgement are constructed socially based on the relationship between different forms of capital. The chapter then explored the notion of culture as a site of resistance,

persistence, and defiance, arguing that the idea of looking at culture as a site of resistance alone is not suitable for the dynamics of culture in Iran.

The chapter then shifted its attention towards how to approach *Talfigi* as a subject matter. To do so, it looked at the idea of how music categorisation can be understood from the perspective of discursive formation. In exploring this idea, we gave particular attention to how music is socially mediated and produced through social relations and as its communities. It also examined how genres are also constituted via discursive formation. The chapter argued that at this point in time, *Talfigi* cannot be seen as a genre, but rather can be understood as a category undergoing its own process of discursive formation. However, *Talfigi* can be understood as a music scene as defined by Will Straw (2001). The next chapter looks at the methodologies used to conduct this research.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details how the questions that were posed in the previous chapters are going to be investigated. On the one hand, it examines how the category emerged historically in Iran. On the other hand, it looks at how this category of music is being discussed among different stakeholders in the country.

To address the first preoccupation of the thesis, a historical approach is used. This approach aims to show the process by which *talfiq*, or fusing, became a category of music called *Talfiqi* after the Iranian revolution in a particular context. Hence, I continue the approach towards history that I took in my master's thesis by looking at my object of study, *Talfiqi* music, in the context of continuity in experimentation with *talfiq* in music in modern Iran. In this historical approach, I hope to show how *Talfiqi* musicians, by embracing hybridity, are exiting the narrow reflection on Iranian culture as dichotomies between tradition and modernity.

To address the second preoccupation of this thesis I will look at the discourse surrounding *Talfiqi* music in the Iranian media. The reason I do this is twofold. Firstly, because of travel limitation to Iran, I was not able to be physically present in the country to do semi-directed interviews. Secondly, contacting musicians in Iran was not very fruitful as I was not able to reach many of them. Moreover, those who were reached were not comfortable in being interviewed by me as I was reaching them online from a foreign country. Albeit these challenges, much of the preoccupation that I had in understanding how *Talfiqi* is discussed can be found in the Iranian news media. Thus, I formulated my second question in a way that I could answer the question by accessing the data available on the subject online.

5.1 Historic formation of *Talfiqi* as a music category

Leslie (2010) defines history as “the written or spoken record, or physical artifact, or interpretation, or study of all that has happened up to the present time” (p.95). Thus, history is the practice of writing about the past in the present time. It is about narrating the past using a communication medium. History helps us better understand what happened in the past to contextualise events in

the present and help us adapt to change (Leslie, 2010). The British historian E.H. Carr (Carr, 1998), in his seminal book *What is history?*, argues that history is the “process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past” (p.24). Thus, history includes facts as well as interpretation of those facts by a person specialised in the practice of writing history. For Berger (2014), history is both objective and subjective. It is objective because a historian looks at events that are backed by facts. For instance, World War II is a war that objectively happened. There are documents (written, visual, audio, testimonies, etc.) that prove that it has happened. However, history is also subjective because there is a relationship between the historian and the facts that they choose for narrating history. This means that facts are not only selected but also interpreted for constructing a body of knowledge that we call history.

Historical research uses historic sources and provides a framework to analyse these sources. According to Leslie (2010), historical researchers first use primary sources as their raw data. These include “individuals who were actually involved in the event or situation you are studying” (p.98) or the original document or material. These may include photographs or sound or video recording. If primary sources are not available, secondary sources are used. These include “books and articles written by other historians or historical researchers” (p.99). In this thesis, both primary and secondary resources will be used to gather data on the subject matter. In terms of primary sources, I look at recorded music as well as recorded interviews with artists and music experts. As for secondary sources, I look at books and articles about the history of popular music in modern Iran. A detailed list of the corpus used for this analysis can be found in Appendix 1, which is available at the end of this thesis.

Historical research uses methods of interpretation for analysing the facts that are collected. The method that I will be using for my research is Idea Studies, which is defined by Berger (2014) as an approach that traces “the development of political, social, or economic idea or movements” (p.184). In this chapter, I contextualise the rise of *Talfighi* as a music category in the post-Khatami era in Iran within the broader practice of *talfigh* in the modern history of Iran. The period that it will cover is from 1918-2005. This period covers the beginning of the practice of *talfigh* in modern Iran when the country got introduced to Western music until the emergence and development of the category of *Talfighi*. Instead of detailed chronological narration, I look at points of rupture in the

history of music in modern Iran and show how different ways of *talfiq* not only coexisted together, but also at times were in conflict with one another. Broadly speaking, the methodology looks at how *talfiq* became a practice that tried to deal with the question of Iranian identity within the context of modernization and the discourse between tradition and modernity and how the category of *Talfiqi* came as an ambiguous discourse that could negotiate between being simultaneously traditional and modern.

5.2 The way *Talfiqi* music is discussed in the Iranian media.

The way *Talfiqi* music is discussed in Iran is very important since there are too many ambiguities in what it is and how it should be done. Here, the problem rises with the fact that there is no clear definition of *Talfiqi* music or ways this music is understood by different actors in the music industry. As Martin Lussier (2011) states, words used to talk about genres “are constantly debated and contested among fans and practitioners, like cultural producers, marketing strategists, critics and legislative agents” (p.111). *Talfiqi* is no different, as it is a category for describing a heterogenous music movement that does not have clear contours. This quality of the movement has political implications for Iran since ambiguity has a certain power in a strict political system. As Kevin Fellezs’ (2011) argues in his book *Birds of fire: Jazz, rock, fun and the creation of Fusion*, fusion music always positions itself in ‘the broken middle’. I look at how the discourse surrounding *Talfiqi* in Iran positions it in the broken middle and problematizes what can or cannot be accepted in this music category. My argument here is that *Talfiqi* is articulated as a genre while it is an ambiguous way of categorising music that is not in conformity with the generally accepted music genres in the country.

To understand how this music is labelled and discussed in the Iranian media, I take *Talfiqi* music as a case and study it by analysing the media coverage that treats this music category. I use content analysis as a method of research to answer my question. Content analysis is a form of unobtrusive research. This means that it does not involve personally doing field research or interviewing subjects (Van den Hoonaard, 2012). Unobtrusive measures are ways of “amassing data without interacting with research participants- that researchers can use to carry out qualitative research” (Hoonard, 2012, p.95). There is no direct interaction with participants. Content analysis “tells us, broadly, what the methodology does, it analyzes the content of something.” (Berger, 2014, p. 232).

The method looks at the “manifest content of communications” (ibid.). This means that the methodology looks how a subject is discussed in different sources. For this thesis, this methodology helps us understand the language formulations that are used to talk about *Talfiqi* by different actors in the music industry (musicians, producers, journalists, etc.).

One way that content analysis is conducted is through the usage of computer software known as Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software. They facilitate the organisation and codification of large numbers of texts and allow the researcher to find patterns between a large body of texts that treat the same subject matter. The two most used QDA software that are purchased by universities are NVivo and Atlas.TI. Unfortunately, these QDA software lack support for languages written from right to left, which Persian is one of¹³. Thus, I used the only QDA software that I found doing a better job of recognising right to left texts and recognising the formatting of the original text called MAXQDA. Since the software is designed to read the Arabic language, it can recognise most letters and symbols of the Persian alphabet easily¹⁴. However, the software is not able to read and codify pdf documents written in the Persian language. I thus imported the pdf format texts into the software and then codified those texts using the screen capture option available in the software. Due to this limitation of the software, in the content analysis chapter, the quotes are pasted as screenshots of the pdf document.

I have gathered the material necessary to analyze this topic from different sources. First, I have subscribed to an Iranian journal portal called magiran.com. This portal has given me access to newspaper articles, journal articles, and magazine articles published in Persian in Iran. Thus, I have gathered every possible article written about *Talfiqi* using the research engine on this website. I have also done several broad searches on Google with keywords in Farsi to find news articles that deal with this subject. I have also consulted Aparat.com, the Iranian version of YouTube. Here, I have tried to find interviews conducted with musicians that are categorised as *Talfiqi*. I have also consulted the music distribution website BleepTunes to see how *Talfiqi* bands are described on their album pages. Lastly, I have found and saved two podcasts dedicated to the subject related to *Talfiqi*

¹³ Atlas.TI has upgraded its software to allow right to left languages. However, the software is still not able to clearly determine page formatting in the Persian language.

¹⁴ The Persian language uses the Arabic alphabet. However, it contains four letters that do not exist in the Arabic language and the formatting of the short vowels in the language is different from the Arabic language.

music, one of which interviews artists and music critiques on the subject matter. I read and listened to all these contents to see how this music is discussed in different media and by different people.

At this point, I would like to clarify my process of choosing key words and finding the material necessary for analysis. I began my research by doing general search on Google for news articles on *Talfiqi* music. To do so, I chose to use the following keywords in Persian:

- تلفیقی (*Talfiqi*)
- فیوژن (transliteration of the word fusion in Persian)

What I found was that the term *Talfiqi* is used to describe any form of art that mixes multiple genres. I thus decided to refine these searches by adding the term music in the keywords. I tried multiple forms of this combination:

- موسیقی تلفیقی (*Talfiqi* music)
- موسیقی فیوژن (fusion music)
- موسیقی و تلفیقی (music and *Talfiqi*)
- موسیقی و فیوژن (music and fusion)

These led me to more specific results about *Talfiqi* music. That said, much of these results were general descriptions of *Talfiqi* music. These searches clarified that the usage of the term *Talfiqi* gives me better results regarding my subject, since much of the articles found discussed Western fusion music more than *Talfiqi* music in Iran. These included articles that spoke about the history of the term *Talfiqi*, and others that introduced the most well-established bands categorised as *Talfiqi*. From there, I decided to use the names of these bands with the term *Talfiqi* to find specific articles about these bands when the term *Talfiqi* was present. Some of these keywords include:

- تلفیقی و بمرانی (*Talfiqi* and Bomrani)
- تلفیقی و داماهی (*Talfiqi* and Damahi)
- تلفیقی و دال (*Talfiqi* and Daal)

- تلفیقی و پالت (*Talfigi* and paalet)
- تلفیقی و شجریان (*Talfigi* and Shajarian)
- تلفیقی و همایون شجریان (*Talfigi* and Homayoun Shajarian)
- تلفیقی و علی قمصری (*Talfigi* and Ali Ghamsari)
- تلفیقی و ماهان عربعلی (*Talfigi* and Mahan Arabali)
- تلفیقی و پیتر سلیمانی پور (*Talfigi* and Peter Soleimanipour)

I then focused my attention to institutions that *Talfigi* music is part of. Among those articles, the two biggest institutions mentioned were the Fajr International Music Festival and *Talfigi* Music Festival. I also decided to investigate the articles where the keywords Ershad and *Talfigi* appeared. Here are the keywords used:

- فجر و موسیقی تلفیقی (Fajr and *Talfigi* music)
- بخش موسیقی تلفیقی و فجر (*Talfigi* music section and Fajr)
- جشنواره موسیقی تلفیقی (*Talfigi* music festival)
- موسیقی تلفیقی و جشنواره (*Talfigi* music and festival)
- موسیقی تلفیقی و ارشاد (*Talfigi* music and Ershad)
- موسیقی تلفیقی و وزارت ارشاد (*Talfigi* music and Ershad ministry)

In gathering these articles, I began to find that many of the results were, in fact, articles I had previously found. This meant that I found a corpus that may include most of the discourse surrounding *Talfigi* music in Iran. I then turned my attention to magiran.com, using the same keywords on that site. One advantage there was the function of advanced search. Here, I specifically searched for newspaper articles, magazine articles, and scientific journal articles written in Persian. While many of the online news articles found in my general search appeared in the Magiran search, I was able to expand my results to include magazine articles and newspaper articles. This enriched the corpus and allowed me to explore more pertinent articles for my analysis. It must be mentioned that many articles were deemed not pertinent since they did not treat a discourse surrounding *Talfigi*. Most of those articles spoke about a *Talfigi* band, then shifted to naming the band's members and the name of the songs on their new album, for instance. In the end, I settled to work with 36 articles.

The corpus looks at an array of documents including opinion pieces, interviews, and news articles and probes the opinions of Iranian journalists, music experts, and musicians regarding *Talfiqi* music and its place in the official Iranian music industry. This is the result of the analysis of 36 documents in total that includes 19 newspaper articles, 10 online news articles, and 7 magazine articles. Through coding the articles meticulously, three overall categories have emerged. These include definition of *Talfiqi*, the ways of doing *talfiq* and *Talfiqi* as a music scene. I have also created a fourth category that I have named "other" to gather coded phrases that were important but did not fit the three categories mentioned. All the texts in this analysis are in Persian language. To facilitate the comprehension of the texts by the reader, those that are used as examples in this chapter are translated into English by myself. The rest of the texts can be found in the original language in the appendix at the end of the thesis. I will begin by giving a general introduction to the topics and the justification of how they are chosen and categorised. I then look at each coded section separately and present a detailed look at each category including the results that have emerged through the coding process. To facilitate the reader, tables are used to show the categories and their sub-categories.

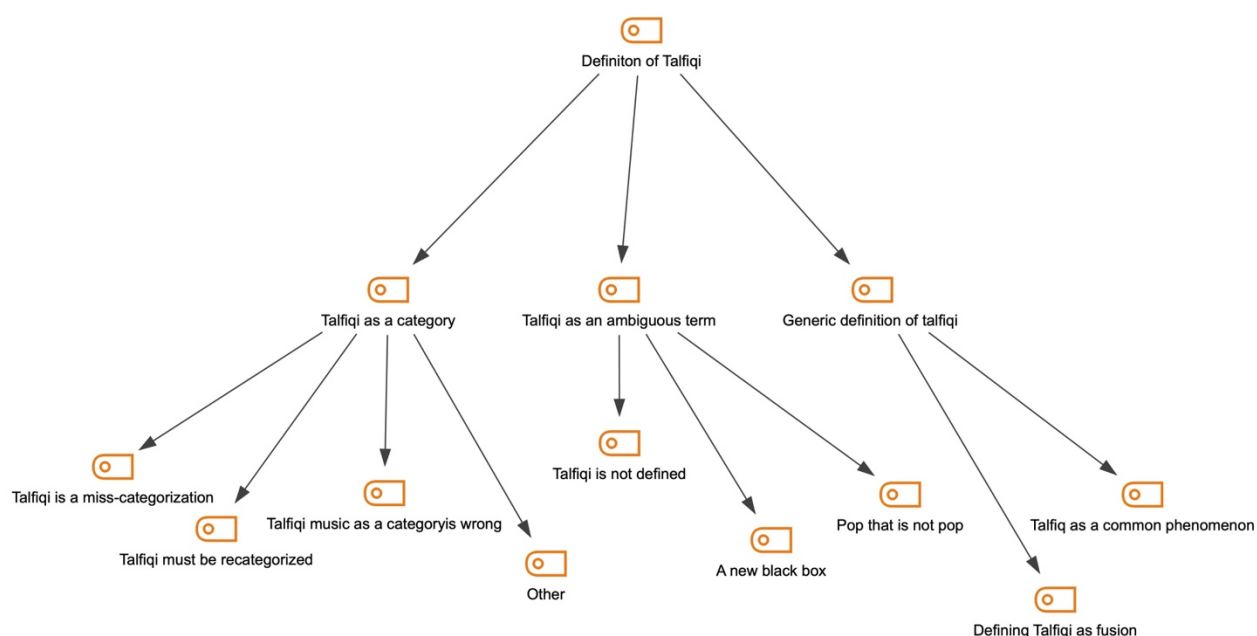
5.2.1 Overview of the themes

The process of gathering information was twofold. First, I gathered 64 articles that had the term *Talfiqi music* in them. Then, I read all those articles and evaluated their pertinence with regards to the research question. Do they talk about *Talfiqi* in a direct way or not, for example. Many of these articles used the term *Talfiqi* in their title but the content of the article was not about *Talfiqi* music. In some cases, they were introducing a new album by a *Talfiqi* musician or band. In other cases, the section dedicated to *Talfiqi* music was short and the content of the section was covered by other more pertinent articles. Of the 64 articles I chose, I eliminated 30 of them because they were not relevant. In total, 222 phrases were coded in the 34 documents. Among these codes, three umbrella categories emerged during this research. These include the *definition of Talfiqi* (106 codes), the *ways of doing talfiq* (60 codes), and *Talfiqi as a music scene* (48 codes). What this shows is that the definition of *Talfiqi* seems to have preoccupied the Iranian media the most while the two other categories took less space in the discussions surrounding the topic. A fourth category called *other* (24 codes) was created to encapsulate all codes that had interesting or important information in

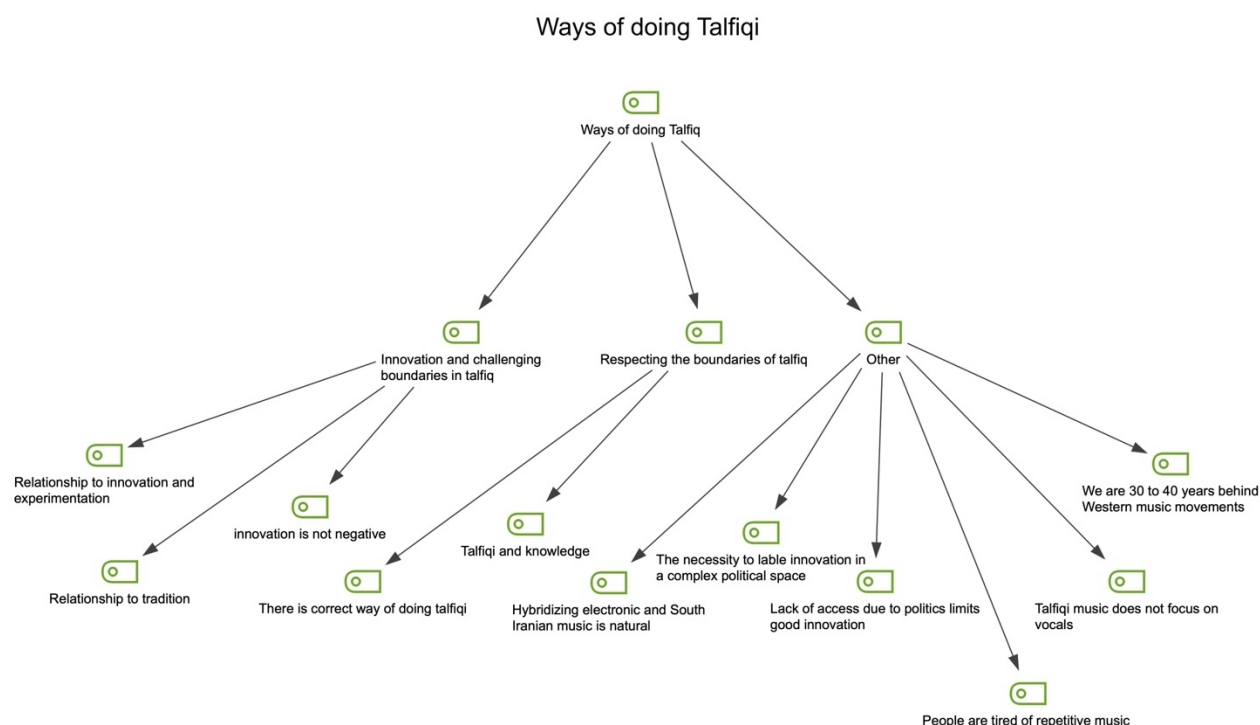
them and that could not be coded in the other three umbrella categories. I begin by looking at each umbrella category and their subsections in the following paragraphs.

The *definition of Talfiqi category* looks at all discussions pertaining to the way *Talfiqi* is defined and the way its definition, and lack thereof, has problematized the understanding of what it means and its place in the Iranian music panorama. The section has three main sub-categories: *Talfiqi as a category* (40 codes), *Talfiqi as an ambiguous term* (35 codes), and *generic definition of Talfiqi* (31 codes). *Talfiqi as a category* is further divided into four subcategories. These include *Talfiqi as a music category is wrong* (6 codes), *Talfiqi music is miscategorised* (20 codes), *Talfiqi music must be recategorised* (9 codes), and *other* (4 codes). The subcategory *other* is added so to add coded texts that are relevant to the umbrella topic but not categorizable in the other three sub-categories. *Talfiqi as an ambiguous term* is subdivided into three different subcategories. These include *Talfiqi is pop music that is not pop* (8 codes), *Talfiqi is a new black box* (13 codes), and *Talfiqi has no meaningful definition* (14 codes). The last subcategory is *generic definition of Talfiqi*. This section is divided into two further subcategories including *definition of Talfiqi as fusion* (18 codes), and *Talfiqi as a common phenomenon* (13 codes).

Definition of Talfiqi

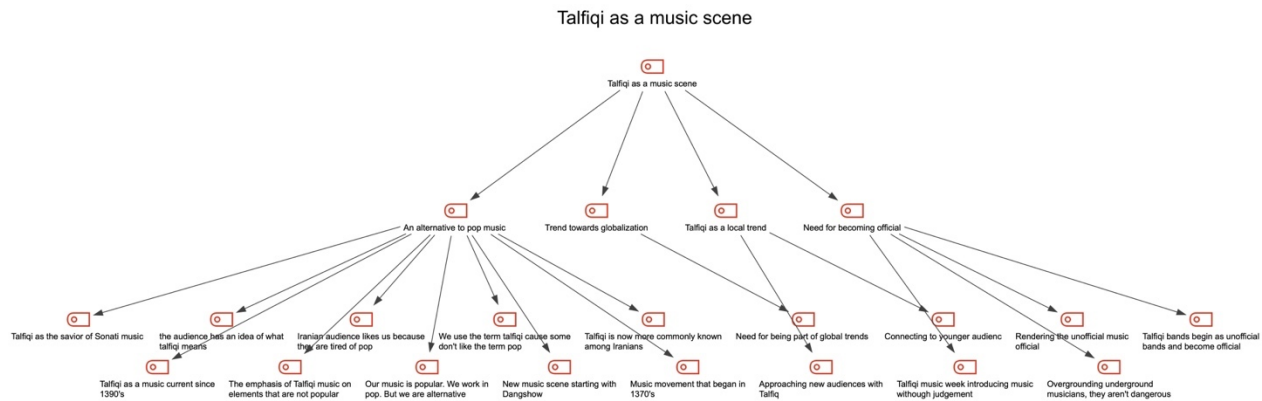


The second most coded topic is about *ways of doing talfiq*. Here, instead of looking at the semantics of the term, the discourse revolves around opinions of different actors regarding the practice of *talfiq* and the opinions surrounding how *talfiq* should be practiced. This section has 60 codes in total and is divided into three sub-categories. These include *respecting the boundaries of talfiq* (21 codes), *innovation and challenging boundaries* (28 codes), and *other* (11 codes). The section *other* was added to include those topics that could be categorised under the section but could not fit the two other sub-categories. The *respecting the boundaries of Talfiqi* sub-category is further divided into two subcategories. The first is *correct ways of doing talfiq* (13 codes) while the second is *talfiq must be practiced with proper knowledge* (7 codes). The *innovation and challenging boundaries of Talfiqi* section is divided into three sub-categories. These include *relationship to innovation and experimentation* (12 codes), *relationship to tradition* (10 codes), and *innovation is not negative* (6 codes). Lastly, 12 codes were categorised as *other* since they could not fit the other sub-categories.

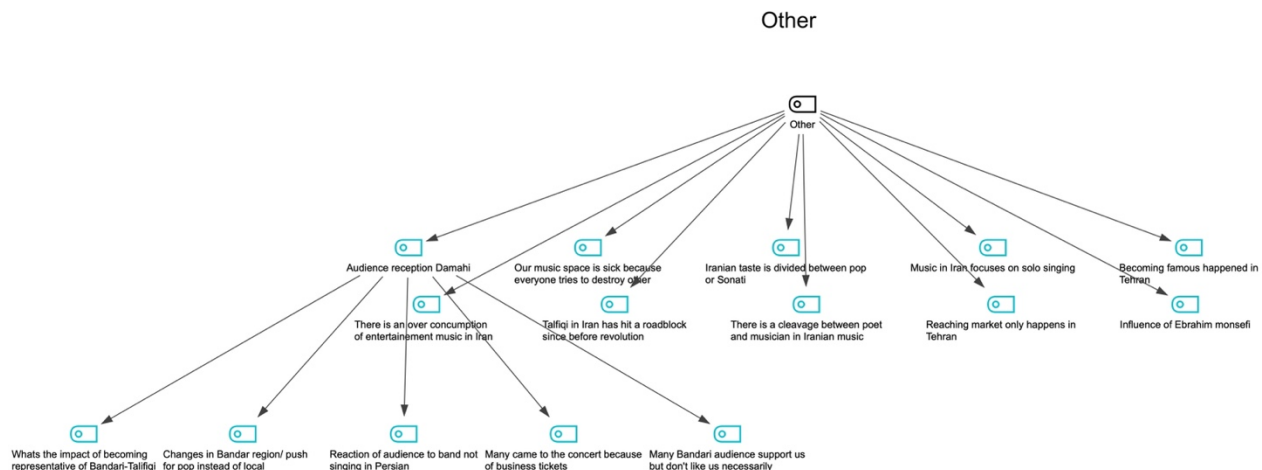


The third topic that emerged from the data is that of *Talfiqi as a music scene* (48 codes). Here, the discussions revolve around four sub-categories: *Talfiqi as a local trend* (9 codes), *trends toward globalization* (17 codes), *a need for becoming official* (4 codes), and *an alternative to pop music*

(18 codes). The *Talfigi as a local trend category* is further divided into two sub-categories. These include *approaching new audiences with Talfigi* (5 codes) and *connecting to younger audiences* (4 codes). The *trends towards globalization* section is further divided into one sub-category of the *need for being part of global trends* (17 codes). The other two categories, *need for becoming official* (4 codes) and *an alternative to pop music* (18 codes) do not have any subcategories.



Many texts that were coded did not fit the main three categories discussed above. Since the content seemed pertinent, I have decided to add them in a separate section and add these topics at the end to enrich the analysis of the content. Thus, a section on the emergence of topics not included in the analysis of the main categories of study will be provided at the end of this chapter. This section was coded as "other", and it has 24 codes. It is not divided into sections.



CHAPTER 6

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF *TALFIQI*

In the early 2010s, the Iranian music industry saw the rise of a new set of bands and musicians described under the category called *Talfiqi*. This music gained popularity to the extent that some considered it the fourth major recognised official music category in Iran beside Western classical, Persian classical, and pop music (Atashi, 2017). Its financial success was praised in a 2016 article in the English translation of the economics magazine *Eqtesad-e Bartar* (2017), and others saw it as a path to saving *sonati* music (Maleki, 2019). For many, its lack of contours and definition was seen as the central trait that gave the music its appeal (Naseri, 2015), while others saw this lack of definition as problematic (Farokheddin, 2016). This chapter looks at *Talfiqi* within the historical context of practices of hybridization in music, namely the practice of *talfiq*.¹⁵ It briefly contextualises *Talfiqi* (fusion) as a category within the practice of *talfiq* (fusing) in music before and after the 1979 revolution. It then looks at three main shifts in the articulation and development of the *Talfiqi* category in the country, namely the rise of the category in the mid-1990s, the changes that this category underwent in the mid-2000s, and its popularization and commercialization in the 2010s.

6.1 Roots of *talfiq* in Iran

Persian art music has its roots in the *maqam* tradition of Middle Eastern music (Chehabi, 1999). By the mid-nineteenth century, a reform in understanding the music of Iran took place whereby “the repertory of 300-400 traditional pieces, the gushas, collectively known as the *radif*, were systematically divided into seven (or by another count, twelve) groups known as *dastgah*, each of which is associated with a distinctive mode” (Chehabi, 1999, p. 143). This shift in developing systems dedicated to teaching and performing music that is distinctly Persian was in part influenced by a growing sentiment of nationalism at the time (ibid.). It brought very precise ways of thinking about what Persian music is and how it must be understood and performed. Another significant

¹⁵ As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the word *talfiq* describes the practice of fusing or hybridising while *Talfiqi* is a noun that is given to a category of music. In this chapter, the word *Talfiqi* is capitalised while *talfiq* is not capitalised unless it appears at the beginning of a sentence. This is to distinguish the difference between these two terms for the reader.

development during the late 19th and early 20th century was the development of the modern *tasnif*, a Persian song form that is based on the *radif* that uses “the syllabic verse of folk poetry rather than poems based on the metric system of *Avāz*” (Chehabi, 1999, p. 144). *Tasnif* became a vital genre during the constitutional revolution as it was used as a vehicle of communicating socio-political issues of the time (Nemati et al., 2020).

With the introduction of Western classical music in Iran and other countries of the region in the late 19th and early 20th century, many musicians who played and worked with different music systems than that of Western tonal system (*raga*, *maqam*, *radif*, etc.) began to view “the absence of harmony in their own music as a sign of its inferiority to Western music” (Farhat, 2004). In Iran, the encounter with Western music led to the development of propositions for using the language of Western classical music for explaining classical Persian music (*sonati*), its system of performance (*radif*), and its modes (*dastgah*) from a scientific point of view, namely the usage of Western music theory for the purpose of notating *dastgah*. The person who really took this project to heart in Iran was Ali Naqi Vaziri, a *tār*¹⁶ player who also studied Western classical music in Iran and Europe and who proposed the further division of the Western equidistant 12-tone into a 24-tone scale to notate the *dastgah* music system using language of notation mainly developed in Europe (Breyley & Fatemi, 2016). For this purpose, Vaziri invented new terminologies and signs such as *koron* (quarter step flat) and *sūri* (quarter step sharp) to represent microtones. The problem with this division is that a quartertone cannot be divided in an equidistant way in the *dastgah* system since its tuning changes based on the *dastgah* that they are used in.

While he was criticised by both *sonati* and Western classical musicians of the time for not being traditionalist or modernist enough (Aghamohseni, 2014), Vaziri spearheaded a change in the consideration and performing of Persian music that had its roots in the logic of modernization of Persian music through the usage of the language developed in Western classical music. In this sense, a *dastgah* could be thought of as a Persian mode, which could be performed with Western classical instruments. One can think of Vaziri as one of the first, if not the first, musicians in the modern history of the country who used *talfiq* to explore hybridising two musical traditions. The practice of *talfiq* in Vaziri’s work is linked to the idea of modernization of Iranian music and nation-

¹⁶ A Persian string instrument.

building. Because he was influenced by *sonati* music, he saw it necessary to modernise it instead of abandoning it and *talfiq* of the two was the solution. Thus, he tried walking on a tightrope in terms of balancing the modernization of Persian music while safeguarding it as a tradition. In this sense, Vaziri's work was to be in between the lines in terms of bringing two different cultural practices closer together.

6.2 *Talfiq* and the radio

The introduction of radio in the country in the 1950s opened new possibilities for *talfiq* and introduced new types of music in the country as entertainment and accessibility became key components for keeping the audience continually engaged with music.

In the aftermath of the 1953 coup d'état and the white revolution, the Air Force radio started to play a genre of popular music known as *motrebi*, with weak lyrics set to fast Arabic dance beats. Sung by pop singers like Mahvash, Afat and Jibili who were not formally trained in classical Persian singing, this type of music became popular among the Iranian public (Lewisohn, 2016). This form of *talfiq* consisted of "arrangements of regional songs for an ensemble that usually brought together violins, a tombak, accordion and a clarinet." (Breyley & Fatemi, 2016, P.27) The music was light in nature and entertaining, was seen by many as trivial, and sometimes used vulgar language. This form of *talfiq* was seen as problematic not only due to its triviality, but also because of the influence that it had from Arabic popular music. This angered many serious Iranian musicians who did not want to be "associated with this kind of tawdry music and unbecoming behavior" (Lewisohn, n.d.).

What followed this was a restructuring of National Radio, including a change in its management, and the rise of an influential group of musicians, poets, literary artists and intellectuals who, under the leadership of Davud Pirnia, produced a program called *Golhā* for the National Radio of Iran. *Golhā* gathered almost all representatives of Iranian music, including "improviser-soloists of the modern (light) style, lyricists and composers (*tasnif sāz*), proponents of the westernised style seeking to harmonise and orchestrate the fixed-meter works of Iranian music (the school of Vaziri), and singers who were known mostly for their radio songs." (Breyley & Fatemi, 2016, p. 27) This allowed the production of an important corpus of music that was serious yet popular and that, as

Bruno Nettl observed, consisted of “songs in which ensembles accompany the singer in unison and octaves, with each instrument occasionally playing slight variations of the main tune.” (Nettle in Breyley & Fatemi, 2016, p. 105).

Due to the radio’s preference for songs that were shorter in length and entertaining, musicians began composing and performing music using the *tasnif* form (Persian song form) (Saffarian, 2015). Known as *tarānehhā-ye dastgāhi* (modal songs), this music had a connection to Iranian classical poetry tradition and the *dastgah* music system while following the popular song format of *tasnif*. Over time, according to Sasan Fatemi, the term *tasnif* was replaced by that of *tarāneh* (song) in terms of naming these new song formats that were becoming more popular over the radio. (Breyley & Fatemi, 2016; Saffarian, 2015) Hence, modal songs became a music aesthetic that used *talfiq* to develop popular music that was based on *dastgah* system and yet easy to listen. In doing so, it competed with the *motrebi* music aesthetic by proposing an aesthetic that was on the one hand educative, in that it exposed the Iranian population to Persian poetry and music, and on the other hand entertaining, since it rendered *dastgah* music more accessible for a larger audience.

6.3 From National to Popular

In the 1960s and 1970s, a plethora of new ways of *talfiq* appeared in Iran that were no longer limited to the mixing of *sonati* with Western classical music. This shift was directly linked to the development of a middle class, the exposure of the Iranian population to a variety of genres of popular music produced in different parts of the world, and the desire to create similar sounding music locally. The music was slowly shifting away from modal songs and towards Western popular music trends.

The musician who really kick-started the pop music genre in Iran was Viguen with his debut song “Mahtāb” (moonlight) that was performed on the radio in the late 1950s and became an instant hit (Sadeq, 2003). Known as Soltan-e-Jāz (Sultan of Jazz), he was a pop chansonnier who sang and played the guitar with a pop orchestra led by a music arranger named Alvaro Sebastian. The result of this collaboration was a music aesthetic that was heavily influenced by the music of Spain and Latin America; Sebastian’s contribution, thus, was to develop the first generation of music aesthetic of the pop music genre that was becoming ever more popular among the youth and that was

primarily influenced by Spanish-speaking pop music, including genres such as Bolero (Asaran, 2017).

This apparent shift in music aesthetic in Iran concerned musicians such as Ruhollāh Khāleqi, who believed that the rise and marketing of entertainment music degraded the music of Iran. In *Sargozasht-e Musiqi-ye Irān* (The history of the music of Iran), for instance, he begins the introduction to his book by stating:

People want songs that touch their hearts and entertain them. However, they don't search for what they want. Instead, they seek European music. Because not everyone has the knowledge of this music, they rely on its lowest form, *jāz*. The musicians and singers that are being influenced by this genre are corrupting our music (Khāliqī, 1974, p. 1, free translation)

For Khaleqi, the fact that pop music was moving away from the *dastgāh* system in its traditional form and toward adaptation of genres such as jazz was disconcerting since the music was corrupting the taste of the public. Other musicians, such as Hoseyn Banan, saw matters differently. For Banan, pop music had its place alongside other genres because one could not expect all audiences to have the same understanding of music appreciation (Saffarian, 2015). What is important here is the way popular music was changing in the country in the 1960s and 1970s. In one respect, it was moving towards trends in globalised pop music. In another, it was keeping very traces of Iranian traditional music within it. In a way, Khāleqi was not able to see how pop music was borrowing from high art music as much as it was borrowing from so-called low art music such as *motrebi*. Pop music was indeed blurring the lines between high art and low art while succeeding partially in what Vaziri had not been able to achieve, harmonising and arranging Persian music.

By the 1970s, the pop genre was becoming ever more popular while finding its own sonic signatures with a new trend in music that was ever more hybridised. The decade saw the important rise of home-grown music arrangers, among whom Varoojan Hakhbandian was one of the most important. Varoojan shaped the aesthetic of pop music in Iran through his sophisticated arrangements. Throughout his career, he defined “the role of the ‘arranger’” in the process of music making and showed how *talfiq* was no longer about a limited vision of genre mixing but a process

of how a song was composed, harmonised, and arranged between different instruments (Asaran, 2017, p. 31). Varoojan's contribution, thus, was the creation of a distinctly Iranian way of arranging music that was immediately recognizable. What Varoojan and others in this new music trend in Iran did was to put into question the idea of distinguishing between serious art vs. entertainment, as well as the narrow view that reduced *talfiq* to the mixing of *sonati* and Western classical music. This brings us back to what *talfiq* has been doing in Iran, namely, to walk a tightrope and open new doors for music aesthetics in the country. In laymen's terms, *talfiq* was a trend that was struggling to find its place between tradition and modernity by navigating socio-politico-cultural changes in the country in the broken middle.

