

## Yunus Rajabiy's legacy and the development of Maqom art

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the role of Yunus Rajabiy in Uzbek classical music and examines his scholarly and creative legacy. It evaluates Rajabiy's work in collecting, systematizing, and transcribing maqoms into musical notation as an important stage in the preservation and development of the national musical heritage. In particular, it highlights how the written systematization of Shashmaqom strengthened the scientific foundations of maqom art. The article also demonstrates that the activities of the Yunus Rajabiy Named Maqom Ensemble established on his initiative, contributed significantly to the stage and pedagogical development of maqom performance. The study concludes that Rajabiy's legacy represents an important cultural phenomenon that laid a foundation for the sustainable development of national musical thought.

**Keywords:** Yunus Rajabiy, maqom art, Shashmaqom, Uzbek classical music, maqom studies, composition, musical notation system, national musical heritage, Yunus Rajabiy Named Maqom Ensemble, traditional performance

Uzbek art and musical heritage are rich and multifaceted, having developed over centuries as one of the most valuable treasures of our national culture. In particular, Uzbek classical music - the art of maqom - stands out as a unique artistic phenomenon that reflects the spiritual world, aesthetic taste, and cultural values of our people. The roots of this tradition emerged in the ancient cultural centers of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khorezm, Fergana, and Tashkent and it has been passed down from generation to generation, continually enriching national musical traditions. Maqoms occupy an important place not only as musical compositions but also as expressions of philosophical thought, historical experience, and refined aesthetic perception.

One of the most significant steps in the development of Uzbek musical culture has been the systematization and preservation of oral folk creativity and classical works in written form. In this regard, the activity of Yunus Rajabiy is of special importance. He is recognized not only as an accomplished composer and maqom performer, but also as a scholar who studied Uzbek music on a scientific basis. The works he created and the maqoms he transcribed into notation played a crucial role in transmitting the nation's musical heritage to future generations.

Yunus Rajabiy was born on January 5, 1897, in Toshkent. As the youngest of sixteen children, he grew up in a family environment filled with respect for art. His mother, Oysha bibi, was knowledgeable in religious and poetic traditions, while his father, Rajab, supported his children's interest in music. From an early age, young Yunus developed a deep love for music, attentively listening to songs performed at public celebrations and wedding ceremonies and memorizing their melodies.

Recognizing his musical talent, his elder brother gifted him a dutar, strengthening his interest in performance. His first lessons were under Mirzo Qosim, a hafiz (master singer/reciter of traditional music), and later he studied with the renowned Mulla To'ychi Toshmammedov, a master hafiz (traditional music performer). Rajabiy distinguished himself with his unique vocal timbre and wide range. In the 1910s-1920s, he became interested in the activities of the Uzbekistan State Conservatory, where he furthered his musical education, and in 1923 he traveled to Samarkand for

creative work. This period gave strong impetus to his work in the field of maqom, inspiring him to begin systematizing and transcribing maqoms into notation.

His early compositional works included pieces such as “Bahor” and “Hammamiz,” and he later created music for theater and opera. Rajabiy collected folk melodies and songs on a scientific basis and transcribed them into notation, thereby preserving the national musical heritage for posterity. Throughout his career, he trained many students who later achieved success in various branches of Uzbek music.

Yunus Rajabiy made an unparalleled contribution to the development of Uzbek maqom art. Through his scholarly and creative activity, he elevated folk music to a professional level while adapting it to contemporary interpretations. The Yunus Rajabiy nomidagi Maqom ansambli, established in 1959 and bearing his name, continues to preserve traditional maqoms, educate young performers, and promote national music to a wide audience.

Today, the name of Yunus Rajabiy is mentioned not only as that of a great artist, but also as a symbol of pride in Uzbek maqom art and musical culture. His legacy - a rich repertoire, scholarly research, a school of disciples, and the enduring activity of the ensemble - has become an eternal treasure of our national music. This article examines the life and creative activity of Yunus Rajabiy, the work of the Maqom Ensemble named after him, its present-day activities, and the new generation of performers.

#### The Life and Creative Work of Yunus Rajabiy

The prominent composer, maqom scholar, and musician Yunus Rajabiy, who left an indelible mark on the history of Uzbek folk music, was born on January 5, 1897, in Toshkent. He was the youngest of sixteen children. Although his father, Rajab aka, engaged in farming and livestock breeding, he was also interested in the arts. His mother, Oysha bibi, was a cultured woman who had memorized the Qur'an, was devoted to poetry, and had authored several poems herself. Growing up in such an art-filled environment, Yunus developed a love for music from an early age.

As a child, Yunus attentively listened to folk songs performed at public celebrations, fairs, and weddings, memorizing their melodies. He possessed the natural talent to reproduce tunes after hearing them only once. Recognizing this gift, his elder brother presented him with a dutar, and his father continually supported his interest in music. In this way, he began his first independent musical exercises.

