

The Role of Music in The Cultural and Spiritual Development of Uzbek Society

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ABSTRACT

Music, as one of humanity's most profound forms of artistic expression, represents an inexhaustible source of aesthetic refinement and emotional awareness. It constitutes a unique cultural phenomenon capable of engaging both the intellectual and emotional dimensions of human consciousness. Through its expressive power, music shapes perception, cultivates sensitivity to beauty, and fosters ethical and emotional maturity. This article examines the historical and cultural significance of music in Uzbekistan, emphasizing its essential role in the formation of moral, patriotic, and cultural values within society. Throughout history, music in Uzbekistan has functioned not merely as a form of artistic expression, but as a vital medium for social communication, spiritual enrichment, and the transmission of collective memory. Musical traditions have long served as a reflection of the nation's historical experience, worldview, and psychological development.

KEYWORDS: Music heritage, Uzbek music culture, Maqam tradition, Cultural identity, Intangible cultural heritage, Music education, National values, Aesthetic education, Moral and patriotic upbringing, Traditional music, Cultural continuity.

INTRODUCTION

Music, as a form of artistic expression, is an inexhaustible source of aesthetic taste and emotional perception. It is a captivating world that enchants both the heart and mind of a human being. This article explores the historical and cultural significance of music in Uzbekistan, emphasizing its role in shaping moral, patriotic, and cultural values in society. It also highlights the importance of music education and preservation of musical heritage in the context of national identity and development.

Music is not merely entertainment; it is a profound artistic domain that cultivates aesthetic sensibility and emotional intelligence. It has the power to inspire beauty and ethical behavior in daily life. In Uzbekistan, music plays a significant role in both individual and societal development, reflecting centuries of social, historical, and psychological evolution. Musical traditions and customs in Uzbekistan are deeply intertwined with national consciousness and have been passed down from generation to generation for centuries.

Uzbek musical events, rituals, and local ceremonies serve as cultural mirrors reflecting the nation's historical journey and collective experience. These practices encapsulate the Uzbek people's worldview, their ethical norms, and their sense of community. As a result, values such as patriotism, compassion, etiquette, and enlightenment continue to flourish among the youth through music-centered education and traditions.

Following Uzbekistan's independence, significant legal and policy reforms were implemented to promote the development of education, with particular emphasis on music education. These reforms aim to cultivate a culturally rich and morally grounded generation.

Uzbek musical culture boasts an ancient and rich legacy. Throughout the development of civilization in the

region between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, various musical genres emerged, including classical music, professional traditional music, folk compositions, and amateur folklore. These diverse forms of musical expression evolved harmoniously, complementing one another in style and performance.

The musical heritage of Uzbekistan continues to serve as a spiritual fountain in contemporary society. Historically, the development of music in this region has deep roots in the intellectual and cultural contributions of great Eastern scholars. Renowned figures such as Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Ahmad al-Fergani, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Pahlavon Mahmud, Mirzo Ulughbek, Alisher Navoi, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, Abdurahman Jami, Najmuddin Kawkabi, and Darvish Ali Changhi authored significant treatises on the science, history, and performance of music. These works include valuable insights on musical instruments, techniques, and artistic ethics.

The evolution of Uzbek musical heritage is closely linked with the invention and refinement of musical instruments. Literary scholar N. Mallayev, in his work *The History of Uzbek Literature*, highlights how music developed alongside literary traditions. He notes that by the 10th to 12th centuries, string, percussion, and wind instruments such as the tanbur, rubab, qobiz, zir, nay, chang, shaypur, surnay, karnay, aruman, and qanun were widely used across the region.

Archaeological excavations in Uzbekistan's historic cities have unearthed ancient instruments resembling the dutar, surnay, qanun, and nay. Stone carvings depicting musicians, as well as miniatures portraying singers and instrumentalists, offer further evidence of a long-standing tradition of musical performance in the region. Uzbekistan's musical heritage is a cornerstone of its national identity and spiritual culture. Rooted in ancient traditions and enriched by generations of scholars and musicians, Uzbek music remains a dynamic and integral part of contemporary life. The promotion of music education and preservation of musical heritage not only contributes to cultural continuity but also fosters moral and emotional development in the younger generation. Thus, music serves as both a historical legacy and a vital force in shaping the future of the nation.

The musical heritage of Eastern civilizations, including forms such as *Maqom*, *Mugham*, *Dastgah*, *Nawba*, *Raga*, and *Küi*, represents complex performance traditions passed down orally through generations. This article discusses the significance of these traditions in Uzbekistan, especially *Maqom*, and analyzes how state policy, educational systems, and traditional mentorship models have contributed to their preservation and development. The paper also reflects on the evolution of musical pedagogy rooted in the master-apprentice (*ustoz-shogird*) system and its enduring value in the modern era. Traditional music holds a central place in the spiritual and cultural life of the Uzbek people. The intricate musical systems shared across Eastern cultures - such as *Maqom* in Uzbekistan, *Mugham* in Azerbaijan, and *Raga* in India - form the backbone of classical and folk music traditions. In Uzbekistan, these forms have not only endured through centuries of oral transmission but have also become emblematic of national identity and cultural resilience.

