Collaboration, Tradition, and Reimagination: The Influence of Soviet Cultural Policy on Uzbek Music

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A thesis accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in History

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Spring 2024

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Master of Arts in History

Title: Collaboration, Tradition, and Reimagination: The Influence of Soviet Cultural Policy on Uzbek Music

This thesis, "Collaboration, Tradition, and Reimagination: The Influence of Soviet Cultural Policy on Uzbek Music," is an exploration of three Uzbek musicians and their engagement with Soviet cultural institutions. By using the careers of these musicians, this thesis uncovers the trajectory of increasing nationalist sentiment in Uzbek music, the legacy of the Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy, and the ways that Uzbek musicians interpreted commands from the metropolitan cultural authorities. This thesis also explores the routes to success for musicians within the Uzbek SSR and the different musical movements that took form under different Soviet leaders. This thesis discusses the concept of authenticity in music and within the USSR, where the Soviets attempted to create "authentic" cultural expression from the top down. Musicians in Uzbekistan had ample opportunities to work within the Soviet system, but they were also working for the benefit of Uzbekistan at the same time, creating a culture that continued to be important after the collapse of the USSR.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2022, a concert was held at the most prestigious hall in Uzbekistan, the Alisher Navoi State Academic Bolshoi Theatre. This concert was in celebration of the memory of Mukhtar Ashrafi, the most famous 20th century composer from Uzbekistan. Multiple orchestras played selections of his music, including opera, ballet, orchestral works, and a few pieces by other composers that he had loved. Many Uzbek luminaries gave speeches praising his work. The celebration was accompanied by a contest with cash prize, intended to attract young composers. Conspicuously absent from news coverage of these festivities, however, was any discussion of how Ashrafi came to be such a classical composer. In fact, in the vast majority of online articles about this event there is no mention of the Soviet Union whatsoever.[1] Ashrafi never lived in an independent Uzbekistan, all of his composing was done under the auspices of Soviet power, and he was a Communist party member until his death.

This begs the question: What is the legacy of Soviet music in Uzbekistan? Artists within the Soviet Union produced an incredible amount of music. From the great Russian classical composers to folk music ensembles from each republic, the communists attempted to prove that they were not suppressing culture, but instead celebrating it. Communism allowed new musicians new opportunities that they would

[1] See for example this announcement in UZDaily. Editor, "The memory of Mukhtar Ashrafi was honored in the State Academic Bolshoi Theatre named after Alisher Navoi," https://uzdaily.com/en/post/73539

not have received in the old, bourgeois society that was rapidly being destroyed. The Uzbek SSR was no exception to this.

Before the 1917 Communist revolution, Uzbekistan had been a constantly evolving dream in the minds of a few Central Asian intellectuals. West Turkestan and the various emirates and khanates subordinate to the Russian Empire were distant borderlands, largely ignored by the Tsar in favor of more important business in Europe. After the Revolution and the civil war, however, the Communists had a vested interest in bringing communism to all of the peoples that previously were subject to the Tsars, and in proving that they were not just the same authoritarian, distant rulers that the Romanovs had been. The Bolsheviks faced many challenges in this, including the rise of national feeling which they had already seen in Finland and Poland, now newly independent of the Russian Empire and the fledgling USSR.[2]

Lenin, Stalin, and the other leaders of the Bolsheviks rapidly came to believe that nationalism among the members of the new Soviet Union was inevitable. As less developed societies, the thinking went, the non-Russian republics had not yet moved through the Marxist stages of history to arrive at a true class consciousness that would allow for the creation of communism. In order to resolve this, the Bolsheviks encouraged people to think of themselves as citizens of the new Soviet world, as workers united by their participation in the great project of building communism. At the same time, however, they also encouraged people to think of themselves as members of their ethno-national group: As Ukrainians, as Georgians, or as Uzbeks. The push and pull

[2] Jyrki Livonen, *Independence or incorporation?: the Idea of Poland's National Self-Determination and Independence Within the Russian and Soviet Socialism From the 1870s to the 1920s, (*Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 1990).

between these two ideas was an ongoing struggle for the leaders of the USSR that began almost as soon as the Union was formed, and that in fact continued beyond the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s. Perhaps nowhere was this more visible than in Central Asia, where the national identities of the region were elastic, and had to be shaped and constructed by both the communists and by local people into the form that we understand them today.

This process took many, often contradictory, forms. One aspect was through culture, and more properly through the process of assigning cultural expressions to differing groups. The Soviets became experts at this, and their linguists, folklorists, and musicologists uncovered enormous amounts of information about culture and tradition across the USSR, with a large part of that work being categorization. At the same time as this process of "national discovery" was occurring, the Soviets also undertook a project of "national development," working under the assumption that they would eventually achieve a universal culture in which music was available to every worker. That art and music would of course take the forms most familiar to Russians as symbolic of high art: Ballet, opera, and orchestral music in the European classical mode. In the territory that became the Uzbek SSR, there were already multiple rich musical traditions, some of which have been re-interpreted as classical in their own right in the present day. These extant musical cultures and the newly imported Russian classical culture were both controlled by the Soviets through a series of institutions and policies that changed radically as the 20th century progressed. The effects of these policies did not vanish with the collapse of the USSR, either. All the music I will discuss in this thesis is still regularly

performed, not only in the Republic of Uzbekistan, but in many of the republics that once were members of the Soviet Union.

Soviet cultural and national policy was first elucidated by Terry Martin in his 2001 book, *Affirmative Action Empire*, in which he laid out a sweeping vision of the system of soft and hard power by which we still understand Stalinism's effects on early Soviet culture. In essence, the government promoted and celebrated regional cultures while also working to suppress them through violence. This book was part of a larger conversation taking place in the 1990s on ethno-nationalism and identity in the USSR, especially the work of Yuri Slezkine, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Ronald Suny.[3] His work largely focuses on Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, where there are very concrete examples of the Central Committee's inconsistent attitude towards nationalism and nationalist expression. From the 1920s to the 1930s, the USSR's policy on language use changed radically in Ukraine, as some communist officials fought for Ukrainian to be used in all levels of government, while others saw expansion of Ukrainian language use as dangerously linked to earlier attempts at Ukrainian independence.

Martin's initial contribution and theories have been expanded and moved into Central Asia over the course of the 2010s by scholars like Adeeb Khalid in *Making Uzbekistan* and *A New History of Central Asia* and Artemy Kalinovsky in *Laboratory of Socialist Development*, as well as into the other non-Russian regions in works like Erik

[3] Slezkine's work includes the 1994 article "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or how a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," and a number of more recent works about the indigenous peoples of Siberia and their relationships to Communism. Fitzpatrick wrote 1994's *Stalin's Peasants* and 1999's *Everyday Stalinism*, both of which greatly contributed to our understanding of Stalinist society and culture. Suny wrote *The Soviet Experiment* in 1998 discussing the legacy for the new successor governments of the USSR, and in 2001 edited *A State of Nations: Empire and Nationmaking in The Age of Lenin and Stalin* with Martin.

Scott's *Familiar Strangers*.[4] In these books, we see the development of new national cultures created partially by intentional Communist planning and partly by the unintended consequence of centralized government.

My work is continuing their approaches with a close look at the mechanisms of cultural power, nation-building, and national identity, as well as continuing forward in time to see the legacies of Stalinist policy in the post-Stalin Thaw. Stalin's successor, Khrushchev, made various attempts to undo or mitigate the effects of earlier policy, leading to a short period of relative creative freedom. After Khrushchev was removed from power, however, the Soviet government settled into a period that has often been characterized as creatively bankrupt. The reality of the Brezhnev era is more complicated than straightforward stagnation, especially where Central Asia is concerned.[5]

The other major thread of scholarship on Soviet cultural policy deals with the music itself, and with the government policies and institutions that governed musical groups like the vocal-instrumental ensembles, the estrada performers, and the folk orchestras of the different republics. These organizations, from the record label Melodiia to the Komsomol, were responsible for producing music, booking concerts, approving or denying tours, and other critical parts of the music industry. David McFayden's *Red Stars* was one of the first works to focus on the Soviet equivalent of

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[4] Khalid has written extensively on Central Asia; 2015's *Making Uzbekistan* and 2021's *A New History of Central Asia* are just two examples. Kalinovsky's *Laboratory of Socialist Development*, from 2018, focuses on Tajikistan, while Scott's 2016 *Familiar Strangers* focuses on Georgia and the Georgian internal diaspora, a concept which holds relevance not only for the Caucasus but for Central Asia as well.

[5] For an exploration of this concept, see Dina Fainberg and Artemy Kalinovsky, eds., *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange*, (Lanham: Lexington Books; 2016).

'popular' music, discussing the post-Stalin expansion of estrada as part of his larger series of works about popular music in the USSR and Russia.[6] McFayden's writing is part of a larger expansion of Soviet cultural studies. Some, like Sergey Zhuk's *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City,* explore cultural relations with the West through the lens of unofficial culture.[7] Other historians have recently looked at the development of unofficial culture within the USSR, revealing a wide range of unauthorized musical groups and performances that were previously largely unstudied.[8] The vast majority of this scholarship, however, has focused on Russia, the Slavic republics, and to a lesser extent the Caucasus. Central Asian popular music has been conspicuously absent in historical scholarship.

Socialist realism, an ill-defined label that was applied across the Soviet era, deserves mention here. It was first used at the Writer's Congress of 1934, where the speakers, cultural figures like Maxim Gorky and Andrei Zhdanov, exhorted the attendees to write Socialist realist literature that would motivate the proletariat towards positive development. This idea rapidly expanded beyond the sphere of literature to encompass all art forms, fro painting to ballet. Drawing on Zhdanov and Gorky's speeches about Socialist realism, Régine Robin argued that Socialist realism is an impossible aesthetic, a mandate for artists to create for both sophisticated audiences

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[6] David MacFayden, *Red Stars: Personality and the Soviet Popular Song, 1955-1991,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press; 2001)

[7] Sergei Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: the West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960-1985*, (Baltimore, Md. : Johns Hopkins University Press; 2010)

[8] See Peter John Schmelz, *Such Freedom, if Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music During the Thaw,* (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press; 2009) and William Jay Risch, Ed. *Youth and Rock in the Soviet Bloc: Youth Cultures, Music, and the State in Russia and Eastern Europe,* (Lanham, Maryland : Lexington Books; 2015)

and the newly 'conscious' proletariat.[9] This thinking has been extensively discussed with regard to the literature of the Stalin era, the visual art and artists, and of course music. Some scholars have suggested that Socialist realism caused Soviet music to abandon high culture and popular culture and become 'middlebrow,' which is itself a loaded term. Vera Dunham and Evgeny Dobrenko used middlebrow to mean mediocre in their indictments of Soviet cultural bankruptcy and applied it to all Soviet art.[10]

Recent scholarship has suggested that Socialist realism is not so easily dismissed as low-quality due to its ideological background. The enduring appeal of many Soviet classical composers, coupled with a certain distance from the residual Cold War rhetoric of the early 90s, has led to a reevaluation of Socialist realism. Socialist realist artists were just as capable of producing quality music at all levels as were artists from outside the USSR. And, as is amply described in Frances Stonor Saunders' *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters,* non-Communist artists were also under enormous governmental pressure to create art that represented the ideological bent of their home countries. In some cases, it seems that government approval was not dependent on any particular element of the music, but on interpersonal politics at the high levels of Soviet government. What's certain, however, is that Soviet musicians at every level of society struggled with the definition and the consequences of mandated socialist realist art.

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[9] Régine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic,* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1992)

[10] Vera S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, enlarged and updated edition (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990).
Evgeny Dobrenko, "The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste, or, Who 'Invented' Socialist Realism?," (South Atlantic Quarterly 94, 1995), 773-806.

Music historians and musicologists have begun to move beyond the extensive scholarship focused primarily on Russian composers to the larger Soviet world, where local culture was absorbed into the Soviet apparatus. Kirill Tomoff's book, *Virtuosi Abroad*, addressed Soviet classical music and its attempts to win international prestige, while Marina Frolova-Walker's *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* and Leah Goldman's "Nationally Informed: The Politics of National Minority Music during Late Stalinism," have discussed the national minority composers as a whole, including the ways that they benefited from and were constrained by Soviet policy. There is also a fairly extensive body of literature on the post-Soviet world and the resurgence of regional folk music in Central Asia, which has taken radically different forms in different regions. Theodore Levin's work, starting with *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God*, addresses these reactions across Uzbekistan and parts of Tajikistan. Some writers, including Levin, have framed Central Asian music as having been essentially suppressed by the Soviets. This tack tends to align with the vision of middlebrow, mediocre art ascribed to Soviet cultural production espoused by Dobrenko et al. Authentic music, and therefore quality music, could only have been made in opposition to the Soviet system, the thinking goes.

Once again, this is an ongoing debate, as scholars inside and out of Uzbekistan insist on various interpretations of the music as either irrevocably tainted by its association with Soviet power, or as salvageable or perhaps even laudable examples of the musical growth of the nation.[11] The planned cultural development in Uzbekistan and the ways that that plan shifted and changed under different Soviet leaders had immense

[11] See Otanazar Matyakubov in "The Musical Treasure-Trove of Uzbekistan" vs O.A. Sobirova in "Forming The Virtue Of Hard Work In Students Through The Life And Work Of The Composer Yunus Rajabi."

impact on the lives of the cultural workers who lived through those changes. Many of those musicians and artists found themselves in opposition to the Soviets at certain times and aligned at others. These changes also aligned with, but were not identical to, larger Soviet cultural changes—events like the Zhdanovshchina and the Thaw, where musicians suddenly found their freedoms expanded or curtailed.

In this paper, I will discuss three figures who represent the three major approaches that Uzbek musicians took towards Soviet cultural policy: Classical composer Mukhtar Ashrafi, folk musician and ethnomusicologist Yunus Rajabi, and rock musician Farrukh Zokirov. How did these three musicians interpret Soviet policy? How do their lives and careers indicate the changing Soviet musical landscape? How have their legacies been interpreted in the years since the breakup of the USSR?

The first, Ashrafi, is representative of an early generation of Uzbek musicians, who were educated and became successful during the height of Stalinism. Ashrafi worked within the Soviet system, benefited enormously from it, and absorbed the ideals of his primarily Russian teachers. His career took him to the height of the classical music world in Uzbekistan, and he remained an avowed communist even through various misfortunes. Much of his work draws on the pre-Soviet past for thematic and sometimes sonic material, but he was committed to the ideals of European orchestral music and, in particular, the ballet.

