



## Research Article

# Thrive and wane of culture: being a musician in Afghanistan

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### Article Info

**Received:** 6 May 2024

**Accepted:** 25 June 2024

**Online:** 30 June 2024

### Keywords

Afghanistan

Cultural heritage

Modern music

Music

Musical education

National musical instruments

Secular and religious music

Taliban rule

Traditional music

### Abstract

This article focuses on music, which is one of the most significant facets of Afghan identity. The country's rich musical legacy is deeply entwined with many ethnic groups and has played a crucial cultural role throughout its stormy past. Even though singing and playing an instrument were not taught in the majority of Afghan schools until recently, the country has a rich musical culture that is passed down from teacher to student from generation to generation. A rich musical heritage has endured for centuries, but the country's great musical tradition has come to an end over the past three years, with Afghanistan's musical culture suffering significant damage following the Taliban's second return to power in 2021. Fearing for their personal safety, many artists and musicians left Afghanistan. Although the bulk of Afghanistan's popular musicians and singers live abroad, many of those who remain in the country appear to have abandoned music in favor of other careers. Nonetheless, musicians living abroad are making an effort to preserve Afghan music by planning events and concerts all around the world. The article details the stages of the formation of state media, the emergence of new genres that are a symbiosis of traditional and modern, the development of national folk music as well as modern classical and popular music, and the emergence of new styles and trends during times when musical performance was entirely or partially prohibited. The article places a strong emphasis on gender rights and seeks to provide a voice to women who have been barred from performing music for millennia. The article also examines the survival tactics of musicians who strive to preserve a rich musical heritage. Hence, the history of Afghan music reflects greater sociopolitical processes and demonstrates Afghan culture's endurance. As musicians continue to face these problems, their art remains an important tool for preserving cultural identity and encouraging worldwide understanding.

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### To cite this article

Abdullaeva, M., and Gafurova, S. (2024). Thrive and wane of culture: being a musician in Afghanistan. *Journal of Music Theory and Transcultural Music Studies*, 2(1), 7-15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12748610>

## Introduction

The creative heritage and culture of Afghanistan is rich and extensive. Music is the most essential aspect of Afghan culture and identity, as it has its own aesthetic and magnificence. Music in Afghanistan is distinguished by the fact that it is more secular than religious and it is more instrumental than vocal, and performed mainly by professional musicians and sometimes by amateur musicians (Belyaev, 1960).

### Ethnic and Cultural Integration

Being an important part in Afghanistan's cultural history, it has traditionally brought together numerous ethnic groups residing there, including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Balochs, Turkmens, Pamirs, Hazaras to name the few. Moreover,

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Afghanistan's ethnic groups have historical, cultural, and linguistic ties to peoples residing outside its borders since antiquity (Lierse, 2021; Maliknezhad, 2019). Therefore, the Afghanistan's long-standing musical traditions have developed to encompass cultures of Persia, Central Asia and India. Its culture absorbed Persian and Hindu motives as well as musical traditions of the northern countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Consequently, its music has been included into the one-of-a-kind art form, as it shares musical styles, genres, and instruments of all these countries.

### **Musical Traditions and Instruments**

The Pashtun music tradition dominates the music of southern Afghanistan. Western Afghan folk music is strongly tied to Iranian folk traditions. Persian music dominated and was considered in the greatest esteem in the Pashtun royal courts of Afghanistan in 18 century, while the Hindu classical heritage of north India became entrenched as Afghanistan's art tradition from 19 century. The Indian classical heritage has had a huge influence. Prior to the 1980s, the vast majority of Afghanistan's elite artists were trained in the Indian classical tradition (Sonneborn, 2011).

### **Evolution of Afghan Music**

Until the early twentieth century, the canonized styles of court music were retained in the country (Broughton and Broughton, 2021). However, the evolution of Afghan music was influenced more by rich and original folk-song art, with the musical folklore of the Pashtuns, the country's most numerous nationalities, taking center stage. Afghan folk music complements singing and dancing and also functions as a distinct art form. It is typically performed at weddings and other types of celebrations such as the birth of a child or festivals. Afghanistan's teahouses have also been the places where most of Afghan musicians performed, as it were the hubs for socializing and entertainment. Heroic songs and ballads about national dignity and the Afghan struggle for freedom, as well as couplet songs about love, are particularly popular among the population.

