AZIZ HERAWI

"Master of Afghani Lutes"



The Program:

A: NAGHMAHA-YE KLASIK IN RAG BEIRU (Instrumentals on *dutar*) (A suite composed by Aziz Herawi)

- 1. jhaptal/dadra
- 2. kaharwa
- 3. kaharwa/dadra
- 4. charbeiti kaharwa
- 5. kaharwa/dadra II

B: (Instrumentals on dutar)

- 6. AUSHARI (traditional from Herat)
- 7. NAGHMA I (by Mohammad Omar)
- 8. MAHALI I (traditional from Kabul)
- MAHALI I (fraditional from Kabul)
 KHANDAN-E AMATURI I

(by Ahmad Zahir)

10. KHANDAN-E AMATURI II

 KHANDAN-E AMATURI II (by Amad Zahir)

11. KHANDAN-E AMATURI III (by Nashenas)

C: (Instrumentals on rebab)

- 12. NAGHMA-YE KLASIK IN RAG PARI (by Aziz Herawi)
- NAGHMA-YE KLASIK IN RAG PILU (by Aziz Herawi)
- 14. MAHALI II (traditional from Kabul)
- 15. MAHALI III (traditional from Kabul)
- 16. NAGHMA II (by Mohammad Omar)
- 17. NAGHMA III (by Mohammad Omar)

 Total time: 66:40

Aziz Herawi – dutar (#1 – 11) or rebab (#12 – 17)

Ghulam Abbas Khan – tabla (all selections except #15)

Omar Mojaddidi – zirbaghali (on #15 only)

Azim Mojaddidi – daira zangi (tambourine)

Anayat Habibi – daira zangi

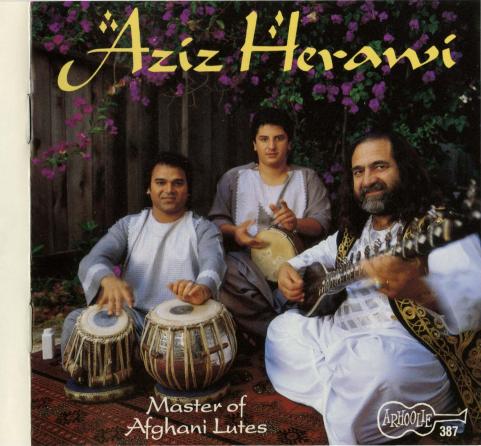
- #1-12: recorded live by Chris Strachwitz at a house party/concert in Concord, California, July 9, 1992 hosted by Anayat Habibi.
- #13-17: recorded by Mike Cogan at Bay Records, Berkeley, California, July 14, 1992.

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local cultures/Musical Traditions,

San Francisco, California



Aziz Herawi "Master of Afghani Lutes"

"...a raucous improvisatory performance that had the audience clapping along...(Aziz Herawi's) playing was about abandon and ecstasy, with intense sections of improvising – always grounded in a galloping rhythm– giving way to delicate, airy moments, soon forgotten in a flurry of heated improvisation."

Peter Watrous. New York Times

Afghanistan

From the Uzbek cultural center at Mazar-e Sharif along the former Soviet border in the north to the Pashtun cultural centers of Kabul and Qandahar to the east of the Hindu Kush range, and the Persian cultural center of Herat in the west, Afghanistan is a multi-cultural nation with strong musical traditions arounded in the melodies and rhythms of folk dances. Afahani musics, in general, are earthy and not given to introspective abstractionism. Rather, they represent the roots and branches of musical cultures that have influenced and been influenced by the great modal systems to the east and west - the dastaahs of Persian and the ragas of Indian music.

Herat, the birthplace of Aziz Herawi (Aziz of Herat), is an oasis city located in a narrow 85-mile long river valley of the same name in western Afghanistan, bordering the Khorasan region of Iran, a prominent stop on the famed "Silk Route" to China. Herat rose to prominence as a cultivated court city in the 15th-century under the last Timurid ruler, Husain-i Bajaara.

