ONLINE JOURNAL
E-ISSN:3060-5490

INSTITUTE OF UZBEK NATIONAL
MUSICAL ART NAMED AFTER YUNUS RAJABI

Milliy Madaniyat Jurnali - Журнал Национальной Культуры

Journal of national CULTURE

Поступила: 21.02.2025 · Принята: 08.05.2025 · Опубликована: 01.06.2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64681/f0w4sq38

ilmiy uslubiy jurnali – научно-методический журнал – research and methodological journal

Institute of Uzbek National Musical Art named after Yunus Rajabi
JOURNAL OF NATIONAL CULTURE, 1(3), 2025
www.jnculture.uz

Collaboration as Creativity and Practice as Research

Rachel Harris

School of Arts & Department of Music, Department of Ethnomusicology,
SOAS, University of London,
United Kingdom/London, 10 Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, WC1H 0XG
E-mail: rh@soas.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper introduces an international research project which pioneers new forms of collaborative research and creativity. The project brings together researchers and musicians from across the maqām world to work across geographical borders. Our methodology combines musical creativity (stimulating and showcasing new forms of cross-border performance) with musical research (analytical, archival and ethnographic). We aim to stimulate new transnational links between musicians and scholars working in the maqām sphere, and to create and curate a new body of work in the form of collaborative performances and compositions.

Our approach does not follow the established model of musical collaboration which uses Western classical music as the core and adds in other "world" traditions for exotic flavour. We aim to foster a different kind of collaboration: egalitarian creative encounters between neighbouring traditions. Our projects are specifically designed to stimulate new cultural flows and new exchanges in forms of knowledge and creative practice within the maqām cultural sphere. We ask, what musical materials do existing maqām repertoires provide for new styles of performance and new forms of creativity across borders; and how do musicians listen, perform and collaboratively create across borders?

Keywords: collaboration, practice-based research, border crossing, Central Asian maqom.

Аннотация

Данная статья представляет международный исследовательский проект, открывающий новые формы коллективных исследований и творческого взаимодействия. Проект объединяет исследователей и музыкантов из различных регионов макамного мира для работы за пределами географических границ. Наша методология сочетает в себе музыкальное творчество (стимулируя и демонстрируя новые формы трансграничного исполнительства) и музыкальное исследование (аналитическое, архивное и этнографическое).

Мы стремимся активизировать новые транснациональные связи между музыкантами и учёными, работающими в области макама, а также создать и курировать новый корпус произведений в виде совместных выступлений и композиций.

Наш подход не следует устоявшейся модели музыкального сотрудничества, в которой западная классическая музыка выступает в качестве основы, а другие «мировые» традиции добавляются лишь в качестве экзотического акцента. Мы стремимся развивать иной тип взаимодействия — равноправные творческие встречи между соседними традициями. Наши проекты специально разработаны для стимулирования новых культурных потоков и обменов в области знаний и творческой практики внутри макамного культурного пространства. Мы задаёмся вопросами: какие музыкальные материалы предоставляют существующие макамные репертуары для новых стилей исполнения и новых форм творчества через границы? И как музыканты слушают, исполняют и создают музыку совместно, несмотря на границы?

Ключевые слова: сотрудничество, исследование через практику, пересечение границ, центральноазиатский макам.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola ilmiy hamkorlik va ijodkorlikning yangi shakllarini ilgari suruvchi xalqaro tadqiqot loyihasini taqdim etadi. Loyiha maqam dunyosining turli hududlaridan tadqiqotchilar va musiqachilarni birlashtiradi hamda ularni geografik chegaralardan tashqarida ishlashga undaydi. Bizning metodologiyamiz musiqiy ijodkorlik (chegaralardan o‘tgan yangi ijro shakllarini rag‘batlantirish va namoyish etish) hamda musiqiy tadqiqot (tahliliy, arxiviy va etnografik)ni uyg‘unlashtiradi. Biz maqam sohasida faoliyat yuritayotgan musiqachilar va olimlar o‘rtasida yangi transmilliy aloqalarni mustahkamlash, hamda hamkorlikdagi chiqishlar va kompozitsiyalar shaklida yangi asarlar to‘plamini yaratish va tartibga solishni maqsad qilganmiz.

