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METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING THE SUBJECT "HISTORY OF UZBEK MUSIC" IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

Teaching the History of Uzbek Music is most effective when historical knowledge is built through lived musical experience rather than memorization of dates, names, and styles. This paper proposes an integrated methodology that combines cultural-historical inquiry with praxial learning: attentive listening, guided analysis, performance-based exploration, and community-oriented fieldwork. Uzbek musical heritage is approached as a dynamic system shaped by regional identities, court and urban traditions, ritual and devotional practices, Soviet cultural policies, and contemporary media. Special attention is given to maqom traditions—particularly Shashmaqom—as a core reference point for connecting musical structure, aesthetics, ethics, and social function. The method aligns content sequencing with developmental pedagogy, supports inclusive classroom practice, and uses assessment tools that measure historical understanding through interpretation and musicianship. The proposed approach is suitable for secondary and tertiary music programs and can be adapted to teacher training contexts.

Keywords

Uzbek music history; music pedagogy; maqom; Shashmaqom; ethnomusicology; praxial music education; curriculum design

In many music education programs, "history" can easily become a subject of passive reception: students are expected to remember periods, representative composers, institutional milestones, and stylistic labels. Yet the history of Uzbek music, like the history of any living musical culture, is not merely a chronology. It is a record of sound ideals, performance ethics, aesthetic debates, patronage systems, and social roles that have shifted across centuries and regimes. When students are taught Uzbek music history as a list of facts detached from practice, they may reproduce information without developing the deeper competence needed to hear historical change, explain musical meaning in context, or connect heritage to contemporary artistic identity. For this reason, methodology must treat history as something students can experience, interpret, and argue about—using music itself as evidence.

Uzbek musical heritage is also pedagogically distinctive because it contains multiple interacting layers: regional folk repertories, urban professional traditions, court and salon aesthetics, ritual and devotional performance, and modern genres shaped by broadcasting, conservatory training, and global popular culture. Any meaningful methodology must therefore help students navigate diversity without fragmenting the subject into isolated units. Moreover, the topic is inseparable from questions of cultural memory and cultural policy. The twentieth century, in particular, involved major transformations in performance institutions, repertory standardization, and public representation of "national" culture. A historically responsible classroom must acknowledge these shifts and train students to read sources critically, especially when textbooks, recordings, and staged "heritage" performances are shaped by institutional agendas.

A central methodological principle in this paper is that students learn music history most effectively through praxial engagement—through listening, making, and reflecting on music as a human action. This aligns with praxial philosophy in music education, which emphasizes

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music as a practice embedded in social contexts rather than as an abstract object to be described from a distance (Elliott, 1995). It also aligns with global and multicultural music education research showing that cultural understanding grows when students participate in musical processes, attend to performance norms, and study how music expresses and organizes communal life (Campbell, 2004). For Uzbek music history, praxial work is not an "extra activity"; it is a methodological necessity because many traditions are transmitted through embodied knowledge—ornamentation, timbre, tuning sensibilities, and etiquette—where musical meaning lives in the act of performance as much as in verbal explanation.

Each unit should begin with contextual framing that is concise and source-aware. Instead of long lectures, teachers can present a focused narrative problem: for instance, how repertories become "classical," how performance norms are preserved or re-shaped, or how a tradition moves from intimate settings to the stage and studio. The framing must also model historical thinking by distinguishing between primary and secondary sources. Recordings, interviews, concert programs, and state ensemble documentation can be treated as primary evidence for modern periods, while travelers' accounts, manuscript traditions, and poetic sources may inform earlier contexts, always with careful discussion of what each source can and cannot prove. Because many students will encounter simplified heritage narratives, explicit source criticism is essential: students should be trained to ask who produced the source, for what audience, and with what cultural or political purpose.

Guided listening is the methodological center of the course. Listening must be scaffolded so that students learn to hear historically meaningful features rather than only reacting emotionally. A practical sequence is to begin with attention to timbre and instrumentation, then move to texture and form, and only later to modal-melodic analysis, because students usually grasp sonic identity before theoretical structure. In maqom-centered units, guided listening can introduce the idea that suites involve ordered sections, stylistic conventions, and relationships between poetry and melodic contour. UNESCO's framing of Shashmaqom as a suite tradition supports the use of excerpt-based analysis that still points to larger form and performance context. The teacher can then model a "listening argument," demonstrating how one can claim that two recordings represent different historical aesthetics by citing evidence such as vocal placement, ornament density, tempo flexibility, ensemble size, recording technology, and performance setting.