Yunus Rajabiy's first musical lessons were under the guidance of Mirzo Qosim hofiz, one of his earliest mentors, who helped him develop his abilities to listen carefully, memorize, and accurately express melodies. Later, he also studied with renowned singers such as Mulla To'ychi Toshmuhammedov. During this period, he began to stand out with his unique vocal timbre and wide vocal range.

Rajabiy received his early education in school and madrasa. After his father passed away in 1913, he completed his studies and began working to support his family. Nevertheless, he never distanced himself from art. By his teenage years, he had already gained recognition as a skilled dutar player and hofiz.

In the 1910s-1920s, Rajabiy showed interest in the activities of the O'zbekiston Davlat Konservatoriyasi, expressing his desire to study there. Those who knew him were surprised, saying, “You are already a famous musician; why do you need formal education?” However, Rajabiy was a person thirsty for knowledge and striving for creative excellence. He graduated from the conservatory in 1923 and traveled to Samarkand to expand his creative horizons.

During his time in Samarkand, Yunus Rajabiy collaborated creatively with the famous hofiz and dutar player Hoji Abdulaziz Rasulov. This meeting gave a strong impetus to his work in the field

of maqom. It was during this period that he began to study maqoms deeply, systematize them, and preserve them in written form.

His first compositions included works such as “Bahor” and “Hammamiz.” In the following years, Yunus Rajabiy worked at the Uzbek National Theatre, collaborating with renowned composers such as Boris Nadejdin, Vladislav Uspenskiy, and Georgiy Mushel, creating music for dramas like “Muqanna” and “Qasos.” He also contributed to operas such as “Zaynab va Omon” and “Nazira.”

Among his creative achievements were instrumental pieces for symphonic orchestra such as “Segoh,” “Farg‘ona,” and “Paxta,” as well as the work “O‘yin bayoti,” and various compositions based on folk melodies. He composed music for the ghazals of poets including Alisher Navoi, Zahiriddin Babur, Furqat, Muqimiy harmonizing Uzbek classical poetry with music.

Yunus Rajabiy studied Uzbek folk music scientifically, collecting and transcribing over 1,500 Uzbek, Tajik, and Uyghur folk songs and melodies. Through this work, he preserved oral traditions and passed them on to future generations. Thus, his name is remembered not only as a composer but also as a scholar who safeguarded the nation’s musical heritage.

Throughout his career, many students trained under him, later achieving success in various branches of Uzbek music. Rajabiy also published a multi-volume collection titled “*Uzbek Folk Music*”, providing a significant scholarly foundation.

The Rajabiy family was rich in art and culture. His wife, Qumri opa, was his closest companion and spiritual support. They had twelve children, all of whom received higher education and pursued careers in the arts and sciences.

Yunus Rajabiy’s contributions were recognized by the state. He was awarded the Lenin Order (1959), the Order of the “Red Banner of Labor,” and the Order of “Glory” (1944). Posthumously, on August 25, 2000, he was awarded the Order “For Great Services.” He was also honored with the title of People’s Artist of the Uzbek SSR.

Today, the name of Yunus Rajabiy is celebrated as a symbol of pride in Uzbek art. One of the metro stations in Tashkent, as well as streets and a house-museum, bear his name - a profound expression of gratitude for his invaluable contributions to national art.

Although Ustoz Yunus Rajabiy passed away on April 7, 1976, his rich legacy continues to live eternally within the treasury of our national culture.

#### Yunus Rajabiy’s Contribution to Uzbek Maqom Art

When one mentions Yunus Rajabiy, the image that comes to mind is that of a great artist who, through his prolific creative work and immense musical legacy, made an invaluable contribution to Uzbek national music. Through his scientific and creative activities, he carved a unique place in Uzbek musical culture and elevated national music to an academic level.

Mentor Hoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov played a key role in shaping Rajabiy’s artistry. Under his guidance, Rajabiy deeply explored the secrets of maqom art and found his own path. In 1927, he became the founder and artistic director of Uzbekistan’s first national radio ensemble - the national instrumental ensemble. During this period, he developed practical standards for maqoms, raised traditional performance to a professional level, and systematized the repertoire.

Rajabiy’s book, “*A Look at Our Musical Heritage*”, remains an important source for the scientific study of Uzbek folk music. Through the ensemble he led, Uzbek classical music was practically revived and entered a stage of development from the 1920s onward. Particularly, the official establishment of the *Maqom Ensemble* in the late 1950s marked a new phase in Uzbek maqom art. This ensemble, featuring the most prominent maqom performers of the time, created a distinctive creative school. Later, this process continued under the leadership of masters such as O. Alimahsumov, G‘. Toshmatov, Sh. Mirzayev, I. Vahobov, and A. Ismoilov.

Uzbek folk music stands out for its national roots, rich traditions, and artistic sophistication. In the 20th century, national music entered a new stage, integrating with Western musical systems and becoming professionalized. Music in general contributes to the development of national culture, while maqom, in particular, serves as an art form expressing the spiritual values, aesthetic taste, and philosophical thought of the Uzbek people.

