



THE CHALLENGES OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

Afghanistan has a rich, ancient and unique history and culture, and a geopolitical and geo-strategic and central location in Asia, where many cultures and civilizations such as Greek, Buddhist, Aryan, Turkish and Indian have come together. Music in Afghanistan, along with other arts, has had a profound interaction with these civilizations, and the variety of music in this country today is a testament to this. Music education in Afghanistan has long been a teacher-centered and oral tradition, and modern music education came into the country with the advent of Western music in the context of military music for the first time under Abdul Rahman Khan (1880–1901). Although Western classical music and its teaching has never really been reflected in Afghan culture, our music community is still faced with limitations and shortcomings to this day due to political developments and the lack of familiarity with up-to-date educational practices. Most of the Afghan masters and musicians are familiar with Eastern music education, which is rooted in India, and a very few music education centers teach using international methods. This article seeks to address the major challenges that hinder the growth and development of music and its standard education in the Afghan music community in order to bring the necessary reforms.

Key words: music education, western classical music, traditional Afghan music, methods, notation

Introduction

Traditional music in Afghanistan has been transmitted orally. By imitating the master's performance, the students were able to master the vocals and songs and gain mastery in the skill of playing. But this cannot be justified in many more complex pieces with richer textures. For example, in a Western piece of music on the piano, the student will not be able to play the piano precisely with repeated repetitions. Because when a piece of music goes beyond a certain level of complexity, the memory will not be able to retain it, and it will need to be performed in partial analysis and cannot be learned and repeated. This is where music writing comes to the aid of the musician and helps him to perform the piece accurately. What is certain, of course, is that any music writing system will not be responsive to accurate performance [1, p.3]. Unfortunately, traditional musicians are little interested in up-to-date methods of music education. They rely on methods that are scientifically flawed but are still used to train their students. The main characteristic of traditional music teaching methods is a teacher-centered authority and the belief that the teacher has the main role of knowledge transfer to students who are ready to accept it. In this regard, little attention is paid to the interests of the students in the education process, as to preferences to literature or styles. In this music method, the student must do exactly what the teacher says [2, p.2].

There are many different systems of music writing today in the world, the most accurate being the writing of Western classical music. Western classical music writing is an international method that is widely used worldwide [3, p. 31]. Although this writing system may not be partially

responsive to the music of some cultures, it is clear that Western music writing has reached a high level of development and is a modern form of writing that has had a constructive impact on other musical cultures.

Many cultures, using Western writing, have made their national and traditional instruments academically sophisticated, and this has accelerated and improved the process of music education of all ages.

Modern music education in the country came about with the advent of military music within the government. Since military music is an important part of government rituals, the later Afghan kings paid particular attention to the training of military music and the formation of military orchestras and bands. But political developments have negatively influenced the growth of military music. In Afghanistan the military sector did not exist until the reign of Abdul Rahman Khan (1880–1901).

Methods

Undoubtedly one of the most important ways that will revolutionize the music education process in the country will be to familiarize all musicians with the western writing style, which will provide the basis for academic teaching and isolate oral and time-consuming methods.

The most important benefits that music writing can have are as follows: 1) in music education western music notation is a factor that enables the transfer of music knowledge to future generations in the best possible way; 2) by learning to write music in this method, musicians will be able to play any piece of music that has a notation, even if they have not heard it before; 3) music notation provides the convenience and facility of playing small and large groups, bands and orchestras,

and 4) writing is a full-fledged linguistic music that allows musicians to share their ideas, even in different languages [4].

Result

In Afghanistan, western music notation has not yet been institutionalized, except in a few academic music training centers, and authentic Afghan musical instruments are played without notes or in Indian style, which includes the names of the notes, without duration, dynamics or expression. Indian writing in Afghanistan is more popular with musicians in the Kharabat, where they have never learned Western music notation.

