UZBEKISTAN

Echoes of Vanished Courts

The robust music scene in Uzbekistan today can trace its roots back to the medieval court culture that flourished during the 14th century. Uzbek court music like *maqam* played a central role at the magnificent *majlis* festivities regularly hosted by Emirs and Khans. Over time, while the courts broke apart and the ancient cities witnessed political turmoil, the music endured. Today classical and amateur Uzbek music permeates daily life through radio and TV programs, concert performances, wedding celebrations (*tois*), and various social events. These 1997/8 recordings of sung poetry (*ghazal*) and virtuosic instrumental ensembles recapture the splendor of ancient shah (royal) music. 53 minutes, 21-page notes.

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Munojat Yulchieva (vocal) and ensemble. London, 1997.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

COVER PHOTO
Munojat Yulchieva and Shavkat Mirzaev (*rubob*), Tashkent, 1998.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

Track List

1. **Nihon Ettim (I Concealed Myself)** 6:48
   Munojat Yulchieva (vocal) and ensemble

2. **Holimni So'ramaysan (You Don't Ask How I Am)** 3:22
   Turghun Alimatov (*tanbur*), Alisher Alimatov (*dutar*)

3. **Favvora (Fountain)** 2:28
   Malika Ziyoeva, Dilorom Turghunova, Dilfusa Yulchieva, Malika Zufarova (four *dutar*s)

4. **Ajam Taronalari (Tune in the Ajam Mode)** 4:54
   Ikram Mattanov (*qoshnay*), Malika Ziyoeva (*dutar*)

5. **Kurd** 2:26
   Abduhashim Ismailov Ensemble: Abduhashim Ismailov (*ghijak*), Abdurahman Holtojiev (*qonun*), Quchqor Saidov (*doira*)

6. **Hanuz (As Yet)** 4:11
   Abduhashim Ismailov (*ghijak*), Abdulahat Abdurashidov (*nay*), Abdurahman Holtojiev (*qonun*), Quchqor Saidov (*doira*)

7. **Eshvoi** 3:30
   Abdurahim Hamidov (*dutar*), Shuhrat Razzakov (*tanbur*)

8. Zor Bo'libdi (He Suffered) 4:37
Dadahon Hasanov (vocal, *tar*) and ensemble (*ghijak, chang, doira*, accordion, *tar*)

9. Chapandozi Qalandar (Vagabond Tunes) 3:59
Timur Mahmudov (*chang*), Malika Ziyoeva (*dutar*), Hodjimurad Safarov (*doira*)

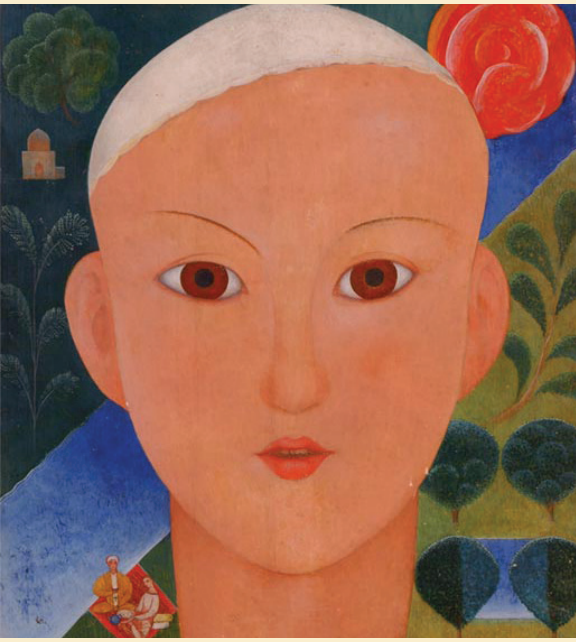
10. Uyghur Fantasy 5:17
Abduhashim Ismailov Ensemble

