

The Master-Apprentice Tradition in Maqam Vocal Art: Contemporary Perspectives

Ulasheva Mamlakat Axmadovna, Ibragimov Abdunabi Begimqulovich, Matyakubov Shavkat Batirovich, Yoʻldasheva Feruza Dilmurod qizi

¹Senior Lecturer of the Department of “Maqom Singing” of the Institute of Uzbek National Music Art named after Yunus Rajabi, Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

²Professor of the Department of “Maqom Singing” of the Institute of Uzbek National Music Art named after Yunus Rajabi, Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

³Associate Professor of the Department of “Maqom Singing” of the Institute of Uzbek National Music Art named after Yunus Rajabi, Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

⁴Lecturer of the Department of “Maqom Singing” of the Institute of Uzbek National Music Art named after Yunus Rajabi, Uzbekistan, Tashkent.

ABSTRACT

The article discusses vocal pedagogy and the relationship between the teacher and the student. It explores how the connection between the teacher and student is strengthened, the role of trust and caution, and the correct use of vocal technique. The article emphasizes the importance of proper approaches in vocal education and the potential harm caused by incorrect methods. It highlights that singing should be done without pain, with the use of proper breathing techniques and support.

KEYWORDS: vocal pedagogy, teacher, student, trust, caution, vocal technique, singing, health, vocal art, voice control.

INTRODUCTION

There are two main types in the formation of the art of singing: amateur and professional solo singing. In amateur solo singing, the performer begins by mastering the basic principles of singing and attempts to perform traditional songs. A professional singer, on the other hand, is a trained artist who performs traditional music at a high level, either solo or as part of an ensemble, and who also engages in creative work. Today, professionalism plays a vital role in the development of traditional singing. Like many developing countries around the world, Uzbekistan is paying great attention to fostering professionalism in the field of music art. One of the primary goals in teaching traditional singing is to train students in high-quality vocal performance techniques, voice control skills, the structural formation of melodies, and performance techniques. This not only involves musical education but also contributes to the development of students' creative thinking. Providing extensive knowledge about Uzbek folk songs and the "Shashmaqom," teaching proper vocal techniques, performance ranges, and giving detailed information about the composers of the studied pieces are of great importance in this process.

The art of maqom singing is a form of art that enables the expression of emotions experienced by our people during various moments of life. When we listen to or perform maqom, we enrich not only our artistic but also our life experiences. Maqom art stirs the listener's emotions, affects their inner world, introduces them to a wide range of life events, and evokes broad associative imagery. In this sense, maqom art serves as a force that unites a person's inner and outer worlds, prompting deeper reflection and emotional awareness.

Maqom art is a unique form of artistic expression, organized in a specific structure and evolving dynamically over time. It allows for the expression of human emotions, thoughts, and perceptions through sound. It is a specially structured collection of sounds primarily based on pitch and temporal changes. In maqom vocal art - that is, the singing of maqom - voice plays the central role. In this type of maqom performance, the voice may be accompanied by instruments or performed a cappella (as in the form known as *katta ashula*). In Uzbekistan, there are three types of maqom traditions:

1. *Shashmaqom* (or Bukhara Maqoms),
2. Khorezm Maqoms,
3. Fergana-Tashkent Maqom Paths.

Shashmaqom was systematized in the mid-18th century in Bukhara by professional court musicians and music scholars as a suite consisting of six maqoms.

- *Shashmaqom* represents a set of six complete modes. The instrumental and vocal cycles of maqom emerge from the commonality of rhythmic patterns and tonal structures within these modes.
- Each maqom in *Shashmaqom* consists of two major sections: instrumental and vocal (songs), performed only by highly skilled instrumentalists and vocalists trained in the traditional *ustoz-shogird* (master-apprentice) system.
- Maqoms have primarily been transmitted orally from generation to generation. Although scholars in the East developed unique systems for musical notation, these were not widely applied in practice. Throughout the 20th century, efforts were made to transcribe maqoms using the five-line staff notation system.
- In the 1920s, under the initiative of Abdurauf Fitrat, the prominent composer and ethnographer V.A. Uspensky (1879–1949) recorded the majestic Six Maqoms in notation for the first time in Bukhara, based on the performances of master singer Ota Jalol Nosir and tanbur player Ota Ghiyas Abdughani.
- Academic musician Yunus Rajabi (1897–1976) also published the Six Maqoms in notated form twice - first in the 1950s and again throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

The art of maqom singing - i.e., the art of vocal performance - has deep historical roots. This art form originates from the Neolithic era, when humans began expressing their emotions through vocal sounds. The merging of laughter and crying into a harmonious vocal form helped individuals gain deeper insight into their inner world. The art of singing is considered one of the oldest forms of artistic expression in human history.

In the pedagogy of maqom singing, the boundaries between a vocal pedagogue and a singing master are often not clearly defined. Typically, a single individual is responsible not only for developing the singer's vocal abilities but also for curating and expanding their repertoire. In many cases, experienced accompanists (*konzertmeisters*) serve as vocal mentors. The vocal pedagogue shapes the student's voice, helping them to produce sound freely, correctly, and with high quality. While innate vocal talent is undeniably important, it is only through proper education and systematic practice under the guidance of a qualified teacher that such natural abilities can be fully realized.

