



THE DEVELOPMENT OF SYMPHONIC MUSIC IN UZBEKISTAN AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF IKRAM AKBAROV

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Abstract. *This article examines the development of Uzbek symphonic music and highlights the contribution of prominent composers to the formation of the national symphonic tradition. Particular attention is given to the creative work of Ikram Akbarov and his role in the development of symphonic genres in Uzbekistan.*

Keywords: *Uzbek symphonic music, Ikram Akbarov, symphony, symphonic poem, national musical traditions, Uzbek composers, orchestral music.*

The compositional school of Uzbekistan, which emerged in the 20th century and developed rapidly over several decades, absorbed various musical styles characteristic of both the national Uzbek musical tradition (primarily classical traditional music, folklore, and the musical cultures of other ethnic groups) and the significant achievements of world musical culture.

The symphony genre in Uzbekistan attracted representatives of different generations of composers: from the pioneers of Uzbek professional music (T. Sadykov, D. Zakirov, M. Ashrafi, and G. Mushel) to composers of the older generation (B. Gienko, I. Akbarov), the middle generation (S. Jalil, F. Yanov-Yanovsky, T. Kurbanov, N. Zakirov, M.

Tadjiev, M. Makhmudov, M. Bafoev, H. Rakhimov, and N. Giyasov), as well as younger composers (O. Abdullaeva, Sh. Sobirov, F. Akramov, and A. Safarov). The interaction between national traditions and European musical principles has enriched the individual style of contemporary Uzbek composers.

During the years of the Great Patriotic War, Georgiy Mushel began his career as a symphonic composer. He created two symphonies in succession: Symphony No. 2 in F minor, "In Memory of Alisher Navoi," and Symphony No. 3 in G minor. The latter, composed in 1942, was dedicated to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War. These works reveal features of the Russian symphonic tradition and elements of Romanticism. At the same time, they were still characterized by a limited degree of independence and lacked fully developed symphonic dramaturgy.

During the same period, the first symphonies in the history of Uzbek music written by an Uzbek composer were created by Mukhtar Ashrafi. His First Symphony, "Heroic," dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution and the heroes of the Great Patriotic War, was composed in 1942. His Second Symphony, "Glory to the Victors," written in 1944, expressed hope for the forthcoming victory.

The names of Ikram Akbarov and Uzbek symphonic music are virtually inseparable. The composer's oeuvre vividly represents the development of this genre from its very beginnings. Akbarov paid considerable attention to instrumental genres of European origin, including the symphonic poem, overture, concerto, and symphony. He also employed sonata principles and relied on a generalized instrumental mode of musical thinking. His programmatic orchestral works are often

associated with specific literary subjects, such as the symphonic sketches “Post Office” based on a play by Rabindranath Tagore and the suite “Shakuntala” inspired by Kalidasa’s poem. Other compositions are based on generalized programs, including the suite “Samarkand Stories,” the symphonic poem “In Memory of the Poet,” the “Epic Poem,” and the “Symphony-Epitaph.”

Ikram Akbarov is regarded as the founder of epic symphonism in Uzbek music. This is reflected in his interest in the historical past of the Uzbek people, architectural monuments, and prominent historical figures. His compositions convey both the spirit of antiquity and the memory of descendants through a modern philosophical perspective.

The symphonic poem “In Memory of the Poet” (1954) is one of Akbarov’s earliest works and is associated with the emergence of the symphonic poem genre in Uzbek music. The composer dedicated the work to the image of the Uzbek poet and revolutionary Hamza Hakimzade Niyazi. Employing the principle of generalized programmability, Akbarov sought to portray not only the outstanding qualities of the poet’s character but also the tragic aspects of his life.

The introduction is based on Hamza’s own song “Yasha, Sho‘ro!” (“Long Live the Soviets!”), which serves as the symbolic theme of the poet throughout the composition.



It is performed by the clarinet and bassoon in unison. This theme reappears at the climactic moments of the development section and the coda.

At the end of the exposition, the theme of the “evil forces” emerges. Stylistically, it resembles zikr chants characteristic of the mournful singing of wandering dervishes. The theme is rhythmically fragmented, written in a 5/8 meter, and presented in the low register.

In the development section, all the thematic materials are brought into conflict, culminating in a tragic climax that depicts the murder of the poet. The full orchestra (*tutti*) presents the theme “Yasha, Sho‘ro!”, followed by a dramatic pause. After the funeral march, the theme reappears in a transformed and enlightened form, symbolizing immortality and hope.

Many of the artistic and compositional ideas first explored in “In Memory of the Poet” were further developed in Akbarov’s next major

symphonic work, the “Epic Poem” (1961). This continuity can be observed in the thematic material, developmental techniques, and overall structure. Unlike the earlier composition, the “Epic Poem” does not portray a specific character or storyline. Its generalized programmatic concept is implied by the title itself and may be interpreted as a musical narrative about the history of the Uzbek people, significant historical events, and the achievements of modern times.

The three principal themes—the introduction, the main theme, and the secondary theme—differ in character and emotional coloring, yet they do not create sharp contrasts. The slow introduction, presented in the low register by the strings in unison, symbolizes the beginning of a narrative about the distant past.



In the development section, the principal theme acquires greater dynamism. The climax features a chorale, while the recapitulation appears in a condensed form.

The significance of Ikram Akbarov’s contribution to the symphonic art of Uzbekistan can hardly be overestimated. As the scholar N. Yanov-Yanovskaya rightly observed: “The milestones of his creative path are the milestones of the history of post-war Uzbek symphonism. They reflect the gradual expansion into new genres, a growing attraction to large-scale forms, the overcoming of everyday folk themes, the broadening of programmatic and figurative content, and later, a striving for original

dramaturgical solutions and a profound embodiment of the national element” (Yanov-Yanovskaya N. Ikram Akbarov. Tashkent, 1990, pp. 55–56).

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the composer continued to work productively in various genres, reinterpreting his stylistic principles and introducing new artistic features. During this period, he created such works as “Poetry of the War Years,” a cantata for cello and orchestra, the “Symphony-Epitaph,” Symphony No. 2, the opera-oratorio “Ibtido Khatosi,” and the symphony “Navruz.”

At the present stage of musical development, scholars devote considerable attention to the works of symphonic composers. Uzbek composers have played an important role in the development of symphonic music. The contemporary Uzbek symphony is characterized by remarkable stylistic diversity, reflected in a comprehensive study of oral professional traditions and an aspiration to explore previously unexamined layers and forms of traditional culture. In addition to maqom traditions, composers draw inspiration from the art of folk storytellers and epic narrators, as seen in I. Pinkhasov’s “Symphony-Dastan” and A. Ergashev’s “Dastan-Music,” as well as from genres of lyrical poetry, exemplified by M. Bafoev’s “Symphony-Ghazal.”

For more than a decade, Uzbekistan hosted the international contemporary music festival “Ilkhom XX” and symphonic music festivals, where works by young composers such as D. Yanov-Yanovsky, N. Giasov, D. Varelas, P. Medyulyanova, and others were performed. During this period, a number of notable symphonic compositions were created, including N. Giasov’s symphony-maqoms; M. Tadjiev’s

Symphonies No. 15 “The Gulag Archipelago,” No. 16 “Cry of the Spirits,” No. 17 “The Samanid Road,” and No.

19 “Heroic”; T. Kurbanov’s symphony-rhapsody “Askiya”; I. Akbarov’s “Symphony-Epitaph”; as well as symphonic poems and symphonies by M. Bafoev, H. Rakhimov, A. Mansurov, D. Saidaminova, J. Shukurov, and O. Abdullaeva.

References

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