

Musical analysis of Kamal Ahmadov's chamber music works

Kamal Ahmadov'un oda müziği eserlerinin müzikal analizi

Rumiya Mammadova¹

¹ Nakhchivan State University, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to theoretically analyze the characteristic features of the musical language in Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works. The article thoroughly examines the modal-harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic properties of the composer's music, highlighting his individual creative style and offering an original analysis of his works. Special focus is placed on Ahmadov's Capriccio, Ballad, Shikasta, and other pieces, correlating them with the distinctive qualities of chamber music. The significance of the research lies in the fact that Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works are being analyzed in detail for the first time within Azerbaijani musicology. This study provides new perspectives on how his works are evaluated not only in the local music scene but also internationally. Research methods include music theory and analysis, as well as contemporary musicological approaches, which are used to explore the technical and aesthetic features of the works in depth. Data collection involved the use of the notated versions of the compositions, scientific literature, and interviews with the composer. The composer's individual style is manifested in the stylistic features evident throughout his works: the rhythmic freedom in Capriccio, the lyricism of the Ballad, and the mournful character of Variations on a Theme dedicated to martyrs. Ahmadov's rhythmic and melodic liberty has enabled him to create a unique musical language. The harmonic alterations and chamber music of melodic phrases render his works both technically and emotionally rich. In his chamber instrumental compositions, Ahmadov has managed to merge national elements with the peculiarities of the dodecaphonic style. As a result, the individuality and originality of Kamal Ahmadov's musical language in his chamber instrumental works are confirmed, and their role in enriching Azerbaijani music is underlined. The research also opens new academic perspectives for evaluating Ahmadov's innovative approaches and his place in world music culture.

Keywords: Azerbaijan music, musical analysis, Kamal Ahmadov, chamber music

ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Kamal Ahmadov'un oda enstrüman eserlerindeki müzikal dilin karakteristik özelliklerini kuramsal olarak analiz etmektir. Makalede, bestecinin müziğinin modal-armonik, melodik ve ritmik özellikleri ayrıntılı bir şekilde incelenmekte; sanatçının bireysel yaratıcı üslubu vurgulanarak eserlerine özgün bir analiz sunulmaktadır. Ahmadov'un Capriccio, Ballad, Şikeste ve diğer bazı eserleri özel olarak ele alınmakta; bu yapıtlar, oda müziğinin karakteristik özellikleriyle ilişkilendirilerek değerlendirilmektedir. Bu araştırmanın önemi, Kamal Ahmadov'un oda enstrüman eserlerinin Azerbaycan müzikbiliminde ilk kez bu denli kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz ediliyor olmasında yatmaktadır. Çalışma, bestecinin eserlerinin yalnızca yerel müzik sahnesinde değil, uluslararası düzeyde de nasıl değerlendirilebileceğine dair yeni bakış açıları sunmaktadır. Araştırma yöntemleri arasında müzik kuramı ve analizi ile çağdaş müzikbilimsel yaklaşımlar yer almakta; bu yöntemlerle eserlerin teknik ve estetik özellikleri derinlemesine incelenmektedir. Veri toplama sürecinde, notaya alınmış eser örnekleri, bilimsel literatür ve besteciyle yapılan görüşmelerden yararlanılmıştır. Bestecinin bireysel üslubu, eserlerinin tümüne yayılan stilistik özelliklerde açıkça görülmektedir: Capriccio'daki ritmik serbestlik, Ballad'daki lirik anlatım ve şehitlere ithaf edilen Bir Tema Üzerine Varyasyonlar'daki hüznü karakter, bu özgün tarzın yansımalarıdır.

