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## FIGURAL WORLD OF CHORAL WORKS BY THE UZBEKISTAN COMPOSERS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the figural world of choral works by the Uzbek composers created in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Using the compositions from various choral genres, the use of several figurative spheres is examined. Particular attention is given to the works of renowned Uzbek composers R.Abdullaev, M.Bafoev, H. Rakhimov, and F. Yanov-Yanovsky, as well as the new works by young composers A. Abdugapparov and S. Mukhamedov.

**Objective:** To identify and classify the figurative spheres of choral works by Uzbek composers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, analyze the thematic range of contemporary choral music, and identify new trends in the selection of figurative spheres.

**Methods:** historical and typological methods, figurative-semantic approach, systemic review method.

**Results:** The main figurative spheres of choral works created in Uzbekistan in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were identified. The leading theme among these was spirituality. The figural palette of choral works is also complemented by festive and patriotic compositions, dedications to cities, primarily Tashkent, and works with tragic imagery that respond to contemporary historical events.

**Scientific Novelty:** This is the first attempt to examine and systematize the most recent choral works by Uzbek composers by the types of imagery they employ.

**Practical Application:** The article's key findings can be applied in performance and teaching practice.

**Keywords:** *Uzbek composers' creative work, choral music, figurative spheres in music, semantics, sacred compositions, festive imagery, tragic themes*

### Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the choral works of Uzbek composers display a wide range of imagery, from vibrant festivities to tragic moments. The chorus, as the most expansive and humane instrument, also explores other im-

portant aspects of life and work – spirituality, historical context, reflection, and experience. Let's examine in more detail the themes of choral works created by both leading figures of Uzbek composition and the emerging composers. We will examine the compositions for

chorus in various genres created during the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Main content

Spirituality is a common theme in contemporary choral works by Uzbek composers. Address to this theme is evident in works of varying scales. One of the most contemporary and iconic works of this kind is the oratorio *Yetti Pir* (Seven Pirs, 2018) by the renowned Uzbek composer M. Bafoev, based on the poetry of S. Sulaymon. In this work, the composer explores the theme of Sufism and its spiritual representatives, *pirs*, or saints. The oratorio's seven movements consistently characterize each saint of the renowned Sufi order Naqshbandi. The spiritual theme of this work is integrated with historical and Sufi contexts. The researcher G. Khaidarova noted that this oratorio "is an example of the high human qualities of the EttiPirs of the Naqshbandi sect, who are recognized not only in our country (Uzbekistan – L.J. note), but also as great spiritual centers in the world <...>" (Original in English: "The oratorio "YettiPir" is an example of the high human qualities of the EttiPirs of the Naqshbandi sect, who are recognized not only in our country, but also as great spiritual centers in the world...") (Khaidarova, 2018). The historical theme reflected in the oratorio is particularly relevant in contemporary composers' work in Uzbekistan, since, as the music experts E. Mustafina and E. Mamadjanova rightly noted, "no nation can imagine its future without knowing its history, without relying on its centuries-old spiritual heritage" (Mustafina, Mamadjanova, 2019, p. 73).

The theme of spirituality is also explored in F. Yanov-Yanovsky's work *From the Gospel of St. Mark* for soloists, choir, and orchestra (2008), which revives the passion genre. Best known to us from the works of J. S. Bach, and especially his passion *St. Matthew's Passions*, the genre virtually disappeared during the Romantic period and has been revived in contemporary music, where composers such as K. Penderetski, A. Pyart, and S. Gubaidullina have turned to it. In his passion *From the Gospel of St. Mark*, the composer F. Yanov-Yanovsky presented an original and

contemporary vision of this ancient genre of sacred music.

The theme of spirituality is interestingly explored through the prism of Islam in the D. Saidaminova's vocal and instrumental work *Azon* (2002) written for choir, violin, piano, and reciter. *Azon* is the call to prayer pronounced by the muezzin. In this work, this concept can be interpreted more broadly – as a call to spirituality and purification. The D. Amanullaeva's Third Symphony, *Kungilsohili* ("Island of the Soul," 2002) for a cappella choir, soloists, flute, and doira, based on the poems of S. Sayid, also belongs to this group. It is a striking example of reflecting the human inner world.