Considered to be the center of a medieval Persian cultural renaissance, the influence of the Herat court spread throughout the region to other court cities including Isfahan (ethnically Persian), Kabul and Ghazni (Moghul), Qandahar (Persian/Moghul), and Samarkand (Uzbek). The Persian poet and music theorist, Jami, and the Turkish/Persian writer, Mir Alisher Navai, were two of the leading Herat court literati of the day. As testament to the long-standing and widespread influence of Herati

musical culture from Turkey to India, it is noteworthy that in the late 16th-century the greatest Moghul ruler of them all, Akbar, brought an Herati tanbur (longnecked lute) master, identified simply as Ustad Yusuf, to his court at Fatehour Sikri (near Aara, northern India). While it is nearly impossible to trace a continuous line of development for Herati classical music from the 15th-century to the present day, it is clear that the crossfertilizing relationships between Persian. Afahani, Central Asian and Indian musical cultures reflect a history of constantly changing political and economic affiliations and hegemonies over time, relationships that continue to develop and permutate.

Aziz Herawi

Aziz Herawi, or Aghasab as he is reverentially addressed due to his direct descendancy in the lineage of the Prophet Mohammad, carries the melodies of his native Herat Valley to Afghani refugee communities around the world. Being born into a family of noted Sunni clerics may not seem like the ideal situation for a budding creative musician forced to practice clandestinely to avoid the wrath of his elders, but Aziz's

passion for music saved his life in the end. In 1979, when the Soviet-backed troops of Babrak Karmal came to round up the local leadership in Herat after a violent insurrection and resulting government bombardment levelled the city, Azizwas away with musician friends, and so escaped with his life. He eventually joined up with the *mujahidin* and spent several years in the mountains lifting the spirits of the guerilla forces with his powerful playing.

Well-known throughout Afghanistan for his broadcasts on Radio Afghanistan, Aziz finally departed from Afghanistan in 1983, whisking his family to safety across the border to Peshawar, Pakistan and then on to California in 1985, home to some 10,000 Afghani refugee families. Here he inspires two of his sons to play and accompany him in his concerts. Omar specializes on the zirbaghali (goblet drum) and Azim on the daira zangi (tambourine).

With the political situation still dangerously sectarian, it may be many years before Aziz, his wife and their six children venture back to their country estate at the village of Bagha Meter in the fertile Herat Valley, "the breadbasket of Central Asia," where he once raised hunting

- 1

dogs and maintained acres of orchards. An "amateur" musician by Afghanistandards of class, which normally relegate professional musicians to very low status as caste entertainers, Aziz Herawi upholds the important traditional calling of the shauqi ("aesthete, enthusiast") - the patron class male so consumed by his addiction to an art form that he becomes diwana ("mad") for it, regardless of cost. And, as an international troubadour of Afghani music, Aziz has himself become part of an emerging class of ex-patriate Afghani artists devoted to the survival and promotion of a new Afahani national musical culture in a world of changing social and economic values.

In the 19th-century, the Afghani monarch, Sher Ali Khan (1863-66, 1868-79) brought Indian court musicians to Kabul for one of the same reasons Akbar had brought an Herati musician three centuries earlier — cultural prestige. In fact, the excellent tabla player (drummer) on this recording, Ghulam Abbas Khan, comes from the same traditional Hindustani musical lineage as the drummerin Sher Ali's court. Rang Ali Talemand, that of the Patiala (Panjab) gharana ("house"). This coincidence marks a re-

markable historical moment indicative of the strong cultural affinities that continue within the region across national borders, Ghulam Abbas, son of tabla master Ghulam Hussain Khan and disciple of the renowned master Alla Rakha. divides his time between Lahore (Pakistan), Europe, and the United States where he is in demand as an accompanist. He has toured with his uncle, the vocalist Salamat Ali and accompanied vocalist Lakshmi Shankar, among others, and is often called upon to accompany Afghani musicians in the New York metropolitan area and in California who especially appreciate his control of shifting rhythms and tempi, a feature of Afghani music not common to Hindustani classical music.

