



## Paniz Faryousefi makes history

# First woman to lead Tehran Symphony draws full houses at Vahdat Hall

### Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran Symphony Orchestra performed under a woman conductor for the first time in its decades-long history as Paniz Faryousefi took the podium for two packed concerts at Vahdat Hall on November 12 and 13, according to the Roudaki Foundation.

Faryousefi, joined by violin soloist Pedram Faryousefi, opened on November 12 with a taut, clear-cut reading of Jean Sibelius's 'Impromptu Op. 5,' delivered by the string ensemble to a hall so still that one musician later called the atmosphere "almost weightless".

The baton then shifted to homegrown repertoire. Works by Iranian composers Golfam Khayam and Aftab Darvishi followed, with 'Simorgh' and 'Zamzameh' setting a hushed, inward tone before Pedram Faryousefi stepped forward to lead Darvishi's 'Diyar.' Both composers were invited on stage to acknowledge pro-

longed applause.

The orchestra switched gears after the interval, expanding to full forces for Franz Schubert's 'Symphony No. 8 in B minor, the Unfinished.' The 'Allegro moderato' and 'Andante con moto' unfurled with a slow tension that held the audience in tight focus. Several listeners described the hall as "locked in" to the orchestra's phrasing.

A more hard-hitting finale came with Aram Khachaturian's 'Sabre Dance' from 'Gayaneh,' its driving rhythm bringing the two-night program to a head and prompting a wave of cheers across the venue. Faryousefi, closing the evening, thanked the musicians, the Roudaki Foundation's management and its artistic council for trusting her with what she called a "milestone responsibility".

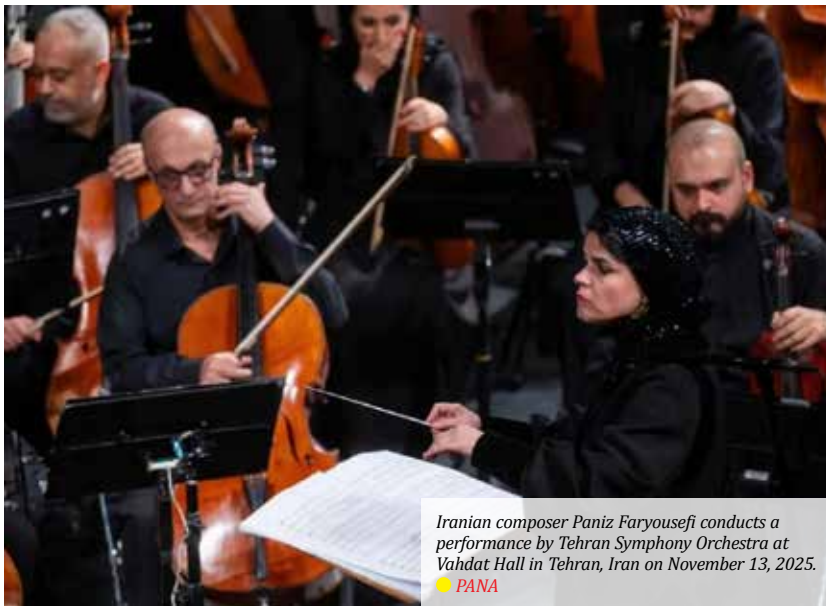
She added, "A special thanks to Nasir Heydarian, who stood by me and the orchestra with genuine care and made this program possible."

She dedicated both performances to "Iranian mothers and women", singling out her own mother.

Heydarian, invited on stage afterwards, said he was "glad" to see decision-makers opening space for younger conductors.

"We must gradually hand the world to the young," he told the audience, adding that the "maternal sensitivity" and artistic nuance of women musicians had been audible "last night and tonight [November 12 and 13]".

At the end of the November 12 performance, commendation plaques from the Roudaki Foundation were presented to Paniz Faryousefi, Golfam Khayam and Aftab Darvishi by Heydarian, pianist Raphael Minaskanian and music scholar Farimah Ghavamsadri. Senior cultural figures, including composer Mohammadreza Darvishi, mezzo-soprano Nesrin Nasehi, pianist Bahnaz Zakeri, and Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Zahra Behrouz-Azar, were among the attendees.



Iranian composer Paniz Faryousefi conducts a performance by Tehran Symphony Orchestra at Vahdat Hall in Tehran, Iran on November 13, 2025.  
● PANA

## Brazil welcomes three-day Iranian film showcase



● IRNA

### Arts & Culture Desk

A three-day Iranian film festival opened in the Brazilian capital on Thursday, showcasing four titles that explore environmental, social, and animated storytelling, subtitled in Portuguese for local audiences.

The event, staged from November 13 to 15 in a Brasilia cultural complex, features four Iranian works, 'Sweet Taste of Imagination,' 'In the Arms of the Tree,' 'Fragrant' and the animation 'Loupetoo,' all subtitled in Portuguese.

The program folds environmental, social and animated storytelling into what organizers describe as a compact survey of contemporary Iranian filmmaking.

Speaking at the opening ceremony attended by foreign envoys, Brazilian cultural authorities and Iran-watchers, Iran's Ambassador to Brazil, Abdollah Nekounam framed the 123-year diplomatic relationship between Tehran and Brasilia as a "long-standing friendship".

He argued that cinema, like other performing arts, has become

a shared medium through which nations "speak beyond race, borders and politics".