Rumiya Mammadova — rumiyyamammadova89@gmail.com

Geliş tarihi/Received: 06.06.2025 — Kabul tarihi/Accepted: 21.10.2025 — Yayın tarihi/Published: 30.10.2025

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Ahmadov'un ritmik ve melodik serbestliğı, kendine özgü bir müzikal dil yaratmasını sağlamıştır. Eserlerdeki armonik çeşitlilik ve zengin melodik cümleler, yapıtların hem teknik hem de duygusal açıdan derinlik kazanmasına olanak tanımaktadır. Oda enstrüman müziğinde ulusal unsurları dodekafonik üslubun özellikleriyle birleştirmeyi başaran Ahmadov, bu yolla hem bireyselliğini hem de müzikal dilinin özgünlüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bu araştırma, Kamal Ahmadov'un yenilikçi yaklaşımlarını ve dünya müzik kültüründeki yerini değerlendirmek için yeni akademik perspektifler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Azerbaycan müziği, müzikal analiz, Kamal Ahmadov, oda müziği

1. INTRODUCTION

Chamber music, traditionally written for small ensembles performing in intimate spaces, represents one of the most refined and complex forms of musical communication in Western art music. Its essence lies in the equality of voices and the intricate interplay among instruments, where each performer acts simultaneously as a soloist and as part of a collective texture. Historically, chamber music evolved from the early contrapuntal practices of the Renaissance into a highly expressive and intellectually sophisticated genre during the Classical and Romantic periods. Composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms established the genre's formal and aesthetic foundations, emphasizing dialogue, balance, and structural coherence. In the twentieth century, chamber music became a laboratory for experimentation, where new harmonic systems, rhythmic models, and timbral innovations were explored. As Taruskin (Taruskin, 2010) emphasizes, the twentieth century established chamber music as a testing ground for harmonic and structural innovation, where composers like Schoenberg and Webern transformed traditional forms into modernist expressions.

Within Azerbaijani music culture, the emergence of chamber-instrumental music was both a reflection of modernization processes and a manifestation of cultural synthesis between Eastern melodic traditions and Western compositional techniques. Beginning in the early twentieth century, this genre gradually gained an academic framework through the pioneering works of Uzeyir Hajibeyli, who combined national modal systems with European forms. His "Ashiqsayagi Trio" and piano miniatures opened a new stage in the development of Azerbaijani instrumental thought. Later, Asaf Zeynalli further professionalized the genre, laying the groundwork for a distinct Azerbaijani chamber style characterized by modal expressiveness, rhythmic asymmetry, and a deep connection to oral folk traditions (Kazimov, 2009). According to Huseynova (Huseynova, 2016a), such integration of national modal systems into Western academic forms laid the foundation for the Azerbaijani compositional school.

Throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, Azerbaijani composers increasingly viewed chamber music as a domain for creative freedom, where experimental harmonic languages and complex rhythmic constructions could coexist with the ethos of national identity. In this context, Kamal Ahmadov occupies a prominent position among contemporary Azerbaijani composers whose works synthesize traditional modal thinking with the innovations of twentieth-century compositional techniques such as dodecaphony, atonality, and polyphonic development. His chamber works — *Capriccio*, *Ballad*, *Shikasta*, and *Variations on a Theme* — not only continue the national school's evolution but also open new directions in form-building and thematic transformation. As Morgan (Morgan, 1991) notes, modern European composers similarly explored serial and atonal languages to expand expressive potential in chamber forms. As Babayev (Babayev, 2021) points out, the integration of Eastern modalism with Western post-tonal idioms is central to defining the aesthetic of contemporary Azerbaijani composers.

From a theoretical perspective, Ahmadov's oeuvre is noteworthy for its synthesis of modal-harmonic logic with serial and polyphonic structures. The dynamic interaction between traditional melodic gestures and abstract compositional systems positions his music within a broader post-modern discourse that integrates folk intonation with intellectualized musical processes. Moreover, the composer's attention to timbral balance, rhythmic freedom, and emotional expressiveness situates his works at the intersection of national and universal aesthetics. His chamber pieces exemplify a dialogue between Azerbaijani intonational heritage and Western modernist tendencies, reflecting both cultural continuity and creative innovation. This fusion reflects what Sadie and Tyrrell (Sadie & Tyrrell, 2001) describe as the universal character of chamber dialogue—an equilibrium of individuality and collective texture.