Bizning yondashuvimiz g‘arbiy klassik musiqa asos sifatida qabul qilinadigan va boshqa “dunyo” an’analari unga ekzotik rang-baranglik sifatida qo‘shiladigan odatiy modelga amal qilmaydi. Aksincha, biz teng huquqli, qo‘shni an’analar o‘rtasidagi ijodiy uchrashuvlarga asoslangan hamkorlikni rivojlantirishni ko‘zlaymiz. Bizning loyihalar aynan maqam madaniy sohasida yangi madaniy oqimlar va bilim hamda ijodiy amaliyot shakllaridagi almashinuvlarni rag‘batlantirish uchun mo‘ljallangan. Biz quyidagi savollarni o‘rtaga qo‘yamiz: mavjud maqam repertuarlari yangi ijro uslublari va chegaralardan o‘tuvchi ijodiy shakllar uchun qanday musiqiy materiallar beradi? Musiqachilar qanday qilib eshitadilar, ijro etadilar va chegaralardan tashqarida birgalikda ijod qiladilar?

Kalit so‘zlar: hamkorlik, amaliyotga asoslangan tadqiqot, chegaralarni kesib o‘tish, Markaziy Osiyo maqomi.

Maqām may be best understood as a field of modal concepts, musical practices and structures, and surrounding discourse. Maqām traditions (mugham, makam, maqom, muqam) are found across the Islamic world [1] from Morocco to Indonesia, in diverse contexts from Quranic recitation [2, 3], to elite court traditions [4, 5] and Sufi ritual practice [6, 7]. The histories of circulation across the maqām world can be observed in the writings of theorists from Mamluk Cairo to Safavid Iran [8, 9]. In my own work, I have explored the historically shifting relationships between modal theory and musical practice in different parts of the maqām world, bringing a group of international researchers into conversation in a coedited volume [10].

However, the broad thrust of scholarship over the past few decades, including my earlier work on the Uyghur Twelve Muqam [11], looked away from these patterns of contact and change in order to focus on the 20th-century formation of national canons. Often these processes entailed a profound separation from earlier traditions of theory and practice, as maqām repertoires accrued powerful new meanings and symbolic value as national culture. The 20th century saw the rise of nationalisms across the Islamic world, within the Soviet sphere and elsewhere, and with this the cementing of imagined traditions through acts of systematisation and documentation [12]; the formation of large-scale repertoires such as the Tunisian Ma'lūf [13], Iraqi Maqām [14], Iranian Radif [15], and the separation of shared traditions into distinct national repertoires (e.g., the Uzbek/Tajik Shashmaqām [16]).

Alongside the emergence of fixed repertoires and practices came notations, large-scale ensembles and new performance contexts such as concert halls and radio broadcasts [17]; state sponsorship and conservatory-based transmission nurturing large cohorts of virtuosic performers; the introduction of women as public

performers; and the Westernisation and theorisation of maqām repertoires in order to establish new traditions of "national" art music [18].

In recent years, however, an interesting shift has occurred across different locales throughout the maqām world. This new trend encompasses the large numbers of displaced musicians who are creating new transnational networks and exploring new forms of maqām-based creativity in exile, and the rise of neo-traditionalist and revivalist movements which draw on historical or neighbouring models of repertoire, creative practice and spirituality. These trends are creating new cosmopolitan musical formations. In contemporary scholarship too, there is increasing recognition that music not only ties us to place but can also displace musicians stylistically and aesthetically. Musicians may come from particular places, but their aesthetic outlook often emerges from places less easy to territorialise [19]. Recent years have seen a growing trend in the disciplines of musicology and ethnomusicology that focuses on transnational exchanges, cosmopolitan musical expression, and larger global musical histories [20], seeking the connections between plural narratives and perspectives, and subjectivities formed across and between borders [21].