Analytical modeling should be aligned with students' level and program goals. In performance-focused institutions, analysis should support musicianship: contour mapping, phrase segmentation, cadence recognition, and timbral comparison can be more educationally useful than advanced theoretical labeling. In teacher-training contexts, analysis should also include pedagogical translation: students practice explaining a musical feature in age-appropriate language and designing a short lesson that links sound to context. Here, scholarship on teaching music "globally" is useful because it emphasizes building understanding through participation, attentive listening, and cultural framing rather than treating non-Western traditions as exotic material (Campbell, 2004).

Practice-based exploration is the bridge that turns history into competence. Even when the course is not an applied performance class, short guided performance tasks deepen historical insight. Students might sing a simple refrain or rhythmic pattern associated with a regional genre, attempt basic ornamentation patterns on their instrument, or reconstruct a short section in different stylistic manners to feel how aesthetics vary. Praxial philosophy argues that musical understanding is inseparable from doing and making musical decisions in context (Elliott, 1995). This is especially relevant when teaching traditions where nuance—microtiming,

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ornament, articulation—carries cultural meaning. Importantly, the teacher should present such tasks as exploratory rather than as "authentic mastery," emphasizing respect, humility, and the limits of classroom reproduction.

Community-oriented fieldwork can be adapted even for schools with limited resources. A minimal fieldwork model involves structured interviewing of local musicians, teachers, or family members about musical memories and practices, followed by reflective writing that connects the interview to course concepts. In urban areas, students may attend performances, rehearsals, or museum exhibits; in rural areas, they may document local ceremonial or festive music with ethical permissions. The point is not to turn students into professional ethnographers but to help them experience history as lived culture. Levin's ethnographic perspective is valuable here because it highlights the interplay between tradition and modern change, offering a scholarly lens for interpreting what students observe rather than assuming that "real tradition" exists only in the past (Levin, 1996).

A key methodological issue is how to address the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Students must understand that musical institutions, repertoires, and public representations were reshaped through professionalization, standardized ensembles, education systems, and ideological expectations. Methodologically, this can be taught through comparative source sets: one set might include early recordings and memoir-like accounts, another set state ensemble performances and textbooks, and a third set contemporary independent performances and online dissemination. Students can then write interpretive comparisons: how has staging affected instrumentation and tempo? What happens to improvisational space when performance is timed for broadcast? What new possibilities appear through conservatory training or digital platforms? These questions train students to see history as transformation of practice rather than as replacement of one "style" by another.

Gender, religion, and private musical spaces also deserve a methodological approach that avoids stereotypes and romanticization. Sultanova's work emphasizes how women's cultural roles and religious contexts intersect with performance and ritual life in Central Asia, giving educators a scholarly basis for discussing topics that may otherwise remain invisible in formal curricula (Sultanova, 2011). In the classroom, this can translate into careful discussion of who is allowed to perform in which contexts, how repertories travel between private and public settings, and how social change affects musical participation. The methodological principle is to treat these topics as historically situated realities, using respectful language and avoiding sensationalism.

Finally, the methodology should prepare future music teachers to teach Uzbek music history in age-appropriate ways. For younger learners, the historical narrative is best built through story, instrument exploration, and simple participatory singing and movement, while older learners can handle comparative listening, basic analysis, and mini-research projects. Informal learning theory also suggests that students' engagement increases when classroom tasks connect to the ways musicians learn outside school—through listening, imitation, peer exchange, and repeated practice—rather than only through teacher-centered explanation (Green, 2002). In Uzbek contexts where many musical skills are learned through mentorship and community practice, this insight is particularly relevant. By aligning historical learning with authentic learning processes, the course supports both cultural continuity and critical modern understanding.

In sum, teaching the History of Uzbek Music is most successful when it helps students become capable interpreters and responsible cultural participants. A methodology that integrates guided listening, contextual framing, practice-based exploration, and evidence-

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centered assessment can cultivate graduates who not only know Uzbek music history but can teach it, perform it thoughtfully, and contribute to its ongoing development in contemporary society.

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