In terms of musical instruments, for millennia, a variety of Greco-Bactrian, Oriental, and Indo - Iranian musical instruments that originated outside the internationally recognized boundaries of modern-day Afghanistan have been among the musical instruments of this region. Typical classical instruments of Afghanistan include dutar, sernai, doira, table, sitar, dilruba, tambur, gichak.

### **Linguistic and Ethno-Cultural Diversity**

The country's linguistic, ethno-cultural, confessional, and religious diversity contributes to the vitality of this culture, particularly its music (Belyaev, 1960). For instance, Afghanistan's northwestern region Tajiks and Uzbeks make up the majority of the region's urban population. They share a musical style that includes Shashmaqom – the classic musical tradition. In Afghanistan, traditional music has been passed down orally. The learners were able to master the voices and songs as well as playing the instruments by copying the master's performance.

### **Traditional Music Education**

Traditional Afghan music was not formerly part of a formal music education. It was kept within families, and musicians had little opportunities to pass on their knowledge and talents to those outside of their families. Traditional music education dates back to the tradition of birth into a family of hereditary musicians. An amateur musician could also find a professional musician eager to teach or share their vast knowledge of music in an apprenticeship known as *uztoz-shogird* which means "master-apprentice."

### **Live Performances and Gender Roles**

Live performances have been an integral part of Afghan weddings. Thus musicians were invited to celebrate the birth of a child, and even during Ramadan, cafes and restaurants in large cities organized nightly concerts (Aidarkhanova, 2022). Traditionally, music making in Afghanistan has been a gender segregated activity in which men perform in public spaces and women in their domestic space in the absence of men (The Guardian, 2022). In the privacy of their homes women in Afghanistan have been used to playing, singing and dancing to the sound of the frame drum, the only musical instrument considered suitable for women.

## Historical View of Afghan Musical Culture

In 1919 Ghazi Amanullah Khan ascended the throne in Afghanistan. He was an excellent pianist and harmonium player. He advocated for music and was influential in the establishment of music academies for youngsters. He dispatched musicians to India to study classical music, and made them return back to Afghanistan. In a tower constructed at Amanullah Khan's royal palace the first broadcasting began in Afghanistan, it was 1925. The following stage was only taken in 1940, when broadcasting was reinstated and Radio-Kabul was established. Since 1941, the musical editorial office of Kabul radio had become the hub of professional musical culture, with 3-year music courses and the formation of folk instrument ensembles and a variety art orchestra. It also harbored numerous amateur choirs throughout the country (Belyaev, 1960).

Afghanistan's musical culture was at its peak in the 1960s and 1970s. It was the time when the country was stable and peaceful under the rule of Mohammad Zahir Shah (1933–1973). The king adopted modern and democratic reforms, such as abolishing the compulsory veiling of women in 1959. Radio-Kabul Afghanistan became the unifying voice of the nation to recruit female singers, mainly from the elite classes, in order to raise the status of women in the entertainment world (Sakata, 2012). This occasion cleared the door for many musicians to adopt a more modern, so-called Western approach to music. For three decades, until the end of the 1970s, many pop artists arrived in Afghanistan and rose to prominence. The 1970s are widely regarded as the "golden era" of Afghan music. At this point, Afghan music had moved beyond its borders, becoming popular in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and India (Sonneborn, 2011).

## Radio Influence and Female Musicians

Until the 1950s, the only music on the radio was traditional songs performed on indigenous and national instruments. Thus, Baily argued that 'Radio Kabul brought about changes in public opinion, familiarized listeners with everyday experience of music, and displayed a model of more respectable musician status' (Baily, 2015, p.17)

In Afghanistan, becoming a musician for women was and has been challenging. The first female vocalist to appear live on radio in Afghanistan was Parwin in 1951 (Waldman, 2003, March). One of the most famous Afghan singers, Farida Mahvash, born in 1947, first worked as a secretary at a radio station, but in 1960 she began her musical career and in 1976 received the honorary title of *Ustad*, meaning master. This was very controversial because until this point, the title was reserved for men only (Sonneborn, 2011). However, when the war broke out in the country, Mahwash emigrated to the United States.

## Influence of War and Migration

There was also such an Afghan-Uzbek performer named Sabzi Gul (1957-2017). She was the only wedding singer in northern Afghanistan, where Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen nationalities prevail.

