

Luri kamancheh has universal language: *Virtuoso*

Migration did not create distance 'between me, my roots'



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INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

family where music was not merely a career choice, but part of everyday life and identity. The son of Faraj Alipour, a prominent master of Luri music and a renowned kamancheh player, he became familiar from childhood with the melodies of Lorestan's music, travel, practice, and the stage. His first experiences alongside his father later developed into an independent path in which he has sought to strike a balance between remaining faithful to the heritage of Luri music and embracing new musical experiences. In addition to his activities with the Tal Ensemble and collaborations with his father, Alipour has worked with figures in Iranian music including Homayoun Shajarian and Parvaz Homa. His participation in projects such as "Simorgh," composed by Hamid Motebassem and featuring Homayoun Shajarian as vocalist, expanded his experience from regional music into the orchestral space and more complex structures of Iranian music. He says that regional music gave him "authenticity and heartfelt expression," while urban music added "a structured perspective and an understanding of form" to this experience. Migration to the United States has not meant distancing himself from his roots; on the contrary, he regards it as a new responsibility to introduce the music of Lorestan abroad. During his years in the United States, he has performed Luri music in different states and sought to familiarize American audiences with the sound of the Luri kamancheh, its energetic rhythms, and the emotional expression of this music. The "Za" project is also one of his efforts to establish a deeper connection between this music and non-Iranian audiences. It is a project in which music is accompanied by narration and storytelling, with a significant portion of concert audiences being non-Iranian. In this interview, Alipour talks about his experience of migration, his relationship with his father's heritage, the difference between the expression of the Luri kamancheh and Iranian classical music, the possibility of Lorestan's music becoming global, the economics of regional music, the use of artificial intelligence to reconstruct part of the historical memory of Lorestan's music, and his plans for the future — a future in which he dreams of taking Luri music to the stage with a large international orchestra. The following is the full interview of Iran Daily with Mazdak Alipour, the prominent kamancheh player.

Mazdak Alipour



IRAN DAILY: You grew up in a family where music was not merely a profession for you, but part of your family's life and identity. You began learning the Luri kamancheh from your father, Faraj Alipour, at the age of seven and took to the stage very soon afterward. What is your earliest image of the kamancheh, and when did you realize that this instrument was going to determine the course of your life?

ALIPOUR: The first image I have of the kamancheh is part of everyday life and the atmosphere of our home. From the age of four, I became familiar with rhythm and beat, and then I began learning the kamancheh from my father.

My first official performance was at the age of 11 in the city of Khorramabad. During the intermission between the two parts of my father's concert, my brother Milad and I went on stage and performed two pieces. The audience's warm applause and enthusiastic reception that night was the first spark that showed me this instrument would be the path of my future.

After moving to Tehran during high school, my musical environment took on a more serious shape. While performing on stage with my father's group, I also collaborated with various other groups and gained experience so that my own independent musical identity could take shape.

Faraj Alipour is a seminal figure in Luri music and, for you, has simultaneously been a father and a teacher. Working with your father, particularly in the Tal Ensemble, was probably both a great opportunity and a considerable pressure. How did you manage to strike a balance between your father's musical heritage and finding your own voice? Have you ever wanted to get out of the shadow of Faraj Ali-pour's name?

Working with my father was not merely a professional experience on stage; it was living in an ever-present university. Day and night, I accompanied him on trips, rehearsals, and journeys, and I saw how lovingly and devotedly he searched for old verses and forgotten melodies in order to reconstruct them and leave them as a legacy for future generations. Being beside him taught me that music is not simply playing an instrument, but also how to respect people and preserve culture. This was the greatest lesson I learned, moment by moment, without



direct instruction.

As for finding my own voice, I never intended to distance myself from or escape my father's name. Instead, I have always tried to continue and complete his path and way of thinking. To maintain a balance between authenticity and innovation, I have tried to preserve the pristine authenticity of Luri music while presenting it through orchestration, instrumentation, and a fresh form of expression that is attractive and enjoyable for today's generation and contemporary audiences.

In addition to the Tal Ensemble, you have worked with figures such as Homayoun Shajarian and Parvaz Homa and have participated in various Iranian music projects. What did working alongside singers and composers of urban and classical Iranian music add to your musicianship that you could not have experienced on your own in regional music?

Working in orchestral projects taught me that, as a musician, above all I must be in the service of the ensemble and orchestra. My simultaneous mastery of Iranian classical repertoire and regional music has given a particular flexibility and richness to my playing in orchestras. This combination of a regional idiom with an urban structure is precisely the point that attracts composers and singers and distinguishes my style of playing from others.

The "Simorgh" project, composed by Master Hamid Motebassem and featuring Homayoun Shajarian as vocalist, was one of my most brilliant experiences. In that project, which was based on Ferdowsi's

Shahnameh, I saw firsthand how a composer can transform ancient texts into music with delicacy in order to create the greatest emotional impact. Playing alongside prominent masters of Iranian instruments greatly enhanced my perspective on ensemble playing and orchestral discipline.

On the other hand, my several years of collaboration with Parvaz Homa created a different environment for me. In his orchestra, I had the opportunity to discover my abilities in improvisation. I had the freedom to let myself go on stage and play with a different expression each time. In addition, I experienced the combination of music with modern poetry, theatrical stage settings, and creative stage concepts alongside him. Regional music gave me authenticity and heartfelt expression, while urban music added a structured perspective and an understanding of form. The combination of these two became my personal signature as a musician.

One of the characteristics of your kamancheh playing is that you seem to build a bridge between Iranian kamancheh technique and the distinctive expression of the Luri kamancheh. From a musician's perspective, what is the most important difference in the expression of the Luri kamancheh compared with the kamancheh in Iranian classical music? And do you think academic training in the kamancheh could cause some of this indigenous expression to disappear?

The main difference lies in the type of bowing, ornaments, embellishments,



Mazdak Alipour performs live in a concert with the Tal Ensemble in Iran.

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and the direct, unmediated tone found in the Luri kamancheh. Folk music has techniques and nuances in ornamentation and phrasing that are not necessarily incorporated into traditional notation. In my view, if academic training begins from the very first day and without sensory understanding, it can weaken the musician's indigenous accent and expression or force it into a particular mold. The right path for me was to first learn music through the "oral tradition," by listening deeply.

My fingering and bowing developed within an authentic Luri environment and became connected to the spirit of this music. I then turned to academic education and reading notation so that I could play without limitations in different orchestras. The greatest challenge is precisely here: some indigenous musicians do not have the ability to perform orchestrally from notation, while some academically trained musicians lose the tone and spirit of folk music. Beginning with regional music strengthens specific techniques that are not found in the traditional repertoire, and adding academic knowledge to it provides the ability to coordinate within any ensemble while simultaneously preserving the instrument's indigenous spirit.

You have been living in the United States for several years, but you have not separated your works from Luri and regional music. Even your recent works show an interest in fusion experiences, including combining Luri music with the country music environment. Did migration cause you to see Luri music from a new distance? And when you play a Luri melody today, do you hear it the same way you heard it in Khorramabad?

Migration not only did not create a distance between me and my roots, but also placed a new responsibility and mission on my shoulders. From the very beginning of my arrival in the United States, I did not stop my activities, and I made every effort to introduce Luri music to Iranian and non-Iranian audiences in various forms — from solo and duo performances to combinations with electronic and country music — which, fortunately, received an extraordinary response.

The idea of combining it with country music goes back many years to my time in Iran. I have always been an active listener of world music in order to find points of connection between cultures.