Despite their artistic value, Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works have not been subjected to comprehensive musicological scrutiny. Existing studies of Azerbaijani music have primarily focused on symphonic and vocal-instrumental genres, leaving the chamber field comparatively unexplored. Therefore, this research aims to fill that scholarly gap by conducting an in-depth theoretical and analytical examination of Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works, identifying the distinctive features of his musical language

and creative individuality. Through this approach, the study contributes to the academic discourse on contemporary Azerbaijani music and expands the methodological horizon of national musicology by applying comparative and structural-analytical perspectives aligned with international research standards.

Consequently, the current investigation not only contextualizes Ahmadov's music within the development of Azerbaijani chamber art but also emphasizes its contribution to global modernism. By analyzing his modal-harmonic systems, melodic syntax, and rhythmic architecture, the paper seeks to demonstrate how the composer's idiom embodies both national identity and universal artistic thought — a synthesis that ensures the continuing relevance of Azerbaijani musical culture in the twenty-first century.

1.1. The main problem of the research

The main focus of this study is the theoretical analysis of the unique features of the musical language in Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works, including their modal-harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic structure, as well as the identification of the composer's individual creative style.

1.2. Significance of the Research

Although Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works hold an important place within contemporary Azerbaijani music, these compositions have not been thoroughly examined from a musicological perspective until now. In this context, the present study constitutes the first comprehensive research that addresses Ahmadov's chamber music compositions through a theoretical and analytical lens. The study not only reveals the composer's individual style and musical language but also aims to evaluate the value of his works within both the local and global music scenes. This research offers an original contribution to Azerbaijani musicological literature and provides a scholarly framework for assessing Ahmadov's innovative approach. Moreover, considering the potential of such analyses to enhance the international recognition of contemporary Azerbaijani music, the study carries both cultural and artistic significance.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To analyze the musical language of Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works, methods of music theory and analysis, as well as comparative analysis, were employed (Huseynova, 2024). The modal-harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic features, along with the composer's individual style and musical structures, were examined in depth. Additional information was collected through interviews and available documents, enriching the analysis of Ahmadov's musical language. These methods facilitated a comprehensive analysis and helped identify the defining characteristics of his works. As Kholopova (Kholopova, 2018) highlights, form and meaning in modern music analysis are inseparable; hence, both structural and semantic dimensions must be evaluated concurrently.

The primary sources of this research are the written scores of Kamal Ahmadov's *Capriccio*, *Ballad*, *Shikesta*, and other selected chamber instrumental works. The musical analysis of these compositions employed both traditional methods from classical music theory and contemporary musicological approaches. Analytical methods were used to systematically examine modal-harmonic structures, melodic organization, and rhythmic patterns, while interpretive strategies were adopted to assess the aesthetic qualities of the works.

During the data collection process, in addition to the original notated scores, relevant scholarly publications, music theory literature, and information obtained through interviews with Kamal Ahmadov were utilized. These qualitative data provided deeper insights into the composer's musical thought and creative process.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. On the creative output of Kamal Ahmadov

The 20th century, as a remarkable and dynamic period in world history, profoundly affected the art of music. As with any historical era, the various political, economic, and social events of this period also influenced musical creation (Mammadova, 2025). During this time, new musical trends and styles emerged, and, like composers around the world, Azerbaijani composers also applied new styles to their works. Kamal Ahmadov,

a representative of the Azerbaijani school of composition, is distinguished by his unique style (Figure 1). Ahmadov's music is always recognizable for its expressive images and ideas. He expresses profound and serious feelings with clarity and impact, creating vast opportunities in the field of creativity through the use of contemporary compositional techniques. At the same time, he has developed a modern style that preserves the intonational and modal-harmonic features of folk music in line with the traditions of national musical culture. Following Adorno's (Adorno, 1998) notion of new music's intellectual autonomy, Ahmadov's approach transcends functional tonality through dodecaphonic and expressive logic.

