ABDURAUF FITRAT'S LEGACY IN THE STUDY OF UZBEK CLASSICAL MUSIC AND ITS SCHOLARLY SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Abdurauf Fitrat's contribution to the study of Uzbek classical music based on his seminal work "Uzbek Classical Music and Its History." The study analyzes Fitrat's interpretation of the formation of Uzbek classical music, the theoretical foundations of the maqom system, and its place within the broader framework of Eastern musical traditions. Fitrat conceptualizes Uzbek music not as an isolated phenomenon but as a coherent and historically developed system grounded in shared Eastern musical principles while maintaining distinct national characteristics. Through a historical and analytical approach, the article highlights the scholarly significance of Fitrat's ideas and their relevance to contemporary musicological research.

Keywords: *Abdurauf Fitrat, Uzbek classical music, maqom, Shashmaqom, Eastern music, music theory.*

Introduction

Uzbek classical music constitutes an integral component of Eastern musical culture and represents a complex artistic system shaped over centuries through stable performance traditions, theoretical principles, and aesthetic experience. The scholarly investigation of this musical heritage entered a new stage in the early twentieth century, particularly through the intellectual efforts of Jadid thinkers. Among them, Abdurauf Fitrat stands out as one of the first scholars to approach Uzbek musical heritage from a systematic and theoretical perspective.

In his work "Uzbek Classical Music and Its History", Fitrat presents Uzbek music as a highly structured artistic system rather than a spontaneous cultural phenomenon. He situates Uzbek classical music within the general framework of Eastern music by emphasizing shared theoretical elements such as the twelve-maqom system, rhythmic patterns (usul), and modal structures (parda). At the same time, Fitrat underscores the stylistic distinctiveness of Uzbek music, highlighting its independent development within the broader Eastern musical tradition.

A central focus of Fitrat's study is the Shashmaqom system, which he identifies as the core model of Uzbek classical music. By analyzing its internal structure –

comprising mushkilot, nasr, and ufar sections – Fitrat interprets Shashmaqom not merely as a performance tradition but as the product of a long historical process of musical and intellectual development. This approach enables a deeper understanding of Uzbek classical music as a historically grounded and theoretically coherent system.

In this context, the purpose of the present article is to analyze Abdurauf Fitrat's scholarly views on Uzbek classical music, to assess his contribution to music theory, and to demonstrate the enduring academic significance of his legacy in modern musicological studies.

Methods

This study is based on Abdurauf Fitrat's work "Uzbek Classical Music and Its History," which serves as the primary source for analyzing the formation and theoretical foundations of Uzbek classical music. To achieve the research objectives, a set of complementary qualitative research methods was employed.

Historical-analytical method. This method was used to examine the historical development of Uzbek classical music within the broader context of Eastern musical traditions. Fitrat's interpretations of the twelve-maqom system, as well as his discussion of the historical evolution of maqom practice, were analyzed to identify the continuity and transformation of musical thought over time.

Theoretical-descriptive method. Key musicological concepts articulated by Fitrat – such as maqom, usul (rhythmic patterns), and parda (modal structure) – were examined through theoretical description. This approach enabled a systematic explanation of the internal structure of the Shashmaqom system, including its division into mushkilot, nasr, and ufar sections, and clarified their functional roles within Uzbek classical music.

Comparative-analytical method. Uzbek classical music, as conceptualized by Fitrat, was comparatively analyzed alongside Turkish, Arab, and Persian musical traditions. This method allowed for the identification of both shared theoretical foundations and distinctive stylistic features, thereby demonstrating the position of Uzbek music as an integral yet independent component of Eastern musical culture.

Logical synthesis method. The findings derived from the above methods were systematized through logical synthesis. This method facilitated the integration of historical and theoretical observations into a coherent scholarly framework, highlighting the scientific value of Fitrat's contribution to the study of Uzbek classical music.

The combined application of these methods ensured a comprehensive and academically grounded assessment of Abdurauf Fitrat's legacy and its significance for contemporary musicological research.

