

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR UZBEK MAQOM AND FOLK SONG INSTRUCTION

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Abstract: The systematic instruction of Uzbekistan's two principal vocal traditions - the classical maqom repertoire and the diverse corpus of folk songs - demands a pedagogical framework that acknowledges their distinct aesthetic principles, transmission histories, and social functions while constructing a unified approach to vocal education. This article posits that effective pedagogy must be built upon three interdependent foundations: a philosophical-axiological foundation, which articulates the core values and artistic goals of each tradition; a music-theoretical foundation, which systematizes the distinct melodic, rhythmic, and poetic structures governing performance; and a methodological foundation, which translates these values and structures into a progressive sequence of teachable practices. Through an analysis drawn from ethnomusicological research and pedagogical practice, the article delineates the specific demands of maqom, with its emphasis on modal complexity, poetic profundity, and spiritual elevation, and contrasts these with the demands of folk song, which prioritizes regional dialect, narrative immediacy, and communal vitality. It argues that a coherent pedagogy must not treat these as separate tracks but must integrate their study, using the technical and expressive tools of one to illuminate the other, thereby cultivating a versatile and deeply informed vocal artist. The ultimate aim is to move beyond repertoire-centric teaching toward a principle-based education that equips students with the intellectual and practical tools to become authentic bearers of the tradition.

Keywords: maqom pedagogy, folk song instruction, vocal tradition transmission, music theory application, artistic philosophy in music, cultural performance practice

Introduction

The vocal heritage of Uzbekistan presents a rich duality: the refined, canonical art of the Shashmaqom and related classical suites, and the vibrant, localized world of folk song. For generations, the transmission of these repertoires occurred within separate, though occasionally overlapping, spheres of social and cultural life. The maqom was the domain of professional musicians (ustozlar) and learned audiences in urban centers, transmitted through the intimate ustoz-shogird (master-apprentice) system. Folk songs, conversely, were the communal property of specific regions and communities, learned through osmosis in fields, at weddings (to'ylar), and during family gatherings. The formalization of music education in the 20th century, culminating in contemporary university and college programs, brought these two streams together under a single institutional roof. This convergence, while creating unparalleled opportunities for study, has often resulted in a pedagogical gap. Instruction can default to teaching songs as discrete items - a maqom passage here, a Lapa there - without building the underlying conceptual and technical framework that connects and distinguishes them.

This article contends that effective instruction in Uzbek vocal music requires the deliberate construction of explicit pedagogical foundations. In the absence of such foundations, learning risks becoming superficial, reliant on imitation without understanding, and vulnerable to the loss of essential stylistic nuances. The challenge is to extract the implicit knowledge embedded in the oral tradition and the practice of masters, and to structure it into a coherent, progressive curriculum. This is not an argument for rigid standardization, which would stifle the art, but for conceptual clarity that

empowers both teacher and student. The question at the heart of this inquiry is: What must a student know, hear, and be able to do to perform Uzbek maqom and folk song not merely correctly, but convincingly and authentically? Answering this requires excavating the philosophical underpinnings, theoretical rules, and practical methods that constitute the bedrock of each tradition. By establishing these foundations, educators can ensure that institutional training deepens rather than dilutes the artistic legacy it seeks to preserve.

Philosophical-Axiological Foundations: Defining the Artistic Goals

Before a single note is sung, pedagogy must be guided by a clear understanding of what the music is for - its aesthetic purpose and cultural value. The philosophical foundations for maqom and folk song instruction are distinct, shaping every subsequent technical and interpretive decision.

The instruction of maqom is fundamentally an education in spiritual and intellectual refinement. The ultimate goal transcends technical mastery; it is the cultivation of *holat* - a state of profound emotional and contemplative depth achieved by both performer and listener. The maqom is a meditative, cyclical journey through a specific modal universe, each with its own ascribed affect (mayl), such as the contemplative dignity of Buzruk or the lyrical sorrow of Rost. Pedagogically, this means that teaching a maqom like Segoh is not merely teaching a sequence of sections (*sarakhbor*, *talqin*, etc.). It is guiding the student to understand and internalize the modal narrative, the architectural pacing, and the spiritual resonance of the poetry, typically drawn from the classical *Divan* tradition of Navoi, Fuzuli, or Bedil. The voice is an instrument of *tafsir* (interpretation), illuminating the hidden layers of the text. Therefore, the philosophical foundation for maqom pedagogy rests on these pillars: the pursuit of *holat*, deep poetic communication, strict adherence to modal integrity (*maqom ruhiyati*), and the embodiment of a dignified, restrained stage presence (*ifoda*).

In stark contrast, the philosophical foundation for folk song instruction is anchored in communal identity, narrative clarity, and unmediated emotional expression. A folk song is a story, a labor chant, a lament, or a celebration tied to a specific place, people, and occasion. The primary goal is not transcendental contemplation but communal connection and the vivid portrayal of a subject - whether it be a beloved horse ("Qorabayir"), the pain of separation ("Yor-yor"), or the rhythms of harvest. Authenticity here is measured by the convincing delivery of the regional dialect (*sheva*), the appropriate energy (*zavq*), and the characteristic vocal timbre - often more open, direct, and dynamically varied than the nuanced maqom voice. The pedagogy must therefore prioritize immediacy, dialectal pronunciation, and an understanding of the song's functional context. The value lies in its power to evoke a shared sense of place and experience.

A robust vocal pedagogy acknowledges these differing axioms. It does not force a folk song's exuberance into the restrained mold of a maqom, nor does it allow the subtle microtonal inflection of a maqom to be coarse in a folk performance. The teacher's first task is to instill in the student this dual artistic consciousness.