The second subject, Rajabi, was also a member of that early generation. Unlike Ashrafi, however, he focused on folk music and often came close to the limits of Soviet patience for nationalism. Rajabi was working within the Soviet system and in alignment with its mandated celebration of national forms, but even his explicit alignment with the

Communists was not always enough to escape suspicion under Stalin. He and his colleagues worked to associate pre-Soviet regional traditions with the Uzbek SSR, in the process cementing the history of the Uzbek culture in a way that still has intense resonance for modern Uzbeks. He was also a groundbreaker, whose new ensembles created opportunities for women musicians in the once almost exclusively male traditional music scene.

My third subject, Zokirov, was born in a post-WWII generation, and his experience is representative of a larger change in the experience of Soviet music culture: The development of modern, popular music and a shift away from a battle between nationalism and universalism towards an increasing acceptance and even pride in regional national identity. Zokirov, the frontman of the folk-rock group "Yalla," produced a huge volume of modern music that still drew on socialist themes and on Uzbek cultural signifiers, another acceptable expression of national identity. Zokirov's music and its continued post-Soviet popularity points to a nostalgic look back at the Soviet era and the successes of Soviet culture, at least in the minds of those who lived through its collapse.

CHAPTER 2

MUKHTAR ASHRAFI

Section 1: "The fate of Uzbek art is inextricably united with the art of the great Russian people…"

Mukhtar Ashrafi was part of the first generation of Uzbeks to grow up completely under Soviet power. He was born in 1912 in Bukhara, then the eponymous capital of the Emirate of Bukhara, which had become an Imperial Russian protectorate in 1873. Before Ashrafi turned 18, Bukhara transformed from the Emirate to the People's Republic of Bukhara, then briefly into the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan. which I will refer to throughout this thesis as the UzSSR. Ashrafi's parents were folk musicians, and his father was a relatively well-known performer in Bukhara and at the court of the Emir.[12] Ashrafi was exposed to Uzbek traditional music at a young age.[13] His father, Ashrafjon Hafiz, taught him to play the dutar starting at the age of seven, and encouraged him to study Uzbek traditional instruments and music.[14]

The territory where Ashrafi lived was in flux throughout his early life, starting with the events of World War One and continuing through the Russian Revolution and the civil war. His education and early life were not negatively affected by the revolution, however. He seems to have grown up relatively securely in Bukhara despite the changing political world and the various conflicts between Bolsheviks, Central Asian

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[12] Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (University of California Press, 2007), 50

[13] Mukhtar Ashrafi, *Muzyka v moei zhizni : Sbornik Statei (*Tashkent : Izd-vo literatury i iskusstva im. Gafura Guliama, 1975), 8

[14] Ashrafi, *Muzyka v moei zhizni*, 11. The dutar is a two-stringed, guitar-like instrument common across Central Asia.

communists, and the Basmachi that marked the early 1920s in Uzbekistan.[15] The Basmachi were rebels against the Soviets, fighting for a number of disparate causes that ranged from political grievances against communism to desperation due to famine. Some scholars characterize their activity as organized anti-Soviet resistance, while others view them as part of an urban-rural divide that existed before the Communist takeover.[16] Despite the various goals of different Basmachi groups, they continued to be a problem for Soviet governance in Central Asia up to the early 1930s, when the Soviets were able to create a kind of stability on their terms.[17] Ashrafi was born into a Muslim family, as were almost all Central Asians in the early 1900s, but by his teenage years the Soviet anti-religious campaigns were in full force. In Uzbekistan, those campaigns were exemplified by the hujum, the 'assault' on women's veiling and other outward signs of repression. Whether or not Ashrafi thought of himself as a Muslim is unclear, but he was certainly never an observant religious practitioner; another quality that eased his way toward working with the Soviets. Because of his background and his family's musical connections, Ashrafi was in the right place at the right time to become one of the first classical composers of UzSSR.

Ashrafi was an ideal candidate to be a young composer in service to the Soviet developmental project. In some ways, his early life formed the blueprint for the Soviet minority composer. Starting in 1930, he studied music and classical composition in Bukhara before moving to Samarqand in 1932, where he studied for two more years

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[15] Ashrafi, *Muzyka v moei zhizni*, 11-12

[16] Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism*, (London, 1954) is an early example of the Basmachi as resistance to Communism narrative, while Adeeb Khalid in *Islam After Communism* suggests the idea of an urban/rural divide.

[17] Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 51-52, 68-70

before moving to Moscow and the Moscow Conservatory in 1934. This path would become standard for composers from the non-Russian republics, and especially for those from the "less-developed" regions in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Many composers attended new Soviet institutions in their home republics before climbing the ladder to what was seen as both the figurative height of cultural development and the literal step upwards to USSR-wide acclaim: Moscow.

In so doing, Ashrafi entered into the burgeoning world of Soviet classical music just as the whole system had been reorganized by Stalin's pronouncements about national identity. That same year, Stalin had clarified cultural and musical policy in a piece of writing which can be summed up in the simple soundbite "National in form, socialist in content."[18] Stalin had been using variations of this idea for years in his role as People's Commissar for Nationalities, as in a speech that he gave in 1925 at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, where he called for a universal communist culture that would be "Proletarian in content, national in form."[19] Its appearance in "Sovetskaya Muzyka" in 1934, however, marked the first time that he called on musicians specifically to make their work fit into his vision. Never particularly precise when applied to any art form, this pithy statement was especially unhelpful to composers who found themselves in a constant struggle to create music that would be seen as national without being seen as too national by the ever watchful eyes of the Composer's Union.

The Composer's Unions, both at the All-Union level and in the individual republics, loom large over all of Soviet classical music and over Soviet music in general.

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[18] J.V. Stalin in Sovetskaya Muzyka, Vol. 10, 1934

[19] J. V. Stalin, *Works,* Volume 7, (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954), 134

Their decisions could and did make or destroy careers, and membership in the Composer's Union often meant career success. During Ashrafi's earlier education in the UzSSR, there had been a division between composers in Moscow. Some composers were members of the Association for Contemporary Music (ACM), which favored experimentation, the avant-garde, and a certain appreciation for Western European composers like Mahler and Schoenberg.[20] They were opposed by the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM), which promoted at-home music, especially the works of the Russian romantics and above all Mikhail Glinka.[21] This conflict, like so many others in the early Soviet Union, was settled from above; by 1929 the two organizations had been combined, and by 1932 the resultant group had been abolished and replaced with the Composers Union, with the works of the Russian romantics solidified as the epitome of the classical art. Ashrafi and his contemporaries entered the Moscow Conservatory just after this political shift.

The Moscow Conservatory, of course, existed before the USSR, but by the time that Ashrafi went there, it had become an institution in service to the new state's goals of creating Soviet music. In Moscow, Ashrafi studied with Sergei Vasilenko as his primary teacher, and Boris Schekhter as his second.[22] Both Vasilenko and Schekhter were successful composers who had themselves studied at the Moscow Conservatory. They were also both interested in Central Asian music. Schekhter eventually moved to Ashkhabad, the new capital of the Turkmen SSR, and became the director of the Soviet-

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[20] Marina Frolova-Walker, *Music and Soviet Power, 1917-1932* (Rochester, NY : Boydell Press; 2012), 156-157

[21] Frolova-Walker, *Music and Soviet Power,* 89-90. Frolova-Walker suggests that this conflict was not purely ideological, but also about control over music publishing.

[22] Ashrafi, *Muzyka v moei zhizni*, 38-39

built music school there.[23] Vasilenko never permanently left Moscow, but by 1934 he had already written several pieces inspired by the music of the so-called Soviet East.

Ashrafi was just one among many national composers who were drawn to the political and cultural center of the USSR by the opportunities for education and work that Moscow offered. Another Uzbek composer, Tolibjon Sadykov, was his classmate, and the Armenian Aram Khachaturian studied with Vasilenko before graduating in 1934. Other composers who followed a similar route included the Georgian composer Nikolai Narimanidze and the Turkmen musicologist Aleksandr Gaiamov, among many others.[24]

While at the Conservatory, Ashrafi produced a number of works, at least some of them good enough to get him named as an up-and-coming young composer. A recording remains of a march he wrote called “Kurulysh,” or “Construction,” from 1935.[25] It is a paradigmatic example of early Soviet music, evoking the mechanical and industrial future of the Union alongside the bright and cheerful future ahead. The title, “Construction,” evokes the hard work of building the new republic, as well as a positivist outlook on its outcome. There are elements of Uzbek traditional music present here, in particular in the harmonies and the tones that Ashrafi used, but the instrumentation is solidly along European lines. "Fabrikaning yo`lida,” or “On the Way to the Factory,” is another of Ashrafi’s early pieces, published in 1937. As one might guess from the name, it is a similarly socialist-realist work which adapts Uzbek folk song to communist ends,

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[23] Frolova-Walker, *Music and Soviet Power,* 255

[24] Leah Goldman, “Nationally Informed: The Politics of National Minority Music during Late Stalinism.” Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol.67 (3), (2019), 382-383.

[25] Editor, “V MSSK,” Sovetskaya muzyka No. 6 (1936), 74

as cheerful men and women sing about their work in the factory. Like much of the early socialist-realist creators of the Soviet era, Ashrafi interpreted socialist realism as a call for music that directly dealt with themes of industrialization, positive change in society, and labor. The gender equality among laborers in the song also reflects the changing environment of Ashrafi's Uzbekistan, where until the Soviet takeover women were not participants in any kind of large-scale industrial labor force.[26]

After his graduation from the Conservatory, Ashrafi began to write about music in addition to writing music. His first contribution to "Sovetskaya Muzyka" was published in 1938 under the title "Plans of Musical Theatre."[27] This article, a short piece as part of a series of updates about the musical landscape around the Soviet Union starts with the line "The fate of Uzbek art is inextricably united with the art of the great Russian people, with the art of Georgia, of Kazakhstan, of Belarus, with the art of all of the peoples of the Soviet Union."[28] Ashrafi goes on to discuss the upcoming programs for the Musical Theatre of Uzbekistan, making sure to mention his own works among them; chiefly, the upcoming Buran, a collaboration between Ashrafi, Vasilenko, and the Uzbek librettist Yashen Nurmagomedov, who had previously worked with Reinhold Glière on the opera "Gyul'sara."[29]

This kind of partnership was typical of the non-Russian composer's experience in the 1930s and 40s. Reinhold Glière, of German-Polish descent, partnered with Uzbek composer Tolibjon Sadykov to write "Gyul'sara" and "Leyli va Mejnun," two early Uzbek

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[26] Marianne Kamp,. *The New Woman in Uzbekistan : Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism,* (Seattle: University of Washington Press; 2006)

[27] Mukhtar Ashrafi, "Plany muzykal'nogo teatra," Sovetskaya muzyka No. 10 (1938), 71-74

[28] Ashrafi, "Plany muzykal'nogo teatra," 71

[29] Georgii Khubov, "Muzykal'noe isskustvo Uzbekistana," Sovetskaya muzyka No. 6 (1937), 8-13

operas. The troika of Vlasov, Feré, and Maldybaev wrote the Kyrgyz national anthem along with many early Kyrgyz national works; both Vlasov and Feré were Russians, while Maldybaev was a Kyrgyz composer who had studied at the Moscow Conservatory.[30] Many other composers had similar partnerships with their teachers, or with composers who the Soviets tasked with their developmental mission. In many cases this gave rise to strange situations, as in the career of Balasanyan, the Armenian composer who wrote the first Tajik ballet. Balasanyan was hailed as a hero for his work contributing to Tajik culture, and the fact that he was Armenian seemed to matter little. The Soviet hierarchy of cultural development placed Central Asia squarely at the bottom and Russia at the top, but there was much room for gradation. Armenian and later Baltic composers occupied a place very close to Russians in the imaginary of the Composer's Union. They were perceived as more "developed," and thus likely to be more successful in music.

In Ashrafi's 1938 article, he also describes the other composers who he sees as influential on the then-current state of Uzbek music: Kozlovsky, a Russian composer who was exiled to Tashkent in 1936; Sadykov, his classmate at the conservatory and fellow national composer; Gadjibekov, the great Azerbaijani national composer, famous for writing a maqom opera based on Leyli va Mejnun in 1908; and Brusilovsky, another young Russian composer who moved to Kazakhstan in 1933. The influence of Moscow on Ashrafi is clear here, as he also thanks Glière for his work in initially developing Uzbek musical culture.[31] On the one hand, his first line reveals that he thinks of Uzbek

[30] A. Livshits, "Muzykanty Sovetskoi Kyrgyzii," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 6 (1939), 49-50

[31] Ashrafi, "Plany muzykal'nogo teatra," 71

music as inextricably tied to the musics of the other republics; on the other hand, half the names he names are Russians, and everyone he names but Gadjibekov studied at the Moscow conservatory. In that issue, a number of other composers similarly discuss the development of musical culture in their own republics, and the story is much the same. Many of them make reference to Ashrafi as a particularly successful young composer, but alongside that, their thanks are largely to their Russian-educated colleagues and their Russian teachers at the Moscow Conservatory.[32] Ashrafi's prose stands out among them as both particularly effusive and particularly pro-Russian.

It's difficult to say how authentic these statements were, considering the political climate of the Soviet Union in 1938. The ongoing Stalinist terror had already led to the arrests, exile, and in some cases executions of many figures who would have been familiar to Ashrafi. One of the composers he named, Kozlovsky, was exiled to Tashkent in 1936, as were many other artists and musicians. Many Uzbek intellectuals were executed in secret at this time for the crime of excessive nationalism, primarily the leaders of the Islamic Reformist movement, the Jadids.[33] Abdurauf Fitrat, who wrote about Uzbek folk music among many other topics, was executed in 1938. On the other hand, the Soviets had given Ashrafi enormous opportunities in his life, and he had no particular allegiance to the Jadids' vision of Islamic modernity. By the time he was an adult, their vision had already been absorbed by the broader Soviet communist vision.

