



TASHKENT AND FERGANA MAQOMS: ORIGINS, AESTHETIC MEANING AND CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION

Aslanov Sherzodjon Turgunovich

Department of Music Education

Navoi State University, Uzbekistan

Abstract

The musical tradition of Central Asia represents a multidimensional landscape where poetry, spirituality, philosophy and artistry are woven into one unique cultural system. Among these traditions, maqom holds a special place as a sophisticated classical genre which preserves the historical memory and musical thinking of the Uzbek cultural world. While maqom remains a common heritage for the entire region, specific schools such as the Shashmaqom of Bukhara or the Khorezm maqoms developed their characteristic stylistic features. The Tashkent and Fergana maqoms, in particular, form a distinct regional tradition that demonstrates a combination of lyrical sensitivity, philosophical reflection and subtle melodic beauty. The aim of this paper is to examine the Tashkent–Fergana maqoms by exploring their historical roots, structural features, poetic foundations and contemporary relevance. Special attention will also be paid to the cultural meanings embedded in the performance tradition, as well as the challenges of preserving authenticity in a rapidly modernising environment.

Keywords: Tashkent–Fergana Maqoms; Uzbek classical music; modal system; Central Asian culture; traditional performance; poetic interpretation; Intangible Cultural Heritage; regional identity; oral transmission; musical aesthetics; maqom structure; spirituality in music.

Introduction

The emergence of maqom in Central Asia dates back many centuries, developing in relation to various musical systems of the Persian, Turkic and Arabic cultural spheres. Historical chronicles show that during the Timurid period musical



knowledge became institutionalised and reached a high level of theoretical refinement. The regions of Tashkent and the Fergana Valley, located at the intersection of trade routes, were open to cultural exchanges that contributed to the gradual formation of their own musical identity.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, professional musicians (hofiz, sozanda, ustoz) played an important role in preserving and transmitting the local musical repertoire. Many of them belonged to artistic circles and cultural gatherings where music was performed not merely for entertainment, but for intellectual reflection and poetic discussion. In this spiritual environment, the Tashkent–Fergana maqoms crystallised as an artistic phenomenon representing both traditional musical knowledge and regional aesthetic experience.

Technically, maqom relies on modal foundations which determine melodic development. In the Tashkent–Fergana repertoire, these modes—commonly referred to as shuba—contain their own structural logic, interval relationships and expressive possibilities. Compared to the grand monumental construction of Bukhara Shashmaqom, Tashkent–Fergana maqoms appear more concise, lyrical and emotionally intimate.

Their melodic patterns generally avoid large dramatic contrasts and instead emphasise gradual movement, ornamentation, and smooth transitions. This stylistic preference reflects not only regional taste, but also a deeper worldview grounded in emotional refinement rather than epic expression. Performance practice therefore requires mastery of subtle melodic details that cannot be fully transmitted through notation alone; rather, they must be learned through oral tradition and personal mentorship.

Poetry plays a fundamental role in the performance of maqom. Classical Uzbek and Chagatai poets such as Alisher Navoiy, Babur, Mashrab and Fuzuli are among the most frequently used authors in maqom texts. Their poetry explores themes of love, devotion, spiritual longing and human existence—subjects that perfectly align with the emotional universe of maqom.

In this respect, the performer is not only a musician but also an interpreter of poetic meaning. Each word becomes an artistic gesture, and each melodic turn reflects a deeper philosophical idea. The performer must therefore embody both



***Modern American Journal of Linguistics,
Education, and Pedagogy***

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 01, **Issue** 09, December, 2025

Website: usajournals.org

This work is Licensed under CC BY 4.0 a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

musical technique and spiritual sensitivity. This synthesis illustrates why maqom is often described as a “school of thought” rather than merely a musical genre. Historically, maqom performance was closely connected with family celebrations, seasonal rituals, religious gatherings and public festivities. Certain pieces were traditionally performed during spiritual evenings (majlis), while others accompanied social events or poetic readings. In oral tradition, master musicians transmitted both technical skills and moral values to their students, forming ethical and artistic continuity.

During the 20th century, performance underwent important transformations. The establishment of musical institutions, radio studios and academic research centers allowed maqom to enter a professional sphere. While such processes contributed to preservation, they also influenced stylistic interpretation, sometimes leading to more standardized performance forms.

The regional distinctiveness of Tashkent and Fergana maqoms represents more than musical difference; it embodies collective memory, geographical experience and cultural imagination. The melodic patterns evoke landscapes, gardens, mountains and valleys of the region, forming an emotional connection between music and place. For listeners, maqom often functions as a symbolic space where memory, identity and spiritual values meet.

Today, maqom continues to play a vital role in contemporary cultural policy and nation-building, reflecting a growing recognition of intangible heritage as a resource for cultural development. UNESCO programs and national institutions have significantly contributed to research, documentation and international recognition of maqom traditions. Modernisation presents both challenges and new possibilities. Young musicians increasingly experiment with fusion genres, jazz arrangements and global collaborations. While innovative interpretation can broaden audience interest, it also raises questions about authenticity and aesthetic responsibility. The most successful contemporary performances appear to be those that preserve the depth of traditional understanding while confidently exploring new expressive forms. Digital technology offers new platforms for dissemination—archival recordings, online lessons and international performances allow maqom to reach global audiences. Nevertheless, true mastery



***Modern American Journal of Linguistics,
Education, and Pedagogy***

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 01, **Issue** 09, December, 2025

Website: usajournals.org

***This work is Licensed under CC BY 4.0 a Creative Commons Attribution
4.0 International License.***

will always remain rooted in teacher-student transmission, oral knowledge and living human interaction.

Tashkent and Fergana maqoms constitute a profound musical heritage representing centuries of artistic intelligence, poetic beauty and philosophical depth. Their unique style, emotional lyricism and spiritual meaning distinguish them within the broader classical tradition of Central Asia.

By listening to these maqoms, one enters a world shaped by ancient wisdom, collective memory and refined musical thinking. Their preservation, therefore, is not only a matter of cultural policy, but an ongoing dialogue between tradition and modern consciousness.

References

1. Komilov, N. Spiritual Culture of Central Asia. Tashkent, 2001.
2. Uspensky, V., Romanovskaya, E. Uzbek Musical Heritage. Moscow, 1989.
3. Saidov, E. Maqom Traditions of Uzbekistan. Tashkent, 2010.
4. UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage Reports. Paris, various years.
5. Yusufjonov, H. Maqom as Cultural Memory. Tashkent, 2018.