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FEATURES OF THE NAMANGAN DUTAR PERFORMANCE SCHOOL (ON THE EXAMPLE OF MUSICIAN RO‘ZMATXON ISABOYEV)

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the life and artistic legacy of Ro‘zmatxon Isaboyev, a distinguished musician of the Namangan performance school. Structured as a monographic study, it presents a detailed account of the musician’s early years, adolescence, and the pivotal role of music in shaping his career. The article also provides the titles of the pieces performed by Isaboyev, along with concise analytical interpretations.

In addition, the article addresses the diminishing tradition of the Namangan dutar performance school and offers substantial information about its representatives and their contributions.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's era, the process of reviving our national values necessitates a comprehensive study of our cultural heritage, including our centuries-old artistic legacy and traditions. Our national songs, which are an invaluable spiritual treasure of our people, serve as important and valuable sources, making their thorough research particularly significant in the present time.

On August 9, 2017, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, signed the Resolution No. 156 (6850) on "Measures for the Further Development and Improvement of the Uzbekistan State Conservatory." In short, this resolution serves as another practical example of the high level of attention President Mirziyoyev is giving to the development of national musical art. It holds great importance as it aims to fundamentally improve the activities of the Uzbekistan State Conservatory and elevate the quality of training highly qualified specialists in the field of music to a new level. ¹

On August 3, 2019, President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev also held a meeting with representatives of the country's intellectual and creative circles. During this meeting, many existing issues in the fields of culture and art were raised, and current creative processes were discussed. Among the most popular art forms today is instrumental performance, which continues to receive special attention, as it is considered one of the most popular and modern forms of Uzbek musical art.

Specifically, the exploration of the history of the art of singing and conducting in-depth research to convey this to our people has become more accessible. Vocal art plays a vital role in preserving, shaping, and developing our musical heritage from ancient times to the present day. The art of singing and instrumental performance stands as a key factor in sustaining the living process of our rich musical heritage. This musical legacy reflects the centuries-old history, values, traditions, spirituality, and emotional depth of our people. Therefore, over time, singers and instrumentalists have developed unique national performance traditions and styles, deeply connected to the lives of our people.

The significance of studying Uzbek musical heritage today lies in the fact that the art passed down from our great ancestors is not only the spiritual treasure of our nation but also vividly demonstrates the cultural identity of the Uzbek people through its melodies. It is well known that our musical heritage, especially classical melodies, holds great educational power, playing an essential role in the moral, spiritual, and ethical development of individuals while embodying Eastern philosophy. Any artist who creates works based on national traditions ensures that these works are passed down through generations, becoming an unforgettable legacy.²

Looking into the history of Uzbek musical art, we can see the great artists who emerged from among the people, winning their hearts through their performance skills and mentorship. One such figure is the renowned musician Roʻzimatxon Isaboyev, who earned the honorable title of "usta" (master) among the musical circles of Namangan and Andijan. As the saying goes, "A

¹ The National Database of Legislative Documents (www.lex.uz). This decision was published in the August 10, 2017 issue of the "Xalq Soʻzi" newspaper.

² Muminova, G. (2024). YANGI OʻZBEKISTONNING SOGʻLOM AVLODI – SOGʻLOM OILADA SHAKLLANADI. Talqin va Tadqiqotlar. <https://talqinvatadqiqotlar.uz/index.php/tvt/article/view/2643>

good name lasts forever.” Some contribute to the prosperity of society by designing gardens, others leave their mark through craftsmanship, and some inspire future generations with their art. They call for beauty, awakening feelings of humanity and generosity in people’s hearts.

The prominent musician and honored artist of Uzbekistan, master Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev, successfully established a unique school within uzbek musical performance.

METHODOLOGY

It is well known that uzbek classical music has a long history. Due to the lack of musical notation in the past, music has been preserved through oral traditions and the master-apprentice system, passing down to us through generations.

Master Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev is remembered in history as both a skilled musician and a craftsman who created uzbek musical instruments, as well as a kind and generous mentor.

Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev was born in 1885 in the Dergezlik³ district of Namangan city, into a family of hired laborers. His father, Isaboy Rahmatullayev, worked as a damgar (metalworker) under Abdujalil the blacksmith, earning a daily wage of 15 tiyin/3 mira (national currency). His mother, Robabi, spun yarn to support the family. Despite having many children, Ro‘zimatxon stood out for his diligence and hard work. Ro‘zimatxon began his studies at a traditional school of that time, but he was expelled because his family could not afford to pay the tuition fees. Upon hearing this, his uncle Yo‘ldosh, a teahouse owner, took him in. At just six years old, Ro‘zimatxon started working as an apprentice tea server at his uncle's teahouse.

In the Fergana Valley, it was rare to find a household without musical instruments such as the dutar or tanbur. These instruments were often kept in teahouses, where customers would play them for entertainment. Ro‘zimatxon noticed a dutar hanging in his uncle's teahouse. Although his uncle did not enjoy playing the instrument himself, he kept it for the enjoyment of the customers. Interestingly, while his uncle appreciated listening to musicians practice, he showed little personal interest in becoming a musician.

When musicians such as Sovur Oxun and Ramazon Oxun practiced on the dutar, Ro‘zimatxon was captivated by the magical melodies produced by the pair of simple strings. Immersed in dreams, he envisioned a future filled with music. Despite being exhausted from carrying tea all day, Ro‘zimatxon practiced the dutar late at night. Unable to reach the instrument’s frets due to its size, he would place its bowl under his arm and prop it against the edge of the platform to continue practicing.

Noticing Ro‘zimatxon’s growing interest in the dutar, his uncle hung the instrument higher on the wall, out of the boy’s reach. However, Ro‘zimatxon remained undeterred and continued his nightly practice in secret.

One day, Ro‘zimatxon’s uncle came to their house, still mounted on his horse, and called for Ro‘zimatxon’s mother. He said, “This must be God’s will. We have no children, so I will take Ro‘zimatxon to live with me as both an apprentice and a son.” Given the family’s poverty, his

³ It means placing a “dergiz-cho‘yan”. It was the name of the neighborhood.

mother agreed. Ro‘zimatxon’s father, who worked as a hired hand for a blacksmith, earned so little that it could not even cover basic expenses.

Despite the hardships, Ro‘zimatxon’s love and passion for music remained undiminished. On a freezing evening in 1896, Ro‘zimatxon fled his uncle’s home and returned to his father’s blacksmith shop in tears. His father’s master, Abdujalil, was a music lover and always kept a dutar hanging in the shop. Musicians often gathered at the shop, playing melodies on the instrument.

Reflecting on those times, Ro‘zimatxon later said, “Because of my family’s poverty, my uncle took me to the teahouse where he worked. I served tea there and listened to Ramazon Oxun and Sovur Oxun practicing their music. Ramazon Oxun was an excellent musician who played both the gijjak and the chang and even made his own instruments. The two years I spent at the teahouse were an incredible learning experience. During that time, I practiced what I heard from those two musicians.”⁴

Clearly, Ro‘zimatxon took the initiative to pursue his passion for music. Alongside learning blacksmithing skills such as shoeing horses, crafting hoes, and making nails, he continued practicing the dutar.

Ro‘zimatxon’s father’s master, Abdujalil, introduced him to Jalolxon, a renowned musician, singer, and maqom performer of the time. Abdujalil frequently took Ro‘zimatxon to Jalolxon’s home, where he learned to play the tanbur, dutar, and gijjak. Occasionally, during his free time, Ro‘zimatxon would also practice the gijjak and dutar melodies he had learned. He also learned some of the maqom pathways. Therefore, Ro‘zimatxon’s first teacher was the skilled tambur player Jalolxon Mirzarahimov (1869-1911).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Between 1902 and 1903, a man named Ramazon Oxun came to Namangan and stayed as a guest for two or three months. Ro‘zimatxon, taking advantage of Ramazon Oxun’s presence in Namangan, learned several melodies such as “Ajam taronalari” and “Mustahzod.” From these, Ro‘zimatxon learned the art of playing the tambur with these two specific melodies, and when he played the tambur, these two arts merged in such a way that it captivated the listeners and earned him admiration for his mastery.

