

Exploring the mystical depths of Persian music: A case study

by

Sylvia Ava Bahrami
B. A., University of Victoria, 2010

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The need for multicultural counselling is on the rise while developing multicultural tools in counselling are lagging behind. This is especially apparent in the use of music for counselling purposes. There is a dearth of knowledge regarding the music repertoires of different cultures and how they might be implemented in counselling practices. The research presented here explores the depths of improvisatory Persian music from the lens of two masters of this music. Master Douglas Hensley is an American born musician who has mastered playing Persian music on various instruments. The second participant, Master Kayhan Kalhor, is a renowned Iranian musician who is best known for his improvisatory work on an authentic instrument called the Kamancheh.

Based on my interview with the participants, I have deduced that Persian music is indeed intertwined with Persian mysticism and as such it provokes self-awareness and self-control. Based on these findings I propose a conceptual framework, which provides the foundation for future lines of research regarding the use of Persian music in counselling settings.

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Since I was a child I always wanted to go into a profession that involved helping others. That is why when I was accepted in the MA program I knew that I was given the chance to do something that I had always wanted to do, which was to provide guidance and support to others. This career path would have not been possible without the support from the following people.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. From multicultural counselling to culturally-centered music therapy

In terms of cultural diversity, North America is perhaps one of the most versatile regions of our planet. The emergence of this multicultural society has led to the inception of a multicultural attitude in counselling (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi and Bryant, 2007). In this setting, counsellors develop a 'worldview' that is respectful of different belief systems their clients may hold (Derald Wing, Arredondo and McDavis, 1992). The competence of counsellors in adapting such a worldview and executing a culture-centered practice depends on various factors (Ponterotto, Rieger, Barret and Sparks, 1994). Gaining knowledge about different worldviews is perhaps the most crucial factor in shaping competent, multicultural counsellors (Arredondo, 1999); however, in this context, developing a 'multicultural empathy' that can be used in counselling practices is equally important (Brown, 2002). Ridley and Lingle (1996) argue that 'generic' empathy is not sufficient in a multicultural setting and counsellors need to develop a sense of 'cultural' empathy. While generic empathy refers to an attempt on behalf of the counsellor to understand the clients' internal feelings, cultural empathy goes beyond to understand the clients' worldview (Brown, 2002). Therefore, cultural empathy, Ridley and Lingle (1996) conclude, is a process that encompasses the concepts of perception, affection, cognition and communication (p. 32).

Communicating with individuals of different backgrounds is perhaps the most delicate matter in multicultural counselling. Each culture has a set of communication

norms, both verbal and non-verbal, that may or may not be shared with other cultures. For instance, consider the simple act of shaking hands: It is perfectly normal for a male counsellor to shake hands with a female client of Western descent; however, the same act would be considered out of the ordinary if the client was Muslim.

Similar subtle nuances apply to other forms of communication. Music, for example, is a form of communication that is considered to transcend cultural barriers and trigger feelings and emotions that are purely human in nature. For this reason, some experts argue that music is a 'universal language' (Blacking, 1987; Campbell, 1997). On the other hand, other experts argue, music is a symbol and as such its perception and interpretation is a culturally oriented phenomenon and thus music cannot universally prompt emotions in all clients (Rudd, 1998). I view this matter from a different perspective: I believe that the origin of a musical piece is as important as its destination. In other words, in my point of view, music reaches 'universality' and triggers our most basic human emotions only when it is created as a consequence of an emotional eruption in another human being. Therefore, music can be universal yet be simultaneously defined by the cultural barriers of the person that created it.

Despite the debate over universality of music as a form of communication in counselling settings, it seems prudent for a multicultural counsellor or music therapist to be familiar with the musical repertoires of different cultures and explore them with the clients of different backgrounds. Unfortunately, a search of music therapy databases reveals a shortage of information regarding the use of culturally diverse music in counselling/therapy settings. I suspect that this limitation is caused by a lack of literary

work on musical repertoires of different cultures and understanding how they might be used in the context of a multicultural counselling practice.

1.2. Scope of the thesis

This research project has formed around my personal belief that a multicultural approach to the use of music in counselling/therapy practices is necessary especially in regions of growing diversity such as North America. I wanted to explore a musical repertoire that is suitable for counselling practices and that is culturally and musically different from the Western repertoire, which is dominantly used in therapy programs. For this purpose I have chosen to explore improvisational Persian music. Given the dearth of literary work on both improvisational Persian music and its use in counselling settings, I believe it would be naïve to formulate a hypothesis for this research. The objectives of this research are purely exploratory and follow two general trends: 1) understanding improvisational Persian music and introducing it to a Western audience and 2) understanding the nature of the experience that forms as a consequence of improvising this kind of music. These objectives allow me to better understand the following question: *How and why does improvisational Persian music trigger an emotional response in a person?*

I have chosen to explore Persian music – the terms Persian and Iranian are used interchangeably in this manuscript – because of its improvisatory characteristics. The repertoire of Iranian music, known as *Radif*, was recently recognized by UNESCO as an “intangible cultural heritage of humanity” (UNESCO, 2009). In my opinion, the term ‘intangible’ has an aesthetic, metaphorical meaning in this instance: Persian music is

often created based on the mood and the deepest emotions of the performer and as such it mystically reaches out to our most basic, yet inexplicable, human feelings. Such an effect would be particularly useful in a counselling setting.

This exploratory work follows the format of a qualitative case study through which I have conducted interviews with two masters of Persian music: Mr. Douglas Hensley and Mr. Kayhan Kalhor. In Chapter 2, I will review the literature surrounding music therapy and Persian music. Music therapy will be viewed from a historical perspective and its variations in different cultures will be discussed. I will provide a review of the current theoretical models in music therapy in an attempt to properly define this term as it pertains to this thesis. The concept of improvisation will be explored in both music therapy and Persian music. To better understand improvisational Persian music, I have reviewed the history of this music and will discuss its connection to Persian mysticism and how the existential experience formed as a result of this music can be exploited in counselling practices.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used for this study. I will review different types of qualitative case study and argue why exploratory case study is fitting for this research project. Moreover, I will layout the format of the study regarding the interviews, participants and data analysis. In Chapter 4, I present the information that I gathered from the interviews in the form of direct quotes from the participants. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I will summarize the findings of the research and will draw some conclusions from this study. Within the theoretical frameworks of music therapy, I will argue for a new perspective in which music is not simply seen as a combination of therapeutic frequencies and amplitudes, nor is it solely defined by the culture of the client who is

perceiving it; I believe the origin of the music, and the cultural context from which it arises, is also important in defining the clients' experiences.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Literature review on music therapy

2.1.1. *Music therapy: A historical perspective*

It is well documented that since the dawn of civilization mankind has been using music in his religious and ceremonial events (Zonis, 1973; Yehuda, 2001). From the archaeological remnants we now know that drum, flute and bow were amongst the earliest instruments that our ancestors possessed between 43,000 and 67,000 years ago (West, 2000). The sounds that were generated from these instruments were thought to be directly from the world of the dead animals whose bone and skin made these instruments (West, 2000). The first documented clues of using music as a ‘healing’ tool come to us after the work of Pythagoras on musical intervals in late 6th century BC. West (2000) cites a quote from Aristoxenus, the Greek philosopher of 4th century BC, who asserts that music was used ‘for purifying the soul’ by the Pythagoreans (p. 56). Crowe (2004) asserts that Pythagoras believed that laws of music are “earthly manifestations of a Divine order” (p. 5). From this point on there is more evidence for therapeutic use of music in Western culture all the way to the modern day (Page 2000; Jones 2000). The earliest modern day references to music therapy appear in medical journals of the 18th century. A notable scholarly work of this era is “*A Treatise on the Effects of Music on the Human Body*” by Louis Roger (1748), which covers the basic concepts of sound, how humans perceive music and the psychology of music (Crowe, 2004, p. 9).

Aside from the Western hemisphere, music has been traditionally used in therapy in other parts of the world. In the Middle East, both Muslim and Jewish traditions have used music for healing purposes (Shiloah, 2000). The biblical reference to David curing King Saul of his melancholy through music and therapeutic rituals such as *hadra* in North Africa are examples of healing through music in this region (Shiloah, 2000). In India, the ‘magico-religious’ tradition of the Vedas is considered to be a prime example of music therapy (Katz, 2000). There is also evidence of music therapy practices in the Far East, especially in ancient China (Horden, 2009), where specific scale patterns were assigned to different emotional aspects of human beings (Crowe, 2004, p. 8).

Ancient music therapy practices in Iran include *Gwat*, *Damal* and *Samā*, where patients are *engulfed* into the music for treatment (Nasehpour, 2012). The basis of these kind of therapies is described in a major Persian literature of the 11th century, *Qabusnameh* written by the Prince of Gorgan: Lower pitched tones are effective for people with sanguine and phlegmatic temperaments while higher pitched tones suit people with choleric and melancholic temperaments (In Wikipedia, April 05, 2012). The scholarly works of the famous Persian musician, Farabi (d. 905), on music therapy is also of great importance in this regard (Naroditskaya, 2009).

2.1.2. Music therapy: A theoretical perspective

Until two centuries ago, when recording devices became available, the only way to listen to a musical piece was to attend a concert. In the past twenty-five years music has become so readily accessible that it is difficult to avoid exposure to some form of music on a daily basis. In Simon Frith’s words, music has become the ‘soundtrack of life’

and as a result musicians are anxious to “differentiate between ‘listening’ and ‘hearing’: the latter being the result of overexposure” (D. Hargreaves, J. Hargreaves and North, 2012). On the other hand, in recent decades many studies have been performed that demonstrate the use of music in treating different clinical conditions from cancer to depression (O’Callaghan, 1996; Hilliard, 2005; Silverman, 2006). Interestingly, the majority of these music therapy programs use *alternative* music such as classical Western music and New Age music (For an example see Smith & Joyce, 2004). The effectiveness of an alternative music might be better understood by the ‘reciprocal feedback’ model that has been proposed by Hargreaves, MacDonald and Miell, which argues that the *level of engagement* of the audience depends on three main concepts: a) characteristics of the music such as familiarity, complexity and genre, b) characteristics of the listener such as gender, age and literacy and c) characteristics of the context of listening such as in the media, in a restaurant or in private. Therefore, it is argued that the therapeutic effects of music, on a psychological level, is much more profound if the listener has a higher level of engagement (Mitchell, McDonald and Brodie, 2006). However, as Rudd (1998) points out, the question remains why is music an effective therapeutic medium? In other words, what are the inherent characteristics of music that induce a therapeutic effect?

