



National Uzbek Music

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Abstract: It must be noted that interrelation of lyrics, tune and rhythm has always been one of the basic principles of Uzbek national music. There have been formed a few distinctive schools of dastan singers and ritual songs in Uzbekistan. And one can find out the names of several outstanding musicians of the medieval Uzbekistan in the article.

Keywords: Avesta, Uzbek, scientist, choral songs, dastans, musician, bakhshi-singers, lapar and yalla, two-string bow, vocal, makom styles.

According to historical sources, the hymns of the holy Zoroastrian book Avesta, composed 2500 years ago in Khorezm, were performed in a drawlingly chanting way. In the 5th century B.C., in his description of the lands and peoples conquered by the Persian king Darius, Herodotus, "The Father of History", mentioned the choral singing of the Massagetae, distant ancestors of the present-day Uzbeks. The famous scientist Narshakhi, who lived in 10th century, in his "History of Bukhara" marked out the Sogdians' art of singing ancient ritual songs.

In some regions of Uzbekistan there have preserved the common practice of starting to plow fields with the ritual of the first furrow and the song "Kush Khaidash", whereas harvesting is started to the accompaniment of "Oblo Baraka" song. The farmers in Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions start their haymaking with the song "Yozi"; whereas during threshing time the ritual tune "Maida" is performed. The celebration of the spring holiday Navruz in Uzbekistan is accompanied by the choral songs "Navruz Ayomi" and "Navruz Muborak"; in winter the first snow is greeted with the chanted rhymes of "Kor Keldi"...

But Uzbek musical folklore is not limited to only ritual songs. Very popular are still the ancient genres kushik, lapar and yalla, when singing of poetic stanzas is accompanied by dancing. It must be noted that interrelation of lyrics, tune and rhythm has always been one of the basic principles of Uzbek national music.

A prominent place in Uzbek musical heritage is assigned to dastan, a genre of a lyric and heroic epic. The unwritten folk music and poetry of the peoples who lived in Central Asia has such deep historical roots that it is impossible to determine the precise date when such masterpieces as the dastan "Gur Ugli" or the heroic epic "Alpomysh" were composed. We only know that as early as a thousand years ago Surkhandarya bakhshi-singers of the Uzbek clan Kungrat would already sing dastans about the feats of the legendary hero Alpomysh. The plot of the dastan "Oysulu" is about the events of the 6th century B.C., those of the fight of Tomyris - the queen of the Massagetae with the Persian king Cyrus. The ancient dastans "Shirin and Shakar", "Takhir and Zukhra", "Farkhad and Shirin" are based on the legends of the Sogdians and the Scythians (Saka) who in the distant past lived in Chach (Tashkent).

As time went by there formed a few distinctive schools of dastan singers in Uzbekistan. In Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions the dastans are sung to the accompaniment of dombra. In Khorezm bakhshi-singers perform them to the ensemble of dutar, gidjak and bulaman. In Karakalpakstan jyrau-narrators perform dastans to the two-string bow instrument kobuz. Based on

folklore poetic style, dastans as well as ritual songs can be regarded as a form of professional folk music.

The professionalism in Uzbek music art developed as early as the beginning of the first millennium AD. Famous for their mastery, there were musicians of a wide variety of genres. Although in a Sogdian manuscript of the 7th century there have been found some accent signs that can be regarded as the prototype of musical notation, all the complex genres of Uzbek professional music used to spread orally; each talented musician would make his contributions to musical composition.

Professional musicians, like artisans, would belong to a mekhterlik, 'an artistic guild'. Each member of the guild would have to follow the bylaw "Risola". A guild would be headed by the most experienced musician. In order to earn the status of a professional singer or an instrumentalist and become a member of the corporation, an apprentice musician would have to learn from a prominent master for ten years, to memorize scores of compositions with great precision and to pass a stiff examination. The musicians of the Western Land - as Central Asian countries were called in Chinese chronicles of the first centuries AD - were famous along the whole Great Silk Road. Central Asian music, dances, musical instruments and artists as dowries of royal brides, diplomatic presents and in other capacities would reach China, Korea, Japan and other countries. There is historical evidence that Sogdian musicians were very popular in China. An orchestra from Ango (Bukhara), for example, was an unprecedented success at the court of the emperors of the Sui Dynasty in the 6th - 7th centuries.

History knows the names of several outstanding musicians of the medieval Uzbekistan. Not only a virtuoso performer of musical compositions but also the author of the treatise "The Big Book on Music" was Abu Nasr al Farabi, a philosopher and a scientist, a man of encyclopaedic knowledge, who lived in the 9th - 10th centuries. His contemporary, the legendary medical man Abu Ali ibn Sino (Avitsenna) and the eminent mathematician Al-Khorezmi also wrote on the theory of music.

