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**SYNTHESIS of TRADITIONS and the MODERNIZATION
of CULTURE: A CULTUROLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
on UZEYIR HAJIBEYLI's LEGACY**

Abstract. The labor of the people representing society and the unique talent and creativity of each individual become the driving force of culture. In history, the achievement of a high level of cultural development has often been embodied in the figure of a single person. At the beginning of the 20th century, Azerbaijan experienced social and cultural changes, a process of cultural development, and a period of transformation. It was precisely in this historical context that Uzeyir Hajibeyli and his broad activity guided these cultural changes in the right direction. He was an initiator of the synthesis between traditional and European artistic thinking. His creativity reflects the process of forming Azerbaijan's new cultural identity, where musical art became not only an aesthetic phenomenon but also one of the most important tools for the nation's self-awareness. His innovations were a response to the challenges of the time: on the basis of traditional musical thought, the composer succeeded in creating an artistic system adequate to both national and universal cultural needs. By laying the foundation of a new artistic paradigm in practice, Hajibeyli also shaped its principles on a theoretical level. His legacy demonstrates a rare example of harmony between the composer and the intellectual principle, which makes him a significant figure in the field of cultural studies.

Key words: Uzeyir Hajibeyli, culture, folk music, composer, musical art.

«Uzeyir Hajibeyov, with his extraordinary innate talent, great dedication, excellent education, scholarship, patriotism, and socio-political activity, became one of the great personalities of our people, a prominent figure representing Azerbaijan, standing among the foremost geniuses of the world.»

— *Heydar Aliyev*

Introduction. In life, cultural institutions are created through the labor of the people who represent society and through the special talents and creative achievements of individuals. The development and formation of culture in society are influenced by natural conditions, the mentality of the people, and national traditions. From this perspective, depending on the environment and conditions in which culture develops, it becomes an expression of a number of national characteristics and traditions. In such cases, culture manifests itself not only as a bearer of universal and humanistic essence but also as a representative of national identity. In many instances, societies that share the same socio-economic foundation but are rooted in different national cultural traditions may not experience the same level of cultural development.

Culture is a multifaceted and multifunctional concept whose development can be observed both in society and in the growth of individuals. Conversely, through the figure of an individual, culture itself can reach a high level of development. In Azerbaijan, this can be vividly exemplified in the figure and creative legacy of our great composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli. Having ensured progress in several branches of Azerbaijani art, Hajibeyli, through his activity and creativity, laid the foundation for the rise of our national culture.

The interpretation of the main material. The name of Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948) holds a special place in the history of world musical culture as well as in the history of Azerbaijan’s cultural development. His legacy extends beyond composition, encompassing philosophical, pedagogical, and culturological dimensions. Hajibeyli was not only an innovator in the field of musical art but also a thinker who consciously shaped the cultural space of his people during an era of global transformation.

He was the initiator of the synthesis between traditional and European artistic thought. His creative work reflects the process of forming a new cultural identity in Azerbaijan—where music ceased to be merely an aesthetic phenomenon and became one of the most important instruments of national self-awareness.

Hajibeyli's uniqueness as an architect of musical culture lies in his broad scope of activity, which extended beyond music to include education, enlightenment, and the establishment of a cultural dialogue between East and West. The early 20th century was a period of profound socio-cultural change for Azerbaijan. Baku became one of the major centers of the global oil industry, contributing to the rapid modernization of society, the rise of the urban intelligentsia, and the emergence of new educational and cultural institutions. During this period, a sense of national self-consciousness was taking shape, finding expression in literature, theater, journalism, and music.

Cultural processes in Azerbaijan at that time could not be interpreted unambiguously: on one hand, the stable traditions of oral folk creativity—such as mugham, ashig art, and folk songs—were preserved; on the other hand, European art forms, including symphonic music, opera, and theater, were actively entering cultural life. Thus, national culture existed in a dialogue between two worldviews—the traditional East and the modernized West.

The musical life of Baku, Shusha, and other cultural centers was distinguished by its special intensity. The interaction between folk performers and professional musicians at various levels contributed to the formation of a new artistic synthesis. The establishment of musical and educational societies, theatrical collectives, and the first professional music schools laid the groundwork for profound cultural transformations.

It was precisely within this historical context that Uzeyir Hajibeyli emerged as the spokesman and conductor of these changes through his multifaceted activity. His innovations were a response to the demands of the time: based on traditional musical thinking, the composer succeeded in creating an artistic system that was adequate to both national and universal cultural needs.

His creative work was aimed at forming a new musical paradigm grounded in the synthesis of traditional and European artistic experience. Hajibeyli was the first to demonstrate that national musical culture, without losing its originality, could be presented in forms comparable to the world's best. He was the founder of Musical Theater in Azerbaijan. The key event in this process was the creation of the first opera in the Muslim East, "Leyli and Majnun", in 1908. Based on Azerbaijani mugham, this opera became a symbol of the union between traditional Eastern musical thought and Western European operatic

dramaturgy. Later, the composer continued this path, creating a number of works in which the national melodic foundation organically merged with the principles of symphony, harmony, and polyphony.

