



# Tengir-Too

*Mountain Music from Kyrgyzstan*

**Nurlanbek Nyshanov**, Artistic Director,  
wooden and metal jew's harps, sybyzgy,  
choor, chopo choor

**Gulbara Baigashkaeva**, komuz and jew's harp

**Zainidin Imanaliev**, vocal and komuz

**Rysbek Jumabaev**, manaschi (Manas epic reciter)

**Kenjekul Kubatova**, vocal and komuz

**Asylbek Nasirdinov**, komuz, jew's harp, qyl-qiyak

**Azamat Otunchiev**, qyl-qiyak

Tengir-Too is a new ensemble that plays old music. The group takes its name from the eponymous mountain range that towers over the high alpine passes linking Kyrgyzstan and China, and is better known by its Chinese name, Tien Shan, or "Celestial Mountains."

Founded and directed by Nurlanbek Nyshanov, a gifted composer, arranger, and multi-instrumentalist who grew up in the city of Naryn, Tengir-Too provides a living laboratory for Nyshanov's efforts to find a voice for Kyrgyz music in the contemporary cultural marketplace. Kyrgyz music is rooted in the sensibility of nomads who







inhabit an awe-inspiring landscape of mountains, lakes, and pristine grasslands. During the Soviet era, however, much of this music was lost or adapted to European musical ideals. Nurlanbek Nyshanov has helped restore its integrity and authenticity, not through an uncritical attempt to reproduce tradition, but by innovating within it. Nyshanov draws on his compositional skills to craft striking arrangements for small ensembles of repertoires formerly performed by solo players. Members of Tengir-Too include Kenjegul Kubatova, whose lush alto voice is the perfect medium for Kyrgyz lyrical song, Gulbara Baigashkaeva, a master performer on the *komuz* – the three-stringed lute that Kyrgyz regard as their national instrument, and Asylbek Nasirdinov, who plays the *qyl-qiyak*, a two-stringed upright fiddle with archaic ties to shamanism. Tengir-Too performs with special guests, Rysbek Jumabaev, a reciter of the great Kyrgyz epic tale *Manas*, and Zainidin Imanaliev, a virtuoso soloist who is at once master instrumentalist, singer, and entertainer.

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# Academy of Shashmaqam

*Classical Music of the **Uzbeks** and **Tajiks***

**Abduvali Abdurashidov**, Artistic Director and sato  
**Nasiba Amanbayeva**, vocal  
**Azada Ashurova**, vocal  
**Jamshed Ergashev**, vocal  
**Kamaliddin Hamdamov**, tanbur and vocal  
**Hurshed Ibrahimov**, vocal  
**Murad Jumayev**, vocal and dayra  
**Sirajiddin Jurayev**, dutar  
**Zumrad Samijanova**, vocal

Shashmaqam is the best known of a pleiade of classical vocal and instrumental repertoires that flourished in the great cities of Central Asia: Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, Khiva, Qoqand. The roots of Shashmaqam are linked most strongly with Samarkand and Bukhara – historically multicultural cities where performers and audiences have included Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Central Asian (Bukharan) Jews. With its Sufi-inspired texts, lyrical melodies, and austere instrumental







accompaniment, Shashmaqam comprises music of great refinement and profound beauty that spans the entire gamut of traditional social life, from prayer to dance. Transformed during the Soviet era into a cantata-like genre performed by a choir and small orchestra of indigenous instruments, Shashmaqam is presently undergoing a restoration whose vitality comes from the rediscovery and reanimation of older, more authentic performance styles. In Tajikistan, the leader of this movement is Abduvali Abdurashidov, who, with support from the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia (AKMICA), created his Academy of Shashmaqam to offer rigorous training to a highly select group of talented young performers. By reducing his ensemble to the essentials – a few voices, frame drum, and two or three long-necked lutes, including the rarely heard *sato* (bowed *tanbur*) – Abdurashidov achieves a remarkable clarity of texture and suppleness of form. His work instills new life in one of the great musical traditions of the Islamic world, and confirms the important place of Shashmaqam in any musical map of Eurasia.