The musician that is often cited as the father of *Talfiqi* music in post 1979 revolution Iran is Abbas Mehrpuya (Bā Mā Television, 2020; Khoshnām & Ahadi, 2012; Pallett band, 2020). However, before the revolution he was categorised as a jazz or world musician. He released many 45 singles and produced only one full album (Soul Ragga), which creatively used the Sitar with rock/jazz music and Persian poetry and melodic lines. In fact, many of Mehrpuya's songs in that album were loosely based on themes from music around the world. Mehrpouya used many instruments that were not commonly used in Iranian pop music at the time to produce music that was aesthetically unique. He not only used Western instruments (drums, guitar, bass, harp, flute, etc.) but also introduced non-Western ones (Sitar, xylophone, and tabla drums) to create Persian music with a transnational identity. Lastly, Mehrpuya's music practices, just like Varoojan's, pushed the boundaries of the juxtaposition between the traditional versus modernity debate by way of referencing other traditions within his music such as Indian classical music, Cuban Bolero, and Cha Cha Cha. His goal of showing how hybridization of traditions can shape a new popular Iranian musical aesthetic tradition is something that should never be underestimated. Musicians such as Varoojan and Mehrpuya were finding different ways to exist in the broken middle between the imagined extremes of "tradition" and "modernity."

Meanwhile, the practices associated with *talfiq* in music, and specifically those introduced by Vaziri and his colleagues, began to be critiqued in the 1960s and 1970s as a group of students from the University of Tehran "became increasingly aware of the significance of oral transmission as an essential component of Persian music, such as the importance of prosody" (Amoozegar-Fassie,

2010, p. 106). Critical of Vaziri's ideas, these students proposed to return to the older tradition of teaching, learning, and performing Iranian music through oral traditions. Thus, they gravitated towards a new institution called Markaz-e Hefz va Eshā'eh-ye Musiqi-ye Asil-e Irāni (Center for the Propagation and Preservation of Authentic Iranian Music) that according to the master sitar player Mohammad Reza Lotfi "became a source of traditional values for those opposing modernization, and a scene of rebellion against the Westernization of Persian music." (Amoozegar-Fassie, 2010, p. 106). Thus, *talfiq* was problematic before the revolution since it was seen as a practice that was not true to the tradition of learning and performing *sonati* music. With the development of the Chavosh ensemble and its influence in creating protest songs in the traditional form of Tasnif instead of the modern form (i.e Tarāneh) this return to authenticity became a political act, since the return to tradition was an act of resisting the Shah and his agenda of rapid modernisation.

Before the 1979 revolution, Iran was at the brink of finding its own sound as it was exploring different forms of *talfiq*. Depending on their social class and taste in music, different people were exposed to varying forms of *talfiq*. In other words, *talfiq* was happening as much in pop, rock, and funk music as it was happening in modal songs and *motrebi* music. While pop music was seen at the center of the Westernisation of music, since it was most strongly associated with the Shah's modernity project, this evolution and modernisation was not exclusive to pop. Due to the greater support state television accorded to Iranian pop music, the latter was equated with an aesthetic of a modernity that discarded the past and corrupted the rich tradition of Iranian music. However, what was happening in parallel was a critique of an essentialist vision that posited fixed divisions between tradition and modernity as well as between serious and entertainment music. Let us now turn to how *talfiq* became the central vehicle for negotiating the politics of music after the Iranian revolution.

6.4 The 1979 revolution and the return to authenticity

In July 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the 1979 revolution, stated that there is no difference between music and opium, that it causes the human brain to become inactive and superficial and that it must be eliminated (Siamdoust, 2017, p. 6). As a result, the new government began restricting many genres of music by labeling them as un-Islamic, banned public concerts,

and made payment to musicians illegal “in terms of the religious law, *Shari’a*. The very act of signing a document mentioning the word ‘music’ was considered a *mas’iyat* (sin)” (Youssefzadeh, 2000, p. 38). Most forms of music that resembled Western popular music were banned and "high profile musicians’, actors’, and media producers' contributions to popular culture were reframed as corruption and crime" (Hemmasi, 2020, p. 10). Another critical change that still exists to this day was the ban of solo female singing in public. Meanwhile, the regime harshly cracked down on the distribution and consumption of any form of music that was not approved by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (ERSHAD). This led most Iranian musicians, composers, and music producers who worked in the music industry in Iran before the revolution to leave the country and begin a new diaspora music industry in Los Angeles (ibid.). The music scene in Los Angeles focused on producing pop music, since the new and ever-growing Iranian diaspora community in California was interested in entertainment music. The scene became the sole source of Persian entertainment music during the 1980s and into much of the 1990s, and it was distributed in Iran through illegal channels.

It was not long before the Iranian government slowly re-introduced music to the public (Siamdoust, 2017, p.90). During the 1980s, the government took control of the production of official music by creating the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and mandating it with the job of giving permission to a limited number of genres of music that were deemed serious, traditional, or committed to the revolution. These included religious music, *sonati* music, some folk music, Western classical music, and Sorud, a genre of military-style choir music “committed to the revolution” that was created as propaganda music during the war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988) (Namjoo, 2015). The common thread between these genres was that they were either seen as authentic forms of music, were considered as music that is not produced for the purpose of entertainment, or as music that served the purpose of advancing the values of the revolution. The Sorud genre, for instance, a re-interpretation of a musical style introduced by Vaziri (Chehabi, 1999, p.150) was a form of military style music that either valorised the revolution or invited people to join the frontlines during the war. The genre was financed by the government and was created by a specific institution called the Center for Revolutionary Anthems and Songs (Namjoo, 2015, p. 185).

Hence, during the 1980s, music was treated as something that had to be dissociated from consumerism, entertainment, modernity, and associated with authenticity and seriousness. This goes back at the heart of the struggle between traditional versus modern as well as serious versus entertainment music. The government of Iran was adamant that music produced and distributed to the public must be traditional and serious. This attitude limited artists' ability to explore different ways of doing *talfiq*. That said, even during the 1980s, *talfiq* was happening in the Iranian music. An excellent example of this is the Neynava concerto by Hossein Alizadeh that succeeded in mixing a Western orchestra with the Persian flute Ney. Written in the *dastgāh* of Nava, the piece adhered to the government's strict guidelines, yet explored new horizons of possibility in music creation. Alizadeh did so in three main ways. First, he wrote the piece in a *dastgāh* scale instead of Western scale, favoring the Persian way of thinking about music. Second, he put the Ney as the solo instrument, giving it agency and power as the instrument that leads the orchestra. We hear this from the beginning of the piece where the orchestra and the first violin are following the melodic theme that the Ney is performing. Finally, it favoured an instrument, the Ney, over a vocalist, emphasising the importance of music as much as poetry in thinking about *sonati* music. Here, *talfiq* was used as a tool to stay innovative in a highly hostile atmosphere, respecting the boundaries set by the government, and succeeding in transmitting the sadness and pain of an artist who was seeing his country at war and radically transforming in front of his eyes. *Talfiq* was not only a tool for innovation, but also one used to say what could not be verbally articulated. Thus, musical expressiveness was able to compensate for the lack of linguistic expressiveness.

6.5 From *talfiq* to *Talfiqi*

In 1988 and 1989, after the Iran-Iraq war, Khomeini revisited his stance on music and issued several fatwas that allowed the sale of musical instruments in the country. These fatwas gave an ambiguous green light to the revival of some form of a music industry in the country. During the early 1990s, the Iranian government began removing certain restrictions on music: music schools were reopened, musicians began to go on tours around the world, and the number of public concerts increased (Maghazei, 2014). The decade also saw the rise of a generation of musicians who had been children or young adults just before the revolution. Meanwhile, Iranians were exposed to more genres of music as the introduction of satellite technology gave wider access to music produced outside of the country. Thus, the 1980s, and to an extent the 1990s, reinstalled in Iranian music the bifurcation

between serious and somber traditional music produced in Iran, and entertaining pop music produced in Los Angeles, a music that was associated with the pre-revolutionary pop music industry. These aesthetic extremes in the music industries inside and outside of Iran created genre vacuums in Iranian music since it left little space for the growth of diverse music scenes. Therefore, an Iranian take on genres such as rock, hip hop, heavy metal or jazz was almost non-existent at the time. As music education gained more momentum in the 1990s, Iranian musicians began to explore ways of creating music using traditional Persian instruments alongside Western instruments. With an increasingly large youth population and more freedom to learn and perform music officially, the vacuum created in the 1980s began to be filled slowly from mid-1990s onward. This was the beginning of the *Talfiqi* category.

In the mid-1990s, a series of instrumental music projects began to gain support by the government in Iran. The fact that these projects were instrumental is crucial because 1) it reduced the hurdle of going through the hoops of getting music lyrics officially permitted, and more importantly, 2) they focused on exploration in music as the central goal of a project as bands, instead of depending on poetry and showcasing the vocalist as the most important and central feature of music. This meant that these bands were now able to push their limits of music making. In 1994, a band called Atin gave a concert at the Bahman cultural center where they performed music by the Gypsy Kings, Astor Piazzolla, Miles Davis, Mehrdad Pakbaz, and Emad Bandkar, improvisational singing in raga music, and an original composition by Peter Soleimanipour. According to Soleimanipour, the band faced the challenge of choosing a term that would encapsulate the mixture of music and settled on the term *Talfiqi* as a solution since “the term was so general that it could not point to any specific genre gravitations in the concert. This way the term ‘*Talfiqi*’ helped us summarise all the genre gravitations in one terminology, but it did not mean anything to anyone” (Nāzemzadeh, 2014).

Around the same time, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) began permitting some musicians to use their studio equipment to produce instrumental music for the state television (Riahipour, 2017). It was in here that Ramin Behna, Babak Riahipur, Pedram Derakhshani, and Reza Aba’i began producing original music for Iranian national television. Their continued collaboration resulted in the formation of a band called Avizheh (Nooshin, 2005a). Also described as *Talfiqi*, the band composed and performed music that to a Western ear would sound like jazz

fusion. Their compositions included an introduction of the melody at the beginning of each song followed by periods of improvisation by each instrument with the recapitulation of the melody at the end of the song, a very common jazz music form. Avizheh incorporated many Persian instruments in their ensemble, including santur (Persian dulcimer) qeychak (a Baluch bow instrument) tombak (Persian goblet drum), and daf (Persian circle drum) alongside the usual suspects of a jazz or rock ensemble (drum kit, keyboard, guitar, and bass). What really distinguished Avizheh was its capacity to transition between genres and performance styles. In the song “Baluch,” for instance, the santur is playing the main melodic line the way an electric guitar would do so in a jazz-rock ensemble. Meanwhile, the Ney is placed in the middle of the song to break the question and answer between santur and kamancheh by grounding the music and changing it from its 11/8 rhythm to a more undefined rhythm. This is all while the core of the band consists of bass, guitar, drum, and sometimes keyboards. Thus, Avizheh not only played with mixing genres but also with the function of traditional Persian instruments. In bringing Western and Persian instruments together in this way, the band was able to navigate the ambiguity of the politics of music regarding accepted genres by the ministry of culture. This was because genres such as Rock and to an extent Jazz were still not accepted by the ministry at the time. However, since they were played alongside genres and instruments that were permitted, their music was able to camouflage its way through the system and not be rejected. In other words, the term *Talfiqi* represented the spirit of exploration of the musicians who came together and was broad and ambiguous enough to mean anything.

Atin and Avizheh’s music navigated a complex socio-cultural and political dynamic that included 1) a challenging process of gaining permission for performance and album distribution in the country and 2) a dissatisfaction with the state of music industries inside and outside of the country that lacked diversity in many ways and 3) a reflection on the idea of Iranian musical identity in relation to exposure to music from around the world. The usage of the term *Talfiqi* was broad enough to include different possibilities of hybridization. As cultural practice, the way genres and instruments were used and fused indirectly and ambiguously negotiated with not only the state, but also with the notion of authenticity in Iranian music. What these musicians were doing was using jazz and rock structures to give importance to the technical capacities of different instruments in their ensembles, producing music that would be received by professional musicians and the general

population alike. Moreover, their choice of following jazz forms meant that they could appeal to non-Iranian musicians inexperienced with following a piece performed in the *radif* structure.

6.6 Late 1990's, early 2000's and the rise of unofficial music

Although Avizheh did not stay together for long, their influence on post-revolutionary Iranian music was very important. For one, each member of the band went on to create new projects, many of which were *Talfigi*. Moreover, the band inspired other musicians to experiment with hybridization. As for Soleimanipour, he continued to be influential especially in the jazz music circles in Iran, even though he always tried to distance himself from being labeled as a jazz musician (Nooshin, 2016). Mohammad Khatami's election in 1997 was a turning point for Iran's cultural actors. Khatami's administration is associated with the period of cultural opening in post-revolutionary history since ERSHAD began to expand the scope of what was accepted in the cultural milieu. During this period, ERSHAD began giving permissions to more diverse genres of music among which pop became the most popular. The pop industry began introducing musicians who sounded like those in the Los Angeles pop scene. In turn, this began the rise and popularity of homegrown pop industry (Breyley & Fatemi, 2016, p.162), which in turn negatively impacted the popularity *Talfigi* music gained in the mid-1990s (Riahipour, 2017).

Sonically, the post-Avizheh *Talfigi* music shifted towards explorations in Persian rock music. This was largely due to the rise of unofficial music in Iran with the development of the Internet in late 1990s and early 2000s. The Internet allowed many musicians to share their music online without the need of going through ERSHAD's filtration system. This period saw the rise of the golden age of DIY music in post-revolution Iran. The development of the unofficial music scene, especially that of rock music, was extremely influential in shaping the type of hybridization that turned *Talfigi* music into a popular category by the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

One of the most significant breaks in *Talfigi* music during the 2000s in the official music scene was the release of the Barad album by a band of the same name (Barad Band, 2003). Released by Hermes records, a record label that began its work in the early 2000s and focused mainly on Iranian experimental music, it was an album that mixed the music of south of Iran with rock music. At the time, the LA pop music industry produced a sub-genre of pop music called Bandari whereby the

rhythmic and some melodic elements from the music of south of Iran were used to produce a formulaic entertainment music. Many singers who were not from the region added so-called Bandari tunes to their repertoire, imitating the southern Iranian accent. Barad's album was a break from this aesthetic and showed another side of the music from south of Iran by steering away from the stereotype that was developed by Los Angeles pop music. The song *Leyva*, for instance, begins with an introduction played on classical guitar influenced by the 4/4 rhythm particular to southern Iranian music and is slowly joined by drums and electric guitar that create a psychedelic space in the music and a singer who sings in the dialect of the region. Interestingly, Barad's instrumentation consisted solely of a rock formation, a contrast to bands such as Avizheh that included traditional Persian instruments. This choice meant that Barad's aim was to make a south Iranian rock music that would be familiar to a non-Persian ear through instrumentation choice. Here, *talfiq* was used as an experimental practice that took agency over the music of a marginalised group that have been stereotyped by the pop music industry in Los Angeles. Barad created a transnational music that carried with it the musical aesthetic of the music of south of Iran.

6.7 Namjoo and *Talfiqi*

With the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, the cultural opening that was implemented during Khatami's presidency was somewhat curtailed. However, hardened attitudes towards cultural policy were fruitless. For one, no one could unhear what they had heard in public. Thus, the argument that something that had been judged legal in the previous administration would become less legal in the succeeding administration was not very convincing. Moreover, the unofficial music scene was in full swing and even if ERSHAD did not accept the publication of an album, that would not stop the artists from distributing their album publicly online. Thus, while the number of albums and live shows that were given permission was reduced, the country saw a very vibrant unofficial music scene that came from different parts of the country.

The unofficial rock music scene in the country in 2000s gave rise to bands from many different regions of Iran. One the most important rock music scenes were that of Mashhad, which gave rise to two influential rock bands: Minus One and MudBand (Rokni, 2021). One of the members of MudBand, Mohsen Namjoo, moved to Tehran and began a solo career as an unofficial musician in the mid-2000s. He shared his music online and slowly gained popularity because of the way he

mixed Persian traditional singing and *dastgah* music with rock music. Mohsen Namjoo's rise to popularity in the mid-2000s was partially due to the answer that he gave to the question of how one can approach rock music in relation to *sonati* music in post-revolution Iran. Namjoo's main argument turned around two main concepts. First, he proposed the idea of deconstructing poetry to give more weight to music while re-evaluating the place of music in relation to poetry. Second, he used the similarities between blues and *sonati* music to travel from Iranian *dastgah* system to Western tonal and modal music systems. Namjoo came at the right time and place to propose and push for a way to rethink *sonati* music in relations to rock music. He did so by questioning why *dastgah* must be played in a certain way and why one could not explore thinking about it differently. This critiqued the tradition of playing Persian music that had been passed down orally from master musicians to students and had been guarded sacredly. In a way, Namjoo put into question the obsession over sticking with tradition in the creative process. His music parodied the debate between tradition and modernity by making the point that the idea of distinguishing the two is irrelevant.

In one of the sections of the chapter written on Namjoo by Nahid Siamdoust in her book *Politics of Music in Iran*, she points to how the discussion on Namjoo's music at a meeting about his only album that was officially published in Iran, Toranj (2007), revolved around the fact that Namjoo's setar tuning was out of tune. For Namjoo, this was not the case because he purposefully tuned his setar to move between an Iranian mode and a Western classical scale (Siamdoust, 2017). This discussion is rooted deeply in the discourse between tradition and modernity and how the two can coexist together. Namjoo's music at the time exemplified that one must not have to choose between the two. Instead, the need is to go beyond this dichotomy and create music that travels in-between the lines and represents the identity of being an Iranian musician in post-revolution Iran.

What Namjoo was doing musically was not necessarily unique in Iran. Many musicians before him explored various arguments that Namjoo's music was making aesthetically. What was special about Namjoo was that he succeeded in bringing the elements that other musicians explored before him in the 1990s and 2000s together to argue for *talfiq* as the best way to produce a unique Iranian sonic identity. He was performing rock with a Persian traditional instrument and moving between Western scales and Persian modes. This was already happening in works by Avizheh and Peter

Soleimanipour in the 1990s and early 2000s. Namjoo was also using many Persian compound rhythms in his music such as 5/8, 16/8, 7/8, etc. This was also not something new as other musicians in Iran had done such *talfiq* work before him. Contrary to the previous generation of *Talfiqi* musicians, who mainly concentrated on non-vocal music, Namjoo used his voice to navigate between Persian classical and rock singing techniques. This was Namjoo's unique musical contribution, capturing a large Iranian population's attention inside and outside of the country, and illustrating once again the importance of voice in Iranian music culture, including poetry and the relation between poetry and music. By putting his finger on doing *Talfiqi* with voice, Namjoo touched probably the most sensible chord when it comes to experimenting with *sonati* music in Iran. Namjoo's other contribution was to bring the term *Talfiqi* back to the popular vocabulary of music categorization since its articulation in the mid-1990s. By walking between many different lines, he showed how *talfiq* is the way to capture the spirit of today's Iranian society since, as Namjoo himself states, "*talfiq*, in my opinion, is the epidemic of today" (Kosari, 2009, p. 147).

6.8 Post-Namjoo and the rise of *Talfiqi* as a popular form of music

By the end of 2000s, *Talfiqi* began to gain more ground in the musical panorama of Iran, as more official and unofficial music adopted this categorisation. Moreover, the music categorised as *Talfiqi* was produced and shared within a large incoherent network of musicians and audiences who were participating in the formation of a new music scene, a term that Will Straw defines as "cultural unities whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic [...]is usefully flexible and anti-essentialising, requiring of those who use it no more than that they observe a hazy coherence between sets of practices or affinities." (Straw, 2001, p. 248) During the period just after the election of Ahmadinejad, bands such as Darkoob (2009), Dang Show (2010), and Rumi (2005) formed as projects that invited guest musicians and vocalists to join them on certain songs or albums. This spirit of collaboration became a central practice among many *Talfiqi* musicians as the music became more popular. What happened at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century was the slow rise of *Talfiqi* as an official category of music that competed with pop music, the most popular music genre in Iran.

Another important event that really influenced *Talfiqi* was the growing integration of jazz music into its aesthetic as well as the introduction of new instruments in *Talfiqi* ensembles. In the mid-

2000s, several Armenian jazz musicians moved to Iran and began teaching jazz music in the country (Farokheddin, 2016). This current began to influence a new generation of musicians that were heavily influenced by jazz theory, including Sardar Sarmast (Piano), Hamzeh Yeganeh (Piano), Makan Ashgvari (Vocals), and Mahan Mirarab (guitar), to name a few. The popularity of jazz among Iranian musicians opened the discourse about *talfiq* and *Talfiqi* music in new ways. As Laudan Nooshin (2016) observes, jazz in post-revolution Iran came to be seen as something that "is and able to transcend cultural boundaries" (p.140). Thus, during the 2000s, jazz was no longer just a separate genre in the periphery but an ever more integral part of music that was categorised as *Talfiqi*. Another significant shift in *Talfiqi* music was the integration of new instrumentations in *Talfiqi* bands. We see the usage of instruments such as cello, trombone, accordion, clarinet, piano and classical guitar in the formation of bands that rose in popularity in the mid to late 2000s. These new instruments played an important role in shaping the sonic color of *Talfiqi* music from late 2000s onward. Here, *Talfiqi* was no longer the integration of Persian traditional instruments with jazz-rock formations but explorations in creating new sonic colors that borrowed largely from Eastern Europe. This sound created the perception of belonging to a larger archetype of an East that extends from Asia to Europe.

The year 2013 kickstarted a new current in the *Talfiqi* music that brought the category of music into popularity and allowed it to find its place as an official category of music in the country. The album that started the trend was *aghā-ye banafsh* (Mr. Violet) by the group Pallett (Pallett band, 2013). What attracted many to "Mr. Violet" was its hybridization of manouche jazz with Iranian *sonati* vocal techniques. The album's use of clarinet, cello, and accordion also gave the music a unique sonic color that had not been explored previously in Iran. "Mr. Violet" played with the notions of entertainment vs. serious music as well as traditional vs. modern music. The result was an aesthetic located in the broken middle between these seemingly obsolete extremes while finding a balance between them by creating an aesthetic that was nonetheless entertaining, popular, and serious. Moreover, the aesthetic proposed by "Mr. Violet" was familiar and unfamiliar to the public at the same time. On the one hand, it was familiar because it used modes that were somewhat close to modes used in *dastgāh* music. On the other, it was unfamiliar because it was the first time after the revolution that such aesthetic was being explored in popular music in Iran. Another aspect of this form of genre mixing was the idea that Pallett located its music in a broader Eastern

transnational aesthetic that was no longer limited to the sounds from the Middle East. Thus, aesthetically, Pallett was from the East, but a broader East.

Many other bands began producing *Talfiqi* albums from 2013 onward, each having different takes on what sort of elements they were trying to hybridise. Bomrani, for instance, began as a bluegrass band that mixed Serbian brass with Western bluegrass music. Others, such as Chaartaar experimented with the hybridization of electronic music with Persian traditional vocal techniques. Lastly, bands such as Damahi and Kamakan continued the footsteps of Barad by creating a sub-category of *Talfiqi* that mixed the music of south of Iran with rock, jazz, flamenco, and sometimes reggae. All in all, most of these projects were trying to explore and experiment with music to find “new audiences for new forms of music” in the country (Rasoulof in Bagheri, 2017). What they were doing was to carve out a space for experimentation in music that was popular and yet would not necessarily be categorised as pop. Moreover, they were experimenting with such music as bands and not solo artists, a characteristic that distinguished them from pop music artists, who are mainly solo vocalists.

Efforts to popularise the term *Talfiqi* had begun a year earlier, in 2012, when the Tehran Fusion Music Week was organised at the Niavaran Cultural Center alongside Tehran Experimental Music Week. In 2015, following the efforts of music critic and journalist Amir Bahari, *Talfiqi* was included as a category of music in the largest national music festival, the Fajr music festival (Soufi, 2018). Thus, *Talfiqi* began to carve out a space for itself in the public sphere by gaining larger audiences and organising official events that included the label *Talfiqi*. With the increasingly common usage of the term *Talfiqi* in the public sphere, a debate surrounding whether certain musical pieces could be categorised as such began to take shape. Moreover, artists known in other genres such as *sonati* or even pop began producing music that did some form of *Talfiqi* work. A great example of this was the release of the song “Heavy Makeup” by the renowned *sonati* vocalist Homayoun Shajarian (Shajarian & Pournazeri, 2014). He stated in an interview that he did *Talfiqi* work so to appeal to audiences that were not necessarily interested in listening to pure *sonati* music (Shajarian, 2019). *Talfiqi*, therefore, had become a category and a practice that appealed to a broader audience.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter began by looking at the evolution of the practice of *talfiq* in Iran beginning in the Qajar and continuing through the Pahlavi dynasties. I showed how it was a cultural practice that was trying to come to terms with the dynamics between tradition and modernity in music in Iran. The chapter then looked at how the practice of *talfiq* continued, albeit discreetly, following the 1979 revolution in Iran with works by musicians such as Hossein Alizadeh. I then argued that the usage of the term *Talfiqi* came accidentally in the mid-1990s as many musicians were exploring new sounds and needed to justify their exploration through an ambiguous language that could be used as a negotiation tool with the limitations imposed by the Iranian government regarding acceptable genres of music in the country at the time. Following the cultural thaw of the Khatami period, the practice went through several iterations before it became a popular music category from 2010 onward. Thus, this music categorization became necessary in recognising a shift in the way musicians in Iran experimented with popular music once the music industry expanded and allowed diverse forms of music. The main feature of this music category is its capacity to shapeshift and put into question the essentialism and obsession over authenticity in music in the country. At the same time, it has become an easy black box to otherise any type of music that does not follow the aesthetic conventions set by the political organizations such as the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (ERSHAD) or the music critique circles. What I tried to illustrate, and I would like to conclude with, is that the idea of trying to define what *Talfiqi* is pointless. Instead, we need to see this categorization as an inevitable result of the dynamics of culture in Iran with regards to discourses surrounding tradition and modernity. *Talfiqi* is thus the point of struggle for finding the place of Iranian music aesthetics in an ever-growing globalised world. Such a point of struggle has opened a space for exploration of a globalised Iranian identity through music and has allowed Iranian musicians to negotiate through ambiguity, be it the ambiguity of the category or the ambiguity in the type of music that is produced under the umbrella term of *Talfiqi*. What the outcome of this has been, in my opinion, is the stabilization of this category as a genre of music in the country. What remains to be seen is whether this genre will continue to have the capacity for negotiation in its music aesthetics in the future.

CHAPTER 7

THE WAYS IRANIAN MEDIA DISCUSS *TALFIQI*

This chapter presents the results of the content analysis of the way *Talfiqi* music is talked about in the Iranian media. It does so by looking at different statements about this music category in the Iranian media and codifying them using MaxQDA, a content analysis software. It begins by looking at the way *Talfiqi* is understood and how it is defined. It then looks at how the practice of *talfiq* (fusing or hybridisation) is perceived. The third section of this chapter looks at *Talfiqi* as a music scene in Iran. It concludes with a miscellaneous section, which brings forward topics that were deemed important and that could not be coded under the three previous themes.

7.1 Definition of *Talfiqi*

The most discussed topic in the analysed content was the definition of *Talfiqi*. The data shows that there are three main struggles with the definition of the term: 1) how this term is understood with regards to the genre of fusion, a terminology developed in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s to categorise music mixing jazz and rock genres; 2) the ambiguity inherent in the definition of the term is critiqued in different ways in the content; 3) discomfort with belonging under such a large umbrella term. In this section, I will go through every coded sub-category and give examples of how each sub-topic is discussed by way of quoting and translating certain phrases.

7.1.1 Generic definition of *Talfiqi*

In this section, I will look at the three main ways *Talfiq* is defined as a genre and as a practice. There are three subsections in this section: defining *Talfiqi* as fusion, looking at *talfiq* as a common phenomenon, and defining *Talfiqi* in relation to its historic root in pre-1979 revolution history in Iran.

7.1.1.1 Defining *Talfiqi* as Fusion

One of the most common ways that *Talfiqi* is defined is in relation to its translation from the English word fusion. A very common way that the term is defined is the following.

موسیقی تلفیقی گونه‌ای از موسیقی است که نتیجه تلفیق دو یا چند فرهنگ موسیقایی باشد. موسیقی تلفیقی ترجمه اصطلاح موسیقی فیوژن است که در اصل و ابتدا به ترکیب موسیقی جز با فانک و راک گفته می‌شد، اما امروزه به خصوص در موسیقی ایران شکل‌های مختلفی به خود گرفته و از تلفیق موسیقی پاپ با سنتی، موسیقی الکترونیک با آواز و... را موسیقی تلفیقی می‌گویند

Talfigi music is a kind of music that is the result of the mix between two or more musical cultures. *Talfigi* music is the translation of the term fusion music, which originally, and at the beginning, described music that mixed jazz music with rock and funk. However, today, especially in Iranian music, it has taken many shapes, and it includes the mixing of pop with *sonati* music, electronic with *avaz* music, and more. (Atashi, 2019)

Thus, the terminology is linked to its roots in the United States with the birth of jazz fusion in North America, as we can see in this report from Hamshari Javān titled *Musiqi Talfigi yā inja hame-chi dar hameh* [*Talfigi* music or is everything messed up over here?]:

مثل بسیاری از جریان های هنری که وارداتی هستند، این سبک هم در خارج از مرزهای ما به دنیا آمد. ماجرا از دهه شصت میلادی شروع شد و موسیقی تلفیقی از ترکیب سبک جز با سایر ژانرهای موسیقی به وجود آمد. همان طور که پیش بینی می شد، طرفداران جز کلاسیک در مقابل این تغییر و اکنش نشان دادند و بسیاری از منتقدان، این سبک را نوعی موسیقی سبک، ساده شده و بی محتوا دانستند که توسط موسیقیدان های بی استعداد تولید شده است.

Like many other artistic currents that are imported, this genre also started outside of our frontiers. The story begins in the 1960's and fusion music began as mixing of jazz music with other genres. As it was predicted, classic jazz fans reacted to this change and many critiques saw this genre as a type of light, simple, and empty music produced by musicians who were not talented (Naseri, 2015)

Others critique the idea of linking *Talfigi* music to the history of Western fusion music by arguing that the music is closer to the category of "world music" than "fusion music". Here is how the journalist Alireza Eshghi of Etemad magazine begins his article that includes an interview with a *Talfigi* band, Damahi:

«موسیقی تلفیقی» همچنان جای بحث دارد. می‌دانیم آنچه امروز در ایران موسیقی تلفیقی نامیده می‌شود با «جز فیوژنی» که در دهه‌های ۷۰ و ۸۰ میلادی و در روند تکامل موسیقی جز در آمریکا و سپس اروپا یا موسیقی ملل «world music» شکل گرفت متفاوت است و بیشتر به نوع دیگری از موسیقی که نامیده می‌شود شباهت دارد. اواخر قرن بیستم که با جریان جهانی شدن، سبک‌ها بیشتر با یکدیگر آمیختند یا موسیقی تلفیقی ملل نامیده می‌شود. داستان موسیقی «world fusion» واژه جدیدتری به میان آمد که تلفیقی در ایران اما کمی متفاوت است. بهتر است این جریان، موسیقی «تلفیقی ایرانی» نامیده شود.

Talfiqi music still needs to be discussed. We know that what is known as *Talfiqi* in Iran is different from "jazz fusion" of the 1970's and 1980's in the evolution process of jazz music in America and later in Europe and that it is closer to "World music", another type of music that is known as music of different nations. In this music, genres are more and more hybridised. The story of *Talfiqi* music in Iran is a bit different. It is better to call this music "Persian fusion". (Eshghi, 2016)

Here, what we see is the shift in the narrative of what is happening in Iran by, from one perspective, linking it to global trends while in another, separating it from these trends by arguing that this is a local music movement that cannot be explained with the broad categories in global trends. Another way that this music category is defined is through its technical attributes, as it is seen in the definition of *Talfiqi* by the journalist Parastoo Bahrami-Rad in Etemad newspaper:

تلفیقی: کلاچند چیز که با هم میکس شوند و پدر و مادرها با آن کمتر مخالفت کنند تلفیقی نام دارد. حالامی خواهد لباس باشد یا موسیقی یا... موسیقی تلفیقی موسیقی است که سنتی و مدرن با هم میکس شد و این سال‌ها هم با استقبال فراوانی روبه‌رو شده است (مخصوصاً نسل چهارمی‌ها). کنسرت‌های این سبک موسیقی هم با استقبال فراوانی روبه‌رو شده است چون هم به فرهنگ ما نزدیک است و هم از موسیقی مدرن که باب میل جوان‌هاست در آن استفاده شده است

Talfiqi: In general, when many things are mixed and moms and dads are less likely to disagree with it, it is called *Talfiqi*. This can be clothing or music or anything else. *Talfiqi* music is a type of music that mixes tradition and modern and these years it has been garnering lots of attention (Especially among the fourth generation). The concerts of this genre of music have been popular because it is closer to our culture and it uses modern music, something that attracts younger generation. (Bahrami-Rad, 2014)

What is interesting about this quote is that it talks about how this type of mixing is favoured by parents because it keeps some of the tradition and old ways of doing and mixes it with more modern ways of doing culture. Lastly, Ramin Behna, one of the founders of the band Avizheh, who is considered one of the first bands that used the term *Talfiqi*, takes the following approach in defining the term:

استفاده از تکنیک های امروزی برای موسیقی ایرانی. تاکید می کنم برای موسیقی ایرانی. زیر ایرانی بودن آن یک خط قرمز می کشم تا کاملاً مشخص باشد.

The usage of today's techniques for Iranian music. I emphasise on Iranian music. I underline Iranianness with a red line so that it is clear.

What is evidently important here for Behna is that *Talfiqi* is an Iranian music that uses technical aspects borrowed from different forms of music practices around the world. Thus, for him, *Talfiqi* is an Iranian practice even though it is connected to music practices around the world. Again, what we see here is a distinction of *Talfiqi* as a music that has evolved in Iran and a core form of Iranian music.

7.1.1.2 Historic roots of *Talfiqi*

In this section, what emerges is the roots of *Talfiqi* in the history of music in Iran. Here, the discourse revolves around the idea that *Talfiqi* began as a genre before the Iranian revolution and then re-emerged after the revolution in the mid-1990's. The two names that are most often associated with *Talfiqi* music are Abbas Mehrpouya and Farhad Mehrdad. Mehrpouya was a musician that used different instruments from around the world and mixed them with Persian poetry and Western styles, such as jazz and rock music. Farhard Mehrad was one of the first singer-songwriters in Iran who performed his music on piano or guitar. We can see this in this Hamshahri Javan article:

می توان گفت کسی که برای اولین بار موسیقی را به شیوه تلفیقی تولید و این نام را برایش انتخاب کرد، عباس مهرپویا، خواننده و نوازنده دهه 49 بود. مهرپویا، با بهره گیری از دستاورد سفرهایش به دیگر کشورها و آشنایی با فرهنگ و موسیقی های مختلف، آهنگ هایی را با سبکی خاص و نو ساخت. او آهنگ های بسیار متفاوتی را با

نوا ساز سیتار (با شباهت ظاهری به سه تار و تفاوت در نوع کاسه و تعداد سیم) با صدا و سبک خاص خویش ارائه کرد.

بعد از او، فرهاد مهراد بود که با جنس صدای خاصش و با استفاده از پیانو و گیتار، آهنگ هایی در سبک تلفیقی منتشر کرد. مسعودشعاری هم از چهره های شناخته شده این سبک است،

We can say that the first person who produced music in the style of *Talfiqi* and chose this name for it was Abbas Mehrpouya, a singer and performer in the 50's [this is 1350's, which is 1970's in Gregorian calendar]. Mehrpouya produced new songs with a particular style that were influenced by his travels to other countries and his familiarity with different music cultures. He produced unique songs using the Sitar (an instrument that looks like setar but is different with regards to the strings that are used and the body of the instrument).

After him, it was Fahrddad Mehrdad, with his unique voice and his usage of piano and guitar, who produced songs in the *Talfiqi* genre. (Naseri, 2015)

Others argue that while the practice of *talfiq* has existed in Iran before the revolution, the term *Talfiqi* was never used to describe this music, as we see in this quote by the composer Christoph Rezaei in the article titled *Sabki be nāme Talfiqi vojūd nadarad* [there is no genre called *Talfiqi*]:

این آهنگساز با اشاره به خواننده قدیمی پاپ ایران، بیان کرد: حدود دهه ۷۰ یک هنرمند ایرانی که تقریباً سبک پاپ را دنبال می‌کرد به نام عباس مهرپویا، از سی‌تار هندی و گیتار الکتریک و شعر ایرانی برای ساخت موسیقی خود استفاده می‌کرد. این خودش یک تلفیق است اما آن زمان به هیچ وجه از چنین نامی استفاده نمی‌شد و البته که خیلی قبل‌تر هم این مسئله وجود داشته است

By referring to an old pop Iranian singer, he states that: a singer who roughly followed the pop genre in the 1970's by the name of Abbas Mehrpouya used sitar, electric guitar, and Persian poetry in his music. This is in and of itself a form of *talfiq*, but this terminology was never used at the time, and evidently, this practice existed before him as well. (Rezaei in Nezamzade, 2014)

Another narrative argues that *Talfiqi* is a post revolution music current that emerged the late 1370's (1990's). Here is how the journalists Amir Bahari and Niousha Mazidabadi begin their report on the round table titled *moosiqi be bombast reside-ast* [music has reached a dead end]:

موسیقی تلفیقی در ایران بیشتر به جریانی از موسیقی اطلاق می شود که اواخر دهه ۱۳۷۰ آغاز و به مرور تبدیل به جریانی شد که بسیاری از نوازندگان توانمند و صاحب تفکر ترجیح می دادند در این عرصه آزمون و خطا کنند.

