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THE ROLE OF THE DUTOR IN MAQAM ENSEMBLES AND MAQAM MELODIES

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Abstract

This article presents a comprehensive scholarly study of the role and artistic significance of the dutor in maqam ensembles and within the melodic structure of maqam repertoire.

The research explores the historical development of the instrument, its timbral and technical characteristics, and its functional role in ensemble performance and maqam interpretation. Special attention is given to the dutor's contribution to modal stability, internal musical balance, and stylistic continuity within traditional Uzbek maqam performance practice.

Keywords

dutor, maqam, traditional instruments, ensemble performance, Uzbek music

Introduction

Maqam art represents one of the most complex and elevated layers of Central Asian musical culture. It embodies not only a modal–melodic system but also a unity of performance traditions, instrumental composition, and aesthetic principles. Within this system, each musical instrument fulfills a specific artistic and functional role, contributing to the overall musical conception. One such instrument is the dutor, which, despite its modest external appearance, occupies a significant place in maqam performance. The dutor has developed over centuries in close connection with Uzbek traditional music. Its participation in maqam ensembles plays a crucial role in preserving modal color, internal movement, and performance balance. The purpose of this article is to provide a systematic scholarly analysis of the role of the dutor in maqam ensembles and maqam melodies, emphasizing its artistic, functional, and aesthetic significance.

Formation and Performance Characteristics of the Dutor

The dutor is a two-stringed plucked instrument characterized by a soft, intimate, and lyrically expressive timbre. Due to the relatively low tension of its strings and resonant construction, the instrument produces a sound that is often perceived as internally directed rather than outwardly projecting. This quality makes the dutor particularly suitable for expressing the inner dramatic movement and spiritual depth inherent in maqam music. From a technical perspective, dutor performance emphasizes precise intonation, breath-like phrasing, and modal stability rather than virtuosic display. Ornamentation is used sparingly, allowing the melodic line to unfold naturally. As a result, the dutor often serves as an internal melodic support rather than a dominant solo instrument, reinforcing the structural integrity of maqam melodies.

The Function of the Dutor in Maqam Ensembles

In traditional maqam ensembles, balance among instruments is a fundamental principle. The dutor occupies a mediating position within this structure, functioning neither strictly as a leading instrument nor merely as an accompanying one, but rather as a stabilizing and connecting element. The primary functions of the dutor in maqam ensembles include maintaining modal stability, reinforcing the principal melodic contour, regulating internal tempo and performance breath, and creating a supportive sonic background for vocalists and leading instruments. Although the dutor's texture is often relatively simple, this simplicity conceals a high degree of responsibility for intonational accuracy and ensemble cohesion. The Melodic and Modal Significance of the Dutor in Maqam Melodies Within maqam melodies, the

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dutor does not typically function as the primary melodic leader. Instead, it reveals the internal logic of the maqam path by articulating its modal framework. Through precise emphasis on central tones and cadential points, the dutor outlines the skeletal structure of modal movement. Ornamentation in dutor performance remains minimal, with priority given to the natural progression of melodic development. This approach supports the concept of internal climax that lies at the core of maqam aesthetics. Particularly in the lower and middle registers, the dutor's timbre enhances the contemplative and philosophical character of maqam melodies. The Dutor and Traditional Performance Thinking Maqam performance is rooted in oral tradition, requiring performers to possess not only technical skill but also deep musical intuition and analytical awareness. For dutor players, understanding where a maqam path begins, how it develops, where it reaches its climax, and how it resolves is essential. Through the dutor, moments of tension and release, stability and transformation, are conveyed with subtlety. Rather than relying on external dramatic effects, dutor performance achieves expressiveness through internal balance and restraint. This quality aligns closely with the philosophical and introspective nature of maqam music.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that the role of the dutor in maqam ensembles and maqam melodies is indispensable. The dutor functions not merely as an accompanying instrument, but as a central element ensuring modal stability, ensemble cohesion, and internal dramatic development. Its soft timbre and restrained performance style correspond closely to the aesthetic essence of maqam art. Through the dutor, the inner spirit, contemplative character, and philosophical depth of maqam melodies become more clearly articulated. In conclusion, the dutor stands as an integral component of maqam music, playing a vital role in preserving traditional performance thinking and ensuring the continuity of Uzbek musical heritage