

Given its crucial role in performance, how musicians learn to improvise must be mentioned at this point. In a co-authored article that compares improvisation approaches in North and South Indian and Persian art music traditions, Laudan Nooshin states the following:

Significantly, [in Persian classical music] improvisation was not taught as such: pupils were simply required to memorise the repertoire precisely by rote. At the same time, repeated repetition of a passage by a teacher would show how it might be varied, and the attempts of individual students to make their own variations, and the teacher's corrections where necessary, further established the possibilities and boundaries of acceptable improvisation. (Widdess & Nooshin, 2006, p. 4)

Nettl elaborates on this process, noting that improvisation forms the core of "true performance", however it is up to the student to deduce how to go about the process:

The musician of Iran studies the *radīf*, memorising it precisely from his teacher's version, which may be similar but not identical to that of other teachers. The teacher is concerned only with the student's ability to reproduce what he or she sings or plays in lessons with utmost exactness. He does not explain the minutiae of the structure of the *radīf*, although the student needs to learn these in order to engage in improvisation, the central activity in true performance. The student must deduce from the *radīf*, with its many examples of variation, melodic sequence, extension and contraction of motifs, that its very structure is the guide to improvisatory procedure. Once the *radīf* is memorised, the student is considered ready to perform without further instruction. He or she has learned a theoretical construct and must now suddenly move to improvisation. [...] The Iranian musician leaps directly from study, detailed but at only one level of conceptualisation, into true performance. (Nettl 2015, 380)

Finally, Shakerifard refers to improvisation as part of a process of "active enculturation", which is the culmination point of transmission:

In learning Iranian classical music, improvisation is not taught, but rather is developed during a lengthy process through years of listening to and imitating a diverse repertoire chosen based on the individual's musical taste. Musicians are highly influenced by masters whose interpretation, style, technique, phrasing, and *hess* (feeling and mood) they prefer. Although older generations of master musicians may attribute improvisational skills to the individual's 'innate', or 'God-given' nature, younger musicians believe that this ability and taste can be developed with time through practice of the *radīf*, listening to master musicians, and heeding comments by their teachers for performing what sounds or feels better. Mastering creativity is a process that does not involve education or even transmission as such, but rather active enculturation that leads musicians to take full agency over the development of their own creative process. (Kohfeld, 2019, p. 25)