Afghani Music

Profound musical changes have occurred in the cultivated musics of urban Afghanistan throughout the 20th-century. While Hindustani classical music was patronized within the confines of the 19th-century Kabul court and had limited influence elsewhere, it is the technological advancements of mass communications—the phonograph recording industry, the national radio and tele-

vision network, and the dissemination of Bombay-produced film musicals — that shape the popular homogenized national sound of the 20th-century. While distinct, idiosyncratic regional styles still exist and are evident in the present recording, the development of Afahani music, post-1978, is shaped by the great social need of the Afahani refugee community to develop a common national musical culture, a sound that will knit together the polyglot populations of Afghanistan who find themselves scattered ground the world. The music of Aziz Herawi, characterized by strong rhythms and recognizable tunes, is a realization of this thrust.

The music of Herat, a center for Persian classicism for most of its history, has become more and more influenced by Hindustani music, especially since the 1950's with the rise of Radio Kabul, since renamed Radio Afghanistan, and the influence of the last king of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zaher Shah, who went so far as to name main thoroughfares in Kabul after Hindustani musicians. With the radio, local musicians could become national heroes, playing with the studio tabla players in Kabul. The neighborhood back alley tea house, traditional

setting for men's live entertainment performed by professionals, began to feature radio receivers pumping out a new brand of music, a music programmed in Kabul. It was through the radio that a gifted *shauqi*, such as Aziz Herawi, could reach an audience.

At the heart of Aziz Herawi's music.

beneath the patchwork of Hindustani and Kabuli performance practice, beats the exuberance and ecstasy of Herati folk music (mahali) and the compositional genius of regional Persian poetics. Local traditional song forms, based on short auatrains known as charbeiti, wed stock melodies to 11-syllable lines which are linked by metaphoric images or sounds and rhymed "A-A-B-A" or "A-A-B-B." Translated into the purely instrumental music of Aziz Herawi, these charbeiti melodies suggest poetic imagery to knowledgeable listeners while they are stylized and individualized by improvisational variation.

Generally, Afghani musicians conceive of music as either vocal (khandan) or instrumental (naghma). By this reckoning, the mahali melodies would be considered khandan music, even when they are played purely instrumentally. Popular urban song compositions played

solely on instruments are as recognizable as the *mahali* melodies. Listeners silently supply the missing lyrics in the same way that an Anglo American audience would recall the words to *Greensleeves* or the Beatles' *Yesterday*, when heard in solely instrumental arrangements.

Aziz Herawi takes special deliaht in the energetic rendering of purely instrumental compositions (naahma), particularly those not derived from sona texts and based, instead, on Hindustani ragas, known as naama-ve klasik. Aziz normally sequences a collection of compositions in multiple meters (tal), set to one mode, to create an evocative affect. Individual compositions are characterized by their brevity of development, a performance practice that may be attributable to the length of the imported Persian and Hindustani 78 rpm records that were prized by the patron class in the first decades of the century.

During the 1930s, Kabuli style music became popular in Herat. Persian classical music, based on the *dastgah* (modal system) and patronized at that time by Shi'a merchants, gradually began to be replaced by a version of the Hindustani raga (modal) system, due, in

large part, to the influence of visiting Kabuli and Hindustani musicians. Not only was a new compositional style introduced, to be played on non-Persian instruments, but the Herati tonal system of the day, a distinctly Persian-influenced sound featuring evocative quarter-tones (koron) and formal Persian registral movement over progressively higher tessitura, became submeraed by the popularity of the new music. Though Hindustani music theory has been utilized since the 19th-century, especially by professional musicians from Kabul, by the 1950's, the raga system reigned supreme. But this raga system was one mediated by local oral musical traditions, idiosyncratic interpretation and, importantly, by the hegemony of the ubiquitous harmonium keyboard, superimposing a new tonality, that of an eventempered, twelve-semi-tones-to-theoctave world, onto an unsuspecting micro-tonal soundscape. Bombay film music and Hindustani "light classical" popular music had a ferocious impact on the more regional, folk-inspired Herati traditions. With Kabul as the political and mass communications fulcrum of multicultural Afghanistan, it was only a matter of time before a single, national sound, molded in the studios of the radio station, became the model of emulation for Afghani musicians nationwide.

The historical development of Afghani musical genres, tonality, and performance practices is mirrored by transformations made to traditional musical instruments in this century, particularly since the 1960s, and the changing fortunes of cultural fashion that elevate one instrument over another in regional and national popularity.

