METHODS IN GIJJAK EDUCATION: TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION

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Abstract. *The article discusses the methodological principles of teaching the Uzbek gijjak in professional music education, with the focus on two sides of the student's growth: technical command of the instrument and artistic interpretation. As a bowed instrument with its own kind of technique, its flexible, expressive intonation and its important place in traditional ensembles, the gijjak makes particular demands on the teacher. We examine the main components of gijjak training: position of the instrument, control of the bow, left-hand technique, intonation, rhythmic stability and sound production. Special attention is paid to how traditional performance practice and academic teaching methods can be brought together. The pedagogical framework we propose rests on demonstration and imitation, technical exercises, analysis of repertoire, ensemble work and the student's independent practice. We also stress the need to develop the student's ear and understanding of traditional melodic structures. Our conclusion is that gijjak teaching should unite technical accuracy, stylistic awareness and artistic individuality while keeping the cultural foundations of Uzbek instrumental performance intact.*

Keywords: *gijjak, bowed-string instrument, instrumental education, bow technique, intonation, maqom, music pedagogy.*

Introduction

The gijjak is one of the main bowed string instruments in the musical traditions of Uzbekistan and of Central Asia more widely. Its particular timbre, its expressive range and its ability to sustain a long melodic line have given it a firm place in traditional ensembles and in professional music training.

Unlike plucked instruments, the gijjak needs constant control of the bow if the sound is to stay steady and expressive. This puts the teacher in a specific situation: physical coordination, hearing, intonation and musical expression all have to be developed at once, not one after another.

The instrument matters especially in maqom performance. Because it can hold a tone, shape fine melodic ornaments and bend intonation expressively, the performer is able to convey the subtle qualities of traditional modal music. Gijjak teaching therefore cannot be reduced to drilling bowing and fingering. Students also have to come to understand the style, the melodic structure and the cultural traditions behind the music.

Studies of the gijjak's construction and of its performance history give a useful basis for building a sound teaching method (Kenzhebaeva, 2025; Niyazbayeva, 2026).

Research Methodology

The study combines historical-organological, pedagogical, comparative and performance analysis. The historical-organological part looks at how the instrument is built and what this means for playing it. Pedagogical analysis helps to define the main stages of technical development. The comparative part examines how traditional gijjak teaching relates to academic pedagogy for bowed strings.

In the performance analysis we look at how bow technique, intonation, sound production and musical expression are connected. We also take into account how much practical demonstration and direct participation in traditional performance mean for the learner.

Specific Characteristics of Gijjak Performance

The technique of the gijjak is fundamentally different from that of plucked instruments. Here the sound comes from the friction of the bow on the strings, and the quality of the tone depends on several factors that act together:

- bow pressure;
- bow speed;
- contact point;
- bow direction;
- choice of string;
- placement of the left-hand fingers;
- coordination between the hands.

These elements should be introduced in a planned order. The student has to understand early on that pressure alone does not make a good sound. Too much pressure produces a harsh, scratchy tone; too little leaves the sound weak and unstable. The relationship between bow speed and contact point is just as important. It is best when the teacher shows in practice how different combinations of these parameters change dynamics, articulation and timbre.

Development of Intonation and Musical Hearing

Intonation is among the hardest problems in gijjak playing. Students have to learn to hear pitch relationships and to correct inaccuracies by themselves.

A sequence that has worked well in our classes is the following:

- listening to reference pitches;
- singing short melodic phrases;
- playing single notes;
- practising intervals;
- reproducing short traditional melodies;
- comparing one's own notes with reference recordings.

The teacher should not rely only on showing where the fingers go. Students need an inner sense of pitch that lets them notice and fix intonation problems themselves. This becomes especially important once they start on traditional melodies and maqom repertoire.

Bowing Techniques and Sound Production

Work on bowing should be organized around musical goals. Long sustained strokes help the student to establish a steady tone and to manage the distribution of the bow. Shorter strokes develop articulation and rhythmic precision. The main types of bowing may be grouped as follows:

Legato: successive notes played in a connected way. Detached articulation: notes clearly separated from one another. Accentuation: controlled emphasis on particular notes or rhythmic units. Dynamic bowing: changes in loudness achieved by coordinating bow pressure, speed and contact point.

Each of these strokes is introduced through exercises that gradually become more complex. Along the way the teacher explains how a given movement contributes to the character of the musical phrase.

Traditional Repertoire and Maqom Education

The educational value of the gijjak is closely tied to its place in Uzbek traditional music, and in maqom above all. Because the instrument can sustain sound, shape delicate melodic turns and produce expressive ornaments, it is well suited to conveying the distinctive character of maqom melodies. Teaching the gijjak should therefore go beyond technical exercises and lead the student into the musical language and performance traditions within which the instrument developed.

