

DOI:10.29013/EJA-26-2-95-97



INNOVATIVE FEATURES OF THE STRING QUARTET BY COMPOSER OYDIN ABDULLAeva AND ITS ROLE IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE GENRE

*Umarova Gulbaxor Maxmudovna*¹

¹ Department of Music History and Criticism, State Conservatory of Uzbekistan

Cite: Umarova G. M. (2026). *Innovative Features of the String Quartet by Composer Oydin Abdullaeva and Its Role in the Evolution of the Genre*. *European Journal of Arts* 2026, No 2. <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJA-26-2-95-97>

Abstract

This article explores the distinctive features of the string quartet (1998) by Uzbek composer Oydin Abdullaeva and its contribution to the development of the quartet genre. The study examines the reinterpretation of structural principles, including movement functions, modal organization, and ensemble interaction, with particular emphasis on the dramaturgical role of the cello.

The analysis highlights the synthesis of national musical elements, especially maqom-related intonations, with Western polyphonic techniques. It also reveals the combination of improvisatory thinking with compositional logic, reflected in thematic development and formal flexibility.

The quartet is shown to expand the expressive potential of the genre and represents a notable contribution to contemporary Uzbek chamber music.

Keywords: *string quartet, Oydin Abdullaeva, Uzbek music, chamber music, maqom, polyphony, musical form, timbral dramaturgy, modal system, contemporary music*

The four-movement string quartet (1998) by O. Abdullaeva demonstrates the composer's pursuit toward renewing the genre, reinterpreting the functions of movements, the modal organization of the cycle, and the interaction of ensemble parts. The compositional innovations of the work determine its significance in the evolution of the quartet genre. As T. A. Golovyants emphasized, "the best works of the republic's composers are marked by the originality of artistic ideas and a sensitive realization of the genre's specificity".

The structure of the cycle is original: the first movement – Largo; the second movement – Allegro; the third movement – fugue: Andante = 65; the fourth movement – Finale, Allegro. The chosen structure reveals a two-phase tempo organization: the first phase – Largo–Allegro; the second phase – Andante–Allegro. It should be noted that each phase begins with a solo cello. In this regard, it can be hypothesized that this is not accidental: O. Abdullaeva, being a cellist, evidently sought to emphasize a personal, semantic dimension.

“At the beginning of the theme in the cello lies a profound meaning. My entry into music and my perception of the world were realized through this instrument. As a composer, the polyphonic style is very convenient for me. The beginning of a theme in the cello often appears in my subsequent works as well.”

It is also noteworthy that the quartet begins, develops, and concludes with a solo cello on the pitch center A, which in letter notation may be interpreted as the initial of the composer’s surname.

Another interesting detail: in the first movement, this A appears in the Phrygian mode, reflecting the psychological nuance of the work’s imagery. The thematic material of the cycle is highly diverse and expressively rich in intonational terms. The music of the quartet is characterized by a vivid national identity, manifested in intonational, metro-rhythmic, modal, textural, and formal parameters.

The first movement, *Largo*, is sustained in an improvisatory-meditative manner. It is polyphonic. The musical development flows continuously, almost without pauses, which appear only in the 2nd and 6th measures and in the final, 64th measure after the conclusion of the movement, on the pitch center a-a¹.

The theme of the solo cello that opens the *Largo* spans 5 measures. It is improvisatory and rhythmically diverse. In the 4th measure, a 2/4 meter appears, emphasizing the Phrygian intonation a-b^b-a. Grace notes, triplets, syncopations, and dotted rhythms enhance the modal distinctiveness of the music. The initial theme combines recitative-declamatory and lyrical song-like elements, giving it a unique character. In the 6th measure, all ensemble members enter; each voice is independent yet interconnected with the others, creating a highly expressive sonority that activates the listener’s perception.

In the *Largo*, the principle of maqom-like unfolding of musical material dominates, reaching a climax at rehearsal number 3, where a wide range is covered in the dynamic *f*. The first violin part звучит in a very high register, expressively and exaltedly, in combination with the other ensemble parts. At rehearsal number 4, the musical material of the first violin gradually moves into the middle register, and the *Largo* concludes peacefully on the pitch center a-a¹.

Thus, the first movement performs a dual function – as an introduction to the cycle and as a meditative exposition, which can be regarded as an innovation in the dramaturgy of the modern quartet cycle.