Master Ro‘zimatxon learned the secrets of music from the great artists and eventually became part of the circle of these musicians. His teacher, Jalolxon, advised him that to truly master the art, he must read more and seek deeper understanding. After the death of his teacher Jalolxon in 1911, Ro‘zimatxon, following his mentor’s advice, set off for Bukhara, carrying a small tambur that he had made himself. On the way, he stopped in various cities, meeting musicians and listeners, and learned various melodies and songs from them.

Upon arriving in Bukhara, he met artists such as his father Jalol Nosirov (1845-1928), Levi Boboxonov (1873-1926), and his father G‘iyos G‘aniyev (who died in 1928), and he followed their guidance. In Bukhara, Ro‘zimatxon learned the “Dugoh” and “Segoh” maqoms from his teacher

⁴ From the biography of Master Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev. September 6, 1963.

Jalol Nosirov and benefited greatly from the knowledge of many artists over the course of two years. During that time, many famous maqom performers from Turkestan gathered in Bukhara to deepen their understanding of the maqom tradition. For instance, Xoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov learned complex pathways of Shashmaqom from Jalol Nosirov, and Toshkent's Mulla To'ychi Hofiz and Shorahim Shoumarov taught him the song "Girya." Along with these seasoned musicians, Ro'zimatxon succeeded in learning and mastering maqom pathways that were previously unknown to the singers and musicians of Namangan.

Ro'zimatxon, enriched with historical, spiritual, ideological, and artistic impressions, came to the presence of the famous singer, composer, and tambur player from Samarkand, Xoji Abdulaziz. Ro'zimatxon had seen this artist when he came to Namangan. Ro'zimatxon describes his arrival in Samarkand as follows:⁵ "When I arrived in Samarkand, I stayed at a teahouse next to the Bibikhonim Madrasa. At that time, the chang was not widely spread, and when I played it, people would gather around. Hearing this, Xoji Abdulaziz became my host. In Samarkand, both Khofiz Mug'anniy and Xoji Abdulaziz pointed out that the songs "Samarqand ushshog'I", "Karimqulbegi", and "Gulizorim", which they had composed, were in harmony with the 'Yalang davron' style."

Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev organized maqom nights in teahouses with the participation of singers and musicians, creating wonderful musical impressions and a rich repertoire along with diverse performance techniques. He emphasized that "the musical works learned from famous masters should not be kept as private property but should be taught to others." Following his words strictly, in 1912-1913, he gathered music enthusiasts such as Dadaxon, Po'latjon, Jo'rayov, and Sharifjon around him and began teaching them the secrets of playing instruments like the dutar, tambur, gijjak, and chang.

By studying each performance style and developing national music art, master Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev was able to create his own distinctive school of music. His career as a musician continued to be productive for many years. Particularly, more than 30 of his students grew to become accomplished musicians and singers in the world of art.

The maqoms and national music art, which are the spiritual wealth of our people, are the creative works of our ancestors. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation through the mentor-apprentice system and has been polished and continued over the centuries. In 1917, great opportunities were created for the art community. The time came for music to truly serve the people.

In the 1920s, Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev also led ensembles composed of amateurs and stopped working in blacksmithing. The government gave the task of contributing to the arts and preparing students. Led by Po'zimatxon, artists began to hold concert tours in various cities of our republic, and the funds gathered from these cultural events were used for the development of education. As a result, middle schools numbered 2, 4, 15, and 16 were built in Namangan.

⁵ From the biography of Master Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev. September 6, 1963.

Master Ro‘zimatxon was also actively involved in the theater scene. In 1923, the play “Halima” by G‘ulom Zafariy was staged on the Namangan stage. Ro‘zimatxon selected Uzbek folk music for the performance, and before the curtain opened, he would play the chang and then the gijjak.