Why did this generation of young composers like Ashrafi get the opportunities they did? The developmental vision of the Soviets included a clear hierarchy of cultural

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[32] Various Authors, Sovetskaya muzyka No. 10 (1938)

[33] Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 60-62

development, in which the Uzbeks were near the bottom. Leah Goldman has argued that this vision presented vast opportunities for minority composers, but that it also forced them into the box of representing their nation rather than the Soviets as a whole, in a sort of tokenization.[34] This line of thinking largely holds up when applied to Ashrafi, even though he was slightly older than the new generation of Soviet-trained composers that Goldman discusses. Stalinist national policy promoted the development of regional culture in a whole host of ways. Musically, this development was supposed to follow along the lines that Russian culture had developed, i.e. towards operas, ballets, and a certain kind of Romantic Classical music. One of the many effects of Stalin's "National in form, socialist in content" pronouncement was to encourage the republics to speed towards developing their own operas and ballets, and thus the personnel needed to support that kind of sudden change in the artistic environment. For Ashrafi to compose and conduct in the style he'd been taught, as he is in Figure 1, he needed both physical and intellectual infrastructure: Academies to train musicians on Western-style instruments, rehearsal spaces, halls with stage managers, printing presses for sheet music, and the other trappings of classical concert culture that the Soviets were invested in building.

In 1939, Ashrafi released his first major piece. Writing alongside his teacher Vasilenko, he premiered the opera "Buran," or, "the Snowstorm." It is a fairly standard Soviet morality play about proto-communists living in Central Asia. As such, it was praised in the press to an astonishing degree. It was reviewed by one L. Stepanov in Sovetskaya Muzyka in early 1940, who suggested that it should be performed as a

[34] Leah Goldman, "Nationally Informed," 397-398

Figure 1. A young Mukhtar Ashrafi conducts.[35]

centerpiece to the second Dekada of Uzbek arts; the first had taken place in 1937.[36] "Buran" was well reviewed generally, and much touted as the first Uzbek opera, another sure sign of development towards cultural modernity. Depending on the article, writers tended to emphasize either Vasilenko's participation or Ashrafi's. Critics fell into these two camps largely along the lines of pro-Russian chauvinism. Writers concerned with the Soviets' developmental mission emphasized the partnership between the two composers and the success of the Soviets in bringing culture to Central Asia. Others emphasized the role of the Russian Vasilenko as the primary composer in an unequal

[35] From the collection at the House Museum of Mukhtar Ashrafi (Dom-Muzey Mukhtar Ashrafi). Tashkent.

[36] L. Stepanov, "Uzbekskaya Opera 'Buran'," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 2 (1940), 72-73

partnership between a 'developed' composer and an 'undeveloped' student. Ashrafi's friend and colleague, Aleksey Kozlovsky, was a particular supporter of Ashrafi's work developing a new culture. In 1944 he published an op-ed discussing the importance of Ashrafi's work joining the musical traditions of East and West.[37] Although he mentions Ashrafi's teacher Vasilenko, it is clear throughout that he is writing about Ashrafi as a successful young composer rather than a student.

During WWII, Ashrafi studied with the Leningrad Conservatory in exile, as the vast majority of its faculty were evacuated to Tashkent. His primary teacher at this time was Maximilian Shteinberg. He continued his work on composition and released "Velikii Kanal," or Great Canal, in 1941. This work, another co-production with Vasilenko, is a blatant piece of Stalin-era propaganda. The canal that the title references is the infamous White Sea canal, whose construction was done by prison laborers and whose ultimate end can easily be read as a sort of symbolic failure of Stalin's attempts at monumental construction projects.[38]

In the post-Stalin era during Khrushchev's Thaw, the strict national identity of composers was no longer an absolute mandate, and this meant that the works of earlier composers received new, and not always flattering, appraisal. "Velikii Kanal" itself was also a symbolic failure; it was reedited and rereleased in 1953 to little fanfare, except for an appearance in the 1956 article "Problemy uzbekskoi muzyki" (Problems of Uzbek

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[37] Aleksey Kozlovsky, "Mukhtar Ashrafi i uzbekskaya narodnaya muzyka," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 2 (1944), 40

[38] Julie Draskoczy, "The Put' of Perekovka: Transforming lives at Stalin's White Sea-Baltic Canal," Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, The Russian review (Stanford), 2012-01, Vol.71 (1), p.30-48
The canal, although touted as a success, was never deep enough to serve its intended shipping function, to say nothing of the cost in human life.

music).[39] In that article, the author, ethnomusicologist Tamara Vyzgo, describes some of the major problems facing Uzbek music, which she saw as primarily stemming from an over-reliance on a few folkloric themes for classical inspiration. She names "Velikii Kanal," "Buran," and Gliere and Sadykov's "Leyli va Mejnun" as three operas that all use the same basic motif at one point, drawn from historical maqom music.[40]

Ashrafi also composed work alone, including the "Heroic" symphony which premiered in 1942. Few recordings remain of this work, but in a review in "Sovetskaya Muzyka," its main attributes were given as patriotism and importance to the war effort. This was confirmed by the Stalin Prize, which Ashrafi received for the "Heroic" symphony in 1943. Frolova-Walker suggests that this prize was part of the Soviet cultural affirmative action; the Stalin Prize committee was heavily pressured to select a winner from each of the republics for some cultural endeavor, if there was at all a credible winner to be found. In some cases, the Stalin Prize committee was overridden by Stalin personally in order to add non-Russian winners.[41] This continued even as Stalin began to mistrust the non-Russians in his government and in the USSR, a fact which has been well-documented.[42] This kind of affirmative action certainly served Ashrafi and the other Uzbek composers of his generation well. From 1937-1953, he received almost every major award the USSR could offer him, becoming the most awarded Uzbek composer. His compatriot Sadykov was a close second, also receiving a

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[39] Tamara Vyzgo, "Problemy Uzbekskoi Muziki," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 3 (1957), 61-68

[40] Tamara Vyzgo, "Problemy Uzbekskoi Muziki," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 3 (1957), 61-68

[41] Frolova-Walker, "Stalin's Music Prize," 173-174.

[42] Erik Scott, *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 85

Stalin prize and several other honors.[43] He finally graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory as an extern in 1948.

Section 2: "Coauthorship or 'Coauthorship?'"

By the end of World War 2, Ashrafi was firmly entrenched in the Soviet system of classical music. He was probably the most famous composer from the UzSSR and possibly from Central Asia as a whole. He had made his bed in the Stalinist era, and was so committed to the musical world that he had entrenched himself in that he sided with the Composer's Union in Moscow against movements in his own republic. The largest example of this can be seen in his role in Stalin's anti-cosmopolitan campaign, starting in 1948. Kirill Tomoff argues persuasively that many Uzbeks interpreted the campaign, now widely understood to have been an anti-Jewish campaign, in a different way that largely served their own internal goals for the republic.[44] Those goals were the promotion of Uzbek traditional music and a loosening of the restrictions on the types of music that could be made. This affair took place while Ashrafi was Deputy Chair of the Uzbek Composer's Union, a position that he held from 1940 until 1948, when he was removed as part of the machinations of the younger, more pro-Uzbek composers. At one point, he and his allies attempted to get Uzbek traditional music banned from the radio. This music, the same kind of music that he had been taught by his father 30 years earlier, was now symbolic of the divide in Uzbek cultural politics.

As we have seen with his works both alone and alongside Vasilenko, Ashrafi was not against drawing on folkloric and national themes in his orchestral writing. In fact,

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[43] In addition to his two Stalin prizes, Ashrafi also got named People's Artist of Uzbekistan, People's Artist of the USSR, and received the Order of Lenin.

[44] Tomoff, "Uzbek Music's Separate Path," 212-13

because of Stalin's cultural policy, he had to remain within the stereotype of the national composer that Goldman outlines. Many of his works from around this period, as for example the soundtrack to the movie "Nasreddin in Bukhara" from 1943 drew heavily on the oriental sound that had come to represent Central Asia in Russian Classical music.[45] "Nasreddin in Bukhara" is also representative of the types of films that the Soviet Uzbek film industry was making, which themselves drew on regional folklore; Nasreddin is an Aesop-like figure who helps the common people through his antics, which made him an easy character to frame as a proto-communist fighting against the proto-capitalist Emir of Bukhara. Ashrafi's "Ferghana suite," also published in 1943, is similarly oriental in sound.

This oriental sound began with Mikhail Glinka's work in the early 1800s and was reproduced by Russian composers into the 20th century. Glinka, born in 1805, wrote music based on what he heard growing up in rural Russia, alongside his education in the classical tradition in Germany. He was followed by the Kuchka, or mighty handful, five composers in the later 1800s who set out to consciously develop an authentic Russian music. Whether or not they succeeded is the topic of much debate, but their works and stylistic inventions were very influential on Soviet composers, and on the techniques those composers used to try and translate folk music themes into classical works. In most cases, this meant approximating the sound of traditional instruments with their closest relatives; oboe for zurna, trumpets and trombones for the shepherd's horns, and

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[45] Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin*. (New Haven : Yale University Press; 2007), 47-49
Oriental here, although related to such concepts as those expounded in Edward Said's "Orientalism," has a specific musical meaning.

strings for the sound of Ashrafi's own first instrument, the dutar.[46] In Ashrafi's case, it also meant exporting not only the sound but the actual melodies, quoting from maqoms and other Uzbek traditional songs. Unlike his younger contemporaries, however, he was not interested in the traditional music on its own terms. Purely traditional music, both in UzSSR and in other parts of the Soviet Union, was consistently characterized as "monophonic." That is to say this music had only one melodic line, and thus was characterized as unsophisticated compared to "polyphonic" European classical music. This idea was not a Soviet or even a Russian invention, but a part of the larger self-aggrandizement of the European classical establishment. Whatever its veracity, however, Ashrafi certainly believed it and believed in the superiority of Russian compositional technique. His compositions reflect his orchestration experience working with Vasilenko, Schekhter, and Shteinberg.

According to Tomoff, Ashrafi was part of the "pro-Russian" group within the Composer's Union in 1948, but he was one of the only Uzbek musicians who felt that way. Even his contemporary and co-alumnus of the Moscow Conservatory, Talib Sadykov, had made inflammatory statements about Uzbek music. Sadykov claimed that Uzbek music could only be understood "by blood;" that is, by people who were ethnically Uzbeks. This ran directly counter to the ideals of the Soviet Union and the supposed universality of the Friendship of the Peoples.[47] The pro-Russian group within the

[46] The zurna is a reeded instrument similar to the oboe that appears across central Asia and into southern Europe. The shepherd's horn has much in common with the alphorn or the natural trumpet. The dutar, already mentioned, is a relative of the guitar.

[47] Tomoff, "Uzbek Music's Separate Path," 227

Composer's Union was almost all exiled and politically compromised composers like Kozlovsky, who became one of Ashrafi's close friends and musical collaborators.[48]

All of the back-and-forth over the direction of Uzbek music came to a somewhat abrupt end with the death of Stalin. In 1952, Ashrafi received his second Stalin prize, this time for the cantata "Pesn' o schast'e."[49] There is some evidence Ashrafi was awarded partly for his efforts to combat the monophonic music of Uzbekistan and create polyphonic music; in other words, European-style classical music.[50] A few years later, Ashrafi was back in positions of cultural importance in the Republic, ultimately receiving the honor of going along with Khrushchev on a number of trips to various as-yet-unaligned countries in the developing Cold War. The most famous of these, his trip to India, took place in 1955, and he wrote extensively on the subject. In his discussions of India, Ashrafi reveals a certain mellowing of his previously strident opinions on musical development. Although he emphasized again that European-style classical music was, of course, the height of development, he was also much more willing to consider the "unique qualities" of Indian music.[51] Despite Indian music's alleged lack of polyphony, he was impressed by the instrumentation and the melodic inventiveness that he heard.

Part of this change in opinion was due to the historical connection between the regions. Ashrafi describes a conversation he had with a music professor, one Sambamurti, about Babur, the leader of the Great Mughal empire, which stretched from

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[48] Tomoff, "Uzbek Music's Separate Path," 240

[49] "Song about Happiness."

[50] Frolova-Walker, "Stalin's Music Prize," 124

[51] Ashrafi, *Muzyka v moei zhizni*, 139-40

Central Asia into the north of India and influenced culture across the whole region. Ashrafi describes this as proof for the similarity of some aspects of North Indian music to Uzbek music, and spent some time musing about their relationship and the possibility for "Soviet brotherhood" with India in the future. In 1958, he released his next opera, "Dilorom," which was made into a film ten years later. Like his earlier works, this is a solidly European orchestral interpretation of Central Asian musical themes. The story of "Dilorom" is taken from the poem collection Khamza, by the 15th century Timurid poet Alisher Navoi. Navoi, in Soviet interpretation and modern Uzbek thinking, was the father of Turkic-language literature, and many of the pieces of Uzbek music created in the USSR draw heavily on his works.[52] "Dilorom" as interpreted by Ashrafi is set in Mughal India, rather than Persia as in the original work. India was important to the whole of the Soviet government in the Khrushchev era as a major potential ally and a recently decolonized power, but it was especially important to Uzbeks like Ashrafi. Starting in the 1950s, Tashkent became a hub for students from outside the USSR, partly as proof that Communism wasn't just for Russians. Soviet outreach to the third world or the unaligned nations created a series of opportunities for Uzbeks from all walks of life to represent the USSR.

After his return from India, Ashrafi settled into a successful career at the height of Uzbek classical music. He held various positions at the Tashkent Conservatory, starting with director of the opera department in 1947, becoming a professor as well in 1953, and eventually becoming the rector of the school in 1970. He was the artistic director of the Uzbek Opera and Ballet Theatre in Tashkent from 1943 to 1947 and again

[52] Leyli va Majnun and Farhod va Shirin are two other parts of the Khamza, for example.

from 1966 to 1970, and the director of the Samarqand Ballet and Opera Theatre from 1964-66.[53] He was on the board of the UzSSR's Composer's Union and on the Composer's Union of the USSR starting in 1948. In practice, he held almost every important position in the UzSSR's classical music apparatus.

In 1960, during this period of prominence, Ashrafi was accused of plagiarism. A special investigation led to his expulsion from the Composer's Union early the next year.[54] This investigation was led by Dmitri Shostakovich, who claimed in personal letters that he never liked Ashrafi and always suspected him of being up to no good.[55] Ashrafi completely omits this moment from his memoirs in *Muzyka v moei zhizni*, which perhaps lends some credence to the accusations. It's difficult, however, to say for certain. Ashrafi had already had the suggestion of plagiarism leveled at him only a few years earlier in Sovetskaya Muzyka. That suggestion was not particularly targeted at him, however, but rather an exploration of the difficulty of returning to the same well of source material again and again. Uzbek composers and national composers more generally were supposed to draw on folkloric material, even as they moved further towards European orchestration and forms. In this conception Ashrafi was just one of many composers, including non-Uzbeks like Glière, who were potentially verging on creative theft due to the limited amount of Uzbek music that could be turned to the Soviet developmental purpose.