There are two main approaches to explaining the therapeutic effects of music. The first approach is a biological one where scientists view sound as ‘input’ that affects different structures within the human brain – like the hypothalamus – and cause emotional arousal (Taylor, 1997). From a biological perspective, a client’s response to music is measurable in terms of the chemicals that are released within the neurological pathways upon listening to music. The second theory focuses on the immeasurable, non-

verbal effects of music on human emotion. From this perspective, “music sounds the way emotion feels” (Crowe, 2004, p. 243). In other words, there is a non-verbal connection between music and emotion. Interestingly, both theoretical frameworks are based on developmental psychology and the concept of human *emotions*.

Given that the ultimate goal of both theoretical frameworks is to describe the effects of music on emotion, Crowe (2004) proposes a holistic theory that relates music to development of *soul*. Existence and nature of ‘soul’, as an immaterial concept, has been debated for millennia. Plato’s dialogues in *Phaedo* regarding the existence of soul are in my opinion a prime example of such debates. For the purpose of developing a holistic theory for music therapy, Crowe defines soul as “a point of view, a capacity, or a quality of human functioning” (p. 336). Soul is what connects our inner being, our unconscious, to our outer, conscious self. From a holistic point of view, soul and music are in essence the same process; they both imply a sort of movement. Soul is the movement of body and emotion while music is the movement of sound that affects body and emotion and as such “*soulmaking* [through music] is an ongoing process of *health*” (p. 341).

When Plato discusses the concept of soul, it inadvertently conjures what is referred to as ‘Platonic forms’. Platonic forms are immaterial realities that are substantive but not available through sensation. One of these Platonic forms is *spirit*. According to Davis (1999) spirit can be defined in two realms: The divine spirit and its manifestation in every person, the human spirit. Divine spirit is a Platonic form that has assumed many names throughout history of mankind one of which is God (Washburn, 1995). Wolf (1999) argues that the manifestation of divine spirit as a function of *time* forms soul and

its reflection as a function of *space* forms matter. According to this definition, when the divine spirit is reflected as a function of both time and space, human spirit is formed. One can therefore conclude that human spirit is part of a whole, a whole that is the divine spirit. In this context music is seen as a tool that connects the human spirit to the divine spirit (Crowe, 2004, p. 294).

In my opinion approaching music therapy from a holistic point of view is essential in multicultural counselling settings. In this endeavour we define *soul* as an immaterial reality that encompasses both human body and human emotion. Soul itself is created when the divine spirit is reflected as a function of space and time and music is a gateway that gives us a glimpse of this divine spirit. It is from this holistic framework that I will view improvisatory Persian music and explore the experiences that the masters of Persian music endure while improvising.

2.1.3. Improvisation in the context of music therapy

Improvisation is the prominent underlying variable in this study and as such it needs to be defined both in the context of music therapy and in the context of Persian music. Bruscia (1987) argues that improvisation in the context of music therapy refers to the use of live-music that is often created as a result of an interaction between the client and the therapist. With this definition in mind, music improvisation – in its Western sense of the word – refers to “a musical event in which two skilled musicians play music together in a free, spontaneous manner” (Pavlicevic, 2000, p. 271). Improvisation is to “put something together as you go from available resources” and as such it “has an element of prepared *aimlessness*” (Rudd, 1998, p. 117).

Rudd (1998) asserts that improvisation in music therapy can be used as ‘play’ since it is the accidental sounds created through improvisation that matter and not the logical rules of music (p. 118). If we approach improvisation as a play, we can better understand how this musical experience helps the client to gain awareness about his/her situation: Play allows the client to realize that perspectives on different issues are *relative* and as such there are other angles from which we can approach everyday experiences (Schultz and Lavenda, 1990, p. 158). However, it is important to note that improvisation can only be approached as play if the client is involved in generating sounds; if the client is not involved in generating music (i.e. he/she is listening to music) this concept no longer applies. Under circumstances where the client is merely listening to music, it is prudent to think of improvisation as a tool that opens the possibility for the client to experience *timelessness* and *transcendence* through which he/she can “discover new meanings” (Rudd, 1998, p. 121).

The musical experiences that are gained through a therapy session can be used to reinforce certain behaviours. In doing so two approaches of “music-based discussions” and “music imagery” can be utilized (Crowe, 2004). Music-based discussions are verbal accounts of the experiences that the client may have gained at different parts of the session. Music is also known to cause generation of visual imagery in our minds (Bonny and Savary, 1990). With the help of the counsellor/therapist, clients can reach a state of awareness through these mental images and the emotions that are associated with them (Crowe, 2004, p. 21).

2.1.4. Role of the counsellor in music therapy

I previously discussed that in music therapy programs improvisation can be approached either as a play or as a tool for transcendence and soulmaking. In this section I will discuss the role of the counsellor in such a program. It is important to note that the role of the therapist is not just musical; he/she is responsible for creating meaning (Pavlicevic, 2000). The therapist is responsible for “evoking personal imagery and emotions” in the client (Crowe, 2004, p. 231). If the therapist is performing live, he/she has to first become a competent improviser, which is a long and uncertain process (Wigram, 2004). Crowe (2004) argues that the “experiences needed for soulmaking” are only effective if they are guided and facilitated by a therapist over time (p. 344).

Another important function of the facilitator is to create a musical environment that meets the abilities and needs of the client (Aigen, 1995). I believe developing multicultural counselling instruments that can be utilized to generate appropriate musical environments based on the needs of clients of different backgrounds is essential. Along the lines of developing a multicultural attitude toward music therapy, Stige (2002) writes:

While music therapists traditionally have taken interest in the established four forces of psychoanalytic, behavioural, humanistic, and transpersonal psychology, I propose that it is about time that we take more interest in cultural psychology. There are of course also other developments within contemporary psychology that may be of interest in evolutionary psychology or the achievements within cognitive research, or the efforts to establish health psychology as a field of study for that matter. When I here choose to see music therapy in relation to cultural psychology it is because this tradition of research directly links to the notion of

humankind, with a clear awareness about the interplay of phylogeny, cultural history, and ontogeny. (p. 40)

I believe studying musical repertoires of different cultures and ethnicities, like Persian music, provide a pathway to implementing this kind of multicultural attitude in music therapy.

2.1.5. Qualitative study of music experience

Whether a musical piece is improvised or composed, exploring the experiences that a listener or a performer have is important for understanding how that piece of music might be useful in a therapeutic setting. As such, numerous studies have been conducted to study the nature of the experience that forms as a result of being exposed to different kinds of music (Amir, 1993; Hay and Minichiello, 2005). In such endeavours, usually qualitative methodologies are used since experience is not a physical entity that can be directly quantified. Bogdan and Biklen discuss 5 characteristics of qualitative research as: a) the research is conducted in a natural setting as opposed to a lab setting, b) the research is descriptive; it is discussed in words rather than numbers, c) researchers are focused on the process rather than products, d) data are treated inductively and e) meaning rather than truth is of utmost importance (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). This description of qualitative research has been more or less applied in various fields for more than a century; however, the first argument to use this methodology in the study of music experiences was made in 1982 by Hesser: “I think we need a new paradigm of research which allows us to look at music therapy without losing its [artistic] essence” (as cited by Forinash, 1993). Since then many scholars have made supporting arguments about the

use of qualitative approaches in studying music experiences. For example, Lillian Eyre, a music therapist, on a philosophical level argues that music and narrative (a qualitative approach) share common ontological roots and are both ways of human communication and expression. Eyre provides an excellent example where she decodes one of Beethoven's masterpieces, *Fidelio*, to show how Beethoven narrated struggles in his own life through this piece (Eyre, 2007).

A growing number of scholars have used qualitative research to study the effects of music on behaviour. For instance, Hay and Minichiello (2005) used qualitative research to study emotional, social and spiritual experiences in 52 older citizens in Australia. This research followed the general guidelines of a qualitative study mentioned above and concludes that listening to music provided the participants with a sense of self while improving their interpersonal communications. Moreover, the participants expressed better understanding of their emotions and feelings of spirituality. This study demonstrates how a qualitative approach can be utilized to study complex phenomena such as spiritual experiences that form as a result of listening to music.

The same principles can be applied to study the effects of improvisational music on human emotions. From a musicological standpoint, Rudd (1998) argues, "improvisation does not produce a musical work of art"; however, it allows us to study "inter- and intrapersonal relationships". Rudd continues to assert that structural, semantic and pragmatic aspects of improvisation can be analysed through a phenomenological approach (p. 165). Case study approaches have also been utilized for this purpose: Crowe (2004) presents a case study where musical experiences have been deduced through a qualitative inquiry (p. 231). Bruscia (1991) has published a book entitled "*Case Studies*

in *Music Therapy*”, which presents 42 case studies related to music therapy. I believe that a qualitative inquiry is the best-suited method for the purposes of my research project.

2.2. Literature review on Persian music

2.2.1. History of Persian music

Earliest signs of music in Iran come from melodies that were used in Zoroastrian religious prayers some four thousand years ago (Farhat, 1990, p. 4). There is very little known about the music of the first Persian Empire (Achaemenid Empire; 550-330 BCE). However, names of top musician from the second Persian Empire (Sassanid Empire) have remained in the literature (Zonis, 1973, p. 28). The most prominent musician of this era is *Barbad* who invented a modal system known as *Khosravani* (From the royal court of *Khosro Parviz II*). No written text remains that explain how the *Khosravani* modal system was organized. Upon occupation of Iran by Arabs, music and the use of Persian language were banned (Zonis, 1973, p. 30). Nevertheless, both Persian music and language survived this invasion, the details of which are beyond the scope of this thesis.