Another woman Elaha, born in 1988, is a Hazara pop singer. Elaha wanted to become a musician and singer. However, she entered a television singing competition under a pseudonym. Having such a beautiful and strong voice it was not difficult for her to win the competition. After becoming an overnight celebrity in Kabul, she had to face a great risk to her own safety because her distant family was against her entering a TV competition. That led to her having to emigrate (Aidarkhanova, 2022).

## Emergence of Pop Music

As for pop music, it first gained relative recognition in Afghanistan in the 1950s, remaining popular until the late 1970s. Amateur singers of unconventional music who wanted to showcase their talents contributed to the development and popularity of pop music in Afghanistan. Their performances were heard in the studios of Radio Kabul. The pop music trend most attracted vocalists who came from middle and upper class families and had a higher level of education than those from traditional music backgrounds.

One of them was Ahmad Zahir (1946 - 1979) an Afghan singer, songwriter and composer. Being an ethnic Pashtun, he sang mostly in Dari, thus winning fans in all ethnic groups. He had more songs to his credit than any other Afghan artist, having released almost 22 albums in less than 15 years. He had earned the title of Afghanistan's Nightingale however died aged 33 in a car crash (Majeed, 2021, December 30).

### **Soviet Invasion and Cultural Shifts**

The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979, which was a turning point, had a pivotal impact on the further cultural development of the country. The role of state control was strengthened through the media, which was used as a political tool. At that time, the Ministry of Information and Culture began to control all radio and television broadcasts, including music. However, the rich musical culture of the Afghan people began to find its way to listeners through the then-emerging cassette recorders. And here again there was a new exodus of representatives of musical art. At this time, those musicians who did not support the communist regime and refused to praise the one began to leave the country en masse (Karlovič, 2021, September 21). It cannot be said that those who left their homeland were able to find themselves and develop their talent in exile in Pakistan or Iran. In these countries, musical activity was strictly watched by the mujahideen. Ten years have passed and despite all efforts, the new communist ideology, unacceptable to most Afghans, has completely failed. The Soviet Army left because it could not break the resistance in many parts of the country (Baily, 2015, p. 25]

### **Mujahideen and Music Restrictions**

In 1988, after the overthrow of the communist regime, a period of bloody power struggles between warlords began. During that time professional musicians were obliged to obtain a license in order to perform. The mujahidins contend that music, whether it is created or consumed, can be morally compromising. However, the musicians were granted permission to perform pieces honoring the mujahidins' struggle, though no one was allowed to utilize amplifiers during a performance. Male musicians were permitted to perform at private parties and weddings, whereas female singers were outlawed and in case of violation of this instruction, they could have been subjected to imprisonment. Despite of all those restrictions, during the years of civil war from 1992 to 1996, music education and music making continued although with limitation. However, this led to a new wave of emigration of musicians but they carried on their work among Afghan diaspora. Music became a life force among immigrant communities, connecting people through song, poetry, and a sense of heritage to a common place of birth. Consequently, being based in Geneva, the folk ensemble 'Ensemble of Kabul' had traversed the world, conserving and promoting Afghanistan's cultural legacy. The 'Ensemble Kabul' really felt a duty to sustain the music of their country.

### **Taliban Regime and Music Suppression**

The Civil War brought the Taliban regime to power in 1996 that lasted up until 2001. Straight away the Taliban<sup>3</sup> had banned nonreligious music. Since they did not recognize any form of entertainment, music was prohibited in all its manifestations. Playing or listening to music, keeping musical instruments or audio recordings, everything somehow connected to music, was prohibited. There has been a suppression of music education in the form of cultural censorship. The Taliban were also against TV and radio, and totally banned them for its idolatrous images. In Taliban's perspective music, steered young people astray and caused moral decay. Therefore, they opted for the destruction of musical instruments. Musical instruments were confiscated and burned. The Taliban groups were patrolling the neighborhoods to identify those who listened to music or played musical instruments. The only music permitted on radio was religious chants or unaccompanied songs in praise of the Taliban. The religious chants did not use instruments, so were not officially regarded as "music". For Afghan Muslims, calls for prayers is primarily the most important sacred ritual in Islam. The recitation of the sacred words by professional reciters has emotional intensity in terms of melody, rhythm and vocal skill of the performer. However, since they are performed without instrumental accompaniment, they are not considered the art of music, which explains why some vocal performances are allowed in public even under the Taliban rule. A restriction on music in cars was already in place in Afghanistan. Though the ban was lifted after the Taliban were ousted, large parts of Afghan society have been still frowned upon music.

