



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Music Initiative in Central Asia



# Introduction



Music and musicians have historically played a vital role in the cultures of Central Eurasia and the Middle East. Music traditionally served not only as entertainment, but as a way to reinforce social and moral values, and musicians provided models of exemplary leadership. Whether bringing listeners closer to God, sustaining cultural memory through epic tales, or strengthening the bonds of community through festivity and celebration, musicians have been central to social life. In 2000, recognition of this important role led His Highness the Aga Khan to establish the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia (AKMICA) with the aim of assisting in the preservation of Central Asia's musical heritage by ensuring its transmission to a new generation of artists and audiences, both inside the region and beyond its borders. AKMICA strives to achieve this goal through four distinct, but mutually reinforcing programme areas:

- Supporting Tradition-Bearers
- Music Touring and Festivals Programme
- Documentation and Dissemination
- Collaboration with the Silk Road Project

## Supporting Tradition-Bearers

AKMICA supports a group of exceptional musical tradition-bearers who are revitalising important musical repertoires throughout Central Asia by transmitting their traditions to students. Formerly inaugurated in 2003, the Programme is currently operating in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. At the core of the Tradition-Bearers Programme is the time-honoured process of apprenticeship known as *ustad-shagird*, in which master musicians, or



*ustads*, provide intensive instruction rooted in oral transmission of a repertory. AKMICA looks for three essential qualities in the musician-educators it supports: vision, passion, and a history of outstanding achievement in musical performance and teaching.

Throughout Central Asia, AKMICA-sponsored tradition-bearers work both in self-initiated music centres and schools, and within guild-like networks that encourage collegiality and communication among independent master teachers. As part of their mission of promoting musical transmission, tradition-bearer centres work to develop new materials and methodologies for teaching traditional music, involve students in ethnographic documentation of local traditions, and work toward building appreciation of authentic traditional music among audiences in Central Asia. AKMICA provides administrative and financial support to centres and schools, and in some cases, a stipend to students. Support is renewed on the basis of an annual review with the long-term goal of helping centres, schools, and guilds to become self-supporting through tuition, barter, and local patronage.

## Kazakhstan

In Qzyl-Orda, in central Kazakhstan, renowned epic performer and scholar Almas Almatov is conserving and digitising archival recordings of epic singers, conducting ethnographic expeditions with advanced students, and preparing audio-visual materials to support the training of a new generation of performers of oral epic and poetry. During the first year of AKMICA support, Almatov released two compact discs, a CD-ROM, and a video devoted to epic traditions. His students excel as performers of epic poetry and music, and are equally adept at electronically transcribing epic texts from handwritten notebooks kept by old masters, and using computers to de-noise old recordings.

In Almaty, Abdulhamit Raimbergenov, director and founder of the Kokil Music College, is working to expand his innovative approach to teaching Kazakh traditional music to children. Students who attend his college are not specially selected for musical talent, and most do not intend to become professional musicians. Raimbergenov's goal is to create educated and appreciative audiences for the next generation of traditional musicians under the assumption that music will not survive unless it is performed in a social milieu in which listeners understand and support it. The culmination of Kokil's 2003 activities was a week-long seminar for secondary school music



teachers on Raimbergenov's orally-based approach to teaching traditional music. The seminar brought together participants from Kazakhstan's many regions as well as from Kyrgyzstan as part of AKMICA's efforts to stimulate interaction among musical tradition-bearers in different parts of Central Asia. Raimbergenov's aim in 2004 is to extend the teacher-training seminar programme to the most distant regions of Kazakhstan. In 2003, Raimbergenov's method was officially approved for use in Kazakhstan's national music school curriculum.

## Kyrgyzstan

AKMICA is presently supporting a "master-apprentice" programme for young *komuz* players centered around three of the leading masters of this instrument, Nurak Abdyrakhmanov, Zainidin Imanaliev, and Namazbek Uraliev. Kyrgyz music is rooted in the sensibility of nomads who live in an awe-inspiring landscape of mountains, lakes, and grasslands. During the Soviet era, however, much of this music was lost or adapted to European musical ideals. Tradition-bearers supported by AKMICA are helping to restore integrity and authenticity to older styles of music and musical instruments. In 2004, AKMICA will sponsor the creation of an atelier to train students in the craft of building high-quality traditional Kyrgyz instruments. Directing the workshop will be Bakyt Chytyrbaev, Kyrgyzstan's leading performer on the *qyl-qiyak*, an archaic two-stringed upright fiddle with close ties to shamanism.

## Tajikistan

Abduvali Abdurashidov, a leading music scholar and celebrated performer of Tajik-Uzbek classical music (Shashmaqam) is founder of the Navo Centre of Music and Poetry and director of the AKMICA-sponsored Academy of Shashmaqam in Dushanbe. The Academy provides an elite group of students with an intensive four-year course of study in Shashmaqam, as well as traditional prosody and poetics (*aruz*), and music theory (*ilm-e musiqi*). Graduates of the programme earn a diploma validated by the Ministry of Education.

Pedagogic work is linked to musical performances, recordings, and ethnographic expeditions that will help assure the continuity of the Shashmaqam. During the Academy's first year of operation, students worked with Abduvali Abdurashidov to recover musical textures, rhythms, and formal features characteristic of the Shashmaqam's pre-Soviet performance style. The students also



began performing their carefully crafted version of the Shashmaqam to enthusiastic audiences in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This coming autumn, they will perform in the AKMICA-sponsored “Voices of Central Asia” concert at the English National Opera.