During the post-Islamic era, perhaps because of the ban on practice of music, Iranians adapted an academic view of music and through Pythagorean principals measured the frequency intervals between different notes and provided a scholarly understanding of Persian music (Zonis, 1973; Farhat, 1990). *Farabi* and *Maraqı* are two of the best-known scholars whose theories about melodic construction of Persian music are well known. From the books that have remained from *Maraqı* (?-838) it is implied that he had developed a system for writing musical notes in order to preserve them;

however, this work has been lost with the passing of time. As a result, the Iranian music was never preserved through musical notes and was always taught in a heart-to-heart manner (Farhat, 1990). In late 19th century, Iranian musicians started to interact with their European counterparts and what came of these interactions can be analyzed in both a positive and a negative light.

From a positive perspective, the interaction with Western school of thought, intrigued Iranian musicians to gather what was left of their musical pieces (in the heart of different masters who inherited the pieces from their predecessors) into a collection called *Radif* and preserve it using the Western musical notations (Farhat, 1990). The person most credited with organizing the first *Radif* is Mirza Abdollah, who comes from a family with renowned musical background (Campbell, 1996). On the other hand, critics of the time argued that interacting with the Western music might destroy the authenticity of Persian music. More specifically, they argued, Persian music is full of subtle hand gestures, vibrations, trills etc. that cannot be preserved in Western musical notations (Farhat, 1990). Therefore, if the students rely just on ‘reading’ the music as opposed to ‘receiving’ it from their teacher, these subtleties will fade over time which will destroy the ‘feel’ that one expects from Persian music. This idea seems to have gained a lot of attention since even nowadays Persian music is predominantly taught in a heart-to-heart manner. Another issue, critics pointed out, is that upon exposure to Western schools, Iranian musicians moved in full force towards ‘composing’ music as opposed to ‘improvising’ it (Farhat, 1990). Thus, many scholars worked on defining ‘improvisation’ with respect to Persian music and preserving it, among which the work of maestro Dariush Safvat stands out.

2.2.2. Improvisation in the context of Persian music

From a technical standpoint, Persian music is unique in the sense that “it is a ‘scale-less’ music” and is performed in a ‘free’ style that changes based on the intuitions of the performer at any given time (Farhat, 1990; Safvat, 1984). In other words, music in Iran is more of an improvisational art and thus academic study of music and expertise in performing one or multiple instruments does not necessarily make one the ‘master of Persian music’. One needs to be connected to divinity through inner reflections before being able to improvise musical notes (Safvat, 1984). To further explore how improvisation works in the context of Persian music, it is useful to first understand the learning process that musicians go through before being able to improvise musical pieces.

The unanimous consent is that students must start by learning the *Radif*, which is organized into 12 *Dastgâh*-s and about 300 *Gûsheh*-s. A *Dastgâh* is an organization of different modes that all have the same ‘feel’ to them. A *Gûsheh* can be thought of as a musical piece that has a specific mode (Farhat, 1990). Therefore, within a *Dastgâh* there are many different *Gûsheh*-s each of which has a specific mode while they all adhere to the overall theme of the *Dastgâh*. Learning the *Radif* takes approximately 4 years and takes about 8 hours of continuous playing to cover the entire collection. However, the *Radif* is almost never played on its own after it is learnt! It simply provides the foundation one needs to improvise (Campbell, 1996). Improvising music is in many ways reminiscent of writing a novel. To write a novel, we need to know the alphabet, and then learn to construct basic sentences before we can *create* a novel. However, the big difference is that when writing a novel, one has time to *think* while when improvising music one has to instantaneously rely on inner feelings and let go of any thoughts. This

spontaneous outburst of emotions in the context of Persian music is intertwined with the performers' mystical understanding of life and it is this very aspect that has attracted me to do more research on the structure of experience that forms when performing/listening to a music that is rooted in mysticism.

There are similarities and differences between how improvisation is defined in the context of Persian music and the way it is defined in the context of music therapy. In both music therapy and Persian music, improvisation is to instantaneously create sounds based on the techniques and other resources available to the performer (Rudd, 1998; Campbell, 1996). However, in the context of music therapy, improvisation “has an element of prepared *aimlessness*” and as such it “does not produce a musical work of art” (Rudd, 1988, p. 165). Improvisation in the context of Persian music on the other hand, does have an aim and is considered to produce artistic pieces of music. Moreover, in Persian music, improvisation is not merely based on the technical aspects of music – as is the case in the context of music therapy – but it also has an element of divinity attached to it. Safvat (1984) argues that improvisation in the context of Persian music is a direct reflection of the performer's inner self and a connection to the divine spirit.

2.2.3. Persian mysticism

In today's world, in my opinion, there is a fascination with simplifying deep concepts and packaging them for the ‘consumption’ of everyday man. For this reason I believe it is essential to first differentiate between the two concepts of Sufism and Mysticism before we examine the relationship between music and mysticism and how they might be used in a counselling setting. The terms ‘Sufism’ and ‘Mysticism’ are

being used synonymously in the West; however, these two concepts are quite different from one another. Sufism is a religious path that is rooted in Islamic beliefs (France, 2004). As such the Sufi vision of existence is aligned with the belief systems presented in Islam. For Sufis, God is a supreme being that is separate from humans and is in control of existence: Sufis view God as “a kind being whose kindness has no limits but at the same time they have to be afraid of God for their sins” (Hodjati, 2000). Sufis often free themselves of possessions and social interactions to reach a point of purity (Hodjati, 2000). To free themselves of earthly belongings, Sufis go through a 7-stage meditative-like process and with the passing of every stage they transcend to a higher state of being (France, 2004).

Mysticism, on the other hand, is not a religious path; it is a worldview. Mystics view the creation of the world as a single event that has led to diversity and so they believe in diversity in the context of unity. For mystics, God is not a being separated from humans; on the contrary, God is a being that exists inside humans. Therefore, mystics view everything in the world as being part of a united truth and believe that God became aware of God’s existence through humans (Hodjati, 2001). This mystical worldview is rooted in ancient Iranian belief systems of Mithraism and Zoroastrianism. In Zoroastrianism, God (*Ahura Mazda*) is a Supreme Being that lures the ‘soul mate’. The latter is perhaps best described in the work of 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche “*Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*”. Zarathustra’s God seems not to be an invisible Lord in the skies: “Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy; but God *died*, and therewith also those blasphemers” (p. 89). The concept of ‘unity of existence’ – the centerpiece of mysticism – is evident in Zarathustra’s teachings.

In Nietzsche's words: "Lo, I teach you the 'superman' [...] man is a rope stretched between animal and superman" (p. 88). Zarathustra teaches a state of being that Nietzsche calls the 'superman' (German: übermensch). Once man becomes a superman he is united with the Supreme Being: "Now am I light, now do I fly; now do I see myself under myself, now there dances a God in me" (p. 194).

Persian mysticism is also manifested through the works of scholars such as Gazali, Attar-e Neyshabouri, Omar Khayyam and mystics such as Bayazid Bastami, Mansour Hallaj, and Rumi. Persian mystics envision humans as 'lovers' who strive to reach a 'point of unity' with the beloved (Dehlvi, 2009, p. 86). The Persian mystic Bayazid Bastami (d. 874 AD) says: "For 30 years God was my mirror [...] now I say that God is the mirror of myself, for with my tongue he speaks and 'I' have passed away" (Dehlvi, 2009, p. 86). After emergence of Islam the boundaries between Persian mysticism and Sufism became vague because mystics were under severe suppression and as such chose to pretend that they are Sufis (Hodjati, 2000). As a result of this oppression the mystical references of this era have a sense of vagueness to them. For example, Hafez, a mystic poet of the 14th century writes:

In the ruins of Moghan I see the light of "God" ... What a surprise that I see a wonderful light from an unlikely spot. (Hafez, Verse 357)

The 'unlikely' spot is Hafez himself, but he refrains from explicitly asserting so due to the predicaments of the time.

2.2.4. Relationship between Persian music and mysticism

Historically, evolution of Persian music and Persian mysticism are intertwined in such a way that it is hard to explore them independent of one another. On the other hand, there is a lack of scholarly work demonstrating the tie between Persian music and mystic practices. However, from the poetry of early Persian mystics one can envision the deep connection between the two. For instance, Rumi – a Persian mystic of 13th century – sings:

*These familiar tunes, we heard in heavens ... Our soul is now buried in bone and
flesh, yet we remember them in essence*

The connection between Persian music and mysticism has expanded over the millennia to include other forms of art as well. The artwork of the world-renowned mosques in the city of Isfahan can be seen in this light. Of interest to this manuscript is the mystic dance of *Samā*, which is accompanied with Persian music. In the words of Leonard Lewisohn (1997), “*Samā* is the audition of sound and the realization of ecstasy without shattering the inward silence [and] self-control” (p. 8). But what is the connection between *Samā*, Persian music and mysticism? They all resemble a sort of movement: *Samā* is the movement of body, music is the movement of frequencies that generate sound and mysticism is the movement of human spirit. Of course all three of them are braided in an inseparable fashion: The movement of sound and body are aligned with the movement of human spirit; they cause the movement in the spirit. This is reminiscent of the holistic theory of music therapy as presented by Crowe (2004) who argues that music opens a

gateway to connect human spirit to the divine spirit. This is the core premise of Persian mysticism and as such I posit that it has never been separated from Persian music.