Aziz Herawi's main instrument is the 14-stringed dutar, the long-necked, plucked lute made of mulberry wood most characteristic of music originating from Herat. The prototype Herati dutar has only two aut strings and is fretted so that it can produce Persian auartertones. A three metal string model was developed in the 1950s with fretting to accommodate the change to a twelve semi-tone music system. Its sound emulates that of the Pashtun tanbur popularized by Radio Kabul. The fourteen metal string dutar is an invention of Mohammad Karim Herawi, a musician employed by the National Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan in Kabul during the 1960s. It includes a feature found on the "national lute of Afghanistan," the Pashtun *rebab*, namely, metal sympathetic strings. Karim's intention was to play *rebab* music on the *dutar* with greater facility and to increase the volume of an instrument that would normally be drowned out in an orchestral setting.

The Afahan rebab, Aziz Herawi's second instrument, is a short-necked, double-chambered plucked lute. The belly of the lower chamber is covered with goat skin while the upper wooden chamber is traversed by four frets at its narrowest end, near the upper pegboard. The forerunner of the Hindustani sarod, believed to have been developed in the mid-19th century in the Lucknow (India) court, the Afghani rebab features three aut or nvlon main playing strings and up to fifteen metal sympathetic strings. As in the case of the fourteen string dutar, the shortest sympathetic string (parand) is raised to facilitate a strummina technique (simkari) in which rhythmic alteration creates a dynamic droning pattern. Aziz Herawi's playing, with its emphasis on bold righthand strumming, is strongly influenced by the rebab playing of the late Kabuli rebab master, Mohammad Omar.

The tabla drum set, as mentioned

earlier, has been adopted from Hindustani classical music. The more traditional goblet-shaped, single-skinned zirbaghali, played by Omar Mojaddidi on this recording, and the daira zangi

frame drum with inset jingles, played by **Anayat Habibi** and **Azim Mojaddidi**, are the accompanying instruments of choice for *mahali* and popular music.

David Roche – 1992

The selections:

- **A:** Naghmaha-ye Klasik, suite in rag beiru, played on the fourteen string dutar (Aziz Herawi) and tabla (Ghulam Abbas Khan).
- 1. An evocative *shakl* (literally "face,"), a brief introductory passage in free rhythm, followed by a composition and improvisations by Aziz Herawi, set first in a fast tempo *jhaptal* (10 beats) and then sped up to a rapid *dadra* (6 beats), (4:47)
- 2. A short shakl leads into a dance-flavored composition by Aziz Herawi set to kaharwa (8 beats) that rises to breakneck speed before disappearing into stillness, only to end in the typical Afghani manner, closing abruptly with a Hindustani-derived tihai repetition (pattern repeated 3 times). (3:43)
- 3. This *shakl* focuses on a higher tessitura of the *raga*, then concludes with a third composition by Aziz Herawi in *beiru*, set to *kaharwa tal* (8 beats). Note the effective use of the *simkiri* (rhythmic drone pattern on sympathetic strings), the changes of dynamics, the shift to a *reng* (dance composition) in *dadra* (6 beats) and the closing *tihai*. (5:39)
- 4. A fascinating shakl momentarily quotes several other ragas, including the beiru variant ahir beiru, before settling into a brief rendition of a stately Herati charbeiti (sung quatrain) melody of the epic love ballad Siamo/Jalali, in kaharwa (8 beats). (2:56)
- 5. Aziz Herawi concludes the suite in rag beiru with a prancing two-part composition in *kaharwa tal* (8 beats), fol-

lowed by a pulsating concluding composition in *dadra* (6 beats), with virtuosic accompaniment on the *tabla*. (4:54)

