

THE SOCIAL IMPORTANCE AND EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF PRESERVING NATIONAL MUSICAL HERITAGE

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Abstract:

This study explores the significance of safeguarding national musical heritage, emphasizing its educational and social relevance, particularly in nurturing the cultural consciousness and personal maturity of youth. National musical art is presented not only as a cultural expression but also as a critical social institution influencing the ethical and emotional development of individuals. Special attention is given to the preservation of classical traditions such as maqom, performance styles, and master-apprentice pedagogical systems. The article underscores the necessity of transmitting these elements to future generations in their authentic forms. It is argued that national music plays a transformative role in shaping spiritual values, aesthetic sensibilities, and cultural identity. The pedagogical approach rooted in oral transmission is discussed as an effective methodology in musical education. Overall, the article advocates for a comprehensive and respectful engagement with traditional music to enrich the educational experience of young learners.

Keywords: National music, classical heritage, maqom, musical education, traditional performance, aesthetics, cultural values, oral pedagogy, musical thinking.

Introduction

In the modern era, special attention is being paid to the development of arts education, particularly in connection with the preservation of national cultural values. In the context of societal renewal and modernization, the safeguarding of national musical heritage has become a priority across various educational initiatives, state programs, and cultural reforms [1]. These measures aim to instill a sense of appreciation for traditional Uzbek musical art among the younger generation by promoting respectful engagement with the cultural legacy.

The protection of national musical heritage serves a dual purpose: it maintains the historical and artistic identity of a nation and also contributes to the cultural education of youth. As researchers emphasize, preserving intangible cultural assets such as traditional music is essential for sustaining collective memory and ensuring intergenerational transmission of values [2]. Accordingly, attention has also been given to scientific research in this domain, which supports the integration of national music into curricula and community-based learning practices.

Musical education involves the acquisition of both theoretical and practical knowledge of music. The process of learning music influences a person's consciousness by enhancing aesthetic sensitivity and emotional depth [3]. Musical consciousness—defined as an advanced state of awareness—forms the basis of musical culture. Without internalizing the foundational concepts



of music, young learners cannot fully engage in creative or performative musical practices. Therefore, the development of musical literacy, including theoretical understanding and emotional perception, is crucial to cultivating artistic competence.

When musical knowledge is internalized, it evokes emotions such as pleasure, melancholy, and joy—thus generating a deeper aesthetic experience. At this point, the learner's musical knowledge transforms into a personal need, eventually shaping a belief system and giving rise to musical mastery. This process leads to the formation of musical culture, which involves the ability to perceive, appreciate, preserve, and enrich musical beauty through conscious engagement [4].

In this regard, the development of musical knowledge should be viewed not only as a technical acquisition but also as a transformation of aesthetic emotions into internalized values, beliefs, and competencies. Musical culture, therefore, refers to an individual's ability to experience and express beauty through music, as well as the level of engagement with musical activities rooted in cultural awareness.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

The preservation and pedagogical integration of national musical traditions has been the subject of growing academic interest. Scholar B. Karamatova has thoroughly investigated the need to improve music-pedagogical education in the context of modern societal transformation. Her research emphasizes the increasing spiritual demand among school-aged students for national musical knowledge and the challenges of incorporating ancient musical values into school curricula [8].

Art historian N. R. Hasanova, in her theoretical work on the development of music criticism in Uzbekistan, has explored the essential issues of perception, genre development, and the role of criticism in artistic culture. She presents music criticism as a sophisticated interpretive art, assessing its multi-dimensional influence within musical life and cultural discourse [9].

Philosopher L. Bobaeva, in her study titled *Philosophical and Aesthetic Foundations of Eastern Folk-Professional Music*, examines the historical and philosophical development of Eastern musical traditions. Her interdisciplinary approach connects music history, philosophy, and pedagogical roots within the framework of Uzbek musical culture, offering valuable insights for educational practice [10].

Aesthetic perception and musical understanding play an important role in shaping patriotism and intercultural awareness among students. To achieve these educational outcomes, several pedagogical strategies are recommended:

- Selecting music pieces with strong patriotic and multicultural themes, ensuring that educational objectives align with national values;
- Encouraging emotional responsiveness and critical listening skills to enhance conscious musical perception;
- Ensuring that teachers provide consistent and impactful pedagogical guidance during the cultivation of national identity through music.

Theoretical issues related to performance methodology are addressed in the work of Dr. F. Khalilov, who proposes a didactic concept involving the selection of repertoire, material organization, and phased instruction. His findings identify the most effective conditions, methods, and resources for improving the instrumental and performative training of music students [11].



