

Katta Ashula - a unique song heritage of Uzbekistan

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Description of Katta Ashula

- Katta Ashula, as intangible cultural heritage, is an integral part of artistic-performing culture of modern Uzbekistan, its specific attribute, invaluable song heritage of the Uzbek people
- Katta Ashula is original song genre of Uzbek traditional music.
- Katta Ashula is peculiar traditional style and manner of singing.
- Katta Ashula is oral form of transmission of skills and knowledge in song creation.
- Katta Ashula formed in medieval centuries on the base of ancient folk-ritual and labour songs, songs of praise with high voice without instrumental accompaniment. All forms of intangible cultural heritage are related to them (music, popular and eastern poetry, traditional singing, succession, oral form). Bearers of traditions of Katta Ashula were and are singers – khofizs, who passed traditional school “Usto-shogird” (Master-pupil)

Characteristic features of Katta Ashula

- Locality – existing and spreading in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan
- Originality of performance – singing by two and more (up to five) singers by turn without instrumental accompaniment.
- Improvisation – rhythmically free style of singing, arising from manner of singing.
- Singing in high register and in a large auditory with a high voice, which demand very strong and high voice of great range.
- Recitative-melodious type of melos, mastery of art of expressive musical declamation.
- Emotionality – existing of high culmination in art of singing.
- «Khamnafaslik» method (harmony of voices) – timbre, strength and range of singers' voices, forms and norms of oral singing should be consonant and unanimous.

Genre composition of Katta Ashula

- Traditional – singing by two singers by turn without instrumental accompaniment
- “Yovvoyi makom” – performance of makom compositions Ushshoq, Bayot, Chorgokh and others by two (up to five) singers in improvised free manner.
- “Yovvoyi ashula” or “likobi ashula” – singing of vocal compositions (ashula) Tanovar, Munojot and others without instrumental accompaniment.
- “Yakkakhonlik” (solo performance) – vocal-instrumental Katta Ashula, where functions of the second singer are carried out by instrumental ensemble.
- Instrumental versions of popular Katta Ashula, which are performed on Uzbek musical instruments (nay, surnay, dutor, tanbur, gijjak).
- “Patnys or likobi ashula” (“song with a tray/plate”), an original style, performed by two singers without instrumental accompaniment, using a little metallic tray or plate in their hands for direction and strengthening of the voice

Mastery schools and its bearers. Kokand school of performance



Mastery schools and its bearers. Margilan school of performance



Participation of the youth and women in the project



Participation of the youth



Contemporary life of Katta Ashula

- Oral transmission of skills and knowledge through mastery schools on site. Existing of traditional teaching methodic “Usto-shogird” (Master-pupil)/
- Organization of Republican contests of performers of Katta Ashula (from 1984, once in three years).
- Introduction into the professional system of musical education (from primary till higher levels) – musical schools, academic lyceums, colleges of arts, conservatoire.
- Organization of Republican contests of traditional performing among musical education institutions.
- Participation of Katta Ashula performers in all national and popular festivities, holidays, festivals (Navruz, Mustaqillik - Day of Independence, harvest festival, wedding, “Boysun bakhori”, “Sharq taronalari”, “Asrlar sadosi” festivals and others).
- Participation of Katta Ashula singers in the International Folklore Festivals, beginning from 1985.

“Katta Ashula” Project

Criteria of revival and preservation of Katta Ashula are: exceptional value, ancient origins of cultural tradition, originality of singing manner, mastery and skills of performance, oral form, cultural identity, source of intercultural exchange, uniqueness of live musical tradition and risk of disappearance.

Main factors: adoption of the Law “**On Safeguarding of Objects of Cultural Heritage**” (April 2009); organizational and popularization activities by all means of communication, attraction of public funds, organization of singers’ contests, particularly among the younger generation; material support for bearers of traditions; educational and scientific-research activities. Special attention is paid to involvement of the youth in all types of activities of the project, starting from their participation in expeditionary works to participation in master-class and contests

One of the challenging issues: wide advertisement and popularization of variety art, pop and rock music, which estrange the youth from traditional culture. Show business is actively introduced in all spheres of cultural activity. Audio-visual form of popularization and preservation of Katta Ashula should be priority.

Main goals and objectives of the project

- Organization of scientific expeditions on collecting the database on-site in all directions (inventory, archiving, documentation).
- Publication of scientific materials on Katta Ashula and its bearers, essays and outlines about singers, collection of notes with sample songs, materials of scientific expeditions.
- Preparation and issue of audio and video recordings (multimedia, CD, DVD) of expeditions, archives of Scientific Research Institute of Art, TV and radio company, private collections and materials of contests
- Organization of master-classes in places with participation of bearers of traditions; revival of mastery schools "Usto-shogird" (Master-pupil)
- Organization of contests of Katta Ashula performers, organization of conferences, festivals.
- Introduction of Katta Ashula traditions into the system of musical education institutions; publication of programmes and relevant educational materials and text-books.

Problems and future of the project

- **Main challenges:** economic (financial) and organizational (support from state and public organizations); educational (personnel training, training of researchers and performers) and popularization (wide involvement of the younger generation (nonartistic youth) to understanding, listening and perception of Katta Ashula traditions).
- **Risk of disappearing** of original genre and unique style of singing Katta Ashula predetermined its safety and protection aimed at revival and development in contemporary conditions, transmission of present cultural heritage to future generations. Its future depends most of all on how reviving cultural traditions and new scientific investigations on Katta Ashula are interpreted.