Closely related to the theme of spirituality is the reflection of time in music. This theme is developed in the new works *Etnos* and *Time* by young composers A. Abdugapparov and S. Mukhamedov. Both works are united by their address to the category of time and their understanding of cultural heritage. *Time* is influenced by minimalism, which, as the researchers have noted, "as music of gradual processes, music of statics, music of euphoria from endless repetition, is today becoming the only response to information trauma" (Khrushcheva, 2020, p. 222). This perception of time, through the prism of minimalism and the limited fullness of choral texture, resonates with philosophical and religious ideas of asceticism for spiritual perfection and liberation.

Another important thematic layer is occupied by negative images that capture tragic events. G. Kuznetsova noted in her study that this group "<...> includes musical images that capture a human's reaction to those phenomena that do not correspond to their ideal ideas about the world around them" (Kuznetsova, 1991, p. 188). The summit of this trend is Rustam Abdullaev's work *Faryod* ("Crying", 2004) for soprano, female choir, strings, and percussion instruments, dedicated to the victims of terrorism. As E. Nechaev notes, this composition is "an example of a creative response to a pressing issue of our era, an artistic embodiment of eternal aesthetic values: love, humanity, kindness, preserving the eternal memory of the terrible horrors of terrorist attacks" (Nechaev, 2019, p. 56).

Negative and tragic imagery is also explored in the composer's other contemporary choral works, such as *Doim Yodda* ("Always in Memory") for a cappella choir (2004). These works continue the imagery of R. Abdullaev's famous vocal cycle *The Cry of Hiroshima*, which was created earlier, in 1979, and dedicated to the tragic events in Hiroshima during World War II. In these works, R. Abdullaev's voice and choral sound become symbols of shared suffering and collective memory.

F. Yanov-Yanovsky's work *In Memoriam* (2002) for reciter, choir, and strings also falls into this category of imagery. Written to the text from St. John the Evangelist, this work is subtitled "In Memory of the Victims of September 11" and is a creative response to the brutal and tragic events that occurred in New York City (USA) on September 11, which claimed the lives of approximately 3,000 people.

The composers are also paying considerable attention to celebratory and patriotic themes in modern times. These themes are typically expressed in music through a solemn and hymn-like sound. Examples of such semantics include songs by R. Abdullaev, such as *Toshkent Madhiyasi* ("Hymn to Tashkent," 2002) and *Badiy Akademiyaning Tantanali Qoshiqi* ("Ceremonial Song of the Academy of Arts," 2005). A similar patriotic style is also characteristic of K. Rakhimov's cantata *O'zbekistonsan* ("You Are Uzbekistan," 2001). A slightly different approach, emphasizing historical heritage and ancient roots, is explored in M. Bafoev's *Buhoroda Navruz* ("Navruz in Bukhara," 2018), where the festive sound is a symbol of spring renewal and deep national roots. Furthermore, in

this work, the composer also explores personal themes, reflecting on his hometown, Bukhara, which often serves as a source of inspiration for him.

Musical reflections of Uzbekistan's cities can also be found in other choral works of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Uzbek composers primarily address the image of Tashkent – a city that seamlessly blends a rich historical heritage with modernity. The composer I. Akbarov has repeatedly addressed this theme: in 1964, he created the first Uzbek oratorio, *Toshkent noma*, and in 2006, he created the choral work *Walks in Tashkent* to the verses of A. Navoi and E. Vakhidov.

The image of Tashkent also comes to life in M. Bafoev's *Hymn to Tashkent* (2009) for soloists, choir, and orchestra, for whom the theme of reflecting on the capital of Uzbekistan is also not new. The composer previously created the well-known choral works *Song of Tashkent* (1983) for reciter, choir, and orchestra, as well as *Tashkent – Beacon of the East* (1984).

### Conclusions

The choral works reviewed here, written in the first decades of the current century, combine tradition and innovation, manifesting themselves through an organic synthesis of national and universal principles.

The composers' choral works reflect many figurative themes: spirituality, festivity, patriotism, and urban themes, as well as philosophical reflections on time and tragic historical events. All these themes are explored through a variety of means and genres – both the cantatas, oratorios, and cycles, common to Uzbek composers, and more unusual ones, such as passion plays.

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