



The Formation of the Uzbek Folk Instrument Orchestra

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OPEN ACCESS

SUBMITTED 14 April 2025

ACCEPTED 10 May 2025

PUBLISHED 17 June 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue06 2025

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Abstract: This paper explores the historical development and organizational principles behind the formation of the Uzbek Folk Instrument Orchestra. It examines the cultural, artistic, and educational factors that led to the institutionalization of folk instrument ensembles in Uzbekistan during the 20th century. The study highlights the roles of key figures, such as composers and arrangers, in adapting traditional melodies for orchestral performance. Attention is given to the classification and orchestration of national instruments, as well as the integration of regional performance traditions into a unified concert format. The research emphasizes the orchestra's importance in preserving and promoting Uzbekistan's musical heritage, contributing to national identity, and supporting professional music education.

Keywords: Uzbek folk instruments, folk orchestra, national music, musical heritage, instrumentation, traditional music, orchestration, cultural identity, ensemble formation, Uzbek music history.

Introduction: The musical art of Uzbekistan has a long history, and its formation dates back to various historical periods. Since ancient times, music has been closely connected with people's rituals, religious traditions, and labor activities. Folk music and instruments such as the dutar, rubab, tanbur, ghijjak, karnay, surnay, and nay served as the main means of musical expression in their time.

Each nation passes down its historical experiences and cultural values through its musical traditions. Since ancient times, Uzbek folk instruments have been present in various public celebrations and ceremonies. As the people's way of life, labor, and social customs evolved, so too did the forms of music. Among the earliest musical instruments were not only traditional

string, wind, and percussion instruments, but also many others used in religious and secular rituals, which developed alongside society.

The development of Uzbek folk instruments has been influenced by cultural exchanges among the peoples of Central Asia, as well as by Arab, Persian, and Turkic cultures. Numerous musical instruments, melodies, and performance techniques were incorporated into Uzbek music over time. These processes contributed to the development of music and helped shape its unique characteristics.

The Uzbek folk instrument orchestra holds a special place in the history of Uzbekistan's musical art. It was created with the aim of preserving and developing national music and has gone through several important historical stages in adapting folk instruments to the orchestral format.

First Stage: Socio-cultural necessity (1920s–1930s). During this period, the need to preserve and promote national musical traditions within the territory of Uzbekistan increased. In the 1920s, the first ensembles based on folk instruments and performance traditions were formed. Work began on studying and promoting folk instruments. At that time, the idea emerged to combine local musical traditions with European musical practices. Ensembles were formed based on native instruments (doira, nay, tanbur, rubab, dutar, ghijjak). In order to preserve the historical and cultural value of folk music, instrumental, vocal, and dance ensembles were organized. Folk music was collected, arranged, and new performance styles were developed.

Instrumental performance in Uzbekistan has ancient and rich traditions. The most widespread folk instruments have been used over long historical periods to convey traditional Uzbek music. The victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution opened all paths for the development of musical art. In the 1920s–1930s, mass instrumental groups composed of folk ensembles emerged, based on the principles of solo and unison performance. These groups carried out large-scale concert and performance activities.

During this period, national instruments began to be taught in educational institutions. Classes were conducted in groups by musician-performers using traditional oral methods, with instruction by ear.

The most popular and widely used folk instruments were expected to play an important role in promoting musical literacy, fostering an appreciation of polyphonic performance, and discovering folk talents. However, the untempered structure of the instruments, their incomplete and narrow-range sound systems, and the weak or overly loud sounds of

certain instruments limited their use on concert stages, narrowed the repertoire, and made it difficult to perform the music of other nations.

The issue of adapting national instruments was also of great significance in the field of music education. Life itself set this task as one of the main directions in the development of Uzbek folk instruments, especially during the process of forming a modern professional musical art. This art had to be closely tied to the best artistic traditions of the people and capable of expressing the full potential of polyphonic music.

Many musical craftsmen and folk musicians, such as Sh. Shoumarov, M. Kharratov, and U. Zufarov, were involved in the improvement of national musical instruments. Each of them approached this task in their own way. Overall, these efforts were aimed at amplifying the sound of the instruments and expanding their performance capabilities.

In addition to expanding the range, necessary work was carried out to improve the instruments, but all these efforts still could not fully solve the problem of developing Uzbek folk instruments to meet the requirements of modern professional performance.

In the 1930s, a resolution by the relevant authorities of the Uzbek SSR called for instruction on Uzbek folk instruments to be based on the standardized Western notation system and the formation of polyphonic ensembles and orchestras. In 1936, for the first time, instruction using Western music notation was introduced at the Hamza Music School for Uzbek folk instruments. This played a crucial role in training musically literate professionals.

By that time, the music workshop established at the school had become a center for the improvement of national instruments. A group of instrument makers and designers—including V. A. Romanchenko, A. A. Kevkhoians, and S. E. Didenko—worked under the supervision of the workshop's founder.