Talfiqi music in Iran is mostly referred to a current that began in the late 1370's [1990's] and slowly became a movement that was favoured by many capable and intellectual performers who experimented. (Bahari & Mizabadi, 2015)

What we see here is the idea that *Talfiqi* was favoured because it became a way of experimenting with music. Moreover, it is done by "capable" and "intellectual" performers. These words hint to the idea that the music is practiced by a certain artistic class in the society who have academic knowledge of the type of music that they are mixing. The idea of experimentation is also important here since this idea reemerges throughout this analysis.

7.1.2 *Talfiqi* as a category

The highest number of phrases that were coded under the topic of definition of *Talfiqi* belong to this sub-section. What is most interesting about this section is the sheer number of codes related to how the terminology is either wrong, miscategorised or in need of recategorization. This shows the malaise of many in confronting and coming into terms with *Talfiqi* as a terminology for describing music. It seems that there is no concrete agreement between musicians, music experts, and journalists regarding what *Talfiqi* means and what can be categorised under this umbrella terminology. In this section, I explore the three main sub-categories that emerged in the analysis. These include *Talfiqi* is miscategorised, *Talfiqi* needs to be recategorised, and *Talfiqi* as a term for categorisation is wrong.

7.1.2.1 *Talfiqi* is a practice, not a category.

What surfaces in this section is the idea that *Talfiqi* is a common phenomenon in music since it is directly linked to the practice of *talfiq*. Here, the meaning of *Talfiqi* is problematised by referring

to the practice of *talfiq* or hybridisation in music. For instance, Peter Soleimanipur, one of the first, if not the first, musicians after the 1979 revolution who used the term *Talfiqi* for describing his music, states the following:

وقتی می‌گوییم موسیقی تلفیقی، همانقدر اطلاعات مخابره کردیم که بگوییم مثلاً «موسیقی صدادار»! موسیقی در هر جای این کره خاکی از روز اول محصول ترکیب و تلفیق عناصر صوتی، فنی، روانی، اجتماعی، عاطفی، ... بوده است. با این وصف ایده‌ی قرار دادن سبکی از موسیقی با نام «تلفیقی» در مقابل سایر انواع «غیر تلفیقی»، شاید نیاز به تجدید نظر داشته باشد.

When we say *Talfiqi* music, we are sharing the same amount of information as when we say, for example, “sounding music”! Music has been the product of mixing and fusing of different sonic, technical, psychological, social, and emotional elements in every part of the world since its inception. Following this logic, using the term “*Talfiqi*” as a genre beside other “*non-Talfiqi*” ones may need reconsideration. (Soleimanipur in Nazemzadeh, 2014)

What is interesting about this statement is that Soleimanipur is one the first artists who used the term *Talfiqi* to describe his music. What this tells us is that the moment the term begins to be deconstructed, the artist who used it first begins to be its first critic.

Ramin Sadeqi, the head of Hermes records, states the following in the same article:

اگر بخواهیم درباره موسیقی تلفیقی صحبت کنیم باید به دوران پیدایش موسیقی برگردیم. تلفیق یک عمل است و نمی‌توانیم آن را یک سبک بدانیم. تلفیق یک نوع رویکرد در آهنگسازی است که می‌تواند در هر سبکی اتفاق بیفتد.

If we want to discuss *Talfiqi* music, we need to look at the time when music was created. *talfiq* is a practice, and we cannot consider it as a genre. *Talfiq* is a type of approach in composition that can happen in any kind of music. (Sadeqi in Nazemzadeh, 2014)

Assuming one can critique what has happened in music since the beginning of time is a very curious formulation. It begs the question, can one define how and when music started, and what is even considered music? It shows that the practice of *talfiq* is seen as a universal practice. These artists

argue that the usage of *Talfiqi* is a problematic way of talking about music in general, since the element of *talfiq* is universally found in music.

7.1.2.2 *Talfiqi* as a category is wrong

This sentiment is mainly expressed among music experts. The argument seems to be that because of the inherent ambiguity of the terminology, using the term *Talfiqi* is a wrong way of categorising music. This sentiment is expressed in this quote by the French Iranian music composer Christoph Rezaie when he is asked about *Talfiqi* Music Week:

با توجه به اینکه در این هفته گروه هایی اجرا دارند که فضای موسیقی شان بسیار از هم دور است: فکر می کنید چقدر نام هفته موسیقی تلفیقی متناسب با اجراها بود؟

از نظر من این نام اشتباه است و معنای مشخصی ندارد. گروه هایی که در این هفته حضور داشتند، سبک های متفاوتی دارند و نمی توان با یک واژه سبک و سیاق همه آنها را توصیف کرد

Amir Hossein Nazemzadeh: Considering that there are bands playing this week whose musical atmosphere are very far away from one another, how appropriate do you think the name *Talfiqi* Music Week is?

Christoph Rezai: I think that it is a wrong name and that it does not have a clear meaning. Groups that were there this week had different genres and one cannot describe all of them with one term. (Nazemzadeh, 2014)

Rezaei points to the fact that gathering bands from very diverse genre backgrounds under one name is not appropriate because it does not necessarily describe them. Moreover, he asserts the idea that *Talfiqi* is an ambiguous term that does not have a clear meaning. The actor, musician, and graphist Ali Bostan take this idea even further in his discussion of the practice of *talfiq* in and of itself:

علی بوستان| من تصور می کنم باید قبل از هر چیز مشخص کنیم تلفیق یعنی چه و آن را در چه می بینیم؟
من تصور می کنم تلفیق واژه اشتباهی برای این نوع از موسیقی است چون تجربه هایی که تا به امروز
ارایه شده محلول نیست، مخلوط است، مثل آشی است که جا نیفتاده

Ali Bostan: I think that before anything, we need to determine what *talfiq* is and what we see it in. I think *talfiq* is a wrong terminology for this kind of music because the experimentations that are happening until now is not fused, it is mixed, like a soup that is not ready (Bostan in Bahari & Mirzabadi, 2014)

Here, what we are seeing is the idea that true *talfiq* is not attained in the music that is called *Talfiqi* since just mixing different musical elements together does not result in the fluid fusion between different elements of music. Ethnomusicologist Sasan Fatemi, the co-author of *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment: From Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond*, has a more critical regard towards *Talfiqi* as is seen in the following citation:

ساسان فاطمی| از هر جهت غلط است. یکی به این دلیل که اصالتلفیقی صورت نمی گیرد. وقتی صحبت از موسیقی تلفیقی می کنیم ظاهر آن نشان می دهد که یک ژانر است. ولی حقیقتاً یک ژانر نیست. ژانر تعریف دارد. شما وقتی می گوئید موسیقی بلوز تعریف دارد.

ولی در موسیقی تلفیقی معلوم نیست که آن چند نفر که کنار هم می نشینند، اهل کدام ملیت هستند و چه می خواهند بکنند و بر اساس چه اصولی این کار را می کنند. به نظرم حتی تجربه کردن هم نیست. راهی برای برون رفت از بن بست است. نمی دانم چه باید بکنم حالا باید بنشینیم با هم یک کاری بکنیم

Sasan Fatemi: It is wrong in every way. First because *talfiq* does not happen (in *Talfiqi* music). When we talk about *Talfiqi* music, it seems that we talk about a genre. However, this is truly not a genre. Genre has a definition. When you say Blues music, it has a definition.

However, in *Talfiqi* music, it is not clear, when a few people get together, which country they come from, what do they really want to do, and on based on what principles they are working. In my opinion, it is not even experimentation. It is a way to leave a cul-de-sac. I don't know what I want to do so let's get together and do something. (Fatemi in Bahari & Mirzabadi, 2014)

Again, Fatemi is reiterating how true *talfiq* is never attained in *Talfiqi* music. This said, Fatemi even goes further by arguing that *Talfiqi* music does not know what it is doing because it does not

follow any principles for doing *talfiq*. What is interesting about this statement and previous statements is the idea of true *talfiq* as something that has precise principles that need to be followed to reach a certain cultural level to be acceptable as legitimate attempt at mixing. In other words, it is a call for the attempt to principled experimentation, an experimentation with knowledge and limits.

7.1.2.3 *Talfiqi* is miscategorised

In this section, we see two main ways that *Talfiqi* is seen as a category that miscategorises the music that it is supposed to describe. What has emerged from this analysis shows that Iranian musicians either distance themselves from the term *Talfiqi* or argue the absence of aesthetic similarities or coherences between different bands that are categorised under the category of *Talfiqi*. In what follows, I describe each of these.

7.1.2.3.1 Distancing from *Talfiqi* as a category

Many musicians who are described as *Talfiqi* distance themselves from this way of categorisation. Opinions regarding why musicians distance themselves from *Talfiqi* vary. Atashi observes that musicians who don't like to be categorised as *Talfiqi* either use other terminologies or avoid using a terminology to categorise their music, as it is shown in the following quote:

اولین و مهمترین نکته‌ای که در مورد موسیقی تلفیقی مورد بحث و بررسی قرار گرفته، عنوان این جنس از موسیقی است که به گروه‌های مختلفی نسبت داده می‌شود. شاید عجیب باشد که اکثریت قریب به اتفاق گروه‌های فعال در این رده بندی، از استفاده از عنوان تلفیقی پرهیز می‌کنند و برای موسیقی خودشان عنوان‌های دیگر در نظر می‌گیرند و یا اصلاً عنوانی را برای آن تعریف نمی‌کنند. به هر صورت خیلی از گروه‌های موسیقی در ایران از این‌که به عنوان یک گروه تلفیقی شناخته می‌شوند، ناراضی هستند و دلایل خودشان را هم برای این عدم رضایت دارند

The first and most important thing discussed about *Talfiqi* music is the name of this kind of music that is attributed to many groups. It might be surprising to note that most active groups in this categorization avoid using the term *Talfiqi*. They choose other names to describe their music or don't use any terms at all. In any case, many music groups in Iran are not happy that they are recognised as *Talfiqi* and have their own reasons for this malaise (Atashi, 2017).

The same idea is repeated in the article *musiqi-ye Talfiqi dar ebhām* [*Talfiqi* music in ambiguity]. Written by Komeil Entezari in *jam-e jam* newspaper, the article looks at how Iranian musicians that are chosen under the category of *Talfiqi* are not happy to be categorised as *Talfiqi*. The author begins the article by the following statement:

سی و دومین جشنواره بین المللی موسیقی فجر درحالی میزبان ده گروه موسیقی در بخش تلفیقی است که بسیاری از آنها موسیقی خود را تلفیقی نمی دانند و پاسخ مشخصی برای چرایی طبقه بندی موسیقی شان در بخش تلفیقی ندارند

The 32nd International Farjr Music Festival is hosting 10 music groups in its *Talfiqi* section at the time when many of the musicians don't consider themselves as *Talfiqi* and have no clear answer about why their music is categorised in this section (Entezari, 2016).

Shaya Shoja, the pianist of Dang Show, one of the first *Talfiqi* bands that made the category popular in 2010's, has this to say about the usage of the term *Talfiqi* for describing their music:

شایا: شاید این سوال تکراری باشد اما پاسخش تا به امروز برای من به شکل یک جواب واحد تثبیت نشده است. از طرف دیگر این که ما موسیقی گروه مان را تلفیق بدانیم، نمی دانم تا چه اندازه درست است؟ چون هر چقدر زمان به جلو می رود، احساس می کنم به جای قرار دادن شیوه موسیقی ما در یک ژانر، بهتر است آن را یک لایف استایل (سبک زندگی) در نظر بگیریم. به نظر من ما به شیوه مرسوم کار نمی کنیم و ژانر بندی کار ما هم ثابت نیست. ممکن است گروه دنگ شو در آلبوم بعدی دو قطعه از موسیقی هیپ هوس داشته باشد و مطابق با هیچ یک از کارهای موسیقی تلفیقی و حتی موسیقی که گروه تا امروز انجامش داده کارش را ادامه ندهد.

This maybe a repetitive question but my answer to the question has not been solidified yet. I am not sure about the idea of considering our music as *Talfiqi* because as time passes, I feel like instead of categorising our music as a genre, it is better to consider it as a lifestyle. I think that we do not work in a habitual way and the genres that we explore are not always fixed. It may be that we will have Hip House songs in our next works (Shoja in Namjoo, 2015a).

Shaya's brother, Taha, who is the vocalist and saxophone player in the band, has a stronger opinion about being categorised as *Talfiqi*:

طاها: من تا زمانی که در جست و جوها و کنکاش‌های
شخصی‌ام شکست نخورم، حاضر به تن دادن به کلمه
تلفیق برای موسیقی گروه نیستم. ما از ابتدا به قصد
تلفیق، کارمان را شروع نکردیم بلکه چیزی در ذهن
ما شکل گرفته بود که خواستیم آن را به وجود بیاوریم.

Taha: So long as I have personal curiosities and move forward in my music, I refuse to give our music up to the term *talfiq*. We did not start our work with the intention of doing *talfiq*. Instead, we had a vision that we wanted to bring to life. (Taha in Namjoo, 2015a).

What is so fascinating about these two quotes is how the band is uncomfortable with being categorised as *Talfiqi* because they do not want to be categorised in any shape or form. Taha's statement is very interesting in the sense that he talks about *talfiq*, the practice of hybridisation, a practice that is almost fundamental to music creation. For him, what he and the band is doing is creating something that came to them as inspirations. Yet, we are not given any information regarding how these inspirations came. When looking at these statements, there seems to be a malaise and fear with being limited by the process of categorisation.

While the discourse surrounding being categorised by Dang Show seem to revolve around maintaining control over one's music and how it is described, the musicians who are categorised as *Talfiqi* do not feel that they have the power to choose how they are described. A great example of

this is how musicians who performed in the *Talfiqi* section of the *International Fajr Music Festival* were not happy to be categorised as such and yet participated in the festival's section. This lack of agency in communicating with the organisers and those responsible for choosing festival's music genres categories creates a malaise among artists who do not see themselves as *Talfiqi* musicians. In answering the question "do you consider your music *Talfiqi*?" The artist Ashkan Khatibi, an artist who performed in the *Talfiqi* category of the festival gives the following answers:

خیر، اجرا و کنسرت ما تلفیقی نیست و ماهیت تلفیقی هم ندارد، اما ظاهراً اسم تلفیقی را به دلایل دیگری بر این بخش گذاشته اند که باید از مسئولان جشنواره درباره چرایی این نامگذاری پرسید.

No, our concert and our performances are not *Talfiqi*, and we do not have the essence of *Talfiqi*. However, the name *Talfiqi* is given to the festival's category for reasons that you should ask those responsible for the festival as to why they chose to use such naming (Khatibi in Entezari, 2016)

Another reason why *Talfiqi* musicians do not like to be associated with this categorisation is that the terminology has become so common in the language of music description in Iran that musicians have given up fighting the terminology as they prefer to spend their time making music more than describing their music. This can be seen in this Question and answer with the *Talfiqi* group Pallet in the 75th issue of *gozāresh-e mūsīqi* magazine published in *mordād* 1394 [23 July 2015]:

• این موسیقی درست یا غلط در کشور ما با عنوان تلفیقی
جا افتاده است. نکته جالب این است که همه هنرمندان عضو این
گروه‌ها از به کارگیری این لفظ برای موسیقی‌شان ناراحت می‌شوند
و این نام‌گذاری را درست نمی‌دانند. آیا زمان آن نرسیده که گروه
پالت در مورد سبک کاری خودش روشن‌نمایی کند؟

به جز گروه‌های فوق‌العاده تجاری که از این کار هیچ ابایی نداشتند. این که ما
در مورد سبک هنری خودمان توضیح دهیم به نظر کار درستی نمی‌آید. وظیفه ما
تجربه و تولید موسیقی است. این کار اصلی هر هنرمندی در هر زمینه هنری است
که به انجام هنر خود مشغول باشد و منتقدین آن هنر کارش را سبک و سنگین
کنند و برداشت‌هایشان را در اختیار عموم قرار دهند.

For the best or for the worst, this music has become recognised as *Talfiqi* in our country. The interesting point is that all artists who are recognised in this category get upset when the terminology is used to describe them, and they don't appreciate such way of naming them. Isn't it the time for Pallet to clarify their music genre?

The idea that we need to describe our music genre ourselves does not seem right. Our responsibility is to experiment with and produce music. The job of every artist in any artistic field is to occupy themselves with their artwork while the job of art critics is to critique artistic works and provide their interpretations to the public. (Pallet in Namjoo, 2015a)

What is so fascinating in both these cases is the way the response does not answer the question and relays the responsibility of categorising artwork to the critics or organisers instead. Thus, the musician, even if they are not happy with the terminology that is given to describe their music, is not responsible for how the public or critics decide the way their music is categorised.

7.1.2.3.2 Incoherence in aesthetic similarities

Talfiqi seems to act as an umbrella category that encompasses a diverse array of music aesthetics. For this reason, many of the statements coded in the miscategorisation of *Talfiqi* music section point to the incoherence in the aesthetic similarities between the bands that are included in this category. This causes great discomfort for some who see such miscategorisation problematic, as it is clearly elaborated in this quote from composer and clarinetist Mona Matboo Riahi:

وی افزود: وقتی هر نوع موسیقی در دسته‌بندی موسیقی تلفیقی قرار می‌گیرد، نتیجه‌اش حضور موسیقی پاپ و عامه‌پسندی که در بسیاری از آثار فعلی دیده می‌شود در کنار برخی کارهای آقای علیزاده است و عجیب است که ما بخواهیم دو موسیقی که هیچ ربطی به هم ندارند را در غالب موسیقی تلفیقی قرار دهیم

She added: when any kind of music is grouped under *Talfiqi* music, the result is the presence of pop music and popular music, which is seen in many of the music in this category, alongside of some of the works of Mr. Alizadeh. It is astounding that we want to put two music that have no relationship to one another under *Talfiqi* music. (Matboo Riahi in Nazemzadeh, 2014)

The same sentiment is expressed by Kamil Entezari when he discusses the Fajr International Music Festival's choices of musicians in their *Talfigi* section of the festival:

برای مثال، میان گروه هایی که در بخش تلفیقی جشنواره امسال حضور دارند، هیچ وجه اشتراکی به چشم نمی خورد. امسال در بخش تلفیقی جشنواره موسیقی فجر هنرمندانی چون اشکان خطیبی، میلاد درخشانی، حجت اشرف زاده، کیان پورتراب، آریا عظیمی نژاد و کاوه آفاق و گروه هایی نظیر کماکان، داماهی، کاکوبند و بمرانی روی صحنه می روند

For example, we do not see any similarities between groups in *Talfigi* section of the festival this year. This year's *Talfigi* section includes artists like Ashkan Khatibi, Milad Derakhshani, Hojjat Ashrafzadeh, Keyvan Pourtorab, Aria Azimi Nejad, Kaveh Afagh and groups such as Kamakan, Damahi, Kakooband, and Bomrani (Entezari, 2016)

Talfigi artists also share the same sentiment as they discuss the incoherence between the aesthetic of their music in comparison to other musicians that are categorised as *Talfigi*. The band Chaartaar, for instance, is not happy about how it is categorised as a *Talfigi* band since they think that their music is the translation of electronic music, as they explain in their interview with *gozāresh-e mūsīqi* [Music Report] magazine:

آرمان گرشاسبی: موسیقی ما تلفیقی نیست. ما ترجمه موسیقی الکترونیک هستیم. ما نگاه‌های مختلفی داریم. ما هم الکترونیک هستیم، هم سنتی، هم پاپ و هم آلترناتیو. تلفیقی معنای متفاوتی دارد و ما آن موسیقی را ارائه نمی‌دهیم.

Arman Garshasbi: our music is not *Talfigi*. We translate electronic music. We have a different look. We are electronic, *sonati*, pop, and alternative. *Talfigi* has a different meaning and we do not offer it (Chaartaar in Namjoo, 2015a)

What we see here is the way Chaartaar distances itself from *Talfigi* by naming the possible styles that their music use. In the same interview, one of the members of the band, Ehsan Haeri, echoes the concern that the musical aesthetic of *Talfigi* bands are different by disagreeing with the idea that their music can be categorised under the same banner as two other *Talfigi* bands (Dang Show and Pallet):

• پس قرار دادن این سه گروه در یک مسیر و یا در امتداد
یک دیگر را قبول ندارید!

احسان حائری: در اینجا مسئله، مسئله زمان است. هر چقدر ما بیشتر جلو برویم مخاطب هم تفاوت‌ها را بیشتر درک خواهد کرد. مسیرهایی که این سه گروه طی می‌کنند با یکدیگر تفاوت بنیادین دارند و حتی از سازبندی و نوع تلفیق (اگر بشود از واژه تلفیق استفاده کرد) می‌شود این تفاوت‌ها را درک کرد. شاید تنها نقطه اشتراک این گروه‌ها وجود آوازی به فرم سنتی باشد. با این وجود باید بگوییم ما اعضای گروه چارتار نه موسیقی دنگ‌شو را می‌پسندیم و نه آن را تلفیق می‌دانیم، حتی ممکن است از نظر ما آن موسیقی، موسیقی خوبی نباشد.

So you do not agree with putting these three groups in the same path?

Ehsan Haeri: Here, the problem is a problem of time. As we continue forward, the audience also sees the differences. The pathways that each group takes has fundamental differences from one another in their orchestrations and the type of *talfiq* (if we can even use the term *talfiq*) and one can appreciate these differences. Maybe the only similarity between them is the existence of *Avaz* [Persian tradition singing] and the *sonati* form. I have to add that we the members of the group do not like *Dang Show's* music, and we do not see it as *talfiq*, and it might be that we are of the opinion that their music is not good (Dang show in Namjoo, 2015a)

What this quote is showing is the tension and, again, the malaise of *Talfiqi* bands in being categorised under the same terminology. What we are also seeing here is a statement on the judgement of taste whereby Chaartaar does not want to be associated with the music of *Dang Show* because they might not even like their music.

Other *Talfiqi* bands, such as Pallet, see *Talfiqi* as a new music wave. For them, just because this new wave has begun, it does not mean that the bands must be categorised under the same umbrella, as it is seen in this quote by Roozbeh Efandarmaz of Pallet Band in their interview with *gozāresh-e mūsīqi* [Music Report] magazine:

روزبه اسفندارمز: به نظر من گروه‌هایی مثل پالت، بُمرانی، چارتار، دنگ‌شو و کامنت موج جدید موسیقی ایرانی به حساب می‌آیند اما نمی‌توان همه این گروه‌ها را در یک دسته قرار داد، در حالی که امروز این کار را انجام می‌دهند و همه ما در تقسیم بندی موسیقی جزو دسته تلفیقی و سایر ژانرها قرار می‌گیریم اما ژانر هر یک از این گروه‌ها تفاوت‌های اساسی با هم دارند. مخاطب ایرانی به این دلیل از موسیقی

Roozbeh Esfandarmaz: In my opinion, bands such as Pallet, Bomrani, Chaartaar, Dang Show, and Comment is part of a new wave of Iranian music. However, we cannot bundle all these groups into one category. While currently all of us are categorised under *Talfigi* and other genres, each of these groups have fundamental differences with one another (Pallet in Namjoo, 2015a).

Here, we see how the sentiment that bands that are categorised as *Talfigi* have fundamental differences is approached more positively by talking about how this is a new wave of music that is emerging in Iran.

7.1.2.4 *Talfigi* must be recategorised

While many critical voices are seen regarding the ambiguity in the categorisation of *Talfigi* music, many believe that there are ways to deal with these ambiguities by thinking about different ways of recategorising this category of music. The three themes that emerge from the analysis point to possible ways of approaching this recategorization: development of contours, diversification of terminology, and using new terminologies. Developing contours is expressed as a collective effort to find the sound signatures of *Talfigi*. It is the idea of finding the mental sonic image that *Talfigi* evokes when an audience hears that a certain band is *Talfigi*. One of Mina Atashi's conclusions is the following:

عنوان یک سبک یا جریان در موسیقی، معرف چگونگی فرم ترانه، ملودی، تنظیم و خوانندگی آن موسیقی است. مخاطب موسیقی زمانی که عنوان پاپ، راک یا سنتی به گوشش می‌خورد، یک تصور و پیش زمینه‌ای از این موسیقی‌ها دارد و می‌تواند بر حسب علاقه‌ای که دارد، با این ژانرها برخورد کند ولی در مورد موسیقی تلفیقی یک پیش زمینه واحد در ذهن مخاطبان وجود ندارد

A genre or a music current's name gives an idea about the music in terms of its song form, melody, arrangement, vocals, etc. When a music audience hears pop, rock or *sonati*, they have an idea of what they would expect from them and based on their taste, they can interact with these genres the way they want. These kinds of signatures do not exist in the minds of the audience when it comes to *Talfigi* music (Atashi, 2017).

This is indeed an interesting proposition because much of the discussion about *Talfigi* revolves around the notion that the category does not have contours and suffers from being vague and ambiguous. Another idea that appeared from the analysis is that of diversification of *Talfigi*. One proposition is to consider *Talfigi* as an umbrella category and develop sub-categories that better describe different music in the broad category. This is how Seyyed Saeed Naseri of Hamshari-ye Javān presents *Talfigi* music.

موسیقی تلفیقی تعداد غیر قابل شمارشی زیرمجموعه و سبک های مختلف دارد و از فضاهاى جدید در سبک های مختلف موسیقی نشأت گرفته. تعدادی از آنها در ایران خیلی موفق بوده اند (مثل پاپ سنتی) و بعضی دیگر هم آمده اند، شنیده شده اند، اما زیاد موفق نبوده و ماندگار نشده اند.

Talfigi music has countless number of sub-categories and genres, and it is influenced by many sonic atmospheres and genres. Many of these were successful in Iran (such as *sonati* pop) and other ones came, were heard, were not as successful, and did not rest. (Naseri, 2015).

The article follows the model of introducing different types of *Talfigi* music using terms such as *pāp-sonati* (*sonati*-pop), *elektronik-sonati* (Electronic-*sonati*), *rāk-sonati* (*sonati*-rock), and *pāp-rāk* (pop-rock). For others, the solution is to just change the terminology and use a new terminology. The *tār*, guitar player, and composer Milad Derakhshani prefers the term independent music since those who make *Talfigi* music do so independently from the mainstream currents in the Iranian music industry such pop music.

به گمان او، این افراد به صورت مستقل و با سلیقه شخصی کار می کنند و نام موسیقی مستقل که در دنیا نیز رواج دارد برای این بخش مناسب تر است. با وجود این، درخشانی نیز می پذیرد که این اصطلاح تبدیل به یک برند شده است و اگر بخواهیم اصطلاح دیگری را جایگزین کنیم، سال ها زمان می برد

According to him [Derakhshani] these musicians work independently and with their personal taste. Moreover, the label independent music already exists in the world and is commonly used to describe independent musicians. At the same time, he understands that this term (*Talfiqi*) has won the minds of Iranians and changing and replacing it with another term may take many years (Derakhshani in Entezari, 2016)

What is interesting in this quote is the idea that *Talfiqi* has become a commonly used terminology even though many musicians do not like it. Thus, the language is already decided by actors other than musicians. Another suggestion comes from Alireza Eshghi's introduction to his interview with the *Talfiqi* band Damahi in *Etemad* news. He argues that it might be better to separate the new wave of music in Iran as Persian *Talfiqi* instead of just *Talfiqi*. By beginning the article with a discussion on music terminologies such as world music or fusion, he argues that what is happening in Iran is different from the context in which genres such as fusion or world music emerged.

داستان موسیقی تلفیقی در ایران اما کمی متفاوت است. بهتر است این جریان، موسیقی «تلفیقی ایرانی» نامیده شود. موسیقی تلفیقی ایرانی به تمایز نوعی موسیقی جدید با موسیقی پاپ و جریان اصلی اشاره دارد. نخستین چیزی که برچسب تلفیقی بر اثری در ذهن متبادر می سازد این است که آن اثر به جریان پاپ معاصر ایرانی تعلق ندارد و به نوعی موسیقی «آلترناتیو» است.

The story of *Talfiqi* music in Iran is a bit different. It is better to call this music current "Persian *Talfiqi*". *Talfiqi* music points to its difference from mainstream and pop music. The first thing that is evoked in one's mind when one thinks of *Talfiqi* is that it does not belong to modern pop music and is kind of an "alternative" music (Eshghi, 2016).

What is so fascinating about this quote is that the author describes the music using an English terminology. It seems that what satisfies the need of categorisation is whether it can fit in the predetermined categories in Western music such as alternative or independent music. This opinion is echoed by the producer of Damahi's first album, Ehsan Rasoulof, who was responsible for producing the majority of *Talfiqi* bands that became famous since mid-2010's:

ما همه با این واژه و کاربردش مخالفیم؛ اما خب بخشی از ادبیات رسمی ارشاد است. واژه ای است جعلی (احتمالا معادل فیوژن!) برای فرار از تعریف نوعی از موسیقی که نه سنتی، نه پاپ و نه کلاسیک است.

آن موقع عنوان تلفیقی وجود نداشت و گروه‌هایی مثل "بمرانی"، "پالت" و "کامنت" به عنوان گروه‌هایی که در موسیقی حرف‌های متفاوتی می‌زدند شناخته می‌شدند تا این‌که آرام آرام عنوان تلفیقی روی این نوع موسیقی گذاشته شد. ما خودمان واژه آلترناتیو را به کار می‌بریم؛ به معنی آن بخش از هر مدیوم هنری که جدای فعالیت بدنه‌ای و تجاری (مین استریم) شکل می‌گیرد.

We all disagree with this term and its usage. However, it has become a part of the official literature of the ERSHAD. It is a fake terminology (probably equivalent to fusion) for escaping the definition of a type of music that is neither *sonati*, not pop, nor Classical. At that time, the term *Talfiqi* did not exist and groups such as "Bomrani", "Pallet", and "Comment" became famous because they were saying something different in their music until the term *Talfiqi* was slowly given to this music. We personally use the term alternative. This refers to the section of an artistic movement that is formed outside of the mainstream market (Rasoulof in Bagheri, 2017).

Again, an English term is used to talk about a wave of new music that was emerging in Iran at the time and that was arriving as a response to the monotony of music in the country. The interesting part of this quote is its reminiscence of Kevin Fellez's description of fusion. Here, instead of "not jazz, not rock", we see the type of music that is emerging in Iran being described as "not *sonati*, not pop", a cross between the two and none of them at the same time.

7.1.3 *Talfiqi* as an ambiguous terminology

A narrative that has already been seen in the previous section is the idea that the term *Talfiqi* is ambiguous. This ambiguity is discussed in three main ways: *Talfiqi* as meaningless, *Talfiqi* as a new black box, and *Talfiqi* as pop that is not pop.

7.1.3.1 *Talfiqi* has no clear definition.

Here, as the title shows, what is seen is the remark that there are no clear definitions of *Talfiqi*. This is also related to the idea that there are no rules surrounding what one can consider as *Talfiqi* because there has been no objective or scientific research on the topic. It seems that the lack of academic research on the definition of *Talfiqi* is seen as a reason why *Talfiqi* is ambiguous. In other words, it is of the opinion of some that academic research will clarify the terminology, as is seen

in this quote by the Iranian composer Christoph Rezaei in an interview with him on ISNA news titled *gerāyesh-e man be mūsīqi-ye Talfiqi "dūstāneh"* ast [my approach to *Talfiqi* is "friendly"] :

اصولا تلفیق، کلمه گنگی در حوزه موسیقی است و معلوم نیست که منظور از این عنوان در موسیقی اشاره به تلفیق سازها دارد یا تلفیق کار نوازنده‌ها

In fact, *talfiq* is an ambiguous term in the field of music and it is not clear whether the term in music refers to *talfiq* between instruments or *talfiq* in what instrumentalists do (Rezaei, 2015)

Some see the ambiguity resulting from the lack of academic research on the subject as a reason to not give their opinion about *Talfiqi* as it is seen in this quote by Hojat Ashrafzadeh, a very famous pop and *Talfiqi* singer, when he was asked about the level *Talfiqi*-ness of his music by a jam-e-jam news journalist:

با توجه به این که تعریف علمی مشخصی از موسیقی تلفیقی در کشور ما وجود ندارد، نمی توان نظری قطعی در این باب بیان کرد. از سوی دیگر، از سیاست های جشنواره موسیقی فجر اطلاع ندارم و نمی دانم اساس این طبقه بندی چیست

Since there are no clear scientific definitions of *Talfiqi* in our country, I cannot give a definitive opinion on this subject. On the other hand, I do not know the policies of Fajr festival and I do not know what they base their decision making on (Ashrafzadeh in Entezar, 2016).

What is interesting about this quote is that the singer avoids answering the question by blaming the lack of definitive scientific understanding of the terminology as a reason not to answer the question. We see a similar commentary by Mahyar Tahmasebi of Pallet band whereby he argues that the lack of academic research about *Talfiqi* has resulted in ambiguous contours of the terminology.

مهیار طهماسبی (نوازنده ویولنسل و عضو گروه پالت) درباره وضعیت موسیقی تلفیقی در ایران گفت: موسیقی تلفیقی در ایران به هیچ وجه تعریف شده و مشخص نیست. ما یکسری سبک‌های کلی موسیقی اعم از پاپ، راک،

کلاسیک و ... داریم و ما بقی موسیقی‌های ساخته شده را در دسته‌ی موسیقی تلفیقی قرار می‌دهیم. روی واژه موسیقی تلفیقی به طور آکادمیک کار نشده و متأسفانه محدوده این موسیقی تعریف نشده است

Regarding the situation of *Talfigi* music, Mahyar Tahmasebi (cellist and member of Pallet band) said the following: *Talfigi* music in Iran is not at all defined and clarified. We have a set of general genres such as pop, rock, classical, ... the music that is left over is categorised as *Talfigi*. There has been no academic research on the subject unfortunately and the contours of this music are not defined (Tahmasebi in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

What is interesting about this quote is that it begins by arguing that any undefinable music is categorised as *Talfigi*. Thus, while academic research needs to be done on *Talfigi* to clarify the contours of the category, for the time being, anything that is not definable is considered as *Talfigi*. In other words, *Talfigi* is a terminology that is used to categorise the uncategorisable, a kind of a black box.

7.1.3.2 *Talfigi* as a new black box

What Mahyar Tahmasebi discussed in the previous section is part of the discussion in an article titled *Sabkī be nāmeḥ Talfigi vojūd nadārad* [there is no genre called *Talfigi*]. In the article, interviewee Ramin Sadeqi, the head of one of the most important music labels in Iran, Hermes records, argues that this form of categorisation is the result of the problem of categorisation between media and the music industry.

رامین صدیقی درباره موسیقی تلفیقی اظهار داشت: در صد سال اخیر که مطبوعات وارد صنعت موسیقی شد، نیاز به طبقه‌بندی هم بیشتر احساس شد. کاربرد طبقه‌بندی این است که ما یک ادبیات مشترک پیدا کنیم اما در موسیقی، هرگاه هر چیزی به ابهاماتی برخورد، یک جعبه سیاه درست کردند و آن موسیقی که در هیچکدام از سبک‌ها جا نمی‌گرفت را داخل این جعبه سیاه قرار دادند

Ramin Sadiqi said the following about *Talfigi* music: in the last hundred years where the media has entered the music industry, the need for music categorisation was felt more. The purpose of categorisation is to have a common literature. However, in music, when a music is ambiguous, a black box is created and the music that was not fitting other genres were put in this box.

For Sadeqi, fusion is one of many black box categories that was created to cater to the music that was ambiguous and in between.

صدیقی تصریح کرد: در کنار واژه فوژن یا موسیقی تلفیقی، جعبه‌هایی مثل موسیقی ملل و موسیقی زیرزمینی هم قرار گرفت که آنها هم چارچوب مشخصی نداشتند.

Sadiqi continued: besides fusion or *Talfigi* music, boxes such as world music and underground music are also there. These also don't have a clear framework. (Sadiqi in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

This shows there is a process of otherising music that is not part of a set of established genres. This said, the process also exists for music that is in-between genres and does not have a clear tendency to be part of one or another genre. Sadiqi states the following about such situations:

ر ایران می‌بینیم که یک گروه، نزدیک به موسیقی پاپ یا سنتی است اما به اسم موسیقی تلفیقی فعالیت می‌کند. این مسئله چند دلیل متفاوت می‌تواند داشته باشد. اولین و مهمترین دلیل این است که سبک این گروه دقیقا مشخص نیست و تنها نزدیک به سبک‌های کلی موسیقی مثل سنتی یا پاپ است در نتیجه حضورش در سبک‌های کلی موسیقی موجب برداشت غلط می‌شود. یکی دیگر از دلایلش هم می‌تواند تجارت باشد. یک سبک ناشناخته قطعا مخاطبان زیادی را جذب خود می‌کند اما به طور کلی، واژه موسیقی تلفیقی برچسبی نبود که هنرمندان به موسیقی خودشان بزنند و بیشتر مخاطبان و مردم برای رسیدن به یک واژه مشترک این واژه را قرار دادند سبکی به نام موسیقی تلفیقی وجود ندارد.