Discussion

Traditional musicians have long opposed the influence and promotion of Western music in the country. They see the arrival of Western music as a weakening and forgetting of national Afghan music. But looking at similar cultures in other countries, we come to the conclusion that studying and understanding the music of other cultures need not mean weakening and forgetting national and folk music, and it cannot be claimed that Western classical music or any other music is incompatible with the growth and development of national and folk music. In fact, the use of notation can preserve national and folk music and make it accessible to musicians around the world.

On the other hand, music is constantly changing and evolving, and the path to creativity and excellence in art cannot be closed under the pretext of saving traditional music. Today in American culture, each of western classical music, jazz, folk, pop music and rock music have a special place, and over time, they evolve and even grow in response to the needs of their audiences.

It is clear that in order to safeguard Afghan national music, proper measures are needed. Today, in many cultures, besides traditional and national music, there is a great deal of interest in Western classical music as a kind of universal and reference music. Perhaps by studying and promoting classical music, their national music has also been preserved and has accepted the constructive influences of classical music. Unfortunately, most of the ideas that have been raised about the prohibition of promoting other cultures, and in particular the great classical music, are rooted in ignorance. Most of these minorities are rooted in diverse, unscientific, and even unrelated positions in the field of music. Studying and accepting the high values of Western classical music, on the other hand, makes the Afghan artist aware of his/her weaknesses or newer dimensions in other types of music, a challenge to their self-esteem and superiority. They should correct these flaws and gain more skills by studying and applying the outstanding features and artistic techniques of any kind of music, especially western classical music.

Today, Western or European classical music has a strong academic presence in other cultures. The richness and evolution of this type of music in all its dimensions has transformed it into a model to engage with or influence some of the most varied types of music around the world and in many aspects such as theory, harmony, notation, forms, orchestration and etc. had a great influence in other styles of music in the world and even late genres and styles of popular music in the West.

Western classical music is highly regarded in all prestigious and professional schools such as conservatories, universities, academies, institutes, bands

and orchestras, as well as in our country, including the Department of Music of Kabul University and the National Institute of Music of Afghanistan. This will ensure the growth of music education in the country in a standard way.

However, some people find any influence of Western music on Afghan music unnecessary and unacceptable. Referring to the different structure of Afghan music to Western classical music, they consider the Western classical music's influence on Afghan music as a way to undermine and ultimately obliterate and destroy Afghan music. The following are some of the reasons this group has always put forward to prove their claims:

First, Afghan music includes special modes that have quarter-tone intervals, and since the smallest distances in western music are half-tone, many western instruments are incapable of playing quarter-tones, such as:

- Clavier instruments such as piano, organ and accordion
- Pizzicato stringed instruments such as guitars with frets. (Although by embedding sub straps between the main straps and even by changing the tone by swiping up or down with the fingers, the quarter-tone can be played in a limited way, but is not standard on guitar instruments).
- Western percussion instruments, except for instruments that can be tuned, such as timpani
- Woodwind instruments such as flute, oboe, clarinet, and saxophone (though some special techniques of fingerprinting and mouth placement can also be performed on some of these instruments).
- Brass wind instruments such as tuba, trombones and trumpets (as with woodwind instruments, these can perform quarter-tones with the special techniques,

for example the horn can also create quarter-tones by using the right hand in the bell section).

Second, the difference between other types of traditional Afghan and Western classical music is in their texture. As Afghan music is mostly mono-phonic and often has a strong connection with poetry and singing, the accompaniment is such that singers and musicians only emphasize one melodic line, sometimes in general and sometimes it is presented separately and intermittently. Although some instruments may have a decorative role, they do not depart from the original melody at all. Counter-polyphonic and polyphonic forms, as they exist in Western classical music, can never be present in Afghan music because the nature and quality of Afghan music is seriously damaged.

Third, the interplay or influence between traditional country music and western classical music is to embrace new styles, new elements and more modern instruments of Western classical music, since these instruments are not compatible with the Afghan musical system and their learning has different methods are dedicated to themselves, it is feared that Afghan music may lose its identity [5, 28 p.].

