

# About

## پشت به پشت "back-to-back"

This work is the first in a set of duos all blossoming from the seminal 1977 album *Chehreh beh Chehreh* (چهره به چهره) from two twentieth-century masters of Persian *moosiqi-ye sonati* (موسیقی سنتی): the late Mohammad Reza Lotfi and the late Mohammad Reza Shajarian, two artists who played an important role in shaping and evolving *moosiqi-ye sonati* in Iran in the twentieth century and beyond.

The work explores the musical discourses between the two: Lotfi, a tar player, and Shajarian, a vocalist, and the sonic and personal relationship between the two masters, expressed through two players who also share dual sonic and personal connections: Josh Modney and Mariel Roberts. As part of the work's planning, I did an interview with the two of them, exploring how their musical and personal lives have intertwined, how they influence each other—artistically and otherwise—and how these facets of their relationship express themselves in their collaborations together. From this interview, a few things that came up struck me and influenced my approach to the work: the huge amount of trust each shares with the other, the way that the two work to cultivate performance practice together, and the way that their relationship is a confluence of trust, practice, musicianship, and time.

The final result is a work that is intimately tied to two separate relationships and four people, the connections and sounds that emerge from these relationships, and the way that our time changes when creating sounds together. Together with the sounds of the violin and cello are sections of intimate and precise timbrally-focused humming: a space for focused listening and performance, vibrations moving from body-to-body through each players' back. This humming eventually gives way to the unifying facet of the work, an excerpt of Shajarian singing two related settings of the same part of Hāfez's *Qazal 87*:

کان کس که پخته شد می چون ارغوان گرفت  
*Kān kass keh pokhteh shod meye choon arqavān gereft*  
"One who has matured (ripened) turns purple like wine"

The four voices expressed together back-to-back.

Daniel Reza Sabzghabaei