In Iran, we see that a band that is close to pop or *sonati* music works under the banner of *Talfigi*. This can have several reasons. The first and most important reason is that the genre of a group is not clearly distinguishable, and it is only close to broad genres such as *sonati* or pop. Thus, its presence in the broad genre would be considered as wrong. The other reason is the industry. An unknown genre would attract new audience to itself. However, in general, the term *Talfigi* was never a label that bands gave themselves and it was the audience and people who chose this term to reach a common literature for talking about music. (ibid.)

The saxophone player and composer Peter Soleimanipour goes further by arguing that choosing the term *Talfiqi* was to resolve the dead end of naming and categorising a certain tendency in music:

پیترا سلیمانی‌پور نیز درباره معنای کلمه فیوژن یا موسیقی تلفیقی می‌گوید: واژه‌ی موسیقی تلفیقی به عنوان برگردان ، محصول نیاز به گذر از بن‌بست در نامگذاری و دست‌بندی (jazz fusion مخفف) fusion فارسی کلمه‌ی فیوژن .گرایشی در موسیقی است

Peter Soleimanipour also says the following about the meaning of fusion or *Talfiqi* music: the term *Talfiqi*, as a translation of the term fusion (short for jazz fusion), was a product of the need to pass the dead end of naming and categorization of music currents. (Soleimanipour in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

What Soleimanipour is saying is that new currents of music that try to be between two or more established genres of music face a dead end and must choose another terminology to describe themselves. Interestingly enough, some *Talfiqi* musicians describe their music as pop music that is not pop, as we can see in this quote from Dara Darayee of the *Talfiqi* band Damahi in an interview with them by Alireza Eshghi in Etemad news:

دارا دارایی: چیزی که الان از شنیدن این واژه به ذهنم می‌رسد این است که هرآنچه «پاپ» نیست در نتیجه تلفیقی است. هر کس در برج و سالن میلاد کنسرت ندهد ظاهراً تلفیقی است. انگار این کلمه بیش از اینکه سبک باشد مارکت بین گروه‌ها را مشخص می‌کند. برای من «ورد موزیک» که چارچوب‌های کمتری دارد و دره‌ایش باز است مفهوم تلفیقی را دارد

What I think of when I hear this term is that what is not "pop" is *Talfiqi*. Whoever who does not play in the Milad tower hall is *Talfiqi*. It seems that this word determines a market more than a genre between different groups (Darayee in Eshghi, 2016).

The idea here is that *Talfiqi* is a way to segment markets more than determining the music of certain groups. Thus, the terminology is no longer ambiguous when it is seen as an economic terminology.

7.2 Ways of doing *Talfiq*

While the first section concentrated on the definition and the categorisation of the term *Talfiqi*, this section of the content analysis looks at the codes that discuss *Talfiqi* as a music practice. Here, the discussions revolve around different approaches to *Talfiqi* in music. These approaches are divided into two broad visions regarding *Talfiqi*. On one side, we see the group of codes that favour respecting boundaries in music when creating *Talfiqi* music. On the other side, we see the idea that *Talfiqi* is being practiced challenging boundaries established in music creation. These two ideas seem to be contrasting to one another.

7.2.1 Respecting the boundaries of *Talfiqi*

This section has two broad discourses within it, namely the idea that there are correct vs. incorrect ways of doing *Talfiqi* and that the practice of *talfiq* must be approached with proper knowledge and respect towards traditions. It looks at how *talfiq* needs to be approached by setting boundaries, having knowledge of music, and understanding the traditions that are borrowed from.

7.2.1.1 Correct way of doing *Talfiqi*

There seems to be an idea that *talfiq* needs to be practiced in a certain way and it must have certain key elements. This idea is explained in relation to what it does not have or does not include. Here is what Mona Matbou Riahi (composer and clarinetist) and Mahiyar Tahmasebi (cellist) have to say about how *talfiq* is misinterpreted when it is practiced by way of playing music from one culture on an instrument from another culture:

مونامطبوع ریاحی با اشاره به اینکه برداشت‌های غلطی از تلفیق به وجود آمده؛ بیان کرد: گاها دیدم گروهی یک نوازنده یا یک ساز را از منطقه‌ای دیگر می‌آورد و موسیقی معمول خودش را اجرا می‌کند که در نهایت اثر به عنوان یک نوآوری در موسیقی ارائه می‌شود. این اتفاق بسیار عجیب است

مهیار طهماسبی نیز درباره المان‌های تعیین‌کننده موسیقی تلفیقی گفت: اصل واژه فوژن هم از ترکیب دو فرهنگ مختلف می‌آید که شاید این ترکیب هم در اکثر آثار ساخته شده سبک موسیقی تلفیقی دیده نمی‌شود. به طور مثال وقتی آقای کیوان ساکت با تار، قطعات شاخص موسیقی کلاسیک را اجرا می‌کند نمیتوانیم بگوییم تلفیق اتفاق افتاده است و درواقع ساز، المان تعیین‌کننده موسیقی تلفیقی نیست

By emphasising how a false impression of *talfiq* has developed, Mona Matbou Riahi said: Sometimes I saw a band that took an instrument from one region and plays its own music, and it is presented as an innovation. This is a very bizarre phenomenon. (Riahi in Nazemzadeh, 2014)

Mahyar Tahmasebi also says the following about determining elements of *Talfiqi* music: at the core of the term fusion is the hybridization of two different cultures, which may not be seen in most of the works in the *Talfiqi* genre. For example, we cannot say that *talfiq* has happened when Mr. Keyvan Saket plays [Western] classical music on tar. In fact, instrument is not the determining element of *Talfiqi*. (Tahmasebi in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

What seems to be said here is that experimentation needs to happen with certain form and discipline. This helps in improving the quality of a music piece. Mona Matbou Riahi expresses this sentiment clearly in this quote:

مونا مطبوعی ریاحی نیز درباره کیفیت و استانداردهای آثار تولیدی در ایران که نگاهی نو در آن جریان دارد و به اسم موسیقی تلفیقی ارائه می‌شود؛ گفت: این روزها هرکس دو چیز متفاوت را کنار هم قرار می‌دهد، نام آن را تلفیق می‌گذارد. نوآوری در موسیقی حد و مرزی ندارد اما هر اثری باید در ژانر خودش قرار بگیرد تا موسیقی تلفیقی از بی‌هویتی بیرون بیاید

Mona Matbou Riahi said the following about the quality and standards of production in music that is offered under the banner of *Talfiqi* and that has a new look towards music: These days, anyone puts two things together and calls it *Talfiqi*. Innovation in music does not have limits and frontiers but everyone should follow their own genre so that *Talfiqi* music overcomes its lack of identity. (Riahi in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

Here, what we see is a critique of *Talfiqi* music as a type of music with no identity by reason that this music does not place itself in a specific mold. This seems to bother Riahi, who sees the lack of clarity in musical practice among Iranian musicians that are known as *Talfiqi* as problematic. *Oud* player and composer Shahram Gholami echos Riahi's opinion but takes a different approach in his critique:

شهرام غلامی (آهنگساز و نوازنده عود) درباره نوگرایی در موسیقی گفت: هنرمند خلاق و کنجکاو است. خلاقیت، کنجکاو و آزمون و خطا؛ موجب شکل‌گیری نگاهی نو در موسیقی می‌شود. اساسا خلاقیت و نوگرایی هیچ حد و مرزی ندارد و این مسئله می‌تواند به هرگونه‌ای صورت بگیرد اما این نوگرایی باید همراه با آگاهی باشد. پیش می‌آید که دو ساز از دو منطقه متفاوت کنار هم قرار می‌گیرند و نام تلفیق و خلاقیت به همراه دارند اما درواقع هر ساز مشغول ارائه موسیقی خودش است و وقتی به‌طور کلی موسیقی را می‌شنوید، به یک خروجی واحد نمی‌رسید

Shahram Gholami (composer and oud player) says the following about innovation in music: artist is creative and curious. Curiosity, creativity and trial and error result in the formation of new outlooks towards music. Creativity and creating do not have any limits or frontiers and it can happen in any shape or form. However, creation must be informed. It happens that sometime two instruments from two different places are played together. This has creativity and *talfiq* in it. However, each instrument is playing its own music. When you listen to the music, you don't see a unified output (Gholami in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

Both artists agree that creativity has no limits. However, they set limits to it the moment they see ambiguity or lack of a clearly unified sound in it. There seems to be a discomfort with lack of clarity in some of the musical practices that are categorised under *Talfigi*. Sasan Fatemi blames the lack of knowledge and scientific understanding of the youth as the reason why musicians are attracted to *Talfigi*, by arguing that this way of exploration is caused by uninformed youthfulness:

بسیاری از جوانانی که امروز بیشتر با نگاه به ردیف این کار را می‌کنند، اتفاقا خیلی با برنامه ریزی این کار را می‌کنند و مثلاً فلان آهنگساز می‌گوید من یک کوارتت زهی غربی کنار کوارتت زخمه‌بی هم بگذارم و به برادرم هم بگویم که آواهای بمی روی این موسیقی اجرا کند. انگار نسل جوان با یک برنامه ریزی که پیش زمینه علمی ندارد و فقط می‌خواهد بگوید من کار خاصی کردم، روی به این تجربه‌ها می‌آورد

Many youths who do this with *radif*, do so with a great attention to programming this music. For example, a composer says that they want to put a Western quartet side by side with a quartet consisting of Iranian instruments and ask their brother to play Iranian folk music over the music played by these instruments. It seems the youth is attracted to experimenting with a program that has no scientific basis because of wanting to say that they did something unique (Fatemi in Bahari & Gholizadeh, 2016).

Here, what we see is a very harsh critique of the youth and how their new ways of experimenting with music, and doing *talfiq*, is misinformed and comes from uninformed curiosity and a desire for individuality.

7.2.1.2 *Talfiqi* must be practice with proper knowledge

The idea of experimenting without proper knowledge is an idea that is echoed in section. This has been equated to the failure of doing good *talfiq* in music in Iran, as seen in the following quote by rock and *Talfiqi* musician, composer, and bass guitar player Mohammad Neek.

وی با اشاره به این که نوع تلفیق در موسیقی در دوره‌های مختلف متغیر بوده است، عنوان کرد: متأسفانه ما در حوزه موسیقی تلفیقی در ایران موفقیت چندان خوبی را تجربه نکرده‌ایم

این آهنگساز افزود: موسیقی تلفیقی در جوامعی بهتر رشد می‌کند که فرهنگ اصلی آن جامعه برای جوانان قابل شناسایی و رویت باشد

وی با بیان این که ما باید به داشته‌های خودمان در حوزه موسیقی بیشتر توجه کنیم، تصریح کرد: آهنگساز موسیقی تلفیقی باید با آگاهی از فرهنگ اصلی خودش، به طور آگاهانه فرهنگ‌های مختلف را ترکیب یا تلفیق کند

By point at how types of *talfiq* in music have changed over time, he states: unfortunately, we are not very successful in *Talfiqi* music in Iran.

The composer adds: *Talfiqi* music flourishes in societies where the original culture of that society is visible and identifiable.

By adding that we need to pay more attention to what we have in our music, he states: composer of *Talfiqi* music must be informed about their culture, they must mix or fuse different culture consciously and with knowledge. (Neek in Nasihetgar, 2021)

This addresses the need to understand the past and knowing the past is present in other phrases that were coded. Here, Mona Matbou Riahi explains how the lack of knowledge of the past causes musicians to produce music that is empty of meaning.

ریاحی با اشاره به اینکه اساس موسیقی سنتی و کلاسیک در کیفیت موج نوی موسیقی تاثیر دارد، اظهار داشت: اتفاقی که این روزها در موسیقی دیده می‌شود این است که آهنگسازان و نوازندگان بدون اینکه اطلاعات درستی درباره پیشینه موسیقی داشته باشند، سعی به ارائه کارهای جدید دارند. ما برای اینکه در موسیقی اصیل ایران بخواهیم کار جدیدی ارائه دهیم، نیاز به شناخت دقیق آن موسیقی داریم. این روزها یک ایده به طور سطحی دریافت شده و بدون شناخت و پرداخت دقیق، ارائه می‌شود. این اتفاق مثل این است که یک نقاش بخواهد اثر پست مدرن ارائه کند اما طراحی بلد نباشد.

او ادامه داد: چرا وقتی اعتراض می‌کنیم که فلان موسیقی ۶۰۰ سال است تکرار می‌شود، به طور دقیق روی آن شناخت نداشته باشیم؟ نوآوری در صورتی امکان پذیر است که شناخت دقیقی از پیشینه و اساس موسیقی وجود داشته باشد

By stating that *sonati* and Western classical music influence the quality of the new wave of music in Iran, Mona Matbou Riahi states that: what is happening in music in Iran is that composers and instrumentalists try to produce new works without any proper knowledge regarding the music's past. We need to have a clear understanding of Iranian traditional music before producing any new work. These days, an idea is superficially understood, and then presented without any precise knowledge or attention to it. This is like a painter wanting to create a postmodern work without knowing how to draw (Riahi in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

She continued: why do we object that certain music has been repeated for the past 600 years when we do not have a clear understanding of it? Innovation only happens when a clear understanding of the past and the principle of music exists.

The idea here is that innovation in music must be rooted in the understanding of historic developments in music. Here, if innovation is not inspired by a profound understanding of the past, it lacks substance; tradition and historic knowledge, thus, gives substance to music creation.

7.2.2 Innovation and challenging boundaries in *talfiq*

In this section, what we see is a type positioning where innovation and *Talfiqi* are intertwined parts of each other. What we see here is the way *Talfiqi* music and *Talfiqi* musicians relate and position themselves in relation to innovation, experimentation, and tradition. Here, innovation and

experimentation are valorised, and seen from the perspective of the way they are practices at the pillar of Iranian contemporary society. Moreover, *Talfiqi* seems to relate itself to tradition by respecting it and wanting to make it relevant to current music movements in Iran and around the world.

7.2.2.1 Relationship to innovation and experimentation

The first narrative that is observed in this section is the idea that experimentation and innovation are not learned but experienced. We can see this in the opinion of Peter Soleimanipour :

این آهنگساز ضمن تاکید بر تحصیل آکادمیک اظهار داشت: با تحصیل آکادمیک یاد می‌گیریم که در گذشته مردم چرا، چگونه و به چه روش‌هایی موسیقی می‌ساختند و می‌نواختند. اما هیچ‌یک از متون علمی موسیقی این را به ما یاد نمی‌دهند که چطوری موسیقی نو خلق کنیم. موسیقیدان بودن یعنی کشف کردن و خنده‌دار خواهد بود اگر فکر کنیم که برای کشف چیزی که تا بحال کشف نشده و ناشناخته است دستورالعملی می‌تواند وجود داشته باشد

The composer, while emphasising on academic education, state: academic education teaches us how and why people have used certain techniques for music making and performance. However, no scientific text in music teaches you how to create new music. Being a musician means being a discoverer and it would be odd if we think that there is a recipe for discovering something that is not discovered yet (Soleimanipour in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

What Soleimanipour is arguing is not a rejection of knowledge acquisition or historic understanding of the past, but the assertion that such knowledge acquisitions do not necessarily teach exploration and experimentation in music. Thus, at the very end, the aim for music is to discover and explore and this requires constant repetition and practice. For Soleimanipour, the practice of *talfiq* is indeed one of the pillars of innovation, as we see in this quote:

سلیمانی پور می‌افزاید: فراموش نکنید خلاقیت در موسیقی یکی از پایه‌های اصلی اش همین پدیده ای است که از آن با عنوان تلفیق یاد می‌کنیم. حالا ما داریم درباره موسیقی صحبت می‌کنیم، اما خود موسیقی یک واسطه یا زبانی است که حال و احوالی را منتقل می‌کند که قابل بیان با واژه‌ها نیست. اگر ساعت‌ها بخواهیم درباره حال و احوالی که موسیقی در ما ایجاد می‌کند صحبت کنیم، باز هم موفق نمی‌شویم آن را در قالب کلام درآوریم

Soleimanipour added: Do not forget that one of the pillars of innovation in music is the phenomenon that we call *talfiq*. We are talking about music and music itself is a type of language that transmits certain sentiments that are not always describable through the usage of vocabularies. If we were to talk about the type of sentiments that music evokes in us for hours, we would never be successful to verbalise it (Soleimanipour in Mortezaeifard, 2015).

For Soleimanipour, *talfiq* is a practice that participates in not only the creation of music but also in the development of a type of language that transmits sentiments that are indescribable by verbal language. Another narrative that was observed is the idea that innovation is a personal experience. Here, what is added is the idea of how innovation goes hand in hand with inspiration, as we see in this quote by composer and guitarist Golfam Khayam:

گلفام خیام (آهنگساز و نوازنده گیتار) درباره اهداف نوآوری در موسیقی گفت: اساساً اینکه یک نفر تصمیم به شروع یک کار نو می‌کند، کاملاً شخصی شروع می‌شود. به طور مثال من وقتی موسیقی بلوچستان را می‌شنوم آنقدر سحر می‌شوم، به طور ناخواسته در وجودم یگ دگرگونی به وجود می‌آید و در نتیجه این مسئله در موسیقی من هم مشهود خواهد بود.

او ادامه داد: اینکه نتیجه ارائه کارهای جدید و نوگرایی چیست، در موفق‌ترین حالتش می‌تواند ایجاد دریچه‌ای برای یک نگاه تازه به موسیقی باشد. این مسئله می‌تواند امکان جدیدی را برای مخاطبان موسیقی ایجاد کند. مقصودم از این امکان جدید، یک زبان تازه است که توانایی انتقال یک فکر و احساس جدید را دارد.

Golfam Khayam (composer and guitarist) states the following about innovation in music: basically, when someone decides to do something new, it begins as something very personal. For example, when I listen to Balouchi music, I get so inspired that I am unconsciously transformed and as a result this influences my music as well.

She continued: The result of new works and new looks is, at its best, the opening of new pathways for a new regard towards music. This can result in new possibilities for the audience. What I mean by new possibilities is a new language that has the capacity to transmit new thoughts and feelings (Khayam in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

Thus, Khayam points to how inspiration is a source of transformation that opens new pathways toward looking at music. For her, innovation arrives from personal experience that results in new approaches toward creativity. Khayam also points to how synthesis in music can become so integrated that the elements that constitute it can no longer be distinguished. The idea here is that creativity in *talfiq* can sometimes take forms that are so new to the ear that the elements containing it can become indistinguishable, as we see in the following quote by her:

خیام درباره سنتز ایده‌ها در موسیقی نیز گفت: المان‌های موسیقایی در هر منطقه متفاوت است. در ایران ما موسیقی اقوام و موسیقی سنتی داریم که از گذشته به جا مانده و البته هر منطقه‌ای المان‌های موسیقایی خاص خودش را دارد. که موجب ایجاد رنگ‌های مختلف در موسیقی دنیا می‌شود

این نوازنده گیتار افزود: تلفیق و سنتز ایده‌ها در موسیقی گاهی آنقدر عمیق می‌شود که شما دیگر نمی‌توانید به‌طور مشخص منشا موسیقی را پیدا کنید. به طور مثال وقتی مسیان ساختار ریتمیک موسیقی هندوستان را می‌گیرد و روی آن موسیقی می‌سازد، شما با شنیدن قطعاتش به هیچ وجه متوجه این ساختار ریتمیک نمی‌شوید تا زمانی که موسیقی او را آنالیز کنید و خوشبختانه خود مسیان درباره قطعاتش توضیحات کاملی داده است

Khayam states the following regarding synthesis of ideas in music: musical elements are different in different regions. In Iran, we have *sonati* and folk music that are with us since the past. In fact, every region has its own musical elements that result in different colors in the music of the world.

This guitarist adds: *talfiq* and synthesis in music are sometimes so in depth that you cannot really distinguish the source of music. For example, when Messian borrows the rhythmic structure of Indian music and composes music over it, you can never notice this rhythmic structure when listening to it unless you analyze the music. Fortunately, Messian describes his works in details (Khayam in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

Another narrative detected in the content analysis revolves around the idea that if a culture, or cultural practice is rich, it will persist through time even when it is experimented with. This is a response to critics who feel that experimentation with *sonati* music through different practices of *talfiq* is destroying traditional ways of doing music. The language that Ramin Sadiqi uses to make

his argument is quite powerful as he argues that if the music can so easily be destroyed with experimentation, its destruction should be encouraged:

صدیقی ضمن تاکید بر غنی بودن موسیقی اصیل ایرانی اظهار داشت: برخی معتقدند اگر تجربه‌ای روی موسیقی اصیل ایرانی، موسیقی مقامی ایران و یا موسیقی نواحی ما صورت بگیرد، اصل این موسیقی‌ها از بین می‌رود اما به نظر من اگر موسیقی ما آنقدر ضعیف است که با چند تجربه موسیقایی از بین می‌رود، باید اجازه داد تا هرچه زودتر نابود شود اما واقعیت این است که موسیقی اصیل ایرانی آنقدر قوی و غنیست که با کشف‌ها و تجربه‌های بیشتر روی این موسیقی، میتوانیم به عمق موسیقی ایرانی پی ببریم

By emphasising the richness of traditional Iranian music, Sadiqi states: Some think that if one experiments with *sonati* music of Iran, *maqami* music of Iran, or folk music of Iran, it is destroying the fundament of this music. However, I think that if this music is so weak that it is destroyed with a few experimentations, we need to allow its destruction immediately. However, the reality is that traditional music of Iran is so powerful and rich that we can understand it depth by experimenting with it (Sadiqi in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

This argument touches a very important and sensible chord among many *sonati* musicians who feel that the tradition of *sonati* music is threatened by new trends that do not respect the rules of this music in its entirety. This discomfort is linked to the idea that *sonati* music is corrupted the moment it is experimented with. This narrative has caused many *sonati* musicians to take a stance against experimentation and often accuse the practice of disrespecting the long tradition of *sonati* music and threaten its future existence.

One of the most interesting perspectives about the relationship between experimentation and *radif* came from Reza Moghaddas, the keyboard player of the band Avizheh, when he is asked whether one must exit the *radif* so to play *Talfigi* music or not. The answer to the question is the following:

برای این کار باید از ردیف خارج شد یا در ردیف هم می‌توان این کار را کرد؟

اصلاً بحث ردیف اینجا مطرح نیست. ما ردیف می‌زنیم که موسیقی یاد بگیریم. اینها اتودهایی هستند که جملات موسیقی را به ما یاد می‌دهند. در موسیقی جز هم کتاب‌هایی به اسم «ریل بوک» داریم که ملودی‌های معروفی که در جهان استفاده می‌شود در آنها آمده و آهنگسازان جز کار خود را براساس این کتاب‌ها آغاز می‌کنند. ردیف هم

همینطور است، یک چیز قطعی نیست که قرار باشد از اول تا آخر ردیف زده شود. به نظرم موزیسین ایرانی باید ردیف بزند اما از جایی به بعد باید از آن فاصله بگیرد.

Do we have to exit the *radif* to do this?

There is no discussion with regards to the *radif* here. We play *radif* to learn music. These are etudes that teach us musical phrases. In jazz music, there are books called "Real Book" that contains famous melodies that are used around the world and jazz composer begin their work based on these books. This is the same with the *radif*. It is not something definitive that we are supposed to learn from beginning till end. I think that Iranian music must play the *radif* but also distance itself from it at some point (Alayee, 2007)

What is so fascinating about this answer is the way *radif* is being described as a series of melodies that one needs to learn to be introduced to its language. The comparison to the jazz repertoire is indeed very interesting. It is true that jazz musicians don't learn all the melodies in a real book before starting to experiment and improvise in jazz. However, the books become a reference of the melodic motifs that shape the history of jazz. What Behna is saying in this quote is that the *radif* should not be treated as an out of reach and elite practice that those who learn the whole repertoire are able to then experiment within it. For him, just like a jazz musician, Iranian musicians should allow themselves the freedom of knowing some *radif* and learning other music and exploring different ways of doing music.

7.2.2.2 Relationship to tradition

The second narrative that was observed in this section is the idea that *talfiq* has a constant relationship to the past. Some see the overemphasis on tradition as a sort of sickness that is putting barriers for musicians to evolve in the music scene of the country, as we can see in the following quote:

تعطیلی موسیقی پاپ در ایران اتفاق افتاد. امروز هم دو دستی موسیقی سنتی را گرفته‌اند و فقط آن را موسیقی صحیح و به درد بخور در سراسر جهان می‌دانند، این جهت‌گیری و تعصب هم ناشی از بیماری موسیقی در ایران است و به نظر می‌رسد هیچ دلیل منطقی هم برای طرح آن وجود نداشته باشد.

Today, they are holding on to *sonati* music with both hands and they only consider this music to be useful and correct in the world. Such positioning and prejudice are also the result of music sickness in Iran and, in my opinion, has no logical reasoning (Nemati in Namjoo, 2015a).

Here, what we see is the critique of the idea of good versus bad music and how traditionalism among some critics or officials result in the development of a certain prejudice towards innovation and the introduction of new voices in the music industry in Iran. Others question their relationship to tradition by arguing that it does not seem relevant to them in its authentic form. For them, tradition needs translation for the new generation. For instance, we see how Dang Show, one of the first *Talfiqi* bands that rose to popularity in late 2000's, states the following about their relationship to tradition:

طاها: من با این توضیح، واکنش بودن کارمان را می‌پذیرم. موزیک ایرانی وارد زندگی ما می‌شد اما با شکل سابقش نمی‌توانست در زندگی ما جریان داشته باشد، یا اینکه حداکثر به عنوان یک امر متافیزیکی قابل ستایش باقی می‌ماند. بنابراین با شکل بسته‌بندی که از گذشته دست نخورده باقی مانده در زندگی ما جریان پیدا نمی‌کرد. حال آنکه با استفاده از این واکنش‌ها این موسیقی وارد زندگی روزمره من می‌شود و در آینده از زندگی من حذف نخواهد شد. این موقعیت درست مثل جمع کردن چمدانی است که به خاطر محدودیت فضا نمی‌تواند خیلی از وسایل زیبا را در خود جا دهد.

Iranian music has entered our lives, but it could not live with us in its old form or be appreciated as a metaphysical element. Thus, it could not continue existing with us if it were to be in its traditional form without any change. At the same time, due to these reactions, this music has entered my everyday life and will not be removed from it in the future (Taha in Namjoo, 2015a).

Thus, Dang Show sees *talfiq* as a practice that allows them to live with tradition by appropriating it in a language that is more understandable to them. We see a similar argument with the band Chaartaar. They see their understanding of Western music as a skill that allow them to look at *dastgah* music from a different point of view. In other words, Western music system becomes a lens through which the *dastgah* system is translated and presented by this band, as we see in the following quote from bandmate Arash Fahhi:

• نحوه استفاده شما از موسیقی ایرانی به چه صورت است؟ آیا از ملودی‌های ماندگار گذشته هم استفاده می‌کنید؟
 آرش فتحی: ساختن ملودی نو و در عین حال آشنا، دشوار است. علتش هم شاید این باشد که من دانش آموخته موسیقی غربی هستم و از دیدگاه و دریچه‌های این موسیقی به دستگاه‌های ایرانی نگاه می‌کنم. برای همین دستم بازتر است که موسیقی شرقی را بسط و گسترش دهم و خودم را در دستگاه‌های موسیقی ایرانی محصور نکنم. مثلاً در قطعه «باران تویی» با استفاده از هارمونی غربی دستگاهم را در موسیقی ایرانی تغییر دادم، یعنی از دشتی وارد اصفهان شدم.

How do you use persian music? Do you use old memorable melodies?

Arash Fahhi: making new and yet familiar melody is hard. The reason is that I know Western music and I look at Iranian *dastgah* music from this lens. Therefore, my hands are more open to use Eastern sounds instead of limiting myself to Iranian music *dastgah* systems (Fathi in Namjoo, 2015a).

Another idea addressed in these quotes is that innovation is constant and its traditions are not static. Here, *talfiq* and innovation are linked directly to the metanarrative of development and progress that problematises authenticity as a concept, arguing that even traditions change over time as they adapt to new societal changes. For Ramin Sadiqi, for example, music is in progress the same way that everyday life changes and moves forward.

Ramin Sadeqi:

رامین صدیقی (مدیر نشر هرمس) در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایلنا؛ درباره نوگرایی در موسیقی گفت: نوآوری در موسیقی، فرایندی است که همواره طی می‌شود. چیزی که قدیمی است، قرار نیست به همان شکل قدیمی بماند. خیلی‌ها تلقی غلطی دارند و فکر می‌کنند احترام به سنت‌ها یعنی به سنت‌ها دست نزدن اما همانطور که زندگی روزمره در حال تغییر است و رو به جلو حرکت می‌کند، موسیقی هم به همین ترتیب در حال پیشرفت و به روز رسانی است. موسیقی پدیده‌ای است که از زندگی اجتماعی هم تاثیر می‌پذیرد. همانطور که ارتباطات در دنیا در حال تغییر است، موسیقی هم تغییر می‌کند

In conversation with Ilina records, Ramin Sadeqi (head of Hermes records) said the following about innovation in music: innovation is a continuous process. What is old is not bound to stay the way it is. Many wrongly believe that respecting tradition means not touching them. However, in the same way that everyday life is changing and moving forward, music is also in progress and is updated. Music is a phenomenon that borrows from the social life. The same way that communication is changing in the world, music is also changing (Sadeqi in Nazemzadeh, 2014)

7.3 *Talfiqi* as a music scene

The third and final umbrella category that emerged from the analysis of the data is that *Talfiqi* is a music scene. Here, what we see is how *Talfiqi* is perceived as a music movement that is attracting new and mostly younger audiences by becoming a bridge between local and global trends. We also see how the terminology is used to introduce new sounds and become a bridge between the underground and overground.

7.3.1 *Talfiqi* as a local trend

The first subcategory in this section treats *Talfiqi* as a local trend that attracts new and younger audiences. What we see here is discourse surrounding how *Talfiqi* as a movement is perceived to appeal to the youth. The data also shows how innovative ways of mixing music appeals to a larger population who may be interested in pop or serious music.

7.3.1.1 Connecting to younger audience

There seems to be a narrative surrounding the fourth generation as a generation that is not very well understood. The fourth generation is the generation of Iranians who were born after the 2000s.

They are part of a generation who were born at the onset of the popularity of the Internet. Thus, they were exposed to the satellite television and the Internet from the beginning of their youth. In a piece written by Syeed Sina Naseri, we see how this generation is seen as one that is not docile and has a taste that is not well understood by those in previous generations:

Seyyed Sina Naseri (Hamshahri javaan)

در کل با وجود اینکه بعضی از جوان های امروز آدم های قالب پذیری نیستند، اما می توان اوج گرفتن موسیقی تلفیقی را با سلیقه متفاوت این نسل مرتبط دانست. از آنجا که ما کلا ارتباط خوبی با نسل چهارمی ها داریم! به سراغ زیر و بم سبک محبوب شان رفتیم، تاریخچه آن را مرور کردیم و با چهره های قدیمی و جدید این سبک هم کلام شدیم.

Overall, even though some of today's youth are not very compliant humans, but we can link the rise of *Talfiqi* music to the difference in taste of this generation. Since we do not have a great relationship to the fourth generation! We have decided to figure out the reasons behind the popularity of this music (Naseri, 2015)

The type of vocabulary used to describe this generation is in a way paternalistic. It seems as if the generation is seen as not docile and their taste as something that is not very well understood. The quote also proposes the idea that because of the lack of understanding of this generation, it is difficult to connect and have a relationship with it. Another interesting find is how *Talfiqi* is being adopted by *sonati* musicians to stay relevant to those who are no longer interested in the traditional practices of doing *Talfiqi*, as it is seen in this quote.

نسل چهارمی ها موسیقی محبوب خودشان را انتخاب کردند؛ سبکی که به آن موسیقی تلفیقی می گفتند. این انتخاب و تمایل جوان ترها به سبک جدید به حدی تاثیرگذار بود که سنتی خوان هایی مثل همایون شجریان هم تصمیم گرفتند تجربه هایی در این فضا داشته باشند (که از قضا تجربه موفقی هم بود). البته می توان نسل چهارمی هایی را که دنباله رو موسیقی های زیرزمینی هستند، در نظر نگرفت، اما همین عده که شاید در مقابل موسیقی سنتی گارد می گیرند، خیلی وقت ها از شنیدن قطعات این گروه های مجاز تلفیقی لذت می برند.

The fourth generation has decided its music, and it is *Talfiqi* music. This phenomenon, and the attraction of the youth to this genre, was so influential that *sonati* singers such as

Homayoun Shajarian also decided to experiment in this space (which turned out to be a good experiment). In fact, we can omit those in the fourth generation who follow underground music. However, the same bunch who take guard in front of *sonati* music enjoys the sanctioned *Talfigi* music (Naseri, 2015).

There seems to be a panic regarding how *sonati* music's relevance to the youth depends on using *talfig* to attract those who "take guard in front of *sonati*". This moral panic is linked to the idea that *talfig* is a practice that is causing harm to *sonati* music. At the same time, *Talfigi* music is also seen as a type of music that attracts the youth who are not interested in *sonati* music to become interested in it through the usage of the practice of *talfig* to attract a broader audience and render the music relevant to the taste of the new generation.

موسیقی تلفیقی در دهه اخیر خیلی رشد کرده و شاید یکی از راه‌های نجات موسیقی است. چون موسیقی سنتی ایرانی به‌طور کامل ظرفیت پاسخگویی به نیازهای نسل جوان را ندارد و از طرفی هم به دلیل اینکه این نسل، هویت و ریشه خود را در موسیقی ایرانی می‌بیند، علاقه دارد از آن هم استفاده کند. موسیقی تلفیقی راه نجاتی بود برای رسیدن به يك ژانر جدید در این عرصه که به‌طور کلی در 6 دهه اخیر بیشتر به سمت کارهای ارکسترال می‌روند، یعنی ارکسترهایی که مبتنی بر موسیقی کلاسیک غرب بودند، در سال‌های اخیر با موسیقی پاپ، جاز و موسیقی سبک روز دنیا ترکیب شده و دسترسی بیشتری برای موسیقی ایرانی ایجاد شده که اتفاق خوب و قابل تأملی است

Talfigi music has been growing in the past decade, and it might be a way for rescuing music (in Iran). This is because *sonati* music is not responding to the needs of the youth completely. At the same time, this generation sees its identity and roots in Iranian music and likes to use it. *Talfigi* music was a way of salvation to reach a new genre in this area which was mostly focused in orchestral music for the past 6 decades (Maleki, 2019).

For the composer Parviz Arjomand, *Talfigi* has become a pathway for rescuing *sonati* music and attracting an audience towards a music that has been becoming less and less popular in the recent years among the youth. Thus, *Talfigi* is allowing more traditional music to stay relevant in Iran by appealing to an audience who does not appreciate its traditional form.

7.3.1.2 Approaching new audience with *talfiq*

Another topic discussed in the articles is the role of *talfiq* and genre mixing in attracting new audiences. What seems to be the consensus here is the idea that *talfiq* and genre mixing have created new forms of sounds, and with it, new types of audiences. One idea articulated here is that *Talfigi* music is diversifying a monotonous musical space in Iran by offering new varieties of music to the market, as we can see in the Shargh newspaper introductory article on the *Talfigi* week in Tehran:

هفته موسیقی تلفیقی تهران از جمله برنامه هایی است که در دو سال گذشته توسط خانه هنرهای شهری در فرهنگ سرای نیاوران اجرا شده است و به آن دسته از گروه های موسیقی اختصاص دارد که در فضای توسعه نیافته و محدود تنوع موسیقی در ایران، سعی در ایجاد صداهاى تازه کرده اند و با امتزاج طیف وسیعی از ژانرهای موسیقی، عرصه شنیدن در ایران را توسعه بخشیدند.

The *Talfigi* week in Tehran is a type of programming that has been hosted at the City Art House in Niavaran cultural house since two years ago and it belongs to the type of groups who, in the undeveloped music space in Iran that is limited in variety, are trying to create new sounds and develop the culture of listening in Iran by synthesising a wide range of music genres (Shargh, 2016).

Another shared idea is that audiences from diverse backgrounds and with music tastes that commonly don't cross paths become interested in *Talfigi* and music that practices *talfiq*, as we can see in the analysis of journalist Marjan Saebi of Shargh newspaper regarding the band Chaartaar:

ا وجود اینکه تنها حدود دو سال از شکل گیری این گروه گذشته و فقط پنج قطعه از ساخته های آنها در فضای مجازی منتشر شده اما شواهد نشان می دهد که چارتار در همین مدت کوتاه مخاطب خودش را از میان آنهایی که شنونده موسیقی جدی هستند پیدا کرده. «آیین احمدی فر» تنظیم کننده، «احسان حائری» شاعر، «آرش فتحی» آهنگساز و «آرمان گرشاسبی» خواننده، چهارضلع مربع گروه «چارتار» هستند که با تلفیق یکی از مدرن ترین انواع موسیقی یعنی الکترونیک با موسیقی سنتی ایران، توانسته اند علاوه بر مخاطبان این نوع موسیقی، عده تازه ای را هم به جمع شنوندگان موسیقی امروز ایران اضافه کنند.

Even though the group has been formed since two years ago and only five of their songs are distributed, it has found its audience in this short time among those who are listeners of serious music. Arranger "Ayeen Ahmad Far", poet "Ehsan Haeri", composer "Arash Fathi",

and singer "Arman Garshasbi" create the four corners of the "Chaartaar" square who, through the *talfiq* between one of the most modern forms of music, electronic music, with *sonati* music have been able to attract, a large audience on top of those interested in electronic music (Saebi, 2013).