11. Tushimda Kursam Edi (If I Could Dream) 7:59
Sheraly Juraev (vocal, *tar*) and ensemble (*qonun, doira, ghijak, nay*)

12. Andijon Samo'si (Andijoni Listening to God) 3:58
Shavkat Mirzaev Ensemble: Shavkat Mirzaev (*rubob*), Ahmadjan Dadaev (*ghijak*), Shuhrat Razzaqov (*dutar*, *tanbur*), Malika Ziyoeva (*dutar*), Ikram Matanov (*qoshnay*), Timur Mahmudov (*chang*), Asror Aslanov (*tanbur*), Hodjimurad Safarov (*doira*), Erkin Hudjaberdyev (*nay*)

Uzbekistan: Echoes of Vanished Courts
Razia Sultanova

Map of Central Asia



Road of Life and Death by Alexander Nikolayev, 1924. Manifest of beauty and love evidences the enduring, refined court culture.

Courtesy of the State Art Museum of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, named after I.V. Savitsky. Nukus, Uzbekistan.

"Times come and go, but songs remain the same," says an old Uzbek proverb. And looking back at the history of Uzbek traditional music, there certainly seems to be a lot of truth in the saying.

The traditional musical culture of Uzbekistan really should have ceased to exist long ago. The Russification (since 1864) and later Sovietization (1917–1991) of the area involved continuous attempts to reshape Uzbek cultural identity. But despite these influences, Uzbek art is still very traditional, particularly its music. Wherever you go in Uzbekistan, whether in cities or villages, in the markets, the shops, the teahouses, the baths, or the cafes, on tourist buses, trains, planes, or just on the car radio, you hear the music of the Uzbek past as a pervasive presence. This active music scene today can trace its roots back to the robust medieval court culture that developed and thrived during the 14th century in the kingdoms of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm, and Kokand.

The Golden Age of Central Asia began during the time of Amir Temir (1337–1405), also known as Timur or Tamburlaine the Great (following the 16th-century play by English writer Christopher Marlowe). Samarkand became a center of

Map of Uzbekistan

political, scientific, and cultural life, where Tamburlaine gathered architects, craftsmen, builders, musicians, singers, and dancers from all the neighboring countries. Musical life flourished at this crossroad of various cultures and stylistic traditions. Tamburlaine the Great celebrated each of his victories, diplomatic successes, and family events with music, and hundreds of thousands of people participated in the festivals and holidays that took place in Samarkand and Shakhrisabz. Splendidly decorated city arches and pavilions were especially built for the celebrations, some of which continued for as long as three months. Singers, poets, actors, dancers, circus acrobats, fighters, hunters, horsemen, and thousands of musicians (men and women) all took part in these festivities, which provided contacts with various neighboring countries such as India, China, Uyghuristan (today's Xingjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), Turkey, and Iran. No wonder, then, as Ruy González de Clavijo observed, musicians and singers played and sang to "Persian tunes, Arabic melodies, Mongol vocal styles, Turkish arabesques, Chinese singing rules, and Altai meters."

Tea House by Aleksey Isupov, 1914–1921.

Courtesy of the State Art Museum of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, named after I.V. Savitsky. Nukus, Uzbekistan.

These feasts or gatherings, known as *majlis*, even included some members of the shah's family, who played instruments at the assembly. Alisher Navoi (1441–1501) was not only the shah's vizier but also his court poet, as well as a musician and composer who created pieces in the genres of *Naqsh* and *Peshrav*. Benefactors like Alisher Navoi gave birth to generations of artistic dynasties at the courts (Wright 1996).

The principal style of music performed in the courts of the Central Asian Emirs and Khans was *maqam*. The word *maqam* has multiple meanings, the most common of which are "melodic mode" and "a suite of pieces organized according to shared principles of melodic and rhythmic development." *Maqam* evolved historically, in different ways and in various regions, into the forms heard today in Central Asia: *Shashmaqam*, from Bukhara; *olty yarim maqam* (six-and-a-half *maqam*), from Khorezm; and *Chohormaqam* (four *maqam*), from the Ferghana Valley and Tashkent.