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<sup>3</sup> Taliban - ultraconservative political and religious faction that emerged in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the collapse of Afghanistan's communist regime, and the subsequent breakdown in civil order.

## Women and Music under Taliban Rule

Women's position was even worse under the Taliban rule. Women suffered deeply in Afghanistan over four decades of war. The Taliban excluded women from all public places (Sky News, 2022, December 25). Female voices were also prohibited on television and radio stations. Aryana Sayeed, a top female pop star who was also a judge on the TV talent show "The Voice of Afghanistan," managed to escape the day after the Taliban took over Kabul. She stated:

*"I had to survive and be the voice for other women in Afghanistan, ... The Taliban are not friends of Afghanistan, they are our enemies. Only enemies would want to destroy your history and your music"* (Armangue, 2021, September 25).

## Post-2001 Revival and Educational Reforms

After the 2001 US military intervention in Afghanistan the country witnesses the re-emergence of women in public sphere and re-integrating them in society. Afghanistan's musical culture started to revive, television went back on the air, while Radio Afghanistan put together a band of musicians and started broadcasting to an audience that was eager to hear music (Doubleday, 2011). Both state and private television struggled to balance their programmes in terms of linguistic, ethnic, religious, confessional and musical diversity.

It could be stated that the golden age of Pashtun traditional singing had arrived. Popular genres emerged as well. As a result, 'Kabul Dreams', one of the first local rock bands, was created in 2008. Their music was largely pop rock, with influences ranging from britpop to new wave punk, with a few folk motives interwoven. All members of the group fled Afghanistan in the 1990s, but after the Taliban regime fell, they returned with the objective of becoming Afghanistan's first big rockers, which they achieved.

## Modern Developments and Ongoing Challenges

Soosan Firooz, Afghanistan's first female rapper, made a breakthrough in hip-hop. In 2012, her debut single "Our Neighbors" was released. She sang about the repression of women in Afghanistan. In 2017 she left Afghanistan and took refugee in India, because of the Taliban threats (Firooz, n.d.).

"Afghan Star" was the first singing competition program that started airing music competitions among youths in 2005 to discover new Afghan music talents. Despite receiving condemnation from Islamic authorities, it was hugely popular and had featured many female singers. "The Afghan Star" and "The Voice of Afghanistan" were important in the emergence of new stars on the Afghan pop scene (Karlovič, 2021, September 21).

In regards to musical education at that time the only institution in the country that taught music at the university level was the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University. There was also the Agha Khan Music Courses, founded in 2003 that relied primarily on foreign donations and art enthusiasts to sustain their artistic activities. Apart from that there were two military bands, one of which was housed in the Presidential Palace, they only taught how to play brass and woodwind instruments, had a relatively restricted repertoire, and seemed uninterested in development (Terpstra, 2020).

Yet in 2010 the National Institute of Music (ANIM) within the Ministry of Education was formally launched and provided a standard academic curriculum as well as specialized music training for children in grades 4 through 14, allowing students to earn a high school certificate as well as a diploma in music. This institute hosted the students from underprivileged backgrounds, either from orphanages or from a non-governmental organization "Aschiana" that provided services to such children. Children were learning to play musical instruments, read music, while studying music theory and ear training. There were children from Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunar, Nuristan, Farah, Panjshir, age range from 9 to 20. More than one third of them were girls. They experimented in jazz, rock, hip-hop or any type of music. Students were learning two types of musical instruments: traditional Afghan and western musical instruments. It was planned to open branches in Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad (Forrest, 2013). The project, intended at reviving the national musical tradition, was created by Dr. Ahmad Sarmast, an Afghan musicologist who returned to Afghanistan in 2008 from exile in Australia. Dr. Ahmad Sarmast became the founder and director of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, under the auspice of Ministry of Education of Afghanistan. He is an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society in UK; an Honorary Fellow of the National College of Music of London; and a Research Fellow