For Peter Soleimanipour, while *Talfiqi's* capacity of offering newness in music in the country is not something new, it is still appreciated. However, he believes that the longevity and continuity of this music by way of attracting new audiences would depend on the reach through different channels, such as the number of live performances, as we can see in this quote:

سلیمانی پور در پاسخ به این سوال که موسیقی تلفیقی در کشورمان چقدر طرفدار دارد، می گوید: در مرحله ای هستیم که داریم به مخاطب نوعی آشنایی می دهیم، البته این نوع موسیقی چیز تازه ای نیست و در اشکال مختلف و دوره های مختلف در سطح تهران حداقل کنسرت هایی بوده که این محتوای موسیقی را ارائه کند. حال این که چقدر طرفدار داشته باشد بستگی دارد به این که ما چقدر اجرا داشته باشیم و چقدر این موسیقی را به گوش مردم برسانیم

In responding to how *Talfiqi* music is popular in our country, Soleimanipour states: we are at a stage where we are presenting newness to the audience, even though this type of music is not new and it has existed in different forms at different periods in Tehran where concerts consisting of this type of music have existed. Now, how popular this music is would depend on how many performances we have and how much this music would reach an audience (Soleimanipour in Mortezaeifard, 2015).

7.3.2 *Talfiqi* and trends towards globalisation

While the previous section discussed the role of *Talfiqi* as a local music scene, this section concentrates on its place in the globalised world. Here, we notice how *Talfiqi* musicians see themselves as musicians that are part of a globalised world. We see how the influence of the Internet is shaping this music and how *Talfiqi* musicians are influenced by world trends.

7.3.2.1 Need for being part of a global trend

An idea that comes under scrutiny in this subcategory is the genre of music *Talfiqi* musicians are influenced by. Here, we see that producing music that resonates with audiences around the globe

becomes a vital way to connect with different cultures and societies. Moreover, the type of music that these musicians listen to demonstrates the diversity of music aesthetics that they are exposed to and influenced by. Shayan Ganji of the band Damahi, for example, is greatly influenced by the music of Africa, as we can see in the following statement:

Shayan Ganji of Damahi

چقدر تحت تاثیر جریان های مشابهی که در جهان وجود دارد، هستید؟

شایان: آرتیست هایی هستند که همه ما دوست داریم مانند ریچارد بونا. ملودی های محلی سنگال، کامرون و آفریقایی برای ما جذاب است تا موسیقی راک و جز. برای نمونه اگر کسی از ما یک ملودی داشته باشد این امکان وجود دارد که گیتار باس برای آن کوبایی یا لاتین یا هر شکل دیگری بنوازد.

How influenced are you from similar trends from around the world?

Shayan: There are artists who we all enjoy such as Richard Bona. We enjoy rock and jazz as much as melodies from Senegal, Cameroon, and other parts of Africa. For example, if someone wants to use our melodies in their music, they can easily play Latin or Cuban bass on it (Ganji in Eshghi, 2016).

This exemplifies that the music this band creates allows other musicians from different parts of the world to adapt it with their own rhythm. It shows the extent to which a band like Damahi is in search of producing music that is understood by different cultures from around the world. In fact, what is observed is the idea that musicians who play *Talfigi* music educate themselves greatly by exposing themselves to music from around the world, as we can see in this quote by Shayan Shekarabi of Daal band, a *Talfigi* band:

شایان: قبل از اینکه آهنگ سازی این گروه را شروع کنیم، به کارهای تلفیقی موسیقی جهانی خیلی گوش دادیم. مثل ظافر یوسف که تلفیق موسیقی جز و عربی است، و آویشای کونن که تلفیق موسیقی عبری و اروپای شرقی با جز

است و موسیقی های دیگری از این جنس بود که با هم به اشتراک می گذاشتیم. اما بیشترین تاثیر در نوع تنظیم کارها و رنگ بندی سازها را از این گروه ها گرفتیم

Shayan: Before composing for the band, we listened to *Talfigi* music from around the world. For example, we listened and share music of Dhafar Youssef who mixes jazz and Arabic music or Avisha Cohen who mixes Arabic, Eastern European and jazz music together. So, we were influenced by the type of arrangements and works from these orchestrations and groups (Shekarabi in Ghazi-Zadeh, 2016).

There are three important elements to point out in this quote. First, the music that influences Shayan's music includes international acts that do different forms of jazz fusion and who are part of middle eastern jazz fusion. Thus, there is research done about understanding the currents in jazz fusion music around the world. Second, the music sound that is selected is part of a music scene in the Middle East and north Africa whereby the Eastern sound is mixed with jazz ensembles. Dhafar Youssef, for instance, is a Tunisian Oud player and singer who mixes Arabic *maqam* music with jazz. Third, politics seem to have no place in the music taste of this musician since he is publicly acknowledging his interest in the music of the Israeli jazz bassist Avisha Cohen. This shows the openness of Iranian musicians in absorbing and integrating new ideas from anywhere in the world and their willingness to continue in the pathway of creating and contributing to a globalised Eastern sound. Besides being influenced by music from around the world, *Talfigi* musicians also see an opportunity to become part of a global music market. In other words, they want to participate in the global fusion music scene, as it is noted by Shayan Ganji of the band Damahi:

به نظرتان پتانسیل شرکت در فستیوال های بین المللی برای گروه شما وجود دارد؟

شایان: از نظر من ۱۰ برابر پتانسیلی که در ایران داریم، خارج از ایران وجود دارد. در بازار جهانی به غیر از چند آرتیست ایرانی در استایل سنتی، هیچ چیز از ایران وجود ندارد. خود من که برای دوستانم از موسیقی های ایرانی پخش می کنم اصلاً باورشان نمی شود که تا این حد مدرن باشد. اروپایی ها برای فستیوال ها هزینه زیادی می کنند و این امکان مناسبی برای ما است

Do you think that your band has the potential to participate in international festival?

Shayan: I think that we have ten times the potential outside of Iran than in Iran. Beside some *sonati* artists, there are no Iranians in the international market. When I play Iranian music for my friends, they cannot believe how modern it is. Europeans invest a lot in festival, and this is a great opportunity for us (Ganji in Eshghi, 2016).

This quote is telling of the way Iranian music is presented in the outside world and shows the dominance of *sonati* musicians in succeeding in having an international voice that represents Iranian music. It also shows the perception of this musician regarding how Iranian music is perceived as a form of classical and highbrow music around the world. This said, the quote also presents the argument of the artist regarding the lack of knowledge around the world about what is happening musically in Iran today and how this has surprised many of Shayan's friends outside of Iran.

7.3.3 Need for becoming official

In this section, what we see is how *Talfigi* is being treated as a doorway for musicians who do not have enough support or exposure to have their works heard by a larger audience. In a way, *Talfigi* is seen as the vocabulary for those who do not fit the molds established in the music industry in Iran in the past 30 years. Much of this discussion is in line with the statements of organisers of the *Talfigi* music festival held in Tehran. We can see how this idea is presented in this section:

آنچه در هفته موسیقی تلفیقی مدنظر ما بوده نگاهی بر اساس ژانرهای مختلف موسیقایی بدون هیچ قضاوتی بوده است. روایتی تاریخی از جریانات معاصر که امیدواریم شاهد اتفاقات خوبی در این زمینه باشیم. البته برای عنوان هفته موسیقی تلفیقی که عنوانی بحث برانگیز است خیلی ها موافق این عنوان نبودند. اما به هر حال این نام برای هفته موسیقی تلفیقی انتخاب شد و تلاشم بر این بود که گروه هایی که بعد از انقلاب به ویژه از دهه ۷۰ به بعد حضور مستمری در جریان تشکیل گروه های موسیقایی داشتند و جریان رسمی کشور از آنها حمایت نمی کرد، بتوانند آثار خود را ارائه دهند.

What we envisioned in *Talfigi* music was a look at different music genres without judgement. A historic narrative of modern currents that I hope we can witness good events coming out of it. Many were not in agreement with regards to the usage of the term *Talfigi* music week, which is a debatable term. However, this name was chosen for *Talfigi* music

week and my goal was that groups who were not supported by the official currents in the country and who had a persistent presence in the music waves of the country after the revolution were given a chance to present their works (Etemad, 2014).

What is being reiterated here is that even though the term *Talfiqi* is debatable, the reason behind it is valuable. This is because it can gather artists who do not have a space in the official currents in music in Iran and provide them with a space to showcase their work. What is interesting about this quote is the usage of the word persistence and how these artists have had a persistent presence in shaping the music of the country even though they are not always financially or politically supported. Another narrative in this section is the idea of bringing the underground overground and demystifying music that is perceived as problematic, as we see in this quote:

بسیار مایل بودیم که خیلی از گروه های زیرزمینی را روزمینی کنیم و بگوییم که این گروه ها موجودات خطرناکی نیستند اما این پروسه موانع بسیار زیادی داشت که تا آخرین لحظه هم درگیر تحقق آن هستیم. گرچه جدول جشنواره منتشر شده است اما باز هم امیدواریم که بتوانیم امکانی را فراهم کنیم تا آنهایی که نتوانستند برای حضور در این فستیوال مجوز دریافت کنند به جدول ما اضافه شوند

I would have loved to bring many underground musicians over the ground and say that these groups are not dangerous creatures. But this process of demystification faces many barriers, and we struggle to address it constantly. Although the festival's calendar is published, I am hoping that we provide the opportunity for those who were not able to acquire permission for the festival so that we can add them to the calendar (Etemad, 2014).

Therefore, *Talfiqi* and the festival that is organised around it seem to have the aim to normalise musicians who are seen as problematic in the country. It aims to achieve the goal of what many unofficial musicians were trying to achieve in the early 2000's unofficial music scene, namely, to become official and work as musicians in the official music scene in Iran.

7.3.4 An alternative to pop music

For bands like Damahi, the way they distinguish themselves is a current of popular music that is not pop and influenced by music movements from around the world.

رضا کولغانی: نظر من بیشتر شبیه به دارا است. اگر همان چیزی که در ایران وجود دارد را بسازیم پاپ می شود و اگر از نقاط دیگر دنیا وام بگیریم و اضافه کنیم تلفیق صورت می

گیرد

Reza Koolghani: my opinion approaches that of Dara's. If we make something that already exists in Iran, it is pop and if we get influenced from other parts of the world and add it to our music, it is *Talfiqi* (Koolghani in Eshghi, 2016). Here, *Talfiqi* is distinguished as a pop that is not pop by its way of getting influenced from music from around the world. This is so interesting because pop is a type of imported music in Iran. And yet, *Talfiqi* seem to distinguish itself from pop by arguing that it is more influenced by world trends than pop music, an already imported genre of music.

امید نعمتی: اگر منتقد حرفه‌ای در ایران نداشته باشیم و یا تعدادشان کم باشد، به جای آن تا بخواهید افراد همیشه غرغروی داریم که همیشه به غر زدن مشغول هستند. در کنار این افراد واژه‌ای هم به نام تلفیقی داریم که از نظر من به آن دلیل مورد استفاده قرار می‌گیرد که بعضی‌ها از کلمه پاپ بدشان می‌آید و یا حداقل دوست ندارند خواننده پاپ باشند.

We may not have professional critic, or they may not be numerous. Instead, we have as many complainers as your heart can desire whose only occupation is to nag. The term *Talfiqi* is for all these people who, in my opinion, are using it because some people hate the word pop or at least don't like to be pop singers (Nemati in Namjoo, 2015a).

7.4 Miscellaneous findings

During the coding process, some sections were coded that could not be categorised under the sections that were established. Thus, I have gathered these codes under a miscellaneous section since I found them important during the process of coding. The main thread in these findings is the impact of the music market on *Talfiqi* bands.

An interesting finding in this section is the discussion about the general problem of career longevity in the music industry as a musician. It seems that the industry has a very high turnover whereby musicians have brief success with a single or an album. However, this success does not result in any form of permanence in the industry since they are easily replaced with new artists and new acts. This idea is explored by Peter Soleimanipour, who talks not only about pop but also *Talfiqi* musicians.

وی افزود: ستاره‌های بسیاری در عرصه موسیقی تجاری امروزی ظهور می‌کنند که عمرشان نهایتاً یک سال است و بعد طوری فراموش می‌شوند که انگار از اول وجود نداشتند. جای تاسف است که بسیاری از جوانان و نوجوانان ارزیابی‌شان از موسیقی بر مبنای همین ستارگانی‌ست که می‌آیند و می‌روند. اگر در جریان ایجاد موسیقی، شهرت و درآمدهای بزرگ حرف اول را بزنند، مسلماً کیفیت غنای موسیقی جزو حرف‌های آخر خواهد بود. و البته برعکس هم صادق است. شاید برخی از اهالی هنر به این مسئله کم توجه باشند که ارائه اثر ماندگار نیازمند نگاهی عمیق به اصل بالفعل موسیقی‌ست و نه به حواشی آن

He added: There are many stars in the music industry today who will not last more than a year and will be forgotten to the point where they would be like they have never existed. It is a shame that many youths evaluate music based on these stars who come and go. If fame and money say the first words in the process of music production, it is obvious that talking about the depth of music is left for the end. And in fact, the opposite is possible. It might be that many of those in the arts pay less attention to the idea that a work of art that would last long time requires an in depth look at what music is and not what is at its periphery (Soleimanipour in Nazemzadeh, 2014).

The idea here is quite important and fascinating since reflects the heart of many music industries around the world. Here, the barometer by which a musician is judged by the general population is their popularity and financial success. The same criteria are also used by the industry to evaluate whether an artist can have a substantial return on investment. Another discussion that is important here is that value of music production depends on its return on investment more than its aesthetic value. What we see that a cultural industry is controlling the direction of music production and aesthetic and is giving more importance to financial return gained by a musician than to the intrinsic value of music as a piece of art. Thus, taste is created by the market and not by the intrinsic value of art.

The importance given to the monetisation of music is also seen in the way Fajr International Music Festival (the largest government sponsored music festival in the country) sets its ticket pricing. Here, the argument is that a government sponsored festival acts as an entity that is trying to profit from the ticket sales instead of playing the role of making music accessible to a larger audience. The result is discouragement amongst *Talfighi* bands, who see that the festival is not trying to promote them in any way. Instead, the way the organisers approach *Talfighi* bands is to piggyback on the popularity of *Talfighi* bands and give them the responsibility to promote the concerts, instead of creating spaces for them to grow their audience base. We see this in the quote below by the band Bomrani:

اما مساله عمده ای که جشنواره فجر دارد این است که می خواهد هزینه های فستیوالش را از طریق فروش بلیت تامین کند. من در هیچ جای دنیا ندیده ام که پول یک فستیوال را با فروش بلیت در بیاورند. در صورتی که فستیوال باید عاشقان موسیقی را برای دیدن اجراها به سمت خود بکشاند. مردم هم بیایند یک هفته زمان شان را برای شنیدن موسیقی خوب بگذارند. اما این قیمتی که برای بلیت های جشنواره تعریف شده به میزان همان کنسرت های مستقل خودمان است و همان قشر افرادی که به کنسرت ما می آمدند، می توانند بیایند و اجراها را ببینند. اساسا نمی دانم چرا باید در جشنواره ای که از طرف دولت برگزار می شود اینقدر قیمت بلیت ها گران باشد؟ اگر قیمت بلیت ها مثل دیگر فستیوال های جهان ارزان بود، مردم به تماشای کنسرت های متفاوتی می نشستند و فقط یک آرتیست مورد علاقه شان را دنبال نمی کردند.

However, the most problematic thing about the festival is that they want to pay for the festival by selling tickets. I have never seen a festival making money from ticket sales anywhere in the world. This is while the role of a festival is to attract audiences that love music. To allow people to come for a week and listen to good music. But the prices that are decided for our concert tickets are the same as our own shows, so the same people who come to our concerts outside of the festival, come and see us at the festival also. I just don't know. Why is it that ticket prices must be so expensive in a festival that is run by the government? If tickets were cheaper like other festivals around the world, people would come and listen to different groups instead of just buying tickets for their favorite artist.

What we notice here is the dissatisfaction of Bomrani with the focus of the festival organisers on making profit instead of encouraging new artists to grow by allowing their music to be more accessible to broader audiences, regardless of economic status. For them, at the stage that they are,

organising the band's own concert versus performing at the Fajr festival does not make any difference since the demographic who can afford the tickets rests to be the same.

The last subject that was discovered in this section is the conundrum *Talfiqi* musicians must confront in the face of monetisation and industrialisation of music. The discourse is a very similar one in other music genres, especially genres such as punk and rock, whereby the thin line between producing a marketable music versus staying true to one's music aesthetic is blurred when musicians face the realities of the music business. The quote from the new *Talfiqi* band that mixes music from south of Iran with jazz and rock illustrates the situation that such a band is facing:

اینکه گروهی بندرعباسی بتواند طرفدار و مخاطب اصلی خود در بندر را حفظ کند و مخاطب غیر بندری هم (در ابعاد فعالیتش) جذب کند کار بسیار دشواری است. اینکه آنها تا چه حد رادیکال می مانند و برای هنر می جنگند و تا چه حد به سمت و سوی بازار فروش سوق پیدا می کنند مهم ترین چالشی است که «جالبوت» پیش رو دارد

The fact that a Bandar Abbasi (a port city in the south of Iran known for its particular music) band can retain their fans from their region and attract new audiences in other parts of the country is very difficult at the beginning of one's career. The main challenge for Jalbot is whether it will stay true to its music or take the direction of the market (Gholizadeh, 2018)

The idea here is that once the band takes the direction of the market in order to sell more, it distances itself from its roots and the projects that began the band. The quote also shows how the band is aware of such dilemma as it is becoming more and more popular. The idea here is the old Faustian conundrum of whether one is selling oneself to the devil by distancing oneself from their aesthetic and adjusting one's music so that it is more in line with the taste of the market.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter looked how *Talfiqi* is discussed in the Iranian media. It used the content analysis method to look at the main topics that are discussed about this music category in the public sphere. The first umbrella topic that was discovered in the research looked at different definition of *Talfiqi* and how the definition, and its lack thereof, cause tension among different stakeholders. The key finding in this section was that the ambiguity of *Talfiqi* as a category is at the heart of the discourse

surrounding the definition of this category and how different artists associate or dissociate themselves from it.

The second umbrella topic looked at *Talfiqi* as a practice. The interesting finding was the idea of proper ways of doing *Talfiqi*. This idea was linked to the notion of educated understanding of elements that are mixed in a music together. This discourse surrounds the idea of having to be educated and to having gained a certain level of respectability that legitimises the musician to attempt the practice of hybridisation in music. There was also a contrasting finding in this section as much of the content revolved around the discourse of creativity and liberty and how *Talfiqi* permits certain level of creativity, experimentation, and exploration.

The third umbrella topic discussed the idea of *Talfiqi* as a music scene. Here, the findings show how the category is part of local trends in music that are connecting to the youth. The section also explored the link between this category and globalisation and how musicians that are categorised as *Talfiqi* see themselves as a part of a globalised movement. The section also saw how *Talfiqi* is seen as a practice that allows unofficial musicians to become official by way of becoming categorised. Finally, the section looked at how *Talfiqi* is seen as a category that presents itself as a popular music that is not pop. In doing so, it distinguishes itself from pop music while linking itself as a more sophisticated form of pop music.

The chapter ended with the look at miscellaneous codes that could not be categorised under the other categories established. The main theme of this section highlighted the realities of being part of an industry and the ways that artists can become part of the industry. Topics such as the moral dilemma of becoming a sellout and the ways market forces impact *Talfiqi* musicians were discussed. The next section links the research question, theoretical framework and hypothesis, and the results together in form of a discussion to analyse what the data that has been gathered tell us and how they answer to the research question.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the information presented in the previous two analysis chapters by way of linking its findings to the theoretical framework presented and discussing the main takeaways from the research conducted. I continue by looking at the main takeaways from the content analysis chapter. Here, I begin with the discussion on the definition of *Talfiqi* and the tensions that have resulted from the difficulty of defining the term. I then look at the practice of *talfiq* in relation to the definition of *Talfiqi* and the perception of how it must be practiced. In both these sections, what we see is a tension when judging not only the terminology, but also the practice that comes with the terminology. I finally focus on the notion of scene and its relationship to the way musicians see their practice as one that is no longer just local but part of global trends. Here, I try to understand how the perspective of being part of the local and global at the same time helps shape the identity of musicians who participate in the *Talfiqi* scene. To do so, I examine the *talfiq* music scene as a glocalised (Hebert & Rykowski, 2018) music scene: one that tries to shape its identity by mixing the global and the local constantly.

I end this chapter by looking at the concept of ambiguity and the role it plays not only in the history of the formation of the category of *Talfiqi* but also its mechanism as a tool for negotiating with the ambiguous politics of music in Iran. Thus, the usage of the theoretical framework that I develop in this chapter helps us understand the way cultural negotiation can be located in the aesthetics as well as lexical function of *Talfiqi* category in Iran.

8.1 Discursive development from *talfiq* to *Talfiqi*

I begin by exploring the link between the practice of *talfiq* in music and its relation to the tension between tradition and modernity in the modern history of Iran. I discuss how *talfiq* as a practice tried to find a way to deal with this tension in different ways. I then discuss the post 1979 revolution Iran and the tension that it created by way of disciplination of culture. Later, I discuss the ways

music was negotiated and changed from the 1990's onward with the articulation of the term *Talfigi* as a music category since mid-1990's.

I use the concept of hybridity by Homi Bhabha (2004) as a key concept to show how the practice of *talfig*, a practice of hybridity, has tried to deal with the relationship between tradition and modernity in the history of modern Iran. For Bhabha, cultural engagements are produced performatively and hybridities emerge from differences. He argues that “the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (Bhabha, 2004, p.2). On the one hand, hybridity is a mixing of cultural practices that produces new unique identities. These mixings rise from the notion of difference. On the other hand, Bhabha's articulation of the notion of hybridity is rooted in the notion of historical transformation. In this sense, what *talfig* means at certain time in history is unique to the historical context of the country at that time. I would like to argue that *Talfigi* emerged as a category of music in the context of the continuity of the cultural practice of *talfig*. Furthermore, this categorisation emerged in a peculiar socio-politico-cultural context as a practice that went beyond the dichotomy between tradition and modernity by locating itself as not only an Iranian musical category, but as an Iranian cultural practice with the aim of discovering new Iranian sonic identities. This perspective of culture reflects the way cultural studies treats culture as a site where cultural struggles are located (Hall, 1992). In the context of *Talfigi*, the category can be seen as a site of struggle where the ambiguity of the term acts as a *tactic*, in the way articulated by Michel De Certeau (1984) to negotiate through sonic aesthetics. This also brings us to the point that Raymond Williams (Williams, 2001) makes in his argument about culture being the place where slow changes in a society occurs. In this sense, *Talfigi* has continually persisted and shifted to find a place for itself in the panorama of Iranian music. It has done so largely through expanding its focus from the framework of tradition versus modernity to that of tradition, modernity and beyond (acted upon through the cultural practice of *talfig*).

8.1.1 Modernising tradition and the practice of *talfig* before the 1979 revolution

One thing that became clear from the beginning of my research on the practice of *talfig* in Iran was how it was linked to the broad discourse of the tension between tradition and modernity in the modern history of Iran. The changes in music in the Qajar dynasty were very important. From one

side, Persian music began to finalise the process of separating itself from the *maqam* system of music and establishing its own system of music, a process that began in the *Safavid* period. One part of this movement was related to the historic process of Iranian musicians recognising the need to distinguish music of their country and developing systems of understanding, teaching, and performing it for Iranian musicians. The other part of it was linked to the recognition of the importance of music as an art form that is part of the Iranian national identity. This recognition became even more prominent during the constitutional revolution (1906-1911) where *sonati* musicians, such as Aref Qazvini, used the *tasnif* form to write revolutionary music. Iran also began to be exposed to modernity from its ideas to its practices to its materialities. For instance, it was the introduction of ideas such as democracy and rule of law that sparked the constitutional revolution in the early 1900s. Thus, from early 1900 onward, a tension between tradition and modernity began to develop. The introduction of Western music and Western instruments brought this tension of tradition versus modernity to the field of music in the country. Thus, the understanding of the role of *talfiq* in music in Iran must be understood directly in relationship to the tension between tradition and modernity.

This question guides our analysis in this section: how was the practice of *talfiq* used and interpreted in the tension between tradition and modernity? Beginning with the early 1900's, what we saw in the chapter on historic analysis of the practice of *talfiq* in Iran was the way *talfiq* became part of the practice of modernising music in the country. In this way of thinking about *talfiq*, the practice is biased towards ways of understanding the translation of *sonati* music in the language of Western music. The way Ali Naqi Vaziri went about doing *talfiq* in music was framed around the idea that Iranian music and tradition needs to be modernised and understood with the modern language of music (Western music notation) in order for the music to become accepted as part of modernity. It is important to note that Iranian musicians had indeed developed their own music notation systems using the ABJAD system. Moreover, while there was continual research on improving the ABJAD system of music notation during Vaziri's life (Daemi Milani et al., 2021), Vaziri himself made the choice of developing a notation system based on the Western notation system under the idea that traditional Persian music is in need of modernisation.

While Vaziri began the idea of using *talfiq* as a way of modernising Persian music, it was Rouhollah Khaleqi who took the philosophy and ideas of Vaziri to the next level by institutionalising them. What Khaleqi did can be understood in two levels. Firstly, he helped establish institutions such as music schools and orchestras that played Persian classical music using Western instruments or mixing them with traditional Persian instruments. Secondly, what he proposed as music was called and framed as national music. This is very important because *talfiq* was not only modernising but also establishing the identity of the modern Iran. His work with the *Golha* radio program was also very important, as he established an orchestra for the program and developed the aesthetic of national music in the most popular radio program of its time. What we see with the continuation of *talfiq* by Khaleqi is the development of the modern traditional by way of developing orchestrations, compositional techniques, and the usage of counterpoints to develop the national music aesthetics. Khaleqi, thus, should be considered not only as someone who used *talfiq* to establish a certain aesthetic and relate that aesthetic to a national identity, but also as an important figure in developing and establishing institutions that provided education for the creation of this aesthetic and the widespread distribution through the medium of radio. Consequently, Khaleqi's emphasis on creating modern structures of performance (orchestras) and education (music schools) played an important role in instituting the national music aesthetic in the country.

The rise of popular music in the 1960's and 1970's shifted the function of *talfiq* with regards to the discourse of tradition versus modernity. From one side, the reference point of this type of music was two folds. In one way it was influenced by Western pop music, and it took cues not only from American and English music but also from other world trends. In another, it was influenced by *motrebi* music, a type of popular music that was greatly influenced by rhythms and melodic motifs from Arabic popular music. From another side, it quickly developed its own sound and became innovative in its own way by embracing Western orchestration techniques to create its own music aesthetic. The works of Varujan Hakhbandian became extremely influential in establishing this aesthetic. *Talfiq*, thus, was not trying to modernise tradition as much as it was trying to develop the modern sound of popular music of Iran while taking cues from Persian popular music traditions. More importantly, musicians that were practicing *talfiq* were trying to position themselves in what Fellez (2011) calls the broken middle, the in-between space of several music practices that came together at a precise historic juncture. What these musicians did was to push the boundaries

between tradition and modernity. An important aspect of this broken middle was the myriad of music that these musicians were being exposed to and influenced by. In a sense, those who did *talfiq* in popular music in Iran wanted to find their place in a globalised music space.

In the context of music of the likes of Mehrpouya in Iran at the time, *talfiq* can be seen as part of a cultural practice that aspired to reach what Michel Freitag calls *mondialisation*. For Freitag (2010), *mondialisation* is “a process that aim at reorganisation of the normative structures (cultural and political) that reflexively govern collective life at the global level” (Freitag, 2010, p.14). Thus, the cultural practice of *talfiq* is the part of the process of partially reorganising normative structures while creating new structures that are unique to the particular geographic place and time (Iran during the 1970’s). *Talfiq* begins as mimicking certain musical practices, such as taking song from another country and put Persian lyrics over it, into a process of finding the musical practices that are unique to Iran and that shape Iranian popular music and its identifying sounds, and yet are part of music practices from around the world. In other words, *talfiq* can be located in the process of cultural *mondialisation* during the time when the governmental structure was trying to achieve a level of globalisation in the country. By this we see that the practice of *talfiq* shifted from modernising tradition to first mimicking the globalised music practices such as rock and jazz. However, as the practice continued, it found an in-between place in the broken middle of tradition and modernity as extremes and positioned itself as more of a *mondialised* practice that sought to create a local and yet *mondial* aesthetic language. In such process, it found itself in a place where it was not agreeing with the previous function of *talfiq* that was limited to the modernisation of tradition and the creation of a modern national identity.

8.1.2 The 1979 revolution and the return to tradition

One of the discourses that became central during the revolution was the idea that the influence of Western cultural practices in the country was slowly eroding the Iranian culture and identity. At the helm of this idea were two authors, Ali Shariati (Shariati, 1980) and Jalal Al Ahmad (Āl Ahmad, 1983), who both proposed that embracing Islam as culture is the pathway to returning to an authentic self. Both Shariati and Al Ahmad died before the revolution and it was never seen to how their ideas were interpreted by Ayatollah Khomeini as a vision of creating a new society through practices of cultural disciplination. A large part of this disciplination was framed around medical

language that saw the Western cultural practices as diseases that slowly eroded the society. This metaphor was taken directly from Al Ahmad's notion of occidentosis (Al Ahmad, 1983). The challenge here was that the understanding of how culture works in the ideas of Al Ahmad and their interpretation is linked directly to the notion of blind mimesis of Western cultural practice by the society. In this blind mimesis, the society is slowly eroded as it begins to forget its past and its authentic self. What this section tries to understand is the following: what role did the practice of *talfiq* play with regards to this return to the authentic?

Although not directly related, the idea of return to authenticity found itself in music just before the revolution by an institution called Markaz-e Hefz va esha'eh-te musiqi-ye asil-e Irani (Centre for the Propagation and Preservation of Authentic Iranian Music (CPPAIM)) that began criticizing the way traditional forms of teaching and performing music in Iran was being forgotten. The way this organisation and its founders framed themselves presented that modernisation of Persian traditional music, a practice proposed by likes of Vaziri and Khaleqi, was leading to the loss of the authentic ways of understanding and performing Persian music. The ensembles that came from this institution also played a vital role in creating revolutionary music, as they used the tradition of writing the *tasnif* song form, a practice that was used by Aref Qazvini during the constitutional revolution (1906-1911), during the 1979 revolution. What this return to authenticity did was to critique the practice of *talfiq* that followed the discourse of modernising the traditional Persian music. At the same time, popular music also came under attack, specifically by the more religious revolutionaries, as it became associated to the imperialist culture that was perceived to be invading Iran.

This idea of return to the authentic reinterpreted the discourse on tradition versus modernity in Iran after the revolution whereby tradition was favoured over modernity. The new regime targeted pleasure as the source of problem in the society as practices of pleasure that were introduced by the West were seen as sources of westoxification in the society. Therefore, artistic practices such as music, dance, and cinema became the first targets of the regime. This is important to note because modernity was never seen as bad so long as it helped the establishing of the new societal order. In fact, modern organisations and technologies were used in the project of societal disciplination after the revolution that has continued to this day. For instance, organisations such

as the Higher Council of Islamic Revolution and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Discipline (ERSHAD) are modern institutions that use structural disciplining procedures to change the university curriculum to fit the *Shari'a* law and filter all cultural products produced and distributed around the country respectively. At the same time, control and management of programs diffused through national radio and television were important in propagating the messages of the revolution. The tasks of these modern technologies and organisation, in the Foucauldian (1995) sense, was to normalise certain practices and ideas and favour certain knowledge over others in order to homogenise the narrative of the new regime in place in order to discipline the Iranian society.

This helps clarify why Khomeini compared music to opium, which gave the green light for banning most forms of music in the country as of 1979. Music was now seen as a western practice and a source of pleasure that would distract individuals in the society from reaching the self-actualisation that the new regime wanted them to reach. Thus, tradition was, and to this day is, an invented utopia. In this discourse, Shariati's ideas were written as a philosophy of reaching individual self-actualisation through the teaching of Shia' Islam. They became political and source material for the implementation of the process of disciplination of the whole of Iranian society. The goal here, to create a homogenised society that reaches a collective self-actualisation through the implementation of policies that favor a very precise utopic version of tradition as it was guided by Shi'a Islam and interpreted by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, at the time. The irony of this return to authenticity was that modernity was selectively used to achieve this goal. The question that remains to be answered is the following: how has this change influenced *talfiq* and its relationship to the dichotomic rapport between tradition and modernity?

The answer to this can be found in Hossein Alizadeh's Neynava concerto for Ney and orchestra. As one of the earliest examples of *talfiq* after the revolution, we see how this concerto adheres to some parts of the new ideology and societal order while distancing itself in other ways. As I have demonstrated, the concerto was designed to showcase a Persian instrument with a unique timber and soft sound alongside a Western modern ensemble, the orchestra, that can easily dominate the instrument's volume by the sheer size and the volume of the ensemble. Alizadeh's Neynava was showcasing tradition within the context of a modern orchestral ensemble. However, it was not returning to tradition as much as trying to place tradition in modern context. This distinction is very

important because, as we argued earlier, the discourse of the new regime in Iran was the return to tradition, i.e., authentic. However, Alizadeh was proposing a co-existence of tradition and modernity whereby neither the tradition is being modernised nor modernity is being dismissed. Instead, they find their place to function together in the context of their own ways of practicing. It is important to note that Alizadeh was part of the Chavosh ensemble and the CPPAIM. Thus, he was part of the school of returning to the traditional ways of teaching and performing Persian music in opposition to the school of Vaziri and Khaleqi who wanted to modernise *sonati* music. However, instead of abandoning the idea of the possibility of doing *talfiq* between *sonati* and Western Classical music, he believed that such *talfiq* is possible so long as both music practices are profoundly understood before an attempt to *talfiq* is made. In this sense, he was influenced by works of Persian classical musicians such as Hossein Dehlavi, Morteza Hannaneh, and Samin Baghcheban, who in their own ways were trying to mix Western music with *sonati music*. This discourse of *talfiq* is one that sees the practice in the context of respect and in depth knowledge of elements that are mixed together. The argument here was that modern music practices have the possibility of existing alongside Persian music practices so long as the two are mixed according to their established ways of practicing music. However, this form of *talfiq* practice did not offer any overture to the possibility of Western music practices that were part of Western pop music, a practice that was banned in the 1980's and most of 1990's.

8.1.3 The birth and evolution of *Talfiqi*

Khomeini's decree in 1989 that permitted the sales of musical instruments was one of the first milestones in slowly changing the attitude of the government towards music. Following the death of Khomeini and realising that the morale of the society needs to be lifted (Maghazei, 2014), president Hashemi Rafsanjani slowly allowed the reintroduction of music in the public with the help of his then minister of culture (minister responsible for ERSHAD), Mohammad Khatami. One thing to recognise from these slow changes was that even though Khomeini did not explicitly state that music can be performed in public spaces or that music education can restart, the government at the time interpreted the permission of sales of musical instruments as a statement that can extend to other practices that will in the end benefit the Islamic Republic with the idea that music can boost the Iranian society's morale after an eight year war (Maghazei, 2014). Another important point to add here is that a decade of the project of disciplination of society with regards to

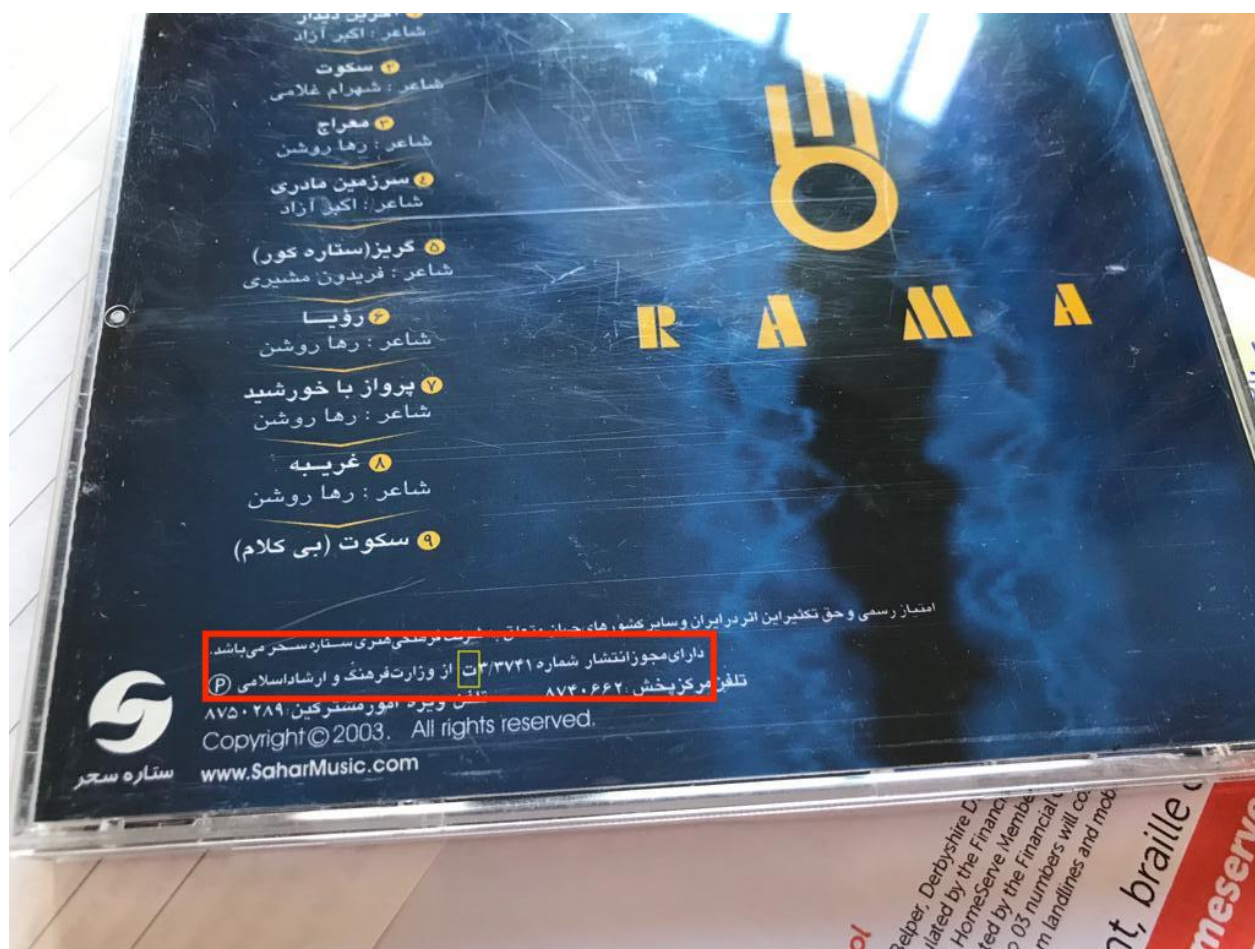
controlling music consumption did not change the consumption habit of the society. Instead, it helped create a bootleg market for media that was forbidden by the government. This in turn, led to a shift in illegal media consumption to the private sphere (Atwood, 2021). Moreover, many of the people who helped the creation and development of the popular music industry before the revolution moved to Los Angeles and developed a diaspora industry. Music produced by this industry was illegally imported to Iran and distributed in the black in the 1980's (Hemasi, 2011).