As a system of classical music, *maqam* was founded on a specific aesthetic and ethical code. As far back as the 16th century, poetic texts indicated that each *maqam* had to be played in a hall decorated with specific colors, and everyone present had to wear clothes with matching colors. In addition, each *maqam* performance was linked to a specific time of day. For example, *maqam Iraq* should be performed in the early morning during sunrise. The terrace and hall where musicians sat down to play *maqam Iraq* should be white, as should the musicians' gowns. *Maqam Buzruk* was to be accompanied by red colors, *Ushshok* and *Rost* by dark yellow, and *Navo* was to be performed after midnight in dark gray costumes. This custom is clearly depicted in the miniatures of Kamal ad-Din Behzad, founder of the Herat school of miniature painting in the 16th century.

Apart from the famous city of Samarkand, Uzbekistan has three other areas where the courtly *maqam* tradition has flourished since the 16th century. Bukhara, one of the most famous holy

Bukhara: entrance gate of the citadel and market place. April 1891.

Courtesy of la Société de Géographie, France.

Instrument Maker by Alexander Volkov, 1924.

Courtesy of the State Art Museum of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, named after I.V. Savitsky. Nukus, Uzbekistan.

cities of the Great Silk Road, became popular as the birthplace and spiritual center of the Nakshbandi Sufi order. It was the capital and seat of power of the Bukharan Emirate until it was taken over in 1868 by the Russian Army, because it represented a challenge to the power and territorial claims of the Russian czar. Then there was Khorezm, the kingdom that, according to a famous legend, originated in the times of the prophet Zoroaster. Khiva, a city in Khorezm, like other Khanates of Central Asia, was conquered by the Russians in 1873. The third area was the Kokand Khanate, centered around the city of Kokand, in the Ferghana Valley, in the east of present-day Uzbekistan. It had been the powerful state of Hudoyar-Khan and experienced several wars at the end of the 19th century, after the establishment of Russian government there in 1876. Following strong resistance by the inhabitants of Kokand, the city was totally destroyed by the Russian Army. But the music has survived.

One reason for the survival of Uzbek traditional culture amidst the political upheaval in the 20th century is the widespread acceptance throughout Uzbek and Central Asian lands of the medieval aesthetic code known as *Nazira*.

According to this code, the essence of proper art lies in paying tribute to the older generation of masters by creating one's work within the boundaries set by their predecessors. Before self-expression through innovation, an artist first had to follow the rules founded by predecessors in that particular art form. Only then could deviations from the standard form be accepted. This practice preserved a strict framework for the content

Munojat Yulchieva (vocal) continues to perform medieval court music in Uzbekistan and abroad. London, 2013.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

and structural development of the music, as each new composition of a *bastaqor* (traditional composer) must pay tribute to the genre, to the local style, to the best version, and so forth, that had been established by previous masters.

The most important sections of each *maqam* had to be performed by established musicians and singers, while the subsidiary, derivative parts could be played by beginners. Even the instrumental ensembles have prescribed structures. In Bukhara, for example, an instrumental ensemble would comprise two *tanbur*s (plucked lutes), one *sato* (bowed lute) or *ghijak* (bowed lute), one Afghan *rubab* (a bellied plucked lute), and three *doira* (frame-drums), whose players also sang. *Maqam* could be performed in instrumental or vocal versions.

In the 19th-century court of Khiva, musical ensembles usually consisted of seven to eight musicians. Being a court musician of that time meant playing several instruments (*tanbur, ghijak, dutar, doira*), knowing the repertoire of the *olty yarim maqam* (six-and-a-half *maqam*), and being able to sing them as well.

