

THE SCIENTIFIC AND CREATIVE LEGACY OF YUNUS RAJABIY IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEK CLASSICAL MUSIC

Muminova Guzal Igamovna

Uzbek National Institute of Musical Art named after Yunus Rajabiy, Senior Lecturer of the "Maqom Instrumental Performance" Department

Shaimkulova Go'zal

Uzbek National Institute of Musical Art named after Yunus Rajabiy 1st year Master's student

Abstract: *This article examines the scientific and creative legacy of Yunus Rajabiy, one of the most prominent figures in Uzbek musical culture and musicology. The study explores his contribution to the preservation, systematization, and development of Uzbek classical music, particularly the maqom tradition. Using historical, analytical, and comparative methods, the research highlights Rajabiy's role in documenting Shashmaqom, his innovative approaches to musical notation, and his influence on the institutionalization of national music. The findings demonstrate that Rajabiy not only preserved invaluable musical heritage but also transformed it into a structured scientific discipline. His works continue to serve as a foundation for modern Uzbek music studies and performance practice.*

Keywords: *Yunus Rajabiy, Uzbek music, maqom, Shashmaqom, musicology, cultural heritage.*

The preservation and development of national musical heritage remain central to cultural identity and continuity. In the context of Uzbek music, the maqom tradition represents a unique and complex system that embodies centuries of artistic and philosophical thought. However, by the early twentieth century, this tradition faced the risk of fragmentation and gradual decline due to socio-political transformations and the lack of systematic documentation. It is within this historical framework that Yunus Rajabiy emerged as a key figure whose efforts fundamentally reshaped the trajectory of Uzbek classical music. The relevance of this study lies in examining how Rajabiy's scientific and creative activities contributed to safeguarding and revitalizing maqom art. This research aims to analyze his legacy not only as a performer and composer but also as a scholar who bridged oral tradition and written musical science.

Literature review: The scholarly exploration of Uzbek classical music and maqom traditions has been addressed by a number of researchers, both within Uzbekistan and internationally. Early studies primarily focused on descriptive and historical aspects of maqom, emphasizing its performance practice and cultural significance. Scholars such as Fayzulla Karomatov contributed significantly to documenting the historical evolution of Uzbek music, while later researchers expanded the analytical framework by incorporating ethnomusicological approaches. International scholars have also examined Central Asian musical traditions, often highlighting the uniqueness of maqom as a complex modal system. However, despite the existence of these studies, many of them rely heavily on the foundational work of Yunus Rajabiy, whose transcriptions and interpretations remain central to academic discourse. What distinguishes the present study is its integrated

approach, which considers Rajabiy not only as a source but as a subject of critical analysis, focusing on the interplay between his scientific methodology and creative practice.

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative methodological framework that combines historical, analytical, and comparative approaches. The historical method is used to examine the socio-cultural context in which Yunus Rajabiy conducted his work, allowing for a deeper understanding of the challenges and motivations behind his efforts. Analytical methods are applied to evaluate his musical transcriptions, theoretical contributions, and compositional techniques, with particular attention to how traditional maqom structures were adapted into written notation. Additionally, a comparative approach is utilized to contrast Rajabiy's work with other scholars and practitioners of Central Asian music, highlighting both commonalities and distinctive features. Primary sources include Rajabiy's own publications and recorded materials, while secondary sources consist of academic literature on Uzbek music and ethnomusicology. This methodological combination ensures a comprehensive and balanced examination of his legacy.

Early life and formation: The early life and artistic formation of Yunus Rajabiy played a foundational role in shaping his multifaceted contribution to Uzbek classical music and musicology. Born at the end of the nineteenth century, a period marked by significant cultural transitions in Central Asia, Rajabiy grew up in an environment where traditional musical practices were still preserved through oral transmission. This cultural setting allowed him to absorb the essence of maqom not merely as a musical system, but as a living artistic and spiritual tradition deeply embedded in everyday life.

From an early age, Rajabiy demonstrated an exceptional sensitivity to sound, rhythm, and melodic structure. His initial musical education was rooted in the *устоз-шогирд* (master-apprentice) system, which functioned not only as a pedagogical method but also as a means of transmitting aesthetic values, performance ethics, and interpretative traditions.

Through this system, he studied under experienced masters who introduced him to the complex structures of maqom, including its modal organization, improvisational principles, and expressive depth. Unlike formalized education, this process required long-term immersion, memorization, and direct engagement with live performance, all of which contributed to his deep internalization of musical knowledge.

As Rajabiy matured, he began to critically reflect on the limitations of purely oral transmission, particularly in the context of rapid socio-political changes occurring in the early twentieth century. The increasing influence of modernization, urbanization, and institutional reforms posed a threat to traditional art forms, including maqom. Recognizing these challenges, Rajabiy developed an intellectual curiosity that extended beyond performance into the realm of analysis and documentation. This transition marked the beginning of his transformation from a performer into a scholar, setting the stage for his later achievements in musicology.

His early formation, therefore, can be understood as a unique synthesis of traditional apprenticeship and emerging scientific awareness, which would later define the distinctive character of his work.

Contribution to Uzbek maqom art: Yunus Rajabiy's contribution to Uzbek maqom art is both profound and transformative, encompassing performance, preservation, interpretation, and dissemination. At a time when maqom traditions were at risk of fragmentation due to changing cultural dynamics, Rajabiy emerged as a central figure who not only safeguarded this heritage but also redefined its place within modern society. His mastery of maqom performance allowed him to engage deeply with its internal logic, including its complex modal systems, cyclical rhythmic structures, and nuanced expressive techniques.