After graduating from the Azerbaijan State Conservatory in 1985, where he studied composition under the eminent composer Khayyam Mirzazade, Ahmadov returned to Nakhchivan, becoming the artistic director and chief conductor of the newly established State Philharmonic's folk instruments orchestra. During this period, he composed a variety of works for the orchestra and produced numerous transcriptions and arrangements. As the orchestra's director, he led many successful concerts in Baku, Sumgayit, and other cities (Rzayeva, 2013).

The composer's musical legacy is multifaceted, with a wide range of works that attract attention. Among his most renowned pieces are the symphony for chamber orchestra, the "Khojaly" symphony for large symphony orchestra, the "Javid" symphonic poem (Mammadova, 2024a), concertos for piano and symphonic orchestra, concertos for tar and symphonic orchestra, "Omrun Heydar zirvesi" (The Heydar Peak of Life) and "Azerbaijan Bayragi" (The Flag of Azerbaijan) for mixed choir and symphonic orchestra, and the cappella cantata "Qadim Nakhchivan" (Ancient Nakhchivan), symphonic poem "Eternal Flame" (Mammadova 2024b).

Figure 1

Composer Kamal Ahmadov



3.2. Kamal Ahmadov's chamber-instrumental works.

As we have noted, Kamal Ahmadov's creativity is multifaceted. However, the chamber-instrumental field occupies a special place in his creativity. He has turned to this field throughout his creative work and composed numerous colorful works. As previously noted, Kamal Ahmadov's creativity is multifaceted. However, the field of chamber music occupies a special place within his oeuvre. Throughout his career, he has devoted considerable attention to this genre, producing a wide range of colorful and expressive compositions. Therefore, it would be appropriate to describe the chamber music field as the composer's creative laboratory. Kamal Ahmadov created compositions for various ensembles, ranging from duets to quintets, assigning distinctive titles to each piece (Figure 2). His works, including 'Ballad' (for clarinet and piano), 'Capriccio' (for violin and piano), 'Trio' (for violin, clarinet, and piano), 'Variations on a Theme' (for string quartet), 'Ashiqsayagi,' 'Rhapsody,' and 'Shikaste' (for quintet), have been incorporated into educational repertoires.

Figure 2

K. Ahmadov's textbook "Chamber instrumental works"



3.2.1. *Ballad.*

The "Ballad," composed for clarinet and piano, is remarkable for its specificity. Written on the basis of an individual *modus* and in the style of serialism (dodecaphony), the piece embodies the distinctive characteristics of the ballad genre (Ahmadov, 2020). Ahmadov's deep familiarity with the performance capabilities of the clarinet and piano allows him to reveal their timbral qualities, achieving a rich ensemble sound. While key signatures are given, they serve a conditional function, as atonality predominates throughout. The ballad features chromaticism, diverse rhythmic figures, and imitation. The composition consists of a single movement with an introduction and coda, but this movement can conventionally be divided into three sections.

The Ballad opens in a *Moderato* tempo with a three-measure introduction (Figure 3). Despite its brevity, the introduction encapsulates the work's general character and possesses a bright sound. The clarinet delivers a passage in thirty-second notes spanning a ninth, ascending primarily in thirds with a sudden crescendo from *piano* to *sforzando*. This passage is constructed using serial technique, with each note representing an element in the twelve-tone series. The piano answers with octaves in both hands in eighth notes, moving downward, thus creating a musical conversation between the two instruments.

Figure 3*Introduction of the Ballad (Ahmadov, 2020)*

The musical score for the Introduction of the Ballad is written for Clarinet in B♭ and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The Clarinet part begins with a melodic line that rises and then falls, marked with a 'p' (piano) dynamic and a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. The Piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment, with a 'p' dynamic and a 'rit.' marking. The score includes a '10' measure rest for the Clarinet and a 'a ten' (a tempo) marking at the end of the section.