In the 20th century, after the Russian Revolution and the Soviet military occupation of Central Asia, the traditional performance of Uzbek music was banned and the musicians associated with it went underground. When the courts broke up, Uzbek music was diverted to other institutional forms, such as theatrical musical ensembles, to create a standard political image, which reflected the nation's political ideologies. In the Ferghana Valley of southeastern Uzbekistan, the Ethnographic Music Ensemble was founded in 1926 by Qary Yakubov, and the Ahunbabaev Ensemble, named after an Uzbek Communist leader, was founded in 1930 at the Andijan Theater of Musical Drama.

The new cultural policy favored art for the masses on a large scale, in keeping with the Stalinist dictum of "taking art out of its narrow national confines and opening it to boundless internationalism." The Soviet cultural revolution was an attempt to create a new culture based on the complete rejection of the old

one, in Uzbekistan as well as in every other region governed by the Soviet regime. This was achieved through encouraging amateur art. Reports of the time, referring to a millennium-old culture, boasted that "where only yesterday all was obscurity and ignorance, where vicious exploitation and colonial plunder suffocated all talent, today magnificent self-taught musicians of the Great October are flourishing in the land ploughed over by the Great Revolution" (Editorial, *Pravda Vostoka*, July 9, 1933).

Musicians often changed the words of classical songs in order to protect them from being banned by the Communist administration. For example, the tune of the famous classical song "Omonyer" was used for the verses of "Salute the Kremlin." *Ufar* melodies from the *maqam* thought suitable for singing praise to the Communist government gave birth to a new style of popular song. Instrumental music fared better, as its oral teaching tradition helped it to survive despite all the anti-traditional Communist Party resolutions and actions. The injunctions were relaxed in the 1950s, when it became possible to study and perform traditional music and *maqam* again. Since 1978, a number of international symposia have taken place in Uzbekistan, and it became possible to examine what remained of court culture and compare it with similar genres of neighboring countries. On the other hand, the hypocritical nature of Soviet power allowed the court music to survive at "Party courts," as the best performers were invited to perform at special receptions given at the *dacha*s (summer houses) of the Communist Party elite.

As modern-day equivalents of the *majli* gatherings of the past, family celebrations like the *toi* serves to maintain the court culture in daily life on non-official terms. A *toi* is a wedding celebration, and—by extension—refers to any celebration that a family would hold for all the important stages of human life: circumcision, the return from a pilgrimage to Mecca, a happy return from military service, and so forth. These *toi*s recapture the meaning and the splendid magnificence of court performance. The long duration of a *toi* makes this festivity very much like a courtly event, with plenty of food and drink on hand to accompany

Sheraly Juraev. London, 1998.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

the abundance of music and songs. Musical performances play a central role in these celebrations by creating high dramatic tension that culminates in a happy ending, similar to royal festivals of the past. Wedding celebrations require an army of singers and musicians, who have become popular and well known without any high-level musical education. For the great majority of Uzbek people, to be a singer means to be a wedding singer—widely popular, handsomely paid, and highly respected. It's hardly surprising that, after the Revolution, the wedding reception—the only area of life that escaped political control—became the focus of attention for musicians and their audiences. But even these days, you won't find the wedding musicians' names on an advertisement for upcoming concerts of a particular town or area. For instance, Sheraly Juraev was recognized as the most popular person in Uzbekistan according to a statistical poll in Tashkent in 1989. However, neither Sheraly Juraev nor other popular Uzbek wedding musicians at the present time have any commercial recordings on CD.

One could say that the wedding performance was the underground music that prevented court music from falling into oblivion, resisting academic innovations and taking on the role of cultural protector. The beauty and splendor of ancient cities like Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva is not just a historical legend. Their inherited treasure of architecture and art can still be seen today. The musical world of these cities is truly alive and integrated into daily life through radio and TV programs, concerts, various social events, and family celebrations.

I made these recordings in 1997 and 1998 in Tashkent during my several visits to Uzbekistan. All musicians were asked to perform the shah (royal) music of the ancient court culture.

