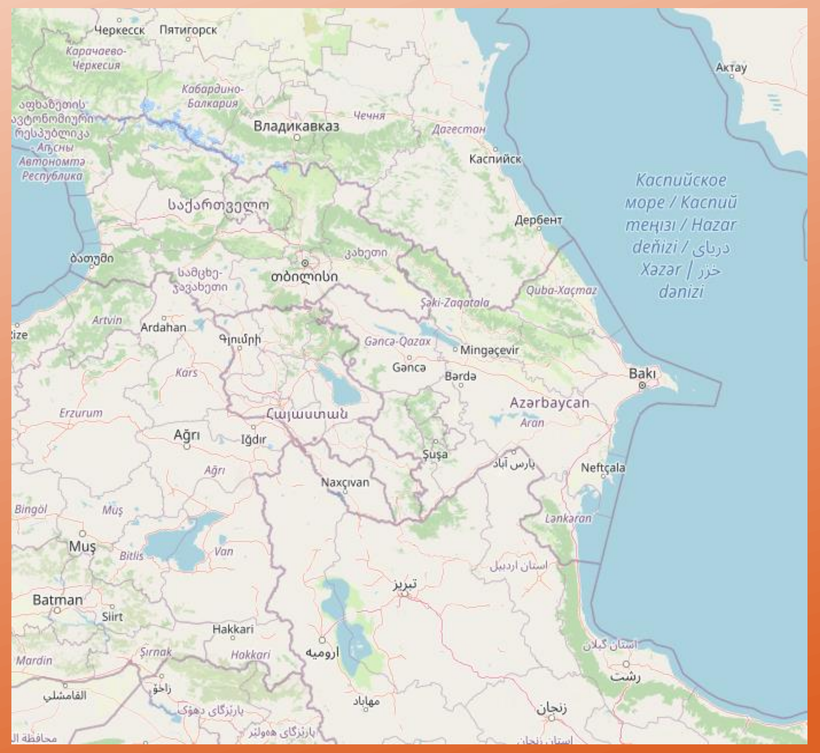
Nəva muğam from Azerbaijan

Background: *Muğam* in post-Soviet Azerbaijan

There are seven main *muğam* cycles (*dəstgah*) in Azerbaijan: *rast*, *şur*, *segah*, *çahargah*, *bayatı-şiraz*, *şüştər*, and *hümayun*. Although *nəva* is not part of this list, this *muğam* has recently received notable attention from Azerbaijani classical musicians.

Nəva is fervently discussed and debated by many of the most esteemed *muğam* masters. What explains its prominence in current discourses is its mysterious Soviet past. Indeed, *nəva* is part of repertoire that has been deemphasized or banned in Soviet Azerbaijan and is now in the spotlight because of ongoing efforts towards its restoration. This *muğam* repertoire includes: *nəva, bayatı qacar, dügah, zəmin xara* and numerous smaller sentences (*guşə,* such as *ruhl-ərvah).*

Discourses surrounding *nəva* center on themes of loss and beyondness, as a response to the past Soviet reforms. For example, *nəva* is linked to religion, mysticism, philosophy, and melancholy, all of which were eschewed during the Soviet era. *Ghazal* poetry that is more complex with Arabic and Persian terminology is preferred to match the underlying *əruz* patterns of *nəva* and its philosophical nature.



Map of Azerbaijan (OpenStreetMap Contributors, 2021)

Nəva as imagined: local terminology used to describe *nəva*

Philosophical (*fəlsəfi*)
Scientific (*elmi*)
Meaningful (*mənalı*)
Spiritual (*təsəvvüfü*)
Sorrowful (*qədərli*)
Removed (*qəybi*)
Eastern (*Şərqi*)
Perfect (*mükəmməl*)
Ancient (*qədim*)

Instrumental *nəva*

<u>Mansurov *tar* lineage</u>

Current representatives:
Elkhan Mansurov
Valeh Rahimov

⇩

Bahram Mansurov
(1911-1985)

<u>Bakikhanov *tar* lineage</u>

Current representatives:
Vamig Mammadaliyev
Elkhan Muzaffarov

⇩

Ahmad Bakikhanov
(1892-1973)

Nəva has been preserved only in its instrumental form in some of the main *tar* lineages. Because there is no vocal version, some argue that the instrumental form should not be taught at all.