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[53] Ashrafi, *Muzyka v moei zhizni*, 16

[54] Transcript of the meeting of the V plenum and the resolution of the extraordinary VI plenum of the Board of the USSR Investigative Committee to consider the case of M. A. Ashrafi. RGALI, Fond 2077, op. 1, ed. kh. 2813.

[55] Shostakovich quoted in "A life's friendship," as well as in Solomon Volkov's controversial work "Testimony."

In 1960, the situation was different. In "Soavtorstvo and 'soavtorstvo,'"[56] the first outward sign that Ashrafi was in trouble appeared. The author, unnamed in the original printing, describes Russian composers like Glière and Vasilenko and their work developing national culture in various republics, as well as the great successes of the national minority cadre of composers. Khachaturian takes pride of place in this listing of the successes of Soviet development. Then the author pivots to talking about a number of composers who are not living up to their promise, starting with Ashrafi. Starting with the recently released "Dilorom," the author claims that almost all of Ashrafi's works going back to "Buran" have been in some way plagiarised, ranging from taking material from his Tashkent colleague Kozlovsky's work to removing his teacher Vasilenko's name from works that they cowrote.[57] The unnamed author also suggests a number of other composers who have crossed the line in some way. A Buryat composer, D. Ayusheev, was accused of leaving off the name of his teacher B. Maisel' in an opera performed at the Buryat Dekada, a celebration of Buryat art. In a particularly complicated case, the author suggests that a piece of Kyrgyz origin could have as many as five credited writers, when in fact it had been released by one.

Shortly after the release of this article, Ashrafi was officially accused of taking credit for Kozlovsky's and Vasilenko's work in their collaborative writings, as well as other potential offenses relating to plagiarism. Ashrafi wrote a number of letters in his defense but ultimately acquiesced to the judgement of the Composer's Union and was

[56] Co-authorship and "co-authorship." Scare quotes intentional in the original.

[57] Author unknown, "Soavtorstvo i 'soavtorstvo'," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 3 (1960), 28-32

expelled. This was temporary, however, and he returned to the Composer's Union a few years later, with no major effect on his legacy or his composition.[58]

Ashrafi lived out the end of his life in an extremely prestigious position, spending his final years as the rector of the Tashkent Conservatory and writing several more major symphonic works, in particular four ballets for the Alisher Navoiy Ballet Theatre: "Amulet Lyubvi," "Timur Malik," "Stoikost'," and "Lyubov' i Mech." All of these are sentimental ballets, based loosely on folkloric themes. Most of them are still performed in Uzbekistan today, although none are particularly beloved as innovative works of ballet. Even in the post-Stalin era, Ashrafi tended to follow the pattern of other composers of his generation and stick to the superficial musical signifiers of national identity in these works; they follow stock ballet and opera plots loosely based on Central Asian folktales, and their soundscape is, by and large, drawn from the same Orientalist tropes as his earlier compositions. They were also fairly well-received by the Soviet establishment. Timur Malik, in particular, was performed across the USSR and received favorable reviews and comparisons to classic ballets.[59] "Amulet Lyubvi" was similarly well-liked, and was performed as recently as 2022 in Tashkent. The various indignities that he suffered also had little impact on his opinions with regard to the superior position of Russian music. In an article from 1972, he wrote thanks to Glière, Khachaturyan, and Kozlovsky for their contributions to Uzbek music and development of high culture, although not to Shostakovich.[60]

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[58] Ashrafi, *Muzyka v moei zhizni*, 17

[59] E. Andreeva, "Na Spektakliakh Yubileinogo Goda," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 12 (1972), 36-41

[60] Mukhtar Ashrafi, 'Uzbekskaya Muzyka', in Aleksandr Rybnik, ed, Muzyka v moei zhizni: Sbornik Statei (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo Literatury i Iskusstva imeni Gafura Guliama, 1975), pp 10-16 (originally published 1955).

Ashrafi died at the age of sixty-three in 1975. Despite his various conflicts with both the Composer's Union and with other Uzbek composers, he remained a consistent supporter of the Soviet musical establishment both in his composition and in his writing. His retrospective on his life, while it avoided many of the more scandalous details, was very pro-Russian and laudatory specifically towards his teachers and collaborators. This was one path that Uzbek composers, especially those of Ashrafi's generation, took; a commitment to the state apparatus both culturally and politically. Without that apparatus, after all, Ashrafi would likely not have risen in the way that he did. All of the institutions for which he worked in Tashkent didn't exist when he was born, and the musical culture was fundamentally changed by the Soviets. Ashrafi certainly seems to have appreciated that fact, and was a loyal and reliable advocate for the Soviet system the whole of his life. In his diplomatic mission to India, he stayed to the party line about the need for the friendship of diverse peoples in the developing world. In all his writings he scrupulously stuck to the same opinions he expressed in 1938 and remained a vocally loyal communist through three major upheavals in Soviet governance. For Ashrafi, Communism was the source of the next phase of culture. Of course, it must have also been easy to be a supporter of the Party when Party membership was all but required to publish symphonies, ballets, and operas.

Uncritical support of the classical establishment was not the only path to success for Soviet Uzbek musicians, however. Ashrafi's contemporary, Yunus Rajabi, found a different and sometimes controversial niche in his lifetime, and left a similarly complicated legacy of work on folk music.

CHAPTER 3

YUNUS RAJABI

Section 1: Uzbek Classical Music?

In 1948, Mukhtar Ashrafi called for Uzbek traditional music to be banned from the radio. As discussed in my previous chapter, this was part of a larger change in cultural policy due to Zhdanov's anticosmopolitanism campaign and local interpretations thereof. The ban was certainly a shock to the average person in Uzbekistan, for whom Uzbek music was by far the most popular radio programming. "Uzbek music" was briefly banned for a period from 1956 to 1959, as part of the ongoing struggle over Zhdanovshchina and local Uzbek politics. But what was Uzbek traditional music, where had it come from, and how indigenous was it to Uzbekistan?

One aspect of the Soviet project in Central Asia was developmental and progressivist. All the republics were intended to have conservatories, theaters, and ballets, thus increasing their cultural profile and bringing the republics closer to a universal communist culture. This was the aspect of Soviet cultural policy that served Ashrafi so well, and to which he became indebted. The other aspect of Soviet cultural policy, which began at the same time in the 20s and 30s, was ethno-national. Each of the republics was supposed to have its own musical culture, folklore, dance, and costume, in order to move through a phase of national identity into socialist awareness, from which they would then be able to achieve communism. In the fledgling UzSSR and the other Central Asian republics, this process meant assigning historical figures from the region to one identity or another. It is important to note that this type of retroactive cultural claiming was not unique to the UzSSR, Central Asia, or indeed to the Soviet

Union. It was a continuation of earlier efforts at national myth-making that existed all over Europe and, indeed, the world. In the UzSSR Chagatai Khan, one of Genghis's Khan's sons, became the first Uzbek and lent his name to the Chagatayists, a Jadid subgroup.[61] Chagatai also became the standard for literature. Alisher Navoiy, the great 15th century Islamic poet, was claimed as an early Uzbek by the Soviets, continuing a process that was started by earlier Uzbek nationalists like the Jadids. His works were subsequently mined by Soviet composers for ballet and opera plots. As the great Chagatai poet/writer, he was a safe reference point for modern composers in a way that more recent regional artists and thinkers increasingly were not.

This process of nationalization extended into the musical traditions of Central Asia. In the territory now called Uzbekistan there existed four different maqom traditions: the Khorezmian Maqom, the Bukharan Shashmaqom[62], the Samarqand Maqom, and the Ferghana/Kokand Maqom. All of these artforms were performed in areas that primarily corresponded to the preexisting polities of the region, the Emirate of Bukhara chief among them. Much has already been written about the Shashmaqom and its origins in the Bukharan Jewish community, in particular by Theodore Levin.[63] The Bukharan Jews made up the majority of performers of Bukharan maqom music before the Revolution. It had been the court music of the Bukharan emir, whose position and state were both ended by the Soviets; the Emirate of Bukhara's territory was split across Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as part of the national delimitation.

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61 Khalid, Adeeb. The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia Berkeley: University of California Press; (1998) 188-190

62 Literally, "the Six Maqoms."

63 Theodore Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God: Musical Travels in Central Asia (And Queens, New York),* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press; 1996), throughout, esp. 91-92

Cultural expression was split as well, as the vast landscape and peoples of Central Asia were divided in new ways. Maqom music encompasses an enormous amount of differing soundscapes and ideas. Nor is it unique to Central Asia within the USSR. Azerbaijan, as another historically Muslim and Persian-influenced region, was developing its own Azerbaijani maqom tradition at the same time as the Uzbeks were. The different maqoms had a certain amount of shared characteristics. They were traditionally played by one or two musicians, typically a doira player and a dutar player/singer. The doira is a frame drum akin to a tambourine, while the dutar is one of many stringed instruments related to the guitar that were common in Uzbekistan. These maqoms were 'monophonic,' in that there was a singular melodic line that both the vocal performance and the stringed instrument played. They were also improvisational, with each musician adding their own ornamentation and elements to the broadly known basic melody.[64] The different regional maqoms had differing structures, but the basic idea of a series of set improvisational moments was common to all. Each maqom has a set introductory melody, a set series of parts that can be played at various times, and improvisational interludes that often call back to earlier parts of the performance.[65] To the Soviets, maqom was simple music, symbolic of the primitivity of culture in the region. Monophony was seen as a symptom, essentially, of a lack of qualified musicians who could create more complicated ensemble structures and melodic lines. Unlike other forms of regional folk music, however, maqom had a highly formalized musical structure. The maqom format and its links to the court culture of the region made it an

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[64] Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools,* 54.

[65] Levin, Theodore, Saida Daukeyeva, and Elmira Kochumkulova, eds. *The Music of Central Asia*. Bloomington : Indiana University Press; 2016 FINISH

ideal candidate for developing into a true "national" form. One of the Uzbek scholars instrumental in this process was Yunus Rajabi, a musician and scholar from Tashkent who would become perhaps the most important Uzbek folk musicologist of the twentieth century.

Section 2: "I will leave this world but my LP recordings will remain."

Figure 2. Melodiia album cover featuring Rajabi. Yunus Rajabi, pictured on the cover of one of the many records of his musical ensembles.

Yunus Rajabi was born fifteen years earlier than Ashrafi in 1897. He was born in Tashkent, at that time the center of Russian Imperial governance in Turkestan. Like Ashrafi, he came from a musical family. His brother Rizqi was a tanbur player, and his father encouraged him to study music at a young age as well. Their neighbor, Mirzokasim Hafiz, was a professional musician who gave both brothers lessons. By the time of the Communist revolution, Rajabi was already a fairly successful dutar player and folk singer. Rajabi's father died, however, when he was just 14, and as a result he

began working in order to support his family. During World War 1, Rajabi was working as a butcher during the day and continuing to study music performance at night.[66]

He was also a budding ethnomusicologist. In 1919, Rajabi enrolled and studied folk music at the new Turkestan People's Conservatory, which had been opened that same year under the initiative of the Central Asia-born Russian musicologist, Viktor Uspenskiy. Uspenskiy had been living in Central Asia and collecting information about music there for decades, and he was ideally placed as a Soviet point person to jumpstart the local music scene. Rajabi studied with another famous Uzbek musician, Shorakhim Shoumarov, who was a Tashkent native and maqom expert, as well as many other instrumentalists.[67] Under their tutelage, Rajabi became interested in the different styles of maqom and their preservation. Although there had been previous attempts to create a separate system of musical notation for Central Asian folk music, for the most part music was passed down through the oral tradition from teacher to student by memory. Rajabi did not attempt to create his own notation. In his studies with Uspenskiy, he learned the European notation system and Uspenskiy's methods of collecting and transcribing music.[68] In this way, he was inculcated both into the preexisting musical traditions of the region and the budding Soviet classical world. He rapidly came to the forefront of attempts to translate the music of Uzbekistan to a national form that would still mesh with the attitudes and ears of the rest of the USSR. Unlike Ashrafi, who threw himself into the European classical mode, Rajabi took the Islamic, Persianate music

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[66] Abdumutalibovich, Ashurov M. "The Study of the Life and Creativity of Yunus Rajabi and the Rich Heritage He Left to the Uzbek Nation." *International Journal on Integrated Education*, vol. 3, no. 12, 2020, 40

[67] Karima Alimbaeva, "Shorakhim Shoumarov," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 3 (1950), 38-39

[68]Abdumutalovich, "Life and Creativity," 40-41

exemplified by Shashmaqom and adapted it. To do so, he worked alongside Soviet ethnomusicologists and folklorists to create or "rebuild" instruments, write down previously unwritten music, and create new kinds of ensembles to play the new Uzbek folk music. In essence, he created Uzbek folk music as it officially existed throughout the Soviet era, although unofficial folk music continued to exist as well.

After his graduation from the Turkestan People's Conservatory, Rajabi began to collect music from across the region, learning songs from different singers and musicians as he traveled around Central Asia. In 1923, he moved to Samarqand. He became the musical director at the Samarqand Drama Theater in 1925, taught music, and wrote the music for several early 'musical dramas,' a sort of precursor to the full operas that the Soviets hoped would eventually flourish in all the republics. Many of these were collaborative pieces he wrote alongside his teachers, in particular Viktor Uspenskiy and Nikolai Mironov. Both of these composers would continue to be heavily involved in Rajabi's career until their deaths.

