

NASIM AHMADIAN**Music PhD (Ethnomusicology)**

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Dear Professor Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi,

I am writing to express my strong interest in the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies (2025-2026) at the University of Toronto, as advertised on the Institute's website. I received my PhD in Music (Ethnomusicology) from the University of Alberta in 2024. My doctoral dissertation titled *Affective Hal and the Aesthetic Education of Sorrow in Performing Iranian Classical music*, co-supervised by Dr. Michael Frishkopf and Dr. Julia Byl, examines the transmission of affect and the ethos of sorrow in Iranian classical music through *maktab* pedagogy, within the historical and socio-political context of twentieth-century Iran. The project also explores the roles of modernity, religious ideology, and orientalism in shaping aesthetics of sorrow and female agency in Iranian music education. I am eager to further develop this research within your vibrant scholarly community and to prepare my dissertation for publication as a scholarly monograph.

As an ethnomusicologist with a focus on Iranian traditional music and interdisciplinary studies in Persian arts, literature, and cultural history, I bring a unique combination of academic and artistic experience. I have taught courses at the University of Alberta and at the Music Conservatory School of Fine Arts in Iran. I am also a professional santur player, educator, and founder of the award-winning *Nasim* Women's Ensemble in Iran. My experience in academic and artistic leadership across Canada and Iran reflects my commitment to the collaborative and interdisciplinary goals of the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute. Having attended several of the Institute's intellectually enriching events in recent years, I would be honored to contribute my research and practice to its dynamic scholarly and cultural mission.

Research Interests and Contributions

My research spans affect and aesthetics, Persian poetics and voice studies, performance and pedagogy, gender and media, diaspora identities, and mysticism, with a particular focus on Iran and the Persianate world. I have presented at major conferences such as the Society for Ethnomusicology, the International Council for Traditional Music and Dance, and the Canadian Society for Traditional Music. My paper on Iranian female agency and the aesthetics of sorrow—drawn from my dissertation—received Honorable Mention from SEM's Gender & Sexuality Section in 2023. A part of this research has been published in the edited volume *Women's Leadership in Music: Modes, Legacies, Alliances*, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld (2023), 225-238. My research and review articles have also appeared in international journals including *MusiCultures* and *World Pop Music*. These presentations and publications, combined with public speeches, invited lectures, and lecture-performances, have helped bring Iranian music and culture to broader international audiences and readership.

In my research, I also advocate for culturally grounded methodologies, ethnography, and writing forms. My dissertation integrated autoethnography with reflective narratives, poetic prose, bilingual poetry, oral history, and interpretive video and art description to examine Persian musical-emotional expression. I argue for

expanding the boundaries of academic writing to include expressive and metaphorical elements native to Persian culture—thereby fostering new ways of theorizing, analyzing, and representing Iranian aesthetics.

Teaching Experience

At the University of Alberta, I developed and taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in Persian art music (MUSIC 365/565) for special topics and area studies in ethnomusicology, and topics including identity, diaspora, media, and cultural politics (MUSIC 102/103) with focus on Iran and the Middle East for Music Department and interdisciplinary programs. These courses were well received by students from diverse academic backgrounds. I am highly interested in developing and offering related courses aligned with the focus and scope of the Iranian Studies Institute, interdisciplinary programs, and courses focusing on Iranian culture and history at the University of Toronto.

Academic Leadership

I have extensive leadership experience as President and Academic Vice President of the Graduate Music Student Association at the University of Alberta, where I organized two international conferences (Encounters 2017 and 2019) with invited keynotes from UBC and UCLA. I served on the program committee for the 2021 CSTM conference and was a research assistant and coordinator for the SSHRC-funded *Dialogues* project (*Decolonizing Dance, Sound, and Music*) and the international conference *Borderless Flows: Improvisational Interactions across Asia, Africa & Beyond* (2022). Additionally, I served as Editor-in-Chief of Music for the graduate journal *Intonations* (University of Alberta) and have recently been appointed as Book Review Co-Editor for the journal *Ethnomusicology*. These roles have developed my skills in collaborative scholarship, project management, teamwork, and public engagement.

I deeply value the inclusive and supportive intellectual environment fostered by the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute and the University of Toronto. As a postdoctoral fellow, I hope to expand my research and teaching horizons while contributing meaningfully to the Institute's collaborative and interdisciplinary initiatives.

Thank you for considering my application. I would be happy to provide additional materials or further discuss how my experience and research align with your fellowship's goals. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Nasim Ahmadian