Lastly, music is undoubtedly an integral part of a nation's culture, and the music of each culture reflects the sentiments, feelings, values, beliefs and traditions of a nation in the form of art, literature, religion, and mysticism. The ancient country of Afghanistan is one of the oldest in the world in terms of its ancient civilizations and has a rich and productive culture that has even influenced other cultures. For example, with the spread of Islam in North Africa, the language changed to Arabic, but not in Afghanistan. The Persian language is one of the living languages of the

world which has retained its authenticity despite the many ups and downs. Various sovereignties in the Persian language enjoyed the supreme values of this language, and even Persian literature was transferred to other territories to the extent that Persian was the official language of the Indian Empire before the British domination, and was the language of the Indian Empire. It even had influence in the Ottoman Turks.

Afghan music like Persian language is ancient and they have a very close relationship with each other. Afghan poetry and music have been transmitted from ancient times to the present to tell tales and stories about Afghan religion, love, goodness, joy, sadness and courage. Afghan traditional musicians fear that with the emergence of classical Western music and the young generation's keen interest in this type of music, the culture of the country will be greatly transformed and young people will forget to learn and appreciate their spiritual possessions that have been valued in our culture for many years. They will blindly follow Western culture.

They also fear that as a result of changes in the attitudes and lifestyles of subsequent generations, the country's original music will be forgotten. Western music is one of the most important tools of cultural invasion in its many forms such as classical, pop, rock and rap with the slogan of modernism, science and globalization. With such immoral content, such music will lead to misguidance, vulgarity and a shift in values and beliefs, and eventually to exploitation and colonization. Today, many young artists have dominated the Afghan music scene without evidencing the slightest appreciation of Afghan national music by recording songs with poor content and making fun and humorous

music videos. Our national music is based on the poetry of classical Persian poets, such as Rumi, Saadi, Hafiz, Bidel, etc. and they lose face in this cultural assault.

In addition, as scientists believe that culture is the most important source of identity of a nation, so the globalization of culture will present new challenges such as the emergence of new identities. This confrontation of a particular culture with universal world culture may cause the destruction of a particular culture. Some theorists believe we should combat and resist against the phenomena of globalization. The result of globalization in the art of music is the formation and promotion of popular western styles such as pop, rock, and rap, the content of which is incompatible with original and national music. Traditional and folk music introduces the cultural instincts and prompts them to perform, sing, and dance through their performances, and these performances evoke national sentiments [6, p. 91-92].

However, there are those who believe that the development and promotion of classical music tools of notation and analysis and their proper use can enrich the art and music of Afghanistan, especially in the field of music education. There are theories that support their claim and they have come up with a number of responses to the opposition to the influence of Western classical music.

Proponents of promoting Western classical music believe that quarter-tones, as stated above, can be played by many Western instruments, such as stringed violins and guitars with or without frets and string instruments with moveable frets, and also woodwind and brass instruments using special techniques. The quarter-tones can be shown with new signs in Western music notation. Furthermore,

promoting western classical music will never mean abandoning traditional instruments. Rather, they can be expanded by preserving their former functions and by upgrading their capacity by adding new roles and colors.

Secondly, as for the use of polyphonic textures, which is one of the most valuable features of classical music, it has been the case that in Western music history the use of polyphonic textures has had many ebbs and flows over time. Today, counterpoint and polyphonic knowledge is one of the most important factors influencing the music of other nations and the formation of national bands and orchestras. The failure of bands in this country's history is evidence that Afghan musicians were less familiar with counterpoint and polyphonic knowledge. An emphasis on the foregoing – the promotion of Western classical music and the application of polyphonic knowledge – will not deteriorate authentic Afghan and national music, but enrich the music and allow us to form standard music bands and orchestras.

Also, as we look at the history of Afghan music and even western classical music, we must concede that no culture remains the same. Cultures always influence each other and are influenced by one another toward excellence. During the reign of Sher Ali Khan and the appointment of a number of Indian musicians to the royal court, Afghan music was greatly influenced by the Indian music culture. Western classical music has also had a profound impact on the interaction of Eastern and Western cultures throughout history. These influences can have both positive and negative consequences depending on the level of knowledge of the musicians and audiences of a nation. For example, some of the negative consequences of Indian music, especially in the field of music

education in the earlier periods, are the following:

- Most music teachers (*ustads*) at that time were illiterate. Therefore, there has been no useful teaching method for a student to appropriately learn music.

