

## Works by Azerbaijani Composers for Young Pianists

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**Abstract.** *The aim of the article* is to study the methodological and artistic-aesthetic significance of piano works by Azerbaijani composers in the education of young pianists. *Results.* A crucial role in the establishment and development of the genre of children's music was played by U. Hajibeyli and all subsequent generations of Azerbaijani composers: A. Zeynalli, G. Garayev, F. Amirov, A. Abbasov, J. Hajiyeve, T. Quliev, A. Alizade, V. Adigozalov et al. These composers have skillfully synthesised national and European musical traditions, drawing upon global musical masterpieces created by R. Schumann, P. Tchaikovsky, C. Debussy, and other outstanding classics. *The scientific novelty* of the research grounds on the fact that for the first time, the author studies traditions and innovations in the creation of piano literature for children by Azerbaijani composers. *Conclusions.* The historical traditions laid down by U. Hajibeyli are currently actively developing and being creatively updated. In their concise piano miniatures, specifically composed for young pianists, the composers aim for a distinctly vivid and expressive imagery, providing ample room for the development of children's imagination. The works created for children represent a methodically valuable and effective educational repertoire, as they take into account the specifics of national musical perception. The genre of music for children remains relevant in the creative output of Azerbaijani composers today.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan; piano composers; beginning stage of studying; educational repertoire

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## Introduction

In the works of Azerbaijani composers, a special place is held by literature created specifically for children. This is a vast musical world, exceptional in its unique richness and diversity. The tradition of music for children and youth was established at the very beginning of the formation of the Azerbaijani compositional school, during the development of a three-tiered music education and training system, with children's music schools and colleges being established throughout the republic.

The distinguished musician, educator and founder of Azerbaijani professional musical culture, U. Hajibeyli, viewed the creation of compositions for the young generation as one of the primary tasks of music education and training. He considered the creation of a national pedagogical repertoire for young musicians an urgent necessity. The master laid the foundation for this genre's development through

his own example. This genre became essential for the growth of the republic's musical culture.

*Analysis of previous studies.* It should be noted that the works of T. Seidov (2006), L. Aliyeva (2004), G. Safarova (2003), et al. played an important role in the research of piano works by Azerbaijani composers for children. In particular, in the fundamental work of T. Seidov, the Azerbaijani piano culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was studied in terms of the integration of compositional creativity, performance and pedagogy. The work of L. Aliyeva examines piano cycles in terms of formal construction, imagery and the use of the contrast principle. In the study of G. Safarova, the strictly methodological significance of piano music for children created by Azerbaijani composers is explored.

**The aim of the article** is to study, analyse and summarise piano works for young pianists created by Azerbaijani composers, as well as to highlight and compare historically established traditions and modern achievements.

## Result

In the works of the first and subsequent generations of Azerbaijani composers, music for children holds a highly regarded position. Today, it is difficult to find an Azerbaijani composer who has not created works for young musicians. This focus on children's music has become a tradition and a hallmark of modern Azerbaijani composition.

Creating music for a young audience is a serious and demanding task, requiring exceptional talent, as the inner world of a child is complex and requires a special approach. Artists like R. Schumann, P. Tchaikovsky, G. Bizet, A. Lyadov, S. Marshak, S. Akhundova, G. Garayev, F. Amirov, et al. have unlocked this unique world with their art.

Children's music literature has a rich tradition. It is not easy to contribute something new to this genre. However, Azerbaijani composers have succeeded, sensing the intonations and images close to children in the pulse of modern life. This is the secret of the popularity of their works, which have resonated with children's perception for generations.

Among the musical works created for children and youth, one of the most widespread genres is piano literature. Azerbaijani composers such as A. Zeynalli, G. Garayev, F. Amirov, J. Hajibeyov, T. Guliev, E. Nazirova, V. Adigozalov, A. Alizade, A. Malikov, M. Mirzayev, T. Bakikhanov, A. Azimov, A. Azizov, A. Dadashev and S. Ibrahimova have made invaluable contributions to this genre. Their compositions are brilliant gems in the world's piano literature for children and youth. These musical masterpieces contain a rich artistic, emotionally vivid content expressed through simple, accessible musical language for young listeners, making them invaluable in both artistic and pedagogical terms. For over a century, they have been indispensable in the pedagogical repertoire of piano students.

In the modern repertoire for beginner pianists, a special place is held by pedagogical pieces based on folk-national material, the relevance of which is tied to children's previous musical experiences. This type of music is particularly effective for cultivating a well-rounded perception, a sensitivity to artistic details that create a unified and vivid image. These pieces allow educators to intensively, deeply and comprehensively develop students' musical and performance potential. Renowned music educators advise using musical folklore as a starting repertoire.

