



SHASHMAQOM AND WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC, A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This article examines the structural, semantic, and axiological similarities between Western Classical Music, the foundation of European art music, and Shashmaqom, the classical musical legacy of Central Asia. Both traditions have profound aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual aspects despite having different cultural and historical roots. To show how each musical system reflects the worldview of its people, the study examines modal organization, improvisational strategies, and axiological implications.

Keywords: Shashmaqom, Western Classical Music, modal structure, improvisation, axiology, musical semantics, cultural dialogue, Sufi aesthetics.

Introduction

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются структурные, семантические и аксиологические параллели между западной классической музыкой, являющейся основой европейского музыкального искусства, и Шашмаком — классическим музыкальным наследием Центральной Азии. Обе традиции, несмотря на различные культурные и исторические корни, обладают глубокими эстетическими, интеллектуальными и духовными аспектами. В исследовании анализируются модальная организация, стратегии импровизации и аксиологические значения, чтобы продемонстрировать, как каждая музыкальная система отражает мировоззрение своего народа.

Ключевые слова: Шашмаком, западная классическая музыка, модальная структура, импровизация, аксиология, музыкальная семантика, культурный диалог, суфийская эстетика

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada Yevropa professional musiqa san'atining asosi bo'lgan G'arb klassik musiqasi va Markaziy Osiyoning klassik merosi bo'lmish Shashmaqom o'rtasidagi tarkibiy, semantik va aksiologik o'xshashliklar tadqiq etiladi. Har ikki an'ana, garchi turli madaniy va tarixiy ildizlarga ega bo'lsa-da, chuqur estetik, intellektual va ma'naviy jihatlariga egadir. Tadqiqotda har bir musiqiy tizim o'z xalqining dunyoqarashini qanday aks ettirishini ko'rsatish maqsadida modal tuzilma, improvizatsiya strategiyalari va aksiologik (qadriyatga oid) mazmun-mohiyat tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Shashmaqom, g'arb klassik musiqasi, modal tuzilma, improvizatsiya, aksiologiya, musiqiy semantika, madaniy muloqot, tasavvuf estetikasi

Introduction

A nation's cultural and axiological identity is reflected in music, which is a universal language of feelings and meanings. The spiritual and creative soul of the Tajik and Uzbek peoples is embodied in the Shashmaqom, which was created in the ancient cities of Khiva and Bukhara. Similar to this, Western classical music, which has its roots in European Renaissance and Baroque traditions, reflects Western aesthetic and intellectual aspirations.

Western classical music developed through formal composition, harmonic progression, and polyphonic structures, but Shashmaqom emerged as a blend of music, poetry, and mysticism. Both traditions strive for artistic excellence, emotional profundity, and spiritual transcendence. The six main modes (maqoms) of Shashmaqom are Buzruk, Rost, Navo, Dugoh, Segoh, and Iroq. Every maqom has an own spiritual meaning, attitude, and scale. The initial development of Western classical music was significantly influenced by church modes, such as Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian. These modes subsequently transitioned into the major-minor tonal system.

Element	Shashmaqom	Western Classical Music
Modal basis	Six maqoms	Church modes (later major/minor)
Tonal movement	Stepwise melodic progression	Harmonic modulation
Emotional color	Philosophical, meditative	Dramatic, dynamic

Consequently, both systems have modal roots and pursue a balance of emotion and tone. Every Shashmaqom consists of multiple sections (nasr, tarona, tasnif, ufari, and gardun), showcasing a progression in both music and poetry.

In a similar manner, Western Classical pieces—like sonatas, symphonies, and fugues—are made up of movements that progress thematic content in a coherent order.

Structural unit	Shashmaqom	Western Classical Music
Thematic development	Through melodic improvisation	Through written composition
Sections	Nasr, Tasnif, Tarona, Gardun	Allegro, Adagio, Scherzo, Finale
Core idea	Spiritual journey	Dramatic narrative

Thus, both convey a story of change, although their approaches vary—oral and spontaneous in Shashmaqom, written and structured in Western classical music.

Musical Meaning and Sufi Aesthetics. The meaning of Shashmaqom is inherently connected to classical Persian-Chagatai poetry (Navoi, Jami, Fuzuli). In this context, the combination of music and word expresses the concept of Divine Love (Ishq-i Haqiqi). **Sufi Aesthetics:** Each Avj (melodic peak) in a Maqom performance signifies the soul's yearning for the Creator—a level of spiritual elevation and illumination. **Semantic Parallelism:** Similar to how the "Theory of Affects" functions in Western Classical music (for instance, minor keys linked to sadness, major with happiness), each Maqom within the Shashmaqom cycle possesses its unique time (vaqt-u soat) and emotional effect on the audience.

Axiological Perspective. From an axiological standpoint, Shashmaqom acts as a medium for the development of the "Perfect Man" (Al-Insan al-Kamil). **The Master-Apprentice (Ustoz-Shogird) Tradition:** This framework transfers not just technical skills but also a fundamental set of ethical and moral principles to future generations. **Humanity and the Universe:** The arrangement of the Maqoms reflects the order of the cosmos and serves as a counterbalance for the human spirit. The

principles of Humanism present in Western Classical music participate in a "cultural exchange" with the deep human experiences rooted in Eastern Maqoms. Cultural Exchange: East and West In contemporary times, the blending of Shashmaqom with Western orchestral music (e.g., the Maqom-Symphony style) stands out as a key instance of international cultural exchange. This approach combines the meditative perspective of the East with the active growth principles of the West.

The Spiritual Role of Music. The main purpose of Shashmaqom is to cleanse the philosophy establishes it as a route to divine unity. Western Classical Music, especially in compositions by Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, aspires to transcendence via structure, beauty, and harmony. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, for example, can be viewed as a Western counterpart to the maqom's spiritual framework - both striving for the ideal of form and spirit.

The Axiological Aspect. From a values-based viewpoint, both systems embody universal human principles: Harmony signifies balance and tranquility; Improvisation and creativity express freedom and uniqueness; Discipline of form conveys reverence for tradition. Shashmaqom represents Eastern reflective wisdom, whereas Western Classical Music conveys Western logical beauty - nevertheless, both meet in their quest for beauty, truth, and perfection. The function of improvisation. Improvisation (*bastanavazlik*) is central to Shashmaqom performance, enabling the musician (*hofiz* or *sozanda*) to convey individual feelings within established traditions. In Western music, comparable inventiveness is evident in Baroque embellishments, cadenza sections in concertos, and Jazz improvisation - reflecting a common belief that authentic art exists at the intersection of discipline and freedom.

Conclusion

Though born in different worlds, Shashmaqom and Western Classical Music share a deep structural logic and axiological spirit. Both: elevate the human soul through beauty and harmony; reflect the philosophical worldview of their cultures; balance tradition and creativity. In the words of a Bukhara musician: "*Maqom is the path from sound to soul.*"¹ Likewise, Western composers believed that music speaks

¹ Ashuraliyev, F. (2025). THE ART AND BASICS OF MAQOM. Modern Science and Research, 4(1), 190–195. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/60758>

what cannot be spoken by words. Thus, the dialogue between these two traditions enriches global musical culture and reveals the shared spiritual heritage of humanity.

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