



THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE HAFIZ AND THE INSTRUMENT IN MAKAM PERFORMANCE

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Annotation: Uzbek national musical art, particularly the classical makam performance, is one of the most comprehensive branches of traditional music. Each aspect of this art — whether vocal (xonandalik) or instrumental (sozandalik) performance — complements the other, creating a complete and harmonious expression. This article provides an overview of the concept of the “hafiz” title in traditional vocal art, discusses the main requirements for achieving this status, highlights the contributions of prominent hafiz masters of the past, and analyzes the interaction between the singer and the instrumentalist as well as its significance for performance mastery.

Keywords: makam, Qur’an al-Karim, hafiz, performance, qari, falsetto, false tone, “dard” (emotional expression), instrument, musical accompaniment, “qochirim” (vocal ornamentation), iy’qo (intonation), rhythm, meter.

Music art is one of the essential criteria reflecting human perfection, aesthetic taste, spiritual world, and the breadth of worldview. The national music and performance styles of every nation embody that nation’s historical experience, cultural values, customs, and ceremonial traditions. In this regard, Uzbek classical (mumtoz) performance art was formed based on ancient traditions, and its main branches are vocal (xonandalik) and instrumental (sozandalik) arts. Although these two branches developed independently, they have become deeply interconnected in performance practice, achieving perfect harmony. This harmony vividly expresses the spiritual, artistic, and aesthetic dimensions of our national art.

In the system of classical performance, the art of hafizlik (traditional vocal mastery) holds a leading position. The wise saying of master artists — “A hafiz with an instrument in hand is a complete hafiz” — clearly expresses the complementary relationship between instrumental and vocal performance in this art form. Therefore, to become a perfect hafiz, it is essential to master the fundamentals of instrumental performance as well.

In the process of nurturing young vocalists and instrumentalists, a deep understanding of the ideological and artistic content of musical works, the enhancement of performance skills, and the ability to deliver the artistic message to the audience fully are of great importance. In this process, traditional singing and instrumental performance merge harmoniously, serving both artistic and educational purposes. Performance, as one of the core components of musical art, represents the very form of its existence, determines the qualitative level of the creative process, and serves as a criterion for evaluating the performer’s mastery.

The term “Hafiz” has been used in the art of vocal performance since ancient times and carries two distinct meanings. Linguistically, it derives from the Arabic word “ḥifz,” which means “to memorize” or “to preserve.” Initially, beginning from the 7th century, the term was used in the Arab world to refer to individuals who had memorized the entire Qur’an and were capable of reciting it with proper qira’at (intonation).



Later, starting from the 11th century, in the Muslim East—particularly in Central Asia and Khorasan—the meaning of the term broadened. It began to denote highly skilled vocalists who could perform classical ghazals and epics from memory, possessed refined artistic taste and creativity, and demonstrated exceptional ability to memorize melodies and modes. Thus, the concept of “Hafiz” came to represent two domains: on one hand, religious scholars who had memorized the Qur’an, and on the other, masters of the vocal art, namely, classical singers and performers.

In earlier times, great figures such as Abdulqadir Maraghi and Darvish Ali Changi, who embodied both of these aspects, were recognized not only as religious scholars but also as eminent representatives of musical art in their eras. Historical sources indicate that in classical performance practice, the term “Hafiz” was initially applied to both singers and instrumentalists, signifying a high level of professionalism and artistic mastery. In later periods, however, it came to be used primarily for singers, though its original meaning and essence remained unchanged. The title “Hafiz” thus referred to vocalists who possessed profound knowledge, technical mastery, and outstanding performance skills. Such artists were not only gifted with powerful and expressive voices but also developed distinctive performance styles, had a deep understanding of musical theory, and trained numerous students.

In this regard, Khoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov, Mulla Tuychi Toshmammedov, Yunus Rajabiy, Fattohkhon Mamadaliyev, Ochilkhon Otakhonov and Orif Alimakhsumov, as well as contemporary masters such as U. Rasulov and M. Tojiboyev, are rightfully recognized as prominent representatives of the true school of Hafizlik (the art of master vocal performance).

In classical performance, the art of “Hafizlik” (masterful vocal performance) has always evolved in close connection with instrumental accompaniment. Ancient sources describe the human voice as a natural sound source, while musical instruments were considered artificial means of sound production. Therefore, true Hafizlik art traditionally required vocal performance accompanied by instruments. The instruments used in makam performance are deeply interconnected with the melodies and songs they accompany in two essential ways: on one hand, they reflect the centuries-old development of musical thought and practical experience; on the other, they serve as a key factor influencing the artistic quality of the performance.