Among such works, a significant place is occupied by études and melodies based on Azerbaijani modes, created by U. Hajibeyli and K. Safaraliyeva, as well as pieces by N. Nasirbekov and piano cycles for beginners by A. Zeynalli, G. Garayev, F. Amirov,

A. Abbasov, J. Hajiyeve, and many others. In these short, concise piano miniatures crafted especially for young pianists, the composers skillfully combine folk-national and European musical traditions, drawing inspiration from the great works of composers like R. Schumann, P. Tchaikovsky, C. Debussy, and other classical masters.

In their cycles, Azerbaijani composers strive for highly expressive and vivid imagery, offering a rich scope for nurturing children's imagination. A distinct feature of these children's cycles is their folk-national foundation intertwined with the imagery of the music itself. The musical language in these works reflects the composers' artistic and aesthetic thought. They do not try to create a new style designed solely for children's perception but rather communicate with young audiences in a musical language characteristic of their style, thus achieving a high level of artistic complexity.

In his study of Azerbaijani piano music, the well-known scholar T. Seidov (1980) notes the diversity of creative styles within it: "Different composers achieve national distinctiveness in their piano works through different approaches. The reliance on various aspects of folk musical art in conjunction with other aspects of creative individuality determines the stylistic diversity" (p. 85).

An invaluable artistic resource is extensively represented in the work compiled by experienced pedagogues and methodologists L. Egorova and R. Sirovich (1977), and edited by the prominent musical and public figure, pianist-pedagogue K. Safaraliyeva. It is also worth noting that the selection and compilation of musical works for the first edition of this collection were conducted under the direct and personal guidance of U. Hajibeyli, who remarked that "...the musical art of every nation is distinguished by its unique richness and individuality in modal thinking. Azerbaijani folk songs and instrumental works possess immense emotional-artistic impact due to their unique intonational-modal color" (Gadzhibekov, 1966, p. 89).

Alongside the extensive representation of Azerbaijani folk and contemporary professional music, the collection offers a rich artistic repertoire drawn from Western classical music. In the book's preface, the authors emphasise: When working on the material in this 'Manual,' it is essential to remember that one of the primary conditions for expressive performance and conveying the composer's intent is the precise rendering of the author's text. Ignoring the phrasing, articulation markings, caesuras, rhythmic and technical accuracy, or choosing unsuitable fingerings, results in a distortion of the composer's intent and creates habits that students

may struggle to break in the future (Egorova & Sirovich, 1977, p. 6).

In their pieces for young pianists, Azerbaijani composers, drawing from the rich heritage of Azerbaijani musical folklore, explore scenes from nature, episodes from daily life, psychological sketches, and fantasy. Many pieces are closely connected to folk traditions, where distinctive Azerbaijani intonations, modes, and rhythmic patterns play a defining role. Here we can name different pieces by O. Rajabov for example, such as *Barkarolla*, *Lyric Dance*, *Joke*, *Thought*, *Lyric Waltz*, *Naughty Kids*, *Remembering the Past*, *Remembering my mother*, *Sad Mood*, *My Memories*. “In his works, the composer was able to bring the world of children to life with great skill” (Humbatova, 2023, p. 140).

When children begin to play the piano, their musical experience is still limited — defined by a few songs, familiar dance melodies, and impressions from media. Under a teacher’s guidance, their listening experience gradually expands, their musical impressions deepen. They learn to listen and emotionally engage with the content of a musical piece. Thus, the teacher instills the foundational skills for active and comprehensive music perception.

Each culture has its unique musical language, which, at the initial stages of piano education, is closer and more understandable to children than others. Given this fact, beginner pianists should be given the opportunity to play works from musical folklore: piano arrangements and adaptations of folk melodies, songs and dances. Musical folklore plays a significant role in shaping young musicians, as folk songs and their adaptations — along with select contemporary works — are among the most relatable and familiar musical materials.

Learning through folk songs, presented in clear and simple polyphonic textures, enables children to successfully acquire foundational skills and aids in preserving and developing the aesthetic and ethical values of Azerbaijani folklore in their musical consciousness. Folk melodies, presented in basic piano textures, are accessible not only for comprehension but also for performance by young pianists.

As young pianists progress, they expand their repertoire with works from classical and romantic composers and pieces from modern piano literature, gradually broadening their expressive capabilities. The unique role of musical folklore in the beginner pianists’ repertoire lies in the fact that a child takes their first steps in music through their own cultural and musical language.

Piano studies can begin with arrangements and adaptations of Azerbaijani folk song and dance melodies presented in simple piano textures. This

repertoire can gradually be expanded with similar folk music from other cultures, allowing the students to acquire new auditory and performance experiences.