of the Monash Asia Institute and Monash School of Music – Conservatorium, in Australia. The funding for the ANIM was coming from the World Bank and several other NGOs. The school's mantra included ensuring the musical rights of all Afghans and promoting gender-equal learning (Khan, 2021, October 23). Under the American-backed government in Kabul, the institute, had flourished, becoming a symbol of Afghanistan's changing identity. The programs embraced both Afghan culture and Western music, preparing hundreds of young artists, many of them orphans and street hawkers, for careers in the performing arts. The ANIM system of education and practice helped them better specialize in traditional Afghan music while infusing the European notation system, including harmony, composition and arrangement. The ANIM revealed the world its Afghan Youth Orchestra, made of boys and girls. In 2015, the Afghan Women's Orchestra, 'Zohra', was launched. In 2017, 'Zohra' brought Afghanistan's new-found music to the rest of the world. Dr. Ahmad Sarmast endorsed the development of music education encouraging Afghanistan's all girls' orchestra 'Zohra'. The 'Zohra's performance had a significant impact on Afghanistan's culture showing the issues of gender equality (Lierse, 2021, p.78). 'Zohra' was named after a Persian goddess of music. Its musicians were the first women in their families, communities and country to study music in over 30 years. They came from provinces all across Afghanistan to live in Kabul and study at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. Among 'Zohra's ranks were the country's first female conductors, Negin Khpalwak and Zarifa Adiba (Hernández, 2022, July 13).

### **Impact of Taliban's Return to Power in 2021**

The students of this institute were invited to perform in a music festival outside of Afghanistan. Two pianists participated in a Chopin festival. An ensemble of Afghanistan traditional instruments toured in South Korea. The sitar and sarod student's ensemble performed in Estonia. The 62-member ensemble toured the United States, and gave concerts in the Muscat Opera House in Oman. Before its doors were shut in August 2021, when the Taliban gained the power again, the ANIM had an enrollment of 300 students, with 60 percent from economically disadvantaged families.

The school's doors have been closed since mid-August, 2021. The building became under constant patrol by the Taliban. World Media reported the shocking visuals emerged from Kabul's National Music Institute as the Taliban destroyed musical instruments including piano and drum sets. The students of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music fled after the Taliban seized power. The institute has been closed as all of its trainers, students and personnel were evacuated to Europe in 2021. Now they are trying to remake their school, and their dreams, in Portugal.

After his second coming to power, the Taliban forbade music, believing it had a "corrupting influence." In the weeks after the American withdrawal, Taliban fighters harassed and intimidated musicians, and pressured radio stations, wedding halls and karaoke parlors to stop playing nonreligious songs. The musicians who had given up their careers because of Taliban restrictions on playing music said that they had hidden their instruments inside closets and cellars, fearing they might be attacked for being artists (Afghanistan's Golden Years: Music, n.d.).

### **Women's Rights and Music Education**

In November 2022 another step was taken by the Taliban government to restrict Afghan women's freedoms. Taliban forced many performers into exile or hiding. The harsh punishment waited those who disobeyed. Afghan boys and girls all lost the right to have access to music education. The Taliban lodged strong resentment against Afghans for using modes of entertainment forbidden under Sharia law. According to Taliban explanation music distracts from the remembrance of God, and deviation from piety and modesty (Baily, 2015). The Taliban's return to power exacerbated the situation for women significantly. Women were not allowed to work or study and were permitted to leave the house only when a male relative accompanied them (Majeed, 2021, December 30).

### **Preservation and Evolution of Afghan Music in Exile**

Afghanistan has experienced ongoing war conflict for more than forty years. During these years, education at schools and universities has been disrupted due to security and consequently accessibility (Lierse, 2021: 77). However, the music of Afghanistan is not dead, it lives on in exile. The expulsion of musicians and singers living in the US and Europe has supported various variations of music from Afghanistan. Even this negative aspect, namely flight and immigration, has not only continued the musical diversity of Afghanistan, but all ethnic groups in the country have been able to continue

their music, especially Persians and Pashtuns, while demonstrating how their national identity is preserved through a mutual interest in culture, a shared musical experience. It will take time to rebuild the musical infrastructure and create conditions for the return of exiled musicians and instrument makers.

Throughout Afghanistan's long years of armed turmoil, when music was highly restricted, censored, repressed, and, eventually, entirely outlawed, Afghanistan's musical culture saw ups and downs, as well as brief moments of relative prosperity, followed by another collapse. True progress is impossible under such conditions, but to argue that religious groups have completely destroyed musical culture, art, and education would be an exaggeration. Afghanistan's musical culture not only survived but achieved new creative heights.

It is impossible for the Taliban to strangle music, no matter how hard they try. Many musicians remain in exile, as they did during previous eras of the music prohibition. Furthermore, Afghan music is not only being preserved but also being developed. Because the musicians who fled their nation are dispersed around the world, their music has now spread beyond the limits of this country. Their grief, suffering, and hope for a better future, which they convey through music, will now be available to the global musical community.

