

## TEACHING MAQOM PRINCIPLES THROUGH THE UZBEK DUTAR REPERTOIRE

Nigora Ibrokhimovna Egamberdieva  
Fergana region, Kokand city, School №15

**Abstract:** This article explores the pedagogical methodology of utilizing the traditional Uzbek dutar repertoire as a primary vehicle for imparting the complex theoretical and aesthetic principles of the maqom system. Moving beyond technical instruction, it argues that the instrument's physical and sonic architecture inherently embodies maqom logic, facilitating a holistic learning process where abstract concepts become tactile and audible experiences. The discussion traces a pedagogical pathway from foundational folk melodies, which introduce core modal concepts like maye (tonic) and microtonal inflection, to advanced classical pieces from the Shashmaqom canon, which teach structural principles of movara (development), usul (rhythmic cycles), and poetic-melodic integration. By examining how the repertoire sequentially scaffolds understanding - from modal feeling and ornamental grammar to the navigation of full suite structures - the article posits that the dutar serves as an essential cultural intermediary. This approach cultivates not merely a proficient instrumentalist, but a san'atkor (artist) who internalizes maqom as a living system of emotional expression and spiritual discourse, thereby ensuring the authentic transmission of Uzbekistan's intangible cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Uzbek dutar, Maqom pedagogy, Shashmaqom, Instrumental teaching, Musical transmission, Uzbek classical music

The dutar, with its gentle cascade of sympathetic strings and its warm, resonant timbre, is far more than a musical instrument in Uzbekistan. It is a vessel of history, a narrator of poetry, and a primary gateway to one of the world's most sophisticated musical systems: the Shashmaqom. To teach the Uzbek dutar is, therefore, to engage in a process of cultural transmission that extends beyond mere technical proficiency. It is an initiation into a complex universe of melodic, modal, and poetic principles. This article argues that the dutar repertoire, from the simplest folk melodies to the most elaborate pieces of the maqom canon, serves as the most effective and authentic pedagogical map for imparting the profound principles of maqom to students. The instrument, in its physical and sonic architecture, embodies these principles, making the learning journey one of holistic integration where theory is felt in the fingertips and heard in the breath of each phrase.

The term "maqom" (or "makom") translates loosely as "position" or "place," but in musical practice, it signifies a vast, interconnected system of modal suites. The Shashmaqom, the six maqoms that form the classical core of Central Asian music, are cyclopean structures. Each named maqom - Buzruk, Rost, Navo, Dugoh, Segoh, and Irok - is a unique emotional and sonic landscape, governed by its own internal logic. This logic is defined by a foundational modal scale, a hierarchy of pitch centers, characteristic melodic gestures or shu'be, specific rhythmic cycles or usul, and a deep connection to classical Persian and Turkic poetry. To approach this system purely through theoretical explanation risks reducing a living, breathing art form to an abstract skeleton. The dutar, however, allows the student to inhabit the system from the very first lesson.

The pedagogy begins not with the grand Shashmaqom, but with the foundational layer of Uzbek music: the folk melodies and termalar (instrumental pieces). These are the tilla (the gold) upon which everything is built. A simple folk song in the Chorgoh mode, for instance, is a student's first encounter with a micro-maqom. The teacher's role is to illuminate the hidden principles within this apparent simplicity. The student learns to feel the gravitational pull of the maye (the tonic or finalis), often emphasized by the open drone strings of the dutar. They discover the shahid (the dominant or secondary stable tone), a note of repose that creates musical tension and release. Through a folk melody, they experience the concept of askar and nasr - the rising, tense phrases and the descending, resolving phrases that form the emotional contour of a mode. The dutar's fretless neck allows for the subtle microtonal inflections, the tartib or specific intonation, that give each mode its distinct colour. A Segoh is not just a scale; it is a particular bend on the third degree, felt under the finger and learned by ear, long before it is named.

