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INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC

Begmatova Nargiza Saibjon kizi¹

¹ “History of Uzbek Music” department State Conservatory
of Uzbekistan. Republic of Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article highlights the masterpieces of Uzbekistan’s art and musical creativity that have been included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. General ideas about the concept of intangible cultural heritage are presented. The article covers various directions of performing arts, musical creativity, and performance.

Keywords: *intangible cultural heritage, music, classical, instrumental, performance, maqomat, creativity, live performance, genre, tradition, ustoz-shogird (master-apprentice), etc.*

Uzbekistan is a homeland of very ancient and unique musical values. The melodies and songs of this land, the influential musical heritage and its integral part, thoughts, legends and traditions, and substantiated scientific views, have always attracted and continue to attract the attention of the people of the world with their refined attention.

Seeing these values as a whole heritage, a common system, it is necessary to study the sacred Uzbek national musical culture on the basis of reliable evidence on the basis of reliable evidence in a wide and comprehensive manner on the basis of reliable evidence in a vast space and time. Some of this evidence has come down to us through sources, and some in the tradition of teacher-student.

The art of music is such a lifelong art that its development directions cannot be limited. Any blessed tradition that has stopped in one place is like a helpless tradition that has been cut off

from life. Therefore, any true tradition is also prosperous with renewal and development.

The main foundation of the art of music is science. In fact, science and art are common concepts. Classical music in the literal sense is half science, half art. That is why wise people divided it into theoretical and practical musical arts. There is another aspect that underlies or dominates them. And that is the idea about music, or in other words, musical ideology-philosophy.

The true basis of musical art can be recognized as the fact that the world of music of all mankind has been formed and developed based on the rules of one principle. The essence of music is rooted in a simple truth: the principle of representing existence through melodies. Indeed, music is an essential spiritual and intellectual nourishment for every individual. This process is characterized by the level of understanding of music, the cri-

terion of its transformation into a product of thought through the imagination and consciousness of humanity. Ultimately, it is inevitable that it is based on the principles of national, traditional, creative, performative, theoretical and practical rules. Therefore, it is undeniable that musical creativity and practice are based on a number of common factors related to the criteria of formation and development.

Today, Uzbekistan, along with other rapidly developing countries, is experiencing the Third Renaissance, a process of renewal and transformation. As in all fields, culture and art are also being enriched with the spirit of the time. As noted, "The spiritual beauty of the Uzbek people has found its unique and unparalleled artistic expression through melodies that have descended from the depths of centuries. Indeed, music is the nourishment of the human soul. Thus, for many centuries, national music has been a living expression of the spiritual richness and maturity of our ancestors, and today it continues to serve as the soul and energy of our society building a great new state" (Abdullayev R., 2023, 267). In the modern era, new directions and genres in music have emerged, with contemporary interpretations and approaches to classical melodies gaining popularity. As a result, while some genres and branches of national music have flourished, others – particularly authentic performances and ancient traditions – are increasingly neglected and undervalued.

To prevent the loss of such treasures and to preserve each nation's spiritual values, traditions, and cultural heritage in their original form for future generations, important initiatives have been undertaken.

Globally, UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – has played a pivotal role in this regard. According to UNESCO's definition, "In order to prevent spiritual impoverishment and the spread of a 'standard culture', a new initiative has been launched to preserve and pass down to future generations the spiritual wealth that reflects the identity of each nation and society, while being free of discrimination or denial of others. Thus, forms, methods, and expressions of identity and knowledge are now being referred to as

"intangible cultural heritage" (Toshmatov U., Isakulova N., 2014; Rajabov. I., 2019).

Cultural heritage is broadly categorized into two major branches: intangible cultural heritage and tangible cultural heritage. When an aspect of folk creativity is directly connected with material elements, it is considered tangible heritage. Conversely, if it is directly related to creative practices and immaterial values, it is classified as intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO began implementing programs for the preservation of intangible heritage in 1989, starting with recommendations on the "Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore" (The issue of "protection of traditional culture and folklore").

In 1994, it launched the "Living Human Treasures" program, followed by the 1999 initiative "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity". Subsequently, the term **"Masterpieces of the Intangible Cultural Heritage"** was adopted more broadly, and comprehensive activities were initiated.

