

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JAZZ PIANO SCHOOL IN UZBEKISTAN: TRADITIONS, INNOVATIONS, AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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**Abstract:** *The article is devoted to the formation and development of the Uzbek jazz piano school, analyzing its historical stages, pedagogical traditions, and contemporary state. Special attention is given to the role of outstanding musicians, composers, and educators of Uzbekistan who have made a significant contribution to the creation of original teaching methods that combine classical traditions with elements of jazz performance. The article emphasizes the importance of generational continuity, the integration of national music with contemporary jazz practices, and the role of the Uzbek jazz school in both the national and global musical heritage.*

**Keywords:** *Uzbek jazz, jazz performance, piano, pedagogy, improvisation, national musical tradition, music education, variety music, popular music.*

The development of jazz in Uzbekistan is first and foremost the story of people deeply devoted to sound, improvisation, and the art of communication through music. For them, jazz has become not only a creative method, but also a means of expressing inner freedom, openness to the world, and respect for cultural diversity. It is remarkable that in the very heart of Central Asia – a region where the melodies of folk music, classical traditions, and oriental lyricism have intertwined for centuries – jazz has existed and evolved for almost a hundred years, becoming an organic part of the region's cultural life.

To gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of Uzbek jazz, it is essential to trace the main stages of its development – from the first soloists and ensembles of the 1920s–1940s to the contemporary generation of musicians who confidently merge national intonations with modern trends in global jazz. Within this process, special significance belongs to artistic and educational initiatives that have contributed to the establishment of a professional school, where jazz has become not only an academic discipline but also a space for living creative exploration.

Today, looking back at the path traveled by Uzbek jazz musicians, one can confidently say that their art has become an integral part of the nation's cultural heritage. The continuity of generations, the collaboration between masters and young performers, and openness to international musical experience have shaped the distinctive character of Uzbek jazz – an art that continues to develop while preserving its oriental depth, lyricism, and heartfelt warmth.

### 1920s–1940s

From the 1920s through the 1940s, jazz gradually began to find its place within the musical culture of Uzbekistan, opening new avenues for artistic expression. An important factor in the dissemination of the genre was the emergence of sound cinema in the 1930s: films with musical accompaniment introduced audiences to a variety of jazz styles and inspired musicians to experiment with new approaches.

Jazz developed particularly actively in the first half of the 1940s, when many professional performers arrived in the republic, including those evacuated during World War II. Their experience and skill contributed to the establishment of jazz performance not only in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, but also in other cities across the country. In 1944, the first orchestra performing symphonic jazz was organized in Samarkand – an event that can be seen as marking the beginning of the systematic formation of a professional jazz scene in Uzbekistan.

### Second Half of the 20th – Early 21st Century

In the late 1950s, the first jazz ensembles began to appear in Tashkent, performing both popular music and classic jazz compositions. These groups were formed within various institutions, clubs, and educational institutions, contributing significantly to the development of jazz culture in Uzbekistan.

A landmark event in the history of Uzbek jazz was the establishment of the State Variety Orchestra of Uzbekistan in 1958, with Alexander Dvoskin appointed as conductor. The newly formed orchestra was led by Botir Zokirov, an outstanding singer, writer, poet, artist, and cultural figure who played a key role in the development of the republic's variety culture. His talent, enthusiasm, and distinctive approach to creativity made him one of the most prominent figures in Uzbekistan's musical life, and his contribution to the development of musical art left a lasting mark on the country's cultural history. In recognition of his significant role in shaping and advancing the national variety tradition, the first Institute of National Variety Art of Uzbekistan was named in his honor.

In the 1960s, inspired by the vibrant musical environment of Tashkent and a desire to explore new forms within jazz, Yevgeny Zhivaev, together with Albert Malakhov, founded the first student Dixieland band in the Soviet Uzbekistan. As a member of this student orchestra, Zhivaev played the piano and began creating arrangements that soon gained widespread popularity. In 1964, in collaboration with composer Enmark Salikhov, he organized the Variety Orchestra of the Uzbek Radio Committee, which later evolved into the Orchestra of Symphonic Variety Music of Uzgosteleradio.

In 1965, a jazz quintet was established at the Tashkent State Conservatory, comprising pianist V. Oleynikov, trumpeter V. Karaev, saxophonist K. Dobroselsky, double bassist S. Gilyov, and drummer G. Nekrasov. That same year, the quintet gave its first formal performance at the conservatory, presenting works by Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, and many other jazz composers.

For the academic staff of the conservatory, the introduction of jazz into an institutional musical setting was unprecedented and provoked mixed reactions. Some teachers, less familiar with jazz culture, expressed reservations, considering the genre unsuitable for an

academic environment. Others, however, recognized the high level of professionalism among the performers and their capacity for improvisation. The student audience embraced the new direction with enthusiasm, which subsequently contributed to the further development of jazz performance in Tashkent.

