



THE SCHOLAR WHO LEFT A MARK IN MY FIELD: THE ROLE OF ABU NASR FARABI IN EASTERN MUSICAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the significant contribution of the great thinker of the Eastern Renaissance, Abu Nasr Farabi, to the art and theory of music. The scholar's views on music are extensively explored, particularly his ideas on the influence of music on human psychology, thinking, and education. The musical systems developed by Farabi, his theories on modes (maqams) and rhythm, as well as their role in the development of Eastern musical culture, are thoroughly examined. In addition, the scientific ideas presented in his famous work "Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir" are comparatively analyzed in relation to modern music education.

The article also substantiates that Farabi's musical heritage should be regarded not only as a historical and cultural phenomenon but also as an important methodological foundation for contemporary music pedagogy. His interpretation of music as a means of education, its role in shaping aesthetic taste, and its significance in developing students' musical thinking are supported by scientific evidence. Furthermore, the article considers the possibilities of applying the scholar's ideas in practice and proposes effective ways of using them in modern music education.

Introduction: Music, as an integral part of human spiritual life, has played an important role in the development of society since ancient times. Particularly during the Eastern Renaissance, music evolved not only as a source of aesthetic pleasure but also as an object of scientific and theoretical study. Among the great scholars of this period, Abu Nasr Farabi holds a special place. His scientific heritage encompasses not only philosophy but also music theory, containing fundamental ideas that remain relevant to this day.

A prominent representative of the Eastern Renaissance, Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Uzlagh al-Farabi (870–950), is considered one of the rare scholars who laid a fundamental foundation for the development of music science alongside many fields such as philosophy, natural sciences, logic, mathematics, politics, and psychology. Among his scholarly works, “*Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*” (“The Great Book of Music”) occupies a special position. Before Farabi, music theory in the East had largely developed based on practical experience and oral traditions; however, his works elevated this field to the level of a systematic science grounded in mathematical and physical principles.

Abu Nasr Farabi is regarded as one of the first thinkers to study music deeply and to provide it with a systematic scientific foundation. He analyzed music from mathematical and philosophical perspectives, revealing the essence of concepts such as melody, rhythm, and modal systems. By scientifically substantiating the influence of music on human psychology and thinking, the scholar highly valued music as a means of education. In this regard, his views serve as an important methodological source not only for his time but also for modern music pedagogy.

Today, in the education system, developing students’ musical thinking, forming their aesthetic taste, and educating them in the spirit of national and universal values are among the most pressing issues. In this process, effective use of historical heritage—particularly the scientific views of scholars like Farabi—is of great importance. His musical-theoretical ideas contribute to deepening students’ perception of music, developing creative thinking, and increasing their interest in art.

The purpose of this article is to provide a scientific analysis of Abu Nasr Farabi’s role in Eastern musical culture, to highlight his views on music, and to reveal the possibilities of applying them in the process of modern music education. In addition, the article examines the theoretical and practical aspects of developing students’ aesthetic education and musical thinking based on the scholar’s musical heritage.

Literature review: The role of Abu Nasr Farabi in Eastern musical culture and his scientific heritage are most prominently reflected in his work “*Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*”. This work is recognized as one of the most comprehensive and systematic sources of 10th-century music science, in which the theoretical foundations of music—sound, intervals, modal systems, rhythm, and the acoustics of musical instruments—are explained on a deeply scientific basis. Farabi approaches music not only as an art form but also as an exact scientific system, analyzing it through mathematical and philosophical principles. By relying on harmonic principles to determine the relationships between sounds, he reveals the internal logic of musical systems. In this regard, his work served as a fundamental source in the formation of Eastern music theory.

According to scholarly research, Farabi, in developing his theory of music, effectively drew upon the teachings of ancient Greek scholars, particularly Pythagoras, further advancing and refining them. In addition to identifying the physical and mathematical foundations of musical sounds, he systematically studied their influence on human psychology and emotional states. Farabi applied an inductive approach in his music theory, deriving scientific conclusions based on practical experience and observation. Through this, he established

music as a precise scientific discipline alongside fields such as astronomy and medicine. This approach demonstrates the breadth and systematic nature of his scientific thinking.