Results

The analysis of Abdurauf Fitrat's "Uzbek Classical Music and Its History" reveals several significant findings regarding the theoretical structure, historical development, and scholarly interpretation of Uzbek classical music. Fitrat's work demonstrates that Uzbek classical music is not a spontaneous or purely oral tradition, but rather a systematically developed art form grounded in well-defined theoretical principles.

First, the study confirms that Fitrat conceptualizes Uzbek classical music within the general framework of Eastern musical theory. He consistently emphasizes that the foundations of Eastern music – particularly the twelve-maqom system – constitute a shared theoretical basis for Turkic, Arab, and Persian musical cultures. However, despite this common foundation, Fitrat clearly identifies stylistic and structural distinctions that differentiate Uzbek music from other Eastern traditions. According to his analysis, these differences emerge primarily at the level of performance practice, melodic development, and rhythmic organization, rather than at the level of basic theory.

Second, Fitrat's examination of the Shashmaqom system establishes it as the central model of Uzbek classical music. The results show that Fitrat does not treat Shashmaqom merely as a collection of musical pieces, but as a coherent and hierarchically organized system. He identifies its three principal structural components – mushkilot, nasr, and ufar – and demonstrates their functional interdependence. According to Fitrat, mushkilot represents the instrumental and introductory foundation of the maqom, nasr integrates vocal performance with instrumental accompaniment, and ufar embodies the dynamic and performative culmination of the maqom cycle. This tripartite structure reflects a mature musical logic developed through long historical practice.

Third, the findings highlight Fitrat's detailed treatment of rhythmic organization (usul). His analysis shows that Uzbek classical music historically relied on complex rhythmic patterns derived from earlier Eastern musical theory, which were later simplified in performance practice. Fitrat traces the transformation from original rhythmic formulas such as tan-tana-tanan to more condensed patterns expressed through percussion syllables like bum and bak. This observation reveals a process of adaptation in which theoretical complexity was gradually adjusted to practical performance conditions without undermining the structural integrity of the music.

Fourth, Fitrat's discussion of modal structure (parda) demonstrates the scientific depth of Eastern music theory and challenges assumptions about its lack of analytical rigor. By referring to earlier scholars such as Abd al-Rahman Jami, Fitrat underscores

that the division and placement of pitches were based on precise proportional and mathematical principles. The results indicate that Fitrat regarded the study of parda not only as a historical inquiry but also as a necessary foundation for the restoration and correct performance of classical instruments, particularly the tanbur.

Finally, the analysis reveals Fitrat's clear distinction between classical maqom-based music and folk musical traditions. While acknowledging the artistic value of folk songs and melodies, Fitrat argues that they operate according to different principles and should not be evaluated using the same theoretical criteria as Shashmaqom. This distinction allows for a more nuanced understanding of Uzbek musical culture, in which classical and folk traditions coexist as parallel yet interconnected domains.

Overall, the results demonstrate that Abdurauf Fitrat's work provides a comprehensive and methodologically consistent framework for understanding Uzbek classical music. His integration of historical sources, theoretical analysis, and critical reflection positions his legacy as a foundational contribution to modern Uzbek musicology and to the broader study of Eastern musical traditions.Uzbek classical music. His integration of historical sources, theoretical analysis, and critical reflection positions his legacy as a foundational contribution to modern Uzbek musicology and to the broader study of Eastern musical traditions.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that Abdurauf Fitrat's approach to Uzbek classical music represents a foundational moment in the formation of national musicology. Unlike earlier descriptive or purely ethnographic accounts, Fitrat's work demonstrates a conscious effort to frame Uzbek classical music within a rigorous theoretical and historical paradigm. This places his scholarship in direct dialogue with both classical Eastern music theory and modern academic standards of analysis.