Uzbek professional music reached its fullest flower in the times of the Temurids Dynasty. In the 15th century centers of education and art in Samarkand, Bukhara and Herat became homes to the famous performing musicians Usto Kul-Muhammad, Sheikhi-Na'i and the poet Abdurakhman Jami. The great medieval poet Alisher Navoi was not only a performing musician but also a composer of melodious pieces of music. Uzbek professional music of folk oral tradition has a wide variety of genres and forms: songs and instrumental pieces, solo and ensemble cycles of vocal and instrumental compositions.

Formed in the Middle Ages, the classical traditional vocal and instrumental genre makom is deservedly believed to stand at the top of Uzbek professional music of folk oral tradition. Some researchers find that makoms evolved from the ancient Zoroastrian sacred songs. Long before Islam became dominant in Central Asia, those songs had been connected with the astrological beliefs of the Zoroastrians. It is supposed that at certain hours when guards were relieved it was prescriptive to perform special ritual song over a fortress's or a town's gates. The song was called makom, the literal Arabian for 'position'.

Makoms are instrumental and vocal musical pieces performed together as a cycle. The lyrics of makoms come from ancient folk poetry and the classical oriental poetry by such authors as Khafiz, Bedil, Navoiy, Jami. Makoms stylistically fall into Bukhara cycle and Khorezm cycle. Bukhara cycle "Shashmakom" consists of six makoms: Buzruk, Rost, Navo, Dugokh, Segokh and Irok. Each of the makoms consists of instrumental and vocal parts. Each instrumental part in its turn should embrace several complete musical pieces: Tasnif, Tarji, Gardun, Mukhammas and Sakil, all of which differ in tune and rhythm. The vocal parts of Bukhara makoms consist of several compositions shu'be to be performed in strict order. The main musical instruments of makoms are the tanbur and the doira. Makom cycles also include usuls, rhythmical fill-ins beaten on the doira or the nagora-drum. Usuls are very important for making makom cycles sound as an integral dynamic piece.

Khorezm makoms, just as Bukhara's ones, consist of six parts containing several original tunes. Though makoms are strictly standardized, it is allowed to change their tempo, interpret usuls and melodic intonations to personal taste of performers.

The highly artistic and perfectly mastered genre of makom cycles is extremely popular in Uzbekistan.

The pervasion of European music in Uzbekistan consequent to Russia's annexation of Turkestan stimulated the formation of a new phase of Uzbek national music. In the 1880s the tanbur-player Pakhlavan Niyaz-Mirzabashi from Khorezm invented written tabulation for Uzbek national musical instruments; a little later the modern musical notation was brought into practice. Early in the 20th century the first national opera "Leyli and Medjnun" by U.Gajibekov was staged in Tashkent.

The fact that such prominent Uzbek musicians as Tokhtasyn Djalilov, Mukhitdin Kari-Yakubov and Yunus Radjabiy were able to master the techniques of musical composition and apply them to the traditional makoms and folk songs resulted in development of new forms of Uzbek national music for ensembles of national musical instruments and philharmonic orchestras.

In the mid-20th century there appeared a galaxy of Uzbek composers. Among them are Tolib Sadykov and Ikram Akbarov. The former was one of the most talented players on tanbur, dutar, and nai-flute; he was a connoisseur of Bukhara, Tashkent and Fergana makoms, of Uzbek folk melodies and songs which he used as the basis for his makom-like arias for the opera "Leyli and Mejnun". The latter composed a suite on themes of Uzbek folk songs for piano, oboe and stringed quartette; in his sonatas for the violin and the piano the vocals originally mix with the rapid rhythm of the folk music.

A significant contribution to the development of the modern Uzbek national music was made by the outstanding composer and conductor Mukhtar Ashrafi. He was born in Bukhara, in a family of a famous singer, where he got his musical education based on the standards of the classical Bukhara makoms. In his youth, when he heard a philharmonic orchestra, he was deeply impressed by the rich sounds of European musical instruments. Later, having studied the theory of musical composition at Moscow Conservatory, he returned to Uzbekistan and became for many years the head of the philharmonic orchestra of the Alisher Navoi State Opera and Ballet Theatre. Mukhtar Ashrafi is the author of the highly praised by professional musicians as well as music-lovers national operas "Buran", "Ulugbek", "Dilorom", and "Heroic" symphony, not to mention many musical compositions for ensembles of stringed and wind instruments. Many of his compositions are based on Uzbek and Tajik folk songs, or evoked by the rhythms of usuls.

One of the most renowned Uzbek composers of the late 20th century is U.Musaev. He is the author of the ballet "Tomiris", which is based on the ancient legend about the fight of the Massagetian queen against the Persian invaders. Among the most avant-garde philharmonic composers stands out Uzbek composer Rustam Abdullaev.

Today the traditions of Uzbek national music, folk melodies and rhythms are taught at musical colleges and at the State Tashkent Conservatory. The graduates of these establishment play at the Alisher Navoi State Opera and Ballet Theatre and at the musical and drama theatres in all the cities of Uzbekistan. In numerous concert halls throughout Uzbekistan music lovers can enjoy musical compositions played by philharmonic and chamber orchestras, ensembles and orchestras of Uzbek national instruments.

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