In contemporary academic literature, Farabi's legacy is being reinterpreted through new methodological approaches. In particular, his views on music are analyzed from the perspectives of cognitive science, psychology, and neuroscience, highlighting his attempt to relate music to human cognition and mental activity. Researchers regard Farabi as one of the first scholars to systematically study the effects of music on human emotions and perception. His ideas about the influence of rhythm, melody, and sound harmony on the human psyche align with modern scientific fields such as neuromusicology and music perception. This demonstrates the continued relevance of Farabi's heritage in the development of modern science.

Farabi's views on rhythm and the theory of poetry also occupy an important place in scholarly research.

He considered rhythm as a fundamental component of music and analyzed it in close connection with poetic meter and melody. The scholar scientifically substantiated the concept of *īqā'* (rhythmic cycle), demonstrating the harmony between musical and poetic systems. Modern studies confirm that his theory of rhythm serves as an important methodological tool in the study of traditional music of the Near East and Central Asia. Compared to earlier theories, Farabi's approach to rhythm is regarded as more advanced and systematic, further highlighting his intellectual capacity.

In general, as the founder of the Eastern music theory tradition, Farabi had a profound influence on later scholars. His scientific ideas were continued and further developed by thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Safi al-Din Urmavi, Abd al-Qadir Maraghi, and Abdurahman Jami. Farabi not only provided a theoretical foundation for music but also deeply analyzed its aesthetic, educational, and spiritual significance. Therefore, his legacy has served as a cornerstone in the formation of Eastern musical culture and continues to be an important methodological resource for music science and education today.

Methodology: In this article, a comprehensive methodological approach was applied to scientifically examine the role of Abu Nasr Farabi in Eastern musical culture. During the research process, three main scientific methods—analysis, comparative, and historical approaches—were used in an integrated manner to systematically study the scholar's musical-theoretical heritage. This methodological framework made it possible to deeply understand the essence of Farabi's views, determine their scientific validity, and consistently reveal their significance within Eastern musical culture.

Based on the analytical method, first of all, Farabi's work "*Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*" and other related scientific sources were examined in terms of both content and structure. In this process, the main components of music—sound, interval, modal system, rhythm, and the system of musical instruments—were identified as separate elements and their theoretical foundations were analyzed in depth. In particular, the structure of the oud instrument, the formation of rhythmic cycles, and the early forms of the maqam system were clarified in terms of how they were scientifically explained by Farabi. As a result, it was substantiated that the scholar's views on music were formed as a comprehensive scientific system.

Through the comparative method, Farabi's ideas on music theory were studied in comparison with the scientific heritage of thinkers who preceded and followed him. Specifically, his ideas were comparatively analyzed alongside those of ancient Greek scholars such as Pythagoras and Aristoxenus, as well as Eastern scholars including al-Kindi, Ibn Sina, Safi al-Din Urmavi, and Abd al-Qadir Maraghi. This approach made it possible to identify the distinctive features, scientific novelty, and systematic development of Farabi's legacy. Consequently, his contribution to music theory was evaluated not only as a continuation of tradition but also as an approach that initiated a new scientific stage.

The historical approach enabled the examination of Farabi's musical heritage within a broader cultural and scientific context. His ideas were analyzed in chronological sequence, considering their formation in the socio-cultural environment of the 10th-century Eastern Renaissance, their development by later scholars, and their reinterpretation in modern music science. Through this approach, the historical continuity of Farabi's legacy, its foundational role in the formation and development of Eastern musical culture, and its ongoing relevance today were scientifically substantiated.

