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THE EVOLUTION OF UZBEK MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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Abstract

The article examines the evolution of Uzbek traditional musical instruments from ancient forms to modern technologies. The Uzbek musical tradition, shaped at the crossroads of Eastern cultures, is presented as an essential element of national identity. Special attention is given to the tanbur – a symbol of musical continuity – its structural features, role in Uzbekistan’s classical music, and its participation in the Shashmaqom cycle. The study analyzes historical stages in the development of the tanbur family of instruments, their modifications, and adaptation to contemporary conditions. The processes of digitizing musical instruments and creating sample libraries that preserve the unique timbre and promote Uzbek musical culture in the global media space are highlighted. The significance of digital technologies for preserving cultural heritage, expanding international cooperation, and promoting Uzbek music is emphasized. It concludes that the synthesis of tradition and innovation contributes to the development of Uzbekistan’s modern musical culture.

Keywords: *Uzbek musical culture, tanbur, dutar, digitalization, samples, cultural heritage, globalization*

Uzbekistan is a country with a rich musical heritage whose roots go back to ancient times. Numerous traditional musical instruments that have developed over the centuries reflect the cultural identity of the people, their history, and their spiritual uniqueness. The evolution of these instruments demonstrates not only the preservation of the authenticity of national music but also its contribution to the world’s musical heritage.

With the advancement of technology, Uzbek traditional musical instruments have undergone significant transformations. Modern versions of these instruments not only pre-

serve their traditional characteristics but also adapt to new conditions, facilitating their integration into contemporary musical contexts. In particular, the development of digital technologies and the creation of sample libraries contribute to the popularization of Uzbek musical instruments in the global music industry. This process also helps preserve the unique timbral qualities of each instrument, making them accessible for study and use by composers and musicians around the world.

One of the most well-known Uzbek instruments is the tanbur, a long-necked plucked string instrument with a resonator.

The history of the tanbur spans thousands of years, as evidenced by numerous archaeological findings. For example, a cylinder seal from the Akkadian period (2400–2200 ALL) depicts a musician playing a long-necked instrument considered to be a predecessor of the tanbur. Etymological studies, particularly the works of Curt Sachs, indicate a Sumerian origin of the word tanbur, which confirms the instrument's deep cultural roots and its significant role in the musical tradition of the region (Khandamian, Victor. 2024).

In the collection of A. Eichhorn (Eikhgorn, A., 1885), unique features of a 19th-century Kashgar sitar are presented. The instrument was equipped with eleven sympathetic strings and one raised melodic string, on which musical pieces were performed using a bow or a plectrum. These improvements significantly enhanced the instrument's resonance and enriched its timbral palette, giving the sitar a fuller and more complex sound. Such modifications expanded its use across various musical genres, ranging from traditional music to contemporary styles.

The *chartar* from Shugnan, featuring four strings arranged in pairs and large sound holes beneath each pair, demonstrates superior acoustic properties that increased the instrument's volume and sonic power. This enhancement provided additional performance possibilities, making the instrument more sought after in diverse musical ensembles (Khandamian, Victor. 2024).

One of the most important stages in preserving and developing Uzbek musical culture has been the digitalization of traditional instruments. The creation of digital sample libraries makes it possible to reproduce the sound of traditional instruments in digital format – for instance, the creation of a sample library for the traditional Uzbek *dutar* (Khandamian, Victor, and Abdulaziz Khasanov. 2021), which plays a key role in preserving and popularizing these instruments among a wider audience. The process of creating such libraries consists of several key stages (Khandamyan, V., Khasanov A., Khasanova G., Rakhimova N., and Rasulov D., 2024):

1. Instrument capability analysis: studying the technical possibilities

of the instrument, including playing techniques, range, and specific performance methods.

2. Library structure design: forming a text file that defines and organizes the library's structure, categorizing sounds by notes and groups.

3. User interface (UI/UX) development: creating an intuitive and user-friendly interface to simplify interaction with the digital library.

4. Studio sound recording: involving professional performers in recording various playing techniques and articulations.

5. Sample editing and slicing: This stage involves cutting recorded sounds into short samples and further processing them for use in a digital environment.

6. Programming and script creation: An important aspect is the use of the KSP programming language to implement all active elements of the library.

Digital sample libraries offer several significant advantages:

- **Accessibility:** Digital versions of instruments are offered at a much lower cost than their physical counterparts;
- **Ease of use:** Musicians can use digital instruments anytime and anywhere without the need to possess the physical instrument;
- **Cultural heritage preservation:** Such libraries help preserve the unique sound of traditional instruments for future generations.

The process of digitalizing Uzbek traditional musical instruments greatly contributes to addressing the objectives outlined in Presidential Decree No. 4038 of November 28, 2018, "On the approval of the Concept for the Further Development of National Culture in the Republic of Uzbekistan."

The creation of digital sample libraries containing recordings of Uzbek traditional musical instruments enables the use of these instruments in international music projects, thereby promoting Uzbek musical culture beyond the country's borders. The digitalization of instruments allows them to integrate organically into contemporary musical and

cultural processes, increasing the presence of Uzbek music in the global media space.

The use of information and communication technologies for the creation and distribution of digital sample libraries expands access to Uzbek musical culture for researchers and performers worldwide. Such libraries provide a convenient and accessible way to study and use the unique sonic elements of the Uzbek musical tradition, facilitating research into its rich cultural heritage.

At the same time, it is important to consider the challenges of globalization associ-

ated with the distribution of ethnic samples. The study “Sampling of Ethnic Instruments: Challenges of Globalization” notes that the mass use of ethnic sounds without regard for their cultural origins can lead to the loss of authenticity and the profanation of traditions. This aspect is particularly relevant for Uzbekistan, as digital sample libraries serve not only as a tool of technological innovation but also as an instrument of cultural diplomacy (Khandamian, Victor. 2025).

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