The emergence and development of jazz in Uzbekistan were also influenced by a number of factors, among which the tours of internationally acclaimed foreign musicians played an important role. Particularly significant were the performances of American orchestras such as the Benny Goodman Jazz Orchestra (1962) and the Illinois Jazz Orchestra (1969), which served as a major stimulus for creative exploration and for adapting the genre to the national context.

However, the impact of foreign tours was only one of several factors in the formation of Uzbek jazz. Equally important were the rich musical traditions of Uzbekistan, which already contained elements resonant with jazz – complex rhythms, a well-developed improvisational culture, and a rich harmonic palette.

In the 1970s, the musical variety of Tashkent continued to develop, enriched by new directions and forms of musical synthesis. Alongside the active work of jazz ensembles, the Tashkent Music Hall was established in 1972 by Botir Zokirov. This project became an important milestone in the development of national stage art, combining elements of Uzbek folklore, jazz, and contemporary variety trends.

The active growth of the genre was accompanied by the creation of professional jazz ensembles and orchestras, as well as, in 1976, the founding of the Tashkent Jazz Club on the initiative of Sergey Gilyov.

One of the notable events of this period was the joining of Tashkent pianist Oleg Gotskozik to the ensemble *Inter*, founded by S. Gilyov in 1972. *Inter* became one of the first Soviet ensembles to combine national musical traditions with elements of jazz and rock.

A significant contribution to the development of jazz culture in Tashkent was made by Vladimir Safarov (1939–2021) – a jazz pianist, composer, and one of the founders of the jazz group *Artsakh*. In 1954, together with his brothers Gennady and Vyacheslav, he created the ensemble *Safarov Brothers*, which quickly gained popularity, performing at local and international jazz festivals. Later, in the 1960s, V. Safarov organized a big band at the Tashkent Institute of Railway Engineers, which became an important step in the development of student jazz ensembles.

In 1968, he became one of the initiators of the first Tashkent Jazz Festival, which brought together musicians from across the former USSR. V. Safarov also played an important role in promoting jazz in the 2000s by leading the *Sergey Gilyov Tashkent Jazz Club*, helping to preserve jazz traditions and develop the performance skills of the younger generation of musicians.

### **Jazz in Uzbekistan: The Present Day**

With the independence of Uzbekistan, a new stage in the development of jazz art began, characterized by the strengthening of international connections and active cultural exchange. During this period, jazz festivals, masterclasses, and tours by foreign musicians were held

regularly in the country, contributing to mutual cultural enrichment and expanding professional opportunities for Uzbek performers.

Variety music, as one of the most popular forms of musical art, inevitably reflects societal changes. The stages of development of the genre and stylistic features of Uzbek popular music are closely linked to the country's cultural, social, and economic transformations. By the early 1990s, the national variety music had acquired its own unique characteristics, distinguished by diversity and originality, which provided a solid foundation for its further development in the contemporary context.

A key milestone in this process was the opening of the Department of Variety Art at the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan in 1996, which enabled the systematic training of specialists in variety and jazz performance. In 2021, the Institute of National Variety Art named after Botir Zokirov was established at the State Conservatory, marking an important step in strengthening the role of jazz within the country's musical education system. These initiatives ensured continuity in professional training and contributed to the further development of jazz music in Uzbekistan, as well as its integration into the international musical community.

Like other great arts, jazz performance requires years of study and dedicated practice to develop an individual style and a deep understanding of the nuances of playing a musical instrument. Jazz pianists must be able to adapt to different musical styles, remain open to improvisation, and cultivate their musical intuition, which allows them to create lively and original interpretations of music. As a result, professional jazz pianists become true masters, capable of combining tradition and innovation in their performances, making jazz piano one of the most dynamic and expressive directions in contemporary music.

The development of jazz performance is also shaped by the significant contributions of composers, whose works not only form the performance repertoire but also reflect the stylistic features of the genre, fostering its further evolution. Contemporary Uzbek composers actively work in the variety genre, leading to the creation of new forms in which jazz rhythms and styles such as blues, boogie-woogie, swing, and bossa nova are organically combined with national musical traditions.

The professional work of Uzbek composers such as Valery Saporov, Nadim Narkhodzhaev, Avaz Mansurov, Enmark Salikhov, Dilorom Amanullaeva, Igor Pinkhasov, Muhammad Atadjanov, Khushnud Nazarov, and many others has made a significant contribution to the development of this field.