Today, this music is still played by the best Uzbek performers. Pillars of Uzbek academic musical culture like Turghun Alimatov and Abdurahim Hamidov have recently passed away, but Munojat Yulchieva, Shavkat Mirzaev, Abduhashim Ismailov, and Malika Ziyoeva continue to perform classical music in Uzbekistan and abroad. At the same time, others, such as Sheraly Juraev and Dadahon Hasanov, are active in the non-academic music scene, playing and singing at wedding receptions.

Malika Ziyoeva with her students. Tashkent, 2011.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

Munojat Yulchieva. Tashkent, 1998.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

Turghun Alimatov. Tashkent, 1977.

Photo by Dmitriy Mihailov.

Track Notes

1. Nihon Ettim (I Concealed Myself)
Munojat Yulchieva (vocal) and ensemble

This is a classical *ghazal* set to poetry by Uvaisy, a 19th-century woman poet from the royal family of the Kokand Khanate:

Falak subhin shom etdy
Hurshidin nihon etdi
Shafaq youngligh nihon kim
Bu hazian ku'nglumni gon etdi

The sun turned its dawn into the sunset
And hid its glow
Like the hidden sunset
It turned my sad heart to blood

Munojat Yulchieva (b. 1960) is the brightest star of Uzbek classical music at the end of the 20th century. She studied music at Tashkent State Conservatory under the guidance of Shavkat Mirzaev, who has been her mentor since 1978. For the past ten years she has toured Europe, Asia, the USA, and Latin America. Her repertoire consists of the best examples of Uzbek classical music as well as music by contemporary *bastaqor*s, composers in the traditional Uzbek style. Her unique voice—a low alto encompassing two and a half octaves—allows her to perform songs from both female and male repertoires.

2. Holimni So'ramaysan (You Don't Ask How I Am)
Turghun Alimatov (tanbur)*, Alisher Alimatov* (dutar)

Turghun Alimatov (1922–2008) performed this well-known classical song from the Ferghana area. He was a great Uzbek performer of the older generation. Born in Tashkent, he played three different Uzbek traditional string instruments. In the 1950s, he revived the *sato*, a long-necked bowed lute, which had been a staple of court music but had become extinct. He began teaching at the Tashkent State Conservatory in 1991. As usual, Turghun performed here with his son Alisher Alimatov (b. 1955).

3. Favvora (Fountain)
Malika Ziyoeva, Dilorom Turghunova, Dilfusa Yulchieva, Malika Zufarova (four dutars*)*

This piece, played by a female ensemble of four *dutar*s, is a very popular melody in Uzbekistan, in both instrumental and vocal versions. The composition expresses the beauty of falling water, either in a fountain or in a stream. Rapidly repeating rhythmic patterns imitate the murmur and babbling sounds of moving water.

Malika Ziyoeva with her class of female students. Tashkent, 1998.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

Malika Ziyoeva was born in 1956 in the Ferghana area and is one of the most famous *dutar* players in the country. She graduated from the Tashkent State Conservatory under the guidance of the veteran professor Fahriddin Sadyqov. Since 1991, she has been teaching at the Tashkent State Conservatory; in 1993 she founded the first female *dutar* ensemble in the known history of Uzbekistan. *Dutar* was traditionally the only instrument women were allowed to play in Central Asia, particularly in Ferghana Valley. As its repertoire becomes more flexible in performance, Malika Ziyoeva has converted this female solo tradition into an ensemble practice.

4. Ajam Taronalari (Tune in the Ajam Mode)
*Ikram Mattanov (*qoshnay*), Malika Ziyoeva (*dutar*)*

This is genuine music of the past, from the *nasrulloi* part of the Ferghana-Tashkent *maqam*. It is difficult music to perform, as there are many passages that develop along similar lines, including the point of culmination (*awj*). This style, known as *chapany* (daredevil music) is closer to folk music; that is, it often expresses emotions and is extremely popular these days.

