

English translation of 'Zi', another composition by Hamid Tabatabaei. The songs are based on classical and modern Persian poetry. The lyrics were translated from Persian by John O'Kane.

[1]

If in the garden the nightingale's blood doesn't boil,  
Where will you find the presence of the red rose?  
The red rose again renews the loved one's memory.  
After all, the red rose gets its colour from his blood.

[H. E. Sāye]

[2]

Vārtān!  
Springtime has come in laughter.  
The Judas-tree has bloomed.  
Inside the house,  
Under the window,  
The old jasmin has flowered.  
Give up these beliefs.\*  
Don't arm wrestle with foul Death.  
To live is better than not to live  
Especially in spring.

Vārtān did not speak.  
Vārtān was a star.  
One instant in the darkness  
He flashed and he leapt and he was gone.  
Vārtān did not speak.  
Vārtān was a violet.  
He blossomed and brought joyful news:  
"Winter is defeated."  
Then he was gone.

Vārtān did not speak.

[Ahmad Shāmlu]

\*In August 1953 the CIA launched a coup d'état in Iran and overthrew the popular government of prime minister Mohammad Mosaddeq – who had recently nationalized the oil industry that had previously been under the control of British Petroleum. Large numbers of Iranians were rounded up, held in prison, and were subjected to torture and killed. Among them was Vārtān Sālākhāniān, a left-wing political activist. After being arrested by the Shah's police, he was tortured to force him to give information about his political associates. Famously, Vārtān did not say a word and died under torture.

[3]

Play, flute-player!  
Flute-player, play!  
Oh flute-player, how well you play!  
Play! This city is asleep.  
Play! This heart is restless.  
Flute-player, play!  
Even though your music will remain unheard.

[Bahrām Beyzāyi]

[4]

Tonight is one of those autumn nights  
That feels my pain and shows kindness,  
One that brings doubts,  
Is sad and gloom-laden,  
That weeps and is of long duration.  
A night which makes me wonder  
Whether as a friend it laments my *night*  
Or while keeping it a secret,  
It also laments my *dawn*.  
Now it fixes its eyes on me.  
I see it is kindly,  
A night  
That places below my head  
A chill, damp hand

Like a black pillow.  
A pillow of dark melancholy

I say this and still  
The night pursues its course.  
Silent and kind to me,  
Seated at my side  
In the manner of a nurse  
Dressed in black with no hope for the patient.  
The night sheds tears.  
I say this and still  
The night pursues its course.

[M. Omid]

[5]

Spring has come without the narcissus and the rose.  
There is no breeze with spring's perfume.  
The swallow is here but there is no news of the rose.  
Why is the swallow not with his fellow-traveller, the rose?  
What took place in the rosegarden,  
What happened to make it forget the rites of spring?  
Why does the cloud lament with lightning in his eye?  
Why does he weep so profusely in anger?  
Why does blood drip from the rosebush?  
What happened, where is the nightingale's voice?  
Why does every breeze carry the scent of blood?  
Why are the violet's dark curls crestfallen?  
Why do the butterflies have broken wings?  
Why has dust of sadness settled in every corner?  
Why in the month of spring is the sun deep in sleep?  
Spring\* is here but the New-Year rose has not bloomed.  
Don't gaze at this broken branch. It has withered.  
When you look at tomorrow, it's full of musk.  
Don't say this country is a barren salt-desert.  
When tomorrow comes, it will be the envy of spring.  
Come, oh spring! So this blood mingled with mud  
May bring forth the red rose like fire from smoke.  
The red rose will blossom whether wished for or not.

Even though a hundred autumns bring destruction.

[H. E. Sāye]

\* Spring begins March 21st and in Iran is considered the beginning of the new year. Hence New Year's Day or Now Ruz is accompanied by all the signs of spring's arrival.

[6]

Live in joy!  
Amid dark-eyed beauties, in joy.  
The world amounts to nothing more  
Than a deceitful tale and wind.  
You must not be sad over what has come.  
Nor must you think of what is gone.  
This world is wind and mist,  
Alack, alas!  
Bring out the wine.  
Let come what may!

[Rudaki]