The first section begins seamlessly after the introduction (Figure 4). The primary musical material is a six-measure phrase consisting of two sub-phrases, which serves as the basis for the entire piece. As the composer notes, the absence of strong accents, the use of notional time signatures, and the variety of melodic constructions result in a sense of free rhythm (non-metric music) in the first section.

Figure 4*First section of the Ballad (Ahmadov, 2020)*

The musical score for the First section of the Ballad is written for Clarinet in B♭ and Piano. The tempo is marked 'a tempo'. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The Clarinet part begins with a melodic line that rises and then falls, marked with a 'mp' (mezzo-piano) dynamic and a '3' (triple) marking. The Piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment, with a 'p' (piano) dynamic and a '3' marking. The score includes a '4' measure rest for the Clarinet and a 'a tempo' marking at the end of the section.

At times, the solo clarinet proceeds without accompaniment, creating a texture reminiscent of a partita (Figure 5). The principal idea is introduced in the first three measures of the first section and is maintained as the melodic nucleus until the end of the section.

Figure 5*Solo clarinet passage from the Ballad (Ahmadov, 2020)*

The musical score for the Solo clarinet passage is written for Clarinet in B♭. The tempo is marked 'a tempo'. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The Clarinet part begins with a melodic line that rises and then falls, marked with a '3' (triple) marking. The score includes a '4' measure rest for the Clarinet and a 'a tempo' marking at the end of the section.

This melody evokes the memory of a tragic event, creating a lyrical atmosphere. The piano accompaniment also possesses a narrative function, regularly imitating the clarinet's theme with recitative-like replies. The purpose of this imitation is to create overall unity.

From measure 40, the middle section of the Ballad begins (Figure 6). The contrast with the first section is primarily found in rhythmic changes: where the first section was non-metric music, the music here becomes regular metric. The solo part is now distributed between the piano's right and left hands in the middle and lower registers, creating imitation. The composer provides this imitation in both instruments using the same pitch.

Beginning at measure 68, a new element is introduced in the solo clarinet: the composer presents the opening intonation of the Chahargah mugam over four bars. The piano melody, divided between both hands, is unified with the mugam intonation.

Figure 6

Middle section of the Ballad (Ahmadov, 2020)



The end of the piece ends relatively quietly with downward-sloping octave-distance chords on the piano (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Middle section ending (Ahmadov, 2020)

At measure 95 ("a tempo"), a rhythmic motif enters, signaling the third section (Figure 8). Here, the themes from the first and second sections are synthesized and further developed in a new texture, which may be described as a dynamic reprise. The piano accompaniment becomes more narrative and fluid, while the clarinet solo is dominated by sixteenth notes.

The melody develops through increasing complexity, creating an ongoing sense of competition between the clarinet and piano and culminating in a dramatic climax. After reaching this peak, the music descends and fades, preparing for the coda.

Figure 8

Third section of the Ballad (Ahmadov, 2020)



In the coda, the music of the first period of the first section is repeated. Notably, the composer deliberately concludes the piece with a relatively incomplete ending, unlike classical style, suggesting the possibility of a new hope and a bright future.

The use of serialism (dodecaphony) and atonality in "Ballad" for clarinet and piano once again shows that Ahmadov composed this work in a modern style appropriate to its time, demonstrating his personal artistic signature.

3.2.2. *Capriccio*.

Kamal Ahmadov composed his "Capriccio" for violin and piano based on the elements of Vasif Adigozalov's famous work of the same name. Although the core musical material is derived from the dance-like theme of Adigozalov's "Capriccio," Ahmadov demonstrates his own creative voice, constructing the piece with a personal modus.

The piece is written in sonata form, comprising exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda. It requires virtuosic performance skills from the players. According to scholars, "the composer synthesizes mugam with classical music, reflecting his admiration for Uzeyir Hajibeyli's legacy in a distinctive manner" (Gulamova, 2015).