The 1930s marked a period of rapid development in the musical culture of Uzbekistan. In 1935, initial experiments in modifying Uzbek folk instruments began at the Central House of Folk Creativity. At that time, the development and achievements of European musical instruments, as well as the experience of the Russian musician and founder of the Russian folk orchestra V. V. Andreyev, were studied.

To facilitate reconstruction, the principle of a 12-tone equal-tempered chromatic scale was adopted, and a family of modified instruments was created on this basis. Although the transition to reconstructed instruments was gradual, this issue was recognized as an urgent task.

In 1936, the Tashkent Conservatory—the first higher musical educational institution in Uzbekistan—was established. That same year, the Uzbek State Philharmonic was founded to widely promote the highest achievements of musical art. Within the Philharmonic, orchestra, choir, and ballet ensembles were organized.

A large unison folk instrument ensemble of 98 members was led by the prominent folk musician and composer To'xtasin Jalilov. At his suggestion, instruments in the lower registers were added to the ensemble. For this purpose, "large ghijjaks" crafted by U. Zufarov were used.

In November 1938, the Uzbek Folk Instrument Orchestra performing with written notation was formed. Instruments with a diatonic, non-tempered scale were gradually replaced with reconstructed instruments tuned to a 12-tone equal-tempered chromatic scale. This newly formed orchestra began to actively promote polyphonic music.

In 1943, a special experimental laboratory for the reconstruction of folk musical instruments was established. This laboratory became the central institution coordinating all reconstruction and improvement efforts. The processes of tempering and chromatic adaptation were applied primarily to string instruments such as the dutar, tanbur, and rubab. The formerly stretched frets aligned with a diatonic scale were replaced by fixed frets corresponding to a chromatic tempered scale.

The sound scale of the chang was also chromaticized. At the same time, new families of folk instruments were created: bowed, struck-string, struck-percussion, and wooden wind instruments.

These innovations aimed to expand the capabilities of folk instruments and elevate their performance culture to a professional level.

A number of folk instruments have been significantly improved, which has greatly expanded their expressive and technical capabilities: range, technique, sound power, timbre, and more. The overall range of the orchestra has now extended from the contrabass "mi" to the fourth octave "sol."

Alongside structural changes, new performance styles have also been developed, which helped to further enhance the expressive potential of certain instruments. In wind instruments, performance techniques were refined through tempering.

In 1948, a department of folk instruments was established within the orchestral faculty of the Tashkent Conservatory. In September 1949, a separate department dedicated to folk instruments was

founded. Due to significant growth of the faculty and the emergence of new issues in performance and methodology, the department was divided into two in 1975: Departments of Folk Instrument Performance and Folk Instrument Orchestral Conducting.

The establishment of the faculty and departments of folk instruments made a great contribution to the development of the republic's musical culture. Here, highly qualified specialists were trained based on the synthesis of the national traditional performance school and the achievements of global performance culture. Educational-methodological materials were also developed, and educational and artistic repertoires were created.

The development of folk instruments, the growth of musical culture, and the increasing demand for instruments led to the emergence of a new branch—musical industry. Initially established under the name of S. Rahimov, it later evolved into a musical instrument factory. While 300 reconstructed instruments were produced by S. Rahimov in 1950, this number reached 80,000 by 1977.

The emergence of polyphonic orchestras and various ensembles for Uzbek folk instruments, along with the development of solo performance on these instruments, gave rise to entirely new musical genres and original works.

Undoubtedly, the improvement of Uzbek folk instruments, the introduction of notation-based performance, and professional instruction contributed significantly to the further development of musical art.

The development of polyphonic folk orchestras and the creation and performance of a modern multinational repertoire through them became the shortest path to widely engaging the masses in musical activity.

Polyphonic folk orchestras played an important role in promoting multinational repertoire and bringing different peoples closer together, thus contributing to the realization of the great idea of international friendship and cooperation.

Year by year, researchers continue to discover more credible and large-scale evidence affirming the ancient roots and richness of folk instruments that have long existed in the territory of Uzbekistan.

The artistic heritage of the peoples of Central Asia is vast and remains insufficiently studied. The enormous potential of this centuries-old practice needs to be understood more clearly in the context of global artistic experience. Artistic experience should not only be preserved but also serve as a source of development and a driving force in historical and cultural processes.

The historical development of musical instruments in

Central Asia from antiquity to the early 18th century provides a solid basis for an important conclusion: instruments have changed over time, and the reason for these changes lies in the shifting social functions of the instruments, the understanding of new artistic and ideological tasks, and the impetus for creating new forms of musical performance.

Although the issue of efficiency has been officially taken off the agenda, it remains relevant. Nevertheless, debates continue—not just about whether an orchestra has successfully or unsuccessfully performed a specific work in a national style, but often about deeper problems.