Students must understand two essential aspects of piano education: the polyphonic nature of the piano and the extensive polyphonic repertoire they are to study. Both factors require a refined ability to perceive and recreate the polyphony in piano textures, both horizontally and vertically. The famous methodologist K. Martienssen (1966) emphasised the following: “Only when each voice sings independently in its ascents and descents, ... independently declaims, — only then does the soul of the piano begin to shine” (p. 160).

Unlike all other instrumentalists, from the very beginning, young pianists face the complex process of mastering (perceiving, performing and memorising) the piano’s polyphonic nature. Polyphonic music in the beginner’s repertoire is the foundation of their future development. It is well known that young pianists study polyphonic repertoire from the outset, in spite of its challenges in perception and performance. This demands developing a special type of auditory perception, specific performance skills and basic theoretical understanding.

It is crucial to balance knowledge acquisition with maintaining interest, ensuring that learning an instrument does not lead children into a world of incomprehensible demands associated with challenging tasks. The importance of gaining essential knowledge, skills and abilities is unquestionable. However, it’s also important to remember that music loses its artistic and aesthetic essence if students, especially beginners, start viewing it as a duty. When young pianists play a simple polyphonic texture, the initial “performance” must be expressive and align closely with the piece’s content. From the beginning, children should be encouraged to approach every element of musical texture with creative interest and a desire to embody it.

It is well known that it is during the initial stage of piano training that the foundations of future mastery are laid. The main goal is to correctly define the purpose of education — the upbringing of a broadly educated musician capable of appreciating and understanding the beauty of the world around them. As researcher N. Kengerli-Najafova (2020) notes:

Among them, piano-performing art has a special place, as it presents, on the one hand, unique timbre-dynamic and technical capabilities, and on the other, certain difficulties in achieving artistic and figurative expressiveness of performance, intonation purity and clarity. The grand piano, as one of the most intelligent musical instruments

with the richest resources, requires the formation of special performing skills related to the ability to intonate on it, to achieve the necessary melodious sound production. (p. 157)

If a teacher, through demonstration, focuses solely on helping students learn to play a particular piece, they may fail to inspire and develop a creative interest in its study. Throughout the teaching process, it's essential to feel what drives the student more: an affinity for music or simply a sense of duty. This understanding allows the teacher to create the best conditions for fostering this affinity.

It's important to remember that strictly professional tasks should always be subordinate to artistic and aesthetic objectives, and beginners' studies should primarily aim to enhance emotional responsiveness, associative artistic imagery and active auditory perception, encouraging the desire to perform on the piano.

## Conclusions

Overall, the extensive piano repertoire currently available offers broad opportunities for study. The selection of pieces should be purposeful and guided by two important principles. Firstly, the repertoire offered to students should be valuable and engaging in terms of artistic and aesthetic content. Secondly, the learning process should be based on a sequential choice of pieces, moving from the simplest, most accessible for the students' comprehension and performance, to more challenging works.

*The scientific novelty* of the article grounds on the fact that for the first time, the author studies the traditions and innovations in the creation of piano literature for children by Azerbaijani composers.

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## Твори азербайджанських композиторів для юних піаністів

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**Анотація.** *Мета статті* — дослідити методологічну й художньо-естетичну значущість фортепіанних творів азербайджанських композиторів у навчанні юних піаністів. *Результати дослідження.* Важливу роль у становленні та розвитку жанру музики для дітей відіграв У. Гаджибейлі та всі наступні покоління



азербайджанських композиторів: А. Зейналлі, Г. Гарасєв, Ф. Аміров, А. Аббасов, Д. Гаджієв, Т. Кулієв, А. Алізаде, В. Адігезалов і багато інших. Ці композитори талановито синтезували національні та європейські музичні традиції, спираючись на світові музичні шедеври, створені Р. Шуманом, П. Чайковським, К. Дебюссі та іншими видатними класиками. *Наукова новизна* статті полягає в тому, що автор уперше дослідив традиції та новаторство у створенні азербайджанськими композиторами фортепіанної літератури для дітей. *Висновки*. На сьогодні закладені У. Гаджібейлі історичні традиції активно розвиваються й творчо оновлюються. У своїх лаконічних фортепіанних мініатюрах, розроблених спеціально для юних піаністів, композитори прагнуть до гранично рельєфної та яскравої образності, що відкриває широкий простір для розвитку дитячої уяви. Створені для дітей роботи є методично цінним та ефективним навчальним репертуаром, оскільки враховують специфіку національного музичного сприйняття. Жанр музики для дітей і нині зберігає свою актуальність у творчому доробку азербайджанських композиторів.

**Ключові слова:** Азербайджан; композитори для фортепіано; початковий етап навчання; навчальний репертуар

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