

# TRADITIONAL SINGING: ROOTS OF UZBEK MUSICAL CULTURE

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## Abstract

This scientific article explores the formation, historical evolution, and current state of traditional Uzbek vocal art. It examines major regional performance schools — Bukhara, Fergana-Tashkent, and Khorezm — analyzing their stylistic characteristics. The study also investigates the connection between vocal performance and maqom music, the role of the master-apprentice system, and the contribution of female singers. Traditional singing is presented as a core component of the national musical identity and intangible cultural heritage of Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** Traditional singing, Uzbek music culture, vocal performance, regional schools, maqom, master-apprentice tradition, poetic repertoire, female singers, intangible heritage, national identity.

## Introduction

Traditional Uzbek singing holds a special place in the centuries-old musical legacy of the Uzbek people. More than a form of musical expression, it represents the worldview, spirituality, and aesthetic values of the nation. The formation of vocal styles and performance schools has developed over generations, becoming an integral part of Uzbekistan's national musical culture.

The scholarly study of traditional Uzbek singing has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Mirzayev (2004) provides a comprehensive overview of the historical development and stylistic richness of traditional singing practices in Uzbekistan. His work emphasizes the deep cultural roots of vocal art in major cultural centers like Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand. Rajabov (2003) and Almatov's research focus on the structural complexity and philosophical underpinnings of maqom music. These works highlight the intrinsic relationship between maqom theory and vocal performance, emphasizing the need for specialized training and interpretative depth among singers.

Karimov (2010) offers detailed insights into traditional instruments and their role in vocal accompaniment, which complements the study of regional singing styles. Tursunov (1998) analyzes various performance schools, comparing their techniques and contributions to the national music tradition.

Yo'ldoshev (2015) explores the contributions of female artists in preserving and popularizing traditional singing, focusing on their role in modern musical education and stage performance.



UNESCO's recognition of Shashmaqom as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (2008) has also spurred international academic interest and supported institutional efforts to safeguard and promote traditional vocal practices through education and documentation.

A singer is a performer who expresses music through voice. The history of Uzbek traditional singing dates back to the early Islamic period. Cultural centers such as Bukhara, Khiva, Samarkand, and Fergana played a pivotal role in establishing and preserving vocal traditions across generations.

Bukhara School: Based on maqom, known for its philosophical and spiritual tone.

- Fergana-Tashkent School: Rich in emotion, demanding a wide vocal range.

- Khorezm School: Sharp and rhythmic in character, marked by rapid transitions.

Mastery in traditional singing is epitomized by the ability to perform maqom. A maqom singer must possess profound theoretical knowledge, a refined sense of tonal harmony, and extensive practical experience. Performing maqom requires advanced vocal techniques and a deep emotional and spiritual maturity.

Traditional singers often perform texts from classical Uzbek poetry, including works by Alisher Navoi, Zahiriddin Babur, and Fuzuli. The lyrical content typically explores themes such as love, enlightenment, Sufism, and morality. The language used is highly poetic and expressive. The master-apprentice system is fundamental to traditional singing. Renowned masters such as Tokhir Norboev and Jurabek Jo'rayev have trained many successors. Female singers like Munajat Yo'ldosheva and Ozoda Nursaidova have significantly contributed to preserving and developing the art of traditional singing in Uzbekistan.

## Conclusion

Traditional singing is a vibrant expression of Uzbek national identity and aesthetic heritage. It represents not only musical practice but also the historical narrative, philosophical thought, and poetic tradition of the Uzbek people. Preserving this art form and transmitting it to future generations is a critical cultural mission.

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