He said Iranian cinema, much like the country's visual and performing arts, is rooted in a "thousand-year-old cultural heritage" and remains committed to portraying "respect for human dignity", alongside ideals of freedom, justice and spirituality.

The ambassador also pointed to Iranian filmmakers' recurring concern for "the rights of all living beings" and nature.

Curators leaned into that environmental thread on the opening night, screening 'Sweet Taste of Imagination', a feature with strong ecological motifs, to echo the timing of COP30-related climate discussions under way in Brazil's Amazon region. Festival guests said the overlap "struck a chord", giving the film added resonance.

Screenings run daily through November 15, with organizers billing the showcase as a cultural bridge for Brazilian audiences keen to probe Iranian narratives at close quarters.

## Cassette tape, sound of nostalgia in digital pulse

How an obsolete medium found its way back into heart of America's music market

By Alireza Sepahvand  
Journalist

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In an era where music is just a few clicks away and endless streams flow through digital platforms, the return of cassette tapes to record store shelves once seemed impossible. Yet after two decades of silence, this small magnetic medium has come alive, sparking a fresh wave of cultural excitement in America's music scene.

#### Gentle crawl of two reels in one frame!

According to recent data from the Recording Industry Association of America, cassette sales have experienced an unprecedented rise over the past five years. Although the numbers are tiny compared to billions of online streams, their cultural weight is far greater. The cassette has transformed from a forgotten format into a symbol of tangibility in a world where everything has become weightless and placeless. Cassette production companies in Tennessee and Chicago have resumed their operations, and alongside digital releases, major artists are surprising the market with new physical editions.

#### Pop stars lining up for nostalgia

When names like Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish, and Harry Styles joined the list of artists embracing cassette tapes, the movement gained real momentum. Swift, who deeply understands her audience's sense of memory and culture, released cassette editions of her recent albums with cus-

tom designs, printed signatures, and even handwritten notes. This cleverness turned the cassette from an audio product into an emotional, collectible object. Swift's fans often buy these editions not to listen to them, but to take home a small, tangible piece of their fan identity.

#### A sound whose flaws are beautiful

The cassette lost to digital long ago, its hiss, crackle, and fading sound once flaws now become its charm. Young listeners raised on compressed, sterile audio embrace its raw, uneven tone as more authentic. Playing a cassette, waiting for the tape to spin, and letting the music unfold offers a slow, human rhythm in stark contrast to the relentless pace of modern life.

#### Gen Z in search of authenticity

The cassette revival cannot be explained merely by the nostalgia of older generations. Today's main buyers are young people who never lived through the format's golden age. They are not reconstructing memories; they are searching for authenticity and a sense of ownership in a virtual world. For Gen Z, the cassette has become a symbolic form of resistance against digital saturation, a quiet, poetic, and cultural protest. The cassette reminds them of a time when patience and duration were part of the joy of listening to music.

#### Cassette's charm in marketplace

Rising demand has brought factories back to life. Companies like Missouri's National Audio Company report artist and label orders have doubled

in three years. The growth is cultural more than economic, as each cassette carries emotion beyond its commodity value. What began with vinyl has now reached cassettes, where people pay to touch the past. Cultural psychologists call this the nostalgia economy, where old objects gain new emotional meaning.

#### Independent artists finding different path

Amid this wave, many independent American musicians have turned to cassette releases. Producing a cassette is far cheaper than pressing vinyl or running large-scale digital campaigns. Alternative, punk, and indie groups release small runs of tapes that simultaneously serve as physical artifacts and declarations of identity. This medium lets them address listeners directly, without intermediaries.

#### Beyond a passing trend

At first glance, the cassette comeback might look like a passing fad. But the signs point to something deeper. The cassette recalls a time of more human connection with music — when every album had its own identity, and every listener built a personal relationship with their tape. In a world of streaming and artificial intelligence, the cassette stands as a reminder that music is not just data, it's a human experience.

#### Cassette culture, consumption in Iran

Cassette tapes first reached Iran in the 1970s as a cheaper, more portable alternative to vinyl. After the 1979 Revolution, they became central to music distribution, shaping the nation's listening culture

in the 1980s and carrying both legal and underground works. In the 1990s, as pop music gradually returned, cassette albums hit peak popularity. Though sidelined worldwide, cassettes have recently resurfaced, yet in Iran they remain limited and collectible. Online stores now sell rare originals at notable prices, a reminder of a market once intertwined with underground music through home duplications, street kiosks, and roadside vendors.

Over the past two decades, with the rise of digital formats and declining purchasing power, physical releases (cassette, CD) have decreased significantly. Nevertheless, limited editions, special prints, or nostalgic designs could attract collectors or listeners who want to experience music through the cassette format. Since digital publishing has become nearly effortless, using cassettes as a "special physical edition" could strengthen an album's identity and appeal to loyal fans. Of course, using cassettes also presents serious challenges. Playing them requires tape decks that few households now possess. The audio quality is technically inferior to digital or even CD formats.

Producing new cassettes may be costly, and Iran's current market might not be large enough to justify mass production, meaning this format would likely remain a special edition or collectible item rather than a mainstream channel for music distribution. Finally, it must be acknowledged that Iran's music publishing environment is complex, and releasing physical formats such as cassettes could still face legal challenges, much as it did in the past.