As the student's technical ability grows, the repertoire naturally leads them into the world of the maqom proper, but through its accessible instrumental intermediaries. The Chor Mixraj piece from the Navo maqom suite, for instance, becomes a critical pedagogical terrain. Here, the principle of movara (variation and development) is introduced. The teacher demonstrates how a single, core melodic motif - a DNA strand of the maqom - is spun out, ornamented, rhythmically altered, and passed across different registers of the dutar. The student learns that mastery is not about playing notes quickly, but about understanding the transformational grammar of a mode. They practice the art of takrir, the tasteful, often improvised repetition and embellishment of a phrase, which is the lifeblood of maqom performance. The dutar's technique directly serves this principle: the risola (tremolo) can create shimmering tension; the zarb (stroke) can articulate the accents of the underlying usul; the left-hand surish (slide) connects notes in a weeping, vocal manner that mimics the human recitation of poetry.

This connection to poetry is paramount and is deeply embedded in dutar pedagogy. The great vocal-instrumental suites of the Shashmaqom are, at their heart, vehicles for the ghazals of Hafez, Navoi, and Bedil. Even when teaching purely instrumental versions, the wise ustoz (master) will always sing or recite the lines associated with a melody. This practice roots the musical phrase in a specific emotional and spiritual context. The student learns that the ascending line in Buzruk is not just a technical exercise; it carries the weight of a lover's yearning or a seeker's question. The rhythmic cadence in a Mughulcha section is shaped by the prosody of the poem. The dutar, in its role as the primary accompanist and interpreter of the voice, trains the student to think like a singer. The instrument's phrasing becomes a breath; its pauses, places for reflection. This teaches the principle of hol (state or condition) - the idea that performance is about achieving and conveying a specific spiritual-emotional state, both to oneself and the listener, a concept far more profound than mere technical execution.

The teaching of usul (rhythmic cycles) through the dutar repertoire is a masterclass in embodied rhythm. Unlike a theoretical explanation of a 6/8 or 7/8 time signature, the student learns the Usul Hazaj or Usul Sakil by playing the naqsh, the characteristic ostinato patterns that underpin entire sections of a maqom. They feel the cycle in their strumming hand, internalizing its groove and its points of emphasis (dom, the strong beat). The repertoire provides the context: a fast, driving usul for a dance-derived Sawt, a stately, heavy cycle for a meditative Muhammas. The dutar becomes a percussive as well as a melodic instrument, its body tapped, its strings struck

in specific dampened patterns to articulate the rhythmic architecture that holds the maqom together.

A significant challenge and a central principle in advanced pedagogy is navigating the macro-structure of a full maqom suite. Here, the repertoire acts as a guided journey. The teacher structures lessons around the progression from the introductory, unmetred Bardast or Sarakhbor, through the various shu'be and tarona (movements), to the climactic Ufar. Each section is a lesson in modal modulation and emotional trajectory. The student learns how the maqom travels from its primary mode to related modes, creating a narrative arc of tension and resolution. They discover the principle of intizom (discipline) within erk (freedom). While there is a prescribed structure and set of materials, the performer has agency in the application of ornamentation, the intensity of development, and the pacing of the journey. This high-level artistry is taught not through a rulebook, but through the immersive, repeated study of canonical interpretations by great masters like Turgun Alimatov or Ozodbek Nazarbekov, whose recordings become essential secondary "teachers."

Ultimately, teaching maqom through the dutar repertoire is an act of cultivating a particular musical consciousness. It moves the student from a state of playing on the instrument to one of thinking and feeling through the instrument. The dutar, in its physical design - its long neck allowing for wide melodic leaps, its sympathetic strings creating a halo of resonance around every note - is a hardware manifestation of maqom aesthetics. It rewards nuance, supports drone, and demands vocal phrasing. The repertoire, carefully sequenced from folk roots to classical heights, provides a scaffolded immersion into this world.

The final goal of this pedagogy is not to produce a mere technician, but a san'atkor (artist) and havaskor (connoisseur) who understands that to play the dutar is to engage in a centuries-old dialogue. It is to understand that the principle of maqom is the principle of place: knowing one's place in the lineage of masters, feeling the emotional place of each mode, and finding one's own creative place within the tradition. When a student can navigate the intricate pathways of Dugoh or elicit the profound sorrow of Rost from their instrument, they have done more than learn pieces. They have internalized a system of thought, a philosophy of sound, and a way of connecting to the cultural soul of Uzbekistan. The dutar, in its humble two-stringed elegance, has been their faithful guide, proving that the deepest theoretical principles are best taught not from a page, but from the wooden body of an instrument, resonating with the wisdom of generations.

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