The Uzbek's piano jazz school represents a comprehensive direction in which both classical and contemporary teaching methods are actively developed. Educators such as Valery Saporov, Tamara Khalikova, Djamila Naimova, Alina Alibekova, Oybek Salikhov, Lola Ganieva, Zukhra Sodikova, Dono Donieva, Sayyora Abdusattorova, Adila Bagamanova, Shahzod Nuriddinov, Igor Martynenko, Sergey Anokhin, and many others have created original methodologies that combine the traditions of the classical school with innovative approaches to jazz performance. Their work sustains young musicians' interest in jazz and variety music, provides them with solid professional skills, and cultivates a deep understanding of jazz improvisational mastery.

Thanks to the efforts of such outstanding composers and educators, including Valery Saparov, the Uzbek jazz school has become an important part of both the national and global musical heritage. Saparov actively worked in both variety and academic fields, making a significant contribution to the development of chamber and orchestral music in Uzbekistan.

A special place in his work is occupied by piano music, most notably the cycle *24 Preludes in Jazz Style*, which can be regarded as a kind of encyclopedia of jazz genres. Each prelude reflects the main styles of jazz performance, including ragtime, blues and boogie-woogie, swing, and bossa nova, creating a comprehensive and multifaceted musical portrait of jazz culture.

In addition to his work as a composer, Valery Saparov made a significant contribution to the development of jazz piano pedagogy in Uzbekistan. His educational manuals provide unique methodological material that helps students master both the technical and performance skills required for jazz piano, making them a valuable resource for young musicians.

An essential part of Valery Saparov's professional activity was his many years of teaching at the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan, where he nurtured a whole generation of talented musicians. His students not only preserve and expand the traditions he established, but also contribute to the development of the Uzbek jazz piano school, promoting it both within the country and internationally.

The development of jazz education in Uzbekistan has largely been made possible thanks to the dedication of an entire generation of outstanding educators who devoted their careers to training professional performers.

One of the key figures in this field is rightfully considered Tamara Khalikova, who made an invaluable contribution to the development of music education in the country. She is a graduate of the Republican Specialized Music School named after V.A. Uspensky, where she studied under such distinguished teachers as L.R. Florentieva, L.B. Shvarts, and O.R. Dubler.

Tamara Khalikova is a musician whose work is built on a unique combination of the traditions of the classical piano school, inherited from her distinguished mentors, and methodologies drawn from global jazz pedagogy. This fusion enables her to train performers who master jazz techniques with ease and skill, while simultaneously enriching their playing with the depth and rigor characteristic of the classical piano tradition.

Alongside T. Khalikova, other talented educators have made a significant contribution to the development of jazz education, shaping a new generation of musicians. Among them, Alina Alibekova holds a special place as a recognized master of jazz piano and pedagogue, whose work at the Uspensky School has become a model for young musicians in Uzbekistan. From the beginning of her career in 1990, she has been developing a teaching methodology that harmoniously combines elements of jazz improvisation with a clear, structured approach to instruction. Alibekova's teaching style focuses on cultivating students' ability to improvise freely and confidently, while maintaining a high level of technical and rhythmic precision in their performance.

Lola Ganieva has had a significant impact on the development of pedagogical methods for jazz performance in Uzbekistan. She devoted many years to teaching jazz piano at the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan and later at the Institute named after Botir Zokirov.

One of the key directions of her research is the integration of traditional Uzbek music into jazz performance. In her works, Ganieva explores ways to adapt national melodies, modal structures, and rhythms to contemporary musical practice, thereby expanding the expressive possibilities of performers.

Many musicians, performers, and educators have made a significant contribution to the development of the Uzbek jazz piano school, enriching it with unique methodologies and creative approaches. Their work sustains interest in jazz and popular music among new generations of musicians, fostering both understanding and respect for these genres, while providing fertile ground for the development of individual talent and self-expression.

#### Conclusion

The history of Uzbek jazz is, above all, the history of devoted and passionate people who have dedicated their lives to the art of sound and the freedom of musical expression. Each stage of its development reflects not only the evolution of artistic forms but also the inner world of musicians who transformed their love for music into a living cultural phenomenon. Their creativity, rooted in the national traditions of Uzbekistan and open to the global jazz heritage, has given rise to a distinctive artistic language – one that combines oriental lyricism, rhythmic vitality, and the improvisational spirit of jazz.

With deep respect and admiration, we acknowledge the work of generations of Uzbek performers, composers, and educators who have preserved and enriched this unique cultural legacy. Thanks to their talent, dedication, and faith in the power of art, jazz in Uzbekistan continues to flourish as a symbol of openness, creativity, and harmony between cultures. Today, Uzbek jazz not only reflects the past but also looks confidently to the future – where every new melody becomes a continuation of a great tradition, and every young musician carries forward the noble mission of expressing the soul of their people through the universal language of music.

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