

Iran’s Nazeri, Tajik Kholov debut collaborative music album in Konya

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian maestro Shahram Nazeri and the late Tajik singer Davlatmand Kholov unveiled their collaborative album ‘O, Love! Come’ on Tuesday, coinciding with the 752nd anniversary of the death of Persian poet and mystic Rumi, according to the Selçuk University Mevlana Research Institute. The album, directed and produced by Shahab Nikman, represents Kholov’s final recorded work and the first time Nazeri has premiered an album in Turkey, ISNA reported. Years earlier, Nazeri’s album ‘Avaz-e Asatir’ (Mythical Chants) had been released in Paris.

It was showcased at the institute with support from the International Mevlana Foundation and the Mana Naqsh Heritage Institute for Culture and Art. "This is the first and only joint effort between Nazeri and a non-Iranian singer," the organizers noted. Featuring seven vocal tracks and a music video, ‘O, Love! Come’ blends Persian and Tajik dialects, highlighting the rich interplay between the two linguistic traditions. Signature pieces include reinterpretations of Nazeri’s ‘Mastaneh Sho’ (Be Intoxicated) and Kholov’s ‘Sheyda Shodam’ (I Became Enraptured), retitled ‘Heyran Bia’ (Come, Bewildered), performed jointly by the two luminaries of Eastern

classical music. The album was created under the auspices of the Mana Naqsh Heritage Institute for Culture and Art, a UNESCO advisory body, to promote Rumi’s philosophy and Persianate intangible cultural heritage shared across Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. Musicians from at least four countries contributed, including instrumentalists from Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, while whirling dervishes featured in the music video hailed from Konya. The video draws inspiration from Rumi’s spiritual journey from Khorasan’s Ghiasieh School of Khargerd to Konya, symbolizing the path from Sharia (religious law) to Tariqa (spiritual path), as

conceptualized in Attar’s ‘Seven Cities of Love.’ Its imagery foregrounds Persian mystical thought and the global recognition of Mevlevi Sema as an intangible cultural heritage. Instrumentation emphasizes traditional Persian and Eastern instruments, particularly the rabab (a traditional, short-necked string instrument), historically associated with Rumi. Five rabab performers contribute, each representing distinct regional styles: An Isfahani musician, two Baloch Iranians, one Tajik, and one Afghan. ‘O, Love! Come’ forms part of the international ‘The Language of Love’ project, launched in 2019 in London with live performances by Nazeri and Kholov at



the Barbican Centre. The initiative celebrates the legacy of 30 first-millennium Persian poets and now highlights Rumi’s enduring influence on music, philosophy, and intercultural dialogue.

Golestan Province poised for tourism surge



Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri (front R) visits the Gorgan Photography Museum in Golestan Province, Iran, December 16, 2025. ● IRNA

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Iran’s northern Golestan Province is on the cusp of a major tourism and sustainable development boom, Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, said during a provincial visit on Tuesday. Speaking at the newly developed Gorgan Rural Heritage Museum and the 650-hectare Qoroq Forest Park, Salehi-Amiri highlighted the region’s unique natural and cultural assets, ISNA reported. “Golestan is like a sun shining across Iran, both illuminating and warming,” he told reporters, noting that provincial authorities, local representatives, and ethnic communities have aligned on a strategic vision prioritizing development over local disputes. The minister described Qoroq Forest Park, set within the globally recognized Hyrcanian forests, as a model of environmentally conscious expansion. “This park will be one of the largest and most beautiful forest parks in Iran,” he said. Within its 50 hectares, a cultural village is emerging, restoring six historic rural structures so far, with the first phase scheduled to

open by the Persian New Year or, at the latest, next spring. Salehi-Amiri confirmed that full project completion is expected in the first half of 2026. During the visit, Salehi-Amiri also toured the Gorgan Photography Museum, the first specialized photography museum in northern Iran. Housing over 2,500 cameras and audiovisual devices, the museum aims to become a national hub for photographic heritage. Future expansions include a 30-seat VIP cinema and dedicated educational programs. Other initiatives include the Ashuradeh sustainable tourism project, undertaken in line with environmental safeguards, and the restoration of the historic Gorgan Wall, targeted for UNESCO recognition. Salehi-Amiri emphasized on-the-ground engagement by senior officials as a cornerstone of the ministry’s strategy to align planning with local realities. He also urged the national media to amplify Golestan’s cultural and natural attractions to domestic and international audiences, highlighting Qoroq Forest Park as a key focal point in Iran’s broader tourism promotion campaigns.

