

*Darya* (pronounced dahr-YAH), meaning "the sea" in Persian, was founded in 1996 through the artistic collaboration between Faraidoun Akhavan and Douglas Hensley. Originally formed as a cultural bridge between traditional Persian music and Canadian audiences, the ensemble has evolved into a sophisticated musical collective dedicated to preserving and reimagining the beauty of Persian classical music.

Named after Keivan Saket's evocative composition "The Sea," Darya embodies the dynamic, ever-changing nature of both the ocean and Persian musical tradition. As the group has grown over nearly three decades, it has welcomed accomplished musicians from diverse backgrounds, creating a rich tapestry of artistic voices united by their passion for Persian classical music.

The ensemble's repertoire spans the full spectrum of Persian musical forms, from traditional folk melodies to contemporary compositions, performed on traditional instruments including tar, setar, santour, ney, kamanche, daf, and vocals. Through their performances across Victoria, Vancouver Island, and beyond, Darya has established itself as a vital cultural ambassador, introducing audiences to the sophisticated and profound expressive depth of Persian musical expression.

With this expansion of talent and instrumentation, Darya continues its mission of preserving classical Persian musical traditions while exploring innovative interpretations that speak to contemporary audiences. The ensemble represents both the timeless beauty of Persian culture and its living, breathing evolution in the Canadian artistic landscape.

Iranian classical music is built around a sophisticated modal system called dastgaah; think of these as musical universes, each with its own emotional character and melodic patterns yet deeply interconnected. Tonight's performance will take you on a journey through several of these musical worlds, from the passionate Esfahaan to the pastoral Dashti.



Welcome to a transformative journey through Persian classical music.



# Program

## Part 1

### Pishdaraamad-e Esfaaan / Composer: Ali Asghar Bahari (1905-1995)

A pishdaraamad introduces a dastgaah's character. This haunting piece from one of the 20th century's most revered kamanche masters moves through contemplative opening passages into passionate questioning, before arriving at a complex resolution balancing longing with acceptance.

### Tasnif-e Darya (The Sea) / Composer: Keivan Saket (b. 1961)

This piece lends its name to our ensemble, creating a vivid musical seascape capturing the ocean's ever-changing moods from tranquil calm to dramatic storms. The poetry warns us to remain as dynamic as the sea itself, lest we become stagnant pools.

### Saaz-o Aavaaz-e Shushtari

Free-flowing musical conversations between voice and instruments, unbound by rhythm. In these intimate dialogues, singer and instrumentalist complete each other's musical thoughts. Vocal accompanied by setar and violin.

### Chahaarmezaab-e Shushtari / Composer: Keivan Saket (b. 1961)

Fast-paced, rhythmic pieces with recurring motifs. This highly technical piece showcases intricate musical details and virtuosic playing by contemporary master Saket, known for his innovative fusion of traditional Persian forms.

### Saaz-o Aavaaz-e Homaayun

Free improvisation featuring vocal with santour and violin. Homaayun evokes deep contemplation and existential reflection, drawing the listener into profound thoughts distinct from the longing found in other modes.

### Tasnif-e Aghrabe Zolfe Kajet (The Scorpion Curls of Your Hair) / Composer: Aliakbar Sheyda (c. 1843-1906)

A Qajar era master and Renaissance figure, Sheyda was poet, calligrapher, and musician. This piece captures the intoxicating danger of love through the metaphor of the beloved's curls as beautiful yet deadly scorpion tails.

### Tasnif-e Aasemoon Be In Gapi (The Sky of Such Expanse) / Folk music of Shiraz

Regional folk music has profoundly influenced formal dastgaahi music. This beautiful piece from Shiraz represents the living connection between Iran's classical tradition and its folk roots, carrying the voice of the people.

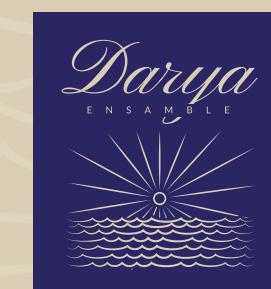


**Mohammad  
Sadeghipour**  
vocals



**Ali Shirazi**  
daf

Born in the city of golden sun and sea, Mohammad discovered his first musical journey in his teenage years, enchanted by the ethereal voice of maestro Shahjarian; a voice sweeter than fresh golden dates of summer. Inspired, he began taking his first steps into singing as a self-taught artist. While pursuing his university studies in Tehran, Mohammad joined the Arsbaran Cultural Center choir, where he briefly studied under maestro Rambod Sodeif. He later continued his vocal training in Bushehr with Bahman Abdolsheikhi, one of maestro Sodeif's distinguished students. Since moving to Canada in 2022, Mohammad has continued sharing the melodies of his homeland, bringing the spirit of Persian music to new audiences.





**Azar Mirzaei**  
setar



**Keivan Monfared**  
santour



**Masoud Manzouri**  
tar

Raised in a family deeply rooted in Persian musical tradition, Azar first discovered her passion for the setar when her uncle, Abbas Adami, gifted her the instrument and taught her a simple melody. In 2001, she began formal studies under the guidance of master musician Hossein Yara. After four formative years, life's path led her away from structured training, but her bond with the setar endured; nurtured quietly through personal practice and reflection. In November 2023, her musical journey came full circle as she joined the Darya Ensemble and resumed her studies with the esteemed master Houshang Farahani, marking the beginning of a renewed chapter in her artistic evolution.

Keivan's musical journey began at age seven when his aunt introduced him to the santour. Captivated by what maestro Faramarz Payvar described as this "simple yet elusive" instrument, he has been devoted to mastering its intricacies ever since. He has studied under renowned masters Hadi Jafari and Javad Bathaei, while continuing to develop his artistry through personal exploration and musical collaborations. With extensive experience performing alongside ensembles such as Nava and Chutney, Keivan brings a wealth of musical depth to his performances. As the newest member of the Darya Ensemble, Keivan is excited to share his distinctive musical voice and contribute to the rich tapestry of Persian classical music.