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# Bardic Divas

**Uljan Baibussynova**, vocal and dombra (Kazakhstan)

**Kenjekul Kubatova**, vocal and komuz (Kyrgyzstan)

**Ziada Sheripova**, vocal and dutar (Qaraqalpakstan)

**Injegul Saburova**, ghijak (Qaraqalpakstan)

**Dilbar Bekturdieva**, vocal, garmon, dayra, qayraq (Uzbekistan)

**Gozal Muminova**, dutar, dayra (Uzbekistan)

**Komila Mattieva**, tar, vocal (Uzbekistan)

Female entertainers have played a key role in the social life of Central Asian women, and continue to do so today. These days, however, women no longer entertain only other women, but perform musical styles and genres once the exclusive province of men. The performers assembled under the rubric “Bardic Divas” are not a fixed collective, but a flexible cooperative whose members represent diverse performance traditions centered around the solo voice. Dilbar Bekturdieva, a *khalfa*, or female wedding entertainer from the Khorezm region of northwest Uzbekistan, displays an urban sensibility in the lively and humorous songs that she accompanies on a small accordion called *garmon*. Kenjekul Kubatova, who also performs with the Kyrgyz ensemble Tengir-Too, specializes in *bel canto* lyrical songs whose wide range of colours and moods is the ideal vehicle for displaying a powerful vocal talent. By contrast, the power of Uljan Baibussynova’s voice is reflected not in *bel canto*,







but in the raspy, guttural recitative in which she recites Kazakh oral poetry. Uljan is a *jrâu* – an epic singer, and was one of the first women of her young generation to master this traditionally male art. Likewise, Ziada Sheripova and Injegul Saburova were the first women to perform a traditionally male bardic repertory from Qaraqalpakstan, an autonomous region of Uzbekistan that borders the Aral Sea. Ziada’s nasalized, finely embellished vocal style, however, is startlingly different from that of Uljan. Performed together with Injegul’s filigree accompaniment on the *ghijak*, a small spike fiddle held upright, it illustrates yet another remarkable development in the panoply of styles and traditions that comprise Central Asian music.

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# Sanam Uyghur Ensemble

**Tughluk Rozi**, tanbur, satar, dutar, vocal

**Ruziakhun Adilov**, vocal, rawap, dutar

**Nazugum Ayupova**, vocal and dance

**Akram Hashimov**, dutar

**Dilshat Iminov**, ghijak

**Mohira Salimova**, vocal

**Ellutdin Shakhputdinov**, dap

The Sanam Uyghur Ensemble takes its name from the spirited suites of song and dance pieces that are central to festivity and celebration among the Uyghurs, a large Eastern Turkic ethnic group whose traditional territory lies in the old oases cities of northwest China, now known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Most Uyghurs still live in Xinjiang, and with a population of more than 8 million, they are the province's largest ethnic group. Uyghurs also live further to the west in the Ili Valley of Kazakhstan, and in diaspora communities in the neighbouring Central Asian republics. These communities grew rapidly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the largest groups in Kazakhstan (200,000) and Uzbekistan (300,000). The members of the Sanam Uyghur Ensemble live in







and around Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and came together under the charismatic leadership of Tughluk Rozi, a *tanbur* player and singer who emigrated from China to Uzbekistan in 1988. The ensemble's repertory spans diverse musical styles and genres ranging from popular folksongs to the multipart *muqam* suites that bring together intricately ornamented, lyrically sung poetry, dance melodies, and driving instrumental sections in a variety of tempos and rhythms. Uyghur *muqam*, like the Azeri *mugham* and Tajik-Uzbek Shashmaqam, represents a regional variant of the sophisticated art music traditions found in various forms and under various names from North Africa across the Middle East and Central Asia, to northwest China. Among these, Uyghur *muqam* is arguably the most eclectic in both style and spirit, with dance playing a particularly important role. The Sanam Uyghur Ensemble brings power, passion and much joy to its performances of one of Central Asia's great musical traditions.

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# Contemporary Music from Afghanistan

**Homayun Sakhi**, rubab and vocal

**Ghulam Bahauddin**, tanbur

**Rahim Takhari**, ghijak, dutar, and vocal

**Muhammad Wali Nabigul**, tabla

Like many lands riven by conflict, Afghanistan and its vexed politics have spawned diaspora communities near and far. Music is the lifeblood of such communities, linking them to a common homeland through song, poetry, and a sense of tradition. Homayun Sakhi, formerly of Kabul, later a refugee in Peshawar, Pakistan, and presently a resident of California, is possibly the finest *rubab* player of his generation. A student of the great *rubab* master Ustad Omar, Homayun performs a style of music rooted in the classical *raga* tradition of North India that was cultivated in Kabul beginning in the nineteenth century. Shifting the distinctive melodic modes and virtuosic performance style of Indian *raga* to the Afghan *rubab*, Homayun Sakhi infuses his interpretations with rhythms and melodic ornamentation that reflect his own Kabuli heritage.







Ghulam Bahauddin, Rahim Takhari, and Muhammad Wali Nabigul are from the north of Afghanistan, and have been active in the revival of its musical life. Their traditional instrumental and vocal repertory, commonly performed at weddings and in teahouses, illustrates the strong connections between the Afghan north and the mountainous Tajik region of Gorno-Badakhshan that lies just across the River Panj.