Species-specific sounds spark surprising animal responses

Scientific, behavioral, and cognitive views

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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Music has been an inseparable part of human experience for centuries, serving as a powerful tool for expressing emotions, facilitating communication, and even providing therapeutic benefits. Yet an intriguing question continues to captivate researchers: Do animals perceive and respond to music as humans do? If they do, what types of music are meaningful to them, and how do their reactions differ from those of humans? Over the past decades, scientific studies have sought to answer these questions, yielding valuable insights into auditory perception, emotional responses, and animal behavior. The following explores animals’ reactions to music through behavioral, cognitive, and biological lenses, drawing on examples from carefully conducted scientific experiments.

Biological foundations of sound processing in animals

To understand animals’ reactions to music, one must first consider the structural differences between the human auditory system and that of other creatures. Every species has its own hearing range, different sensitivities to frequencies and rhythms, and unique cognitive capacities that determine how it receives and analyzes sound. For example, dogs hear much higher frequencies than humans, so human-centered music is not always pleasant or understandable for them. Marine mammals like whales and dolphins have different auditory structures, and much of their communication is based on ultrasound. Songbirds possess a brain structure closer to that of humans, comparable to the human music-processing area.

These biological differences lead to highly diverse reactions to music among species, and a piece of music that is calming or joyful for humans may be annoying or meaningless to another animal.

Music shapes animal mood

Behavioral studies show that animals display reactions to familiar sound patterns. However, their reaction to music greatly depends on the species and the type of music. Research shows that dogs react more calmly to classical music. In some experiments, reduced barking, lowered bodily tension, and increased resting time were observed while dogs listened to classical music. In contrast, rock or metal music can trigger nervous behavior and restless movements. Cats respond less to human-centered music than dogs do. But studies on “cat-specific music”, pieces composed based on the frequencies and rhythms similar to natural cat sounds, show that they react more positively to such music. This aligns with the theory that animals respond to sounds that fall within the natural range of their communication. In agricultural settings, music is sometimes used to improve livestock welfare. Studies show that cows, after a period of listening to calm music, show increased milk production. Pigs react more calmly to gentle music. Chickens also become calmer and less stressed in some conditions when exposed to music. However, these effects are not always constant and may depend on the environment, sound volume, and the animals’ habits. Some birds, such as finches and budgerigars, have complex vocal abilities, and their songs have structures similar to music. Research shows that the brains of songbirds contain regions that process sound similarly to the human auditory cortex. They can im-

itate and retain complex rhythmic and melodic patterns. Some species can detect whether a vocal sequence has been altered, something similar to detecting a “wrong note.” However, it is still unclear whether birds experience music “emotionally” or if their reactions are merely related to learning and imitation patterns. Chimpanzees, gorillas, and monkeys are genetically close to humans, but their behavior toward music shows that the concept of music may not exist in them as it does in humans. In some studies, they did not show specific reactions to classical, pop, or rock music. Music that resembles their heartbeat or body-movement rhythms attracts more attention. Sometimes regular rhythms can reduce stress, but this effect has not been confirmed in all studies. These findings suggest that human-like music perception may be a species-specific trait of our kind. Horses are sensitive to sound, and calm music can reduce their stress. Trainers sometimes use music to create relaxation during grooming or training. Although the auditory structure of fish is very different from that of mammals, they respond to sound vibrations. Music with a steady beat can change the group movement of some fish. Elephants have the ability to perceive very low frequencies. Documented cases exist in which elephants reacted to sounds from instruments like the piano and even exhibited rhythmic movements. However, it is not definitively known whether these reactions are emotional or merely motor curiosity. In recent years, music has gained attention as a therapeutic tool for pets and even zoo animals. Its known applications include reducing separation anxiety in dogs, reducing stress during livestock transport or treatment, calming animals in shelters, and improving sleep and reducing aggressive be-

havior. Many of these results are linked to specific musical features such as gentle rhythm, simple harmony, and frequencies close to the species’ natural hearing range.

Do animals experience music?

One of the most important questions is whether animals’ reactions represent some kind of emotional experience, or if they are simply responses to auditory stimuli. Opinions on this matter vary. Some scientists believe that aesthetic sense in music is likely unique to humans. Others have found evidence suggesting that animals may experience a kind of emotional state related to music. For example, the heart rate of dogs or cows decreases when listening to calm music, which may indicate emotional changes; but it still cannot be said with certainty that this state is the same as the “musical pleasure” humans experience. In conclusion, animals’ reactions to music are complex and multifaceted, because the most important means of human communication is expression and language, and obtaining and interpreting mental reactions from animal species is very difficult. Nevertheless, studies show that animals are sensitive to sound, and music can affect their behavior and physiology. However, many animals, especially primates, do not experience human music the way we do. Reactions are usually related to biological features of the species, including hearing range, type of vocal communication, and natural behavioral patterns. Still, music can be an effective tool for reducing stress and improving animal welfare. Research in this field is ongoing, and as our knowledge of animal brains and cognition grows, we will better understand how and to what extent music can affect their world.