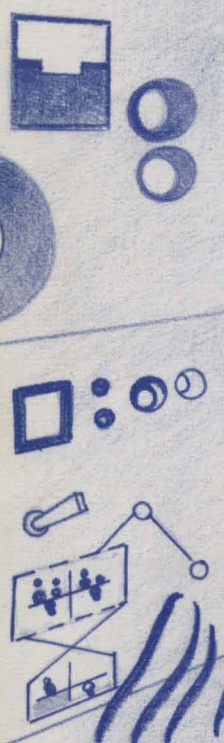
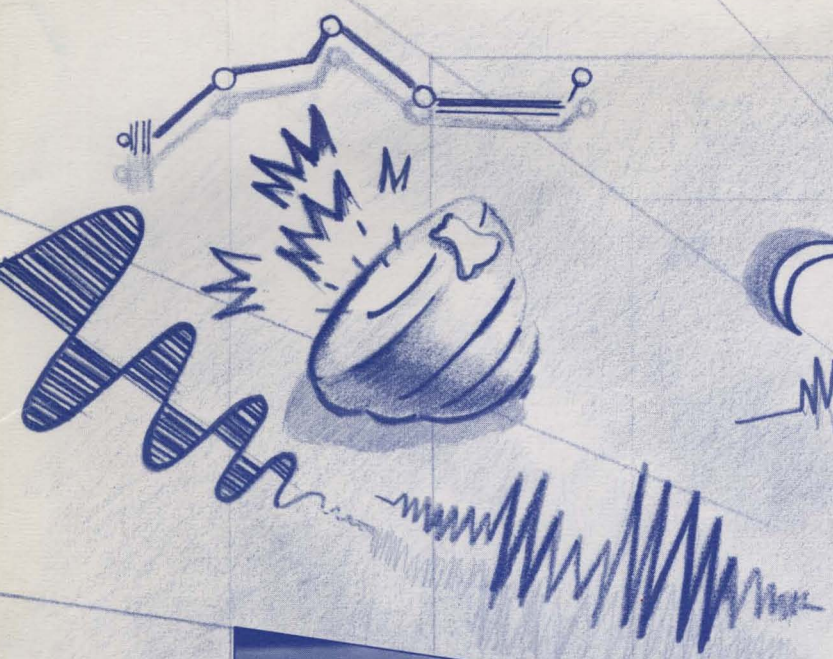
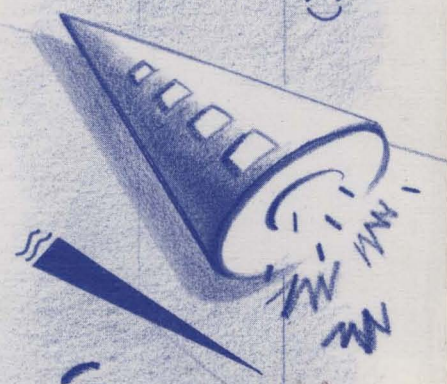
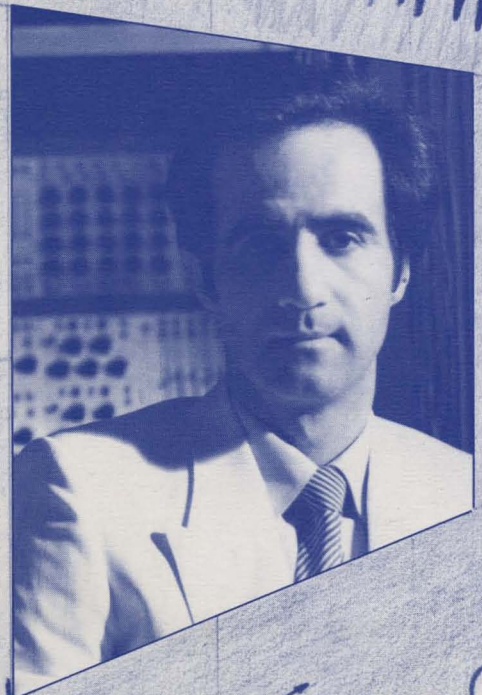


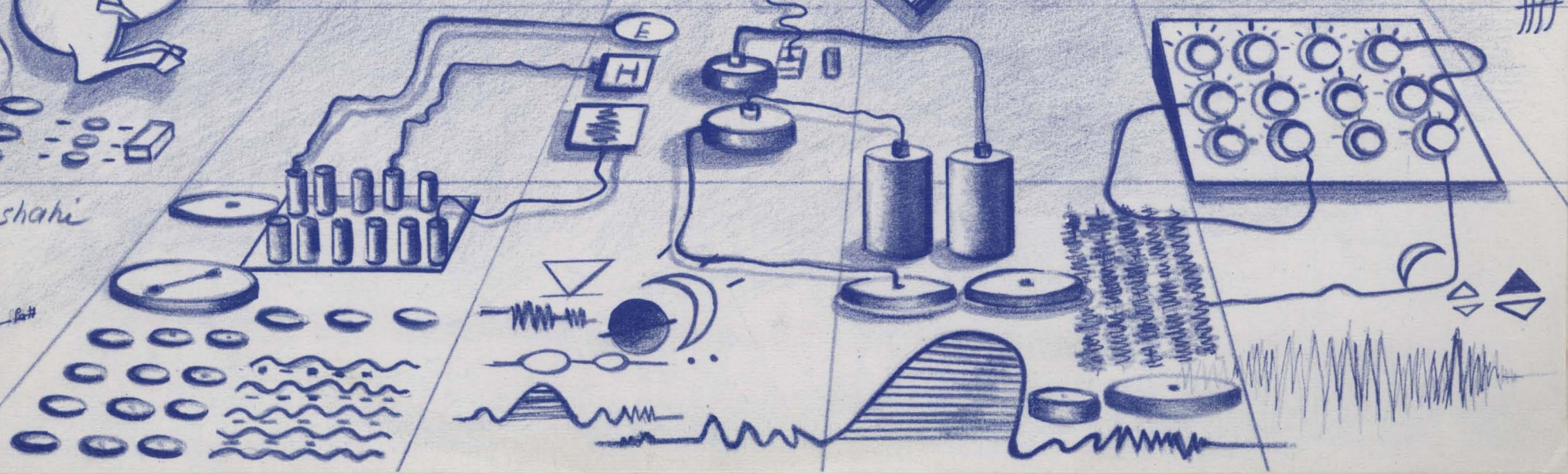
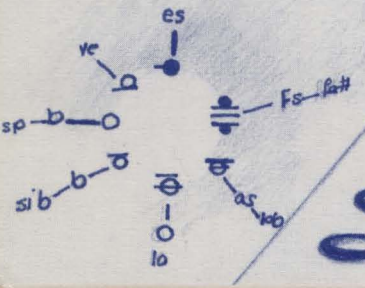
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 37467