I believe that the mystical aspects of Persian music make it an attractive tool in counselling settings and music therapy programs. First, this kind of music adds a cultural element to the practice of counselling. Second, given that Persian music is embedded in mysticism, it can be connected to an existential worldview. Exploring such a worldview with clients can provoke inward awareness and a sense of self-control. However, for counsellors to be able to guide the clients through this journey they first must understand improvisatory Persian music, how it is connected to mysticism and how it provokes human emotions. Through this thesis project I hope to shed light on these issues and explore improvisatory Persian music and its connection to the divine through the lens of two masters of Persian music.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Conceptual framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) define conceptual framework as graphical or narrative description of “the main things to be studied” (p. 18). A conceptual framework, therefore, allows the researchers’ to a) identify the participants, b) describe the relationships that may exist between different entities in the study and c) construct “intellectual bins” based on the researchers prior understanding of the topic under study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Baxter, 2008). Maxwell (2005) describes the conceptual framework as a *construct* that the *researcher* builds based on the prior art that exist for a particular topic. The conceptual framework that I have constructed for this research is illustrated in Figure 3.1. This framework is based on the literature review that I have conducted on the topics of improvisatory Persian music and the role of music in counselling clients.

According to this framework, the master of Persian music and the clients are separate individuals who share some emotional experiences when improvising Persian music or listening to it. From the master’s perspective, this emotional experience coincides with the act of improvisation to the point that one can not separate one from the other: According to literature, improvisation in the context of Persian music is purely based on the performer’s intuitions and inner being (Farhat, 1990; Safvat, 1984). From the client’s perspective, and according to music therapy theories, the sound of music creates meanings and acts as a symbol that is perceived based on the cultural foundations

of the client (Rudd, 1998). The theoretical framework by Crowe (2004) argues that music is reminiscent of one's inner being and thus it's a tool for 'soulmaking'. This pure human emotion is the point of interjection between the experience that the master gains through improvisation and the experience that the client perceives through the act of listening. This point of interjection is the mystical worldview that teaches awareness of inner self and self-control. The role of counsellor in this process can be defined in two steps: 1) The counsellor provokes a cathartic experience in the client through improvisational Persian music, then 2) the counsellor explores the experience with the client and guides the client to reach a mystical worldview, which teaches awareness and self-control. What the client takes from this path can then be applied to his/her issues in life.

For a counsellor to use Persian music to evoke a cathartic response, he/she needs to understand how/why improvised Persian music triggers emotion and what is its connection to a mystical worldview. This research project, explores the nature of this experience from the performer's perspective and how it is connected to Persian mysticism. In order to do so, I have designed an exploratory, descriptive inquiry as outlined in the next section.

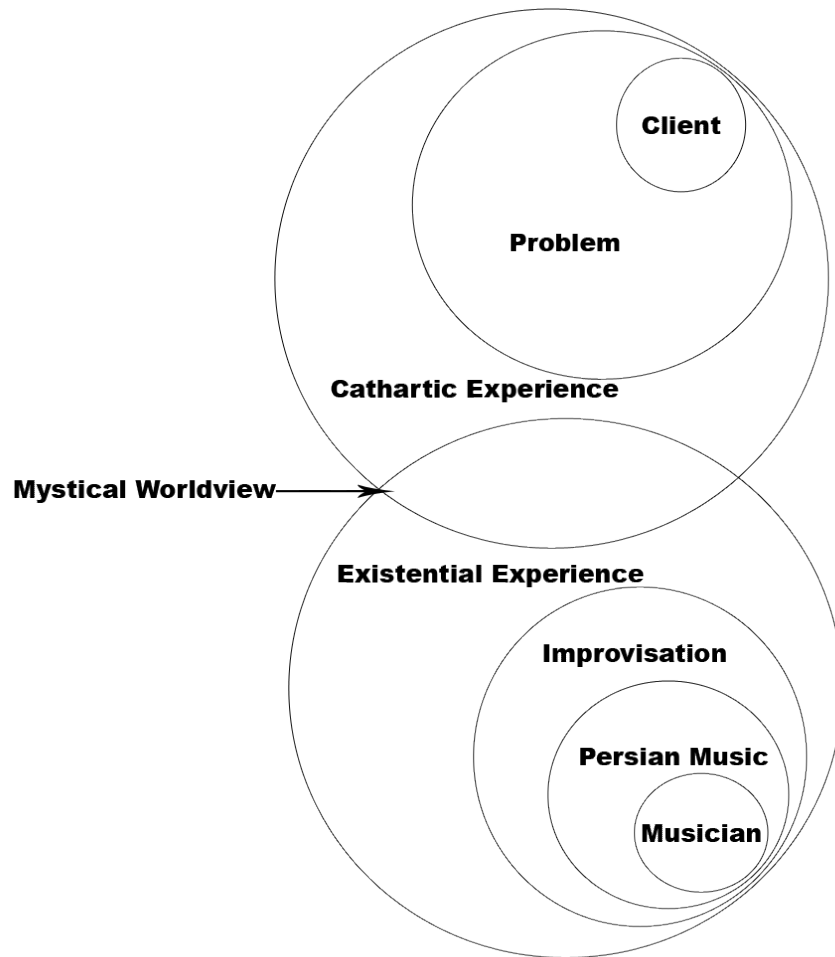


Figure 3.1. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this thesis project is presented. The counsellor uses improvisatory Persian music to evoke a cathartic response in the client. The experience is then analysed from the lens of mysticism and the counsellor guides the client to adapt a mystical worldview, which asserts a sense of awareness and self-control in the client.

3.2. Rationale for a qualitative inquiry

The first step in a scientific inquiry is to determine the approach that is taken to examine a specific question. The two possibilities are quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In general, quantitative methods involve *measuring* a phenomenon while qualitative approaches are more *descriptive* in nature (Gillham, 2000, p. 10). In detail, however, many other differences exist between these two types of research methods; the main factor that makes qualitative research suitable for this study is that the goal of a qualitative research is to understand the situation under investigation from participants' perspective (*emic* or insider) and not the researcher's perspective (*etic* or outsider) (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006, p. 8). More specifically, in studying the structure of experience in the context of improvised Persian music, I need to explore the issue from the participants' (masters of Persian music) perspective, which lends itself to a qualitative research inquiry. Moreover, the theories behind music therapy unanimously agree that it is important to pay more attention to the *meaning* of music and at least one theory suggests the intimate relationship between music and the concepts of 'soul and spirit' (Crowe, 2004). Studying such an existential relationship between music and human inner being lends itself to a descriptive approach rather than a quantitative approach.

There are arrays of qualitative research designs that a researcher can select from. The two most widely used designs in counselling are case study and grounded theory (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative case study is of particular interest since it allows for exploring a phenomenon "within its context" (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Since I need to explore the experience of improvisation in a unique context, Persian music, this type of

research appears to be suitable. The two widely used approaches in qualitative case study are designed by Robert Stake (1994) and Robert Yin (2009). Yin argues that case study should be used if a) the researcher is aiming to answer “ ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions”, b) the behaviour of the participant can not be manipulated by the researcher, c) the phenomenon is to be studied in a specific context or d) the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not well defined (Yin, 2009; Baxter and Jack, 2008). This further argues that case study is most suitable for this research: a) The main question under study is a “how and why” question: “*How and why does improvisational Persian music trigger an emotional response in a person?*” b) the researcher has no influence on the formation of experience of improvisation, c) the phenomenon is specifically studied through the context of Persian music, however, d) improvisation and Persian music are intertwined concepts and a defined boundary cannot be established between the two.

Stake (1994) argues that a case study design is most suited when particularization, rather than generalization, is intended. In other words, the goal of a case study, according to Stake, is to understand a case within its own context rather than attempting to compare the case to other cases or contexts and draw conclusions. With this framework in mind, understanding the experiences and emotions that form as a result of improvising Persian music can be achieved using a case study format. The goal of this research is not to compare the experience of improvisation in the context of Persian music to any other context; the study is merely focused on better understanding experience of improvisation in the particular context of Persian music.

3.3. Exploratory case study design

The first step in a case study is to define the ‘case’ or unit of investigation. In doing so the researcher avoids an eruption of information and allows for a focused and balanced approach (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Stake argues that a case is a ‘thing’ that is a) specific, b) complex and c) functioning. The unit of investigation in this study is the experience that is formed through the process of improvising Persian music. The case under study is a) specific to improvised Persian music, b) it is a complex phenomenon related to the our basic human inner being, and c) it is functioning in the sense that experience which forms as a result of improvisation causes a behavioural change on its subjects. Identifying the unit of investigation is necessary but not sufficient. Additional boundaries are required to specifically determine what the case entails and what issues are not included. There are multiple ways to bind the case: Creswell (2003) suggests binding the case by ‘time and place’, Stake (1994) suggests binding by time and activity and Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest binding by definition and context. The suggestion by Miles and Huberman is especially useful for this study: To study the formation of experience through improvisation, I first need to define boundaries for ‘improvisation’ while the context is limited to Persian music. According to the literature review, improvisation in the context of Persian music is not simple, random assembling of notes to create harmonic or non-harmonic sounds. Improvisation in this context is shaped through a) years of learning elementary ‘alphabet’ of improvised Persian music and more importantly b) it is purely based on the performers intuition and divine feelings. This study only focuses on the experience that forms while improvising from the lens of the performer and not the listener.

There are different designs that can be used for a case study. The first level of design that needs to be considered is whether the research follows a ‘single-case’ model or a ‘multiple-case’ model. The rationale that argues for a single-case design for this research rests with the fact that this case is *unique* (Yin, 2009, p. 47). The concept of improvisation, and by extension the experiences that form as a result of this kind of music, pertains to all types of music. However, the experience of improvisation in each case is unique to the context from which it arises. This uniqueness is the basis for a single-case study design.

Yin further categorizes case study research into exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. This research falls under an exploratory case study where the phenomenon under study has no set, predetermined outcome (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Stake divides case study into intrinsic, instrumental and collective (Stake, 1994). Intrinsic design is described as a study where the goal is to better understand a case unit (Baxter and Jack, 2008). In an intrinsic case study the researcher is not necessarily interested in “generalizing her findings to a broader population” but rather is exploring an event (Hanckock and Algozzine, 2006, p. 32). In Stake’s terminology, this research is categorized as an intrinsic case study. To summarize, the research presented in this manuscript follows a single-case, exploratory design where the case under study is the experience that forms as a result of improvisation in the context of Persian music. Understanding the nature of this experience, allows me to draw some conclusions as to how/why improvised Persian music triggers an emotional response.