One of the most significant aspects of Fitrat's contribution lies in his balanced interpretation of universality and particularity. While acknowledging that Uzbek classical music shares core theoretical principles with the broader Eastern musical tradition – such as the twelve-maqom system – Fitrat consistently resists reducing Uzbek music to a mere regional variant of Arab, Persian, or Turkish models. Instead, he emphasizes stylistic differentiation, performance logic, and historical development as decisive factors that define Uzbek music as an autonomous artistic system. This perspective remains highly relevant in contemporary musicology, where debates surrounding cultural hybridity and national specificity continue to be central.

Fitrat's conceptualization of Shashmaqom further reinforces this scholarly significance. By interpreting Shashmaqom as a structurally coherent system rather

than an accumulation of separate compositions, Fitrat anticipates later systemic and structuralist approaches in musicological research. His division of the maqom cycle into mushkilot, nasr, and ufar not only reflects performance practice but also reveals an underlying musical logic that governs progression, emotional intensity, and formal balance. This interpretation allows Shashmaqom to be analyzed as an integrated whole, comparable to large-scale musical forms in other classical traditions.

The discussion of rhythmic transformation (usul) in Fitrat's work also deserves particular attention. His observation that complex rhythmic formulas gradually evolved into simplified patterns highlights an important dynamic between theory and practice. Rather than interpreting this transformation as degeneration, Fitrat views it as a functional adaptation shaped by social and performative conditions. This insight aligns with modern ethnomusicological perspectives that recognize musical change as a natural and context-dependent process, rather than a loss of authenticity.

Equally important is Fitrat's engagement with modal theory (parda), which challenges long-standing assumptions about the supposed lack of scientific precision in Eastern music. By referencing earlier scholars such as Jami and emphasizing proportional and mathematical reasoning in pitch organization, Fitrat reasserts the intellectual depth of Eastern musical thought. His concern with the correct placement of frets on instruments such as the tanbur demonstrates that his work was not only historical or theoretical but also oriented toward practical reconstruction and preservation of classical performance standards.

Finally, Fitrat's clear differentiation between classical maqom-based music and folk traditions contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Uzbek musical culture. While he values folk music as an authentic expression of popular sentiment, he insists on distinct analytical frameworks for folk and classical genres. This distinction prevents methodological confusion and enables a more accurate evaluation of each tradition on its own terms-a principle that remains methodologically sound in contemporary scholarship.

In light of these considerations, Fitrat's legacy can be understood not merely as an early attempt at documenting Uzbek music, but as a comprehensive scholarly project that integrates history, theory, and critical reflection. His work continues to provide a conceptual foundation for modern research on Uzbek classical music and contributes meaningfully to broader discussions within Eastern and comparative musicology.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Abdurauf Fitrat's "Uzbek Classical Music and Its History" represents a foundational scholarly contribution to the study of Uzbek

classical music. Through a systematic and historically grounded approach, Fitrat conceptualized Uzbek music as a coherent theoretical system shaped by long-term cultural, intellectual, and artistic processes, rather than as a collection of isolated or purely oral practices.

The analysis confirms that Fitrat successfully situated Uzbek classical music within the broader framework of Eastern musical theory while simultaneously emphasizing its stylistic autonomy and national specificity. His interpretation of the Shashmaqom system as an integrated structural model – comprising mushkilot, nasr, and ufar – provides a clear analytical framework that remains relevant for contemporary musicological research. Moreover, his discussions of usul and parda reveal the depth, precision, and intellectual rigor of Eastern music theory, challenging reductive assumptions about its scientific foundations.

Fitrat's distinction between classical maqom traditions and folk music further contributes to a nuanced understanding of Uzbek musical culture, allowing each domain to be evaluated according to its own aesthetic and theoretical principles. This methodological clarity strengthens the scholarly value of his work and aligns it with modern approaches in ethnomusicology and comparative music studies.

In conclusion, Abdurauf Fitrat's legacy extends beyond historical documentation; it constitutes a comprehensive scholarly paradigm that integrates theory, history, and critical reflection. His work continues to serve as an essential reference for the study of Uzbek classical music and offers enduring insights for broader discussions within Eastern and global musicology.

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