### Conclusion

The cultural trajectory of Afghanistan's music scene embodies a complex interplay between resilience and repression. Afghan music, deeply intertwined with the nation's diverse ethnic heritage, stands as a critical cultural anchor, continually reflecting and shaping the socio-political landscape. Throughout history, Afghan musicians have faced formidable challenges, yet they have adapted, preserving their cultural heritage and innovating within their art forms.

**Table 1.** Evolution of Afghan Music: A Historical Overview

Period	Key Events and Developments	References
1950s-1970s	Rise of pop music in Afghanistan. Ahmad Zahir becomes an influential figure, blending traditional and contemporary styles.	Majeed, 2021; Broughton & Broughton, 2021
1979-1988	Soviet invasion and increased state control over media. Emergence of cassette recorders allows music to reach the public. Mass emigration of musicians.	Baily, 2015; Karlovich, 2021
1988-1996	Period of civil war and power struggles between warlords. Restrictions on music, particularly for female musicians. Continuation of music education and performance within the Afghan diaspora.	Karlovich, 2021; Baily, 2015
1996-2001	Taliban regime imposes a ban on nonreligious music. Destruction of musical instruments and suppression of music education.	Baily, 2015
2001-2021	Post-2001 US intervention leads to revival of musical culture. Establishment of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM). Integration of traditional and Western music education.	Forrest, 2013; Hernández, 2022
2021-Present	Return of the Taliban leads to renewed threats to music culture. Destruction of instruments and suppression of music education. Many musicians flee, continuing their work in exile.	Majeed, 2021; Baily, 2015; Afghanistan's Golden Years: Music, n.d.

Women in Afghanistan have encountered significant barriers in the music industry, reflecting broader gender dynamics within the society. The first female vocalist to appear live on radio, Parwin, in 1951, and later figures like Farida Mahvash and Elaha, highlight the persistent struggles and occasional breakthroughs for female musicians (Waldman, 2003; Sonneborn, 2011; Aidarkhanova, 2022). These women navigated societal constraints, often facing severe risks, to pursue their musical careers, illustrating the broader gender issues within Afghanistan.

The rise of pop music in the 1950s, with icons such as Ahmad Zahir, marked a period of cultural flourishing, blending traditional and contemporary styles and appealing to a broad audience across ethnic lines (Majeed, 2021). This era, often referred to as the "golden age" of Afghan music, was abruptly disrupted by the Soviet invasion in 1979. The Soviet regime's control over media and subsequent political turmoil led to the displacement of many musicians, resulting in a loss of cultural continuity but also the emergence of a resilient diaspora that continued to promote Afghan music internationally (Baily, 2015; Karlovich, 2021).

The subsequent civil war and Taliban regime (1996-2001) imposed severe restrictions on musical activities. The Taliban's ideological control led to the banning of nonreligious music, suppression of music education, and destruction of musical instruments (Baily, 2015). Despite these oppressive measures, Afghan music persisted among expatriate communities, showcasing the resilience of Afghan cultural traditions.

The US intervention in 2001 marked a significant revival of Afghanistan's musical culture. Institutions like the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), founded by Dr. Ahmad Sarmast, played a pivotal role in this cultural resurgence. ANIM integrated traditional Afghan music with Western musical education, fostering a new generation of musicians who embodied the transcultural essence of Afghanistan's musical heritage (Forrest, 2013; Hernández, 2022). This period saw a flourishing of cultural activities, with ANIM becoming a symbol of Afghanistan's changing identity and resilience.

The Taliban's return to power in 2021 once again posed a significant threat to Afghanistan's musical culture. The destruction of musical instruments and the suppression of music education forced many musicians to flee the country, with institutions like ANIM relocating their operations abroad (Majeed, 2021). Despite these challenges, Afghan music continues to evolve and thrive in exile, demonstrating the enduring power of cultural expression as a form of resistance.

In summary, the history of Afghan music reflects broader socio-political dynamics and serves as a testament to the resilience of Afghan culture. Afghan musicians have continually adapted and innovated, preserving their cultural heritage against formidable odds. The efforts of institutions like ANIM and the resilience of the Afghan diaspora highlight the enduring power of music to foster cultural continuity and global solidarity. As musicians continue to navigate these challenges, their art remains a vital medium for preserving cultural identity and fostering international understanding (Eyerman, 2001; Pratt, 1992; Welsch, 1999).

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