The *Maqom* tradition stands out as a vital component of Uzbekistan's classical musical culture. Its complexity in structure, modal variety, and emotional depth has allowed it to serve as both an artistic and spiritual guide for generations. Recognizing the need to preserve and enhance this heritage, more than 20 presidential decrees and orders have been issued in Uzbekistan, particularly emphasizing the creation of new artistic expressions rooted in traditional forms. These reforms represent a progressive approach toward revitalizing classical music while honoring its foundational aesthetics. The national commitment to nurturing future specialists in the arts is enshrined in the *Law on Education* and the *National Program for Training Personnel*. These policies envision a system that equips young generations with the necessary knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding to meet modern challenges. Uzbekistan's music education sector is now supported by adequate infrastructure and resources to develop both technical proficiency and cultural awareness among students.

The roots of music education in Uzbekistan are deeply embedded in the oral transmission system known as *ustoz-shogird* (master-apprentice). This system has been the cornerstone of traditional music instruction,

ensuring the continuity of performance techniques, repertoire, and artistic philosophy across generations. Notably, this model emphasized rigorous mentorship, deep emotional bonds between teacher and student, and unwavering dedication to musical excellence.

This form of education was never purely technical—it included moral discipline, deep respect for tradition, and an understanding of music as a spiritual calling. Only those with genuine talent, passion, and perseverance were encouraged to pursue music, while the uncommitted were discouraged from entering the profession. This unwritten code helped preserve the integrity and prestige of the musical arts.

A key characteristic of Uzbek traditional musicianship lies in the transmission of skills associated with specific instruments such as the *tanbur*, *rubab*, *nay*, and *dutar*. Mastery of these instruments was considered not only a technical feat but also a cultural responsibility. Those aspiring to become professional musicians were required to study under a master, gradually acquiring the secrets of performance, tone, rhythm, and emotional expression.

This traditional pedagogical structure ensured the transmission of a refined set of values alongside musical skills. The process often required years of discipline and hardship, reflecting a broader understanding of music as a way of life rather than a

Like other nations of the world, the Uzbek people possess a rich spiritual, literary, and musical heritage shaped by their historical journey. Uzbek musical culture, distinguished by its spiritual depth and artistic sophistication, continues to be a vital part of the country's identity. Its strength lies in its oral transmission and its function as a living legacy—one that evolves while retaining its foundational values.

Traditional music, especially *Maqom*, plays an important role in reinforcing cultural memory and societal cohesion. As a spiritual and cultural language, it communicates

The preservation and continued development of Uzbekistan's traditional music require a balanced approach—honoring age-old practices while integrating modern educational and creative innovations. The *ustoz-shogird* system, state policy support, and grassroots cultural efforts together sustain this heritage as a living and evolving phenomenon. As a result, Uzbek music remains not only a historical treasure but also a vibrant expression of national identity and human creativity.

National values, including long-standing customs, traditions, labor ethics, and ways of life, continuously adapt to the changing demands of the times. As these values evolve, they gradually take root and transform into enduring cultural practices. In this context, the traditional music of the Uzbek people has played a vital role in shaping the nation's rich cultural heritage. From ancient times, folk traditions have significantly influenced the development of musical forms, with each tradition contributing distinct characteristics that enrich and complement one another.

METHODS

The study of folk music, especially in today's globalized world, has become more important than ever. As the exchange between world cultures intensifies, preserving national traditions, nurturing them, and using them as a foundation for creativity hold exceptional educational and cultural significance. Folk music, deeply embedded in the history of the Uzbek people, is a reflection of the collective memory, emotions, and spiritual experience of generations.

Over the centuries, Uzbek folk music has developed into various branches and forms. These include folk songs, classical music, and the creative works of composers and songwriters. Among these, classical music holds a special place in our heritage and is often referred to as traditional music. The *maqom* - a large and complex musical form - stands at the heart of this tradition. *Maqoms* eloquently express the emotional depth,

philosophical insights, and inner world of the Uzbek people through intricate melodies and structures.

There are three distinct regional schools of maqom performance in Uzbekistan, each with its own unique qualities and historical background. These are known as the Shashmaqom of Bukhara, the Khorezm Maqom, and the Fergana-Tashkent Maqom styles. Each of these musical systems reflects the specific cultural and geographical features of the region from which it originates. These differences are most clearly observed in the performance techniques, which display a wide range of stylistic diversity.