3.4. Collecting information

3.4.1. Participants

There are two basic requirements for improvising Persian music: 1) Knowing the ‘alphabet’ of this music, which comes from years of apprenticeship to learn the many *Gûsheh*-s of the *Radif* and 2) Relying on ones inner self, the premise that is being explored in this thesis. Therefore, the participants of this research project had to be masters of Persian music who have reached the ability to improvise this kind of music. I approached two masters of Persian music in this regard via e-mail, both of whom agreed to participate in the study and be acknowledged for their participation in accordance with the University of Victoria’s ethical guidelines (Ethics Protocol Number 12-243). Mr. Douglas Hensley is an American musician who is also a master of Persian music. Mr. Kayhan Kalhor is an Iranian musician who is well known for his improvisatory performances worldwide. Given the extensive background of the participants in Persian music, they are in a unique position to provide some insight regarding the nature of the experience that they gain through this process.

3.4.2. Interviews

Interviews are one of the methods by which the research can attain ‘rich, personalized information’ (Mason, 2002). Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for a case study research (Hancock and Algozinne, 2006). The goal of this kind of interview is to create a ‘rich dialogue’ with the participants using open-ended questions (Yin, 2009, p. 69). The questions that I used to conduct a semi-structured interview are presented in Appendix III. The questions were designed to achieve three main goals.

First, one of the ‘variables’ in this study is how we define the concept of ‘improvisation’; therefore, to eliminate the researcher’s bias in defining improvisation, some questions were designed to understand how the participant defines this concept. Second, some questions were incorporated to explore the emotional experiences and feelings that emerge during the process of improvisation. Third, I asked a few questions to contrast the experiences that form as a result of improvisation to experiences that evolve in other settings (for example when the musical piece is pre-recorded). The purpose of this set of questions was to understand whether the experience gained through improvisation has any unique attributes.

The interview with Mr. Hensley was conducted in person at the Conservatory of Music in Victoria, BC. The conversation was recorded using a recording device. The interview with Mr. Kalhor was conducted using Skype video call feature and the conversation was recorded as before.

3.4.3. Observations

Direct observations by the researcher are another method of gathering information (Yin, 2009, p. 109). However, in this method the researcher needs to be especially aware of his/her biases while observing events and making judgments about them (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006, p. 47). When interviewing Mr. Hensley, I had a chance to briefly see him perform live; I paid especial attention to his hand movements. During both interviews when the participants were explaining the emotions that they feel when improvising, I paid special attention to their bodily gestures. There are countless videos of Mr. Kalhor’s performances on the web; I made observations using one of these videos,

which was a performance for the ‘Tiny Desk Concerts’ held by the national public radio. Once again, I paid special attention to the hand movements and the somatic gestures. The goal of these observations was to gather information regarding the visible effects of improvisation on the performer.

3.5. Formatting information

In a qualitative inquiry, the descriptive data are often rich and extensive. Combing through these descriptive evidences and distilling the main ideas is a time-consuming process and is prone to researcher-bias. Mistakes during transcription can be as simple as inaccurate punctuations and mistyped words or as serious as misunderstanding the meanings of specific words or sentences. Ideally, to minimize errors during transcription the researcher should be both the interviewer and the transcriber (Easton et al., 2000). For this reason I personally performed the process of interview and transcription. It is important to note that the interview was conducted in Persian with Mr. Kalhor and the data were translated to English to be incorporated in this manuscript. To ensure the accuracy of translation, I used the help of a native Persian speaker to independently verify the translation on a sentence-by-sentence basis. I also used ‘member-checking’ to further ensure the accuracy of information. Member-checking is a process by which the transcribed data are shared with the participant who can then review and comment on the integrity and accuracy of the transcription, which is thought to be the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

After the data are transcribed, the researcher has to categorize them and determine whether the information is pertinent to the objective of the study or not (Yin, 2009, p.

119). It is important to note that “unclassifiable data are *not* unimportant” (Gillham, 2000, p. 73). I therefore categorized the data into two main categories: 1) Statements defining the concept of improvisation in Persian music and 2) statements describing the experiences of the performer while improvising. I gathered the categorized information for each participant in a computer file that was easily accessible. I used what researchers call “letting the case tell its own story” when presenting the results (Carter, 1993; Coles 1989). I used this approach since through this research I was seeking an emic perspective on the experience of improvisation. Moreover, presenting the case in such a way allows for readers to learn the material on their own without any interpretations from the researcher (Stake, 1994, p. 240).

3.6. Analyzing information

To synthesize findings based on the results of the interviews, I asked the following questions as suggested by Hancock and Algozzine (p. 63):

- “What information from different sources goes together?”
- “How do various sources of information affect findings?”
- “What previous work provides a basis for analysis?”
- “What questions are being answered?”
- “What generalization can be made?”

Based on the answers of these questions, I was able to group results that I had obtained from the two participants. This approach is consistent with the concept of ‘pattern-matching’ as suggested by Gillham (p. 82) where grouping of results from different sources allows for creation of generalized conclusions. The grouping is also beneficial to

understand any possible contradictions that may exist amongst the results obtained from the two participants. I also compared the results to what has previously been reported in literature to draw some conclusions.

In a qualitative case study, researchers use the process of triangulation to “verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 1994, p. 241). In this process multiple perceptions are compared to either demonstrate repeatability or to demonstrate that there are multiple paths that lead to the same phenomenon (Stake, 1994, p. 241). By comparing the perceptions of the two participants regarding the concept of improvisation in Persian music and the experiences that form from it, I employed triangulation to verify my interpretation of the results.

Chapter 4. Results

4.1. Introduction

As described in Chapter 3, I used a semi-structured interview format to explore the concept of improvisation in the context of Persian music and the experience that a master of Persian music endures while improvising. For this purpose I interviewed two renowned musicians: Mr. Douglas Hensley and Mr. Kayhan Kalhor. Douglas is an American born musician who teaches multiple different instruments at the Victoria Conservatory of Music. Given Douglas' background, I was interested to know why he became interested in Persian music. He describes his introduction to Persian music as follows:

“When I was introduced to Persian music ... my background was an 18 year old boy from Kentucky and I had never, to the best of my knowledge, have never heard [the word] Persian before, or maybe [I had only heard it] in some fairy-tale setting, Middle East [was] completely unknown. After I got out of high school I started collecting instruments because I realized that I had to be a musician. I spent a year working on the racetrack in Cincinnati, Ohio and when I was in Ohio there was a music store that had a [Indian] Sitar for sale for 75 dollars, which I added to my growing collection of instruments. [Around the same time] I had a friend who told me that there is a really interesting guy who is the Dean of Music at University of Oregon and so I bought a Volkswagen bus and drove off to Oregon and I showed up at the Dean's office and said I have an Indian Sitar, do

you know anyone who could teach me how to [play it]? ... He said: “No but there is this Persian guy who plays Persian Setar and these are both modal music [so you might find it interesting]!” So I went to this guy’s class and I totally fell in love with it; he was playing this recording and the sound of the Persian Tar and the Nay that I just ... it just leached inside of me and got hold, you know, it felt familiar and it just felt like home and that was my introduction to Persian music ... totally unexpected totally unlooked for even.

The other participant in this research, Mr. Kayhan Kalhor, is an Iranian born musician who started to learn Persian music at an early age. Kayhan has extensively travelled throughout Iran to study the music of different regions especially that of Khorasan and Kordestan (2 of the Iranian provinces). He has held many international concerts and has collaborated with musicians of all backgrounds and cultures. In my opinion, Kayhan’s improvisatory work on an instrument called Kamancheh is a valuable example of improvisation in Persian music. He joined me via a video call on Skype, which allowed me to engage in a dynamic conversation with him regarding improvisation in the context of Persian music, its relationship to Persian mysticism and most importantly the experience that he endures during improvisation.

This Chapter presents the conversations that I had with the two participants. The case under study is the experience that results from the process of improvisation. To better understand this case, there are two themes that I adhered to during the interviews: 1) The variable that needs to be defined is improvisation so I asked each of the participants to explain how they view improvisation and 2) The experience that results from the process of improvisation is the centerpiece of this manuscript and thus the

interviewees were asked to describe their emotional feelings while improvising. I present the case such that it “tells its own story” and so I keep my comments at a minimum and just to facilitate the flow of information (Carter, 1993; Coles 1989).

4.2. Interview with Maestro Douglas Hensley

After Douglas told me about the story of why he became interested in Persian music, I asked him to define improvisation within the context of this kind of music:

My understanding is that your 12 year apprenticeship is a process [where] you learn all the *Gûsheh-s* and *Dastgâh-s* in a heart-to-heart [fashion]: The master plays [the piece] and you sit around while all the students are playing it and you absorb it all the time and all this stuff is memorized. After the apprenticeship, everything you do will be in the style. [To improvise] you take the soul rhythm and expand it. In terms of my own concept, I did not have the luxury to work with any one master at a time for all that time, I never memorized one *Radif* ... even then I would still improvise sometimes and the point is not to have it completely memorized the point is to just play and be the music ... [when you play a composed piece of music] you are bound to the composer’s music ... I have never heard that any Iranian play the same piece the same way as any other. [However], anything you do improvisatorially is something that you have available, it can’t just be bumbling around and you accidentally happen to do some nice things; those fingers have to have traveled those roads before ...

What were the roles of the masters from whom you learnt Persian music in teaching you how to improvise?

That is one of my great disappointments actually; whenever I was with all of those people we never got to improvisation because we were always learning the *Radif*. I would love to talk to people like Omoumi (Master of Nay) and Lotfi (master of Tar) about it ... there is a lot I feel I lack not to have had continued exposure to a master.

You mentioned in your introduction that Persian music 'felt familiar' to you; can you expand your explanation of that feeling, especially when you improvise?