How does one choose a good vocal instructor? When it comes to teaching vocal technique, factors such as the number of a teacher's students, their popularity, or their connections with well-known figures are not the primary considerations. What truly matters is that the teacher possesses a deep understanding of both the external aspects of the voice and the internal, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, and that they are equipped with the necessary methodologies to teach these effectively.

In addition, a vocal pedagogue offers the student various techniques and exercises to enrich and make full use of their natural voice. Each vocal issue is unique and must be addressed according to the student's vocal type, physiological characteristics, and individual needs. A good pedagogue also applies their solid theoretical knowledge and practical experience to teaching the art of vocal performance.

In essence, the art of singing is a powerful medium that enables the most profound expression of the human soul, emotions, and thoughts. At the same time, the process of teaching vocal technique in this art form is highly complex and requires a wide range of knowledge and skills.

The relationship between teacher and student is one of the most enduring and unique forms of human connection. The severance of this bond is often comparable to a significant separation or the end of a long-term relationship. Ideally, the dissolution of such a relationship can resemble the emotional parting between

parent and child. The connection between a teacher and a student is frequently built on mutual trust and openness, as the student exposes their most vulnerable and personal qualities to the instructor. As a result, a profoundly strong bond is formed between them.

The process of vocal training usually spans several years, leading to a deepening of this relationship. While lessons might be held once a week, ideally, they should occur several times per week. In such circumstances, the teacher and student become very close. The student often feels extremely vulnerable and shares their innermost emotions with the teacher, making this bond similar to that between parent and child.

METHODS

Thus, the teacher not only imparts vocal technique to the student but also teaches them to understand the human inner world and to express emotions with authenticity and precision. The most critical aspect for a teacher is to establish mutual trust with the student and to create an environment where the student feels safe and uninhibited in expressing themselves. If the teacher lacks professional competence, they can cause significant harm to the student. The vocal system is extremely delicate and requires a cautious and informed approach. Improper use of the voice or excessive strain may lead to serious long-term issues. Here, one must pay close attention to a fundamental rule: if singing causes discomfort or pain, it is an indication that something is being done incorrectly.

Suggestions by teachers to activate “new muscles” or use muscles that have not previously been engaged can often lead a student down the wrong path. The process of making music should be natural and free. It should primarily be associated with relaxation and calmness, rather than forceful intensification and tension. Proper breathing techniques and the correct use of abdominal muscles should not cause any pain or tension during singing. If the act of singing becomes painful, it clearly indicates a flawed approach. In such a case, the student should immediately consider changing their teacher, as issues with the vocal folds can result in lasting damage. These kinds of incorrect approaches may render a student unfit for professional work in the future; therefore, the development of the voice must be approached with great care. Each singing session should be free, comfortable, and natural, and the teacher must consistently guide the student using correct and healthy techniques. The art of singing, with its unique techniques and approaches, requires individualized learning for each singer. A singer’s vocal apparatus is extremely sensitive and must be treated with the utmost care. One of the most important principles in this field is that if the process of singing causes pain or discomfort, the singer is likely doing something wrong. Pedagogues must also teach their students to avoid experiencing pain during vocal production. Improper breathing or misuse of muscles can result in painful phonation.

Both the singer and the vocal pedagogue must focus not only on developing correct breathing techniques and voice production but also on avoiding pain or undue tension while singing. Singing should be a natural and liberating process, in which the most important components are proper breathing and the correct use of muscle coordination. Instead of relying on force, the singer should engage the respiratory and muscular systems fluidly and freely. In vocal training, the mastery of correct breathing methods—especially diaphragmatic breathing—is of great significance. This allows the singer to project sound clearly and expansively. Proper control of the breathing process in singing significantly enhances a vocalist's performance. In vocal artistry, it is essential for every singer to manage their breath correctly, maintaining deep and calm inhalation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most effective method of breathing is diaphragmatic breathing. This technique not only facilitates correct sound production but also adds brilliance and power to the voice. Another critical aspect for singers is the proper use of both lower and upper vocal registers. If a singer does not utilize their lower or middle vocal range, their voice may lack fullness and stability. Ideally, the lower and upper registers should complement one another and function as a cohesive whole. For female vocalists, this often involves the use of *belting*, a technique that enables smooth transitions from the chest voice to the head register. Male singers, particularly in ensemble settings, may navigate between baritone and tenor registers. Mastery of this technique allows

singers to perform across various styles and a wide vocal range.

Correct breathing, effective vocal control, and full use of vocal registers are among the fundamental elements of the vocal arts. These skills teach singers to use their voices fully and clearly. Though complex, vocal training is crucial for nurturing creative expression. Therefore, the instruction of proper breathing techniques and voice control is a foundational factor in a singer's development. These methods not only improve the quality of the voice but also enhance the overall performance. In conclusion, the teaching of vocal arts must emphasize breathing techniques, correct muscular engagement, and the full and pure use of the voice, all of which require specialized pedagogical approaches.