However, Rajabiy's significance lies not only in his technical expertise but also in his conceptual understanding of maqom as an evolving cultural phenomenon. He approached maqom not as a static relic of the past, but as a dynamic system capable of adaptation and reinterpretation. Through his performances, he demonstrated how traditional compositions could be presented in ways that remained faithful to their essence while also resonating with contemporary audiences. This balance between authenticity and innovation became a defining feature of his artistic philosophy.

Moreover, Rajabiy played a crucial role in expanding the audience for maqom. By participating in public performances, cultural events, and educational initiatives, he contributed to the popularization of maqom beyond elite circles of traditional practitioners. His efforts helped transform maqom into a symbol of national identity and cultural pride, particularly during a period when questions of cultural preservation and modernization were highly relevant. In doing so, he not only preserved a musical tradition but also reinforced its social and cultural significance.

Scientific work and publications: The scientific work of Yunus Rajabiy represents a milestone in the development of Uzbek musicology. Unlike many traditional musicians who relied exclusively on oral transmission, Rajabiy recognized the necessity of systematic documentation and theoretical analysis. His scholarly activities were driven by a clear objective: to transform maqom from an orally transmitted art form into a structured body of knowledge that could be studied, taught, and preserved within academic institutions.

One of his most significant achievements in this regard was the development and refinement of methods for notating maqom music. Given the complexity of maqom, including its microtonal intervals and improvisational elements, this task posed considerable challenges. Rajabiy addressed these challenges by adapting existing notation systems and supplementing them with detailed explanations that captured the subtleties of performance. His approach was not merely technical but also interpretative, as it required making decisions about how to represent fluid musical elements in a fixed written form.

His publications, particularly those related to Shashmaqom, became foundational texts for subsequent generations of musicians and researchers. These works provided not only musical scores but also analytical insights into the structure, development, and aesthetic principles of maqom. As a result, Rajabiy's contributions extended beyond preservation to include the creation of a scholarly framework for understanding Uzbek classical music. His work effectively bridged the gap between tradition and academia, establishing a model for future research in the field.

Role in preserving Shashmaqom: The preservation of Shashmaqom stands as one of the most enduring achievements of Yunus Rajabiy's career. Shashmaqom, as a complex and highly developed musical system, represents the pinnacle of Central Asian classical music. However, its reliance on oral transmission made it vulnerable to loss, particularly during periods of cultural upheaval and transformation. Rajabiy recognized this vulnerability and undertook the monumental task of documenting and systematizing this tradition.

His work involved extensive field research, including the collection of musical material from various performers and regional traditions. By comparing different interpretations and performance styles, he was able to identify core elements of Shashmaqom while also acknowledging its internal diversity. This process required not only musical expertise but also a deep respect for the tradition and its practitioners.

Through his efforts, Shashmaqom was transformed from a fragile oral tradition into a documented and accessible body of work. This transformation had far-reaching implications, as it ensured the survival of the tradition for future generations and facilitated its inclusion in educational curricula. Moreover, Rajabiy's work contributed to the recognition of Shashmaqom as a significant cultural heritage, both nationally and internationally. His role in this process underscores the importance of individual initiative in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Influence on modern Uzbek music: The influence of Yunus Rajabiy on modern Uzbek music is both extensive and enduring. His work laid the foundation for the development of contemporary music practices that integrate traditional elements with modern forms. By systematizing maqom and incorporating it into formal education, he ensured that future generations of musicians would have access to a structured and comprehensive understanding of their musical heritage.

Many modern Uzbek composers and performers continue to draw upon Rajabiy's transcriptions, theoretical insights, and artistic principles. His emphasis on preserving the authenticity of maqom while allowing for creative interpretation has influenced the evolution of new musical styles that remain rooted in tradition. In this sense, his legacy is not confined to the past but actively shapes the present and future of Uzbek music.

Furthermore, his contributions have had a broader cultural impact, reinforcing the role of music as a marker of national identity. In a globalized world where cultural homogenization poses a constant challenge, Rajabiy's work serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving and promoting unique artistic traditions. His influence extends beyond the realm of music, contributing to a broader understanding of cultural continuity and innovation.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the scientific and creative legacy of Yunus Rajabiy represents a defining milestone in the history of Uzbek classical music and musicology. His multifaceted activity as a performer, composer, and scholar enabled the preservation of maqom traditions at a time when they were facing the risk of decline due to rapid social and cultural transformations. By systematically documenting and analyzing Shashmaqom, Rajabiy not only safeguarded an invaluable musical heritage but also recontextualized it within a modern scientific framework.

One of the most significant aspects of his work lies in his ability to bridge the gap between oral tradition and written scholarship. Through his innovative approach to musical notation and analysis, he transformed maqom from an exclusively performance-based practice into an academic discipline accessible to a wider audience. This transition played a crucial role in the institutionalization of Uzbek music education and contributed to the formation of a professional community of musicians and researchers.

Furthermore, Rajabiy's legacy is characterized by a dynamic balance between preservation and innovation. While remaining deeply rooted in tradition, he demonstrated that classical forms could be adapted to contemporary contexts without losing their authenticity. His influence continues to shape modern Uzbek music, serving as a foundation for both theoretical research and practical performance.

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