I tend to do something completely different when I am improvising just because I have no idea what I am going to do from one second to the next and I can feel it in my fingers where I need to go to certain frets in order for my musical thought or my musical stream of consciousness to come out; it is not like randomly putting fingers down but it's a weird concept ... like if you can imagine just opening your mouth and starting to talk you know it's a little bit like that so um I have to know what *Dastgâh* I have to play in because that will determine [the positioning of] my fingers and there are some things that I have to decide right on the spur of the moment ... it is totally unpremeditated so I guess there are two extremes where you have an idea of what you are going to do or things you have never played before and there are little snippets from the *Radif* that are not predetermined at all. [After all] it's the human experience and there is huge broad spectrum of possibilities.

Interesting, can you explain how these human experiences lead to generation of an improvised piece of music?

I think it leads to the generation of musical phrasing the same way speaking does: When I speak I don't know what I am going to say but I am following a thought process, I think it's really like that I mean it is a satisfying thing, right? Like when you sit down for an instrument it's like you are hungry for nourishment ... that is how the experience is like ... it's nourishing ... I don't know how to say anything else about it. Often musical feelings can be impossible to describe with words, which I think was perhaps my great attraction to music originally. I remember John Lennon saying "It's not the word itself it's the sound that gives the feelings"...

As the last question: You mentioned that when you improvise you have this sense of nourishment, what is the experience like when you listen to a piece of improvised Persian music that is already recorded?

Well, when I listen to improvised Persian music it's ... it's ... I guess I am in a state of awe because the people I listen to are the masters and those are the people I have recordings of ... it's a great experience to listen to people who know what they are doing ... I'd always loved to understand more how or why they do what they do ... in a way that to me is like being born Hafez or Rumi; you just speak poetry and nobody can argue with you.

The interview with Douglas, as a musician, provided me with a great deal of insight into the concept of improvisation and the experience a master of Persian music endures while improvising. As a Westerner, Douglas' perspective on the concept of improvisation, regardless of whether he is performing or if he is listening to a recording, is an invaluable source of information. After the interview, Douglas suggested that I find another

participant who is musically qualified but also has a Persian background so that I can account for the cultural nuances that might affect the experience that is gained through improvised Persian music.

4.3. Interview with Maestro Kayhan Kalhor

After my interview with Douglas, I wanted to explore the cultural roots of Persian music in more detail. More specifically, given that Douglas explained his experience as a source of ‘nourishment’ and pointed to the versatility of human experiences, I became interested in exploring in more detail the connection between the experiences that arise from improvising Persian music and mysticism. The literature on this topic was very scarce and the perspective of a master of Persian music on such a deep topic is of great value. For this reason I approached master Kayhan Kalhor, a renowned Iranian musician who has studied Persian music in a cultural context. I asked Kayhan about the relationship between Persian music and mysticism and in response he started by differentiating between Iranian mysticism and what is nowadays understood to be mysticism in the West:

The works that have been published try to connect Persian music to mysticism and this is not an accurate vision from some perspectives: Mysticism, as it is defined in the West, is different from the Iranian mysticism that has been in existence before the emergence of Islam, which was then divided into different branches after Islam. Mysticism has always existed as part of the Iranian culture, and the goal of this approach has always been to create a connection with one’s inner self which leads into ‘godly conclusions’ i.e. the person becomes aware of

his destiny and has absolute control over his life with regards to his surroundings. This kind of mysticism is different from 'religious mysticism' and has existed since antiquity. After the emergence of Islam, [Iranian mystics] portrayed [their mystical approach] in a special layer such that the invading Arabs, who were inferior in terms of understanding such deep concepts, can understand mysticism to some extent. For this reason they aligned [ancient Persian mysticism] to Islamic traditions, which is different from ancient mystic practices rooted in Persian Mithraism, that were social and moral approaches [to life]. Nowadays, mysticism is being defined in connection with religious practices. Connecting to these concepts, especially in the West, is very stylish and everyone is trying to connect to a form of [Eastern] mysticism, and to say that their music connects with mysticism.

He then went on to provide a brief description of the history of Persian music and its connection to Iranian mysticism:

Iranian music comes from two distinct lineages: 1) Ancient tones [performed] on Tanbour from Kordestan that go back several millennia and 2) the tones used in Zoroastrian religious practices. These [musical tones] lead to the [practice of music] during the Sassanid Empire when we talk about [musicians] such as Barbad, Nakisa and later Rudaki. [Iranian music] has not always been 'religious' per se; it has usually been a social music, a special case of which is manifested as 'court music'. Therefore, we cannot rule out that this court music has emerged from the society and mysticism [embedded in this society]. When we [as Iranians] talk about mysticism we need to consider that it is part of our everyday lives. As

an Iranian you know ‘things’ that for a Westerner takes years of scholarly work to realize; we grow up [with mysticism], we live with it in our families. An example of this can be seen in the way that we play our instruments: Even up until the Qajar dynasty, the portraits and paintings of Iranian musicians show them as sitting on their knees (*Do Zanoo*). For some instruments – like the Persian Tar – this form of sitting changes a bit since the Western [school of thought] started to influence Persian music during the Vaziri’s (a contemporary musician) era. Nevertheless, this form of sitting is the most humble way of sitting in front of ‘God’. Even nowadays, Iranian mysticism is embedded in every move of our every day actions, music included.

You have talked about how mysticism is embedded in every day lives of Iranians, how does this fact impact *improvisation* in the context of Persian music?

Creation of an improvised piece [from a technical standpoint] has nothing to do with mysticism, however, if you consider music from the standpoint of every day life – and as I mentioned mysticism is embedded in that – then you can translate the effects of [mystical approaches] on music. When you consider music in this region – from northern India to northern Africa, which constitutes the old Persia – [you realize] that it is primarily based on ‘improvisation’ in the sense that the musician takes a motif, for example [the motifs] that are taught as part of the process of learning the *Radif*, and expands it [*de novo*]. [This expansion of the motifs] is reminiscent of the concept of mysticism: Human beings have vast capabilities and mysticism in essence tells you [that you can use these capabilities] to elevate and reach a ‘godly state’, which in a way raises the

question of [how you define ‘God’]. When we try to translate this concept in [Iranian] art, for example let’s pick the example of the miniature design that you see in the ceramic work of the ceiling of the Shah’s Mosque (located in Isfahan, Iran), you always notice that there is a motif that has been expanded to form a bigger, transcendent piece. [It is important to note that] you always see a balance in these works, you don’t see chaos; you always know where you are going [while expanding the motif]. You see a mysterious expansion, with infinite beauty and order. You always see order despite the fact that the work has been improvised. This is why we call our musical [repertoire] the *Radif* (Persian for ‘rank’ or ‘order’). This is exactly what you see in today’s music in Iran and India: In Indian music you take a motif (*Raga*) and you expand it. The moral behaviours of the people of this region, their way of life, the experiences that they have gained through life have taught them to be creative. To give you another example of this, [consider] Rumi and his grand book of poetry that exceeds 30,000 verses, the motif is the alphabet and the rules of Persian language; the book that is created from this motif would be the improvised piece. Iranian music is exactly the same; if someone could have recorded all the improvised Persian music of the time you would find musicians who were on the same level of creativity as poets like Rumi, Hafez and Sa’adi. The difference is that the improvised piece by the musicians is created in a single moment (i.e. instantaneous) and could not have been recorded. Nevertheless, this concept of improvising a transcendent, bigger piece from a smaller motif can be seen in every type of Iranian art, and music is one them.

You mentioned the instantaneous nature of improvisation in music, what do you feel in that instant? Can you describe it?

It is difficult to describe it but note that you always have a goal that you are trying to reach. My goal is always to create a complex, bigger piece, which starts from somewhere and assumes a special form until it reaches the destination that I want to get to. In this process there are a couple of determining factors.

- 1) The technical aspects of the music: you need to have the knowledge of music, you need to know the *Radif*; just like the example that I mentioned earlier about the alphabet. [And then comes] the creativity and the way of thinking of the musician. Improvisation is not to play whatever comes into your brain; this is why you see that some improvisers are highly regarded by the public for their artistic work and some improvisers cannot create a respected piece because they can't expand their motifs and thus can't influence their audience. This is why improvisation is regarded as 'art': Improvisation is an instantaneous design. The more you design, the better your work becomes. If you have a mental map of where you want to go, of your destination, you can go from A to B. This is a technical description for improvisation.
- 2) Because music is related to the concepts of soul and inner beings, what 'speaks' [through music] is the performer's soul not his soma. The physique of the performer is responsible for the technical portion of improvisation, which is learnt during the first years of apprenticeship. Once you go beyond the learning stage, and you are trying to decide how

to apply [what you have learnt], this goes back to your creativity, to your mental status. When I am improvising, all I think about is not to be in that spot, not to be on the Earth, not to be in a defined position. The instrument is playing itself through me. Something comes into my mind from somewhere ... I don't know where ... and I think its goal is to connect me to something else, somewhere else. If we want to call this mysticism, maybe this is it; if we want to call it a trip from some point to some other point, this may be it. I am unable to describe this. When I first sit to perform, [I am aware] of the audience, and then slowly after 5 minutes, 10 minutes I become more and more lonely then it reaches a point and its just me, I am nowhere and the experience becomes personal. It's a feeling that I am immersed in absolute calmness and I have a mysterious force with regards to myself; I can control anything, everything becomes mine, I become the master you know, I reach a point that I am in command of myself and my music. And that place is a non-place, when I am done I don't even know where I am. Sometimes I open my eyes and I wonder where I am. It's a personal, mental trip through which I exit myself with the help of music and that music becomes the centerpiece and I lose myself, I don't know where I am anymore.

This mental trip that you are describing when improvising, do you have the same kind of feeling when you listen to recorded improvised music or is it different?

It depends on the artistic value, the transcendence of the piece that you are listening to. You cannot reach the same feeling with any kind of musical piece: When you hear a perfect piece from a [capable] artist it can take you there, but another piece may not do that for you. This is why the public says this person is a good artist and his improvisation influences me and the other person not so much. This is a complex setting; not everyone can do it, at least for me it is that way, not everyone can influence my soul, it needs to be a special work to touch my spirit. Only some musicians are able to reach that point of [influencing others]. This is just like life; there are some people that you can talk to and they understand you and some people who will never understand you as simple as that. This is the same in Western music – though it is composed and not improvisatory – an artist might influence you and another might not.