Music-Theoretical Foundations: The Architectonics of Sound

With philosophical aims established, pedagogy must then be built upon a clear, teachable music-theoretical foundation. This involves systematizing the core structural elements that govern performance practice in each tradition, moving beyond vague impression to precise understanding.

For maqom, the theoretical foundation is the intricate system of *maqomat* (modal systems). This is far more than a scale. Pedagogy must break down each maqom into its constituent parts: its central tonic (*maye*), its characteristic microtonal intervals (*pardalar*), its defining melodic motifs (*sho'ba* or *furud*), and its typical melodic cadences. Students must learn to hear and reproduce not just "notes," but the specific, often fluid, pitch environment of, for example, the *Uzzal* mode with its

perceptibly lowered second degree. This is paired with the theory of rhythmic cycles (usullar), such as the weighty Mughul or the flowing Sakil, which govern the temporal structure of instrumental introductions and vocal sections. Crucially, the theory extends to prosody (aruz). Students must study how the quantitative meters of classical Persian and Chaghatay poetry dictate the rhythmic placement of syllables and the elongation of melismas, creating an indivisible bond between word and tone.

The theoretical foundation for folk song is, by nature, more flexible and region-specific, but no less systematic. It begins with the classification of genres: the call-and-response Lapar of Surkhandarya, the expansive epic fragments of Doston, the lyrical Katta Ashula of Fergana, or the lively Yalla. Each genre carries its own formal expectations. Theory here focuses on regional modes (kuy or namud), which may be pentatonic or heptatonic and are often more stable in intonation than the fluid maqom pardalar. Rhythmic theory deals with asymmetrical dance meters and the relationship between vocal line and the driving pulse of the doyra frame drum. A critical theoretical component is dialectology - understanding the phonetic and syntactic particularities of the song's region. The melody often follows the natural speech inflection of the local dialect, making linguistic study a non-negotiable part of musical theory for folk song.

A comprehensive pedagogy integrates these theoretical foundations. A student might examine how the flexible intonation of a maqom parda differs from the fixed pitch of a folk song's tonal center, or how the complex arus meter of a Ghazal contrasts with the simple, repetitive stanzaic form of a Qo'shiq. This comparative theoretical understanding prevents confusion and fosters stylistic precision.

Methodological Foundations: From Theory to Practice

The final and most practical layer is the methodological foundation: the sequenced techniques and exercises that transform philosophical understanding and theoretical knowledge into embodied skill. This is where pedagogy becomes actionable.

Maqom instruction requires a method that builds from the molecular to the holistic. Initial training involves intensive aural immersion and targeted exercises. Students practice singing central modal tetrachords and pentachords with precise intonation, often against the sustained drone of a tanbur to develop harmonic hearing. Ornamentation (naqshlar) - the kampira, lison, yalli - is isolated and practiced as a technical vocabulary before being applied in context. A key methodological tool is the taksim-style, unmeasured improvisation on a single vowel or poetic line within a given maqom, developing the student's intuitive sense of modal movement and phrasing. Learning a full maqom section proceeds in layers: first, the skeletal melodic outline; then, the application of correct poetic meter and diction; next, the addition of appropriate ornamentation; and finally, the cultivation of the overarching dynamic shape and emotional trajectory. The method is slow, repetitive, and deeply analytical, mirroring the tradition's own contemplative nature.

The methodology for folk song, while equally rigorous, is more direct and energetically focused. It often begins with the text. Students recite the lyrics in the correct dialect until the natural rhythm and cadence of the language are internalized. Melody is then added, with an emphasis on clear narrative diction - every word must be understood by the listener. Breath control is trained for the long, sustained phrases of a Katta Ashula or the rapid, interjectory phrases of a Lapar. A central methodological component is kinesthetic learning: embodying the rhythm through movement or dance, as many folk songs are inseparable from bodily expression. Ensemble singing is introduced early, teaching students to blend in unison or harmony (kuylash) and to respond to a lead singer, replicating the communal context of the music.

An integrated pedagogical method strategically uses these approaches to cross-pollinate. The precise intonation drills from maqom training sharpen a student's ear for the modes of folk music.

Conversely, the narrative energy and clear diction honed in folk song study can prevent a maqom performance from becoming rhythmically inert or emotionally opaque. The methodology is not a set of rigid rules, but a flexible toolkit that the teacher deploys to address the specific needs of the repertoire and the student.

Conclusion

Establishing the pedagogical foundations for Uzbek maqom and folk song instruction is an act of preservation through clarity. By articulating the distinct philosophical aims, theoretical systems, and methodological pathways for each tradition, educators create a roadmap for deep learning. This structured approach does not imprison the artistic spirit; rather, it liberates the student from uncertainty and guesswork, providing the secure technical and intellectual ground from which authentic expression can grow.

The ultimate outcome of this foundation-laying is the formation of a new generation of unified vocal artists. These are singers who can navigate the spiritual depths of Shashmaqom with authority and the vibrant spontaneity of a Yalla with equal conviction. They understand that performing a Doston fragment requires a different vocal mechanism and mental approach than unfolding a Talqin from Iroq. This versatility, rooted in deep knowledge, is the hallmark of a mature musician.

Therefore, the future of Uzbek vocal arts in educational institutions depends on a commitment to building these explicit foundations. It requires teachers to be not only skilled performers but also reflective pedagogues, capable of analyzing and transmitting the inner logic of their art. When philosophy, theory, and method are woven together into a coherent curriculum, the university classroom transforms from a place of simple song-learning into a true conservatory of culture. Here, the living voice of Uzbekistan is not merely echoed, but understood, nurtured, and prepared to speak with enduring power to the generations ahead.

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