The "Capriccio" begins with an exposition presenting the main theme, based on Adigozalov's lively, dance-like motif (Figure 9). The primary theme plays a central role in the sonata form, introducing the first subject and setting the stage for dynamic contrasts. It follows the 'parallel' sonata type where the initial motif is expanded without introducing entirely new material. The three-phrase main theme is characterized by playful, rhythmic vitality.

Figure 9

Main theme of Capriccio (Ahmadov, 2020)

From measure 45, the secondary theme (transition) begins (Figure 10). This section contrasts with the main theme in mood, texture, rhythm (3/4), and phrasing. It develops in a wave-like fashion, interspersed with short piano solos of two measures each.

Figure 10

Secondary theme (Ahmadov, 2020)



The breadth of the main, secondary, and closing themes in the exposition, along with their strong contrast, results in a complex three-part structure that deviates from classical sonata form (Figure 11). The closing theme is built from elements of the primary theme and has a rich sonority. The exposition ends with a passage that reaffirms the main tonal center.

Figure 11

Closing theme (Ahmadov, 2020)



The second section — the development — unfolds with abrupt transitions, reflecting the typical capriccio genre character (Figure 12, 13). Although it primarily develops the material of the main theme, a new musical idea is introduced at the beginning, featuring tremolos in the violin. The development of the main theme resumes at measure 127.

Figure 12

Development section (Ahmadov, 2020)



The dynamic reprise, based on the material of the main part, gradually rises with the introduction of dual voices into the solo part and the further rhythmic fragmentation of the melody, eventually reaching a high register that will prepare the beginning of the coda.

Figure 13

Development section (Ahmadov, 2020)



The dynamic recapitulation is formed based on the material of the main theme. The use of double stops in the solo part and increasing rhythmic fragmentation leads to a dramatic climax in the upper register, preparing for the coda.

The coda, written in a Maestoso tempo with a solemn and grand rhythmic character, concludes the emotional and dramatic progression of the preceding sections, bringing the composition to a powerful and majestic close (Figure 14).

Figure 14

The Coda (Ahmadov, 2020)



3.2.3. Variations on a Theme.

Kamal Ahmadov's string quartet composition "Variations on a Theme" holds a special place in his chamber-instrumental oeuvre. Dedicated to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Azerbaijan, this piece continues Ahmadov's distinctive requiem theme. The work is imbued with a somber and dark mood, evoking images of fallen heroes and a mourning, suffering nation. Its minor tonality (C minor) adds to the composition's overall melancholy character.

"Variations on a Theme" is structured around a single theme and consists of four variations and a coda. Although the overarching theme (the requiem theme) remains dominant throughout, each variation introduces thematic, rhythmic, and polyphonic modifications through various combinations.

The theme, marked Adagio, is harmonically closed (monotonal), formally a repeated phrase structure in non-square periodic form (with the second phrase extended), and written within the major-minor functional system in a deeply pessimistic tone (Figure 15). Using contrasting polyphony, Ahmadov initially presents the middle voices in parallel, and later in divergent development (Huseynova, 2016b). Each voice exhibits its own distinct development. The first phrase, spanning eight bars, is carried by the first violin, symbolizing the memory of the martyrs. The other string instruments represent the grieving people and reinforce the mourning atmosphere. The phrase ends in a dominant function with a medial cadence. This phenomenon parallels the observations of Tariverdiev (who underscores the continuity of modal logic in post-Soviet compositional thought (Tariverdiev, 2019)).

Figure 15

Main theme (Ahmadov, 2020)

The image displays a musical score for the main theme of 'Variations on a Theme' by Kamal Ahmadov. The score is for a string quartet, featuring Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The tempo is marked 'Adagio' and the title 'Tema' is written above the first staff. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The first phrase of the theme is 8 bars long. The first violin carries the melody, while the other instruments provide harmonic support. The score is in C minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. The first phrase ends with a medial cadence.

The second phrase continues the first and functions as a conclusion. The first two bars of the second phrase echo the beginning of the first phrase in the interval of a fifth below, after which the phrase expands and concludes in the main key, ending with a full cadence.