- Some *ustads* were very unprofessional in their teaching habits, and as they had had to struggle to learn music for many years, they also were reluctant to teach their students and even their own children all the secrets of the profession. The student almost had to steal the mastery from his master and, as a result, was reluctant to pass it on to others. Also, there are many musicians in the history of Afghanistan who had no interest in teaching students.

- One of the common practices of the time was the “enslavement” attitude of the masters towards the students. By the wearing of a “*panera*” on his wrist and participating in the “*gurmani*” ceremony, the student, like a slave, had to obey his master's material and spiritual pleasures and had no right to learn music from anyone else. In every encounter with his master, he had to kiss his hands and feet and even rub his shoes and etc [7, p. 36-37].

Some music professors in Afghanistan believe that by transferring the knowledge of music to the students effectively, one day their position as a professor will be shaken, and they always fear that their students may be more proficient than they were. Many professors refuse to teach talented students and accept medium-talented students, prolonging the teaching process which in turn brings in more money. In addition, the *ustads* were not interested in teaching all the techniques of music to the students. It must be said that this is a common practice among scholars of all disciplines in Afghanistan.

Lack of government support for promoting music

For a long time now, with the changes of political sovereignty, governments have had an indifferent attitude toward music. As mentioned, during the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman and Amanullah Khan, efforts were made to properly develop music and institutionalize music education. But with the advent of other sovereigns, the anti-artistic and anti-musical attitude eradicated all achievements. During the *mojaheddin* and the Taliban's regime, music completely disappeared and no attention was paid to the promotion of music education. Music was considered forbidden, and those involved with music were considered criminals and punished. After 2001, with the advent of the new government and the support of the international community, there was a renewed focus on the development and promotion of the arts, especially music, and the music education institutions that had been closed for years resumed their activity.

It should be noted, however, that the government has not yet paid serious attention to the development and expansion of music in Afghanistan. The Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University is the only institution in the country that teaches music at the university level, and the National Institute of Music within the Ministry of Education and the Agha Khan Music Courses, founded in 2003, still rely on foreign aid and art lovers as important factors in sustaining their artistic activities. The state budget for capacity building for these institutions is scant. The government has no institution other than Kabul University in its educational system that can teach music academically. While there are two military bands, one resident in the Presidential Palace, they only teach how to

play brass and woodwind instruments, but have a very limited repertoire and very little interest in development.

The meaning of music in Afghanistan is quite a bit more restrictive than the general understanding of the concept of music. It is secular, never religious. It is more instrumental than vocal and it is performed mainly by professional musicians and sometimes by amateur musicians.

There is a general view that music is religiously forbidden in Islam. The definition of music and its standing is dependent upon an understanding of its perceived distance from religiously sanctioned or praiseworthy activities. For example, Quranic recitations or calls to prayers *Azan* and many other religious singing – not such as *Naat*, *Rawza* and *Nawha Khani* no matter how musical they sound – are never considered music. When the voice is accompanied by musical instruments and sung by singer to a public audience, they are called music [8, p.1].

To date, many people in Afghanistan believe that music is one of the arts that causes youth to be morally corrupt and divorced from God and religion. Despite these perceptions, listening to music is an important part of their daily routine. But they refuse to learn music because of their respect for Shari'a and custom. As a result, Afghans are somewhat "schizophrenic" in their attitudes towards music. Many students who start studies in music at the schools are forced to abandon their studies due to cultural pressures.

Conclusion

According to the studies, the challenges facing music education in Afghanistan can be addressed in several sections. First, many traditional musicians have always been less interested in knowing methods with emphasis on traditional and

master-based methods. Undoubtedly, in order to develop and improve the music situation in Afghanistan, one has to study the music of different cultures, especially classical western music as other cultures which have had great achievements in this regard.