While working in Andijan, Master Ro‘zimatxon frequently met with Hamza Hakimzoda. Every time Hamza came to Andijan, Master Ro‘zimatxon would happily say, “It would be great, let's practice the tambur,” to which the poet would reply, “Would I play when you are here? You will hear it from yourself.” And so, they would sit together until late at night, playing music. Hamza would listen to pieces like “Qo‘qon ushshog‘i,” “Kurash,” “Shahnozi gulyor,” and “Cho‘li Iroq” in his presence.

During his time in Andijan, Ro‘zimatxon went to Kokand with Hamza, where he met renowned musicians like Yusufjon changchi (1870-1935) and Shodmon Xoji (1872-1937). He learned Yusufjon’s multi-part “Nasrullo.” Upon returning from Andijan, some of the children from the orphanage followed their master and received education at his home in Namangan. Among them were the beloved composer and musician, “People's Artist of Uzbekistan” Komiljon Jabborov, who became famous for his compositions like “Dilbar,” and Burxonjon Yusupov, who worked alongside the master at the Namangan art school and earned the title “Honored Teacher of Uzbekistan”.

Moreover, master Ro‘zimatxon was so skilled not only proficient in playing musical instruments but also in creating them. He adhered to the words of his teacher Jalolxon Mirzarahimov, who said, “A musician who does not know how to make instruments is not a true musician”. At that time, there were no workshops or factories for making musical instruments, and musicians needed to be provided with instruments. Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev made all kinds of Uzbek musical instruments.

In 1912, he learned to make hammered dulcimer (chang) after Ramadan. Back then, the size and shape of the instrument were different, but he improved it and, for the first time in Namangan, introduced it to a musical ensemble. Previously, hammered dulcimers were tuned to a diatonic scale based on the notes played, but today, a chromatically tuned hammered dulcimer is used.

The work of improving the hammered dulcimer began earlier, with contributions from master musicians like Master Olim Komilov, Master Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev, and Matyusuf Kharratov. Ro‘zimatxon's reputation for making musical instruments spread even beyond our republic, with orders coming from places like Lelinobod, Osh, and Olam-Ota. A fan from Sherabad even sent him a letter, thinking that Ro‘zimatxon was the director of a music store, asking him to send musical instruments. Later, Ro‘zimatxon also led a music instrument workshop set up by the Namangan Trade Union. The instruments produced there became famous not only in Central Asia but also in other republics.

Master Ro‘zimatxon's talent as an artist, educator, and organizer truly shone after 1917 when the new society created great opportunities for the development of folk art. During those years,

Usta Ro‘zimatxon led an amateur concert ensemble. After a two-year report concert on September 25, 1972, in the Andijan theater, he returned to his hometown, Namangan, at the invitation of local leaders. The master, who dedicated his entire life to educating young musicians, especially children, could not live a day without working. In March 1828, he established a new music club at the 1st orphanage in Namangan, where he taught 26 children the secrets of playing musical instruments.

Master Ro‘zimatxon gained fame as a music master, skilled folk musician, and organizer. He taught his students the works created by elderly folk composers, recording several pieces, such as “Daromadi Ushshoq” and “Shahnozi Gulyor,” for the radio archives. Every region has artists who spread its fame. In Khorezm, there was Madrahim Yoqubov, in Bukhara, Domla Xalim Ibodov, in Samarkand, Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov, in Margilan, Yusuf Qiziq Shakarjonov, and in Andijan, To‘xtasin Jalilov. In Namangan, he formed an ensemble of musicians, including Inomjon, Baxriddin, Sharifjon (ghijak players), Mallaboy (hammered dulcimer player), Ergashboy (hammered dulcimer player and tanbur player), and Tojimirza (sorna player).