The second movement is written in ternary form. It introduces a vivid contrast into the musical development, is set in an 8/9 meter, and begins with the assertion of the pitch center A in all voices at the dynamic *f*. This represents the voice of Abdullaeva – a bright and nationally distinctive compositional personality. The three-octave unison functions here as a symbol of a monodic national sound uniting the ensemble participants.

At rehearsal number 1, the first and second violins perform in octave unison, intensively developing a diatonic melody based on the octave a-a¹, which acquires a pronounced Phrygian coloration in the course of its development. This energetic theme is joined by the viola and cello with a lyrical, chromaticized theme звучащей in octave unison. Under its influence, the character of the violin sound changes, becoming highly expressive in the upper register due to the use of grace notes that reinforce the national character of the music.

The combination of the violin parts with those of the viola and cello, which present the theme in octave unison, forms two melodic layers of a two-voice polyphonic interaction. At rehearsal number 3, a change of texture occurs. The first violin presents a highly expressive melody with a complex intonationally chromatic and rhythmically syncopated structure, while the other parts assume a figurational accompanimental role.

In the cello part, tertian and quartal vertical structures appear, creating a harmonic background.

At rehearsal number 4, the texture changes again: the cello plays sharply rhythmic quintal patterns in *pizzicato* at dynamic *f*. The other voices enter successively, forming a polyphonic combination of expressive melodic lines based on sustained tones with grace notes and flexible intonation patterns. The music exhibits a distinctly Uzbek national character. At rehearsal number 5, the quintal patterns pass alternately to the second violin and viola, while the cello performs an expressive arco melodic line in the low register.

The musical development leads to a vivid dynamic climax, where the initial theme returns in octave unison a^1 – a^2 in the first violin, supported rhythmically by harmonic intervals in the other parts. A high climax is achieved at *ff* across a wide register span (measures 98–138, rehearsal number 9), culminating on A. This is followed by a sudden relaxation, where the note A in the cello appears softly (*p*) as a kind of post-cadential gesture and simultaneously as the subject of the fugue, subsequently entering in the viola, second violin, and first violin in the upper register.

This section fulfills a dual function: as a coda concluding the second movement and as a precursor to the third movement – the fugue. The coda ends with great dynamism at *ff*, affirming energetic motion. The pitch center *a* acquires symbolic significance as a reflection of the composer's identity.

The third movement is a four-voice fugue (Andante, common time). Its imagery is associated with lyrical reflection and introspection. The fugue subject spans three measures and is introduced by the solo cello, beginning on *a* and covering the interval of a minor sixth. The subject consists of two elements: the first is diatonic, beginning with a neighbor-tone motion around *a* and an ascending perfect fourth; the second begins with the altered tone *d \flat* , contains ornamental elements, and concludes on *a \flat* .

Its structure may be interpreted as question–answer: the first element poses a “question,” the second provides an “an-

swer,” complicated by a semitone shift of the tonal center. The answer is presented by the viola, followed by a six-measure interlude. The subject enters in the second violin (m. 13) and the answer in the first violin (m. 16). The subsequent development involves all four voices, expanding the range and leading toward Allegro and a climactic culmination at *ff*.

The fourth movement (Finale, Allegro, common time) opens with a four-part octave unison at *f*. The techniques of octave-unison writing from the second movement are further developed. The initially monophonic texture gradually thickens, and from m. 46 various types of figurational motion emerge: lyrical melody in the first violin and syncopated ostinato in the other parts.

These textures develop further, leading to *sf* (m. 70), after which a new wave of development begins, culminating at *ff* (m. 92). A *meno mosso* section intensifies the expressive dynamics, followed by a return of tempo culminating at *fff* (m. 237) on pitch center C.

In conclusion, Abdullaeva's quartet demonstrates a distinctly innovative approach that renews the quartet genre. The composer reinterprets its structure, introduces a strong personal dimension, enriches its semantic content, transforms traditional formal functions, and intensifies the dramaturgical development. Undoubtedly, this quartet represents a significant contribution to contemporary Uzbek chamber instrumental music.

References:

- Golovyants, T. A. Chamber-Instrumental Ensemble Music of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: Fan, 1990. – 111 p.
Jabborov, A. H. Uzbek Composers and Musicologists. – Tashkent, 2004. – 86 p.

submitted 16.04.2026;
accepted for publication 30.04.2026;
published 31.04.2026
© Umarova G. M.
Contact: umarovagulbakhor8@gmail.com