While he was teaching and directing, Rajabi was also studying and transcribing maqom music, and in Samarqand he met many then-famous Uzbek folk musicians. He recruited a great many of them into the ensembles that he founded over the course of the 1920s including well-known performers like Imamjon Ikromov and Fulom Mirzaev, as well as his brother Rizqi, as can be seen in Figure 3. In 1927 he returned to Tashkent to create and direct the National Folk Ensemble for the new Uzbek radio station. The ensemble immediately became quite popular, and included performances from many of Rajabi's interlocutors and teachers, including his conservatory instructor Shoumarov. During the period between 1927 and 1940, Rajabi continued his education and the

expansion of his musicological knowledge. He traveled to Moscow to study at the Moscow Conservatory on multiple occasions, although one of his trips was cut short due to the outbreak of World War II. [69]

Юнус Ражабий раҳбарлигидаги ансамбль. 1929 йил. Биринчи қаторда (чапдан ўнгга) Назир Гозиев, Ориф Қосимов, Карим Зарипов, иккинчи қаторда — Ғулом Мирзаев, Имомжон Икромов, Мақсудхўжа Юсупов, Рихси Ражабий, Шораҳим Шоумаров; учинчи қаторда — Юнус Ражабий, Хайрулла Убайдуллаев, Аброр Дадахўжаев.

Figure 3. Yunus Rajabi and one of his first ensembles. Yunus Rajabi is in the bottom left. Also pictured are his brother Rizqi and his teacher, Shorakhim Shoumarov.[70]

Section 3: The Jadids

During the 1920s, Rajabi's work was supported by the Soviet government as part of the korenizatsiia policies. The Soviets wanted recognizable national cultures that had

[69] V. Meyen, "Uzbekskie Muzykanty," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 11 (1964), 111-112

[70] Reproduced in Yunus Rajabi, *Shashmaqom,* (Tashkent, 1966-74)

broad appeal and could promote healthy or safe national identity; their cultural policy reflected this throughout the 1930s and beyond. In Uzbekistan specifically, the problems of creating a local musical tradition were many. Before the Revolution, Uzbeks lived

alongside other Central Asians in a way that rarely aligned with the Soviet conception of national territories. Local culture was similarly non-unified, although it had certain elements that were common across different cities and regions. Besides maqom, the influence of Sufism and the Sufi conception of Islam was common across most of the region. The concept of folk music or heritage music itself did not exist in Central Asia in the same way it did in Europe, where there was a much clearer divide between the classical tradition and folk music.[71] Rajabi, alongside other Soviet musicologists, was part of this process of creating Uzbek music. Under his purview, Shashmaqom became the exclusive reserve of the Uzbek people, who were in the process of being created by the national delimitations that separated the once intermixed peoples of Central Asia into clear administrative units.

The same project was underway in Tajikistan, the republic with the most cultural overlap with Uzbekistan. Before the national delimitation, the divide between Uzbek and Tajik identity had been much less clear, and more split along rural-urban lines around large cities like Samarqand. While Soviet Uzbeks were defining what exactly was Uzbek culture, Soviet Tajiks were doing the same, often creating parallel visions of culture.

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[71] Alexander Djumaev, "Musical Heritage and National Identity in Uzbekistan," (*Ethnomusicology Forum* Vol. 14, No. 2, November 2005) 166-167

The Jadids, the Islamic reformists who allied with the Soviets in the 1920s, were also invested in promoting a new national identity. Among them was Abdurauf Fitrat, a reformer who had studied in the Ottoman Empire and was an Uzbek patriot. He was a Muslim, but he was opposed to the 'ulama[72] he and his fellow Jadids saw as leading Uzbeks along a non-modernist path. The Jadids also had an interest in presenting maqom as the indigenous classical tradition of the Uzbeks. When the Soviet takeover presented the opportunity, they jumped at the chance to put maqom forward as a convenient avatar for national musical development. Fitrat wrote extensively on shashmaqom in his book on Uzbek classical music, *O'zbek klassik musiqasi va uning tarikhi*.[73] In that book, Fitrat created the idea of Uzbek classical music, and defined the limits of what was Uzbek and what was not. He also worked alongside Viktor Uspenskiy, the primary ethnomusicologist who worked in Central Asia and was one of Rajabi's teachers. Uspenskiy, a career musicologist, spent his life trying to understand and catalogue the music of Central Asia, and wrote a number of books on the subject. He was heavily influenced by Jadids like Fitrat, who advocated to him their opinions about the development of music in the region. Fitrat wrote on the types of maqom as well as the ensembles that should play them, creating a format that Rajabi used as a starting point and expanded on over the course of his career.

The Jadids had a specific vision of the modernity that they hoped to achieve in Central Asia. Originally, it was drawn from Islam; unlike the Soviets they were not atheists, but were committed to a vision of religion. They allied with the Soviets,

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[72] Conservative Islamic clergy.

[73] Abdurauf Fitrat, *O'zbek Klassik Musiqasi va Uning Tarikhi,* (Samarkand-Tashkent, 1927)

however, as a result of their intention to radically change Central Asian culture, where the existing Islamic scholars in power were totally resistant to any sort of societal change. They also began the process of creating the distinct national identities that now exist in Central Asia. Fitrat, in his work on music, insisted on the primacy of the Uzbek language rather than using Tajik, thus implicitly claiming the folk music of the region for the new Uzbek state.[74] In this way, the forms of maqom music that Rajabi later codified were taken from their previous associations with specific cities in different emirates and khanates and attached to the new Uzbek SSR. Uzbek music was divided into multiple separate but overlapping spheres in the early Soviet era.

Much of Fitrat's scholarship was removed from the public eye, however, in the later 1930s, when almost all of the Jadids were imprisoned and executed as part of Stalin's terror campaign. Because of their political aspirations before the Communist takeover, they were politically suspect. They didn't owe their power or their social influence completely to Stalin or indeed to Lenin, and their religious beliefs also put them into the camp of the suspect. Of course, due to the semi-random nature of the terror, they might very well have been targeted even if they were atheists. Rajabi and other folk musicologists, on the other hand, were safe due to their lack of political connections. Rajabi had not aspired to run a newspaper or initiate sweeping changes in the social system of the region. His focus was almost exclusively musical, and he had not been particularly activist before the Revolution. He had also never left Central Asia, whereas Jadids like Fitrat had visited the Ottoman Empire and further distant countries, which made him politically suspect. Fitrat's work continued to be obliquely

[74] Djumaev, "Musical Heritage," 172

referenced by Uzbek scholars like Rajabi, however, as he continued to be the primary source for information about the dominant vision of Uzbek folk music. Rajabi had, in fact, met Fitrat and spoken to him during his investigations in the 1920s.[75]

Rajabi was also following in the footsteps of another contemporaneous early Uzbek folk musician, Hamza Hakim-Zade Niyazi.[76] Niyazi, another Jadid, was born in Kokand in 1889, in what was then the Kokand Khanate. Like Fitrat, Niyazi was a proponent of Uzbek folk music. He, too, was a reform-minded Muslim (although, unlike Fitrat, he later professed atheism), a supporter of radical change in Central Asia, and willing to work with the Communist party. He was also both a composer and a poet who wrote almost a hundred songs in the early years of the Soviet Union before his death in 1929.[77] Niyazi was stoned to death for his outright support of Soviet policies like the hujum, or assault, which aimed to radically change women's place in Uzbek society. Some of the songs and poems that Niyazi wrote were specifically about this subject, featuring women unveiling and singing about their liberation. This kind of didactic song-writing and his premature end led him to be held up as the father of Socialist realism in the UzSSR.[78]

Section 4: "There were some very serious ideological debates…"

One of Rajabi's major influences on maqom in the UzSSR was to complicate this formula through the various ensembles that he created, all of which added significantly

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[75] During, Jean. "Power, Authority and Music in the Cultures of Inner Asia." *Ethnomusicology Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Music and Identity in Central Asia (2005): 144-45.

[76] Sultanova, Razia. "Music and Identity in Central Asia: Introduction." *Ethnomusicology Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Music and Identity in Central Asia (2005): 136.

[77] Sultanova, "Music and Identity in Central Asia," 136-137

[78] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan,* 174-175

more instruments, harmonies, and a structured form which mimicked that of a chamber orchestra. His largest maqom ensembles had over forty musicians.[79] With written, official maqom charts, musicians moved away from the previous oral/aural tradition of music passed down from teacher to student and became more similar to the classical conservatory model that had been imported from Moscow. The level of improvisation also dropped significantly as a result, and the somewhat fluid nature of older maqom performances became more and more regimented.

In addition to his work transcribing and performing, Rajabi composed new work for the new ensembles following in his footsteps. He wrote many original songs for the National Folk Ensemble, some based directly on other Uzbek folk songs and some in the mode of the Soviet socialist realist song that was permissible at the time. His musical works from this era are clearly variations on the themes of maqom, featuring virtuosic singing in the 'throaty' style that so frustrated Russian cultural authorities.[80] This style was considered a relic of the underdeveloped past, especially by some Russian commentators who associated it with 'monophony'. Rajabi was also tasked with creating a number of other ensembles throughout the 1930s. In 1939, he created and directed the first all-female dutar ensemble at the Tashkent Conservatory, which became immensely successful under his leadership.

Folklorists and ethnographers like Rajabi also faced the problem of western musical notation, which did not easily facilitate a true representation of the soundscape of local instruments. Microtonal sounds and other assumptions of the 'default' way of

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[79] Abdumutalovich, "Life and Creativity," 40-41

[80] Tomoff, "Uzbek Music's Separate Path," 223

thinking about music did not line up well with the standardized 12-tone scale in use in European music since the time of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.[81] Western music was and is based on the circle of fifths and major and minor keys, while maqom and the other indigenous music of Uzbekistan tended to use scales derived from earlier Persian sources. The Soviet solution, which Rajabi was a key participant in, was to rebuild both the actual instruments and the ensemble structure of the music in order to 'Westernize' them while theoretically still keeping the unique character. This process has remained controversial, as has the whole of Rajabi's work. Contemporaneous scholars and composers worried that changing the instruments too much would lose the authentic sound of maqom and create a crude facsimile of the music, a cry that hearkens back to arguments about Orientalism in music writ large.[82]

Yan Pekker, a musicologist and journalist, wrote two articles about this process, one in 1946 and one in 1949. Importantly, these articles fall on either side of the 1948 Zhdanovshchina pronunciation. In the first, Pekker lays out the situation in UzSSR and the current work of the folk instrument orchestra, which he describes as "one of the main achievements of the Uzbek folklorists."[83] He also explicitly discusses the problem of the scales and the "inequality of temperament" that defined the historical sound of Uzbek music. According to Pekker, the ethnomusicologists A. I. Petrosian and N. N. Mironov were on opposite sides of this divide, with Petrosian championing reconstructing instruments to conform to European notation, and Mironov insisting on

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[81]See for example: Ralph Kirkpatrick, *Interpreting Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier: a Performer's Discourse of Method,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

[82] Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin,* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2007), 152-53

[83] Yan Pekker, "Uzbekskie Narodniy Instrumentiy," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 11, 1946, 43

what Pekker calls the original, "monophonic" sound.[84] Pekker went on to praise Rajabi specifically as a composer whose work had helped develop the new folk orchestra. He ended this first article on a hopeful note by saying that Uzbek music was still in a developmental stage, but that it was on the path towards being "one of the most interesting musical collectives in our Motherland."[85]

Three years later, Pekker returned to the subject of the Uzbek folk orchestra, this time with a somewhat less positive spin. One of his major complaints is that all of the best musicians in the UzSSR have been absorbed into other ensembles, whether it be the Philharmonic Uzbek Song and Dance Ensemble or the Uzbek Radio Orchestra, which Rajabi was directing.[86] Pekker describes three viewpoints on Uzbek music that have created problems for the folk orchestra. The first was that only the classical tradition was important, and that Uzbek folk music should be totally abandoned. Pekker doesn't name names, but it seems clear that this is in reference to Mukhtar Ashrafi and his faction in the Uzbek Composer's Union. The second is that instrument reconstruction has been a failure and that to capture the authentic nature of Uzbek music requires older instruments and a move away from the European style ensemble. This argument is the anti-Orientalist one, as it acknowledges the importance of regional tradition and inscribes attempts to reproduce it with European methods as doomed to failure. The third, which Pekker agrees with, is that in fact the folk orchestra has been successful. In

[84] Yan Pekker, "Uzbekskie Narodniy Instrumentiy," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 11, 1946, 42

[85] Yan Pekker, "Uzbekskie Narodniy Instrumentiy," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 11, 1946, 44

[86] Yan Pekker, "Ob orkestre uzbekskikh narodnykh instrumentov," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 5, 1949, 81

his argument, the orchestra is still in the process of developing but is, in fact, the first among the orchestras then performing in UzSSR.[87]

Rajabi's role as music director at the National Radio ensemble came to an abrupt halt in 1948. Although he was not part of the Composers' Union, he got caught up in the fallout of the anticosmopolitanism campaign and its results in UzSSR. When Ashrafi advocated for banning traditional music from the radio, he was specifically working against Rajabi as the most obvious avatar of Uzbek music's "separate path."[88] As with many of the consequences of that affair, this was a temporary pause. Stalin's death and the subsequent Thaw meant the end of attempts to police the radio quite so strictly, and made the conflict at the top of the Composers Union a moot point. Rajabi returned to his position in 1959 and reformed the Uzbek Maqom ensemble, which continued to perform for the rest of his life, although he eventually stepped back from directing it in his old age.

Rajabi bounced back from the events of the 1940s and 50s more determined than ever to present his vision of Uzbek folk music, and to preserve the music in the form that he had created. He was heavily influenced by the perspectives of ethnomusicologists like Pekker and Petrosian or at least the perspective that some aspects of the formalized ensemble were contributory to the development of Uzbek folk music. By adding more musicians, more instruments, and counter-melodies and harmonies, he increased a kind of musical complexity that brought maqom closer to Russian classical music. Maqom was, of course, already complex music without his intervention. Some of Rajabi's work

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[87] Yan Pekker, "Ob orkestre uzbekskikh narodnykh instrumentov," Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 5, 1949, 82

[88] Tomoff, "Uzbek Music's Separate Path," 229

was to codify and reorganize the existing elements, and to try and make them fit into the Western model. This project took up most of his life, and he made multiple attempts at it over the course of his career.

Yet another problem of maqom that Rajabi faced in this process was its explicitly religious nature. Uzbek folk music of all stripes was heavily influenced by the Persians, and almost all of the lyrical content was drawn from Islamic Sufi writers. This was not exclusive to folk music; as discussed earlier, many of the more classical works of the UzSSR were drawn from folktales and stories written by the Islamic scholars of the 1400s and 1500s. As elsewhere in the USSR, the Soviets were forced to contend with the explicitly religious nature of the regional tradition that they claimed to be supporting, as opposed their official, still largely atheistic, policy. Rajabi, like Ashrafi, was a Muslim in his early life. Also like Ashrafi, he seemingly was not particularly religious or observant. He was like many Uzbeks interested in Islamic music, and aware of the history of the Islamic thinkers of Uzbekistan, but not particularly resistant to the Soviet anti-religious campaigns.