Recordings of instrumental *nəva*

Bahram Mansurov performing *nəva-nişapur:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1nH4dwBpWc

Vamig Mammadaliyev: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sHWfMygFV8

Elkhan Muzaffarov: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBo3O1pBwZ8

Learning from Elkhan Muzaffarov (Bakikhanov lineage)

Learning from Elkhan Mansurov (Mansurov lineage)

Instrumental *nəva*

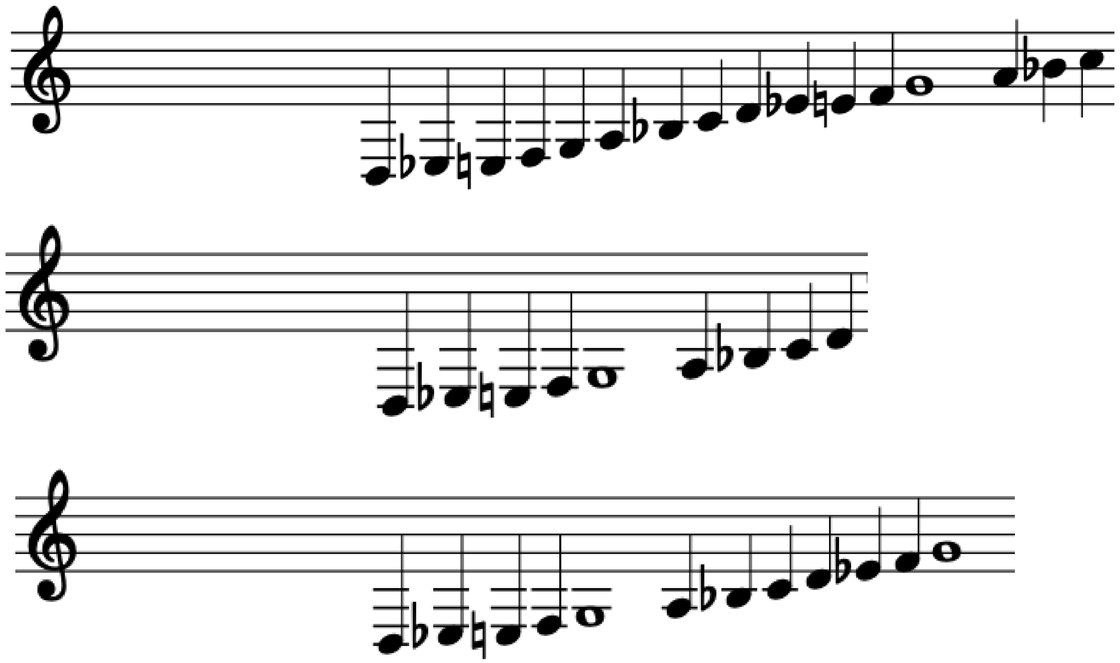
The Bakikhanov version is part of the official curriculum (it was reintroduced in the 1990s, after being removed in 1940).

Mansurov successors criticize Bakikhanov *nəva* because they claim it originated in Iran. Bakikhanov successors criticize Mansurov *nəva* (usually called *nəva-nişapur*) because its structure does not show musical development as found in *dəstgah* structure (see below).

Musical features of both instrumental forms include pronounced metricity and rigid/inflexible rhythms. The tetrachord that characterizes *nəva* is: T-ST-T.

The main difference between the two instrumental versions is evident in the overall form of the *muğam*. The Mansurov *nəva* centers on the main tone (A on the *tar*), starting in the lower register and then moving up an octave, highlighting the A tone all throughout. The Bakikhanov *nəva* starts with lower G as the main tone, moves up an octave to emphasize the higher G and then the A above, before returning to the original tonal center (lower G). Hence, it involves the typical staircase rise and form found in other *dəstgah* cycles.

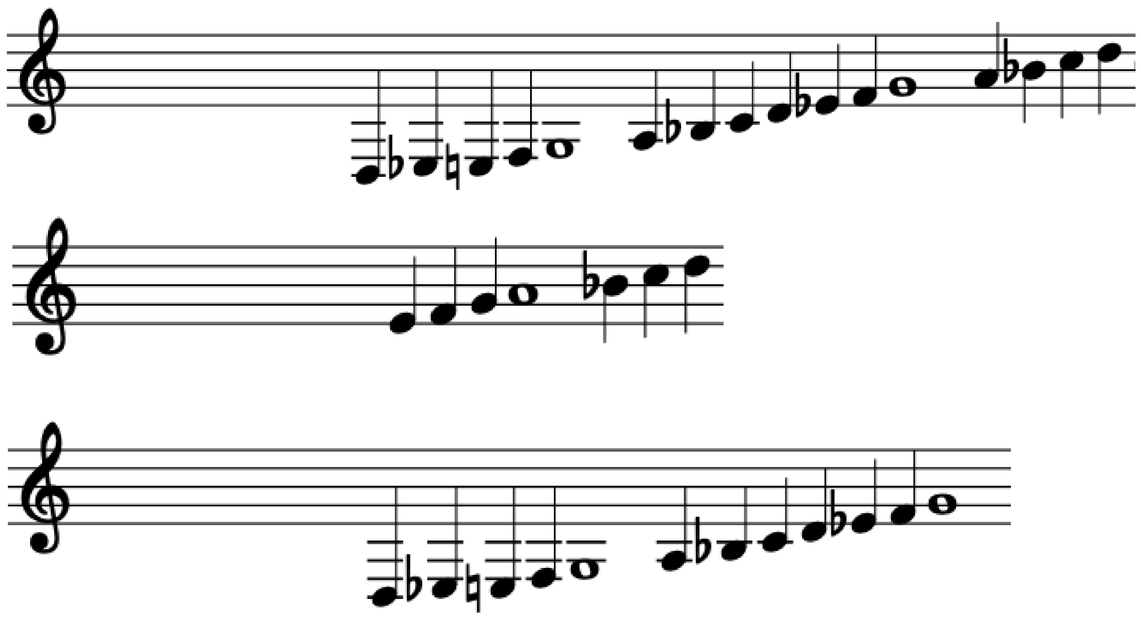
Instrumental *nəva* main sections and their tones*: Bakikhanov *tar* lineage



