



MUSICAL THINKING: DEFINITION, STRUCTURE, AND COGNITIVE FEATURES

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Abstract

This article examines the concept and essence of musical thinking as a distinct form of artistic and cognitive activity. It explores theoretical perspectives on the emergence of musical art and its integral role in shaping human perception, emotion, and imagination. The study analyzes how musical thought operates through sound structures, rhythm, and texture, forming an expressive system that bridges sensory experience and intellectual reflection. Special attention is given to stylistic phenomena such as homophony and glissando, which illustrate the dynamic interaction of melodic and harmonic layers within musical texture. The paper also discusses the impact of mass culture on the transformation of musical consciousness in contemporary society, emphasizing the need to preserve aesthetic values and creative depth amid technological and cultural change.

Keywords: Musical thinking, homophony, glissando, rhythm, texture, mass culture.

Introduction

In the modern era, musical art exerts a profound and enduring influence on the moral and spiritual development of the younger generation, often surpassing other forms of artistic expression in its emotional and psychological impact. Throughout history, music has served as one of the most powerful means of shaping the social, economic, and ideological life of humanity. Beyond fulfilling the spiritual and aesthetic needs of people, musical works have also reflected their attitudes toward the social realities and challenges of each epoch.

With the advent of national independence, renewed attention has been directed toward reviving and reinterpreting traditional cultural values, customs, and



artistic heritage. This process has underscored the significance of music as an essential component of moral and cultural identity. Historically, the musical heritage of the Uzbek people—including folk songs, maqom performance, and traditional instruments—has always occupied a central place in the spiritual life of the nation, serving as a vital source of emotional nourishment and collective expression.

Every nation possesses its own musical language and instrumental forms that reflect its traditions, worldview, and cultural identity. The world of Uzbek musical instruments, in particular, is remarkably rich and diverse, both in material structure and in spiritual meaning. As the wisdom of the ages affirms, the greater a nation's spirituality, the deeper and more enduring its historical legacy becomes [1, p. 21].

Classical scholars such as al-Farabi, Safi al-Din al-Urmawi, Abd al-Qadir Maraghi, Ahmadi (author of *The Dialogue of Instruments*), and Zayn al-Abidin Husayni (author of *Risala dar Bayani Qanuni wa Amali Musiqi*) explored not only the study of musical instruments but also the theoretical and methodological foundations of musical performance and aesthetics. Their works provide valuable insight into the musical thought and instrumental traditions of their respective eras, forming the intellectual foundation of Eastern musicology.

Traditional music and songs have long called people toward faith, compassion, and humanity. Even today, they remain a crucial force in cultivating a sense of national pride, ethical consciousness, and social harmony, especially in shaping the worldview of the younger generation. Derived from the Greek word *mousikē*—"the art of the Muses"—music represents a form of art that expresses human emotions, thoughts, and imagination through an organized sequence of tones and melodies. Its content embodies dynamic states of the human spirit, conveyed through expressive and meaningful artistic imagery that transcends linguistic boundaries and unites people through shared feeling and experience.

Materials and Methods

Music embodies the full range of human emotions—excitement, joy, pleasure, sorrow, and contemplation—and reflects the individual's willpower, determination, and temperament. The expressive and representational potential



of music has been highly valued since antiquity by Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as by Eastern thinkers including al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Jami, Navoi, Babur, Kawkabi, and Sufi scholars like al-Ghazali, Kalabadi, and al-Bukhari [2]. They emphasized that the extraordinary psychological and emotional influence of music derives from its processual and harmonious nature, which corresponds closely to the dynamic flow of human inner experiences.

Within the content of musical works, artistic ideas are expressed in an integrated form through the interaction of musical images—comparison, contrast, and development. Depending on the nature of these relationships, music may acquire epic, dramatic, or lyrical characteristics. Of these, lyricism is the most closely aligned with the “inner” or spiritual nature of music, as it conveys the subtle states of the human soul. The essence of musical content lies in the unity of individual, national, and universal artistic values. Through its melodies, rhythm, and structure, music reflects the emotional vitality, intellectual energy, and social consciousness of a particular people, society, or historical period.

Musical forms have always corresponded to the moral and intellectual needs of each era, while simultaneously intersecting with multiple aspects of human activity. Above all, music plays a vital role in shaping moral and aesthetic taste, nurturing emotional sensitivity, and encouraging creative potential.

Like speech and other systems of sound-based communication, music possesses the capacity to transmit information through tonal signals. Variations in pitch, duration, timbre, and intensity allow it to express internal emotional states, thus resembling speech in its communicative nature. However, as an art form, music differs fundamentally from speech in that its meanings are conveyed through purely acoustic, nonverbal structures unique to artistic sound organization [3].

Melody serves as the principal artistic medium of music. In oral musical traditions, the melody functions as the primary and complete form of artistic expression.

Thinking, in general, is the process by which reality is reflected in human consciousness through analysis and synthesis. It arises from sensory perception and practical activity, relying on concrete knowledge, evidence, comparison, and generalization. The philosophical study of thinking—gnoseology—examines the



theory of knowledge, while the disciplines of logic and psychology investigate its specific forms and processes. Logic studies the formal structures of thought—concepts, judgments, and inferences—whereas psychology classifies types of thinking as visual-motor, visual-imaginative, and abstract (theoretical). The individuality of thought manifests in qualities such as independence, originality, flexibility, and speed.

Musical thinking emerges from musical perception and feeling, relying on auditory, aesthetic, and artistic imagery. It represents a specific intellectual process for understanding the structure and meaning of musical art and the laws of musical culture. The nature of musical thinking depends on the degree of a person's musical ability and the environmental conditions in which that individual is raised and educated.

A distinction must be made between Eastern and Western musical cultures.