Masoud brings his passion for the tar and deep appreciation for Persian classical music to the Darya Ensemble. His dedication to mastering this foundational instrument of Persian music reflects his commitment to preserving and sharing the rich traditions of his heritage. Through years of study and practice, Masoud has developed a nuanced understanding of the tar's expressive capabilities and continues to explore its melodic possibilities within the ensemble's collaborative performances.

## Part 2

**Chahaarmezraab-e Dashti** / Based on an etude by Jalil Shahnaz (1921-2013), arranged by Siamak Aghaei

The legendary "God of tar" revolutionized Persian classical music through virtuosic technique and vivid musical imagery. This piece in the popular Dashti mode showcases the rhythmic brilliance that made Shahnaz a legend.

### **Saaz-o Aavaaz-e Dashti**

Free improvisation featuring vocal with ney. Dashti evokes open countryside and rural landscapes, carrying the spirit of vast plains and the timeless connection between people and land.

**Tasnif-e Ey Aamaan (Oh Refuge)** / Composer: Faramarz Payvar (1933-2009)

A heartfelt plea for sanctuary from separation's ache. This piece is in Shur mode, one of the most beloved dastgaahs, known for its deeply moving character that captures longing and spiritual yearning.

### **Pishdaraamad-e Abuataa** / Composer: Faramarz Payvar (1933-2009)

Payvar revolutionized the santour while creating sophisticated arrangements that introduced polyphony into Persian music. This pishdaraamad introduces the mystical Abuataa mode.

### **Saaz-o Aavaaz-e Abuataa**

Vocal accompanied by tar. Abuataa expresses joy and happiness while maintaining deep spiritual undertones and an air of mystery, perfect for exploring the connection between earthly emotions and divine transcendence.

**Tasnif-e Baa Man Sanama (With Me, My Beloved)** / Composer: Faramarz Payvar (1933-2009)

Performed in gushe Hejaaz from mode Abuataa, demonstrating sophisticated modal relationships through delicate interplay between sound and silence. The lover surrenders completely, finding strange power in choosing to be conquered by beauty.

### **Reng-e Dashti** / Composer: Reza Mahjoubi, with additions by Abolhassan Saba

Rhythmic concluding pieces traditionally accompanied by dance. The lover rests beside flowing water, knowing petals scatter and wine sours, but in this moment lives music, beauty, and the possibility that love might linger.

# Members



**Tayebeh Adami**  
tar



**Faraidoun Akhavan**  
kamanche, viola & violin



**Arian Aminalroaya**  
tombak & percussions

The resonant strings of the tar have been Tayebeh's musical language, refined through studies with masters Hoshang Zarif, Hoseyn Mehrani, Mehdi Hoseini, and Amir Ahadi. Her musical path began thanks to her brother Abbas, who gifted her a recording of master Shahnaz and then her first tar. Her deep passion for traditional Iranian music extends beyond personal artistry to a genuine joy in sharing these ancient melodies with others. Always eager to discover new sonic territories, Tayebeh continues her musical exploration through innovative collaborations and fresh interpretations.

At twelve years old in Iran, Faraidoun discovered his musical calling and studied under Assadollah Malek, a celebrated Persian violinist and composer. His early career included performances with the Zahedan classical music orchestra before his departure from Iran in 1979. For decades in Canada, Faraidoun has served as a cultural ambassador, introducing Persian classical music to diverse audiences across various venues. In 1996, he joined forces with Douglas Hensley to establish the Darya Persian classical music ensemble in Victoria, creating a lasting legacy through countless performances that continue to bridge cultures through the universal language of music.

Music chose Arian early; at just five years old, he began his studies under master Arjang Kamkar in Tehran, specializing in Persian percussion and vocals. This early foundation launched an international performance career that has taken him across stages with the Ancient Music Society and Duo Corvi. Since 2011, he has been an early member of the Darya Persian Music Ensemble, bringing his ear-trained musicianship and expressive artistry to explorations spanning classical, popular, and electronic Persian music. Currently pursuing business studies in digital marketing, Arian seamlessly blends traditional artistry with contemporary innovation.



**Maryam Badrzadeh**  
vocals



**Douglas Hensley**  
oud



**Davoud Jafari**  
ney

Born in Tehran and now calling Victoria home, Maryam has nurtured her passion for vocal performance since her teenage years. Her self-guided journey through Persian classical singing has been illuminated by the works of legendary masters, inspiring her own artistic development. During her years in Iran, she spent two enriching years collaborating with a local music ensemble. Since 2023, Maryam has found her artistic home with the Darya Ensemble, where she continues to explore the depths of Persian vocal tradition alongside accomplished musicians.

Bridging East and West through his musical journey, Douglas brings his foundation in classical guitar and lute to Persian music with remarkable dedication. His studies span continents and masters; learning tar with Mohammad Reza Lotfi and Dariush Tala'i, setar with Reza Ghasemi and Partow Hooshmandrad, ney with Hossein Omoumi, oud with Akbar Mohseni, and santour with Mahvash Guerami across California and Paris. A founding member of multiple ensembles including Steluța and Three Rivers, he is also a member of the Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra and teaches at the Victoria Conservatory of Music.

Davoud's path to the ney began through friendship; learning initially alongside Abbas Adami before deepening his craft under master Yasin Azhdari, a distinguished student of the legendary Kiani Nezhad. Further studies with Hasan Nahid have shaped his expressively rich and nuanced playing style. For Davoud, the haunting voice of the ney is not merely an instrument but a vital thread woven through the fabric of his daily life.