Increasingly, the Soviets turned a blind eye to expressions of religiosity within the home and in private spaces, which led many Uzbeks to profess Muslim identity in a way that was radically different than in the Muslim nations of the Middle East. This laxity was due in part to World War II, during which time Stalin backed away from explicit religious persecution in hopes that imams and patriarchs would support the war effort. After the war, the Soviets never went back to persecuting religion with the same vigor. Under Khrushchev's program of connection with unaligned nations, the USSR had an interest in appearing religiously tolerant.

Rajabi's major writing and publishing in the 1950s coincided with some of the big outreach efforts to the Islamic world, including the famous trips abroad where Khrushchev brought Uzbek political and cultural figures like Mukhtar Ashrafi and future party secretary Sharof Rashidov on his visits to the developing world. In the Thaw period, largely because of international policy after the Bandung conference in 1955, Soviet crackdowns on Islam drastically lessened and Rajabi was able to advocate for his vision of Uzbek music once again. The conference, also called the Afro-Asian Conference, barred Soviet participation and galvanized Khrushchev to try and prove that the USSR was not merely a rehash of the Russian Empire. This presented previously unheard-of opportunities for travel, of course, but also allowed for greater freedom of expression at home in certain arenas.

Rajabi published five volumes of Uzbek national music between 1955 and 1959, which rapidly became the standard for interpreting and playing Uzbek music.[89] This collection, *Uzbek Halq Musiqasi* or Uzbek Folk Music, encompasses eight volumes and cements the identity of Uzbek music as distinct from the musics of the other Central Asian republics.[90] It also included commentary from Rajabi about his ideas on the subject of Uzbek music's place among world cultural traditions. *Uzbek Halq Musiqasi* is an attempt to standardize the folk traditions of the Uzbeks, expanding beyond maqom to the historically less formalized music of the Gap, the T'oy, and other celebrations, as

[89] Yunus Rajabi, *Uzbek Halq Musiqasi,* (Tashkent, 1955-59)

[90] Yunus Rajabi, *Uzbek Halq Musiqasi,* (Tashkent, 1955-59)

well as so-called “everyday music:” worker’s songs, farmer’s chants, and women’s songs.[91]

Rajabi’s work also remained connected to the Soviet establishment, however. He went on to work at the Tashkent Conservatory, the successor school to the Turkestan People’s Conservatory where he originally studied. He created a curriculum and school for training students in his version of maqom performance. He did so contemporaneously with Ashrafi’s work to develop the European orchestral school at the Conservatory, and occasionally crossed over. In 1956, Ashrafi called him a “bearer of Uzbek musical knowledge” whose hard work was being used to prop up the weak Uzbek opera scene.[92] This was less than ten years after Ashrafi had called for Rajabi to be banned from the radio during the anticosmopolitanism campaign; now, in the relaxed climate of the Thaw, Ashrafi was willing to acknowledge Rajabi as an authentic ‘bearer’ of the Uzbek cultural tradition.[93] And an authentic bearer he was. Rajabi was called on to help write many, many pieces that needed some Uzbek ‘national form’ to In 1959, he helped finish writing and publishing an opera, “Zeinab i Oman.”[94] It had been started by Tolibjon Sadykov, who died in 1957. This must have been somewhat tragic for Rajabi, who had been Sadykov’s teacher in Samarkand in the 1920s.[95] Rajabi was constantly composing for most of his life, on top of directing multiple ensembles and working on

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[91] The Gap is a traditional meeting of men, often to discuss Islamic theology; in the Soviet era these meetings became more secular, but not completely so. The T’oy encompasses a number of celebrations, but especially weddings.

[92] Ashrafi, “Nashi Trudnosti Preodolim,” Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 3 (1956), 48

[93] Ashrafi, “Nashi Trudnosti Preodolim,” Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 3 (1956), 49

[94] M. Sabinina, “Uzbekskaya Muzyka Segodnya,” Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 1 (1959), 31

[95] O. Sadykov, “Narodniy Kompozitor Talibdzhan Sadykov,” Sovetskaya Muzyka No. 10 (1982)

his writing about maqom. He was also recording extensively at the Tashkent Factory; many recordings of his ensembles survive today. The Tashkent Radio also preserved many recordings of his work, including whole shows that were originally broadcast live.[96]

Rajabi also wrote dozens of articles on Uzbek folk music. In addition to *Uzbek Halq Musiqasi*, he published another large collection of transcriptions in the 1960s and 1970s as he neared the end of his life. This collection, *Shashmaqom*, was the biggest part of Rajabi's published contribution to ethnomusicology and to the project of nationalizing Uzbek culture.[97] Rajabi's Uzbek Shashmaqom collections were matched by Boboqul Fayzullayev's Tajik language interpretation of Shashmaqom, released from 1957-1967.[98] Both of these interpretations were enshrined by Viktor Beliaev in his work on Central Asian music, in which he drew heavily on the work they had done and Uspenskiy's categorical works in the 1920s.[99] Rajabi's *Shashmaqom* was the culmination of the work that he had begun doing before the Revolution: A complete set of musical notation that explored everything that he thought important about the form. This text became, in essence, the curriculum for later explorations of maqom in Uzbekistan, as it touches all six of the classical forms that were common in Bukhara. It also continues the separation between Uzbek maqom and other forms of maqom, enshrining the work into the new national and Soviet identity.

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[96] See musical examples for both modern and 1950s interpretations.

[97] Yunus Rajabi, *Shashmaqom,* (Tashkent, 1966-74)

[98] Merchant, *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan*, 52

[99] Viktor Beliaev. *Central Asian music: Essays in the History of the Music of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R.*, Trans. Mark and Greta Slobin. (Middletown, Conn. : Wesleyan University Press; 1975)

Rajabi's nephew Ishaq Rajabov followed in his footsteps and wrote about maqom music and Uzbek folk music as well, including making reference to the works of the Jadids, who had up to this point been largely verboten due to their censorship after the Terror. Both uncle and nephew were, in essence, part of the project that Fitrat and his colleagues had started, even though they couldn't be particularly explicit in their support of Fitrat's ideas about Uzbek national culture. Many of the Jadids were partially rehabilitated under Khrushchev's administration, but their works were still not published and only obliquely mentioned in the 1960s and 70s. Rajabov, like his uncle and his father Rizqi, was also a musician and was not only writing about the music, but performing it. In fact, nearly all the scholars from Uzbekistan were both performers and scholars, seemingly convinced of the importance of playing the music in order to truly understand it.

Rajabi died in 1976. Like Mukhtar Ashrafi, he was heavily awarded, both by the USSR and the UzSSR. Most of the ensembles that he created survived his passing and continued under the leadership of other Uzbek folk musicians, and in many cases outlasted the USSR entirely. In Theodore Levin's works on Central Asian music, he recounts being surprised, when he visited Uzbekistan in the 90s, to discover a divide between those who played music in Rajabi's conservatory-trained mode and those who played what seemed to him a more authentic version. He was especially surprised to discover that both groups were, in essence, playing the same songs.[100] Authenticity, in the case of Uzbekistan, means of genuine national origin, played the way it was played in some prelapsarian past. The maqom music recognizably has the same originating point

[100] Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools*, 55

whether played by an Europeanized ensemble or by a soloist bard, and in large part follows the same conventions. Rajabi did not change the music, or he did as little as possible, but he changed its meaning and its importance to the nation of Uzbekistan, which had not existed until he was almost twenty-seven years old.

CHAPTER 4

FARRUKH ZOKIROV

Section 1: Too Many Jazz Ensembles.

In 1966, Tashkent, the capital of the UzSSR, was destroyed by a huge earthquake. One consequence of this was the destruction of the Tashkentskii Zavod, the record pressing plant that had served the recording needs of the city's cultural industry. The plant had originally been in Noginsk, outside of Moscow, but was evacuated to Tashkent during World War 2 along with much of the cultural institutions of Russia, including the Leningrad Conservatory and many of the composers mentioned earlier in this thesis.[101] From 1941 into the 1960s, the Tashkent Factory was the hub of recording for not just UzSSR, but the whole of Central Asia.[102] In 1964, Melodiia, the Soviet record label, came into existence as a subsidiary of the Ministry of Culture and acquired all of the labels of the USSR.[103] This included the Tashkentskii Zavod imprint.

Melodiia's initial ownership was short-lived, however, as just two years later the city had to be almost completely rebuilt. In the process of rebuilding, Melodiia decided that the city should have an expanded record pressing plant and perhaps a recording studio as well. This reconstruction, along with many other developmental projects in Tashkent, happened under the auspices of the UzSSR's first secretary, Sharof Rashidov.

Rashidov came to power in 1959 and presided over a period of astonishing growth and success in the UzSSR until his sudden death in 1983. In 1959, Uzbeks were

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[101] Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009 121-122

[102] B. Vladimirskii, "O grammofonnoi plastinke," Sovetskaya Muzyka no. 9, 1959

[103] Editor, "Bez edinogo rukovodstva," Sovetskaya Muzyka no. 4, 1965

the fourth most numerous narodnost', or nationality, in the USSR. By 1970, they were the third, and the number of people claiming Uzbek ancestry had grown by more than three million. Tashkent went from the fifth to the fourth most populous city in the USSR over this time, and the largest city outside of the majority slavic regions of Russia and Ukraine.[104] This vast population expansion created an enormous demand for new cultural productivity in literature, art, film, and music. This demand was part of what led Melodiia to push for an expansion of recording of all types at its many new factories across the USSR. In particular, Melodiia began recording and recruiting bands organized under the new concept of VIAs, or Vocal-instrumental ensembles.

Vocal-instrumental ensembles were a Soviet reaction to popular music from the capitalist world. Post WWII, and especially after Khrushchev's "kitchen debate" with Nixon at the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, Soviets became increasingly concerned with living conditions and the benefits of being within communist culture. If the capitalist state had new popular music, why shouldn't the Soviets? In the Khrushchev era, importing Western music was politically difficult, but audiences were increasingly turning away from classical music like that composed by Mukhtar Ashrafi in favor of other listening experiences.[105] This was a continuation of a trend that had already begun in the 1930s, as Uzbek audiences flocked to the sound of folk ensembles over the more Russified operas and ballets produced by conservatory musicians. Ultimately, VIAs filled the gap in the Soviet musical world, falling into a

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[104] Barbara D. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, "Demographic Sources of the Changing Ethnic Composition of the Soviet Union," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1989): 642-643. https://doi.org/10.2307/1972593

[105] N. G. Tomilina, ed., *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul'tura 1965-1972 dokumenty* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009), 43-46.

place between classical music and folk music, just as popular music did outside the USSR.

The VIAs did not create the concept of popular music in the USSR. The phenomenon of Estrada, which was both a precursor to and coexisted with the height of the VIAs. Estrada was an evolving art form, dating back to pre-revolutionary Russia, where it had elements of folk culture similar to vaudeville performance.[106] Estrada performances included songs, staged performances, comedy bits, and elaborate set and stage design that bled over into most other forms of Soviet entertainment. This was certainly true of the VIAs, who are sometimes classified as performing "Estradnaya pesnia" or Estrada songs. Estrada songs, especially in the post WWII era, tended to fall into either what MacFayden calls "civic" or "lyric" themes, and very often a combination of both. Civic themes are another interpretation of the role of socialist realism in music: a celebration of institutions, the nation, the USSR and its historic victories. Lyric themes, on the other hand, are such archetypical subjects as love, romance, and the life of the ordinary person.[107] These thematic elements, largely safe subjects in the Brezhnev era, recur again and again in the music of VIAs. In their song *Trava U Doma*, for example, the Russian VIA Zemlyane connects love for their home and for the Earth with the spacefaring achievements of the cosmonauts, thus combining a civic theme and a lyric one.

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[106] MacFadyen, David. *Red Stars: Personality and the Soviet Popular Song, 1955-1991.* Montreal : McGill-Queen's University Press; (2001) 14-15

[107] MacFadyen, *Red Stars*, 34-35.

The development of Soviet pop music and the VIAs was also influenced by jazz both from within and without the USSR.[108] In the 1940s, jazz had become symbolic in the Soviet imaginary of the decay of Western culture. In the 1920s and 30s, many local Soviet jazz musicians had been performing, both in official and unofficial groups, as well as on the soundtracks to movies like *Veselye Rebiata*.[109] The rise of the socialist realist guidelines for art dismissed what was seen as largely frivolous music, and officials generally frowned on the Western influence of jazz musicians.[110] After WWII, however, the Stalinists took new interest in exerting control over Soviet culture, culminating in Zhdanov's anti-cosmopolitanism campaign. Just as it had hampered Uzbek folk music and led to years of strife within the Uzbek musical establishment, the Zhdanovshchina also led to renewed anti-jazz and anti-Western music efforts in UzSSR. Jazz became associated with moral deviancy, an opinion that lasted among cultural elites even after Stalin's death despite the widespread popularity of jazz.[111] Jazz became more acceptable over the 1960s, due partly to radio programs like Radio Free Europe and Radio Tangiers. Young listeners inside the USSR were mostly not convinced by anti-Communist rhetoric, but they were easily persuaded to enjoy jazz. US cultural diplomacy also played a more direct part in this expansion of jazz. In 1962, Benny Goodman toured the USSR, performing in six major cities, one of which was

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[108] Gleb Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Cold War Soviet Union, 1945–1970*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 185-86

[109] "The Happy Guys." Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun,* 59.

[110] Sometimes this influence went beyond cultural; like other touring artists, jazz musicians occasionally defected to the West or became smugglers. Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 202.

[111] Penny M. von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 15-16.