- In Eastern music, monodic thinking predominates, characterized by a horizontal development of melody, the use of numerous modes (over 80), microtonal intervals (quarter-tones and semitones), glissando techniques, complex rhythmic structures, and non-tempered tonal relationships. These features create a rich diversity of timbre and melodic expression.
- In contrast, Western music is defined by homophonic-harmonic thinking, which develops vertically through harmonic progression, chordal structure, and the logic of harmonic movement.

Musical thinking has been studied since ancient times. Pythagoras' experiments with the monochord revealed mathematical relationships between musical sounds, laying the foundation for the scientific study of music [4, p. 31]. All forms of musical thought possess a social and historical character, reflecting the style and spirit of their epoch—whether that of the early polyphonists, the Viennese classicists, the Romantics, or the Impressionists. The individuality of musical thinking can be observed in the compositional and performance styles of specific composers and artists. Even within socially accepted frameworks and stylistic traditions, each musician manifests a unique creative identity [5].

Musical thinking is directly linked to the birth of artistic imagery. In contemporary psychology of music, the artistic image within a musical work is viewed as a unity of material, spiritual, and logical components.



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- The material component includes notation, pitch structure, melody, harmony, meter-rhythm, dynamics, timbre, register, and texture.
 - The spiritual component encompasses mood, imagination, emotion, and volition.
 - The logical component involves form, genre, and content.

True musical thinking arises only when all these components—composer, performer, and listener—interact harmoniously in consciousness, uniting technical mastery, emotional depth, and intellectual understanding into a single creative process.

Results and Discussion

In musical activity, the process of thinking depends on several interrelated aspects: the ability to imagine and form associative images that shape the character and emotional atmosphere of a composition; the capacity to comprehend the development of ideas within the harmonic and structural texture of a piece—its melody, rhythm, texture, dynamics, agogics, and formal logic; and finally, the creative search for the most effective means, methods, and techniques for embodying musical thought and emotion, whether through performance or notation.

Many music educators emphasize that in contemporary musical training, technical performance skills often receive greater attention than the cultivation of deep theoretical understanding and reflective thinking. As a result, the accumulation of enriching conceptual knowledge proceeds too slowly. Therefore, the conscious development of musical thinking—together with the broadening of both musical and general intellectual outlook—must become a continuous process in the education of every young musician. This not only enhances creative understanding but also expands the performer's professional potential and artistic individuality.

According to the well-known formulation of B. V. Asafyev, the logical development of musical thought can generally be represented through three stages: initial impulse, development, and conclusion. The initial impulse is embodied in the exposition of one or two main themes, which establish the foundation of the musical idea. After the exposition, the process of thematic



development begins, often involving techniques such as repetition and comparison. Transformation and substitution represent other important methods for advancing musical thought. Progression, as a more complex form of comparison, develops when each subsequent section evolves from the previous one, following the structural logic of the a–b–b1–c–d pattern [6, p. 32].

The first serious discussions of the improvement of Uzbek national musical instruments appeared in V. M. Belyaev's monograph *Uzbek National Instruments*. The earliest organized efforts in this direction began in 1935 at the Hamza Music School under the supervision of A. I. Petrosyans, with the explicit goal of modernizing traditional instruments. From 1943 onward, this work continued systematically in a special laboratory established at the Tashkent State Conservatory. The creation of the Experimental Scientific and Production Laboratory for the Improvement of National Instruments made it possible to design instruments suitable for performing notated compositions within the framework of written musical tradition.

Today, in the era of globalization, scientific and technological advancement, and the rise of the innovation-based society, young musicians and artists are presented with a wide range of new opportunities. However, these opportunities also impose new intellectual and moral challenges: the need to make swift and informed decisions, to cultivate innovative and critical thinking, to enhance intellectual potential, and at the same time, to remain faithful to national and universal human values [7].

Musical thinking, therefore, stands at the intersection of tradition and modernity. It serves not only as a reflection of a musician's technical skill and cultural memory but also as a creative instrument for synthesizing artistic, intellectual, and ethical dimensions of human experience [8]. The balance between professional mastery and deep musical cognition remains a defining factor in the development of both individual artistry and collective musical culture.

Conclusions

In today's rapidly changing world, preparing young people for successful participation in social life requires the cultivation of key moral and civic qualities such as responsibility, discipline, legal awareness, tolerance, intellectual



independence, enlightened worldview, and a strong sense of spiritual and national identity. The formation of these traits has become one of the most urgent tasks of modern education and cultural policy.

In this context, it is essential to help youth correctly evaluate the complex ideological processes occurring in the world, make sound social decisions, and form clear personal goals that enable them to find their rightful place in life. Such education also serves to strengthen family and community relationships, prevent indifference and delinquency, and protect young minds from the destructive influence of certain forms of “mass culture”.

In Uzbekistan, the moral and intellectual education of youth has been elevated to the level of state priority, largely through the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. A recent example of this is the Cabinet of Ministers’ resolution “On the phased introduction of the subject Tarbiya (Education and Upbringing) in general secondary schools,” adopted in July of this year, which underscores the government’s commitment to developing spiritually mature and culturally aware citizens.

Education, in its fullest sense, aims to nurture a well-rounded individual who embodies moral integrity, spiritual richness, and physical vitality. Among the key elements of such education is the formation of aesthetic perception and cultural taste. In this regard, music plays a crucial role as a means of moral and emotional development. To ensure that musical art exerts a positive influence on the upbringing of youth, it is essential to foster a correct understanding of the value and meaning of national musical heritage.

The cultivation of musical taste and sensitivity among the younger generation is therefore one of the most pressing issues of modern education. Traditional performance practices, passed down from generation to generation, continue to serve as a powerful medium for cultural transmission, moral formation, and the enrichment of the human spirit at every stage of societal development.



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