D. Yu. Saipova, in her pedagogical research, explores the cognitive complexity of sight-singing (solfege) and defines it as a method for developing pitch recognition, vocal discipline, and notation literacy. She notes that solfege exercises serve as essential tools for nurturing musical fluency, requiring systematic instruction and parallel coordination with music theory classes [12]. Although musicology in Uzbekistan has addressed the study of traditional instruments, many aspects still require further research. One key challenge lies in comparative analysis: examining traditional musical compositions in relation to the instruments for which they were originally intended. S. Khudoyberdiev, for instance, highlights the central role of the *dutar* in Uzbek and Tajik classical traditions and calls for a nuanced understanding of the instrument's evolving expressive capacity across generations [13].

Researcher G. M. Najmetdinov focuses on the formation of professional interest in students of music-pedagogy faculties. His study connects this process to broader societal transformations, including the restoration of spiritual values and the implementation of the national school concept. Najmetdinov proposes a structural model for cultivating motivation among future music teachers, addressing pedagogical conditions, psychological traits, and methodological frameworks [14].

Finally, the theoretical contributions of Dr. J. Rasultoyev stand out for their integration of musical performance, instrumental practice, and cultural expression. His research conceptualizes Uzbek instrumental performance culture as a holistic phenomenon—merging instruments, performers, and sound aesthetics into a single interpretive system. Rasultoyev's work also introduces, for the first time in Uzbek musicology, the concept of "sound symbolism" and the traditional performer's cognitive image, contributing significantly to contemporary understandings of musical identity [15].

Results and Discussion

Archaeological research has revealed that the origins of Uzbek musical culture date back to the Zoroastrian era. The *Avesta*, the sacred scripture of Zoroastrianism, references several musical instruments, including the *tanbur*, *vinig*, *chang*, and *nay*, suggesting that music played a significant role in spiritual and everyday life during that period [8]. According to historical sources, Zoroaster himself performed melodies on the *tanbur*. Instruments recovered from Afrasiyab ruins, such as *surnay*, *doira*, and *ushpulak*, closely resemble their modern counterparts, indicating the longevity of musical forms and designs in the region [9]. Additionally, international musicologists have recognized Uzbekistan as one of the original homelands of chordophones (stringed instruments), which began spreading globally from this region in early historical periods. The structural characteristics and classification of national musical traditions are central to understanding the broader scope of Uzbek music. Among these, the art of *maqom* is regarded as the most sophisticated expression of musical heritage. Uzbekistan is home to three major *maqom* traditions: **Bukhara Shashmaqom**, **Khorezm Maqom**, and **Fergana–Tashkent Maqom**. These represent the pinnacle of Uzbek classical music, reflecting profound artistic, emotional, and philosophical depth. The term *maqom*, derived from Arabic, refers to the "position" or "place" of sound in music, and more broadly, to specific modal and compositional systems in traditional Eastern music [10].