- **B:** Aushari, naghma-ye klasik, khandan-e mahali, and khandan-e amaturi, played on the fourteen string dutar (Aziz Herawi) and tabla (Ghulam Abbas Khan), with dairazangi (Azim Mojaddidi).
- 6. A traditional, proud *aushari* (Herati dance) composition in *bairavi*, first in *kaharwa* (8 beats), then in a blistering *mogholi tal* (7 beats). (4:38)
- 7. A well-known naghma (instrumental composition) by the Kabuli rebab master, Mohammad Omar, in pilu, set in two tempi of tal kaharwa (8 beats), separated by a brief contrasting passage in dadra (6 beats). (5:21)
- 8. A traditional Pashtun *mahali* (folk melody) from Kabul, *Sab zina rang* (a triple reference to a woman's name, the color green, and the verdancy of nature), in *mogholi tal* (7 beats). The Pashtuns are the dominant community of Afghanistan encompassing about 50% of the total population. The pauses at the end of passages indicate a point

where dancers traditionally freeze in position. The spontaneous rhythmic clapping of the audience adds a lively dimension, evoking memories of the abandonment and joy of house parties during more peaceful times. (2:59)

- 9. Khandan-e amaturi (vocal composition of a non-caste musician), Shabhai zol mahali (dark night of sadness), by the late Ahmad Zahir who was assassinated in Kabul after the coup in 1979, at the gae of 35. A son of the former Prime Minister of Afghanistan, his loss was nationally mourned in Afahanistan with an astonishing intensity of grief. A aifted singer as well as composer, his compositions have a special poignancy for Afahani refuaee communities worldwide. The mode for this composition is a variant tetrachord of the Afghani pilu with a constantly reiterated minor third, set in *geda* (4 beats). (3:54)
- 10. A second Ahmad Zahir composition, the *khandan-e amaturi Dostan...* (Friends..), in *bairavi, dadra tal* (6 beats), with handclapping chorus. (3:31)
- 11. A khandan-e amaturi composition, **Shiren omar che tereiei** (sweet life

of the past) by a noted contemporary of Aziz Herawi, the Pashtun composer, Nashenas. Based in London, Nashenas toured the United States in 1992. He is known for his ability to sing in five languages and is also revered by Indian audiences because of the close resemblance of his voice to that of the Hindi film music legend, K. L. Saigal. He was the head of the music and literature department of Radio Afghanistan before the 1979 coup. The mode is bairavi and tal kaharwa (6 beats). (4:38)

C: Naghmaha-ye klasik, played on the rebab (Aziz Herawi) and tabla (Ghulam Abbas Khan), with daira zangi (Anayat Habibi).

12. A sprightly instrumental composition in *rag pari*, *tal kaharwa* (8 beats) to conclude the traditional house party, by Aziz Herawi. (3:58)

13. A second composition from Aziz Herawi, this time recorded in the studio, in a variant of *rag pilu*, set to *tal kaharwa* (8 beats), and completed with a *tihai*. (2:40)

Khandan-e mahali, nagmaha-ye kabuli,playedonthe rebab(Aziz Herawi) and tabla (Ghulam Abbas Khan), with daira zangi (Anayat Habibi) and zirbhagali (Omar Mojaddidi).

14. A reprise of selection #8, the traditional Pashtun *mahali* (folk melody) *Sab zina rang*, this time on the *rebab*, in *mogholi tal* (7 beats). (2:44)

15. An old Pashtun mahali (folk melody), mode pilu, in dadra tal (6 beats). Note the pauses, signaling frozen dance postures and the special rebab strumming techniques. (3:42)

16. An instrumental composition by the famous Kabul *rebab* master, Mohammad Omar, in *pilu, tal dadra* (6 beats). (3:40)

17. A concluding composition by Mohammad Omar, in *pilu, tal kaharwa* (8 beats). (3:01)

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ARHOOLIE CATALOG, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530 Special thanks to ethnomusicologists John Baily, Hiromi Lorraine Sakata, and Mark Slobin for their many informative publications on Afghani musical cultures. Special thanks to Joe Wilson of the National Council for the Traditional Arts for bringing this remarkable music to Chris Strachwitz' attention and for his enthusiastic support. Also thanks to David Roche of local cultures and Julia Olin of the NCTA for all their help. This project is the result of field work which was commissioned by California Presenters, Inc. and funded by the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. This field work was for the tour "California Generations" organized by the National Council for the Traditional Arts.

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WORLD MUSIC IN CALIFORNIA

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