Through his Khunar Centre, Sultonali Khudoiberdiev has organised a master-apprentice (*ustad-shagird*) programme in Khojand, Isfara, Ura-Tyube and other cities in Northern Tajikistan, and is preparing to open a special music school for gifted children. Students study one-on-one with master musicians, assimilating classical art song and instrumental music through oral transmission.

## Uzbekistan

In Tashkent, two leading musicologists and music educators, Ravshan Yunusov and Aqil Ibragimov, have written a new music textbook for beginning and intermediate students based on indigenous music theory, repertoires, and performance traditions. The textbook will be introduced into the curriculum of music schools during the coming year as a replacement for textbooks based exclusively on European music.

## Afghanistan

AKMICA activities in Afghanistan are centered around the spiritual and physical revival of Kucheh Kharabat, the musicians’ quarter in Kabul’s old city, and a centre of Kabul’s distinctive art music tradition.

Depleted in the late 1970s as well as during the Coalition Period, when musicians fled Afghanistan, mostly for Peshawar and Quetta, Kucheh Kharabat ceased to exist during the Taliban rule. Today, with many master musicians returning to Afghanistan and re-opening their music schools, Kucheh Kharabat has acquired new symbolic significance.

AKMICA’s Ustad-Shagird Music Training Scheme (*Program-e amuseshi ustad-shagird* AKMICA) began operation in 2003 and currently supports masters (*ustads*) who teach vocal music, harmonium, *rubab*, *delruba* and *tabla*, each selecting his students on a merit basis. Plans to extend the project beyond Kabul, as well as to include oral history and a recording component, are currently in development.



## Music Touring and Festivals Programme

The Music Touring and Festivals Programme was created to celebrate Central Asian musical traditions in regions where they are little known, and integrate leading exponents of these traditions into the global network of music presenting institutions.

The Programme achieved a *succes d'estime* in its European tours of winter and summer 2002, when AKMICA artists enchanted audiences in France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In 2003, AKMICA conceived and co-produced a festival programme “Via Kaboul: Musiques de l’Asie centrale sans frontières” in Paris, France. Twenty musicians and dancers from Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan performed at Odéon-Théâtre de l’Europe in three theatricalised concerts, with parallel lectures at the Musée Guimet and workshops and master classes at the Maison Populaire de Montreuil. The partnership with Odéon-Théâtre de l’Europe represented a breakthrough in concert presentations of traditional music in that theatre technology – lighting, set design, and overhead projection – became integral elements of the performance, generating widespread media coverage.

In 2004, AKMICA is preparing an expanded touring programme of music from Central Asian. The five-week-long tour includes major performances at the Festival de la Musique Sacrée in Dijon, France, the English National Opera in London, the Ultima Festival in Oslo, and the World Music Expo (WOMEX) in Essen, Germany as well as at venues in Brussels, Turin, and Milan. The tour programme will also feature numerous educational events such as workshops, lecture-demonstrations, and master classes.



## Documentation and Dissemination

The Music Initiative has undertaken a long-term collaboration with the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum and research complex of the United States, to create a ten-volume Anthology of Central Asian Music. When complete, the Anthology will include compact discs, DVDs, photographs, and detailed booklet notes for each volume. The Anthology will consist primarily of new recordings as well as selected archival recordings drawn from important collections in Central Asia. One of the Music Initiative's goals in producing the Anthology is to set new standards of professionalism in ethnographic sound recording and videography. The Anthology will be released worldwide by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

The first three volumes, scheduled for release in spring, 2005, feature musicians from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. "Tengir-Too: Mountain Music from Kyrgyzstan," presents a panoramic view of Kyrgyz music performed by the ensemble Tengir-Too as well as by distinguished solo performers such as *komuz* players Nurak Abdyrakhmanov and Zainidin Imanaliev, and Manas reciter Rysbek Jumabaev. The Dushanbe-based Academy of Shashmaqam, sponsored by the Aga Khan Music Initiative and directed by Tajik classical musician Abduvali Abdurashidov, is featured in a recording devoted to the courtly art song cycles known as Shashmaqam. Abdurashidov's nine-person ensemble breathes new life into the Shashmaqam's refined, Sufi-inspired poetic texts and ecstatic lyricism during their hour-long vocal tour de force. From Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Uyghur vocalist and *tanbur* virtuoso Tughluk Rozi leads his seven-piece Sanam Uyghur Ensemble in a rousing performance of Uyghur festive music drawn both from the classical *muqam* and from the rich repertory of Uyghur folksong. Future releases in the Anthology series will feature music from Afghanistan, Badakhshan, Kazakhstan, Qaraqalpakstan, and Uzbekistan.



## *Collaboration with the Silk Road Project*

The Initiative's creative partnership with the Silk Road Project began in 2000 and has since resulted in festivals, concert tours, recordings and innovative collaborations. The Silk Road Project and its performance unit, the Silk Road Ensemble, both founded and directed by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, is devoted to exploring musical tradition as a resource for innovation and creativity.

In 2003 AKMICA presented Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble in a nine-day concert tour of Central Asia featuring concerts and workshops in Bishkek, Almaty, and Dushanbe. The partnership has recently been extended to develop multimedia programmes for a new "Museum Initiative" in which works of visual art join traditions of oral literature and world music through performances, exhibitions, and educational events in some of the world's leading museums. Newly-created multimedia programmes have been presented at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts in January 2004, and, most recently, at the British Library in London, accompanying the exhibition "The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith".

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