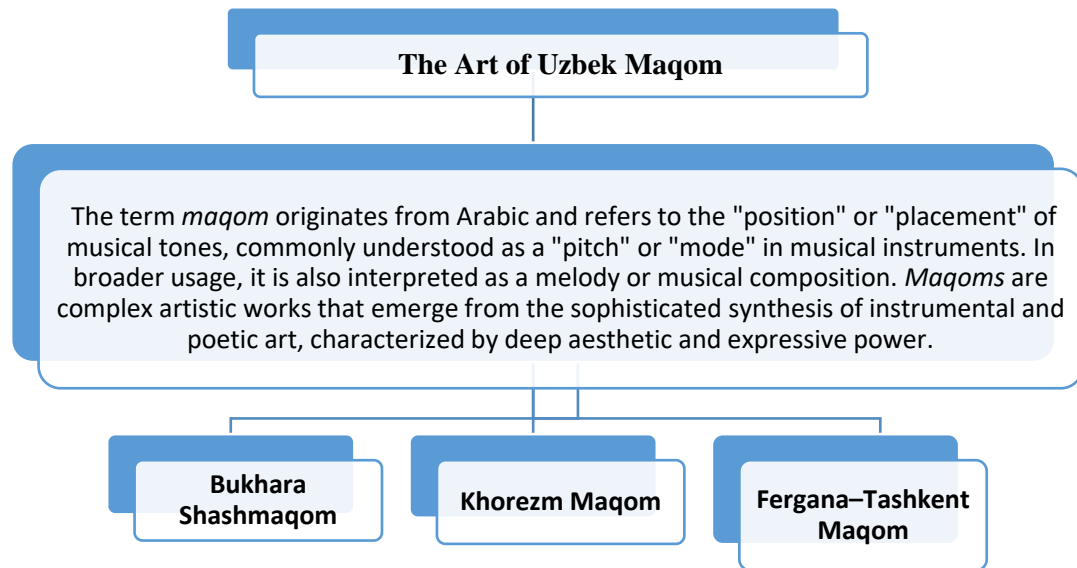


Figure 1. The Art of Uzbek Maqom

Historically, *maqom* music held an elite status as the jewel of court culture. It was performed selectively on ceremonial occasions, with strict standards of authenticity upheld by rulers such as the Emirs of Bukhara and the Khans of Khiva. Performers who rendered *maqom* improperly were subject to penalties, a testament to the art's high social and aesthetic value. The scope of *maqom* heritage is vast: the Shashmaqom alone contains more than 300 interconnected pieces, including instrumental and vocal compositions linked through complex modal relationships [10]. The transmission and preservation of these traditions were ensured through legendary figures such as Ota Jalol (Shashmaqom), Niyozjon Khoja (Khorezm Maqom), and Khudoyberdi Ustoz and Ashurali Mahram (Fergana-Tashkent Maqom) [11]. Each lineage reflects regional nuances and evolving cultural contexts. The Shashmaqom, in particular, has been called a "musical epic" that reflects the Uzbek people's emotional life, love, and existential struggle. In the 20th century, efforts by scholars like Yunus Rajabiy, Shonazar Sobirov, and Boboqul Fayzullayev were instrumental in transcribing and publishing the *Shashmaqom* repertory [11].

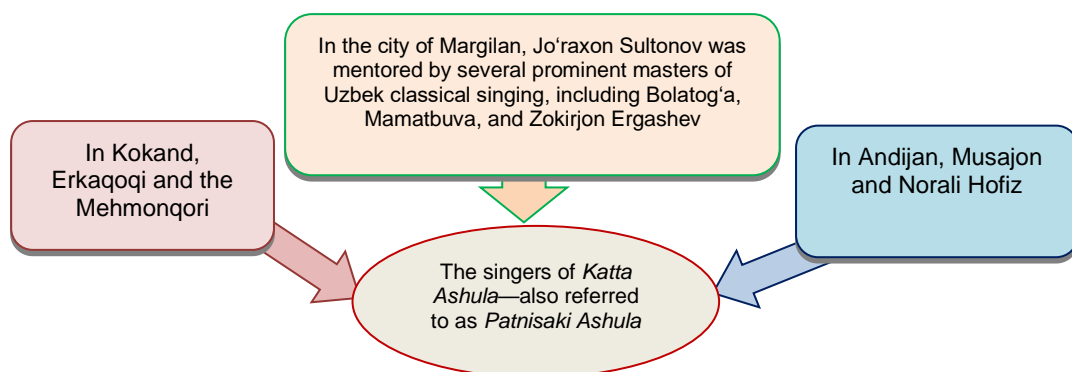


Figure 2. The *Katta Ashula*, or “Large Song,” is a unique genre of Uzbek professional music traditionally performed by two to four vocalists without instrumental accompaniment, often based on classical poetry and ceremonial themes.

In addition to *maqom*, several other indigenous genres reflect Uzbekistan's rich and diverse musical traditions. One such form is the **Katta Ashula**, a genre characterized by large-scale vocal performance by two to four singers, usually without instrumental accompaniment. Rooted in spiritual recitations and poetic traditions, this genre has been preserved by prominent singers from cities such as Kokand, Margilan, and Andijan, despite decades of neglect and cultural suppression [12].

Another central form of Uzbek musical heritage is **Baxshi art**. The term *baxshi* is thought to derive from Mongolian and Buryat words meaning “enlightener” or “teacher,” and is etymologically connected to the Sanskrit term *bhikshu*, meaning a spiritual guide or mendicant. In Central Asian Turkic cultures, these artists are also known by regional names such as *jirau*, *ashiq*, or *göyanda* [12]. In Uzbekistan, *baxshis* have played a vital role in reciting epic tales (*doston*) accompanied by instruments, thus creating a powerful artistic dialogue between performer and audience. These performances have historically fostered collective identity, patriotism, and a sense of justice through poetic narration of social struggles and ideals.