Tashkent.[112] Other jazz musicians like Duke Ellington and Dave Brubeck visited various parts of the Eastern Bloc on several occasions through the 60s and 70s. Ellington also toured the Soviet Union in 1971. [113]

Out of this new cultural moment of Cold War came the Vocal-instrumental ensemble, the Soviet answer to the problem of youth culture. In addition to a cautious tolerance of jazz, Soviet cultural authorities attempted to co-opt rock and roll by creating vocal-instrumental ensembles, giving young musicians the opportunity to play music while still strictly controlling the thematic material of that music.[114] The term VIA briefly meant any band, but rapidly came to indicate the specific mix that the Soviet authorities were most comfortable with, which included approved songs, traditional instruments, and adherence to a certain vaguely defined code of Soviet morality. VIAs rapidly became immensely popular. At one point in 1974, there were approximately one hundred and sixty thousand official VIAs, and probably thousands more unofficial VIAs, performing across the USSR.[115] Komsomol leaders and event organizers eagerly bought records to play at dance parties, hired bands to perform, and otherwise tried to lead youth participants away from "unhealthy" music and dance and towards the "safe," vetted Soviet music of officially recognized VIAs.[116]

This was a problem that the Komsomol had been dealing with almost since the end of WWII. Official events and youth clubs did not appeal to the younger generation

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[112] Penny M. von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 98-99, 114.

[113] Penny M. von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 123.

[114] Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 193.

[115] Liudmila Bubennikova, "VIA," In *Estrada Rossii, XX vek: entsiklopediya*, edited by E.D. Uvarova, (Moscow, 2004), 115–117.

[116] Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun,* 230.

for a whole host of reasons, including the illicit availability of popular culture from outside the USSR. During the Thaw years, the Komsomol had organized events like the 1957 Moscow International Youth Festival in attempts to prove that the USSR had a vibrant youth culture.[117] The festival, while a success, caused problems for the Komsomol, which was accused by conservative factions led by Alexander Shelepin of doing too much to promote Western-style music and culture.[118] Until the beginning of Brezhnev's ascension to power in 1964, the Komsomol largely stuck to an anti-Western, anti-capitalist position that precluded the notion of accepting any outside musical trends. By the mid-60s, this was an untenable position, and the Komsomol leadership once again pivoted towards attempting to compete with America in the youth culture arena.[119]

Komsomol officers and music enthusiasts alike were buying and listening to music on vinyl. Because of this, the importance of Melodiia's expansion to the success of the VIAs cannot be overstated. Without the huge state infrastructure for producing and recording music, the Soviet music culture could not have taken the form it did. In the UzSSR, the reconstruction of vinyl production in Tashkent was a sea change not just for Uzbek popular music, but for all Uzbek musicians. The Tashkentskii Zavod pressed enormous amounts of records. Mukhtar Ashrafi and Yunus Rajabi were both recorded with various ensembles, as were dozens of VIAs and popular music groups. Tashkent continued to be the center of the music industry in Central Asia and musical groups like the Turkmen jazz-fusion group Gunesh and the Tajik singer Nasiba Abdullaeva also

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[117] Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 140-141.

[118] Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 150.

[119]Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 190.

recorded extensively there. The Tashkent complex attracted musicians from all five of the Central Asian republics, who produced an incredible volume of popular music that drew both on regional themes and on the burgeoning rock and roll sound that managed to penetrate the Soviet world.

Section 2: "Uch Kuduk, Tri Kolodtsa…"

One of the earliest and most famous of the VIAs in Central Asia was Yalla, which initially formed in 1968. Farrukh Zokirov, the lead singer and songwriter of the group, came from a musical dynasty. His parents, Karim Zokirov and Shoista Saidova, had met while studying at the Moscow State Conservatory, where they had attended as members of the same early class of Soviet Uzbeks. Saidova was the originator of the role of Leyli in the Azerbaijani composer Hajibekov's version of "Leyli and Majnun," an opera based on a version of the Leyli and Majnun story by the 16th century Azeri poet Fuzuli.[120] Karim Zokirov was a similarly well-respected musician and went on to become a soloist at the Tashkent Ballet and Opera Theatre, where he worked alongside and was conducted by Mukhtar Ashrafi. He was made a People's Artist of the UzSSR in 1959.[121] Farrukh's older brother Batyr was a musician who, before his untimely death in 1986, was a pop musician and VIA member in his own right. Batyr was 10 years older than Farrukh, and was already highly successful by the time Yalla started performing. He had performed at the 1957 Moscow International Youth Festival and had been named People's Artist of the UzSSR in 1965.

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[120] Jack Ewing, "Layla And Majnun, " in *Critical Survey of Mythology and Folklore: Love, Sexuality, and Desire,* Ed. by Thomas J. Sienkewicz. (Hackensack: Salem Press, 2013).

[121] Editor, "Nagrazhdenie ordenami i medalyami USSR rabotnikov iskusstva i literatury Uzbekskoy SSR." Pravda, No. 78, (1959), 2. https://dlib-eastview-com.uoregon.idm.oclc.org/browse/issue/954706/viewer?udb=870

Farrukh Zokirov himself was a conservatory-trained musician, as were all of the other initial members of Yalla, which included his younger brother Ravshan. They met their bandmates during their schooling at the Tashkent Conservatory, where Farrukh was studying choral arranging. It's likely that the members of Yalla studied with both Mukhtar Ashrafi and Yunus Rajabi, as he they were both at the school throughout Yalla's tenure as students in the late 60s. Like the other VIAs of the time, Yalla originally played a mixture of music that included jazz elements, traditional instruments, and folk-rock backing. In 1968, they performed their first shows in and around the Conservatory before gaining official recognition and support, culminating with an appearance on the TV show *Allo, my ishchem talanty! (Hello, We are Looking for Talents).*[122] One of the band's early lineups is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The original Yalla lineup. Farrukh Zokirov is second from right.

[122] Christine Elaine Evans, *Between Truth and Time: A History of Soviet Central Television* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 201

On the show, they played a Russian folk song and the Uzbek folk song "Kyz Bola."[123] The presence of a Russian folk song here speaks to the continued importance of Russian culture and Russian language in music even in the pop era. Many artists sang primarily or mostly in Russian rather than their republic's home language, and the same is true for Yalla. "Kyz Bola," however, is a much more interesting example, as it set the stage for much of Yalla's future music production. It opens with almost a full minute of flute and rubop playing before launching into a surf-rock style drum beat and a vocal harmony reminiscent of the Beach Boys.[124] The song itself, a lighthearted folk song about a young girl, is short, sweet, and sung in Uzbek. It was an immediate success after its release as a single by Melodiia.

Another of their early songs, "Izlab Izlab," is a ballad reminiscent of the Eagles, except that it also features dutar and rubop in addition to electric guitar and bass. It begins with a long rubop solo in a traditional mode before transitioning into a more contemporary rock song, one of the many elements of their music that ties a version of traditional Uzbek culture to pop. Another element is the music video, which features the members of Yalla performing in front of a madrasa, seemingly the Registan in Samarkand. "Izlab Izlab" is a lyrical song, in the sense that it is concerned with romance and love, but these elements solidly connect it to the history of Uzbekistan and the national culture of the region.[125]

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[123] According to the band's official account on their website. https://yallaofficial.ru/#next

[124] Rubop, like dutar, is a traditional instrument with five strings, historically used for solo performance.

[125] Yalla, "Izlab Izlab." Originally aired 1978, Gosteleradiofond. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkTtV1nWLcg

Yalla released many singles through the 70s, all of which followed a fairly similar format. They imitated aspects of the Western style that was popular, included traditional instruments, and tended to explore themes of love, romance, the beauty of Uzbekistan, and the successes of the USSR. Some of their songs were directly taken from poems and folksongs as well, once again putting them in reference to the historic Uzbek past. One of Yalla's most appealing characteristics was their multilingual performance, a quality which they shared with many of the most successful VIAs. In addition to Uzbek, they sang in Russian, German, Polish, and a number of other languages from the republics of the Soviet Union. Very often, Yalla attempted to cater a song to whatever region they toured in as a sort of tribute to their audience.[126] One particularly successful example of this is the 1975 recording *Wie Schade/Das Wird Ein Tag Sein*, a pair of Yalla songs recorded in Berlin and sung in German. Both songs feature heavy use of traditional Uzbek instruments. "Wie Schade" is a complete translation of an Arabic folk love song into German, while "Das Wird Ein Tag Sein" is a more modern love song written by a German composer. "Wie Schade" employs a lyrical theme in that it is about doomed love, features traditional Central Asian instruments like jaw harp and dutar, and is sung in German, thus emphasizing connection between the USSR and the GDR. Yalla toured in East Berlin as part of the 10th International Youth Festival in 1973, which meant they became part of the machinery of communist international diplomacy. Whether they convinced any of the visitors of the success of communism is hard to say, but Yalla certainly became popular enough for multiple German-language releases.

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[126] Editor, "Besedy ob iskusstve," Pravda, No. 358, (1988), 4. https://dlib-eastview-com.uoregon.idm.oclc.org/browse/issue/956892/viewer?udb=870

As some of the most successful VIA performers from UzSSR, the members of Yalla were reaping the rewards of playing to the Soviet ear: Record releases, TV appearances, radio performances, and tours beyond the borders of the USSR. Farrukh Zokirov was also cementing his position as the band leader and musical director. In the 70s, he remained constant, while other members of the group left or retired and were replaced, as can be seen in Figure 5. Part of the reason there was such personnel

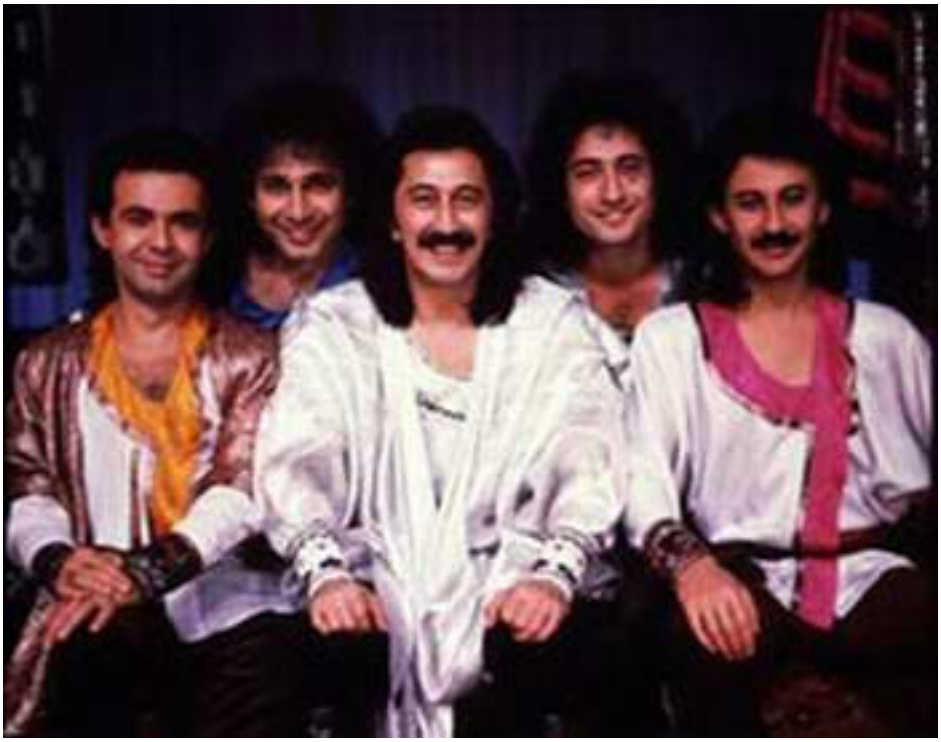

Figure 5. Yalla's 80s lineup, which lasted from the early 80s until the collapse of the USSR. Farrukh Zokirov is in the center.

changeover appears to have been a relative decline in popularity. Another possible explanation is the expansion of music technology, as synthesizers and keytars started to be produced within the Soviet sphere of influence. Whatever the reason, Yalla's music changed dramatically at the beginning of the 1980s. This change was accompanied by a dramatic rise in fame.

Yalla's next phase of success came in 1981 with their release of the single *Uchkuduk/Tri Kolodtsa*, followed in 1982 by the full-length album of the same name.[127] The titular song, *Uchkuduk*, is another track in a similar mode to their earlier work. It references a city in the UzSSR, a town whose name literally translates to "Three Wells," and describes a sort of fantastical caravan journey to the city, which is described in the song as a place of refuge from the "hot sun and hot sand" of the desert. The lyrics were based on a poem by Yuri Entin, the famous and extremely prolific children's entertainer, poet, and composer.[128] *Uchkuduk* is yet another song that takes on a "lyrical" theme as it describes a romantic, distant place within the USSR. It also marks the rise of the synthesizer in Soviet music. Unlike their music released in the 70s, Yalla opens "Uchkuduk" not with a traditional instrumental but with swirling synth chords.

Yalla performed the song on television at "Pesnya Goda-82," the Soviet music television event celebrating music from around the USSR.[129] They appeared alongside such well-known figures as estrada stars Alla Pugacheva and Edita Piekha, as well as other regionally successful artists like the Kazakh singer Roza Rymbaeva. The star-studded casts of these festivals were among the best and most popular official artists from around the USSR. Their popularity and success only increased after this appearance, as did their appeals to regional identity. In 1984, they performed their song *Shakhrisabz* at Pesnya Goda 84, song about a small city in UzSSR and its many

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[127] https://www.discogs.com/artist/475301-Ялла

[128] According to the band's site. https://yallaofficial.ru

[129]Literally, Song of the Year. Yalla, "Novogodnyi Kontsert Pesnya-82," aired 1982, Gosteleradiofond. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TINPTpBh-AU

delightful qualities.[130] Yalla also increasingly leaned into their Uzbek roots in their costuming, which went from matching suits in the 70s to flamboyant costumes inspired by traditional robes. Their outfits reflected both 80s rock fashion in the West and increased reference to the Uzbek past.

Yalla 's next big release was "Muzykal'naya Chaykhana" in 1987, a song that even more explicitly draws on Uzbek regional pride and on a sort of self-exotification of the "Orient." The refrain, sung in Russian, is "In the east, in the east, what is life without the tea-house?"[131] Many versions of this tune feature ostentatious robes, belly dancers, camels, and other signs of the mythopoetic. In short, although the instrumentation and indeed the lineup of the band had changed dramatically since the 1960s, the thematic material remained largely the same. They were seemingly unaffected by the war in Afghanistan, which began in 1979 and continued to 1989. As a state-sponsored VIA, Yalla was expected to toe the party line, so it's little surprise that they didn't speak out on it. Few did, as there is evidence that most Uzbeks were in favor of the war.[132]

The collapse of the USSR and the rise of the new, independent Republic of Uzbekistan had little effect on Yalla, except for the emigration of their long-time bass player, Rustam Ilyasov.[133] Yalla released a few CD compilation albums of their greatest hits mixed with new recordings of folk songs in the 1990s and settled in to the kind of semi-retirement that often affects old rock musicians. Farrukh Zokirov, the creative

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[130]Yalla, "Novogodnyi Kontsert Pesnya-84," aired 1984, Gosteleradiofond. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCzC5HJVihg

[131] "Na vostoke, na vostoke/chto za zhizn' bez chaykhany?" Farrukh Zokirov, Muzikal'naya Chaykhana, 1988.

