PROFESSIONAL CRITERIA OF MENTOR-APPRENTICE TRADITIONS IN THE ART OF HOFIZ

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Abstract. This article scientifically analyzes the professional factors and fundamental criteria intrinsic to the vocational activities of prominent figures holding the status of "master" within traditional vocal schools. The study evaluates the performance traditions of Uzbek classical music, the creative heritage of legendary masters, and the unique methodologies of instruction that emerged and withstood the test of time throughout historical educational processes as primary evaluation criteria. Furthermore, it elucidates the pedagogical capacities of the traditional mentorship system in seamlessly transmitting professional vocal mastery across generations in its pristine authenticity.

Keywords: art of hofiz, mentorship criteria, traditional singing, master-apprentice tradition, classical music, professional competence, musical education.

If we perceive the folk musical heritage as a vast ocean, its sheer magnitude and wealth of mysteries are vividly manifested through its stylistic diversity, multifaceted performance traditions, and rich world of musical instruments. This developmental trajectory is intrinsic to the spiritual universe of nearly all great civilizations. Phenomena such as the Japanese Gagaku, Chinese traditional opera, Indian Ragas, Pakistani Qawwali, Afghan Ghazals and Epics, as well as the *maqom* systems of the Arab and Ajam peoples, captivate the world through their grandeur, stylistic uniqueness, and high level of professional culture. Crucially, the masters who ensure the flawless creation and execution of these sublime arts are referred to simply as "exemplary performers." Within the framework of Uzbek classical music, the art of the *hofiz* (traditional singer) is recognized as a supreme manifestation of folk culture. Consequently, a master of this craft, possessing comprehensive perfection and leadership, has always been revered as a distinguished mentor (*ustoz*).

In the practical sphere of Uzbek classical music performance, a Mentor is conceptualized as a consummate performer both a vocalist and an instrumentalist endowed with a flawless voice, exceptional talent, and deep philosophical knowledge. Such an individual is a connoisseur of musical heritage, possessing superior skill in improvised interpretation and commentary, and thoroughly comprehending the unique styles and creative output of legendary figures. The culture of Eastern peoples, particularly their musical art, has consistently carried profound scientific and academic weight due to being nurtured by rich traditions, deep artistic substance, and highly creative concepts.

It is well established that the understanding, acquisition, and investigation of music are achieved through its live performance and expression. When approached from a professional standpoint, this miraculous expression demands immense accountability from the performer. Indeed, the mentor bears not only the responsibility of artistic execution but also, in a broader sense, the obligations of an exemplary guide and educator. In his medieval work "*Futuvvatnomai Sultoniy"*, the scholar Husayn Vaiz Kashifi provides detailed insights into the requisite qualities of a mentor and the criteria for apprenticeship: "If asked who a perfect mentor is, answer: he is a person of pure faith, conscious of his own flaws, wise, and discerning. No trace of envy, malice, or avarice should reside within him. If asked upon what foundation the edifice of apprenticeship is constructed, answer: upon devotion. If asked what devotion implies, it means listening to whatever the mentor says with the utmost reverence, accepting it with absolute sincerity, and manifesting it practically through one's physical actions. If asked what is best for an apprentice, answer: pure conviction, for conviction alone guides a person to their ultimate aspirations..." It is precisely for this reason that the highest status achievable in this artistic realm is affectionately revered as "Mentor."

Historically, the Uzbek people have maintained a distinct educational framework transmitted across generations to raise future lineages in alignment with the demands of their era, nurture the professional mastery of the youth, enhance their spiritual-enlightenment potential, and foster well-rounded individuals grounded in core values and traditions. This underscores the specialized significance that the practice of mentor-apprentice traditions has commanded over centuries. This system serves as the very foundation of the school of professional mastery, embodying the delicate dynamics of the master-disciple bond, vibrant communication, and a sense of mutual responsibility. Within it, the secrets of reaching the pinnacle of true mastery and the creative elevation toward perfection driven by structured learning processes and educational principles tailored to each learner's nature have been crafted with jeweler-like precision.

Above all, the criteria for obtaining a comprehensive education, akin to cultivating a "perfect human", evolved in harmony with the contemporary social progress of each era, enriching the inner world and raising the cultural standard based on national values and customs. The fact that youth in the musical field are nurtured through this method highlights how the process encapsulates flawless educational traditions.