Abduhashim Ismailov Ensemble (left to right): Umarali Bulturov (*ud*), Abdulahat Abdurashidov (*nay*), Abduhashim Ismailov (violin), Abdurahman Holtojiev (*qonun*), Quchqor Saidov (*doira*). Tashkent, 1998.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

5. Kurd
Abduhashim Ismailov Ensemble: Abduhashim Ismailov (ghijak), *Abdurahman Holtojiev* (qonun), *Quchqor Saidov* (doira)

In the olden days this piece had a double name ("Kurd-Eshvoi") that originated from the classical Ferghana-Tashkent repertoire.

Abduhashim Ismailov, who received the honorary title "Artist of the People" of Uzbekistan, is the most famous *ghijak* player in the country. He founded his own instrumental ensemble in 1983 and serves as its composer and head. Born in 1952 in the Ferghana Valley, he studied at Tashkent State Conservatory. He was the first to compose for this particular new combination of instruments made up of *ghijak, nay*, and *qonun* (box zither).

6. Hanuz (As Yet)
Abduhashim Ismailov (ghijak), *Abdulahat Abdurashidov* (nay), *Abdurahman Holtojiev* (qanun), *Quchqor Saidov* (doira)

This three-part melody came from the genre *katta ashulla* (extended long song). The tempo, rhythm, and ornamentation are typical of the style identified with Jurahon Sultanov, a famous singer from Marghilan, who made this sophisticated piece difficult to reproduce.

Abdurahim Hamidov. Tashkent, 1998.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

7. Eshvoi
Abdurahim Hamidov (dutar), *Shuhrat Razzakov* (tanbur)

"Eshvoi" is a famous classical tune from Khorezm. Abdurahim Hamidov (1952–2013) was the most critically acclaimed Uzbek *dutar* player, a teacher at the Tashkent State Conservatory, and an author of two books on the Uzbek dutar tradition. He studied music at the Tashkent Musical College and Tashkent State Conservatory with Fakhriddin Saduqov, concentrating on three different *dutar* styles—Ferghana, Tashkent, and Khorezm—and their wide-ranging techniques.

Shuhrat Razzakov (b. 1965) is one of the best-known pupils of Abdurahim Hamidov and was trained to play the *dutar* exclusively in the oral tradition. He gained international recognition very early in his career when playing in the Shavkat Mirzaev Ensemble.

Dadahon Hasanov.
Tashkent, 1988.

Photo by Dmitriy Mihailov.

8. Zor Bo'libdi (He Suffered)
Dadahon Hasanov (vocal, tar*) and ensemble (*ghijak, chang, doira, *accordion,* tar*)*

This is an old Sufi song from the Ferghana Valley with religious meaning. It starts from a high point in the *awj* (point of culmination) and after that develops in the form of a couplet.

Shaidony hu'ring tunlary bedor bu'libdy
Yor hasratida hastay bemer bu'libdy . . .

Look at this madman of love,
He spent his nights awake
Suffering for his passion,
He became sick and exhausted . . .

Dadahon Hasanov is a distinguished Uzbek poet and singer. Born in 1944 in Namangan (Ferghana Valley), he graduated from Tashkent State University as a journalist. Politically non-conformist, he has always been out of favor with the various governments. He has written lyrical songs and protest songs as the modern-day version of a poet-singer or bard. The singer has published several collections of his poetry.

9. Chapandozi Qalandar (Vagabond Tunes)
*Timur Mahmudov (*chang*), Malika Ziyoeva (*dutar*), Hodjimurad Safarov (*doira*)*

This tune, from the Ferghana-Tashkent *maqam* and the cycle *Kalandar*, has an unusual meter (3/8 plus 2/4). A modal melody makes this piece a reference to the old court entertainment—with the comedian and the acrobat not far away.

10. Uyghur Fantasy
Abduhashim Ismailov Ensemble

This is a piece created by Abduhashim Ismailov inspired by the image of court performances from the time of Timur in the 14th century, which usually included music from neighboring countries. This tune is believed to be closely related to Uyghur music—it is bright, cheerful, and has a sophisticated technical virtuosity, which reflects the exuberance of the courtly merrymakers.