A new framework for collaboration and practice-based research

I am currently leading an international research project which aims to pioneer new forms of collaborative research and creativity. The project brings together researchers and musicians from across the maqām world to work across geographical borders. Our methodology combines musical creativity (stimulating and showcasing new forms of cross-border performance) with musical research (analytical, archival and ethnographic). We aim to stimulate new transnational links between musicians and scholars working in the maqām sphere, and to create and curate a new body of work in the form of collaborative performances and compositions. We are working closely with leading musicians in selected maqām

traditions, with the goal of stimulating new forms of creative practice rooted in the principle of neighbourly exchange.

Our approach does not follow the established model of musical collaboration which uses Western classical music as the core and adds in other "world" traditions for exotic flavour. We position ourselves against the dominant orientations of projects which recycle colonial, orientalist tropes, using Western classical frameworks decorated by "national instruments." Such forms of intercultural performance in the West have been critiqued for their use of indigenous musicians as a resource without disrupting the dominant ontologies of Western classical music-making. Canadian Inuk vocalist Tanya Tagaq, for example, has spoken bitterly of collaborations where her voice was used "as an ingredient in someone else's stew" [22]. We aim to foster a different kind of collaboration: egalitarian creative encounters between neighbouring traditions.

The collaborative music-making projects that we are organising are specifically designed to stimulate new cultural flows and new exchanges in forms of knowledge and creative practice within the maqām cultural sphere. Our creative engagement and research are underpinned by these questions:

- What musical materials (structural, affective and stylistic) do existing maqām repertoires provide for new styles of performance and new forms of creativity across borders?
- How do musicians listen, perform and collaboratively create across borders?

In our practice-based research, then, we aim to explore the negotiations involved in "neighbourly" intercultural musical collaboration, and the questions of authority, knowledge and power which emerge. Imaginaries (senses of identity or authenticity, correct performance) are always co-present in the performance space of cross-cultural collaborations; and they always entail the negotiation of a series of relationships between participants and their notions of identity, mode, repertoires,

and performance styles [23]. How do musicians negotiate questions of modality in their contemporary performance practice, and how they relate norms of fixed or moveable tunings to questions of authenticity [24]? Such questions relate to the internalisation of dominant ways of listening, and the challenges of "border listening."

We will attend to the work done by rhythm, in terms of metre and especially "groove" [25, 26]. What does our ability to embody particular rhythms—or the alienation we may feel when encountering unfamiliar rhythms—mean in terms of our sense of identity, and how does this impact on our ability to "cross borders" musically speaking [27]? Our focus on performance practice highlights the embodied and interlinked nature of cultural identity and aesthetic formations, and the challenges faced by attempts to act creatively across borders.

One strand of the project currently underway explores the shared musical language of Uzbek and Uyghur maqām. These repertoires may be understood as regional dialects of a shared musical tradition, and yet the 20th-century Soviet–Chinese border, and decades of canonisation under Soviet and Chinese nationality policies, have driven a wedge between them. We are working with a select group of musicians who are deeply rooted in their respective traditions of maqām: leading teachers and researchers in the Institute of Uzbek National Musical Art named after Yunus Rajabi (Guzel Mominova and Abror Zufarov) and leading Uyghur musicians from Kazakhstan (led by Saniyam Ismailov), exploring shared repertoire, similarities and deviations in form and style, and the creative potentials of listening across this recent divide. We plan to showcase the results of this project in concerts in Tashkent, Almaty and London. We hope that this collaborative practice-research project will showcase the potential for new cross-border creativities.

We approach this project as both a creative process and a form of participatory research. We draw on established models of performative ethnography [28]: reflexive and critical praxis which entails deep immersion in the expressive practices

under study, blurring the boundaries between researcher and research participants, taking embodied experience seriously, and attentive to relationships between performance and power, communication and creativity.

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