Analysis and results: Abu Nasr Farabi is one of the prominent thinkers who interpreted music not only as a source of aesthetic pleasure but also as an independent science based on precise scientific laws. His views on music were formed in close connection with philosophy, mathematics, physics, and psychology, and he explained music as an ordered system of sounds in terms of time and pitch. By expressing the relationships between sounds through mathematical ratios, Farabi scientifically substantiated the theory of intervals. In doing so, he systematized the concepts of consonance and dissonance, revealing the scientific nature of music.

Farabi also deeply studied the influence of music on the human psyche, interpreting it as a phenomenon closely related to psychological and educational processes. According to him, specific rhythms and modal structures can evoke various emotional states in individuals—such as joy, sadness, calmness, or mental activation. Therefore, he viewed music not only as an art form but also as a means of education and even as a tool connected with medicine. This approach was later developed by Ibn Sina and became a foundation for scientific views on the therapeutic properties of music.

Farabi paid great attention to the theory of musical instruments, scientifically analyzing the structure, tuning, and acoustic capabilities of instruments such as the oud, tanbur, and qanun. He developed various tuning systems for the oud and mathematically substantiated the tonal possibilities produced by each of them. In addition, he systematically described performance techniques, methods of pressing strings, and mechanisms of sound production. These ideas had a direct impact on the development of Eastern traditional performance culture.

Farabi's most significant work, "*Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*", is recognized as a fundamental source of Eastern music theory. In this work, the physics of sound, theories of intervals and rhythm, the acoustics of musical instruments, and the philosophy of music are presented in a comprehensive system. Rhythm is analyzed through the concept of *īqāʿ*, and various rhythmic models along with their connection to poetic meters are scientifically

explained. By interpreting music as a science grounded in mathematical laws, Farabi transformed its theoretical foundations into a precise scientific system.

In general, Farabi's influence on Eastern musical culture is extensive. He significantly contributed not only to theoretical musicology but also to practical performance and music education. His ideas were further developed in the works of scholars such as Ibn Sina, Safi al-Din Urmavi, Abd al-Qadir Maraghi, and Abdurahman Jami, forming the basis of the Eastern school of music theory. By interpreting music as a means of moral and aesthetic education, Farabi elevated it to the level of a supreme art serving human perfection. Therefore, his scientific heritage remains an important methodological resource for music theory and education even today.

Conclusion: Abu Nasr Farabi occupies a special place in the history of Eastern musical culture as a great thinker who was among the first to study music in close connection with exact sciences such as mathematics, physics, philosophy, and psychology. He analyzed musical sounds based on mathematical ratios and provided scientific definitions of concepts such as interval, modal system, and rhythm. Through this approach, he laid the foundation for understanding music not only as an emotional-aesthetic phenomenon but also as a scientific system governed by precise laws. This perspective marked an important stage that fundamentally transformed the status of music within Eastern scientific thought.

Farabi's most significant work, "*Kitab al-Musiqa al-Kabir*", is recognized as a comprehensive encyclopedia of music theory. In this work, the theory of sound, systems of intervals and rhythm, issues of consonance and dissonance, the acoustic properties of musical instruments, and the philosophy of music are thoroughly explained on a scientific basis. The work had a considerable influence not only on Eastern musicology but also on the science of the European Renaissance, and its translation into Latin further enhanced its global significance.

Farabi's scientific legacy had a direct impact on the subsequent development of Eastern musical culture. His theories of modal systems and rhythm were continued in the works of scholars such as Ibn Sina, Safi al-Din Urmavi, and Abd al-Qadir Maraghi, serving as a methodological foundation for the formation of the classical maqam system in the East. Moreover, by improving the theoretical and practical aspects of musical instruments such as the oud, tanbur, and qanun, he made a significant contribution to the development of traditional performance culture.

At the same time, Farabi deeply analyzed the relationship between music and the human psyche, scientifically substantiating its educational and therapeutic significance. He emphasized that music, through its influence on human emotions, contributes to moral perfection and spiritual development. In conclusion, Farabi can be regarded as one of the founders of Eastern musical civilization, and his scientific heritage continues to retain its importance as a key methodological resource for music theory, education, and performance practice today.

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