Despite the significance of *baxshi* traditions, many schools of this genre were lost during the Soviet era due to cultural suppression and policy-driven assimilation. The schools of Bukhara, Samarkand, Namangan, and Tashkent disappeared, while those in Khorezm, Qashqadaryo, and Surxondaryo managed to survive and continue [12].

The Art of the *Bakhshi*

According to some linguistic studies, the term *bakhshi* is derived from the Mongolic and Buryat words *bakhsha* or *baghsha*, both of which carry the meaning of “educator” or “spiritual guide,” highlighting the intellectual and didactic functions of the *bakhshi* in oral epic traditions.

In Sanskrit, there is also the word *bhikshu*, which denotes a “dervish,” “wandering ascetic,” or “spiritual teacher,” all of which align with the concept of a bearer of enlightenment and wisdom.

Among the Turkmen people, *bakhshis* are known as *bagshi*; among the Karakalpaks, they are called *baqsi*; in Kazakh tradition, they are referred to as *jirov*; and in the Caucasus region, such performers are known as *ashiq*.

Figure 3. The Concept of Bakhshilik

Another gendered tradition within Uzbek musical heritage is **Xalfachilik**. The term *xalfa*, meaning “learned person” in Arabic, refers to women performers who sang and played instruments—typically the *doira*—at female-only social gatherings. This form developed in the Khorezm region and included poetic and spiritual recitations by master performers such as Xonimxon Xalfa and her students [13-15]. Songs like *Muboraklar bo'lg'ay* and *O'lguncha sizni derman* remain culturally relevant and are still performed today.

The genre of **O'lanchilik**—short-form ritual and festive songs—is another component of

traditional music, particularly among nomadic and semi-nomadic Uzbek communities. O'lans are primarily performed during weddings and seasonal festivities. Prominent scholars such as H. Zarifov, Z. Khusainova, and T. G'oziboyev have made significant contributions in collecting and classifying these oral traditions [16-18].

The decline in traditional music education under Soviet rule also contributed to a loss of interest in national instruments and genres. Regional specificities were neglected in curricula, and European musical values began to dominate elite musical institutions. This, combined with a shortage of ethnic Uzbek music educators, led to a generational disconnect. It was not until 1972 that the "Eastern Music" department was finally established at the Tashkent State Conservatory, marking a pivotal moment in institutionalizing national music education [19-21].

Conclusions

In conclusion, during the Soviet era, Uzbek national musical heritage was systematically marginalized and often dismissed as a relic of the past. As a result, all genres of traditional music were subjected to pressure and restrictions. Educational institutions—whether at the general, secondary-specialized, or higher education levels—failed to allocate sufficient curricular space or institutional support for national music. Instead of encouraging the study and preservation of traditional instruments and genres, the number of instructional hours dedicated to national music education was reduced.

For decades, conservatories within the Soviet higher education system did not provide platforms for the true connoisseurs and virtuosos of Uzbek music. Iconic figures such as Turgun Alimatov (tanbur and sato), Ismoil Naychi (flute), Domla Halim, or Mamurjon were not produced by these institutions. The primary reason for this neglect was the lack of institutional encouragement, investment, and coherent strategies for developing national music education.

Furthermore, the absence of structured support for the study of national instruments led to a significant shortage of professionally trained performers. Several challenges persist in the field of folk instrument performance, including:

- inadequate professional development systems for music educators;
- lack of specialized academic literature and research;
- and limited access to traditional instruments in educational settings.

Despite these setbacks, the current cultural and educational reforms in Uzbekistan reflect a renewed commitment to elevating national music as a vital dimension of spiritual and aesthetic education. The targeted development of music education is rightly seen as a high-level cultural phenomenon, with significant emphasis placed on nurturing students' aesthetic awareness and national identity through music.

Indeed, music is not merely a form of celebration or entertainment; it also serves as a source of emotional strength, spiritual support, and creative inspiration. Authentic works of art—especially music—are often regarded as a universal language capable of evoking deep aesthetic appreciation across all peoples, cultures, and civilizations. Therefore, the social and pedagogical significance of preserving national musical heritage lies in its capacity to deepen future specialists' sense of belonging, enhance their educational motivation, and reinforce their professional aspirations.

Meeting the contemporary requirements of music education and ensuring successful student engagement with curricular content depends on a wide range of factors. Among them, the



availability of appropriate pedagogical conditions and teaching resources is particularly critical. This includes not only well-trained instructors and modernized curricula but also access to national instruments, historical recordings, and culturally relevant teaching materials.

In this regard, protecting and revitalizing national musical heritage is not merely an act of cultural preservation—it is an essential pedagogical responsibility.

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