



CENTER FOR WORLD MUSIC

AND RELATED ARTS



Mohammad-Reza Lotfi

M. R. Lotfi taught and performed Persian classical music for the Center for World Music in 1998. Renowned for his mastery of Persian traditional music, he made numerous recordings, both as a solo artist and in collaboration with celebrated Iranian musicians such as Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, Shahram Nazeri, Hossein Alizadeh, and Parviz Meshkatian. Lotfi was one of the greatest contemporary masters of the tar and setar. He was among the major figures who, over a span of twenty years, revolutionized Persian traditional music. His innovative approach of combining classical and folk elements injected new vitality into an old tradition. Indeed, the original creativity and the deep-rooted emotional quality of his playing secured his position as the “father of a new aesthetic” in Persian music.

Encouraged by his older brother, Lotfi learned to play the tar and demonstrated his extraordinary talent by winning the first prize in Iran's Young Musicians Festival in 1964. The following year, he began his studies at the Persian National Music Conservatory in Tehran under Habibollah Salehi and Master Ali Akbar Shahnazi. He also served as a tar player for the Fine Arts Administration Orchestra (Saba Orchestra) under the direction of Hossein Dehlavi. Two other eminent teachers of his were Abdollah Davami, from whom he learned the classical Persian music repertoire (*radif*), and Master Sa'id Hormozi, who taught him to play the setar.

While attending the College of Fine Arts at Tehran University, Lotfi became a student of Master Nour-Ali Boroumand. He also worked at the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Persian Music, both as a soloist and as a conductor. His other accomplishments were teaching at the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents, researching folk music for National Radio and Television, and performing at the Shiraz Arts Festival. After graduating in 1973, Lotfi joined the faculty of Fine Arts at Tehran University.

While continuing his collaboration with radio and television, Lotfi cofounded the Shayda Ensemble. Between 1978 and 1980, he served as the Head of the School of Music at Tehran University. He also served as the director of the Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Persian Music and the Chavosh Center. In 1984 Lotfi was invited by Fondazione Cini to participate in a seminar and perform concerts in Italy, where he resided for two years. He lived in the United States for many years and performed widely throughout Asia, Europe, and North America.