

THE PROCESS OF WORKING ON CANTILENA PIECES IN THE RUBAB CLASS

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Abstract

This article presents a detailed methodological and pedagogical analysis of working with cantilena-style pieces in the rubab class. It discusses the artistic and expressive potential of the instrument, outlines key stages of work, and emphasizes the importance of developing phrasing, legato technique, musical breathing, and performance culture in students. Practical methods, analysis of expressive tools, and guidance for repertoire selection are also included.

Keywords: Rubab, cantilena, phrasing, legato, musical breathing, expression, performance technique, pedagogy.

Introduction

The rubab is one of the most refined and expressive instruments of Uzbek traditional music. Its rich timbre, resonant sound, and unique structure allow it to convey a wide range of emotions. Among various genres, cantilena-style works stand out for their lyrical and melodic nature, often associated with deep musical expression, smooth phrases, and emotional resonance.

The cantilena style, rooted in vocal expression, emphasizes connected, flowing lines with subtle nuances of dynamics and rhythm. When applied to the rubab, this style not only enhances the instrument's lyrical potential but also develops students' musical sensitivity, artistic thinking, and interpretive abilities.

I. PEDAGOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CANTILENA PIECES

Working on cantilena-style pieces in the rubab class yields multiple pedagogical benefits:

- Artistic Development: Helps students internalize musical imagery and develop their artistic imagination.
- Emotional Growth: Encourages emotional sensitivity and the ability to communicate feeling through music.
- Technical Refinement: Reinforces legato playing, phrasing, finger smoothness, and control of the mizrab (plectrum).
- Performance Maturity: Teaches musical breathing, interpretive awareness, and a polished stage presence.

II. EXPRESSIVE CAPABILITIES OF THE RUBAB

The rubab's structure and playing technique naturally lend themselves to lyrical expression. The following features support cantilena interpretation:

- Resonant strings: Provide sustained and smooth sound ideal for legato lines.
- Soft plectrum technique: Allows for subtle attacks and dynamic control.
- Flexible hand movements: Enable natural transitions between phrases and notes.
- Vibrato technique: Brings warmth and emotion to individual notes and phrases.
- Musical breathing: Allows phrases to be played with a sense of inhalation and exhalation, imitating vocal phrasing.

III. STAGES OF WORKING ON CANTILENA PIECES

Stage 1: Familiarization and Musical Analysis

At the initial stage, students become acquainted with the structure, emotional content, and form of the piece. Key steps include:

- Identifying the emotional climax of the work.
- Understanding phrase structure and articulation.
- Developing an internal image of the piece.
- Discussing character and stylistic elements with the teacher.

Stage 2: Technical Preparation

This phase focuses on laying the technical groundwork:

- Practicing legato fingering smoothly across strings.
- Developing soft, consistent mizrab movement.
- Isolating breathing points within phrases.
- Integrating slow practice to internalize hand coordination.

Stage 3: Expressive Interpretation

Once the basic structure is secure, focus shifts to expressivity:

- Phrasing is refined in collaboration with the teacher.
- Dynamics, agogics, and tempo flexibility (rubato) are coordinated.
- "Musical breathing" exercises help students internalize phrase flow.
- Emphasis is placed on shaping phrases as if naturally breathing – this adds sincerity and naturalism to performance.

Stage 4: Integrating the Whole

The final stage unifies technical precision with emotional content:

- Full phrasing and transitions are connected smoothly.
- Rhythmic stability and musical character are reinforced.
- Final polishing prepares students for public performance.
- Students reflect on their own interpretations and receive feedback.

IV. CRITERIA FOR SELECTING CANTILENA PIECES

Selecting appropriate repertoire is essential for effective teaching. When choosing cantilena pieces for rubab students, consider the following:

- National identity and cultural relevance: Works that reflect traditional Uzbek modes and maqams.
- Technical accessibility: Pieces that match the student's current level.
- Pedagogical usefulness: Works that develop specific skills (e.g., legato, phrasing, dynamics).
- Emotional depth: Pieces that inspire creative engagement and personal interpretation.

Recommended pieces:

- Segoh (slow variant)
- Bayot, Tanovar, and other maqam-based melodies
- Traditional lyrical pieces with soft phrasing and rich expression

V. PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

Based on teaching experience, the following strategies have proven effective:

- Tailored feedback: Focus on each student's strengths and areas of improvement.
- Modeling interpretation: Teachers demonstrate emotionally rich performance to guide students.
- Visual and verbal imagery: Use poetic or metaphorical language to evoke feelings.
- Gradual phrase work: Break down phrases into small segments before uniting them.
- Dialogue about music: Encourage students to express what the piece means to them.

Cantilena-style works in the rubab class represent a powerful means of fostering both technical precision and artistic maturity. These pieces awaken emotional depth, promote musical independence, and encourage creative self-expression. They prepare students for solo performance, deepen their interpretive skills, and help shape their musical identity. In essence, cantilena is the art of singing through the instrument. The rubab, with its sensitivity and warmth, is among the finest instruments for mastering this art.

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