[132] Riccardo Mario Cucciolla, "Sharaf Rashidov and the International Dimensions of Soviet Uzbekistan," (ABINGDON: Routledge Central Asian survey, 2020-04, Vol.39), 195-196

[133] According to the band's site. https://yallaofficial.ru

force behind the band for the almost whole of its run, became a politician and served as Deputy Minister of Culture for several years. He, and some of the other later members of the group, still occasionally perform together.

Zokirov and his group literally outlived the system that had made them famous. Without the USSR, their Vocal-Instrumental Ensemble would never have met, much less risen to the height of international fame.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

In Uzbekistan, all three of my subjects remain highly thought of. As one of the most recognizable names in Uzbek music, a two-time Stalin prize winner, and a major proponent of the various Soviet conservatories at which he had worked, Ashrafi was a clear representative of the successes of the Soviet system in Uzbekistan. To Uzbeks, as well, he was the hometown boy who had made good. Like the Uzbek premier Sharof Rashidov, he was largely beloved in his home territory, and the Uzbek Composer's Union never ejected him. Rashidov is a particularly relevant comparison due to his own legacy. Currently, he is beloved of the modern Uzbek government due to his perceived resistance to the Soviet Union. In his lifetime, he was a career Soviet governmental official until the revelation of his involvement in the Cotton Affair of the 1980s. Essentially, Rashidov had been falsifying cotton export numbers, manipulating data, and giving his relatives positions high up in the Uzbek Communist Party to help him cover it up, and he had been doing it with the help of several highly placed Russian officials, the most famous of which was Brezhnev's son-in-law. Unlike Ashrafi's plagiarism scandal, Rashidov died before he could be punished for his crimes. Like Ashrafi, he was rapidly rehabilitated, and posthumously has become symbolic of peaceful resistance to Soviet power. Many Uzbek accounts of his life ignore the Cotton Affair entirely. Others position it as a frame-up motivated by anti-Uzbek racism.[134] Much of this rehabilitation was a conscious choice by Islam Karimov, the first president of Uzbekistan, a Soviet apparatchik who smoothly transitioned into the role of president

[134] Cucciolla, "Sharaf Rashidov and the International Dimensions of Soviet Uzbekistan," 198

for life after the collapse of the union. Under his watch, many Uzbeks had their legacies reevaluated as part of the initial process of separating Uzbekistan from the newly independent Russia.

Ashrafi's position is similar to that of someone like Rashidov. In the post-Soviet era, he remained as namesake on one of the schools of the Tashkent Conservatory. Modern Uzbek scholarship continues to emphasize his work developing classical music culture in the region, and almost totally omits the plagiarism accusations. He is remembered with a house museum at the apartment where he lived in Tashkent, as well as a wing of the Conservatory, streets, statues, and other monuments around both Tashkent and his hometown of Bukhara. Ashrafi has posthumously made the transition from a respected Soviet figure to a respected Uzbek cultural figure. His music is still fairly regularly performed, especially the ballets he wrote near the end of his life.

Yunus Rajabi's trajectory mirrors Ashrafi's legacy to an astonishing degree. Musicians in Uzbekistan today still perform both the versions that Rajabi created as well as other, less formalized, folk music. My interlocutors had immense respect for Rajabi, whose name still appears on the Tashkent Conservatory, as well as on street signs in a whole neighborhood of Tashkent where he used to live. His son, Hasan Rajabi, has turned his home into a museum which acts as a shrine to what, in the modern conception, is his act of resistance against Soviet attempts to destroy Uzbek culture.[135] Another element that makes Rajabi an even easier symbolic choice is his lack of personal scandal. Unlike Ashrafi, he never had a conflict with the government that could not be easily explained away as resistance to the Soviet order.

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[135] Tanya Merchant, *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan: From Courtyard to Conservatory,* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 63-64

Some scholars, like Theodore Levin and the Uzbek musicologist Otanazar Matyakubov, view Rajabi's work as ultimately destructive. They argue that, by working within the Soviet system, Rajabi created music that was neither authentic nor artistically valuable, and that the ongoing reproduction of his notated music misses fundamental elements of actual Uzbek folk music, which can only be found in the living rooms and celebrations of ordinary Uzbek people. The G'ap, or men's meeting, and the T'oy, or wedding celebration, are the places where folk music was actually preserved, while Soviet authorities turned a blind eye to unauthorized music.[136] Matyakubov in particular views Rajabi as a good musician and a conscientious scholar who tried his best but, in the face of the Soviet system, could not possibly make anything authentic or interesting.[137]

This opinion is very much in the minority, however. Most Uzbek scholars view Rajabi and his nephew Rajabov as absolute authorities on Uzbek music, part of an unbroken line of musicologists that stretches back through the Jadids and Abdurauf Fitrat, all the way to the 10th century Islamic scholar Farabi. Ethnomusicologist Alexander Djumaev also suggests that there is a sort of "holy trinity" of Uzbek scholarship on music, with Fitrat, Rajabi (and Rajabov), and medieval scholars as the three points.[138] Many musicians directly credit Rajabi and his radio ensemble with getting them interested in performing maqom and other traditional music, as evinced in musicologist Tanya Merchant's *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan*. Merchant spoke with

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136 Otanazar Matyakubov, "The Musical Treasure-Trove of Uzbekistan: The Phenomenon of Uzbek Classical Music," (Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia, vol. 55, no. 1, 2016), 82

137 Matyakubov, "The Musical Treasure-Trove of Uzbekistan," 82-83

138 Djumaev, "Musical Heritage," 177

many women who cited the radio ensemble, the women's ensemble and Rajabi's transcriptions as critical points in their journeys to professional musicianship.[139] Many of her interlocutors also suggested that the Soviets generally had had a positive influence on culture and music in the republic, whether or not the rest of their vision had ultimately been realized.

Setting aside the question of whether his work was valuable or not, we are faced with another question: Was Rajabi actually successful in preserving Uzbek folk music? This argument is ongoing; Rajabi insisted that by preserving the music, no matter the form, he was keeping it alive in the face of the radical cultural change instigated by the Soviets.[140] Other scholars, especially in the heady days of the immediate post-Soviet 90s, claimed that the music was fundamentally changed by the act of writing it down, and as a result only other forms of maqom really counted as the authentic folk music of Uzbekistan. In Marina Frolova-Walker's work on musical nationalism, she discusses the nature of Orientalism as a musical device, which is particularly trenchant for this discussion.[141] The search for authenticity in music troubled the UzSSR throughout its existence. Composers like Mukhtar Ashrafi created music that was outside of the direct musical traditions of the region, but they were still beholden to represent some aspect of their homeland in their music, no matter how much of it was borrowed from the romantic classical tradition of Europe. Rajabi and the other folklorists scrupulously transliterated music into 'European' formats, but as a modern listener, his work is still distinct from anything in the European tradition.

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[139] Merchant, *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan*, 56-57

[140] Yunus Rajabi, *Shashmaqom,* (Tashkent, 1966-74)

[141]Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism,* 152-53

Yalla's legacy, on the other hand, is not in question. Farrukh Zokirov and the other surviving band members are big celebrities both in Central Asia and in the broader post-Soviet world. Zokirov served as the Deputy Minister of Culture for several years in the early 2000s. Although largely retired from performing, the group has reassembled multiple times to perform at various nostalgia festivals like the 2008 and 2016 "Discoteka 80-x" festivals in Moscow. The festival, a celebration of 80s culture, initially took place in 2002 and continued without pause until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it also featured Western pop artists, the festival's main performers were VIAs. In 2016, for example, the headliner was British reggae band UB40, but Yalla performed alongside Pesniary and Veselye Rebiata, two other extremely famous VIAs. If the popularity of these festivals is anything to go by, the enduring myth of the VIAs and the late Communist period is one of a time of enormous musical and cultural flowering, a time when musicians from all the republics could perform together and the USSR was responsible for the best culture in the world. Zokirov, now almost 80, performed recently at a 2022 New Year's celebration in Tashkent where he sang, or at least lip-synced, "Izlab Izlab."[142]

Yalla's relationship to authenticity of music is also not in doubt, as they have never claimed to be representing the historic or the authentic tradition in their music. Like many of the VIAs, their relationship to national tradition falls somewhere between nostalgia and vague reference. In one way their music is authentic: Authentically Soviet, produced and recorded to meet the demands of the culture-consumers of the UzSSR.

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[142] Sevlimi TV, Uzbekistan. Broadcast December 31, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlwIOB9MNtE

In the 1920s, the Soviets were in possession of a multinational, multiethnic empire which they immediately began attempting to reshape, develop, and improve in an incredibly complex process that transformed the many societies that had existed within the Russian Empire. During this time, Uzbekistan was created from the preexisting societies of Central Asia with the help of groups like the Jadids, who already had a vision of modernity that they hoped for. As a result, Uzbek identity, culture, and music was fundamentally changed in the Soviet era. Soviet cultural policy provided enormous opportunities for musicians, even as it constrained expression into socially acceptable forms like the VIA and the folk ensemble. Yunus Rajabi and Mukhtar Ashrafi, both born before the revolution, rose to prominence as a result of the new society that they became members of as young men. They studied in Soviet institutions, taught at Soviet Conservatories, conducted Soviet ensembles, and became famous not just within the UzSSR but throughout the USSR. Farrukh Zokirov and the other members of Yalla grew up completely within the Soviet system in UzSSR and similarly engaged with the products of Soviet cultural policy, from the conservatory where they studied to their successful tours within the wider Communist world.

The nature of the Soviet Empire meant an exchange of influences between the different republics and regional cultures. Very often, this meant a top-down exportation of Russian cultural forms and Russian ideals of musical beauty. This was certainly true in UzSSR. As I have discussed, this was not a one-way street. All of these musicians rose to widespread success, both in their home republic and throughout the USSR. This is especially true of Farrukh Zokirov and Yalla, who became one of the most famous

groups from UzSSR and enjoyed popularity not just in the USSR, but in other Warsaw Pact countries as well.

One aspect of this is the increasing globalization of culture during the 20th century. The Soviets saw classical music as an arena to compete in, one in which they were in conflict both with Western classical musicians and lesser forms of music like jazz. In order to prove the superiority of the Communist system, they had to prove the superiority of Communist music. As classical music became less popular with large audiences, this same type of thinking produced the VIAs, the officially sanctioned estrada acts, and other ephemera of Soviet pop-culture. Even the abiding popularity of Uzbek folk music and maqom can be read as a government-sponsored reflection of the various folk and traditional music ensembles of the post-colonial world.

Another way to look at the story of these Uzbek musicians and their successes in the Soviet era is as a product of family legacy. Ashrafi's father was a musician who taught him how to play traditional instruments starting at a young age. Rajabi's parents encouraged him and his brother to study music with musicians of an older generation, and they passed that interest in music on to their children, like Rajabi's nephew and fellow musicologist Ishaq Rajabov. Zokirov's parents were musicians, although they met at the Moscow Conservatory and were thus indebted to the Soviets. Zokirov's brothers Batyr and Ravshan also became culture workers of various types. It's certainly possible to imagine that, without Soviet intervention, at least Ashrafi and Rajabi might have become successful musicians in their own right. Rajabi was already well on his way to a local music career before the Revolution.

Mukhtar Ashrafi, Yunus Rajabi, and Farrukh Zokirov are all fascinating figures, among the most famous musicians that the UzSSR produced in its existence. Without their interactions with Soviet cultural power, however, none of these musicians would have had the careers they did. Ashrafi's whole career was made on the strength of the nationalities policy and the USSR's attempts to create new composers in UzSSR. Rajabi, in a similar manner, was able to maneuver his ethnomusicological interests into the "national form" that the Soviets were so willing to support. And Farrukh Zokirov, who was making music all throughout the Brezhnev era, increasingly turned towards regional favorites and celebrations of the homeland of the Uzbeks, as well as their mythopoetic past. The VIA era and the new music it exemplified the unintended consequences of the earlier decisions made under Stalin: music that celebrated the nation rather than socialism. This was music, in other words, that was socialist in form but nationalist in content.

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MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Mukhtar Ashrafi
"Kurulysh." From the album Uzbek Music of the Soviet Era. https://youtu.be/seaI4B9D61E?si=dJ6Ire8d8ESBeWHq

"On The Way To The Factory." Performed by the Choir and the Folk Instruments Orchestra of the Uzbek Radio. https://youtu.be/ZczjbQX66cA?si=B2b3wXoplH9GR9Jk

"Pesnya bez slov." https://youtu.be/wgFkDWpXb-c?si=1FdycDhPOavbb-Pk

"Dilorom." From the opera Dilorom. Performed by Masuma Boltabayeva and the Alisher Navoi Symphony Orchestra. https://youtu.be/1xvfGdcJf5k?si=1tzbc_YH6w-haagq

This video, a short documentary about Ashrafi, features footage of him conducting! https://youtu.be/NtIcpmcAQ1k?si=XSDvzFeI9KOVxrwY&t=386

Yunus Rajabi
"Qaro ko'zim" performed by Yunus Rajabi and ensemble. 1958, courtesy of Agenstvo Uzarkhiv. https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=KkkU3oYftU4

"Nasrulloyi" performed by Ilyos Arabov and the Maqom Ansambli. https://youtu.be/vHc0P05Ohsg?si=uli4DPEDztBlR9CD

"Begi Sulton" performed by Ilyos Arabov and the Maqom Ansambli. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXzN18AIArM

Farrukh Zokirov and Yalla
"Qiz Bola" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyevRs1LPrA

"Izlab Izlab" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkTtV1nWLcg

"Wie Schade" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ud3vOummdw

"Pesnya-82" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TINPTpBh-AU
Yalla Performance: https://youtu.be/gjkHEEfobKI?si=TgcyoobHTbSGt48K

"Pesnya-84" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCzC5HJVihg
Yalla Performance: https://youtu.be/1BDW3d9D-XA?si=rlco6SkYouoJdStf

"Izlab Izlab 2022 Novyi God" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlwIOB9MNtE