The mid-1990's saw the reintroduction of music first in the Radio Television of Iran, an organisation that is allowed to choose its content separate from the ERSHAD and that is directly controlled by the supreme leader of the country. The musicians that later became Avizheh began their journey in these studios and created music that mixed elements from jazz, rock, electronic, and *sonati* music. The function of *talfiq* here became that of aesthetic negotiation by mixing enough traditional elements with Western ones that it sounded acceptable to the organisation that allowed them to make more music and use their studios. Here, the function of *talfiq* is negotiation through familiarisation and normalisation. This is a tactic that appeals to the taste of the officials in ERSHAD with the hope of acquiring permission from the government officials. What I mean by this is that by keeping enough familiar sounds and naming it something that does not link it to the West, sounds that are deemed prohibited began to be heard and normalised by decision makers in the government.

The articulation of the *Talfiqi* as a category of music appeared right after these changes in the country. We can see how this articulation was a result of a mish mash of different elements from politics to religious interpretation to sonic aesthetic negotiation. From one side, it was an attempt by musicians to enter sounds in the country that were deemed prohibited just by its association to the West and not by the actual music/sound. Second, the *Talfiqi* musicians were offering a type of music that distinguished itself from pop music from Los Angeles, and yet had elements from popular music in terms of its instrumentation and musical aesthetics. Most importantly, *Talfiqi* reimagined the struggle between tradition and modernity because its message was one that saw Iranian music identity beyond the polarity of tradition and modernity. It argued for tradition, modernity, and more in its music aesthetics by believing in experimentation as the solution to finding new sounds and identities. At the same time, *Talfiqi* is a term that is used in the Persian

language (the word is also used in Arabic) and is not a Western terminology for music categorisation. This is important because the term is articulated at a time when using Western terms to describe music automatically helped in labelling the music as forbidden by ERSHAD.

What is fascinating is that ERSHAD also integrated this terminology into its lexicon and categorised different music as *Talfiqi*. The exact date of this decision is not clear. However, Professor Laudan Nooshin, one of the leading scholars in the research on popular music in Iran, was able to send me the picture of a CD that she owns from 2003 where the letter T, or (ت) in Persian is seen after the permission number issued by the institution. According to Dr. Nooshin, that letter indicates that the CD is categorised as *Talfiqi* by ERSHAD. In the following photo, you can see the area circled in red that read “In possession of distribution permission number 3/3741 (t) from Ministry of Culture and Islamic Discipline (P)”:



The same system is also used in the permission number for Avizheh's album published in 2019 (Avizheh, 2019). We see here that a discourse was articulated and circulated by musicians in mid-1990's was then adapted by the regulatory body that gives permission to cultural products and performances such as music. We can make a link to how David Bracket (2016) discusses the discursive formation of music categories such as genres, since he looks at the way music categories emerge in the interplay of relationships between different actors and power relations such as distributors, audiences, the billboards, the musicians, etc. We may not have the same body of information available in the music industry in Iran since billboards don't exist, there is no registry of distributors in Iran, the ERSHAD website does not provide details of its process of decision making or the list of albums that have received permission, etc. That said, from the historical analysis provided, we can clearly see how a music category emerged from its articulation by musicians to its adoption by ERSHAD. What this shows is that *Talfiqi* category emerged in a particular historic moment that within itself included multiplicities of power relations that led

musicians to think of a particular word, discourse, that not only described what they do but also negotiated what they do with those who decided its legitimacy. This discourse was then adopted by those in power and used as a category to name music that did not fit in the previous categories that ERSHAD itself determined in the 1980's all the way to mid-1990's. The question that is remained is the following: what did this adaptation of category do?

8.1.4 Unofficial music scene, *Talfiqi*, and the search for identity

Mohammad Khatami, who was the engineer behind many changes in the cultural field in Iran during Rafsanjani's presidency, became the president of the country by providing a particular discourse that revolved around the idea of dialogue between civilisations and motivated the Iranian youth to vote for him in the 1997 election. Once in power, his presidency led to drastic cultural changes in Iran including a project of cultural thaw that made it easier for those working in the cultural industry to gain permission for the distribution of their work. This was also extended to music whereby pop music, a type of music that was banned throughout the 1980's and most of 1990's began to gain permission from ERSHAD and be distributed publicly. Interestingly, the genre of music that was most despised in the 1980's became the first Western music genre that gained permission during the Khatami period. This is not by accident, since the strategy of the government during Khatami was shifting towards the idea that fighting the outside world is fruitless and the solution is to divert consumption inwards by providing local alternatives to artists from the LA music scene. This resulted in the appearance of many sounds a like singers in early 2000's in Iran.

At the same time, what we saw was the rise of non-official music in Iran due to the difficulty of many artists to gain permission for their works. This resulted in the rise of homegrown bands and musicians who would record in makeshift studios and distribute their music online. As Laudan Nooshin (Nooshin, 2005b) clearly recognises, the term "underground" that was given to these bands by mostly the Western media at the time was a misnomer because contrary to "underground" scenes in Western countries, whereby musicians stay outside of the public sphere so to not become associated with popular music industry, the unofficial music scene in early 2000's in Iran wanted to be recognised and become popular but did not have the means to do so. Moreover, the unofficial musicians sought something that both the Iranian government and the LA industry was not paying

attention to. This being the need for diversification in music. The tactic that the government of Iran used at the time was reactionary to the LA music industry. At the same time, the government still made it more difficult to allow music that were categorised in other Western music categories such as rock. What happened in the early 2000's was that many musicians realised that categorising their music as *Talfigi* instead of rock was a helpful way to gain permission from the ERSHAD. This meant that the problem was not really with the music as much as it was with the way it was named and associated. This is when we see the shift of *Talfigi* towards exploration with rock music with artists such as Barad Band (2003). This period was an exploration by Iranian musicians in understanding what Persian rock is and how it can be approached. This exploration also positioned *Talfigi* in a different category than pop music because the aesthetic aspirations of music coming out of each category was very different.

By the end of Khatami's administration, the non-official music scene in Iran was becoming more and more popular. Moreover, the scene was trying to find its unique sound using different practices of *talfig*. The musician that really marked the post-Khatami era was Mohsen Namjoo. He began his career performing music with different musicians and bands until he began a solo career whereby, he would share his music on social media platforms such as YouTube. What was important in Namjoo's story was the way he looked at *talfig* and the relationship between tradition and modernity. For him, *talfig* was a natural process of mixing different elements of music together. However, when it came to the tradition and modernity debate, his music aesthetic argued for the deconstruction of tradition and its re-assemblage with modernity. Namjoo also applied this idea of deconstructing tradition to Persian traditional vocal techniques. This was the Achilles' heel that got him into trouble with many traditional musicians since they saw him damaging the tradition of performing vocal techniques of *sonati* music. This is important because the voice and techniques of singing in *sonati* music is extremely important in shaping the identity of this music. However, for Namjoo, this was intentional because the purpose was to deconstruct Persian music in order to reconstruct it differently.

While the first generation of musicians who articulated *Talfigi* did so to bring new sounds to the sonic sphere of music in Iran, the musicians that worked in the non-official scene and *Talfigi* scene from late 1990's and especially early 2000's onwards dealt with the question of how to come to

terms with the practice of *talfiq* as an exploratory practice. The answer that influenced many musicians during this time was that of Mohsen Namjoo who argued for fearlessly deconstructing and reconstructing music so to envision new ways of doing music and exploring the sonic identity of the Persian music. Thus, the function of *talfiq* shifted to deconstructing and reconstructing as a practice of identity exploration.

8.1.5 Commercialisation of *Talfiqi*

Namjoo released one album officially before needing to leave Iran. However, his influence persisted in the country and inspired many musicians to find different ways of deconstructing and reconstructing tradition. On the way to this process, *Talfiqi* found itself as a category that slowly began to enter the commercial music market, competing with popular music. Up until Namjoo, *Talfiqi* was a music category used by artists who were trying to enter the official music market with an aesthetic that could not be categorised in the existing music categories of the time. Moreover, the category was not really associated with commercially successful musicians. Following Namjoo, several other bands and musicians in Iran saw *Talfiqi* as a viable alternative to enter the official music market and offer a sonic aesthetic that was distinct from pop music. This is where Iran saw the rise of several commercially successful bands such as Pallett, Bomrani, Damahi, Kamakan, Chaartaar, Daal Band etc. who proposed a music aesthetic that mixed traditional or folkloric with various genres of music that were not explored in Iranian music at the time such as jazz manouche, Serbian brass music, electronic and bluegrass music, to name a few. At this stage, the function of *talfiq* was to deconstruct elements of Persian traditional and pop music and offer an alternative to pop music that could attract its own audience. It is at this stage that we see *Talfiqi* slowly finding its place in the music panorama in Iran. At the same time, the category was taken more seriously as it developed its own local festival, was included in the International Fajr festival, and was included as a music category among music distribution channels such as Beeptunes and Navaak. This commercial success resulted in more musicians and bands be interested in creating music in this category due to the possibility of financial success. Thus, the function of *talfiq* after the Ahmadinejad's presidency shifted towards an instrument of new market creations.

8.2 *Talfiqi* and *talfiq* in the Iranian media

In this section, I will be discussing the results of the research conducted through content analysis of Iranian media about *Talfiqi* music category. This section is divided into three sub sections. The first looks at the definition of the term *Talfiqi* and how this definition is discussed in the Iranian media by different stakeholders. The second section looks at the way the practice of *talfiq* is discussed in the Iranian media. Finally, I look at how *Talfiqi* is perceived as a music scene in the country.

8.2.1 The definition of *Talfiqi* and how it is understood

There are certain themes that re-emerge with regards to the definition of *Talfiqi*. In the following paragraphs, I briefly go through these themes.

First, we explored a discussion on the relationship between *Talfiqi* and fusion music in the way *Talfiqi* music is defined. Some argue that *Talfiqi* is the translation of fusion music and that the term is borrowed from the lineage of jazz-rock movement that began in the 1960's and 1970's in the US. Others point to the idea that *Talfiqi* is closer to what is categorised as world music rather than fusion music as it contains more foreign sound in it (micro-tones, non-western instruments, etc.). Another important discussion in this section is the idea that *Talfiqi* can be understood in the continuity of experiments in music by musicians such as Farhad Mehrdad and Abbas Mehrpouya before the revolution. Here, the narrative is that *Talfiqi* is the continuity of these experimentations, and it restarted after the revolution when limitations with regards to music began to be lifted in the country and Iranian musicians were able to pick up what was left before the revolution. In this narrative, what we see is the idea of continuity and rupture and that while things were paused for over a decade, they restarted the moment the opportunity was available. The last idea here is that *Talfiqi* is a post-revolution Iranian phenomenon, and it is the product of the socio-political lives that musicians in Iran were encountering.

Next, we move from definition to categorisation. Here, the discussion surrounds the ways *Talfiqi* functions as a category and what must happen about such categorization. Some see *Talfiqi* as a practice and not a category. A good example of this is the term “sounding music” in Peter Soleimanipour's conversation about *Talfiqi* when it comes to the amount of information that is

shared when the term *Talfiqi* is used. The same idea is shared by Sadiqi who argues that *Talfiqi* is an approach to composition more than a category. Another group completely rejects the notion of *Talfiqi* by arguing that it is a wrong category. The reasons behind why this terminology is wrong are different. On the one hand, Christoph Rezaei argues that the inherent ambiguity in the term deems it unsuitable for a category. Others, such as Ali Bostan, argue that the music called *Talfiqi* does not reach the level of proper mixing between different music to merit to be called *Talfiqi*. Sasan Fatemi takes this idea further by arguing that the musicians who do *Talfiqi* have no idea of what they are doing and that the term cannot be a genre because it does not have clearly defined boundaries. As I mentioned earlier, what is fascinating about this section is the perception that there is a true recipe for *talfiq* and because *Talfiqi* musicians are not able to achieve this recipe, their music cannot be called *Talfiqi*.

The discussion on categorisation is continued with the idea that *Talfiqi* mis-categorises the music that it includes. Some show their dissatisfaction with how their music is categorised under *Talfiqi* by avoiding the usage of the term for categorising their music. This idea continues to prevail as bands such as Dang Show reject categorisation of their music completely as they see their music uncategorisable. Others have given up on the fight for defining their music as they argue that the categorisation process never comes from the band but from forces outside of the control of the band such as the market, the political institutions, and the audiences. The last point of discussion in this section is the idea that musicians and bands that are categorised under the umbrella of *Talfiqi* do not see eye to eye in their aesthetic. The idea here is that the musicians and bands are not aesthetically similar and yet they are forced to be in one category when they perform at a festival like the *Fajr International Music Festival*.

The last point of discussion with regards to categorisation of *Talfiqi* is the proposition that the term needs to be changed or replaced with other terminologies. Mona Atashi argues that *Talfiqi* does not evoke a sonic imagery the same way genres such as pop or rock may do so. Others argue that *Talfiqi* must come with its sub-categories to distinguish different ways of doing *talfiq*. Here, the argument is that *Talfiqi* might be considered as a broad category that may include many sub-categories. The idea is to find the more common genres that the music uses and introduce the music as such. Others argue that the term must be replaced with another term. Interestingly, the terms

proposed to replace *Talfigi* are all English words. For example, Milad Derakhshani proposes the term *independent* music since he argues that the music categorised as *Talfigi* is done by mostly independent artists. Others such as Ehsan Rasoulof and Ali Eshghi propose the term *alternative* since the groups categorised as *Talfigi* are proposing alternatives to traditional music genres.

An idea that emerges and re-emerges in the discussion on *Talfigi* is the ambiguousness of this terminology. This seems to bother different people for different reasons. On the one hand, one is not sure of what the term actually means, since the definition is so broad that it encompasses diverse forms of music. Moreover, there is no technical understanding of what type of practices *Talfigi* involve. Here, the idea is that one does not know if *Talfigi* is related to fusing of different instruments, different genres, different orchestration forms, or all of the above. There is a constant struggle to understand the technical significance of this practice. This lack of technical definition is the way Hojat Ashrafzadeh answers the question about his opinion about *Talfigi* by saying that he cannot have an opinion due to a lack of scientific definition. Others see *Talfigi* as a box where anything that cannot be categorised is put. For Ramin Sadiqi of Hermes records, this is a practice in music industry when the music is not categorisable in already packaged categories. He makes a parallel to categories such as world music and underground music as other examples of black box categories that the industry uses for music that cannot be fitted in already established genres or categories. All these discussions make one think of how *Talfigi* is being treated as a category. It seems that the ambiguity of the category causes discomfort among different people who give their opinions about the subject (musicians, journalists, scholars, etc.). This causes a discursive ping-pong game between different stakeholders who either completely reject the category, try to distance themselves from it, or try to pass the conversation to some else. Meanwhile, no one has a clear answer, and the term continues to circulate and be used as a way to describe a broad range of musical practices. In the next section, we look *Talfigi* as a practice and the way this practice is discussed in the Iranian media.

8.2.2 The practice of *talfig*

Another theme that can be discussed here is the understanding of *Talfigi* music as a practice. We first look at how many critiques argue that there is a right way of doing *talfig*. We then look at the relationship between innovation and challenging boundaries.

The comments that were analysed in the first section make a central argument: *talfiq* has to be done in a certain way and within certain boundaries in order to be a good kind of *talfiq*. Thus, for these musicians and commentators, the essence in *Talfiqi* music is the practice of innovation and such practice must respect certain rules and contours. Otherwise, the practice is empty of depth and identity. We see this in the comments by Mona Matloub Riahi whereby if *talfiq* is not approached with certain intention in the *Talfiqi* music, that practice tends to lack identity. This idea is approached differently by Shahram Gholami who argues that the best way to reach an output that is coherent is when the musicians are informed about the practices that they are trying to mix. Thus, the argument here is that creativity and *talfiq* have no limits. At the same time, one ought to frame creativity and the practice of *talfiq* in a certain way and with certain reference to knowledge about the borrowed elements in order for the practice of *talfiq* (a type of creative practice) to be one that is good, right, or coherent. The idea of lack of knowledge is sometimes used as a way of looking down on the youth as the population that practice *Talfiqi* poorly. This is an example of judgement coming from the taste of a specific class of society that has developed certain cultural capital alongside social capital in the country. Such groups downplay new forms of cultural practices, since they see them as practices that threaten the tradition of music in Iran. This idea of practicing *talfiq* with proper knowledge is explored further where we see a critique of how *talfiq* in *Talfiqi* music is poorly executed. On the one hand, critiques of *Talfiqi* point to the lack of knowledge of the history of genres or instruments *Talfiqi* musicians are mixing together. In this critique, *Talfiqi* musicians are located as a-historic subjects that do not understand the implications of their practice. Thus, the further argument of knowledge goes to the notion of understanding the past in a profound way in order to produce music that is respectful of that past. However, it critiques *Talfiqi* musicians and their practice by judging them as lacking a proper understanding of historical context and tradition.

We also looked at a discussion on the relationship between the practice of *talfiq* and innovation. Here, the idea of practicing *talfiq* within the context of certain histories, traditions, and boundaries is questioned. For one, we see the idea that, even with knowledge acquisition and understanding of history, innovation comes from experimentations that sometime are not perfect. Another factor discussed is the link between personal inspiration and innovation and how the two are intertwined. Here, personal experience and inspiration open doors to new ways of practicing music. At the same

time, *talfiq* might produce aesthetics that are not familiar to the ears of audiences who listen to a piece of music. Besides the idea of how *talfiq* can introduce unfamiliarity in sonic aesthetic, some try to address the critiques given to *Talfiqi* music as an aesthetic that threatens the traditions and that it tries to mix them together by arguing that rich traditions such as that of *sonati* music will survive any form of *talfiq* and will even thrive in them. This argument addresses the discomfort of musicians with traditional views who have the perception that modifying and mixing tradition will destroy its authenticity. For example, we see how Ramin Sadiqi states that a rich tradition like *sonati* or folk music of Iran will not be destroyed even when they are experimented with. Continuing in this discussion, what we see is different ways of coming to terms with tradition by *Talfiqi* musicians. On the one hand, the comments analysed show how the conservativeness of traditional musicians in holding on to practicing tradition in a specific way is seen as an attitude that is holding back innovation. On the other hand, tradition is seen as a fluid and constantly evolving practice. In this sense, tradition can be experimented with because one must allow it to change with the society that it is existing within.

8.2.3 *Talfiqi* as a music scene

Another broad theme that emerged was how *Talfiqi* is seen as a music scene. This was done by observing a generational tension between musicians who are categorised as *Talfiqi* and an older audience who don't seem to understand what the goals and aspirations of these musicians are. The perception of this generational gap is translated into a very paternalistic attitude towards the unknown and unfamiliar. The category seems to be generating different forms of panics. On the one hand, the unfamiliarity of the aesthetics of music categorised as *Talfiqi* plays a role in judging the music in this category as a part of youth exploration. Thus, the practice of *talfiq* and being categorised as *Talfiqi* is seen as the practice that is done with naiveté. On the other hand, the category is generating a sort of panic and discomfort because of how the music borrows from the past and yet it does not follow the established traditions of how tradition ought to be practiced. This leads to a sense of *Talfiqi* threatening *sonati* music even though it is using bits and pieces of this music in its aesthetic. This threat seems to root in the notion that any form of change in the tradition threatens its longevity and leads it to be forgotten by the next generation. Thus, changing a tradition to make the new generation becoming attracted to it is participating in a gradual change in eliminating the music from the culture. Yet, others think of this category as one that is saving the

Iranian music traditions. The *talfiq* that happens between traditional music and popular music attracts both younger and older generations because it provides the aesthetics that are acceptable for both generations in one package. Here, *Talfiqi* is seen as the savior of tradition as it renders tradition attractive to the younger generation, who are not always attracted to more traditional music like *sonati* music or even older pop music. What all these discourses tell us is the contradictory perceptions of what *Talfiqi* is doing to music in Iran. Some see it as a threat to tradition that is coming out of youth naiveté while others embrace it for the purpose of making traditional music practices more attractive to the next generation by using music aesthetics that the youth are more familiar with.

We also saw the dynamic between local and global. Here, we observe the type of music that *Talfiqi* musicians and bands are influenced by, how they perceive different music movements, and how they perceive themselves in global movements. For one, *Talfiqi* musicians are influenced by a variety of music aesthetics from around that world that is not limited to English language music. More importantly, their goal in their music making is to be able to aesthetically connect to a broad audience so that even if the lyrics are not understood, the music is appreciated. Here, the dynamic between the local and global is the music taking elements from the local and global and mixing it in a way so that it has broad enough of an appeal to be aesthetically understood by cultures from different backgrounds. We can refer to the theory of hybridity by Homi Bhabha (2004) and how mixing of cultures is a practice that helps the development of a hybrid identity. Secondly, the chosen aesthetic by musicians categorised as *Talfiqi* is related to the aesthetic of music produced by Middle Eastern, North African, and Eastern European musicians. Here, the local and global becomes even more complicated because the local-ness in the global-ness of the music is linked to the music aesthetic that gives the feeling of Eastern-ness, even though the music cultures and aesthetics are different from one another. Lastly, by opening their ears to such diverse music aesthetics, the musicians categorised as *Talfiqi* seem to surpass regional political tension and look to musical similarities between their music practices and those of artists such as Avishai Cohen of Israel. All these result in the contribution of *Talfiqi* musicians to a globalised Eastern sound. Lastly, these musicians see their music as having the capacity to be well received outside of their country because of the diversity of music they expose themselves to and the creative ways they integrate what they are exposed to in their music.

Another topic that we explored was the underlying reasons why *Talfiqi* and the practice of *talfiq* become important. The first element here is the usage of *Talfiqi* as a vocabulary to be considered in the official music segment in the country. Here, what we see is that music groups that were not supported in the official music industry found a way into the industry by joining what we discussed as the black box of *Talfiqi*. By doing so, they had a better chance of gaining permission to perform and record as well as having a space to do so in the official music space in the country. We see this clearly as the *Talfiqi* music festival organisers discuss how the category is a way to demystify musicians who are seen as problematic in the country. *Talfiqi* also positioned itself as a type of music that is pop and yet not pop. This distinction is related to how pop music is seen as a different aesthetic to what *Talfiqi* musicians do. Yet, one of *Talfiqi*'s main goals is in line with pop music's goal to gain popularity among a broad audience. What is interesting is that *Talfiqi* is seen as an alternative to pop music; *Talfiqi* musicians regard pop music as monotonous, standardised, and commercialised with the aim of gaining more audience without a consideration to aesthetic quality in music. In other words, because of the financial interest in pop music, the music does not take as many risks, whereas *Talfiqi* is a space whereby creatives' risk in music aesthetic is encouraged. In this sense, *Talfiqi* musicians seem to have a judgmental regard towards pop music and see their practice as somehow culturally superior or more profound in relation to pop music aesthetic in the country.

8.2.4 Miscellaneous

This final section focuses on topics that could not be discussed in other sections of the content analysis chapter. It primarily focuses on the economic concerns of *Talfiqi* musicians. It begins by looking at the idea of longevity and how *Talfiqi* bands survive in the Iranian music market. This seems to be a problem that touches musicians in general in the country. The high turnover in music means that few bands find the aesthetic and appeal that gains long-term popularity. Soleimanipour argues that the lack of attention to longevity comes from the idea of reaching instantaneous fame instead of considering music as a long-term career path. This challenge seems to be linked to the production cycle in the music industry in Iran and how producers approach the industry.

Another theme seen in this section is the importance given to funding musicians and other players in the industry such as the biggest music festival in the country. *Talfiqi* musicians seem to not

appreciate the Fajr music approach of monetising musicians that perform in the festival instead of trying to frame the festival as a place of discovery for the Iranian population. In this sense, the festival piggy backs on the popularity of musicians that perform in it to create more income for itself.

The last idea that was discussed in this section was how the preoccupation with economic viability can direct a band towards shifting their creativity and aesthetic authenticity. What was discussed was the idea of becoming a sell-out of the industry for the purpose of continuing to survive. This is indeed a wide-ranging conundrum that many musicians face. As their popularity grows, pressures to cater to the desires of their audience and facing concerns to economic viability, a sort of Mephisto moment manifests, to where musicians feel that they must sell their soul to the evil of capitalism.

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by analysing the results from chapter 6. It looked at how the function of *talfiq* as a cultural practice of hybridisation (Bhabha, 2004) changed in the modern history of music in Iran and how these changes were linked to the attitude of musicians towards the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. It then looked at the emergence of *Talfiqi* as a music category and how this emergence was influenced by the cultural politics of the country. What it showed was that *Talfiqi* was a category that emerged through discursive formations (Born, 1995; Brackett, 2016) and such formation was the result of musicians wanting to negotiate with the cultural politics in the country indirectly. Here, what we see is how cultural studies (Hall, 1992; Williams, 2001) looks at cultural practice as a site of struggle and in what Fellesz (2011) calls broken middle. The reason why *Talfiqi* was successful in this negotiation was because of existing in an in-between space and encompassing multiplicities of music practices in this space because of its ambiguous nature. This ambiguous nature, thus, played a role in successfully negotiating many music aesthetics that were not permitted by ERSHAD beginning in late 1990's and early 2000s. As a negotiation device, this category can be considered as what Michel de Certeau (1984) calls *tactics* (practice of *talfiq* and construction of the category of *Talfiqi*) in the face of *strategy* (ERSHAD and other bodies that determine legitimate music). The role of *Talfiqi* then shifted from trying to mix tradition, modernity and beyond towards the practice of deconstructing tradition and modernity so to create new sounds

that were not thought possible. With the development of *Talfiqi* as a music scene (Straw, 2001) and the possibility of using this terminology to integrate non-official music into the music panorama of the country, *Talfiqi* was slowly seen as a commercially viable category. This recognition led the category to be recognised in more official institutions and produced commercially successful musicians and bands in the country.

The second section of this chapter looked at the results from the chapter 7 and began by discussing how *Talfiqi* as an ambiguous terminology is understood by different stakeholders in the Iranian media. What was shown was mainly a discomfort with the categorisation because of its ambiguity. Some defined it based on the English translation of the terminology, fusion. Some called for a new terminology that is less ambiguous, while others dismissed the terminology completely and called it wrong. It then looked at how the practice of *talfiq* in the category of *Talfiqi* music is recognised. Here, the ambiguity of the practice dominated the way it was understood. Some thought that the practice of *talfiq* is meaningless because all music is *talfiq*. Others focused on the idea of differentiating good versus bad *talfiq*. Here, what was seen was a clear judgement of taste with regards to what encompasses the right way of doing *talfiq*. Lastly, some looked at the potential of the category as a basin for creativity in music in the country, due to the possibilities created from the freedom of not knowing what it exactly is. The section concluded by looking at how *Talfiqi* is perceived as a music scene. One way that this scene is judged is with regards to how it threatens tradition. By not doing the right way of *talfiq*, the scene is understood as a menace towards tradition. At the same time, the same cultural category and practice is seen as the savior of tradition, as it renders it relevant aesthetically to younger audiences, who do not necessarily enjoy traditional Iranian music. The section continues by exploring how *Talfiqi* is a glocalised practice. Glocalisation looks at how exposure to the flow of music by musicians leads them to create music aesthetics that mix the global and the local within it. The term is understood as “a re-emphasis on local traditions and tastes as a transnational response to the pervasive forces of capitalism” (Hebert & Rykowski, 2018, p. xxiii). Glocalisation critiques the idea of homogenisation of culture that globalisation brings, and looks at nuanced ways hybridisation between the local and global cultural practices produce new cultural practices and aesthetics. In this sense *Talfiqi* is a cultural category results from practices of blurring the global and local lines and the tradition and modernity lines.

What we see in this chapter is a mechanism of distinction that produces judgements. In this distinction, ideas about *Talfigi* are established from its critics as well as those who practice it. The critics of *Talfigi* judge it by means of determining good versus bad *talfig* practices. At the same time, *Talfigi* musicians position the music category as a sort of pop music that is superior to pop music produced in the country. Thus, *Talfigi* is judged in terms of its content and *Talfigi* judges its position in relation to pop music. As it was discussed in the chapter on theoretical framework, Pierre Bourdieu's look at how culture operates brings attention to how the concept of capital can be understood beyond economic capital whereby one can look at social and cultural capitals. These capitals shape the social and cultural position of a person in a society. It also shapes the perceptions, attitudes, and cultural practices that social agents have in each society. These practices become what Bourdieu calls habitus: practices and perceptions that are shaped by different capitals and social state of a person that are practiced unconsciously. Bourdieu looks at habitus as structured structures as well as structuring structures because these practices are rooted in certain structure that dictates how to interact in a society and structures new behaviours in a society. Bourdieu also argues that certain habitus is implanted in an individual as primary habitus from childhood while others are 'transplanted' by being acquired through encountering different social fields.

When we talk about *Talfigi* and the process of judgement that is applied to this category, what we see is that certain statements of judgement are articulated by certain social groups (ex. professional musicians, music critics, etc.). These judgements have then become part of the 'transplanted' habitus in the field of music in Iran. A good example of this is how the works of Hossein Alizadeh or Davood Azad are seen as superior examples of *Talfigi*, the right way of doing *Talfigi* because these musicians are already known and respected in the music field. Having a certain amount of social and cultural capital, their practice is seen as the right way of doing *Talfigi*. Thus, the perception of what separates good versus bad *Talfigi* has become a habitus in the thought process of certain critiques and musicians. These cultural agents see pure experimentation without considering traditions that are mixed as problematic and judge such forms of experimentation as inferior.

At the same time, *Talfigi* as a category judges others by positioning itself as distinct in relation to pop music. Here, pop music is perceived as a music that does not have the body of cultural capital

that *Talfigi* has because the aesthetic of this genre of music is not perceived as complex as that of music produced by *Talfigi* musicians. Thus, *Talfigi* defines itself in large part in relationship to pop music by framing itself as a kind of popular music that is not pop because it is aesthetically different from pop music. Therefore, we see *Talfigi* musicians talk about pop that is not pop. What is interesting is that *Talfigi* does not have the same amount of economic capital that pop music has in Iran, since pop music is more popular and sells more. However, this capital is put in juxtaposition to cultural capital, whereby *Talfigi* sees itself as having a larger portion of this form of capital. This goes back to what Bourdieu (1984) argues about taste. In his conclusion to his book *Distinction*, he begins the chapter in the following way:

“Taste is an acquired disposition to ‘differentiate’ and ‘appreciate’, as Kant says—in other words, to establish and mark differences by a process of distinction which is not (or not necessarily) a distinct knowledge, in Leibniz’s sense, since it ensures recognition (in the ordinary sense) without implying knowledge of the distinctive features which define it” (p. 467)

Differentiating themselves from *Talfigi* musicians, as a group and a music scene in the Iranian society, define themselves by differentiating themselves from pop and assume a posture of aesthetic superiority in this process of distinction. They are not able to really pinpoint an implied knowledge of the distinctive features that define *Talfigi*. Instead, they merely distinguish it in relation to another form of music.

Up until now, I have used the term category to address *Talfigi* music. This was because the answer to the question of whether *Talfigi* can be considered as a genre would depend on the information that emerged from the research conducted for chapter 7. On the one hand, there is no consensus between experts and musicians about whether *Talfigi* is a genre. At the same time, the category is used by ERSHAD and music distributors to broadly categorise the emergence of music that is pop but not pop. This research was not able to conduct any survey of *Talfigi* bands’ audiences to get a sense of what their position is with regards to the categorisation. In 2021, a group of music journalists began an online magazine called *Cadencemag*. The magazine tends to different aspects of emerging music in Iran and includes interviews with popular or emergent artists. The magazine

interviewed the band Pallett and asked them about their relationship to the label *Talfiqi* (Pallet band, 2021) Their response is one that may shed some light to this debate.

The journalist Siamak Gholizadeh begins by saying that the band tries to stay away from the term *Talfiqi* by defining themselves as pop musicians and that they don't like the terminology. Gholizadeh continues by asking why the band labels itself as *Talfiqi* on the website Bleepunes. The singer of the band, Omid Nemati, responds by saying that there is no other categorisation. When Gholizadeh rebuttals by saying that the band could have chosen the pop label, both Nemati and the band's cellist, Mahyar Tahmasebi, say that it is true, but they are not pop either. What follows is a conversation about how the label *Talfiqi* is stabilized and used by audience, ERSHAD, music distributors, and festival organisers alike, arguing that the labeling process was always out of their control. They discuss the struggle for the band because they do not know how this process happens and how they ended up being labeled as such. What this interaction shows is that *Talfiqi* has established certain conventions that makes it recognised as such by different stakeholders in the music panorama in Iran. Moreover, the idea of *Talfiqi* being pop-not-pop is the most recurrent theme that seems to emerge, showing that there is a recognition of a new generation of pop musicians that are clearly different from the pop music genre in Iran. Thus, we can see that *Talfiqi*, as a text, has established the convention of being recognised as pop-not-pop. In doing so, it has stabilised itself in the music panorama in Iran temporarily by being able to be cited and quoted as the music that is pop but not pop. Therefore, at this point in time, we can consider *Talfiqi* as a genre and refer to it as the pop but not pop music of Iran. Interestingly, Candencemag does not use the *Talfiqi* label in its content when addressing different music that are pop but not pop, challenging this stability and proposing new ways of categorisation. Thus, the stability of *Talfiqi* cannot be taken for granted, as the genre may be renamed or replaced with another term in the future.

CHAPTER 9

AMBIGUITY AND TALFIQI

This previous chapter began with the analysis of the discursive evolution of the practice of *talfiq* in the modern history of Iran. Using the concept of hybridity by Homi Bhabha (2004) in conjunction with perspective of looking at music as culture (Born, 1995) and music categorisation as a process of discursive formation (Bracket, 2016), the first section tried to trace the way the practice of *talfiq* in the history of Iranian music evolved, the functions it took, and the way it was articulated as a category of music, *Talfiqi*, at a precise moment in time. In all of this, the ambiguity of the practice of *talfiq* as well as the category of *Talfiqi* allowed the practice and the category to function as a tool for indirect negotiation. We also observed how the practice of *talfiq* and the category of *Talfiqi* have consistently positioned themselves in what Fellesz (2011) called the broken middle. More importantly, we observed that the discursive development of the practice of *talfiq* and the category of *Talfiqi* is directly linked to the tension between tradition and modernity. This tension starts to become less relevant as *Talfiqi* begins to find its place as a commercially viable category of music that also acts as a black box category that cannot be categorised with more established categories of music by ERSAMD. What this tells us is that the new generation is tired of thinking of tradition and modernity as a tension and is trying to come up with different ways of going beyond the dichotomy that has lingered in the modern history of Iran since the late 19th/early 20th century.

In the next section, when analysing the content of the media coverage of *Talfiqi* in Iran, the theme of ambiguity was extremely prominent. For one, the ambiguity in the definition of what is *Talfiqi* and what is included or excluded in the category has created much discussion in the media. Moreover, the ambiguity in terms of how the music categorised as *Talfiqi* must be practiced has created other tension in the discourse surrounding this music category. Lastly, *Talfiqi* as a music scene has found itself in a position of juggling between local and global, an ambiguous position that tries to respect tradition while appealing to a global audience through implementing music practices that are more globally appealing. In other words, *Talfiqi* as a music scene is positioned in

a broken middle between the local and the global and between tradition and modernity. All this tension has results in the development of judgements of taste in the Iranian media with regards to *Talfiqi*. From one side, the category is dismissed by groups who see the in-between-ness of the practice of *talfiq* in this music category as an uninformed practice that is damaging authentic traditions. From another side, *Talfiqi* positions itself by differentiating itself from pop music, a process of judging itself superior to pop.