The domain of music is multi-faceted a colossal ocean encompassing numerous interrelated disciplines. While primarily manifesting through practical criteria, this field transforms into a highly productive creative resource when reinforced by scientific and theoretical foundations. Through the nuances of instrumental and vocal melodies, it possesses the unique capacity to articulate the beauty of the world and the distinctive imagery of national traditions. Most importantly, it distinguishes itself from other fields through its power to stir the human soul and provide profound psychological sustenance. In this context, the specificity of the professional attributes of the master and their leadership role within the domain are of paramount importance. Their activity is characterized by a deep connection to the populace, unyielding fidelity to tradition, a proactive stance in promoting cultural values in alignment with modern times, a strong faith saturated with national identity, and an exemplary synthesis of advanced proficiency and practical execution.

The musicologist Otanazar Matyoqubov offers a elegant yet profound definition of the mentor's status: *"In music, a mentor is an instrumentalist who plays a melody, infuses it with elements of his own creativity, and elevates his mastery to the status of sublime art."* Achieving this standard imperatively requires being an outstanding leader in every dimension of the craft.

The pivotal dimensions that manifest the effective criteria of mentorship include: A mentor is characterized by professional competence, spiritual maturity, a broad worldview, analytical thinking, and a wealth of altruistic pedagogical experience. It is crucial for the master to serve as a role model in terms of knowledge, skills, qualifications, morals, ethics, and professional conduct. Furthermore, it is highly significant that they are well-versed in musical heritage, deeply cognizant of the performance traditions of *maqoms* and the interpretive styles of preceding master artists, and thoroughly grounded in pedagogical principles.

Within the educational lineage of Uzbek *maqom* art performance namely the master-apprentice tradition specialized processes have emerged. These processes developed naturally in practical environments, anchored in both tradition and contemporary principles. Although not bound by rigid theorems at first glance, a set of naturally occurring rules has emerged that carry profound philosophical weight, applied flexibly according to the individual, environment, institutional capacity, and current demands. Correlating with the aforementioned perspectives, these rules have been practically implemented in absolute alignment with the comprehensive condition, individual capacity, and receptive talent of the apprentice.

While these constitute professional factors for mentors, they simultaneously manifest as criteria that define the most beautiful traditions in nurturing the spiritual wealth, broad worldview, and future perfection of the apprentices through music. Consequently, apprentices have historically accepted the specific professional demands intrinsic to musical art and classical literature as indispensable rules for a performer's career. These include mastering instrumental execution, vocal performance, flawless pronunciation, singing with a deep comprehension of the meaning of poetry and *ghazals*, internalizing

rhythmic cycles, investigating musical heritage, and maintaining a dignified conduct in diverse social circles. Apprentices were required to master these professional requirements flawlessly; only after passing the specialized examinations administered by their mentors were they granted formal permission to embark on independent professional activities. This rigorous process ensured the preservation of the national heritage, customs, values, and beautiful spiritual traditions of the people.

In general, musical interpretation itself is a multi-dimensional criterion. Comprehending music, internalizing it, and articulating it through words is equivalent to navigating an unmeasurable ocean. Melody is a limitless phenomenon, and its pathways are countless; walking within the world of music may appear accessible, yet discovering one's unique voice and path is profoundly difficult. Within this journey, the mentor acts as a caravan leader, functioning as a guide, pathfinder, educator, instructor, and facilitator of perfection. It must be acknowledged that expressing music through music itself constitutes the most authentic pathway. As the musicologist L.B. Dmitriyev observed in his research: *"The creativity of folk singers is something that consistently remains in memory, stirs emotions, compels reflection, and renders individuals beautiful, pure, and enriched."* This is because the output of the *hofiz* serves as direct sustenance for the human psyche.

Throughout history, musical education within the global spiritual landscape has evolved continuously. Countless methodologies of musical instruction have been refined in the crucible of practice. Only the methods anchored in the most flawless and robust rules have been preserved, revered, and transmitted traditionally across generations. The master-apprentice tradition stands indisputably as one of these highly resilient educational methodologies.

The formation and historical advancement of Uzbek classical music have been profoundly shaped by the legacy of past scholars, extensive research, and the coordinated activities of educational institutions. Its direct linkage with the activities of the most skilled artistic figures of each era served as a vital mechanism promoting the advancement of art and culture, providing the bedrock for their ultimate perfection. Ultimately, the flawlessness of the master-apprentice tradition remains the primary guarantee ensuring the perpetual continuity of not only *maqom* art but all diverse genres within the Uzbek musical heritage.

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