In the art of traditional singing, the ability to accurately and sensitively perceive pitch (parda) is among the most crucial indicators of a performer’s mastery. This quality demands from the Hafiz an excellent sense of hearing, refined musical sensitivity, and clarity of musical thinking. The singer’s perception and interpretation of pitch are closely linked with their spiritual depth, aesthetic taste, and level of musical knowledge and practical experience.

The broader a performer’s artistic outlook, intellectual development, and worldview, the more expressive and captivating their performance becomes. At the same time, a Hafiz’s reliance on traditional foundations, combined with their own creative interpretation of their teachers’ experience, allows for a deeper and more convincing artistic expression. Naturally, this process is directly connected to the performer’s theoretical and musical preparation. Only when sufficient knowledge and analytical ability are present can a singer fully reveal the potential of their voice and express an artistic interpretation convincingly and meaningfully.

In the practice of classical performance, regular listening and vocal exercises play an important role in developing musical skills. However, it is not recommended to constantly sing in full voice during practice sessions, as this may cause strain on the vocal cords and negatively affect performance quality. Therefore, the use of the falsetto (light voice) technique during



rehearsals is considered beneficial. Moreover, listening attentively and quietly to a musical piece enhances its perception and contributes to long-term memorization.

One of the most effective methods for enhancing a vocalist's performance skills is singing while accompanying oneself on a musical instrument. In such cases, the Hafiz perceives the pitches more precisely, which helps prevent off-pitch (false) singing. The process of simultaneously playing and singing fosters inner harmony, refines the performer's ability to feel the melody deeply, and encourages a more natural and expressive delivery. Practical experience shows that even when accompanied by a highly skilled instrumentalist, each performance varies depending on the singer's emotional state, mood, and inner experiences. Therefore, when both singing and instrumental accompaniment are performed by the same person, it ensures wholeness of expression and a more complete harmony between word and melody.

In makam performance, the tanbur and doira occupy a special place as the leading instruments. The doira is an ancient percussion instrument that embodies the rhythmic foundation of the makam system—its metric patterns, rhythmic cycles (iyqo), and tempo structures. The doira serves not only as an accompaniment tool but also as an artistic measure of rhythmic organization, providing balance and precision in performance. For this reason, performing classical works on other percussion instruments is often considered untraditional.

The tanbur, on the other hand, is regarded as a symbolic instrument of the Maqom art. Through the tanbur, the melodic pathways (makams), their tonal systems, and artistic essence are expressed. Hence, many traditional makam cycles are often referred to as “Tanbur makams”, highlighting the instrument's central role in preserving and conveying the spiritual and aesthetic depth of this ancient musical tradition.

Prominent representatives of the classical performance school of the past century — such as Khoji Abdulaziz Abdurasulov, Domla Khalim Ibodov, Khojikhon Boltayev, Fattokhon Mamadaliyev, Komiljon Otaniyozov, Rasulqori Mamadaliyev, Ma'murjon Uzoqov and Ne'matjon Kulabdullayev — placed special emphasis on the harmony between voice and instrumental accompaniment in their creative work. In their performances, instruments such as the dutor, tanbur and tor served as the main companions, and many of them also possessed excellent skill in rhythmic accompaniment on the doira. The artistic experience of these masters contributed to establishing the tradition of singing with instrumental accompaniment as one of the fundamental practices in classical vocal performance.

Among female singers, performing with the dutor became the most convenient and widely adopted form. This aspect was clearly evident in the creative work of renowned female vocalists of the past — Lutfikhanum Sarimsoqova, Mukarrama Abdullayeva and Mavluda A'zamova, who masterfully performed folk songs and yalla genres accompanied by the dutor. (Rasulov, 2024; Karimova, 2025; Yuldashev, 2025) Among contemporary artists, People's Artist of Uzbekistan Nodira Pirmatova continues this rich tradition with great artistry and professionalism.

By its very nature, the art of singing represents one of the most essential elements of musical interpretation and encompasses a wide range of stylistic approaches. Within it, the unity of word and melody, communication, emotional expression, and stage presentation are interrelated components that together shape the performer's artistic image. In classical performance, achieving a perfect rendition requires the refined development of all elements — voice technique, rhythm, diction, and stage culture.



Hafizlik, in turn, represents the highest level in the art of singing — a title bestowed upon artists who possess profound understanding of the art form, extensive knowledge, and exceptional skill. (Karimova, 2025).

For young performers studying the national classical art, it is essential to fully comprehend the true meaning of the Hafizlik title, and to acquire the necessary knowledge, experience, and practical abilities to reach this level. In this journey, the legacy of the great masters — their style, interpretation, and performance traditions — serves as a solid foundation and an enduring source of inspiration for future generations.

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