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In the early 1930s, a significant event took place in Namangan’s cultural life, namely, the establishment of a musical drama theater in 1931. To work at the new theater, musicians who had been trained by master Ro‘zimatxon, such as Burxonjon Yusupov, Nabijon Muhammadiyev, Ergash Ro‘ziyev, Boydada Olimov, Ikromjon Tojiboyev, Karimjon Mansurov, and Mahmudjon Muhammedov, were invited.

The current A. Navoi Theater stage opened with the play “Intilish” by playwright Rozisov. In 1932, Vahobjon Azimov's work “Xujumxon” was staged. Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev composed the music for these works. In 1935, a children’s theater was established in Namangan. Master Ro‘zimatxon led this theater. The theater’s concert group received applause not only in Namangan but also in other regions for their performances.

In 1936, this group traveled to Osh and held a concert. The pieces played and sung were warmly received by the audience. Prominent artists from the Uzbek Musical Drama Theater took the stage and sincerely congratulated the children.

The Alisher Navoi Regional Theater and the Namangan Music School are closely linked to the name of Usta Ro‘zimatxon. Usta gathered his students in the “Sharq” garden in Namangan, conducting regular rehearsals and giving concerts. In 1947, the children's home was transformed into a music school. Later, this school was merged with the music educational institution.

The remarkable musician Ro‘zimatxon Isaboyev’s musical career was not limited to the city or the provinces where he lived. Between 1939 and 1940, he actively participated in the construction of the Lakon, Katta Farg‘ona, and Northern Farg‘ona canals alongside his students, serving the people. During the day, they worked on digging the canals, and in the evening, they would light torches in the open fields and perform concerts for the workers.

Being a teacher, no matter the field, is considered one of the most honorable professions.

Therefore, those who hold this profession have always been respected. This is because people's knowledge, worldview, historical understanding, and their relationship to the era they live in are shaped based on the teachings of their teachers.

The knowledge received from teachers plays an essential role in determining the future status and place of everyone in life. Although each person is endowed with talent by Allah, which manifests in their activities in one field or another, every part of a profession contributes to the development and prosperity of society. The teacher is the one who shapes these professions. There is a saying in our culture, "A teacher is as great as a father." Undoubtedly, honoring and appreciating teachers is based on this understanding.

Master Roʻzimatxon Isaboyev began his teaching career in 1912-1913, passing on the knowledge he had gained from great mentors to young art enthusiasts. Throughout his meaningful life, master Roʻzimatxon has been active in hundreds of cities and regions. Many of his students continue his work at art institutions in Andijan and Namangan. Among them are educators and talented musicians, such as Akhmudjon Doʻstmuhammedov, a teacher who served Uzbekistan and worked at the Namangan State Music School, and skilled musicians like Ikromjon Tojiboyev. Moreover, prominent artists who gained fame at the Muqumiy Republic Musical Drama and Comedy Theater, such as Uzbekistan's People's Artist Komiljon Jabborov, Mahmudjon Muhammedov, and singer Khadya Yusupova, were also trained by master Roʻzimatxon.

His entire life remains a beautiful and praiseworthy example of selfless service to his country and art. Every moment of his career was devoted to nurturing the growth of national art, with every ounce of his immense talent and energy dedicated to its flourishing. Today, many musicians, not just in the region but also in other parts of the valley and beyond, have been nurtured by the hands of this esteemed master.

Additionally, Roʻzimatxon Isaboyev, with his unique talent and refined craftsmanship, could have belonged to the elite, with great wealth. However, throughout his life, he chose to remain with the working class, believing that the most precious reward was the respect and admiration of the people. He considered the greatest success to be the first achievements of his students, and the deepest gratitude to be the ability to bring light to those whose hearts were lost in darkness. This blessed soul lived humbly and simply, without any extravagance, and often in poverty. Whether his earnings were large or small, he always wished them to be shared with his people and students.

One of Master Roʻzimatxon's devoted students, the skilled hammered dulcimer player and respected teacher at the Art School, Jamol Xasanov, recalls:⁶

"The Master's memory was exceptional. One day, while Burkhonjon and I were practicing "Nasrulloi", we forgot a part and could not get it right. We knew we had to tell the master. When we approached him, he immediately sang the exact part we had forgotten, and we were amazed.