Hajibeyli not only created musical works but also reflected his path in theoretical and scientific writings. In his fundamental work “The Principles of Azerbaijani Folk Music” (1945), he wrote: “Azerbaijani folk music is not only understood and loved by Azerbaijanis; it can also reach the hearts of many other peoples. This music is especially close to the peoples of Transcaucasia and Central Asia. Therefore, the study and research of the main issues, rules, and principles of Azerbaijani musical art is of great relevance” [1, p. 14].

According to the composer, the musical culture of a nation cannot develop in isolation; it must incorporate all valuable elements created by world civilization while preserving its own roots. This idea reflects his understanding of culture as a dynamic system, where the interaction of tradition and innovation is a prerequisite for progress.

Thus, Hajibeyli not only laid the foundation of a new artistic paradigm in practice but also formulated its principles theoretically. His legacy demonstrates a rare harmony between the principles of the composer and the intellectual, making him a significant figure in the field of cultural studies.

In Hajibeyli’s creative work, Azerbaijani mugham serves not merely as a source of melodic material but also as a system of artistic imagery capable of interacting with the harmonic and polyphonic structures of European music. For instance, in “Leyli and Majnun”, the composer not only employs modal constructions characteristic of mugham but also introduces harmonic and orchestral development elements typical of classical European opera. Such a synthesis creates a unique artistic language in which national identity is expressed in a form comprehensible to the international audience. Hajibeyli viewed European forms not as a threat, but as a means of enriching national culture.

Hence, the composer’s creative legacy represents an exemplary model of cultural dialogue, where each tradition retains its intrinsic value, and their interaction gives birth to new forms of artistic expression. Hajibeyli’s creativity demonstrates how art, through the artistic development of universal forms, can serve as a means of modernizing society and strengthening national self-awareness.

The significance of Uzeyir Hajibeyli as a composer extends far beyond his musical innovations. Through music, he expressed the ideas of national

self-determination, and he masterfully united folklore, history, and spiritual traditions into an aesthetically integral work.

In his essay “On Folk Music”, Hajibeyli emphasized: “Folk creativity contains an inexhaustible richness of styles. Its language is multifaceted. The people are the creators and first composers of beautiful songs and dance melodies. Folk songs that serve as examples for us have been refined over centuries and are only now attaining their true artistic form. We, as composers, must always remember that the people will judge our creativity. For the people are not only the creators, not only the composers, but also the finest critics and the best ‘consumers’ of musical works” [2].

Hajibeyli was also an educator. He created a music education system that was accessible to broad segments of society. In the 12th issue of the journal *Maarif və Mədəniyyət* (“Education and Culture”) in 1923, the composer wrote in his article “Music Education in Azerbaijan”:

“The development of Eastern music is possible only through systematic education and an approach based on scientific foundations. Professional tar players who can read music notation, and musicians who have mastered the knowledge of mugham through both theoretical and practical training, can make a genuine contribution to the progress of this field” [3].

Another important aspect is that Hajibeyli, based on national traditions and global experience, created a professional musical environment where a new generation of musicians could be trained. In the long term, this meant forming an intellectual and artistic elite capable of advancing national culture.

A significant step in this direction was the establishment of the first professional music school in Baku in the 1920s. The school later became the foundation of the Azerbaijan State Conservatory, the leadership of which was entrusted to Uzeyir Hajibeyli himself. Through this educational system, Hajibeyli sought not only to instill professional skills in students but also to foster a deep understanding of national musical tradition.

In his 1939 article “Folk Character in Music”, he noted:

“Folk music has immense importance, and this issue should be among the main disciplines of the conservatory. In recent years, our young composers have begun to understand the great significance of folk character in music; many of them are studying the rich field of folklore. These efforts fully and firmly convince us that in the coming years, Azerbaijani music will enter an even brighter stage of flourishing” [4, pp. 322–325].

The great artist emphasized how essential folk music was both for composition and for the science of music, highlighting the importance of collecting and preserving this heritage. Thanks to his initiative and tireless work, in 1932, the Scientific Research Music Cabinet was established under the Azerbaijan State Conservatory, led by Bulbul, the founder of Azerbaijani vocal art.

This invaluable contribution by Uzeyir bey demonstrates not only the essence of his work but also the importance of continuing his mission — to perceive the preservation and study of national musical heritage as both a professional duty and a civic responsibility for future musicians. One of the main goals of creating this Cabinet was precisely the training and preparation of successors to continue this mission.

Most importantly, the purpose was not merely to train individual specialists, but also to develop specific methodological standards and long-term research platforms to ensure systematic progress in this field.