11. Tushimda Kursam Edi (If I Could Dream)
Sheraly Juraev (vocal, tar*) and ensemble (*qonun, doira, ghijak, nay*)*

This is a classical *ghazal* set to a poem by 19th-century female poet Nodira

Nigary yolbadanimi tushimda kursam edy
Zabi shirin shikonomni tushimda kursam edy . . .

If I could dream about my beloved of the flower body
If I could dream about my beloved with the sugar lips . . .

Sheraly Juraev is a famous Uzbek singer whose name is synonymous with well-to-do wedding performance. He was born in 1947 in the heart of Uzbekistan, in Muday village in the Ferghana Valley. He learned the best traditions at local vocal schools taught by Mamurjan Uzzakov (Andijan) and Kamildjan Ataniyazov (Khorezm). His repertoire includes about 600 songs, half of which are his own. His particular voice and style have inspired many others to imitate him. As a result, each Uzbek city today, and even each village, has its own "pseudo-Sheraly."

12. Andijon Samo'si (Andijoni Listening to God)
*Shavkat Mirzaev Ensemble: Shavkat Mirzaev (*rubob*), Ahmadjan Dadaev (*ghijak*), Shuhrat Razzaqov (*dutar, tanbur*), Malika Ziyoeva (*dutar*), Ikram Matanov (*qoshnay*), Timur Mahmudov (*chang*), Asror Aslanov (*tanbur*), Hodjimurad Safarov (*doira*), Erkin Hudjaberdyev (*nay*)*

This piece is based on the famous, joyful tune from Andijan (Ferghana Valley) which in older times was supposed to be an instrumental tune in the Sufi style. It became known as a popular dance tune in the late 1950s.

Shavkat Mirzaev (b. 1942) is a well-known performer of the *rubob* in Uzbekistan, composer, teacher, and head of an ensemble performing Uzbek classical music. His most famous achievement is the revival of the Sufi repertoire in Uzbek classical music, which was forbidden under Soviet rule.

Shavkat Mirzaev Ensemble: (front row, left to right) Ahmadjan Dadaev (*ghijak*), Malika Ziyoeva (*dutar*), Timur Mahmudov (*chang*), Shavkat Mirzaev (*rubob*); (back row, left to right) Hodjimurad Safarov (*doira*), Erkin Hudjaberdyev (*nay*), Asror Aslanov (*tanbur*). Tashkent, 1998.

Photo by Razia Sultanova.

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Dr. Razia Sultanova is the Director of the Centre for Central Asian music at the University of Cambridge. Her music education began in Uzbekistan in Andijan Music College, continuing in Tashkent Music College and State Conservatory (BA, MA), and further progressed in Moscow State Conservatory (PhD). Moving to the West (in 1992) she lived in France and Germany before finally settling in the UK (since 1994). She is the author of four books and three edited volumes and a recipient of a number of international grants, including

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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding among peoples through the documentation, preservation, and dissemination of sound.

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The UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music includes more than a hundred pioneering audio recordings of the world's traditional musics, published between 1961 and 2003 on a number of recording labels, including Bärenreiter-Musicaphon, EMI, Philips, Auvidis, and Naïve. The series was launched in collaboration with ethnomusicologist Alain Daniélou (1907–1994) and the International Music Council (IMC, created by UNESCO in 1949), joined in 1963 by the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD), and from 1994 stewarded by the International Council for Traditional

Music (ICTM). The Collection comprises mostly field recordings made on location, in their original context. Each recording is accompanied by scholarly annotations and photographs. Together, these albums are a reflection of the immense variety of music-making and of the position music holds within cultures around the globe. Between the late 1980s and 2003, 115 albums were issued on CD but went out of print in 2005. In 2010 UNESCO and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings forged an agreement to make the UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music available to the general public again. In addition to the previously released titles, 15 never-released albums will also be available as digital downloads and on-demand physical CDs.