In this last section, I explore ambiguity theoretically and answer this question: how can ambiguity in the context of *Talfiqi* music be understood? As I showed earlier, the interpretation of what music is acceptable in Islam is extremely ambiguous. This ambiguity has leaked into the way politics is practiced among policy makers, musicians and the audience alike (Fathi, 2008; Gholampour-Ahangar, 2012; Siamdoust, 2017; Youssefzadeh, 2000). In other words, ambiguity is shaping the cultural politics of the music industry in Iran by creating the conditions of mechanising it as a habitus, an unconscious cultural practice.

Such a dynamic has also created the conditions for using ambiguity as a creative force for finding new ways of navigating the boundaries of what is or is not accepted without using direct confrontation, or resistance, as a way to position oneself. This also extends to the idea of going beyond the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity by positioning in the broken middle in order to come up with ways of articulating identity that are not limited to the polar extremes. The way such ambiguity has been articulated is through the usage of hybridity, or *talfiq*, as a tactic. In other words, *talfiq* as tactic of persistence has become the ambiguous way for Iranian artists to respond to the ambiguous cultural politics of the music industry that controls them and the need for resisting the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity. I say persistence, and not resistance, to argue that Iranian musicians are not necessarily working to resist the system since one cannot locate the intention to resist. Instead, they are making room for themselves in the system by articulating new sounds that push the limits of the accepted sonic categories of the country. In other words, the official music in Iran is shaping its own musical identities by way of constant negotiation and expansion of the sonic aesthetic of music.

9.1 Towards a theory of ambiguity

Etymologically, the root of the term is the combination of the prefix *ambi* (meaning both or around) and *agere* (to act) (Caputo, 2005). The term can have a range of meanings that include uncertainty, vagueness, and indefiniteness to name a few. Within epistemology, it is seen as a problem because it is a state of knowing that needs to be dealt with, resolved, or clarified. Donald Levine (1988) critiques the shift towards univocal language in the sciences and the flight from ambiguity by arguing that our conception of knowledge in the western context has been constructed around clarity and clarification and univocality since the 17th century. Even hermeneutics, which is the study of the interpretation of ambiguous text, formulates its way of knowledge production around clarification and univocality. Ambiguity can also be understood from an ontological perspective. For one, it always follows the verb “to be” or its conjugations which situates it as a state of being as much as possibilities of knowing. Hence, we can think of ambiguity as an experienced phenomenon whereby one can be put-in or live in an ambiguous situation. Simone de Beauvoir (1967) situates this ambiguity between the facticity of human being in existence and their consciousness which is where they are most free. While I do not agree with de Beauvoir in her conception of freedom, I do think that she is on point when she looks at ambiguity as an existential phenomenon.

I look at ambiguity in terms of three characters: equivocal, paralysing, and cryptic. Within these characteristics, I evoke the ways such characteristics can be used as tools for different means of negotiation and/or articulation. In doing so, I link this theoretical concept to *Talfiqi* music as a category and the discourse surrounding this category.

9.1.1 Equivocal Character of ambiguity

This characteristic is related to epistemology. The type of knowing that ambiguity gives us is not uni-dimensional but bi-dimensional, and to a certain extent multi-dimensional. Hence, ambiguity rises from possibilities of meaning within a text or a practice. This also means that ambiguity comes with multiple interpretations of knowledge. The term is different from ‘unclear’ since meanings in ambiguity are clear but have no definitive borders. However, ambiguity pushes us to accept the interpretation of more than one meaning. This is what Caputo (2005) calls a shift from Either/Or to Both/And in the understanding of ambiguity. What this means is that instead of dualities that

Either/Or produces in the production of knowledge, we can see ambiguity as a property that encourages us to look at Both/And. This characteristic allows the possibility of multiple interpretations of a text or an event. This is the most common characteristic that is recognised when ambiguity is defined or explored. As a tool, it is used to create flexibility. It is also used as a protectionist tool by hiding one's positions or intentions in a situation that would put a person in danger. In other words, it is an adaptive tool.

The best way to look at this is to consider how Henri Kissinger uses it as a negotiation tool. Kissinger is known to be the first person to use the notion of constructive ambiguity as a way of diplomacy and negotiation since “the conscious use of vagueness and imprecision is directly ascribed to him by Kissinger's admirers and detractors” (Klieman, 1999, p. 29). Kissinger used ambiguity to bring parties into agreement with the knowledge that such agreement can be re-interpreted, changed, and adapted to the circumstances that would benefit each side in the future. Hence, ambiguity, as Klieman (1999) states, is “neither entirely good nor completely bad. Its role is largely circumstantial, and also a matter of proportion” (p. 32). Kissinger was not a fan of taking formal positions regarding a situation since he thought “formal positions are like the shadows in Plato's cave – reflections of transcendent reality almost impossible to encompass in the dry legalisms of a negotiation process” (Kissinger in Klieman, 1999, p.34). The flexibility that comes from usage of ambiguity can also be used as a tool to interact in complex situations without causing offence. Hence, it is an adaptive tool to situations where direct action or language would put a subject in some form of conflict. By taking an ambiguous position in a situation, a subject succeeds in avoiding direct conflict in situations that would threaten the subject.

When we look at the history of the rise of *Talfigi* in Iran in the late 1990's, what we see is the usage of this ambiguous terminology to negotiate without negotiating. The term was used for music that had elements that were illegal at the time (usage of modern instruments, performance of music that was not allowed such as rock music, etc.). What we saw in this thesis was the idea that an ambiguous terminology came to be associated with a music aesthetic that was at the borderline of being legal. By using traditional instruments and musical practices, it was traditional enough to be accepted. Yet, it entered sonic aesthetics that were not allowed by mixing them with those that were allowed. Moreover, by choosing a terminology that was not derived from Western

terminologies for describing music, it was able to negotiate sonic aesthetics without directly confronting the system. Thus, the equivocality of the music as well as the terminology both helped in the negotiation and entrance of new music aesthetics in Iran.

This negotiating without negotiating is also apparent in the way *Talfiqi* negotiated with the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity by first questioning its relevance in the late 1990's and early 2000's and then deconstructing it by 2010's with the rise in popularity of artists such as Mohsen Namjoo. In this way, *Talfiqi* played politics in two ways. The first was with the government of Iran as it tried to enter aesthetics that were not acceptable in music at the time. The second way was to play politics with the music field in Iran by questioning the relevance of the dichotomy that has been so prominent in the country since early 20th century. The equivocal position of *Talfiqi* as aesthetic thus resulted in the opening of the discussion about practices such as genre mixing and music hybridisation. As we saw in the media analysis of *Talfiqi* music, *Talfiqi* was dismissed by many as a non-genre, as a wrong category, and as a wrong name for the category. This has been the direct result of the discomfort that the equivocal nature of the term *Talfiqi* has caused because it does not adhere to predefined notions that are within the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity. This can also be observed as *Talfiqi* can be understood as the “black box” that the music industry creates when it cannot categorise certain music into predetermined categories.

9.1.2 Paralyzing Character of ambiguity

Ambiguity has a paralysing character because it creates temporal and spatial states of limbo. This is because the ambiguity of not knowing what will happen, when will it happen or what comes next creates anticipation and vulnerability in the subject that experiences it. An interesting way of exploring this characteristic is through *The Trial* of Franz Kafka (2011). The novel is the story of Joseph K., a cashier of a bank, who is unexpectedly arrested by unknown men from an unknown agency for an unknown crime. The novel depicts the paralysis and anxiety that K. experiences as he tries to face a bureaucratic system that treats him like a cog in a machine. Kafka's novel is the expression of how the human dignity can be put under scrutiny when a human being is turned into a subject in a complex organizational structure and left in complete ambiguity existentially. It also tells of the anxiety that ambiguity creates when it is applied by a power structure. When imposed from a power structure, ambiguity can be seen as a bureaucratic disciplinary tool that de-humanises

the subjects that it treats. This characteristic can be used as a disciplinary tool by way of de-humanising and intimidating the subjects it treats and re-enforcing power by way of doing and saying nothing. The paralysing character of ambiguity puts one in an uncertain position. In this sense, the character is related directly to existential uncertainty, which is paralysing. As Simone de Beauvoir (de Beauvoir, 1967) would argue, in accepting such reality, one can move forward to realise its potential in different ways. In this sense, the paralysing character of ambiguity becomes an enabler of creativity and innovation since it pushes its subject to find new solutions to deal with the anxiety that it produces.

In Iran, there is ambiguity about who can decide on music in the country. First, there are two official organizations that give permissions to musicians: a) ERSHAD and b) Art Centre at the Organization of Islamic Propagation. While the former is linked to the president, the latter is linked directly to the Supreme Leader. Musicians, at this point, have the option of obtaining permission at one or the other organisation for the distribution of their work (Fathi, 2008). Even if a music is approved by both organizations, the Radio and Television of Iran can refuse to play it in their channels because they have their own jurisdiction in terms of accepting or rejecting music (ibid.). This means that one is not certain as to the location of decision making and a coherence between interpretations of acceptable music. When it comes to gaining permission for performance, this ambiguity is even more complex. This is because while ERSHAD has jurisdiction over giving permission to a live performance, the final decision for the choice of location and place of performance is decided by other organisations (Melakan and Moazen, 2015, p.56). Even at the point of performance, the Basij or other organisations may decide to stop the event in the middle and shut down a performance without any previous notice (Siamdoust, 2017).

The impact of this ambiguity was especially felt among artists who decided to stay in Iran instead of moving to Los Angeles to continue their practice. For example, the singer Farhad Mehrdad was not able to get any permission from the ERSHAD for 14 years even though his music was used in the Iranian media after the revolution in multiple occasions (Dar Al-Shafaiyee, 2012). Similar situations have happened to many bands whose music was rejected with no clear reasons. Moreover, as Siamdoust (2017) argues in her book *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, there are no clear guidelines that are used by organisations that approve music in Iran and the process of knowing what to accept

or reject was “set in a fairly organic, and mostly unwritten way. For example, the Supreme Leader would give a talk to a small circle about some aspect of music, or the Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution would have a meeting (whose minutes are not public) on music” (p.29). This means that even those in the institutions that approve music do not have specific knowledge of the guidelines for approving music. This ambiguity in decision making thus trickles down to the way acceptance or rejection of music is communicated, as this judgement is based on value judgement more than actual evidence. This in turn creates a paralysing effect for musicians since they never know how to adapt their music so that it is accepted by the ERSHAD.

9.1.3 Cryptic character of ambiguity

This character can be understood in relation to Wittgenstein’s notion of language games (Wittgenstein et al., 2010) whereby the understanding of the intention of the articulator is only possible through the acquisition of what Bourdieu calls cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Wittgenstein's (2010) main argument is elaborated in his book *Philosophical Investigations*. The book is a critique of his previous work *Tractus Logico-Philosophicus* that he wrote in collaboration with Bertrand Russel (Wittgenstein, 1994). Wittgenstein begins his book with the idea of meaning as use. By this, he means that the meaning of a word or a phrase is dependent of the way the word or phrase is used. Therefore, meaning is “not some ideal, mathematical system, says Wittgenstein, but the way the word or sentence is used in concrete situations-- meaning is the use” (Marsh, 1975, p. 245). Wittgenstein then goes to construct his idea of language games which looks at language as a tool that is used in different ways based on different contexts. For him, the use of language and the context where it is used provides the basis of how we understand language. Hence, what he calls games are ways contexts and meanings are decoded based on the usage of language in each separate context. Based on this perspective, meaning does not have a hierarchy because it is the context that is more important in decoding which way language is used, and therefore, must be understood. Ambiguity has a cryptic character because it hides the game that one needs to play in order to understand or interpret the meaning of what is said or what is happening. Such characteristic of ambiguity can be used as a tool to create, seduce, and negotiate.

The usage of ambiguity as a creative tool can be turned into a book of itself. The question is not if ambiguity is used as a creative tool, but more importantly why. One way to look at this is to see

ambiguity's role as the tool to communicate without articulating. For one, ambiguity has the capacity to resolve multiple meanings into one element (a sentence, a musical theme, a scene in a film, etc.) (Empson, 1984). Moreover, it can connect several meanings and communicate them simultaneously. This results in the capacity for communicating without unequivocally articulating. This is one of the reasons why arts use ambiguity as a creative tool because by doing so, one is capable to encapsulate very abstract ideas that are difficult to communicate into something comprehensible. Alan Blum (2003) takes this even further by arguing that ambiguity is a social force for creativity. In *Imaginative structure of the city*, he argues that ambiguity is the “locus of collectivization through the very problem-solving it fertilises” (p.18). Hence, while ambiguity may paralyse, it also becomes a force for finding innovative ideas to adapt to the situation and generate new ways of articulation and creation.

One way this characteristic of ambiguity can be observed in this research is with regards to the dynamic that the ambiguous interpretation of music, in terms of what is or is not allowed, has changed constantly in Iran. First, as we saw in the problematic chapter, the religious interpretation of music in Islam is extremely ambiguous and its interpretation is highly subjective and arbitrary. This is because there are no fixed guidelines or agreed-upon criteria for deciding whether a music is permissible or not. Almost all terms used to explain the permissibility of music are in themselves ambiguous and qualitative. While there are clear red lines that cannot be crossed when making music, even these red lines are problematic. Take, for example, the voice of women in music in Iran. Technically speaking, a woman cannot sing as a solo vocalist and must always be accompanied by a male voice or by another female voice. This seems like a simple rule, albeit a sexist one. However, two questions rise 1) what is singing? 2) what is a voice of a woman?

I give two examples to explain why these questions are important. In 2018, Homayoun Shajarian released *Iran-e Man*, a *Talfiqi* album that mixed traditional music of Iran with many other music traditions including Western music that is approved by ERSHAD. At 6 minutes, 15 seconds into the first song titled *Moghadameh Gholab Va Avaz Gholab* (introduction in Qulab and Avaz in Qulab), the soprano singer Delnia Aram performs a roughly two-minute vocal solo in operatic style before the solo is taken and continued by clarinet, repeating the main motifs of the vocal solo before continuing its own improvisation. Here, we hear a woman singing without uttering words. Thus,

when a woman uses her voice as an instrument, the law sees the sound of that voice as a sound produced by an instrument, the vocal cords. However, the moment the woman sings words with those notes, the practice is seen as singing and her practice becomes illegal. In 2019, Damahi band released the album *Dar man boro Shekar*, where they invited the singer Majid Salari to sing on one of the songs called Niyaz on the album. Because Majid Salari is a counter-tenor vocalist, his voice range is similar to a female counter-alto voice type, allowing him to sing in the same range as many female singers. This then means that Damahi is able to release a song that has the tonal quality of a female voice using a male vocalist. It also answers the second question, a woman's voice has nothing to do with the timbral quality of an actual voice and is directly linked to the gender of the singer.

This creative way of using the ambiguous interpretation of the voice of woman to negotiate the female voice in Iran can be observed in many instances in *Talfigi* music. I use two examples to demonstrate this. The 2014 album of Ali Ghamsari, a *Tar* player famous for his unorthodox approach to *sonati* music, is titled *Sokhani nist* (there's nothing say). The album begins with the song *Sher-e bi vajeh* (wordless poetry), a song that is sang by soprano *sonati* vocalist Haleh Seifizadeh whereby she improvises the melody of a song while being supported with counterpoints by other male singers (Ali Ghamsar and Mesbah Ghamsari). The song's aesthetic is telling of the need for wanting to say something and just shouting it without saying it, wordless poetry. Considering the clear discriminatory law against female singers, this song is a clear usage of the cryptic character of ambiguity in sonic aesthetic to communicate the dissatisfaction with a law that has prohibited female vocalists singing in public. Another example of this character of ambiguity can be found in the song *Nimeh-ye Khamoush* (Silent half) by *Talfigi* band Daal Band. Daal band uses similar techniques that Ghamsari used in his song, except they take the argument into the visual realm. Released in 2018, the lyrics to the song written by the band's poet, Ghazal Mahdavi and were released in a music video on social media. The lyrics of the song, along with its name, is already telling of the message of the song:

Wish you would sing to the world, The requiem that's trapped inside your voice

And that the bird whose caged behind your dreams would one day fly, and with it the sound of freedom
would resonate right in front of you.

You are sentenced to a life time of silence, And I am broken from the pain this brings you

You agonize the pain of not having a voice While I am singing with you the silence in your voice

But we will conquer this silent night if we put our hands together again.

Because Persian language does not use pronouns, the ‘you’ in this poem is never clearly addressed. The beauty of not having pronouns is that the argument for who the poem is addressing can be made through different interpretations. This goes back to the equivocal character of ambiguity whereby by purposefully resting ambiguous, it has the opportunity to negotiate its meaning in the future. Moreover, after knowing the rules regarding the solo female singing in Iran, it is easy to decrypt this poetry and to realise the message the song is sending. This means that understanding the context is vital in understanding and decrypting the message that is layered and coded in the poetry.

The song begins with an introduction following the male voice who starts singing the poetry into four microphones that are not connected to any cables. The song then continues with a solo improvisation of a female vocalist who sings in front of the same microphones that are now turned away from her, as showed in the screen shots bellow (illustration 9.1 and illustration 9.2). These are all visual examples of using the cryptic characteristic of ambiguity to reference not only the problem with the law against female voice, but also censorship in music in Iran.



Illustration 9.1: Male singer singing into disconnected microphones pointing towards him

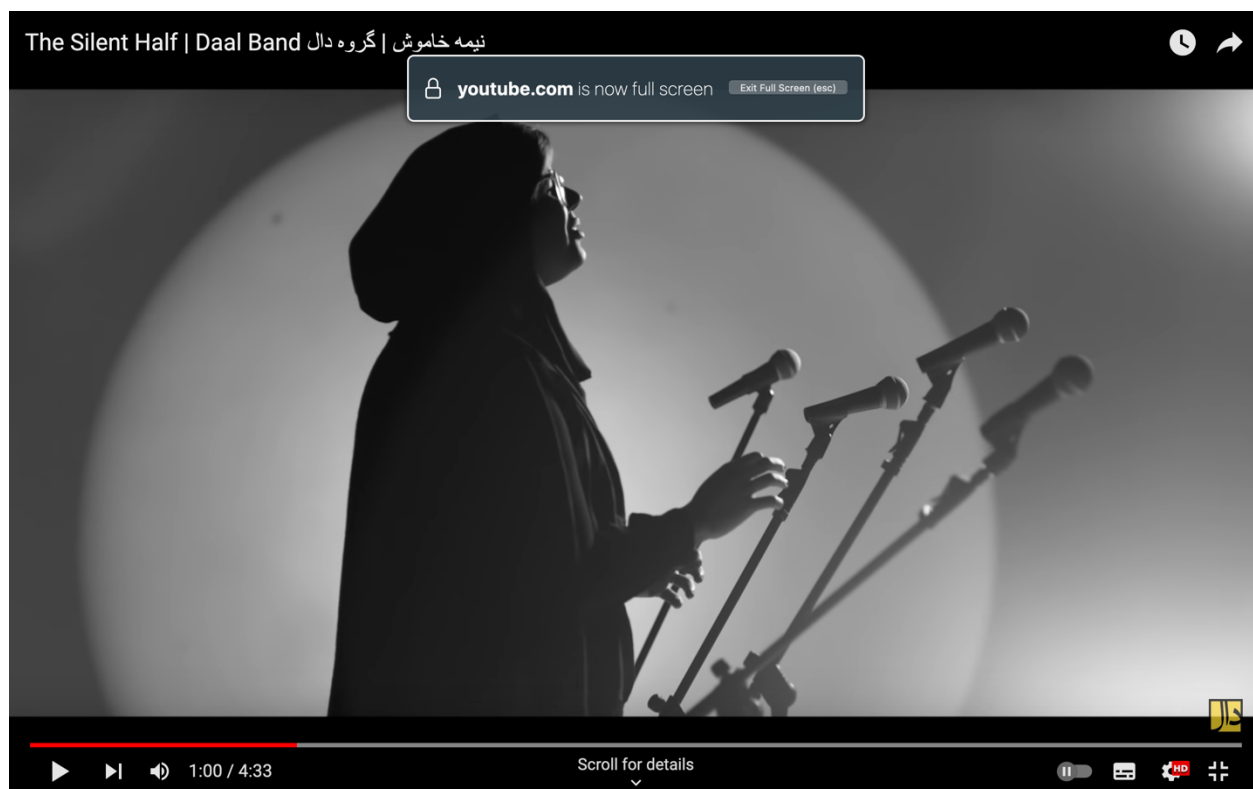


Illustration 9.2: Female singer singing into disconnected microphones pointing away from her

9.1.4 Conclusion

The cultural political dynamics of music in Iran revolves around the habitus of ambiguity as cultural practice. This dynamic creates paralysis in the music industry by creating constant uncertainty regarding the future of the industry as well as the state of the industry in present. It also creates ambiguity in terms of the criteria of the government with regards to accepted music, putting many musicians in the state of limbo for weeks or months before they hear about a rejection without any precise reasoning. At the same time, it also creates spaces for persistence and negotiation. From one side, the government needs to stay relevant and must give something to shift culture and cultural practice inwards. From another side, cultural producers negotiate through ambiguity, be it ambiguous terminologies or creative cryptic practices, to nudge the ball forward one step at a time. The final question that remains to be answered is the following, how does this relate to this thesis?

What I would like to argue is that ambiguity is integrated into the operation of cultural politics in Iran. This politics is not only the policies, or lack thereof, regarding culture but also a tool for

negotiation in the face of restrictions in the country. Moreover, ambiguity's generative capacity as a creative tool turns it into a negotiation tool when musicians and artists do not wish to directly confront power. As I argued in the theoretical framework chapter, music in Iran can be considered as a field. This field includes multiplicities of actors as well as rules, many of which may not be written ones. Ambiguity, and acting ambiguously, is one of these rules, as it guides the behaviours of actors in the music field. Thus, as an ambiguous category (*Talfiqi*) with an ambiguous practice (*talfiq*), they embody the habitus of this field, the practice that is done unconsciously and is part of the way of existing in the field. Moreover, the location of power and negotiation lies in ambiguity and ambiguous behaviour because the *tactic* of using ambiguity and being ambiguous has succeeded in slowly changing attitudes of the power towards music in the country. Ambiguity is also the source of judgement in the field of music because it destabilises the already established habitus and norms that judge good versus bad music, or truly traditional versus not truly traditional music. In this sense, ambiguity is not only negotiating culture with those in power politically but is also doing so with the established class that determine the aesthetic quality of music in the country. Through years, by gaining social and cultural capital, *Talfiqi* has been able to establish itself as a commercially viable category of music and this has in turn created discomfort amongst many in the field of music who see the category as a threat. Thus, ambiguity of *Talfiqi* has also become a point of critique and aesthetic judgement, within the field of music because of its ambiguous position.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to explore the rise of *Talfiqi* as a category of music in Iran and the way the category's inherent ambiguities and practice of *talfiq* negotiated with not only the government of Iran's rigid and ambiguous stance on music but also the music panorama of the country. In this conclusion, I begin by providing a brief description of the way this research was conducted. The chapter follows by addressing the main contributions of this thesis and the limitations of this research. I look at the pertinence of this research in the field of communication studies as well as in the broader fields of Iranian studies, popular music studies in general, and Iranian popular music studies in particular. Following this, I look at music and the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran and how this movement has changed the direction of music in the country. I conclude by providing recommendations about how this research and its theoretical contributions can be expanded and used in future research.

This thesis began by looking at how the history of music in modern Iran is linked to the tension between tradition and modernity. I began by looking at the history of music and its relationship to cultural politics in the country and focused on the Qajar (1789-1925) and Pahlavi (1925-1979) dynasties to contextualise the relationship between culture, politics, and music in modern Iran. I then looked at the relationship between cultural politics and music after the 1979 revolution. Beginning with the almost ban on music after the revolution, I delved into the place of music in Islam and different interpretations of this artistic practice. I also presented organisations responsible for interpreting permitted culture and music in the country since the beginnings of the revolution. With these tools, I gave an overall survey of the changes in the relationship between cultural politics and music in the past 40 odd years in Iran. I showed how attitudes towards music shifted historically by way of interpretation of what sanctioned music ought to be. All these ideas brought with it ambiguities about what music is since 1979. I juxtaposed these changes in relationship to the debates surrounding culture in Iran to show how these debates pin modernity against tradition. The hypothesis that rose out of these explorations was that the practice of *talfiq* as a practice that locates itself in coming into terms with this dichotomy and *Talfiqi* as a music

category that rose at a precise moment in Iran to negotiate with power because of its ambiguous nature and the fact that it renders this dichotomy irrelevant.

I positioned this thesis theoretically within different understandings of how culture operates. From cultural studies (Hall, 1992; Hall et al., 2008; Williams, 2001), I showed the importance of studying everyday culture in locating points of tension and struggle with power in popular culture. From Michel de Certeau (1984), I took the idea of strategies and tactics, constructing the idea of persistence as a set of tactics that use and mix available physical and discursive materials to negotiate for its place with power instead of resisting or defying it. I also formulated the idea that persistence happens through creative ways of using ambiguity. Finally, from Pierre Bourdieu, I took the idea of different forms of capital and habitus to argue that debates surrounding *Talfiqi* revolves around different forms of the judgement of taste. I located *Talfiqi* as a category of music that uses the cultural practice of *talfiq*, a practice of hybridity (Bhabha, 2004) and that functions in what Fellezs (2011) calls the “broken middle.” In the Iranian context, this broken middle is located between tradition and modernity. I also argued, using works from Georgina Born (1995) and David Brackett (2016), that *Talfiqi* music can be understood historically since music and music categorisation rise from different power relations and are discursively formed.

I used two methods for conducting this research. The first looked at the historic formation of *Talfiqi* as a music category. It traced the practice of *talfiq* in modern Iran after the introduction of Western music in the country and looked at how the practice of *talfiq* tried to deal with the tension between tradition and modernity in this history. I then looked at the emergence of *Talfiqi* as a music category that was able to negotiate between tradition and modernity because of its place as an ambiguous category. The second method looked at how *Talfiqi* music was discussed in the Iranian media. It sought to look at the debates surrounding this music category by looking at the content of Iranian print media to understand how this music is labelled and discussed. The software MAXQDA was used to conduct this research as it was deemed best suited for analysing right to left languages such as Persian.

This thesis had several key findings. First, *Talfiqi* emerged as a category of music at a precise moment in Iran through the process of discursive formation. It was able to negotiate with power because it was an ambiguous terminology, used ambiguity in its hybrid practice, and existed in the

broken middle. Moreover, it had the capacity of encompassing multiplicities of music practices because of its ambiguous character and its position in the broken middle. The emergence of this category was a rupture in the continuity of the practice of *talfiq*, a cultural practice of hybridisation that was used by musicians to deal with the contradictions that rose from the dichotomies between tradition and modernity in the country. More importantly, the *Talfiqi* category rendered the dichotomy between tradition and modernity in music irrelevant by deconstructing these labels and creating new aesthetic possibilities. Second, in analysing the content of Iranian media and how *Talfiqi* was discussed, it was revealed that this ambiguity is not always embraced. On the contrary, discomforts with this ambiguity among musicians, scholars, and music critics leads to the judgement of this category. For one, the category is dismissed as not a true genre of music. Moreover, it is seen as a practice that is not rooted in the elements that it tries to mix. From another side, suggestions are given to ameliorate the practice through profound and rich understanding of cultures and music practices that it tries to mix. Thus, a good versus bad way of practicing *Talfiqi* is proposed. In other words, the discourse on good versus bad *talfiq* produces certain standards for the practice and imposes judgement on those who do not follow these standards. As a result, the ambiguity in the terminology and the ways it is judged has resulted in many musicians distancing themselves from the category and choosing other labels for their music. At same time, *Talfiqi* is seen as a category that has emerged to attract new audiences, speak to the new generation, and express new forms of music. These new expressions are part of glocalised (Hebert & Rykowski, 2018) practices of Iranian musicians who are positioning themselves as Iranian musicians who are part of the global music trends. Thus, they are continuing to function in the in-between spaces of tradition and modernity. However, instead of seeing this as a division, they are seeing it as a *Kairos*, an opportune moment, to explore new ways of expressing themselves.

The contribution of this thesis is in the intersection between identity creation and negotiation. First, we argued that *Talfiqi* can be considered as a genre and that it is producing certain Iranian music identities using hybridisation of many musical elements and genres. This identity sees in musical expressions a way to go beyond the tradition versus modernity dichotomy and to embrace the bricolage of culture and cultural practices that are borrowed from different experiences living in a globalised world. Thus, the power of *Talfiqi* is in its capacity to create and innovate new sounds and produce new identities that are Iranian and yet globally recognised. These creative practices

are indeed fluid and their capacity to adapt, change, and negotiate depends on this fluidity. What is also important to note is that the fluidity of *Talfiqi* alongside its ambiguity gives it the capacity to negotiate with power. In other words, in the presence of an autocratic power, negotiating through ambiguity becomes the modus operandi of not only working with the system but also slowly changing its perceptions and attitudes towards newness. Therefore, one cannot position *Talfiqi* musicians and the practice of *talfiq* as one that resists or defies power, but one that persists on its position, mixes it with accepted cultural practices, and negotiates to change what is perceived by power as norm. This is a tactic that includes survival in its practice because it tries to survive and negotiate through a longer period.

This thesis also shows that resistance is not always the right terminology to be used to address the ways culture negotiate. Resistance and defiance have their place in the literature and Iranian music has many examples of them (hip hop and rap culture in Iran is a good example of cultures that resist to the hegemonic power in the country). However, in the case of Iran, the framing of all forms of music that negotiate with power as practices of resistance or defiance is misleading because the ways culture functions in Iran are different. Therefore, I talk about *Talfiqi* as practice of persistence that utilises the ambiguity in its terminology and its practice (*talfiq*) to negotiate with power. In the case of *Talfiqi*, what becomes important is to the way ambiguity is leveraged and persisted upon. This unveils the habitus of *Talfiqi* artists as artists that use ambiguity and persistence to navigate censorship, express new ideas, construct identities, and change norms with regards to what is or is not accepted in music in the country.

This thesis contributes to communication studies, popular music studies, and Iranian studies fields. The theoretical and methodological approaches in this thesis positions it in the field of communication because it adds a new tool for communication scholars to locate cultural negotiation in places where clear articulation of dissatisfaction with power is not possible due to dangers of persecution. This way of understanding cultural negotiation also allows communication scholars to take ambiguity seriously as a tool for cultural negotiation. Also, by conducting a systematic content analysis, this thesis uses a method commonly used in communication studies on a subject matter that has rarely been discussed in the communication field, namely the way popular music is discussed in the Iranian media. This thesis thus contributes by showing the

possibility of using content analysis as a method of analysis of Iranian media to understand how discourse is articulated. The thesis also contributes to the study of popular music by continuing the footsteps of scholars such as David Brackett and Georgina Born, who put an emphasis on looking at music and music categorisation through the lens of discursive formation. By tracing the ways in which the practice of *talfiq* functions in different time periods in Iran and how the category of *Talfiqi* emerges at a particular moment for a particular function, the thesis shows the way this practice and category is formed as a discursive formation. The thesis is also a contribution to the field of popular music studies because it broadens the scope of this field by talking about popular music in the non-Western context. Finally, the thesis contributes to Iranian studies by taking popular culture in Iran seriously and applying the lens of cultural studies to better understand popular culture in Iran. Furthermore, the thesis' contribution in showing how ambiguity can be used by the Iranian government as well as popular musicians can profoundly help the understanding of cultural dynamics in today's Iran.

This thesis had several limitations. Some of these were addressed while others could not be addressed. First, access to raw data was one of the main problems that was faced during the development of this thesis. For one, many of the approaches that are commonly used to conduct research on popular music was not feasible in this research. For example, Iran does not have any music ranking systems. Using websites such as Billboard to understand the state of popular music is a very common way of conducting research in popular music because it allows popular music researchers to get a sense of the place of certain category of music in the music industry. In the case of Iran, this can be circumvented by looking at other measures such as the number of social media followers of a band or the bands that are recurrently covered in the Iranian media. In addition, distribution businesses in Iran such as Beeptunes or Ava-ye Shabahang do not share any statistics with the public, stating that the information is part of the company's trade secrets (Ilina news, 2017). However, these methods have their own limits as they do not provide the same type of information that organisations like Billboard provide. Secondly, because of several reasons, I was not able to travel to Iran or communicate with musicians in Iran to conduct my research. This limited me in my research because I had to cross off several key approaches in conducting my research. For one, I was not able to do any type of audience studies, as I was not able to go to concerts and observe how Iranian audiences interact with *Talfiqi* bands in a live music setting. Moreover, I was not able

to interview bands and *Talfigi* musicians, a limitation that stopped me from interacting with actors in the industry personally. This is partly the reason why content analysis was chosen as a method of research because it allowed me to gather how different musicians and experts talked about *Talfigi* music without physically being in Iran or having to interact with them personally.

Second, while changes that were brought about by technological changes in the country was discussed, the thesis did not cover the topic in a more in-depth manner. The impact of technology on music in Iran is a fascinating topic that I will conduct research on in my future studies. This becomes especially important as the number of home studios began to rise from the beginning of 2000's onward. The accessibility to recording software and quality equipment has given many musicians opportunity to be creative and produce music in a DIY manner. Moreover, access to the Internet and social media has given Iranian musicians to share their music directly to their audience and circumvent the process of gaining permission from ERSHAD. Lastly, Internet has become the platform for musicians to listen and learn about new musical practices and adapting them to their music. Thus, it is a central source of inspiration for many Iranian musicians including *Talfigi* musicians. The removal of this topic from this thesis was because I wanted to focus on the practice of *talfig*, the emergence of *Talfigi* music, and the way this music category is discussed in the music panorama in Iran. Therefore, I purposefully did not focus on technology, as the topic merits its own separate research agenda, a topic in my agenda of future research topics that I will be exploring after I obtain my PhD.

Finally, while the thesis treated the category of *Talfigi*, no analysis of the actual music was conducted from a musicological perspective. In the thesis project that I submitted, this was included as a method of analysis. However, after different considerations, I decided to focus my energy on other areas instead of music analysis. Music analysis would have been a good route to show how *Talfigi* musicians used different ways of treating sound to produce a transnational identity through sound. This analysis would have been interesting to be added to the analysis of visual language of videos that *Talfigi* musicians release online. These are topics that I keep for future research. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I have decided to keep the analysis simply to the content analysis so I can spend more energy in understanding how *Talfigi* is discussed by musicians and experts.

On the 16th of September 2022, Mahsa Jina Amini, a Kurdish woman who was visiting Tehran with his brother, was killed in the custody of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Guidance police, also known as morality police. Her death sparked a widespread protest movement that began in her hometown of Saqqez and quickly spread across the nation, creating one of the largest uprisings in Iran after the 1979 revolution. Music was part of the many artistic practices that was practiced during this uprising. Many musicians and music groups began to produce music that articulated the demands of the movement. Some of these musicians produced music that was defiant of the regime, such as Toomaj Salehi, an Iranian rapper who was later arrested and sentenced to 6 years in prison (Baker, 2023). Moreover, groups such as the Tehran University Art Students created music that was heavily inspired by protest music from 1979 revolution, which heavily borrowed from the aesthetics of the South American revolutionary movements. The group's moto was to gather students together as a choir who used techniques such as stomping their feet or clapping as they sang songs written for the woman, life, freedom movement. Moreover, the videos that this group published hid the identity of the members who participated in the choir.

However, of all the music that was created during this time, the one that garnered the most attention was Shervin Hajipour's *Baraye* (translated to "for" or "because of" in English). In the song, Hajipour compiles the tweets that Iranians from across the world wrote with the hashtag #*Baraye* to create the lyrics of the song. The lyric of the song, thus, is not Hajipour's creation itself. It is a compilation of what was written and what was accessible online. In it, the song does not directly critique the authorities in any way, instead, it tells a narrative by not telling the narrative directly and having the audience guess the narrative. Thus, through the process of curation and bricolage (Hebdige, 1979), Hajipour communicates the concerns of everyday Iranians who expressed themselves on Twitter through the hashtag *Baraye*. In other words, Hajipour uses the power of ambiguity to create a song that captures the imagination of not only Iranians but also people from around the world. We can see the usage of ambiguity as a technique of self-expression that communicates the grievances of Iranians. However, ambiguity is no longer a negotiation tool. This is because the woman, life, freedom movement shifted the culture towards imagining and developing new resistance practices. Thus, what I argued in this thesis was applicable when many musicians had the hope that by creating new and alternative practices, they can slowly shift the attitude of the government towards changing its ideas about certain music practices. What the

woman, life, freedom movement did was to bring all the dissatisfactions that have been built up in the Iranian society for the past forty odd years to the foreground and give courage to talk about them in public. This means that the practice of *talfiq* and its function will be shifting, and to an extent has already shifted in Iran.