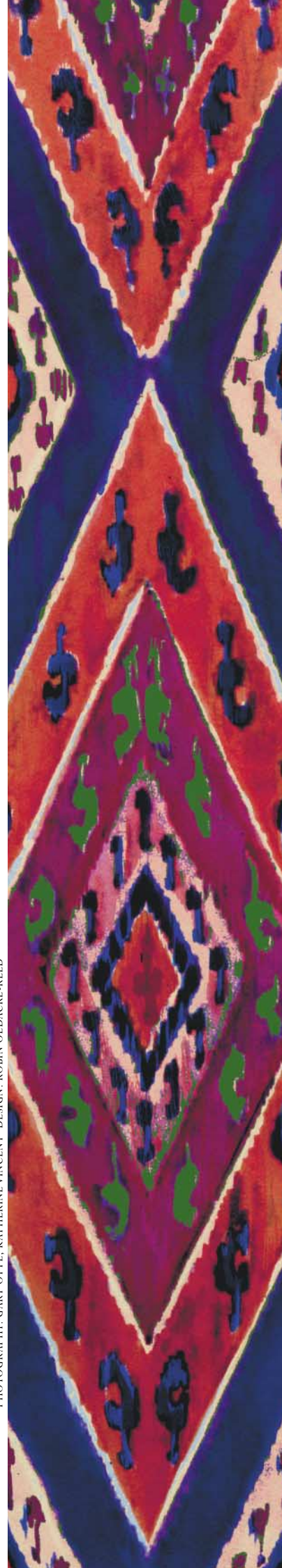
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# Songs and Music of Badakhshan

**Aqnazar Alavatov**, vocals, rubab

**Sahiba Davlatshaeva**, vocals and dance

**Shodikhan Mabatkulov**, daf

In the southeast of Tajikistan, where the majestic Pamir Mountains reach heights only slightly lower than those of the Himalayas, local traditions of devotional song, mystical music, and dance have flourished among mountain-dwelling Pamiri peoples, many of whom are Shia Isma'ili Muslims. Like their sister Pamiri Muslim communities, the Isma'ilis, whose hereditary spiritual leader, or Imam, is His Highness the Aga Khan, have cultivated distinct cultural practices. Combined with Badakhshan's rugged geography, these practices have nourished the preservation of many aspects of traditional culture.

Aqnazar, Sahiba, and Shadikhan live in and around Khorog – the regional capital and Badakhshan's largest city, with a population of around 40,000 – where they earn their livelihood as professional musicians. Their repertory includes *maddah* – devotional songs that can embody the spiritual power known as *baraka*, laments with spare instrumental accompaniment called *falak*, and traditional







popular songs, called *khalqi*. For Badakhshanis, music and dance are intimately linked, and Sahiba, an outstanding dancer as well as one of Badakhshan's finest female vocalists, illustrates the rich symbolism of Pamiri dance. Aqnazar is particularly known for singing the lyrics of Rumi, the great thirteenth-century Sufi poet, whose verse is admired among Muslims of many cultures and which provided the inspiration for the Mevlevi ("Whirling") Dervishes.

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# Alim Qasimov Ensemble

## Music of Azerbaijan

**Alim Qasimov**, vocal and daf

**Ferghana Qasimova**, vocal and daf

**Rauf Islamov**, kemanche

**Malik Mansurov**, tar

Alim Qasimov is Azerbaijan's best known and most beloved singer, a modest virtuoso who is equally at home in the two musical domains central to Azeri musical culture: classical art music, or *mugham*, and the urban bardic tradition of the *ashiq*. *Mugham* is the Azeri form of the vast *maqam* tradition that has flourished for centuries in the sophisticated urban cultures of North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Consisting of long suites of art songs interspersed with quasi-improvised instrumental pieces, *mugham* is an ideal vehicle for the display of musical passion and virtuosity. The *ashiq*, or bard, is simultaneously an entertainer, poet, historian, and keeper of collective memory. In both the *mugham* and *ashiq* traditions, vocalists accompany themselves on a small frame drum (*daf*), and are typically joined by a duo of instrumentalists who play the spike fiddle







(*kamanche*) and long-necked lute (*tar*). Vocalists in both traditions have historically been men, but women now appear with increasing frequency as singers of *mugham*. Ferghana Qasimova, Alim's daughter, has absorbed her father's musical gift, and is well on the way to becoming a great singer in her own right. Sensitively accompanied by Rauf Islamov and Malik Mansurov, both members of distinguished musical lineages, the Qasimovs present the art of *mugham* and the tradition of the bardic *ashiq* at their zenith.

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