At its core, singing is based on the ability to manage breath efficiently and to use the vocal apparatus in a strong yet natural manner. Today, in the education of youth, acquiring a deep understanding of national music, fostering creative innovation, and advancing traditional vocal art are of great importance. The teaching process in traditional singing is distinguished by its complexity and the extended time required to master it. This field develops on the basis of the *ustoz–shogird* (master–apprentice) tradition and performance practices that have evolved over centuries. Therefore, one of the most pressing issues today is the development of professional singing, including the introduction of new approaches and methodologies in the art of singing and vocal pedagogy.

Classical songs (*mukammal ashula*) differ significantly from folk songs due to their musical development, extended melodic structures, wider vocal ranges, and the presence of climactic passages. The progression in classical singing often begins with the *daromad* (introduction), gradually building in intensity until reaching a musical and emotional peak. These changes give classical songs their distinct aesthetic qualities and intricate musical structure. In comparison to folk songs, classical pieces demand more complex vocal expression and technical mastery, elevating them to a refined and elevated artistic domain.

CONCLUSION

The widespread presence of vocal works in both classical and composed music traditions, as well as their regional variants, not only reflects the richness of folk music but also showcases regional musical identities. For instance, in Bukhara, folk songs and *muxammas* are prominent; in Khorezm, *suvora* and *naqsh* genres are practiced; and in the Fergana Valley, traditional genres such as *ashula yo'llari*, *katta ashula*, and *yovvoyi ashula* exist. Additionally, classical vocal traditions addressing religious and moral themes have also developed uniquely. Songs based on the works of Mashrab, Ahmad Yassawi, Ogahiy, Feruz, Haziniy, Furqat, Huvaydo, and Maxtumquli—along with spiritual forms such as *munojot*, *na't*, *qalandar*, *xonaqoyi*, *hamd*, and *manzuma*—represent a musically and thematically sophisticated body of work, forming a significant part of our classical musical heritage.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These songs are distinguished not only by their structural and thematic completeness but also by their ability to preserve musical traditions while continuing to evolve in harmony with contemporary times. Classical vocal works constitute a refined and profound layer of folk music, and their musical structure, vocal style, and thematic richness play a vital role in elevating our musical art. Their substantial contribution reinforces their significance in the creation of exemplary forms of folk music and traditional art.

In conclusion, the art of maqom singing, traditional vocal performance, and vocal pedagogy - with their distinct characteristics and study processes - are integral components of the musical heritage of Central Asia. The integration of traditional and professional approaches in the educational process not only facilitates artistic training but also nurtures students' creative thinking. This, in turn, serves as a foundation for the future development of national music.

REFERENCES

1. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2017, November 29). *Decree No. PF-5264 on the Establishment of the Ministry of Innovative Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan*.
2. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2017, November 30). *Resolution No. PQ-3416 on the Organization of Activities of the Ministry of Innovative Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan*.
3. Rajabov, I. (1963). *Maqomlar masalasiga doir* [On the Issue of Maqoms]. Tashkent.
4. Rajabov, Y. (1965). *Shashmaqom (I–VI); O‘zbek xalq muzikasi (I–V)* [Shashmaqom (Vol. I–VI); Uzbek Folk Music (Vol. I–V)]. Tashkent.
5. Yunusov, R. (2022). *Sharq xalqlari maqomlari* [Maqoms of Eastern Peoples]. Tashkent.
6. Ibragimov, O. (2006). *Fergana-Tashkent Maqoms*. Tashkent.
7. Zufarov, A. M. *The Contribution of Eastern Scholars in the Formation of the Maqams’ Veil System. Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity*, Impact Factor 7.985, pp. 63–65.
8. Zufarov, A. M. (2023, October). *Compositions Based on Maqoms: A Case Study of Saidjon Kalonov’s “Topmadim”*. *Oriental Art and Culture, Scientific Methodical Journal*, Volume 4, Issue 5. ISSN 2181-063X.
9. Farraj, J., & Abu Shumays, S. (2019). *Inside Arabic music: Arabic maqam performance and theory in the 20th century*. Oxford University Press.
10. Katz, R., & Cohen, D. (2006). *Palestinian Arab music: Latent and manifest theory of a maqām tradition*. University of Chicago Press.
11. Levin, T. (Ed.). (2006). *The music of Central Asia*. Indiana University Press.
12. Signell, K. (1977). *Makams of Turkish art music*. Asian Music Publications.
13. Signell, K. (1986). *The dastgāh concept in Persian music*. Cambridge University Press.
14. Al-Faruqi, L. I. (1981). *An annotated glossary of Arabic musical terms*. Greenwood Press.
15. Marcus, S. L. (2007). *The maqām as a modal system*. In J. Nettl (Ed.), *The study of ethnomusicology: Thirty-one issues and concepts* (pp. 409–421). University of Illinois Press.
16. Xasan Rajabiy — “Theoretical Aspects Of Traditional Uzbek Vocal Art”. *World Bulletin of Education and Learning* (2025), 1(02), 409–413.
17. Zafar G‘ofurov — “The Art of Maqom Singing...” *Western European Journal of Linguistics and Education* (2025), 3(11), 87–90.