

the story – one that is not so much about juxtaposition, conjunction, or sharing as it is about distinctly modern barriers to movement.

Jonathan Holt Shannon's *Performing al-Andalus* is evocative, accessible, compact, and innovative in its methodological and expository approach. These qualities make it an attractive text for undergraduate students, as well as for graduate seminars focused on Mediterranean studies, the ethnomusicology of the Middle East and North Africa, and the politics of culture and memory. More broadly speaking, readers who are grappling with the possibilities and impossibilities of thinking through the Mediterranean and al-Andalus will find much stimulation in its pages. ✨

DOI:10.1017/rms.2018.81

Jonathan Glasser  
College of William and Mary

NAHID SIAMDOST. *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017). Pp. 368. \$29.95 paper. ISBN 9781503600324.

In 2005, Iranian music scholar Laudan Nooshin noted that, at that time, there was “relatively little academic interest in Iranian pop music and even less in rock” (464) (“Underground, Overground: Rock Music and Youth Discourses in Iran,” *Iranian Studies*, 38(3), 463-494). Since then, numerous works have addressed emergent popular music scenes in twenty-first-century Iran and their political implications under a theocratic government with a marked ambivalence toward music. Nahid Siamdoust's *Soundtrack of the Revolution* adds a valuable contribution to this literature. While placing current developments in Iranian music and politics in historical context, it also emphasizes the fact that the political potential of music in Iran is nothing new, but rather an extension of practices that began long before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In the author's own words, the intent of the book is to “[present] a sort of soundtrack for Iran's tumultuous postrevolutionary decades,” (25) a goal that she executes with an absorbing investigation of numerous musical genres and artists within their respective historical and political contexts. The narrative is historically bookended by the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the 2009 Green Revolution but does not myopically focus on the two revolutions as stand-alone crisis points. Rather, Siamdoust treats them as culmination points of political and cultural processes lacking a neat

beginning, middle, and end. In tracing the events that led to each of these revolutions, the author demonstrates how the meanings, permissibility, and subversive potential of various types of music – and even individual songs – have transformed as Iranian society has responded to political developments in the country.

The book's first and last chapters present the main themes of *Soundtrack of a Revolution*, while the remaining eight chapters focus on specific historical periods, musical genres, and representative artists. Chapters Two and Three examine the decades leading up to, and the immediate aftermath of, the 1979 Islamic Revolution. They also highlight classical vocalist Mohammed Reza Shahjarian and his efforts to navigate the tricky political waters of a regime that initially attempted to silence all music in the new Islamic Republic. Chapters Four and Five focus on the Iran-Iraq war period (1980-1988) and the regime's gradual recognition of music as a necessary tool in sustaining their revolutionary goals, which led to the development of state-sanctioned pop music, represented most prominently by vocalist Alireza Assar. Chapters Six and Seven center on the "burnt generation" (171) that followed the war years: the frustrations faced by musicians during the late 1980s and 1990s birthed Iran's first generation of alternative and underground musicians, represented by the irreverent Mohsen Namjoo. Chapters Eight and Nine examine "Iran's Third Generation" (211) and the 2009 Green Revolution, both musically enmeshed with the growth of *Rap-e Farsi* and illustrated by the rap artist Hichkas (Soroush Lashkary).

As indicated above, the past decade has witnessed a growing body of work on Iranian underground music and hip-hop, women's music festivals post-1979, music organizations and musical traditions, the Western avant-garde in Iran, Persian rap, and Persian classical music in the mass media. The value of Siamdoust's book lies in its interweaving and expansion of these individual strands of scholarship and in its ability to flesh out the narrative with details gleaned from personal interviews, first-hand observations at public performances, surveys of Persian-language media, and musical examples. Rather than focusing on a single genre or scene, the book investigates how a number of genres have conveyed political and emotional sentiments, which become re-contextualized as political conditions fluctuate. Her analysis encompasses official statements made by Iranian leaders about music, the state bureaucracy responsible for managing musical activity, and Iranian academic discourses on music. Siamdoust points out that individuals (albeit officials, not ordinary citizens) have some amount of agency to effect change within the parts of Iran's bureaucracy

that oversee music. She also shows that many defining characteristics of contemporary Iranian popular culture are rooted in pre-existing elements of Persian culture, with some musicians even consciously placing themselves within an historical artistic lineage. For example, Iranian rappers draw not only from a rich tradition of Persian poetry as the basis for their rhymes, but also position themselves as modern-day versions of the traditional *luti* (itinerant performer), who exemplified both chivalry and social justice (247).

There are a few points of possible critique, foremost among them the scarcity of women artists from the otherwise rich survey of Iran's cultural landscape. To her credit, Siamdoust acknowledges that she focuses predominantly on male musicians, explaining that this lopsided ratio stems from the very environment of political repression that constitutes the main subject of the book. The chapter on rap does highlight numerous female musicians, but the book could have benefitted from additional female voices in other chapters (for example, interviews with banned female singers). In addition, although Siamdoust's journalistic tone makes the book accessible to a wide range of audiences, it may not provide enough theoretical analysis or technically detailed descriptions of the music for readers accustomed to more rigorous scholarly treatments of musical subjects.

Overall, *Soundtrack of the Revolution* presents a comprehensive narrative of music and politics in Iran that is at once academically sound and experientially engaging. It would clearly make a useful addition to a university course on Iranian music, or even a course on the general themes of music and politics. The work is also accessible beyond ethnomusicology or popular culture and would be appropriate for courses on Iranian/Persian studies, Middle East studies, political science, sociology, and journalism. ✂

DOI:10.1017/rms.2018.82

Megan Rancier  
Bowling Green State University

ANNEBELLE SREBERNY AND MASSOUMEH TORFEH, EDs. *Cultural Revolution in Iran: Contemporary Popular Culture in the Islamic Republic* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017). Pp. 296. \$27.50 paper. ISBN 9781784535131.

The well-established field of Iranian studies houses many disciplines under a canopy of mutually acknowledged common interests. At times, however, one