Uzbekistan ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2007 and became a member in 2008. In 2009, a special law was adopted, and in 2010 the Cabinet of Ministers developed a national program. One of the main objectives was to integrate the concepts and practices of intangible cultural heritage into the education system (Toshmatov U., Isakulova N., 2014, 11).

As part of this program, countries proposed their most unique cultural elements. After evaluation by a special commission, candidates were selected annually. To date, Uzbekistan has contributed the following 15 items to the list:

2001 – "Boysun Cultural Space"; 2003 – "Shashmaqom"; 2009 – "Katta Ashula" and "Navruz Celebration"; 2014 – "Art of Askia" (Wit and Humor); 2016 – "Palov and the traditions surrounding it"; 2018 – "Margilan School of Crafts: Atlas and Adras Weaving"; 2019 – "Khorezm Dance – Lazgi"; 2020 – "Miniature Art"; 2021 – "Art of Bakhshi" (Folk Epic Narration); 2022 – "Traditional Sericulture"; 2022 – "Storytelling traditions of Nasreddin Afandi"; 2023 – "Ceramics of Uzbekistan"; 2023 – "Art of Tazhib" (Illumination and Decorative Art); 2023 – "Ifar and its Social-Cultural Traditions"; 2024 –

“Craftsmanship and Performance of the Rubab Instrument”.

This article focuses mainly on the music-related programs, specifically Shashmaqom, Bakhshi art, Katta Ashula, and Khorezm dances (Lazgi).

UNESCO-recognized ICH programs often involve performing arts, encompassing music, spoken word (lyrics), dance, theatrical arts, and folk games. In terms of performance art, two major directions are recognized: folk creativity (folklore) and classical performance traditions. The former relates to the collective, mass traditions of folk art, while the latter reflects individual artistic creativity in the classical music tradition. These two directions of performing arts represent diverse genres and rich traditions of musical creativity and performance. They include traditional music (instrumental and vocal), dance and performance arts, and elements of folk games.

In Uzbekistan's National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, many performance-based musical forms have been recorded as leading components. These include: Shashmaqom, Khorezm Maqoms, Fergana-Tashkent Maqom traditions, Dutor and Surnay musical paths, Art of Bakhshi, Katta Ashula, Suvora, Mavrigi, Classical songs and Yallas, Feruz, Ushshoq, Tanovar, Ceremonial songs, Khal-fachilik (female performance traditions), Folk games (for children and adults).

Great attention is paid to the art of Maqom, Khorezm dances (Lazgi), and Bakhshi art as the largest forms of intangible cultural heritage.

Maqom is the leading genre of Uzbek classical music. “Maqoms are structured musical complexes created in a specific order... they are the encyclopedia of national music” (Rajabov. I., 2019, 19). In 2018, President of

Uzbekistan gave special attention to the maqom art, leading to large-scale initiatives, the establishment of educational programs, and the organization of prestigious national and international forums, including the International Maqom Art Forum in Shakhrisabz (2018) and in Zomin (2024).

Khorezm dances (Lazgi) are a unique expression of the national values and traditions of the Uzbek people. Lazgi, as a musical and dance form, plays a key role in preserving ancient values and uplifting spiritual life.

Bakhshi art is considered a historical oral source that encapsulates the centuries-old traditions of various peoples. Today, great attention is paid to this tradition, and International Bakhshi Art Festivals were held in Termez (2019), Nukus (2021), and Gulistan (2023). Through these festivals, not only was Uzbekistan's national heritage celebrated, but it was also presented to the global audience. In conclusion, all art forms listed in this heritage inventory are unique treasures and great legacies.

Their preservation, research, and transmission as spiritual values from the past to the present confirm their cultural significance. The attention and opportunities being provided serve to protect and pass on the authentic values of each nation to future generations. As long as such heritage is practiced in people's creative lives, it will continue to evolve with the spirit of the time and reflect the national traditions.

Therefore, emphasizing folk heritage, reviving ancient traditions, enriching our spiritual world in line with the demands of the modern era, and educating the new generation based on these values are the enduring mission and relevance of intangible cultural heritage.

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Contact: navouzbek@mail.ru