The pinnacle of maqom art, *Shashmakom*, has been recognized by UNESCO as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, confirming its global significance. Over centuries, it has been polished through the dedicated work of great poets, hofizs, and composers.

Yunus Rajabiy made unparalleled efforts to preserve and publish the Uzbek *Shashmakom*. He initiated scientific and cultural work such as publishing maqom notations, recording melodies and songs on magnetic tapes, and systematizing them. These efforts were among the most important steps toward creating a written foundation for Uzbek music.

Among Rajabiy's maqom compositions are works like "*Girya*," "*Ushshoq*," "*Ko'cha bog'i*," "*Eshvoy*," "*Kurd*," "*Qalandariy*," "*Gulyor-Shahnoz*," "*Bayot*," "*Dugohi Husayniy*," "*Chorgoh*," "*Miskin*," and "*Nasrullovi*." He also reworked folk songs and restored pieces such as "*Subhidam*," "*Yolg'iz*," "*Sayqal*," "*Fig'on*," "*Oraz*," and "*Begi Sulton*."

Rajabiy achieved high success in composition as well. He created music for musical dramas and operas such as "*Farhod va Shirin*," "*Layli va Majnun*," "*Rustam*," "*Avaz*," "*Xolisxon*," "*Qasos*," "*Muqanna*," "*Nodira*," "*O'g'il uylantirish*," and "*Zaynab va Omon*."

Between 1955-1959, under Rajabiy's leadership, a five-volume collection "Uzbek Folk Music" was published, encompassing nearly a thousand Uzbek, Tajik, and Uyghur folk songs, Bukhara Shashmaqom, Fergana-Tashkent maqom routes, major songs, and works by contemporary composers.

Later, working with the *Maqom Ensemble*, Rajabiy prepared a six-volume new edition of *Shashmaqom* (1966-1974) and recorded them on gramophone records, enabling Uzbek maqom art to gain international recognition.

Among Rajabiy's students were prominent artists such as T. Sodiqov, D. Zokirov, F. Sodiqov, O. Alimahsumov, T. Alimatov, N. Hasanov, K. Jabborov, O. Imomxo'jayev, B. Davidova, and K. Ismoilova - all continuators of the creative school he established.

The Yunus Rajabiy Maqom Ensemble, founded in 1959, continues to operate today. Through this ensemble, major examples of maqom performance - including *Shashmakom* and Fergana-Tashkent maqom routes - have been meticulously studied and recorded. The ensemble has played a vital role in creating modern interpretations of Uzbek music and promoting it internationally.

Yunus Rajabiy preserved national music through his devoted creativity, scholarly research, and mentorship, elevating it to a professional level. Institutions, metro stations, music schools, and research centers bearing his name reflect the enduring legacy of this great artist.

Rajabiy remains historically immortal as a master who established the scientific and practical foundations of Uzbek maqom art and brought it to international recognition. Today, his work continues to serve as a model and source of inspiration for younger generations.

Conclusion: Yunus Rajabiy's role in Uzbekistan's musical culture is unparalleled. He is remembered not only as an accomplished composer and maqom performer but also as a scholar who systematically studied and preserved Uzbek folk music. His creative work safeguarded musical heritage, transmitted it to new generations, and elevated it to a professional level. His compositions, creative works, and scholarly collections contributed to the development of Uzbek music both nationally and internationally.

Rajabiy played a key role in developing practical standards for maqoms, professionalizing traditional performance, and systematizing them. By studying, transcribing, and recording *Shashmakom* and other folk routes, he created a written record of the nation's musical history, ensuring that Uzbek maqom art would remain a rich legacy for future generations.

His students and ensembles - particularly the Yunus Rajabiy Maqom Ensemble - continue his scientific and creative legacy, performing traditional maqoms on stage, producing new interpretations, disseminating them through concerts and media, and training young performers. In this way, the ensemble plays a central role in the development of Uzbek maqom art and passes Rajabiy's creative school to the next generation.

Yunus Rajabiy's work combined composition, scholarly research, and mentorship. He collected, notated, and preserved folk songs, melodies, and maqoms, while also developing new creative ways to perform them. His students and ensemble members have achieved success in various fields of Uzbek music, blending historical roots with modern demands, making an invaluable contribution to the development of Uzbek maqom art.

Today, Yunus Rajabiy's name is honored as a symbol of pride in Uzbek music. Metro stations, museums, music schools, and research centers in Tashkent bear his name, reflecting deep gratitude for his contributions to national music. His rich creative and scholarly legacy remains crucial for preserving national music, nurturing new generations of performers, and promoting Uzbek maqom art internationally.

In summary, Yunus Rajabiy is remembered not only as a great artist of his time but also as a scholar, mentor, and founder of a creative school who developed Uzbek music. His students, ensembles, and written works provide the foundation for the continued development of national culture and serve as a model for younger generations. He also played a key role in shaping contemporary interpretations of Uzbek maqom art and introducing it to the world stage.

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