The governments in Afghanistan had a different approach to music. Some of these governments, with the exception of need in the military music sector, paid no attention to the development of music academically, and some of these powers considered music forbidden according to the Sharia of Islam. Today, most government policies in field of the development of music remain slogans. In 2011, *Sayed Makhdoom*

Rahin at the Afghan Music Festival at the Babur Bagh in Kabul announced the Ministry of Culture's goal to include music as a subject in the school curriculum, but nothing has been done since then. Academic music education institutions are heavily dependent on friendly collaborations and budgetary assistance from foreign countries. These institutions will not be able to improve music education and promote it effectively, given the many constraints on student recruitment, professionals, facilities and funding. Now in 2019, there is a discourse of bringing peace between the government and Taliban which if this occur, it could have negative outcomes

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АУҒАНСТАНДАҒЫ БІЛІМ БЕРУДІҢ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ

Аңдатпа

Ауғанстан тарихы бай, бірегей, әрі өте тереңде жатыр және де ол грек, буддистік, ариялық, түрік және үнді сияқты көптеген мәдениеттер мен өркениеттер біріккен Азиядағы геосаяси, геостратегиялық және орталық орынға ие. Ауғанстанның Музыкасы да өнердің басқа түрлері сынды осы өркениеттермен терең қарым-қатынаста және бүгінгі күні оның осы елдегі алуан түрлілігі соның дәлелі болып табылады. Қазіргі заманғы музыкалық білім елге алғаш рет Абдул Рахман Ханның (1880-1991 жж.) тұсында Батыс музыкасымен бірге әскери музыка контекстінде келді. Батыс классикалық музыкасы мен оның оқытылуы ауған мәдениетінде ешқашан толығымен көрініс таппаса да, саяси оқиғалар мен қазіргі заманғы білім беру тәжірибелерінен жеткіліксіз хабардар болуына байланысты біздің музыкалық қоғамдастықта әлі күнге дейін шектеулер мен кемшіліктер бар. Ауғандық мамандар мен музыканттардың көпшілігі Үндістанда негізі қаланған шығыс музыкалық білімімен таныс және халықаралық әдістемеге сүйене отырып сабақ беретін музыкалық мектептер санаулы ғана. Бұл мақалада музыканың өсуі мен дамуын тежейтін негізгі кедергілер мен қажетті реформалар жүргізу үшін ауған музыкалық қауымдастығында оны оқыту стандарттарын ашып көрсетуге тырысады.

Трек сөздер: Музыкалық білім беру, батыс классикалық музыкасы, дәстүрлі ауған музыкасы, әдістер, музыкалық таңба (ноталар).

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ПРОБЛЕМЫ МУЗЫКАЛЬНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В АФГАНИСТАНЕ

Абстракт

У Афганистана богатая, древняя и уникальная история и, он занимает геополитическое, геостратегическое и центральное положение в Азии, где смешались многие культуры и цивилизации, такие как греческая, буддистская, арийская, турецкая и индийская. Музыка в Афганистане, наряду с другими видами искусства, глубоко взаимодействует с этими цивилизациями, и ее многообразие в этой стране на сегодняшний день является тому подтверждением. Музыкальное образование долгое время полагалось на устную традицию, где центральное место отводилось учителю. Современное музыкальное образование пришло в страну вместе с западной музыкой в контексте военной музыки впервые при Абдул Рахман Хане (1880–1991 гг.). Хотя западная классическая музыка и ее преподавание никогда в полной мере не отражались в афганской культуре, наше музыкальное сообщество до сих пор сталкивается с ограничениями и пробелами из-за политических событий и недостаточного ознакомления с современными образовательными практиками. Большинство афганских мастеров и музыкантов знакомы с восточным музыкальным образованием, которое уходит корнями в Индию, и только немногие музыкальные школы преподают, опираясь на международную методику. В настоящей статье дается попытка раскрыть основные преграды, которые тормозят рост и развитие музыки и стандарты ее преподавания в афганском музыкальном сообществе, чтобы произвести необходимые реформы.

Ключевые слова: музыкальное образование, западная классическая музыка, традиционная афганская музыка, методы, музыкальные обозначения (ноты)

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