ELECTRONIC
MUSIC
BY
DARIUSH
DOLAT-
SHAHI
"PLACE
OF
FIRE"

OTASH-GAH



Sudi Sharaf-shahi



ELECTRONIC MUSIC BY DARIUSH DOLAT-SHAHI

In the great Persian epic *Shah-nameh* ("Book of Kings"), which describes the Iranian Empire from the creation of the world to the Mohammedan conquest in 636, the eleventh-century poet Ferdowsi tells of the discovery of fire. The hero Hushang, journeying towards the mountains, comes upon a serpent-like monster with eyes "like pools of blood" and a mouth from which "poured black smoke covering the world with gloom." With superhuman strength the hero hurls a stone at the world-devouring monster. The stone misses the agile creature, striking another stone, setting it aglow. "Out of the realm of the hidden," the poet sings, "fire was discovered..." The struggle between good and evil begets the life-giving spark. The collision of opposites—light and dark, joy and sorrow, tragedy and comedy, heroism and cowardice—informs the entire *Shah-nameh*, as it does the spiritual and philosophical world-view of Persian-Iranian culture.

Dariush Dolat-shahi was born in Iran and spent his formative years there. Despite later residence and study in Holland and the United States he has maintained a deep connection with Persian culture, the values of which continue to shape his life and work. As in traditional Persian art, his music stems more from primal and spiritual impulses than from intellectual ones, just as the improvisations of traditional Persian musicians express a spiritually transcendent state that could not be achieved through intellectual means. His aesthetic predilections are clearly drawn when he writes, "In my music I seek to release my emotional and mental energy rather than to overcome structural and aesthetic problems. I am strongly influenced by forces of both in nature and in humans: changes of season and changes of temper, natural and human forces of anger, frustration, confrontation, and all other characteristics shared by nature and living things."

It seems paradoxical that a composer would choose to express such traditional spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities through this century's most radical musical innovation—electronically generated sound. That medium, since its inception, has been widely used as a hyper-intellectual tool for the creation of unprecedented musical precision, as a bulwark against human vagaries and human fallibility. Dolat-shahi's choice of medium is, however, entirely consistent with the ultimately constructive conflict between opposites that permeates the rich Persian cosmology. He has given voice to his traditional cultural values not by avoiding technology but by confronting it. Perhaps it is the spark created by these inimical colliding forces that gives the music some of its life.

Dolat-shahi's electronic music can be described as epic, like the work (albeit in another medium) of Ferdowsi, whom he so admires. The repetition of short rhythmic and melodic threads throughout each work and the leisurely unfolding of a consistent sonic backdrop suggest a sustained narrative. Unlike one of the predominant styles of electronic music over the last thirty years, which contains discrete, disconnected, rhythmically irregular, meticulously and often elegantly shaped musical events, Dolat-shahi's music achieves its raw power through grand gestures, occasionally, but more commonly through the obsessive repetition of short, blunt ones. *Ostinati* (repeated rhythmic and melodic patterns), slightly altered or layered to create subtle rhythmic shifts, give the work a kind of cyclic unity. At the same time, this continuous musical flow is not without contrast. *Otashga* ("Place of Fire") opposes darkness and light through the sudden interruptions of contrasting registers and textures; stillness alternates with flurries of activity. In the second movement, these flurries suggest the twittering sounds of nature playing on an undulating musical surface.

Dolat-shahi's music contains a spontaneous, organic, and unpremeditated quality that reflects the philosophy of the composer. "I believe that all the musical elements of a composition should be absorbed and digested to such a degree that these elements are not used as trappings, but as a natural and felt factor in a piece of music. This can be reached only by the right mental and spiritual approach."

Dariush Dolat-shahi studied at the Teheran Conservatory, the Amsterdam Conservatory of Music, the Institute of Sonology in Utrecht, and Columbia University in New York where he received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree. He has participated in numerous international events, including the Gaudeamus Festival in the Netherlands, the International Festival of Computer and Electronic Music in New York, and the 1983 27th Biennial Conference for Traditional Music at Columbia University. His commissions and performances have included those of Teheran Symphony Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Utrecht Symphony Orchestra, and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra.

Mr. Dolat-shahi's music for the tar, sehtar (both traditional Persian instruments) and electronic tape may be heard on Folkways Records FTS 37464.

Perry Goldstein

The music on this record was realized at the
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