Azerbaijanian Mugam
Bahram Mansurov, tar

侧1:
1. Mugam Bayati-Isfahan
2. Mugam Humayun
3. Mugam Nivanishapur
4. Mugam Shur

侧2:
5. Mugam Mahur-Hindi
6. Mugam Bayati-Kurd
7. Mugam Chahargah

Azerbaijan, which in very ancient times was called Albania, is situated to the south-east of the Caucasus. It has been, all through history, a centre of refined cultures. The fertile lands that form today the southern republics of the Soviet Union have always been a cultural crossroads where different civilisations met, and have played an important role in their respective histories. Azerbaijan, once a Persian satrapy, then a Hellenistic kingdom, was occupied by the Scythians and the Parthians. The population is today mainly of Turcoman origin. The language is a Turkish dialect, similar to Uzbek and Turkmen.

Islam became the common religion of Azerbaijan in the eighth century. The country came under Mongol domination in the thirteenth. Many of the great philosophers, scholars, artists, and musicians of the Islamic world were of Azerbaijan origin. The country played also an important role in the shaping of Iranian culture.

The traditional music of Azerbaijan is of the modal type, which means that it is a monodic development, on a particular scale in relation to a fixed tonic. The modal scales and the style of performance are almost identical to those of Persian music and musically both systems belong to the same family. In any case both lay claim on the same theorists — Saifuddin al Urmiavi in particular, who in the thirteenth century wrote a famous treatise in Arabic on musical theory and who is said to have been born in Azerbaijan. As in Indian or Persian music, the musical development consists in an improvisation, according to fixed rules, on a particular mode which is here called mugam. The term mugam in the art music of Azerbaijan does not merely mean a mode. Its meaning includes also the whole structure of the instrumental and vocal development. In its most usual form the mugam is performed by a singer, the khanande accompanied by an instrumental ensemble, the sazande composed of a tar (lute), a kamanje (bowed instrument) and a daf (frame drum with jingles). The mugams, however, can be performed on the tar alone when the musician is a great virtuoso.

It is, in fact, in this solo form that the improvisation allows for the most variety, refinement, and expressive possibilities.

The development of the mugam begins with a barzadsh, a free improvisation similar to the alap of Indian music. This is followed by rhythmic variations ending with a reng or dance.

There are about seventy mugams in Azerbaijan music which are for the most part identical with the Persian dastgahs that bear the same names. The most usual are Rast, Shur, Shushtar, Segah, Chargah, Bayati-Shiraz, Bayati-Isfahan, Shanaz, Hijaz, etc.

As in the Arabic theory, the octave is divided into 17 intervals, allowing expressive variants for several of the notes in the various scales of the mugams.

Bahram Mansurov was born in Baku in 1911. His grandfather and his father were musicians of repute. It was first with them that the young Mansurov learnt the technique of the tar. Later he had as a teacher the celebrated musician Muslim Magonaev. Employed by Radio-Baku as a tar soloist since 1930, he has been the chosen accompanist of the greatest Azerbaijani singers. He also took interest in modern musical experiments within the framework of the Baku Philharmonic. In 1956 he received the coveted title of "Artist Emeritus of the Republic."

With his delicate sensitivity and his profound knowledge of the mugam, Bahram Mansurov is unrivalled for his talent of creation and improvisation in the pure style of the traditional music of Azerbaijan.

The mugam Bayati-Isfahan is a mixture of the scales of Bayati and Isfahan, the sixth being slightly lowered. The predominant notes are the tonic and the sixth:

G A B♭ C D♭ E♭ F G A B

The mugam Humayun is a variant of shur with a major third. The predominant notes are the tonic, the fourth, and the octave:

G A♭ B♭ C D♭ E F G A♭ B♭

The mugam Nivanishapur corresponds to the Indian mode kafi. The predominant notes are the tonic and its octave:

G A B♭ C E♭ F G A B♭

The mugam Shur is one of the basic modes of Persian and Indian music. It corresponds to the Indian raga Bhairavi. The predominant notes are the tonic and the fourth:

G A♭ B♭ C D♭ E♭ F G A♭ B♭

The mugam Mahur Hindi is a variant of mahur corresponding with the Indian mode Bilaval. The second (D) and the sixth (A) are slightly lowered. The tonic and the fifth are the predominant notes.

F G A B C D E F A B

The mugam Bayati Kurd is a variant of Bayati in the scale of Shur (the Indian Bhairavi). The tonic is the predominant note:

G A♭ B♭ C D♭ E♭ F G A♭ B♭

The mugam Chahargah is one of the fundamental modes of Iranian and Indian music. It corresponds to the Indian Bhairava. The predominant notes are the tonic and the fourth:

G A♭ B C D♭ E F G A♭ B

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MUSICAL SOURCES

Modal Music and Improvisation

Azerbaijani Mugams

Momam Bayati-Ishakli (5' 20'')
Momam Humayun (8' 23'')
Momam Nisankhaun (4' 48'')
Momam Shur (8' 56'')

Bahram Mansurov, tar