Performance traditions, or *ijrochilik*, are central to the identity of Uzbek music. They encompass a variety of techniques, forms, and interpretations that have been refined and passed down through generations. Over time, these practices have crystallized into a distinctly Uzbek performance art, deeply rooted in national identity and artistic expression.

In conclusion, as modern challenges and cultural interactions continue to shape societies, the preservation and revitalization of Uzbekistan's musical traditions - especially through the lens of national values - remain a cornerstone of cultural continuity and development. These traditions not only reflect our past but also serve as a foundation for future creative endeavors in music and beyond.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Performance traditions in Uzbek folk music encompass a broad spectrum of both simple and intricate forms. Among these, *maqom* performance stands out as a particularly complex and refined musical practice. Due to its complexity, various forms of musical interpretation have emerged over time - from solo performances to collective ensemble arrangements. Performing in an ensemble is not only a distinctive feature of musical expression but also reflects the performance norms rooted in the musical traditions of different cultures.

Each nation develops its own ensemble performance techniques, which are deeply intertwined with its musical heritage and national values. Over the centuries, Uzbekistan has cultivated unique ensemble traditions, particularly within the classical genre known as *maqom*. These traditions emerged as a natural extension of the country's broader cultural and musical evolution. In the realm of *maqom* performance, ensemble interpretation holds a special place, combining instrumentalists and vocalists in a highly coordinated and expressive musical experience.

In our current era, there is a renewed focus on exploring new dimensions of ensemble performance. This involves modern reinterpretations built on the solid foundation of historical traditions. The aim is not only to preserve the spiritual wealth inherited from previous generations but also to internalize its depth and convey it to younger generations through fresh, innovative formats. These efforts are closely tied to the larger goal of nurturing a morally and spiritually enriched generation - an essential objective in the development of an independent and culturally confident nation.

CONCLUSION

This article presents both theoretical insights and practical knowledge for young performers and vocalists studying the art of classical Uzbek music. By understanding and mastering the existing styles of performance, young musicians are empowered to become worthy representatives of their craft. If each student thoroughly studies the songs and oral folk traditions that form part of the *maqom* repertoire, and incorporates them into their professional practice, they will play a significant role in the spiritual education of future audiences. These classical and historically rich songs can foster a deep appreciation for our cultural legacy, encouraging young people to listen to, perform, and take pride in their musical heritage.

Recent changes and cultural revitalization efforts have had a visible impact on music, particularly on the maqom genre. Uzbek national maqoms are gradually gaining wider international recognition, showcasing the artistic richness and depth of Uzbekistan's musical values on a global scale. Our collective mission is to deepen the understanding of maqoms from historical, cultural, and musical perspectives, and to promote their presence and prestige in the global musical arena.

Achieving this not only contributes to the preservation of Uzbekistan's cultural identity but also enriches the global musical heritage by introducing the unique artistry and traditions of Uzbek classical music to the world. One of the most significant recent developments in the cultural landscape of Uzbekistan is the establishment of the **Uzbek National Maqom Art Center** in the capital city, Tashkent. The creation of this institution marks an important milestone in the preservation, development, and promotion of the rich traditions of Uzbek classical music, particularly the art of *maqom*.

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Since September 2021, the **Yunus Rajabiy Institute of Uzbek National Music Art** has also commenced its operations. Named after the renowned maqom performer and researcher Yunus Rajabiy, this institute plays a vital role in advancing the study and teaching of maqom. It serves not only as a center for academic research but also as a hub for training future generations of musicians and scholars who are dedicated to mastering and preserving this ancient musical tradition.

The institute's work is instrumental in achieving new milestones in the documentation, analysis, and dissemination of maqom music. Through a combination of theoretical instruction, practical performance, and scholarly inquiry, the institution contributes significantly to sustaining the legacy of maqom while also adapting it to contemporary cultural and educational frameworks.

The establishment and successful operation of these institutions reflect Uzbekistan's broader commitment to safeguarding its intangible cultural heritage and ensuring that the profound artistic value of maqom continues to resonate both nationally and internationally.

Music holds a vital place in the cultural and spiritual development of Uzbek society. Rooted in centuries of tradition, it serves as a mirror of national identity, a tool for moral education, and a bridge between generations. Classical genres like *maqom* not only preserve the philosophical and emotional depth of the past but also continue to inspire modern interpretations and innovations. With the establishment of institutions like the Uzbek National Maqom Art Center and the Yunus Rajabiy Institute, Uzbekistan has taken important steps to safeguard and promote its rich musical heritage. As a result, music remains a powerful force in shaping values, nurturing creativity, and strengthening the nation's cultural legacy both at home and on the global stage.

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