Working on maqom repertoire develops intonation, phrasing, a feeling for rhythm, ornamentation and stylistic sensitivity. Each piece poses its own problems: the performer has to grasp its melodic structure, its modal features and its expressive character. Over time students learn to recognize typical melodic movements and to understand how separate phrases build the larger development of the music.

In practice the work can be organized in three stages that complement one another. First the students listen to professional recordings, paying attention to melodic detail, ornaments, tempo and expressive nuance. Then the teacher demonstrates selected passages and explains the bowing, fingering and intonation they require. Finally the students play the material on their own and learn to reproduce and interpret the music without constant help.

Particular attention should go to the link between gijjak playing and the voice. Many maqom melodies are rooted in vocal tradition, and to interpret them one needs a sense of musical breathing, of where a phrase is going and of expressive intonation. A simple but effective exercise is to have the student sing a passage before playing it. Singing helps the student absorb the character of the melody and keeps the performance from becoming mechanical. Gradually the student begins to treat the gijjak not as a technical device but as a means of conveying the expressive qualities of traditional music.

Maqom study should also acquaint students with different regional interpretations and with the work of outstanding performers. Comparing these approaches shows them how varied the gijjak tradition is and helps them form their own artistic judgement. In this way teaching through repertoire connects technique with cultural knowledge, and students gain both performance skills and an informed understanding of the heritage they are expected to carry on.

Integrating Traditional and Academic Approaches

Traditional gijjak teaching relies heavily on demonstration, imitation and direct contact between teacher and student. In this way the student picks up not only technique but also fine stylistic features that are hard to put into words: ornamentation, flexible intonation, bow control, the expressive shape of a maqom phrase. Academic education adds systematic technical exercises, notation, theoretical analysis and formal assessment of performance. We do not think gijjak pedagogy should choose between these two approaches. It should combine them.

A traditional piece may have stylistic qualities that notation alone cannot capture. The score provides the structural frame, but it does not always show the nuances of performance, such as how a melodic phrase is shaped or how intonation shifts slightly. Technical exercises and systematic analysis, on the other hand, give students the physical coordination, the trained ear and the theoretical knowledge that professional performance requires.

Kadirov's (2026) research emphasizes the importance of the gijjak in teaching Eastern maqom traditions, particularly for developing students' understanding of modal structures,

intonational relationships and traditional musical thinking. It follows that maqom should not be taught purely as a theoretical system. Students need to experience its musical qualities through listening, through the teacher's demonstration and through their own playing. In this setting the gijjak becomes not only an instrument for reproducing maqom melodies but also a way of understanding their inner musical logic.

A useful parallel comes from Abdurashidova's (2025) study of sound production and its notation in dutor playing. Although it deals with a different instrument, her work shows how traditional playing techniques can be described and ordered through technical explanation and notation. Her discussion of sound-production methods and their written representation suggests a principle that is relevant for teaching: practical knowledge passed on by demonstration can also be documented systematically, which makes learning more consistent.

For the gijjak this would mean that teachers document typical bowing patterns, articulation, ornaments and other details of performance alongside their traditional demonstrations. With such materials students could return to particular technical elements during home practice and better understand how written instructions relate to the sound actually produced.

An effective method of teaching the gijjak, then, keeps the personal and practical nature of traditional instruction and at the same time makes use of the clarity of academic methods. Bringing together the ustoz-shogird tradition, notation, theoretical analysis and audiovisual learning can create a fuller educational environment. The aim is not to formalize every detail of traditional performance. It is to give students the knowledge and skills they need to understand maqom, to reproduce it and to interpret it creatively without losing its distinctive musical character.

Repertoire Progression and Student Development

Repertoire is chosen according to the student's technical and artistic level, as summarized in the table below.

Educational stage	Main teaching objectives	Recommended material
Beginner	Posture, bow control, basic intonation	Short melodic exercises
Intermediate	Coordination, articulation, phrasing	Traditional melodies and simple maqom passages
Advanced	Expressive control and stylistic interpretation	Complex traditional and concert repertoire

Advanced students should be encouraged to compare different interpretations and to work out their own artistic approach. Ensemble playing is also important at this stage, since it trains listening and the ability to coordinate with other performers.

Conclusion

Teaching the gijjak requires a method that takes in both the technical and the artistic nature of the instrument. Its key elements are correct posture, controlled bowing, accurate intonation, coordinated fingering, sound production and musical interpretation.

Traditional repertoire, and maqom in particular, provides an essential basis for developing stylistic awareness and a sense of national musical identity. Combining traditional, demonstration-based learning with systematic academic instruction can make gijjak teaching considerably more effective.

The main goal should be to educate performers who are not only technically proficient but who also have an independent artistic outlook and a deep understanding of Uzbek musical

traditions.

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