Practical experience shows that the process of improving musical instruments has accompanied the entire history of musical culture. Numerous musical legends and tales describe how famous musicians expanded instrument ranges, increased the number of strings, and so on. This evolutionary process developed with special intensity after the Great October Revolution, as there was a need to adapt to the new socio-cultural direction and to create new works for a wider audience.

In every historical period, instruments have undergone change. The Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 brought an unprecedented pace of transformation to people's lives. The social functions of art changed drastically, and new directions emerged, including polyphonic music, which led to the necessity of modifying traditional musical instruments. Thus, the idea of reconstruction arose in connection with the social conditions and new roles of instrumental music.

The emergence of Uzbek folk instruments on major stages marked a turning point. Questions arose: what should be performed, how should it be performed, and most importantly, with what instruments should it be performed? It was advisable to further develop the tradition of ensemble performance that had long existed in Uzbek musical practice. However, this required increasing the sound volume of these instruments, especially string instruments that were popular and beloved among the people.

To achieve this, the instruments were combined for collective performance. However, this soon led to certain difficulties, including the lack of identical instruments. Each instrument was made by craftsmen who followed their own methods and had the freedom to make the instruments slightly larger or smaller. As a result, these instruments varied significantly from one another.

In the pre-development era, when music was performed in small rooms, differences in pitch and natural tone of the instruments did not cause

inconvenience. On the contrary, soft performance was often connected with the general emotional content of lyrical and love-themed works. However, the need to perform music for large audiences and include new works with civic and developmental content in the repertoire required more powerful sound. It became clear that standardization of instruments was necessary.

Additionally, it was both possible and necessary to increase the sound of each instrument. This depended on several factors: the structure and shape of the resonator, the material of the strings, their tension, and so on. Thus, the idea of gradually introducing metal strings in folk music performance began to form. According to Kazakh musicologist and academician A. Zhubanov, "In the village of Abay, when the *dombra's* strings were replaced with shaped and metal strings, they produced pure sounds."

In connection with this, the assertion by West German musicologist Fred Priberg that "replacing strings with metal ones on folk instruments" was a result of political domination is considered highly ideological.

The results of the work by the creative group led by A. I. Petrosyans were astonishing. In a short time, instruments like the *dutar*, *tanbur*, and later the *rubab* were reconstructed based on the principle of twelve-step tempering, and work began on developing the family of *ghijjak* instruments. This immediately enabled the expansion of the tonal range of folk instruments and opened up broad opportunities for polyphonic performance.

Since 1943, reconstruction work continued in a special experimental laboratory under the art history department of the scientific research institute.

The laboratory included scholars who had deeply studied the musical culture of Eastern peoples in Uzbekistan and authored valuable scientific works on this topic. These included V. A. Uspensky (who headed the laboratory in 1943–1944) and V. M. Belyayev, whose works were dedicated to scientific analysis of this issue. According to T. Vyzgo and A. Petrosyans, during this period, V. M. Belyayev was a scientific researcher in the laboratory, participated in calculations and drawings, and, with the help of master musicians, the reconstructed instruments were produced there. From 1944, the laboratory was led by A. I. Petrosyans.

New forms of instruments were created—stringed and plucked instruments based on the twelve-step tempering principle: *dustars*, *tanburs*, *Kashgar* and *Afghan rubabs*; and bowed string instruments such as *ghijjaks*. Based on existing but unreconstructed instruments among the people, various sizes of instruments were made, allowing the creation of instrument families sounding in different registers. The

need to create folk instrument families was proven by the experience of other nations, especially those in Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

Thus, families of dutars, tanburs, and ghijjaks were formed, significantly expanding the musical range they could produce.

During the reconstruction process, work was also done to improve the sound quality of instruments, introduce new performance techniques, and develop new technical capabilities. Changes in performers' technique and sound production played a major role in improving instrument quality.

Furthermore, significant improvements were made to traditional Uzbek instruments by specialists, leading to the creation of new instruments and the modernization of existing ones.

As a result of the reconstruction efforts in Uzbekistan, a family of bowed string instruments—ghijjaks—was created: ghijjak-soprano (a reconstructed traditional ghijjak), ghijjak-alto, ghijjak-qobuz bass, and ghijjak-qobuz contrabass. The bowed qobuz, which existed in Kazakhstan and Karakalpakstan and closely resembled the Kyrgyz kyl-kiyak, was reconstructed by A. I. Petrosyans in the 1950s. The reason for the change was the fuller sound provided by the larger body and the desire to standardize the bowed instrument family. Based on this principle, the families of bowed string instruments were formed. From the reconstructed dutar-tenor, a family was created: dutar-prima, dutar-seconda, dutar-alto, dutar-bass, and dutar-contrabass. A similar process was carried out with the tanbur. However, according to T. Vyzgo and A. Petrosyans, "Although these instruments were confirmed by experimentation, they were not preserved in the orchestra."

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