You mentioned Western music, what do you think is the main difference between Persian music and Western music?

You cannot say that they are different, music is music; however, their presentation, the way they are approached is different. For example, what is the difference between Western cooking and Iranian cooking? The ingredients that they use, [but at the end food is food]. Music is the same; ultimately there is no difference between our music and any other type of music. Western music has reached a stage to be performed for large audiences in cathedrals etc. [When you look at the history of Western music] you even see [evidence of] improvisation during the 14th and 15th century but it has slowly faded away. When you are obliged to have 10-15 musicians together, you are forced to have them play

something that is coherent, you can not have them act autonomously, so along with the advances in music and the ability to write music you were able to put musicians together to create harmony. This harmony becomes more complex as time goes on after the Middle Ages, the orchestras get bigger, during the Classic era you see 15-20 musicians in the chamber orchestra along with a soloist, during the Romantic era you see 90-100 musicians. As these techniques advance more musicians can sit next to each other and a composer can write a piece for them. So the path that the Western music has gone is different, that music has evolved for a different purpose; however, music in its essence is the same worldwide. This is just like languages; Persian language is different than German language, they have their own rules yet at the end they are both languages. Similarly, music is always music however for different reasons it has assumed different forms [in different places].

As the last question, you mentioned the concept of writing music. While in Iranian music we have this concept of heart-to-heart education. You have also mentioned that improvisation in its technicality depends on the *Dastgâhs* and *Gûshehs* that the performer learns during his learning stage. What is the role of the master from whom you learn music in teaching you how to improvise?

The role of the master is very important. In Eastern music, the role of the master is like a mentor in life, like a father. Not only we learn the basics of music from him, but also, when we review the history of our music, Indian music, Middle Eastern music, [we see that] sometimes the students were even living with their masters. They might have even become related by marriage. They would become

really close in terms of social interactions. The master is not just a teacher, as it is unfortunately perceived nowadays in our society, you cannot learn anything this way. You have to dedicate a lot of time and have a deep attitude towards this. During the peak of the heart-to-heart era, you would have lived with someone and learnt everything from them, music being a part of that. You would have learnt everything from the details of how to tune your instrument to how to interact with people, how to sit, how to behave in the court and every other aspect of life. Slowly you would have learnt everything from the master.

The results of the two interviews are summarized in Table 4.1 with respect to the main themes of the study.

4.4. Observations

During the interviews I made some observations with regards to the bodily gestures of the participants. Both participants had a difficult time explaining their feelings. It seemed as if they were trying to describe the most basic concept, yet couldn't find the right words for it; as if they were in pursuit of something that was hidden deep in their 'self' and they had to search for it. Interestingly, I got the feeling that while improvising they had no problem finding this 'hidden treasure'. Douglas explained improvisation with a brief performance on his Persian Tar and I noticed the smoothness in the movements of his fingers. The movements were gentle, they were fuzzy, and they were barely there yet they hit the notes at the perfect moment. I watched a video of Kayhan while improvising on his Kamancheh. He was sitting on his knees in an interesting way with his eyes closed. My eureka moment came when he told me about the

philosophy behind this sitting gesture without me even asking about it. Retrospectively, when I watch that video I can better envision his 'mental trip' to the 'non-place'.

Table 4.1. Summary of the results

Theme	Maestro Douglas Hensley	Maestro Kayhan Kalhor
How do you define improvisation within the context of Persian music?	Improvisation is to “take the soul rhythm and expand it”; however, “it can’t just be bumbling around and you accidentally happen to do some nice things; those fingers have to have traveled those roads before ...”	Improvisation is to “take a motif and expand it to form a bigger, transcendent piece. [It is important to note that] you always see a balance in these works; you don’t see chaos. You see a mysterious expansion, with infinite beauty and order.”
Describe your experience while improvising.	<p>“When you sit down for an instrument its like you are hungry for nourishment ... that is how the experience is like ... it’s nourishing” ...</p> <p>“I have no idea what I am going to do from one second to the next and I can feel it in my fingers where I need to go to certain frets in order for my musical thought or my musical stream of consciousness to come out.”</p>	<p>“When I first sit to perform, [I am aware] of the audience, and then slowly after 5 minutes, 10 minutes I become more and more lonely then it reaches a point and it’s just me, I am nowhere and the experience becomes personal. It’s a feeling that I am immersed in absolute calmness and I have a mysterious force with regards to myself; I can control anything, everything becomes mine, I reach a point that I am in command of myself and my music. It’s a personal, mental trip through which I exit myself with the help of music and that music becomes the centerpiece and I lose myself, I don’t know where I am anymore.”</p>
What is the experience like when you listen to a recording of an improvised Persian music?	<p>“Well, when I listen to improvised Persian music it’s ... it’s ... I guess I am in a state of awe” ... “its a great experience to listen to people who know what they are doing.”</p>	<p>“It depends on the artistic value, the transcendence of the piece that you are listening to. When you hear a perfect piece from a [capable] artist it can take you there” ... “it needs to be a special work to touch my spirit.”</p>

Chapter 5. Conclusion

5.1. Pattern finding: Participants

I explored improvisatory Persian music and the experiences that arise from it with two masters of Persian music. By comparing their responses with one another I was able to identify patterns that help me to draw my conclusions. First, I wanted to provide an accurate description for the concept of improvisation in the context of Persian music. Both participants agreed that improvisation from a musical standpoint is an instantaneous, unpremeditated expansion of the snippets and motifs of the Iranian *Radif* (the repertoire of Persian music). Students learn the *Radif* during their apprenticeship, which provides the foundation based on which *de novo* music can be generated. Both participants made statements that demonstrate that improvisation in the context of Persian music goes beyond a musical sense. According to Douglas, improvisation is related to the broad spectrum of human experiences. Kayhan expanded this notion and analysed improvisation from a mystical point of view. He argued that both improvisation and mysticism have elements of expansion: In improvisation we have expansion of motifs to create a transcendent piece of music, while in mysticism we have an expansion of human abilities to the point of absolute self-awareness and control.

I asked both participants about their experience while improvising. It was interesting to me that they both had a difficult time expressing their experience in words. Douglas explains his experience as ‘nourishing’; he says that before he starts improvising he is ‘hungry’ for something and then he feels ‘nourished’. Kayhan likens the experience

to a journey. He says that he has a destination in mind and at first he is aware of the audience but as time goes on he becomes lonely and then it's just him at the destination. At that stage he describes his experience as 'calming' and asserts that he feels a certain force towards himself that allows him to be in control of his inner self in absolute terms. It is apparent from these descriptions that the feelings are very personal. Interestingly in both cases music is a bridge that connects the performer to his destination: Douglas seeks nourishment (destination) from his state of 'hunger' and he uses improvisation to get there while Kayhan gets to his destination (state of self-control) much the same way. From a linguistic standpoint the 'destination' seems to be different for the two participants; however, I believe that in both cases the destination is the same fundamental existential experience that is simply expressed in different terms.

Applying improvisatory Persian music in counselling settings would probably require pre-recorded musical pieces as opposed to performing live music – The number of therapists who are capable of improvising Persian music live is an issue. For this reason I wanted to explore whether recorded improvisatory Persian music can create similar existential emotions in the participants. Douglas told me that he goes into a state of 'awe' when he is listening to this kind of music and it feels 'like home' for him. Similarly, Kayhan asserted that a special piece of music can "touch his spirit". However, both masters told me that the improvisatory piece has to come from someone who knows improvisation very well otherwise the piece would not trigger an emotional response in them.

5.2. Pattern finding: Participants and literature

In this section I compare the results of my interviews (Chapter 4) to the literature review that I have conducted for this research (Chapter 2), which allows me to add credibility to the conclusions that I draw from this study. The description that the participants offered for the concept of improvisation is aligned with the writings of Farhat (1990), Safvat (1984) and Campbell (1996). Both the participants and the published information on this matter assert that 1) Improvisation in the context of Persian music is based on learning the *Radif* and 2) Instantaneous expansion of the motifs are rooted in the performers' emotions and existential experiences. Interestingly, this definition is in contrast with how improvisation is defined in the context of music therapy. Rudd (1998) argues that improvisation in the context of music therapy "does not produce a musical work of art" (p. 165). Kayhan explains that in, the context of Persian music, improvisation is referred to as an art. Both the participants and the literature surrounding Persian music argue that improvisation in this context is infinitely ordered and follows an *aim* and you cannot find chaos in it. On the other hand, the literature surrounding music therapy argues that improvisation generates 'accidental' sounds that are the results of 'prepared *aimlessness*'.

To my knowledge, the experience that results from improvisatory Persian music has not been discussed in literature before. However, the information provided by the participants regarding their experience can be compared to the information that is presented in the scholarly work surrounding the theories of music therapy. Both participants argue that music is a tool by which they can reach the 'destination' that they have in mind. Similarly, in the holistic theory of music therapy it is discussed that music

opens a gateway through which human spirit experiences a glimpse of the divine spirit (Crowe, 2004).

Kayhan provided a thorough description of Persian mysticism and argued that it is different from ‘religious mysticism’ in the sense that through Persian mysticism humans can use their capabilities to reach a ‘godly state of being’, which he describes as a state of self-control. This description is consistent with the results of my literature review. As discussed in Chapter 2, according to the literature, there is a difference between Persian mysticism and Sufism since Sufism is an Islamic path of life while mysticism is a worldview through which God is manifested in human spirit. The story of Bayazid Bastami who had reached a ‘godly state’ is very similar to Kayhan’s description of Persian mysticism. He also likens improvisation in the context of Persian music to mystical experiences since both of them represent an ‘expansion of motifs’. This is similar to the argument made from a holistic point of view: Soul and music are in essence the same process; they both imply a sort of movement; soul is the movement of body and emotion while music is the movement of sound that affects body and emotion (Crowe, 2004).