⁶ "Soviet Uzbekistan" Art Magazine, 1978, 10, page 13.

Whatever part of the Shashmaqom you asked, the master would instantly provide the answer. He was like a living musical score...

Another quality of the master was his deep kindness toward his students. He personally guided me, along with many others like me, from the school's music club to the music academy, which was directly organized under his leadership.”

In the 1940s⁷, the Master was a leader for the famous musicians invited to the new theater. Like everyone else, the war also affected the creative individuals, and Usmon Yusupov, as the protector of the group, would frequently check on their well-being. Upon inspecting the master's condition, it was clear that he had become weak, his practices had slowed down, and brother Usmon insisted on taking him along, giving him money for clothes and food, saying, “From now on, you will always eat with me.” The Master refused. He said, “Whatever happens to the others, it happens to us as well”. In fact, he even asked if it was possible to take all the food that had been placed on the table that day to his colleagues.

Existing historical sources, the memories written by the students and colleagues who received lessons from the Master, as well as the autobiography he himself wrote, which is currently preserved in the Namangan Regional State Archive, clearly show that the path of art is a difficult, challenging, and, at the same time, an honorable one. Especially, national classical folk art requires patience, determination, and continuous effort in pursuit of one's goals. The example of the Master's creative journey demonstrates that a person should not only focus on a single profession but also understand and master related professions that align with their craft.

Even during times when national music art was met with different attitudes, he continued his work in pursuit of his goals. This is crucial in nurturing the spirit of dedication to one's craft in young people who have entered the field of art.

In the G'ishkoprik neighborhood of Namangan city, there is a street named after Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev. This is the street where Ro'zimatxon was born and developed a love for art. Today, a new generation lives on this street. Perhaps among the young people passing through this street, there are some who have held a musical instrument in their hands and felt the desire to become a musician. If so, they are sure to find another street where master Ro'zimatxon's artistic world lives on, a place where the flowers of goodness and loyalty bloom.

The Master not only left behind worthy disciples but also children who would continue his profession. With the intention that his children would follow in his footsteps and dedicate their lives to art, he named his eldest son San'at, and his youngest son Odil, hoping that they would find happiness in a just time. The children followed their father's path, becoming not only talented musicians but also organizers and educators.

His eldest son, San'at Ro'zimatov (1973-1996), received his first music lessons from his father. He graduated from Namangan Music School and continued his education at the Tashkent State Conservatory. His exceptional skill in playing the chang earned him recognition not only in

⁷ “Namangan Sadosi” Newspaper, December 28, 1995.

Uzbekistan but also abroad. He served in a leading position in the musical broadcasts of the State Committee for Radio and Television, where he contributed to the fine nuances of our national music.

The younger son followed in his father's footsteps and currently teaches the Qashqar rubab at the 2nd Children's Music School in Namangan. The Master's granddaughter, Madina Ro'zimatova, works as a teacher at the Moscow Conservatory.

CONCLUSION

The melodies played by Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev on the tanbur are the essence of beauty. In these melodies, truth embodies the mysteries of the world, human virtues, the grace of life, and emotions that awaken a longing for beauty in hearts.

The Master's art, in its beautiful cadences, continually inspired people, sharing with them spiritual delights, an art that resonates eternally. He dedicated his entire life to nurturing tanbur players, advancing Uzbek music culture, and enriching the people with the treasures of our musical heritage.

From 1947 until the end of his life, Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev worked at the Music School. He always said, "The essence of this world is the melody; the tune." Master Ro'zimatxon Isaboyev, from these melodies, chose the closest to the people's hearts and transformed it into a beautiful piece of music. The achievements he made in the development of our musical culture, especially his efforts in the style of tanbur playing and popularizing the chang, hold significant importance. As young people, we must always study the legacy of our masters, draw inspiration from it, and widely apply it in our musical practice.

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