The brilliant results of this foresight were reflected in the numerous expeditions organized across various regions of Azerbaijan and in the collections and anthologies published based on the gathered materials. Folk songs and dances were reflected in the works of composers both as direct quotations and through the incorporation of their genre features, modal-intonational structures, and metrorhythmic elements of the musical language.

In this regard, Uzeyir Bey's compositions once again served as a benchmark.

Deeply imbued with patriotism, Uzeyir Bey profoundly understood the importance of preserving the national heritage and passing it on to future generations — a cause to which he dedicated one of the most meaningful aspects of his entire life and activity.

Conclusion. Hajibeyli's legacy expanded the cultural space for a wide audience. It had a profound impact on the formation of a cultural unity in which folk tradition and professional art interacted and enriched one another. His activity as an organizer and educator reflected a comprehensive approach to the development of national culture: he not only created works of art but also built the necessary infrastructure for their perception and for the continuation of traditions by future generations.

Uzeyir Hajibeyli's work can be characterized as fulfilling the function of a "cultural mediator." His activity exemplified how a local culture can integrate into the global sphere without losing its authenticity.

Hajibeyli demonstrated that national culture can be both deeply original and open to the artistic experiences of the world. His legacy remains relevant in the 21st century, affirming the idea that art is an inseparable element of cultural development and national identity.

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Nailə Rəhimbəyli (Azərbaycan)

ƏNƏNƏLƏRİN SİNTEZİ VƏ MƏDƏNİYYƏTİN MÜASİRLƏŞMƏSİ: ÜZEYİR HACIBƏYLİNİN İRSİNƏ KULTUROLOJİ BAXIŞ

Cəmiyyəti təmsil edən xalqın əməyi və hər bir fərdinin xüsusi istedadı, yaradıcılığı mədəniyyətin aparıcı qüvvəsinə çevrilir. Tarixdə bir şəxsin simasında mədəniyyətin yüksək inkişaf səviyyəsinə çatması müşayiət olunur. XX əsrin əvvəllərində Azərbaycanda sosial-mədəni dəyişikliklər, mədəni-inkişaf prosesi və transformasiya dövrü yaşanırdı. Məhz bu tarixi kontekstdə bu mədəni dəyişiklikləri doğru istiqamətləndirən Üzeyir Hacıbəyli və onun geniş fəaliyyəti oldu. O, ənənəvi və Avropa bədii təfəkkürünün sintezinin təşəbbüskarı olub. Onun yaradıcılığı Azərbaycanın yeni mədəni kimliyinin formalaşması prosesini əks etdirir və burada musiqi sənəti yalnız estetik hadisə kimi deyil, həm də xalqın özünüdərkinin ən mühüm alətinə çevrildiyi məqamdır. Onun yeniliyi dövrün çağırışlarına cavab idi: bəstəkar ənənəvi musiqi təfəkkürü əsasında həm milli, həm də ümumbəşəri mədəni ehtiyaclara adekvat bədii sistem yaratmağa nail olmuşdur. Hacıbəyli praktikada yeni bədii paradigmanın əsasını qoymaqla yanaşı, onun prinsiplərini nəzəri müstəvidə formalaşdırıb. Onun irsi bəstəkar və intellektual prinsip arasında harmoniyanın nadir nümunəsini nümayiş etdirir ki, bu da onu mədəniyyətşünaslıq sahəsində əhəmiyyətli şəxsiyyətə çevirir.

Açar sözlər: Üzeyir Hacıbəyli, mədəniyyət, xalq musiqisi, bəstəkar, musiqi sənəti.

Наиля Рагимбейли (Азербайджан)
**СИНТЕЗ ТРАДИЦИЙ И МОДЕРНИЗАЦИЯ КУЛЬТУРЫ:
КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ВЗГЛЯД НА НАСЛЕДИЕ
УЗЕЙРА ГАДЖИБЕКОВА**

Труд народа, уникальный талант и творчество каждого его члена превращаются в движущую силу культуры. В истории нередко высокий уровень развития культуры воплощался в личности одного человека. В начале XX века в Азербайджане происходили социально-культурные изменения, процесс культурного развития и период трансформации. Именно в этом историческом контексте направлял эти культурные изменения в верное русло Узейир Гаджибеков и его многогранная деятельность. Он стал инициатором синтеза традиционного и европейского художественного мышления. Его творчество отражает процесс формирования новой культурной идентичности Азербайджана, где музыкальное искусство стало не только эстетическим явлением, но и важнейшим инструментом самосознания народа. Его новаторство было ответом на вызовы времени: на основе традиционного музыкального мышления композитор сумел создать художественную систему, адекватную как национальным, так и общечеловеческим культурным потребностям. Закладывая основы новой художественной парадигмы на практике, Гаджибеков одновременно сформировал её принципы на теоретическом уровне. Его наследие демонстрирует редкий пример гармонии между композитором и интеллектуальным принципом, что делает его значимой фигурой в области культурологии.

Ключевые слова: Узейир Гаджибеков, культура, народная музыка, композитор, музыкальное искусство.