Both participants pointed to the importance of the role of the teacher in learning improvisation and also, as Kayhan put it, every other aspect of life. This is similar to the concept of *pir* in mystic practices. A *pir* is a person who knows the path to transcendence and unity with the divine and guides the student through this path (France, 2004). This concept has implications for the relationship between counsellors and their clients: The counsellor guides the client through his/her journey to self-awareness and control (France, 2004).

5.3. Summary of findings and significance

Based on the pattern finding results I make five general conclusions regarding this study: 1) Improvisation in the context of Persian music is a musical event that is intertwined with mystical experiences, 2) experiences that are evoked as a result of improvisation can be explained from the lens of an existential/mystical worldview, 3) such experiences can also be triggered if the person is listening to a pre-recorded improvisatory Persian music if the piece is transcendent from an artistic point of view, 4) improvisatory Persian music is a '*soulmaking*' tool that allows the human spirit to unite with the divine spirit and all of these findings lead to the fact that 5) the connection between Persian music and mysticism evokes self-awareness and self-control, which can be exploited in a multicultural counselling environment to guide the clients through their issues.

The significance of these findings is best understood through a multicultural lens. First, a new, culturally diverse music repertoire has been explored, which is important from an ethnomusicological point of view. Second the experiences that are formed through this music and their connection to mysticisms have been explored. Understanding these experiences and the mystical worldview provides a new tool for utilization in multicultural counselling practices.

5.4. A conceptual framework for implementing the findings in practice

In this section I will reiterate the conceptual framework that I presented in Figure 3.1. in light of the findings of this study. Based on this framework the counsellor plays

two important roles: 1) The counsellor uses improvised Persian music to evoke a cathartic experience in the client and 2) the counsellor explores the experience with the client from the perspective of a mystical worldview. The goal of the therapy is to guide the client through a journey, like a *pir*, to reach a state of self-awareness and self-control. Improvisatory Persian music is particularly useful in this setting since it has historically been braided with mystical concepts and practices and according to the participants of this case study it does evoke a connection with one's inner self.

In my opinion there is a connection between the experience that the performer has while improvising and the cathartic experience that the client gains while listening. The point of intersection, in my opinion, represents the most basic human emotions and feelings that are universal and not affected by culture, ethnicity or background. According to LeDoux (1996) we are born with these core emotions and our environment does not affect them. These human emotions, if viewed from a mystical worldview, can be developed such that the client becomes aware of not only the surroundings and existential truths but also the 'God that lives within them'. According to mystical approaches, uniting with the divine spirit allows the client to reach a state of self-control, which can then be utilized in everyday life. It should be obvious that in a fixed period of time different clients will experience varying levels self-control based on their ability to expand their core human emotions. However, the role of the counsellor is to show the path not to get the client to his/her destination.

5.5. Recommendations for future research

This research project has focused on the experience that forms while improvising Persian music and its connection to mysticism. From the information provided in Chapter 4, it can be implied that some mystical experiences can be evoked by *listening* to this kind of music; however, this matter needs to be further explored from the point of view of clients. I therefore propose a study where selected improvisatory pieces of Persian music are used in a music therapy/counselling setting with a diverse collection of clients. The aims of such a study would be to determine whether a) this kind of music can evoke a cathartic experience in the clients (who are likely to have minimal knowledge of music) and b) whether the counsellor can guide the client to search within his/her experiences and reach a mystical worldview. I hypothesize that the core human experiences are well preserved in all of us and therefore reaching a cathartic state should not depend on the ‘clients’ background’. Therefore, it seems important to include clients of all cultures and backgrounds in this study to test this hypothesis.

As Kayhan mentioned in the interview, the concept of improvisation in music can be applied to other forms of art as well. I am particularly interested in developing a program where Persian music is used in conjunction with another type of art (dancing for instance; as seen in the practice of *Samā*) to reach a state of ecstasy that is more powerful than the kind of emotional state that is resulted from listening to music alone. This allows the client to *improvise* the dance and as such practice the concept of ‘expanding the motifs’, which is then applied to developing his/her inner being.

5.6. Closing remarks

Conducting this study was a journey for me through which I explored my inner self along with Persian music. I am privileged to have had the chance to speak with two amazing musicians who guided me through understanding deep concepts that are involved in improvisatory Persian music. As an aspiring multicultural counsellor I am now on a path to understand a mystical worldview through which I can guide my clients to self-awareness and self-control. I believe in ‘learning by example’ and so I intend to reach a state self-control in my life. Persian music seems to me to be the ideal tool to cross the bridge and go beyond myself, to unite with the divine. Each plectrum that cares for the strings on the Tar and each swing of the bow on Kamancheh take me to a place that Hafez calls *na koja* (no where). It seems particularly fitting to end this thesis with a sonnet from Hafez as translated by Shahriari (1999):

*If I find the dust under Beloved's feet
 Use as eye-liners, draw a line, neat & discreet.
 In your scent I have drowned, yet I have hope
 Waves of my tears shall float my fleet.
 Butterfly of my soul, Beloved seeks
 Once finds that candle, joyously burns by its heat.
 Think of me today, turn not away
 Else tonight in pain, my prayers I repeat.
 Beauty of your hair consoles every lover
 Yet with their calmness, my calm defeat.
 O breeze, bring me a scent of that wine
 One whiff, my drunken state will treat.
 If my friend's deceptions don't break my heart
 Her every breath my spirit will replete.
 Don't try to shed my dust from your clothes
 From now on, even the wind, it shall cheat.
 Hafiz, her sweet lips are my soul's seat
 I live for the moment when soul and lips meet.*

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Appendix I: Recruitment Material

Dear Mr. _____,

You are invited to take part in a study entitled “*Exploring the Mystical Depths of Persian Music: A Case Study*”, at the department of Education Psychology & Leadership Studies at University of Victoria. My name is Ava Bahrami and I am a Master of Arts candidate who is working with Dr. Honoré France to explore the structure of experience that forms through improvised Persian music. As a master of Persian music you are in a position to provide description of the experience that you gain when improvising Persian music or listening to it.

This research will provide invaluable knowledge to the field of ethnomusicology since improvised music has not been widely studied in the context of music therapy. This research also paves the way for a multicultural approach to music therapy – an endeavor that has been long overdue.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and although no risks are anticipated to the participants, you may withdraw from the study at any time without any explanation. You will be asked to attend a written interview, which should take about 1 hour of your time to complete. The questions in the interview are designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience that results from improvised Persian music. The transcribed data will be used in presentations and publications under complete anonymity unless you provide consent to be acknowledged for this study. In case you choose anonymity, you should be aware that the raw data will be kept for a period of one year after which it will be destroyed either by deleting the audio files or by shredding the paper records. Please note that this study is being conducted according to the guidelines of the Human Research Ethics Office.

If you are interested in participating in this research or if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Ava Bahrami at -----.

Sincerely,

Ava Bahrami, Master of Arts Candidate
Education Psychology & Leadership Studies
University of Victoria

Appendix II: Informed Consent

Education Psychology & Leadership Studies

Participant Consent Form

Faculty of Education

University of Victoria

Project Title: Exploring the Mystical Depths of Persian Music: A Case Study

Researcher(s): Ava Bahrami, Master of Arts Candidate. Education Psychology & Leadership Studies, University of Victoria

Supervisor: Dr. Honoré France, Education Psychology & Leadership Studies

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

The objective of the proposed research is to provide a thorough description of the structure of experience that a master of Persian music endures when improvising music or when listening to an improvised musical piece. The main question of this study, thus, is “How does experience form as a result of improvised Persian music?”

This Research is Important because:

- A) The research adds valuable knowledge to the field of ethnomusicology.
- B) Understanding the nature of experience that forms through improvised Persian music will pave the way to hypothesize about possible use of this music in therapy programs.

Participation:

- You are being invited to participate in this research because you are a master of Persian music.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
- You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

Procedures:

- **Duration:** There will be one written interview that takes approximately 60 minutes and can be scheduled to your best convenience.

Benefits:

- **To state of knowledge:** This research will advance the field of ethnomusicology specifically in the department of improvisational music.

Risks:

- There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.
- If at any time and for any reason you find yourself in an uncomfortable position do not hesitate to contact the primary investigator.

Withdrawal of Participation:

- You may withdraw at any time without explanation.
- Should you withdraw, your data will be destroyed unless if you formally agree for the researcher to use the data towards the goals of the research.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- You will have the option to choose whether you would like to be acknowledged in this study (full name and credentials cited in disseminated material) or remain

anonymous. If anonymity is requested the following measures will be taken:

- **To protect your anonymity, your name will not be recorded in the data, interview tapes and transcribed data. Initials or a code number will be used to indicate your identity.**
- **Your identity will not be shared with any third person or organization. The data provided by you may appear in presentations/publications but will be completely anonymous.**

Research Results will [may] be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

- **The research data may be used in presentations/publications.**
- **The raw data will be kept for one year and will be destroyed afterwards. Audio recordings will be deleted from the hardware and the paper recordings will be shredded.**

Questions or Concerns:

- **Contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1;**
- **Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria**

Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you agree to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

If you would like to be acknowledged in this study, please sign below.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Appendix III: Guidelines and Open-ended Questions for Interviews

1. How did you come across Persian music?
2. What was the experience like when you heard the very first tunes of Persian music?
3. How do you define the concept of improvisation in the context of Persian music?
4. In your point of view, how is the experience formed as a result of improvised music different from the experience that forms when a composed musical piece is performed?
5. What is, in your point of view, the key aspect of Persian music that differentiates it from other types of music especially Western music?
6. When you were learning Persian music, how did you learn to improvise? What was the role of the master who was teaching you music in this process?
7. Generally speaking, what is the experience like when you improvise Persian music and how does that experience lead to generation of musical sentences?
8. Looking at your performances, I have noticed that you close your eyes when improvising and it seems like you are traveling in a different world. Can you describe the emotions/feelings that form in you when you are improvising?
9. What is the experience like when you listen to improvised Persian music? Any specific differences from when you improvise yourself?
10. Do you receive any kind of feedback from your audience regarding your improvisational performances? If so, how do they explain their experiences when listening to improvised Persian music?
11. Any additional comments?