Əmiri-bərdaşt
(introductory section)

Mayə (main section)

Nişapur



Əbu-ata

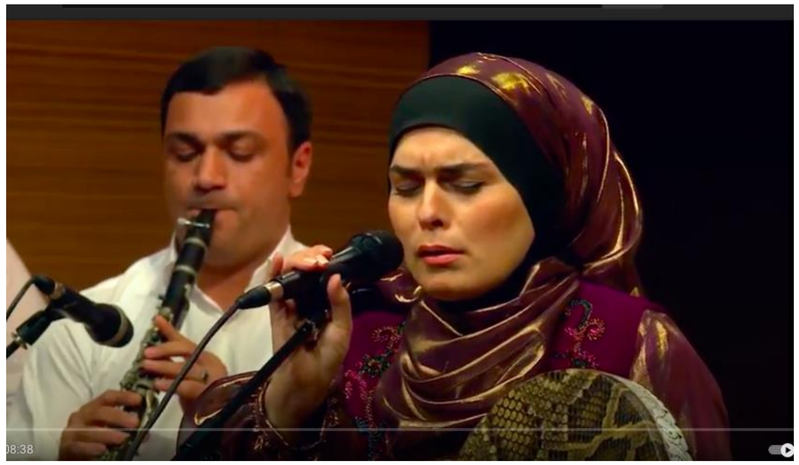
Hicaz

Nişapur ilə ayaq

***Additional sections and modulations can be performed. The tones here are standard written pitch for the *tar*, while the concert pitch is a semitone lower.**

Vocal *nəva* ???

Fergana Gasimova, 2015
In a public debate that followed the performance, a conclusion was reached that this is a “foreign” *nəva.* Fergana is hopeful that this version will eventually be accepted and become part of the official repertoire.



Irs Folk Ensemble, 1997
Masters have referred to this performance as “not *muğam,* but a musical composition” and heavily criticized it for not having proper *muğam dəstgah* structure.

Javid Murtuzoglu, 1995
Musician from Iran who came to Azerbaijan to perform *nəva*. The consensus is that his is “Iranian” *nəva.* Some musicians did perform his version afterwards, but it never caught on and was criticized.

Seyyid Shushinsky - ? Performed vocal *nəva* underground at a private meeting in the 1960s (location: Absheron suburban towns). No records of this have been found.

Hajibaba Huseynov - ? Performed vocal *nəva* underground at a private meeting in the 1960s (location: Absheron suburban towns). No records of this have been found.

There are notes that vocal *nəva* was indeed performed in early 20th century (Shushinsky 1979).

Vocal *nəva* ???

There have been many attempts to find vocal *nəva* in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. All of them failed to be recognized as official Azerbaijani *nəva* and none have been introduced as part of the institutional curriculum.

The main problem lies in the difficulty to find poetry with prosodical meters (*əruz*) that match the music of the existing instrumental version.

Recordings of vocal *nəva*

Fergana Gasimova's *nəva*:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UztziwYo3SI

İrs Folk ensemble (part 1 and part 2)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YHrN6jolY4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_m2b0OeShaU

References

OpenStreetMap Contributors. 2021. Azerbaijan. geo:40.477,46.363?z=6. Available at: https://openstreetmap.org (Accessed 1 June 2021).

Shushinsky, Firuddin. 1979. *Folk Singers and Musicians of Azerbaijan* [Narodnye Pevtsy i Muzykanty Azerbaydzhana]. Moscow: Sovetsky Kompozitor.