This thesis has opened many avenues of research. *Talfiqi* music as cultural practice has opened spaces within the Iranian music panorama by going beyond the idea of pinning tradition against modernity. One way it has done so has been through its aesthetic dimension. This thesis has not gone into details of this aesthetic dimension, and this can be an avenue for further research. Two specific cases can be discussed in this avenue. First, one can look at how *Talfiqi* pushes the boundaries of what is accepted in terms of the woman's voice in Iranian music. As it was mentioned previously, singing in Iran means two things 1) Singing word 2) Vocalizing melodies. Women cannot sing words by themselves in a music because they must be either accompanied by other women as a choir or by at least another man. However, there is no limitation for a woman vocalizing melodies (humming melodies). In other words, women can hum in music as solo instruments because their voice is an instrument and not a device for producing words. So, choir harmonization techniques are used heavily in *Talfiqi* music to make women's voices heard. Moreover, a man who sings in the same range as a woman is allowed to sing solo. All these nuances in what singing, and voice means gives ample material for Iranian *Talfiqi* musicians to problematise the ban on solo female singing. This is an example of how *Talfiqi* changes cultural norms developed by the rules established by the Iranian regimes through persisting on the idea that women's solo singing voice must be included in music in Iran. This is an important avenue that can be explored in future research. Another way this thesis can be expanded is by looking at how *Talfiqi* has opened spaces and ways for musicians from minority groups to share their music and cultures using the practice *talfiq*. For instance, musicians from the minority groups from south of Iran began to use different musical techniques to re-introduce the music of the south by hybridising it with jazz and flamenco music. Another key element in this form of hybridisation is the fact that these musicians returned to the works of musicians from before the revolution to revive their music by evoking nostalgic memories of the past. This in turn has allowed these musicians to introduce a new narrative about the music of the south of Iran. This is another example of how further research can emerge.

In conclusion, music in Iran today is changing rapidly and the practice of *talfiq* is at the center of this change. The practice is no longer trying to come into terms with tradition versus modernity dichotomies and this is the result of change in the society's attitude towards this dichotomy. Instead, it is shifting towards embracing tradition and modernity while adding complexities to it by experimenting with music and musical expressions. *Talfiqi* is a category that has helped Iranian musicians to negotiate with the Iranian government aesthetically and developing new approaches to music that is glocal. *Talfiqi* has given space to Iranian musicians to reconnect with their past, find their place in a globalised world musically, and imagine new musical identities for themselves. This has not been easy as visions about what proper *talfiq* ought to be tells us that tradition is still lingering and trying to influence the practices of *Talfiqi* musicians. What is important, however, is that the practice of *talfiq* is continuing and it is reshaping the way Iranian musicians approach music. This music category has settled itself as a genre by establishing itself as a reference for music that is pop but not pop. What I would like to see is how the practice of *talfiq* is influenced by the woman, life, freedom movement and what new forms of *talfiq* will emerge out of this movement in the form of music. The fact of the matter is that the grievances that were heating for years boiled over with this movement and this has shaped how musicians see themselves in the context of this movement. Music came out of this movement and more music will come to express the grievances that the woman, life, freedom movement articulated. My prediction is that the next lieu of struggle is the right for women to sing freely in public. The Iranian regime has tried very hard to silence women for the past 40 odd years and Iranians have had it with this sexist rule. It is not the matter of if but when and I look forward to seeing the day when that becomes a reality.

ANNEXE A
CORPUS FOR CHAPTER 6

Attar, A. (2011). Naqmechaye No: Didar ba Hossein Dehlavi [New Songs: Meeting with Hosseing Dehlavi] BBC. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpEk4hboT60>

Balafkan, F. (2018) Juyandegan Shadi [Happiness Seekers] YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-sQ7IQnNKY&t=2486s>

Breiley, G. J. (2016), and Sasan Fatemi. Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment from Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond. Routledge.

Breiley, G. (2010). “Hope, Fear and Dance Dance Dance: Popular Music in 1960s Iran.” *Musicology Australia*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 203–26. Crossref, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08145857.2010.518354>.

Fatemi, S. (2000) . “«Le Chanteur silencieux. Un aperçu de la vie musicale en Iran».” *CEMOTI*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 321–33. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3406/cemot.2000.1535>.

Nooshin, L. (2015). *Iranian Classical Music: The Discourses and Practice of Creativity*. Ashgate, 2015.

Nooshin, L. (2016) “Jazz and Its Social Meanings in Iran: From Cultural Colonialism to the Universal.” *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz*, edited by Philip Vilas Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 125–49.

Nooshin, L. (2005) “Subversion and Countersubversion: Power, Control and Meaning in the New Iranian Pop Music.” *Music, Power, and Politics*, edited by Annie Janeiro Randall, Routledge, pp. 231–72.

Nooshin, L. (2017) "Whose Liberation? Iranian Popular Music and the Fetishization of Resistance." *Popular Communication*, vol. 15, no. 3, July 2017, pp. 163–91. Crossref, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2017.1328601>.

Saffarian, N. (2015). *Shab-e sheydayi* [Sheida Nights]. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5544924/>.

Siamdoust, N. (2019) "A Revolution of Culture." *IPPR Progressive Review*, vol. 26, no. 2, Sept. pp. 196–203. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1111/newe.12163>.

Siamdoust, N. (2017). *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran*. Stanford University Press.

ANNEXE B
CORPUS FOR CHAPTER 7

- Afroomand, K. (2014). Goftegū bā gorūh-e Bomrani: Hameh bā ham familin digeh? [Conversation with Bomrani: You are all family, right?]. *Etemad*, 10.
- Afshin, T. (2018). Be bahaneh enteshār-e album-e تازه-e “dang show” “shiraz az chehel sāleh” ye 10 sāleh [Using the excuse of the publication of new “Dang Show” album, the 10 year old “Shiraz forty years.”] *Etemad*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3851669>
- Alaayee, B. (2007). Goftegu ba ramin behnā darbareh-ye masiqi-e talfiqi: Hameh dar jāyee motevaqef shodand [in conversation with Ramin Benha regarding Talfiqi music: Everyone is stuck]. *Etemad*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/1501783>
- Alaayee, B. (2008). Goftegu ba Ali Ghamsari ahangsaz va namavazandeh- Bakhsh aval - [Conversation with Ali Ghamsari, singer and performer- First section] *Etemad*, 2.
- Alaayee, B. (2010). Moosiqi Iran baya dba musiqi Jahan motevasel shavad. [Music in Iran has to get connected to the music in the world]. *Shargh*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/2158772>
- Atashi, M. (2017). Cherā gorūh-hāye talfiqi az onvān-e talfiq gorizārand [Why Do Talfiqi Music Groups Run Away from the term Talfiqi?]. *Honaronline*. <http://www.honaronline.ir/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-5/109844-%DA%86%D8%B1%D8%A7-%DA%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%DA%AF%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF>
- Ātashi, M. (2019). Jaraqeh-ye mūsīqi-ye talfiqi dar irān chegūneh zاده shod? [What sparked Talfiqi music in?]. *Honaronline*. <http://www.honaronline.ir/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-5/135306-%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%DA%86%DA%AF%D9%88%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%B2%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%B4%D8%AF>

Bā Mā Television. (2020). Namāshā.

https://www.namasha.com/v/6pxakQ75/%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%BE%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%A7_%D8%8C_%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82_%D8%BA%D9%88%DB%8C_%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%A8%D8%A7_%D9%88_%D8%A8%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%B1_%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C_%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%D8%B%8C_%D8%AF%D8%B1_%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86

Bagheri, S. (2017). Honar-e ālternātive dochar-e bohran-e resāneh ast [alternative art is in crisis of media] Honar online. *Honaronline*.

Bahari, A., & Gholizadeh, S. (2016). nostalgie yani hale emrūz-e mā emrūz khūb nist ¬[Nostalgia means that we are not feeling good today]. Etemad. *Etemad*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3392258>

Bahari, A., & Mizabadi, N. (2015). *Moosiqi be bombast reside* [Music has reached a dead-end]. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3088975>

Bahrami-rad, P. (2014). Negāhi be sabk-hāye mūsīqi [a look at music genres]. *Etemad News*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3048434>

Barabadi, S. (2013). Chand nokteh darbareye musiqi ye goroooh-e darkoob: Talfiq ya musiqi ye bazgasht. *Shargh*, 2.

Dangshow. (2015). Mardom az mūsīqi-ye tekrari khasteh shodeh-and [people are tire of repetitive music]. *Iran*, 23.

Emam-Jomeh, F. (2019). Jame-Shenasi-ye masraf farhangi-ye musiqi dar kalan-e shahr-e Tehran [Sociology of music consumption in the greater Thran city] *Urban Sociological Studies*, 31. <https://www.magiran.com/paper/2052859>

Entezari, K. (2016). Musiqi-ye talfiqi dar ebhām: Gorūh-hāye bakhsh-e talfiqi dar jashnvāreh-ye fajr bā ham rabti nadārand [Talfiqi in ambiguity: Talfiqi bands in the Fajr festival have no similarities to one another]. *Jam-e-Jam*, 2.

Eshghi, A. (2016). Shāyad nataavānim hameh rā rāzi konim [we may not be able to satisfy everyone]. *Etemad*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3361892>

- Etemad. (2014). Zir zamini-hā rā rū-ye zamin beshenavim [Lets listen to those from the underground over ground]. *Etemad*, 8.
- Ghazi-Zadeh, N. (2017). Bomrani barayeman yek kargah ask [Bomrani is a workshop for us]. *Shargh*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3559594>
- Ghazi-Zadeh, S. (2016). Khalāf-e jaryān-e nāomidi dar harekatim [we are moving along with the current of hopelessness]. *Shargh*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3492438>
- Gholizadeh, S. (2015). می گوش چارتار چرا کنم؟ نمی گوش چارتار چرا. Chaartaar goosh nemikonam? Chera chartar goosh mikonand [*Etemad*, 10.
- Gholizadeh, S. (2017). Moteaser az fazāye jāme-eh hastim [we are influenced by the society]. *Etemad*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3694133>
- Gholizadeh, S. (2018). Jalbot az bandar abās tā Tehran [Jalbot, from Bandar Abbas to Tehran]. *Etemad*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3691661>
- Gholizadeh, S., & Khalilian, M. (2017). . 9, 56.
- Honaronline. (2018). Cherā gorūh-hāye muisiqi az onvān-e talfiqi gorizārand? [Why do music bands run away from Talfiqi?]. *Tabyaan*. <https://article.tebyan.net/389245/%DA%86%D8%B1%D8%A7-%DA>
- Iran's sociology institute. (2015). Jameh-Shenasi- ye Moosiqi-ye Talfiqi [Sociology of Fusion music] [Colloquium]. Iran's Sociology Institute. <http://www.isa.org.ir/%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4-%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D9%87%D8%A7/373-%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4-%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B3%D8%AA-%DA%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87%E2%80%8C%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%87%D9%86%D8%B1/1308-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87%E2%80%8C-%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C>
- Jam-e-jam. (2015b). موسیقي تلفیقي گوي سبقت را از پاپ ربود. Moosiqi-ye Talfiqi gooye-sabk raa az pap robood [Talfiqi music stole from the popularity of pop music] *Jam-e-Jam*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3101144>

- Kheshti, A. (2016). Musiqi-ye Talfiqi va harf-haye nagofteh : goftegoo ba alireza kheshti, ahangsaz va seda bardar [Talfiqi music and unsaid words : conversation with Alireza Eshqi, composer and sound engineer] *Music report monthly*, 10. <https://www.magiran.com/paper/1648164>
- Khoshnām, E., & Ahadi, S. (2012). Yaadi az mehrpooya, sedayee az ghabilehe andooh [In memory of Mehrpouya, Voice of the tribe of sadness]. *DW News*. <https://www.dw.com/fa-ir/%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%BE%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%82%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%87/a-16012504>
- Maleki, H. (2019). Musiqi talfiqi; rāh-e nejāt-e mūsīqi sonati [Talfiqi music: The way for sonati music to survive]. *IRNA News*. <https://www.irna.ir/news/83256551/سنتی-موسیقی-نجات-راه-تلفیقی-موسیقی>
- Mortezayee-Fard, Z. (2015). Shabhā-ye talfiqi dar tehrān [Talfiqi nights in Tehran]. *Jam-e-Jam*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3091656>
- Naeimi, A. (n.d.). صمت روزنامه موسیقی بازار فتح برای پاپ و سنتی تلفیق. *Samt News*. Retrieved October 1, 2021, from <https://www.smtnews.ir/art-culture/37069-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82-%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D9%88-%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%BE-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%AD-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C.html>
- Namjoo, R. (2015a). Goftegū bā gorūh-e dangshow, Chaartaar, pallet [In conversation with Dang Show, Chaartaar, and Pallet]., 75, 12. <https://www.magiran.com/paper/1422975>
- Naseri, S. (2015). Musiqi talfiqi: Injā hamechi dar hameh [Talfiqi music: It is a mess over here]. *Hamshahri Javan*. <https://www.bartarinha.ir/fa/news/214247/-موسیقی-تلفیقی-یا-اینجا-همه-چی-در-همه>
- Nasihetgar, S. (Director). (2021). Irān dar toolid-e mūsīqi-ye talfiqi movafaq nist [Iran is not successful in producing Talfiqi music]. In *Arghavan*. Radio goftegoo. <http://radiogoftogoo.ir/newsdetails/?m=175129&n=861103>

Nāzemzadeh, A. H. (2014). Sabki be nām-eh talfiqi vojūd nadārad [A genre by the name of Talfiqi does not exist]. *Ilina news*. <https://www.ilina.news/سبکی-تجسمی-هنرهای-موسیقی-بخش-ندارد-دو-وجود-تلفیقی-موسیقی-نام-به>

Music Report Monthly, 10(84), 4.

Rasoulof, E. (2017). *Honar-e ālternātive dochar-e bohran-e resāneh ast/ tahi-ye konandegi dar teātre va mūsīqi jāigāh-e moshakhasi nadārad* [Alternative art is facing a media crisis/ producing in theatre and music does not have a clear place] [Online journal]. <http://www.honaronline.ir/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%B3%D9%85%DB%8C-4/111124-%D9%87%D9%86%D8%B1-%D8%A2%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%88-%D8%AF%DA%86%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%87-%DA%A9%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF%DA%AF%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%A6%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%A7%DB%8C%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%AE%D8%B5%DB%8C-%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AA-%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%86%D8%AE%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AA%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86>

Rezaei, C. (2015). Gerāyesh-e man be mūsīqi-e talfiqi “dūstāneh” ast [My approach to Talfiqi music is friendly]. *ISNA*. <https://www.isna.ir/print/94070805414/%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>

Saaebi, M. (2013). Azā-ye gorūh-e mūsīqi-ye chārtār dar goftegū bā Shargh: Talfiqi dar mūsīqi ejtenāb nāpazir ast [Members of Chaartaar in an interview with Shargh: Talfiq in music is inevitable]. *Shargh*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/2861159>

- Salehi, A. (2012). است شده ای گلخانه ایران موسیقی. Musiqi-ye Iran golkhaneh-yee shodeh [Iranian music has turned into a green house production] *Jam-e-Jam*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/2471204>
- Samim, R. (2012). A Sociological Analysis of the Space of Popular Music Production in Iran. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3, 10.
- Shargh. (2016). Zir-e āseman-e firūzeh-yee [under the turquoise sky]. *Shargh*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3354690>
- Sinjaani, N. (2015a). Shab-e derakhshesh e mūsiqi-ye talfiqi [the luminous night of Talfiqi music]. *Iran*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3316569>
- Sinjaani, N. (2015b). Zāeqeh-ye mardom avaz shodeh ast [People's taste has chaged]. *Iran*. <https://www.magiran.com/article/3165162>
- Soofi, F. (2018). Parcham dārān-e do dahe-ye musiqi dar Iran [the flagbearers of Talfiqi music in Iran]. *Musique-e-Maa*. <https://www.musicema.com/node/339172>
- Soofi, F. (2019). Bakhsh-e talfiqi chandān dar jashnvāreh talfiq nashod [Talfiqi section in the festival did not really talfiq with it]. *Musique-e-Maa*. <https://www.musicema.com/node/374146>

REFERENCES

- Abrahamian, E. (2008). *A History of Modern Iran*. Cambridge University Press.
<http://public.ebib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=352961>
- Aghamohseni, K. (2014). Modernization of Iranian music during the reign of Reza Sah. In B. Devos & C. Werner (Eds.), *Culture and cultural politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi state, new bourgeoisie and the creation of a modern society in Iran*.
http://www.123library.org/book_details/?id=103909
- Aghamohseni, K. (2022). Applied ethnomusicology in Iran: A framework for solving cultural and social problems through music. *Journal of Iranian Cultural Research*, 14(4), 101–129.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.22035/jicr.2022.2935.3284>
- Āl Ahmad. (1983). *Occidentosis: A plague from the West* (H. Algar, Ed.; R. Campbell, Trans.). Mizan Press.
- Alikhah. (2008). The politics of satellite television in Iran. In M. Semati (Ed.), *Media, culture and society in Iran: Living with globalization and the Islamic state* (pp. 94–110). Routledge.
- Amanat, A. (2017). *Iran: A modern history*. Yale University Press.
- Amin, C. M. (2015). The Press and Public Diplomacy in Iran, 1820–1940. *Iranian Studies*, 48(2), 269–287.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2013.871145>
- Amoozegar-Fassie, F. (2010). *The Intimate Correlation between Prosody and Persian Classical Music*. University of British Columbia.
- Ansari, A. M. (2007). *Modern Iran: The Pahlavis and after*. Longman.
- Asadi, H., Safvat, D., & Tavousi, M. (2007). Historical Background of the Dastgāh Concept in Persian Musical Manuscripts. *The Journal of Humanities of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 14(3).
- Asaran, H. (2017). *Varoojan* (2nd ed.). Roshideh.

Asimaki, A. (2014). Habitus: An Attempt at a Thorough Analysis of a Controversial Concept in Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice. *Social Sciences*, 3(4), 121.

<https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ss.20140304.13>

Atashi, M. (2017). Cherā gorūh-hāye talfiqi az onvān-e talfiq gorizārand [Why Do Talfiqi Music Groups Run Away from the term Talfiqi?]. *Honaronline*.

<http://www.honaronline.ir/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-5/109844-%DA%86%D8%B1%D8%A7-%DA%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%DA%AF%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF>

Atwood, B. R. (2021). *Underground: The secret life of videocassettes in Iran*. The MIT Press.

Avizheh. (2019). *Avizheh* [CD]. Moaseseh-Farhani-Moosiqi-Arghnoon.

Bā Mā Television. (2020). Namāshā.

https://www.namasha.com/v/6pxakQ75/%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%BE%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%A7_%D8%8C_%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82_%D8%BA%D9%88%DB%8C_%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%A8%D8%A7_%D9%88_%D8%A8%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%B1_%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C_%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C_%D8%AF%D8%B1_%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86

Bagheri, G. (2018). *Millenial Iran: Political Disenchantment, Post-Network Society and Commodity Culture*. The University of Texas at Austin.

Bagheri, S. (2017). Honar-e ālternātive dochar-e bohran-e resāneh ast [alternative art is in crisis of media] Honar online. *Honaronline*.

- Baker, G. (2023, July 10). *Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi jailed over anti-government protests*.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-66155991>
- Balafkan, F. (Director). (2018). *Jooyandegan-e Shadi*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-sQ7lQnNKY&t=2486s>
- Barad Band. (2003). *Barad*. Hermes records.
- Bastaninezhad, A. (2014). A historical overview of Iranian music pedagogy (1905-2014). *Australian Society for Music Education*, 2, 5–22.
- Bayat, A. (2013). *Life as politics: How ordinary people change the Middle East* (Second edition). Stanford University Press.
- Berger, A. (2014). *Media and Communication Research Methods* (third). San Francisco State University.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Bihnām, J. (1973). *Cultural policy in Iran*. Unesco.
- Blum, A. (2003). *The imaginative structure of the city*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Born, G. (1995). Understanding Music as Culture: Contributions from Popular Music Studies to a Social Semiotics of Music. In R. Pozzi (Ed.), *Tendenze e metodi nella ricerca musicologica: Atti del Convegno internazionale: Latina, 27-29 settembre 1990* (pp. 211–228). L.S. Olschki.
- Born, G. (2011). Music and the materialization of identities. *Journal of Material Culture*, 16(4), 376–388.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183511424196>
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812507>
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (8th ed.). Harvard Univ. Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2008). *The logic of practice* (Reprinted). Stanford Univ. Press.
- Brackett, D. (2016). *Categorizing sound: Genre and twentieth-century popular music*. University of California Press.

- Breyley, G. J., & Fatemi, S. (2015). *Iranian music and popular entertainment from Motrebi to Losanjelesi and beyond*. Routledge.
- Caputo, J. (2005). In praise of ambiguity. In C. J. N. De Paulo, P. A. Messina, & M. Stier (Eds.), *Ambiguity in the Western mind* (pp. 15–34). Lang.
- Carr, E. H. (1998). *What is history?: The George Macaulay Trevelyan lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge January-March 1969*. Vintage.
- Chehabi, H. (1999). From Revolutionary Taṣnīf to Patriotic Surūd: Music and Nation-Building in Pre-World War II Iran. *Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, 13.
- Dabashi, H. (2008). *Iran: A people interrupted*. The New Press.
- Daemi Milani, F., Asadi, H., & Moghbeli, A. (2021). An analysis and transcription of a song-text notated in a fusion notation method (Abjad-metric) by Mehdi-Gholi Hedāyat (Mokhber-al Saltaneh), considering the suggested intervals of Montazam-al Hokamā'. *Fine arts publication- music and performance arts*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.22059/jfadram.2021.305797.615447>
- Dang Show. (2010). *Shiraz 40 Year Old*. Raha Records.
- Dar Al-Shafaiyee, B. (Director). (2012). *Jome-haaye Farhad (The fridays of Farhad)* [Documentary]. BBC Persian. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2BiYXj5hZY&t=1583s>
- Darkoob band. (2009). *Darkoob*. Iran Gaam.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1967). *Ethics of Ambiguity* (Third). Citedal Press.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S. Rendall, Trans.; Nachdr.). Univ. of California Press.
- Derakhshani, P. (2005). *Rumi 1*. Moaseseh-Farhani-Moosiqi-Arghnoon.
- Empson, W. (1984). *Seven types of ambiguity* ([3. ed.], 14. print). New Directions Publ.
- Eqtesad Bartar. (2017). *Hāl-e khoob-e musiqi-e talfiqi [The state of Talfiqi music is good]*. <https://www.eghtesadbartar.com/حال-خوب-موسیقی-تلفیقی-ایران/>

ERSHAD. (n.d.). *osool-e siasiat-e farhangi va ahamiat-e aan/vezarat-e farhang van ershad eslami* .

Retrieved August 24, 2018, from

<https://pcci.farhang.gov.ir/fa/magazin/faslname/faslname2/siyasat>

Esposito, J. L. (2004). *The Oxford dictionary of Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Fabbri, F. (1981). A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications. *Popular Music Perspectives*, 52–81.

Farhat, H. (1990). *The dastgāh concept in Persian music*. Cambridge University Press.

Farhat, H. (2004). *The dastgāh concept in Persian music* (First paperback edition). Cambridge University Press.

Farokheddin, F. (2016). 160(19), مجله هنر موسیقی ایران. بررسی روند تلفیق در موسیقی معاصر ایران.

<http://honaremusighi.com/downloads/%d8%a8%d8%b1%d8%b1%d8%b3%db%8c-%d8%b1%d9%88%d9%86%d8%af-%d8%aa%d9%84%d9%81%db%8c%d9%82-%d8%af%d8%b1-%d9%85%d9%88%d8%b3%db%8c%d9%82%db%8c-%d9%85%d8%b9%d8%a7%d8%b5%d8%b1-%d8%a7%db%8c%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%86/>

Fathi, B. (2008). *The Situation of art in Iran (3): Analysis of the situation of music (goals and policies 1370-1385)* (Cultural Policy 9173; pp. 1–34). Ministry of Education; Islamic Parliament Research Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran. <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/733344>

Fellezs, K. (2011). *Birds of fire: Jazz, rock, funk, and the creation of fusion*. Duke University Press.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (2nd Vintage Books ed). Vintage Books.

Freitag, M. (2010). L'avenir de la société: Globalisation ou mondialisation?. L'enjeu d'une théorie sociale unificatrice: sociologie critique ou théorisation systémique positive?(Texte présenté par Daniel Dagenais). *SociologieS*. <http://sociologies.revues.org/3379>

Ghani, H. A. (2011). 'Urf-o-Ādah (Custom and Usage) as a Source of Islamic law. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 1(2).

- Gholampour-Ahangar, E. (2012). *Ashnayee-e Ejmaali baa Siyasatgozari dar hoze-ye honar* (Cultural Policy 12411; pp. 1–52). Ministry of Education; Islamic Parliament Research Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran. <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/report/show/816742>
- Golkar, S. (2011). Politics of Piety: The *Basij* and Moral Control of Iranian Society. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 2(2), 207–219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2011.619257>
- Hall, S. (1992). Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural Studies* (pp. 227–294). Routledge.
<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furr/pursuits/hallcultstuds.html>
- Hall, S., & Cervulle, M. (2008). *Identités et cultures*.
- Hall, S., Cervulle, M., & Jaquet, C. (2008). *Identités et cultures: Politiques des cultural studies* (Nouvelle éd. augmentée). Éd. Amsterdam.
- Harris, K. (2017). *A social revolution: Politics and the welfare state in Iran*. University of California Press.
- Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture, the meaning of style*. Methuen.
- Hebert, D. G., & Rykowski, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Music Glocalization: Heritage and Innovation in a Digital Age*.
- Hemasi, F. (2011). Iranian Popular Music in Los Angeles: A transnational public beyond the Islamic state. In K. van Nieuwkerk (Ed.), *Muslim rap, halal soaps, and revolutionary theater: Artistic developments in the Muslim world* (first edition, pp. 85–107). University of Texas Press.
- Hemmasi, F. (2020). *Tehrangelles dreaming: Intimacy and imagination in Southern California's Iranian pop music*. Duke University Press.
- Ilina news. (2017). آیا آمار فروش آنلاین آلبوم‌های موسیقی جزو اسرار تجاری‌ست؟ *Ilina News*.
<https://www.ilina.ir/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%87%D9%86%DA%AF-%D9%87%D9%86%D8%B1->

6/477517-%D8%A2%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B4-%D8%A2%D9%86%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%A2%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%88%D9%85-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%B2%D9%88-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%B3%D8%AA

Joolayee, S. M., & Entezari, A. (2021). Tatavor Siasat-e Farhangi-e Vezarat-e Ershad-e Eslami dar dolaat haaye pas az Enqelab (Development of cultural policies of Ershad in post-revolution governments). *Scientific Quarterly Journal of Strategic Management of National Defence Studies*, 19, 137–170.

Kafka, F. (2011). *The trial*. Createspace.

Khāliqī, R. (1974). سرگذشت موسیقی ایران. بنگاه مطبوعاتی صفی علیشاه.

Khamenei, A. (2000). *The cultural viewpoints of the leader of the Islamic revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei*. Center for Cultural and International Studies, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization.

Khoshnām, E., & Ahadi, S. (2012). Yaadi az mehrpooya, sedayee az ghabilehe andooh [In memory of Mehrpouya, Voice of the tribe of sadness]. *DW News*. <https://www.dw.com/fa-ir/%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%BE%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%82%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%87/a-16012504>

Khosravi, S. (2008). *Young and defiant in Tehran*. University of Pennsylvania Press ; University Presses Marketing [distributor]. <http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?ANTH;1759351>

Klieman, S. (1999). *Constructive ambiguity in Middle East peace-making*. Tel Aviv University, Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research.

Kosari, M. (2009). Underground music in iran. *Sociology of Art and Literature*, 1(1), 127–157.

- Lena, J. C. (2012). *Banding together: How communities create genres in popular music*. Princeton University Press.
- Leslie, L. (2010). *Communication Research Methods in Postmodern Culture: A revisionist approach*. Allyn and Bacon.
- Levine, D. N. (1988). *The flight from ambiguity: Essays in social and cultural theory*. Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Lewisohn, J. (2016). Conservation of the Iranian Golha radio programmes and the heritage of Persian classical poetry and music. In M. Kominko (Ed.), *From Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme* (pp. 587–616). Open Book Publishers.
<http://books.openedition.org/obp/2266>
- Lussier, M. (2011). The labelling process in popular music: Being-called “musiques émergentes” in Montréal. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 27(51), 17.
<https://doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v27i51.4080>
- Maghazei, M. (2014). *Trends in contemporary conscious music in Iran*. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/58481/>
- Maleki, H. (2019). Musiqi talfiqi; rāh-e nejāt-e mūsiqi sonati [Talfiqi music: The way for sonati music to survive]. *IRNA News*. <https://www.irna.ir/news/83256551/موسیقی-تلفیقی-راه-نجات-موسیقی-سنتی>
- Mansouri, M. (2011). *PAYAM Ashena—The Underground Rises* [Magazine].
<http://www.ashena.com/english/culture-art-history/2540-the-underground-rises.html>
- Marsh, J. L. (1975). The Triumph of Ambiguity: Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein. *Philosophy Today*, 19(3), 243–255. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday197519316>
- Masroori, C. (2007). The Conceptual Obstacles to Political Reform in Iran. *The Review of Politics*, 69(02), 171. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670507000502>

- Mirsepasi, A. (2000). Islam as a modernizing ideology. In *Intellectual discourse and the politics of modernization: Negotiating modernity in Iran*. New York : Cambridge University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489242>
- Mirsepasi, A. (2006). Religious intellectuals and Western critiques of secular modernity. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 26(3), 416–433.
- Mirsepasi, A. (2010). *Democracy in modern Iran Islam, culture, and political change*. New York University Press. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10386275>
- Mohammadi, M. (2007). Iranian University Students’ Politics in the Post-Reform Movement Era: A Discourse Analysis. *Iranian Studies*, 40(5), 623–634.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00210860701667704>
- Mokhtari, M., & Azadehfar, M. (2022). A synthetis of the encounter between tradition and modernity in Iranian classical music; a study of Chavosh Ensemble. *Journal of Iranian Cultural Research*, 14(4), 69–99. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22035/jicr.2021.2771.3154>
- Nachman, A. (2018). To loosen and bind: Khomeini, Rafsanjani, and supplementary governance in the Islamic Republic. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2018.1509691>
- Namjoo, M. (2015). The revolution and music: A personal odyssey. In A. Milani & L. J. Diamond (Eds.), *Politics and culture in contemporary Iran: Challenging the status quo* (pp. 179–216). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Namjoo, M. (2007). *Toranj*. Raha records.
- Naseri, S. (2015). Musiqi talfiqi: Injā hamechi dar hameh [Talfiqi music: It is a mess over here]. *Hamshahri Javan*. <https://www.bartarinha.ir/fa/news/214247/درهمه-چی-همه-اینجا-یا-تلفیقی-موسیقی>

- Nāzemzadeh, A. H. (2014). Sabki be nām-eh talfiqi vojūd nadārad [A genre by the name of Talfiqi does not exist]. *Ilina news*. <https://www.ilina.news/ببخش-موسیقی-هنرهای-تجسمی-60/245494-سبکی-به-نام-موسیقی-تلفیقی-وجود-ندارد>
- Nooshin, L. (2005a). 'Subversion and Countersubversion: Power, Control and Meaning in the New Iranian Pop Music. In A. J. Randall (Ed.), *Music, power, and politics* (pp. 231–272). Routledge.
- Nooshin, L. (2005b). Underground, overground: Rock music and youth discourses in Iran. *Iranian Studies*, 38(3), 463–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210860500300820>
- Nooshin, L. (2016). Jazz and its Social Meanings in Iran: From Cultural Colonialism to the Universal. In P. V. Bohlman & G. Plastino (Eds.), *Jazz worlds, world jazz* (pp. 125–149). The University of Chicago Press.
- Olszewska, Z. (2013). Classy Kids and Down-at-Heel Intellectuals: Status Aspiration and Blind Spots in the Contemporary Ethnography of Iran. *Iranian Studies*, 46(6), 841–862. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2013.810078>
- Pallet band. (2021). *Cadencemag interview with Pallet band E1* [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ad319AeHfcg>
- Pallett band. (2013). *Mr. Violet*. Nofeh Recording.
- Pallett band. (2020). *Pallet dar studio art talks-sar-o kale-ye moosiqi talfiqi az koja peida shod* [Interview]. <https://www.aparat.com/v/bZWlq/>
- Rahimi, B. (2008). The Politics of the Internet in Iran. In M. Semati (Ed.), *Media, culture and society in Iran: Living with globalization and the Islamic state* (pp. 37–56). Routledge.
- Rastaq, A. (2014, February 9). *Avaz-haaye Enqelabi; az markaz-e hefz va esha'e ye musiqi ta kanoon-e chavosh (revolutionary songs; from Center for Protection and Revival of Music to Chavosh Ensemble)* [News website]. BBC News فارسی. https://www.bbc.com/persian/arts/2014/02/140209_I51_chavosh_music_revolution

- Razavi, R. (2009). The Cultural Revolution in Iran, with Close Regard to the Universities, and its Impact on the Student Movement. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45(1), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200802547586>
- Riahipour, B. (2017). *Babak Riahipour: moosiqi-ye rap bayad mojavez begirad [rap music must gain permission]* [Online]. <https://www.aparat.com/v/sneaG/>
- Robertson, B. (2012). *Reverberations of dissent: Identity and expression in Iran's illegal music scene*. Continuum.
- Robertson, B., Khalaji, M., & Aghdami, M. (2011). *Cultural censorship in Iran: Iranian culture in a state of emergency* (pp. 1–98). Small media foundation.
<https://smallmedia.org.uk/old/pdf/censorship.pdf>
- Rodman, G. (2015). Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards: Mixing Pop, Politics and Cultural Studies. In A. Bennett & S. Waksman (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of popular music*.
<http://www.credoreference.com/book/sageukpm>
- Rokni, S. (2021). Persistence as Performative: A Brief History of The Evolution of Two Rock Music Scenes in Iran. In B. Rahimi (Ed.), *Performing Iran. Cultural identity and theatrical performance*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- Sadeq, S. (2003, November 26). Vigen Derderian: Pop idol of a musical revolution in Iran. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/nov/26/guardianobituaries.iran>
- Saffarian, N. (Director). (2015). *Shab-e sheydayi* [Documentary].
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5544924/>
- Shajarian, H. (2019). *Mosahebeh baa homayoun shajarian* [Interview]. <https://www.aparat.com/v/flrRz/>
- Shajarian, H., & Pournazeri, S. (2014). *Heavy Makeup*. Iran Gaam.
- Shariati, A. (1980). *Culture and Ideology*. Free Islamic Litterature Inc.

- Shayegan, D. (1989). *Le regard mutilé: Schizophrénie culturelle: pays traditionnels face à la modernité*. Michel.
- Siamdoust, N. (2017). *Soundtrack of the revolution: The politics of music in Iran*. Stanford University Press.
- Siamdoust, N. (2019). A revolution of culture. *IPPR Progressive Review*, 26(2), 196–203.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/newe.12163>
- Sreberny, A., & Khiabany, G. (2010). *Blogistan: The Internet and Politics in Iran*. I. B. Tauris.
<http://books.google.ca/books?id=KrGe20F4nQcC>
- Sreberny, A., & Mohammadi, A. (1994). *Small media, big revolution: Communication, culture, and the Iranian revolution*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Straw, W. (1991). Systems of articulation, logics of change: Communities and scenes in popular music. *Cultural Studies*, 5(3), 368–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389100490311>
- Straw, W. (2001). Scenes and sensibilities. *Public*, 22–23.
<http://public.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/public/article/viewFile/30335/27864>
- Sutton, A. (2003). Innovation and Accessibility: Towards a Typology of Fusion Music in Korea. *서울대학교 음악대학 동양음악연구소*, 25, 227–250.
- Tavakoli-Targhi, M. (1990). Refashioning Iran: Language and Culture During the Constitutional Revolution. *Iranian Studies*, 23(1), 77–101.
- Touma, H. H. (1971). The Maqam Phenomenon: An Improvisation Technique in the Music of the Middle East. *Ethnomusicology*, 15(1), 38. <https://doi.org/10.2307/850386>
- Vakili, V. (1996). *Debating religion and politics in Iran: The political thought of Abdolkarim Soroush*. Council on Foreign Relations New York. http://www.dr.soroush.com/PDF/E-CMO-19960100-Debating_Religion_and_Politics_in_Iran-Valla_Vakili.pdf
- Van den Hoonaard, D. K. (2012). *Qualitative research in action: A Canadian primer*. OUP Canada.

Walther, M. (2014). *Repatriation to France and Germany: A comparative study based on Bourdieu's theory of practice*. Springer Gabler.

Williams, R. (2001). *The long revolution*. Broadview Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1994). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L., Hacker, P. M. S., & Schulte, J. (2010). *Philosophical Investigations*.

http://www.calstate.ebilib.com/EBLWeb/patron/?target=patron&extendedid=P_514408_0

Yarman, O. (2007). *A Comparative Evaluation of Pitch Notations in Turkish Makam Music*: 19.

Yöre, S. (2012). Maqam in music as a concept, sclae and phenomenon. *Zeitschrift Für Die Welt Der Türken / Journal of World of Turks*, 4(3), 267–286.

Youssefzadeh, A. (2000). The situation of music in Iran since the Revolution: The role of official organizations. *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 9(2), 35–61.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09681220008567300>