While the first variation shows slight rhythmic activity, there are no significant changes in texture, tonality, rhythm, tempo, or dramaturgy (Figure 16). The vertical structure remains intact. This variation is constructed in the same two-phrase period form as the theme. The only difference lies in its conclusion, which features tremolos in the violin and cello.

Figure 16

First Variation (Ahmadov, 2020)

The musical score for the First Variation is presented for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first measure is marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a '2' in a box, indicating a second ending. The Violin I part includes a 'Var I' marking. The Viola and Cello parts also feature a '2' in a box. The score concludes with a tremolo in the Violin I and Cello parts, marked with a '3' in a box and a forte (f) dynamic.

The second variation introduces more substantial changes, distancing itself from the original theme through vertical transformation and new rhythmic groupings. It is more developmental than the first (Figure 17). The use of 4/4 meter and sequential melodic development infuses it with a new energy. The dynamic intensity of the piece begins to build in this variation—particularly from bar 46—culminating in increased tension between melodic lines. The shortening time values in this passage can be thought to reflect and describe the rebellious voice of the people.

Figure 17

Second Variation (Ahmadov, 2020)

The musical score for the Second Variation is presented for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first measure is marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a '4' in a box, indicating a fourth ending. The Violin I part includes a 'Var II' marking. The Viola and Cello parts also feature a '4' in a box. The score concludes with a tremolo in the Violin I and Cello parts, marked with a '4' in a box and a forte (f) dynamic.

The third variation, set in major tonality and 3/4 meter, modifies the overall timbral quality by incorporating double stops in the first violin part, thereby enhancing its dynamic and expressive intensity. (Figure 18). Formally, it is a non-square, non-repetitive structure consisting of a simple two-phase period. Although the second phrase retains similar intonation, meter, and texture, it is based on new material. Toward the end of the variation, note values are extended and double stops intensify, lending weight to the melodic line.

Figure 18

Third Variation (Ahmadov, 2020)

The musical score for the Third Variation is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. It is in 3/4 time and major tonality. The score is marked with a '5' in a box at the beginning of each staff, indicating a fifth interval. The dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano) throughout. The Violin I part features double stops, which are highlighted with a blue box and a blue arrow. The score consists of two phrases, with the second phrase introducing new material. The variation concludes with extended note values and intensified double stops.

The fourth variation draws attention with changes in tonality and meter (Figure 19). Returning to minor tonality (G minor) and 4/4 meter, it is built as a monotonal, square, repetitive two-phase period. Here, the theme is fragmented and developed through intonational means.

Figure 19

Fourth Variation (Ahmadov, 2020)

The musical score for the Fourth Variation is written for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. It is in 4/4 time and G minor tonality. The score is marked with a '5' in a box at the beginning of each staff, indicating a fifth interval. The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) throughout. The Violin I part features a repetitive two-phase period, which is highlighted with a blue box and a blue arrow. The score consists of two phrases, with the second phrase introducing new material. The variation concludes with fragmented and developed intonational means.

Following the fourth variation, the coda is introduced (Figure 20). It reuses the theme of the first variation in a slightly modified form. Structured as a two-phrase period, the first phrase restates the opening phrase of the first variation verbatim. In the second phrase, the theme is transferred to the second violin, and toward the end, the melody broadens, closing the piece with a heavy sonority.

Figure 20

The Coda (Ahmadov, 2020)

3.2.4. *Shikasta*.

One of the works by K. Ahmadov based on Azerbaijani folklore samples is “Shikasta” for piano and string quartet. The composer wrote this piece based on the fruitful themes of “Kesme shikasta,” one of the Azerbaijani rhythmic mugams. In general, the piece is characterized by an optimistic spirit and evokes lively emotions in the listener.

Although the piece is structured in a rondo-sonata form, it does not fully adhere to all the principles of the classical rondo-sonata, displaying a somewhat conventional nature. The succession of the productive and effective themes of “Kesme shikasta” perfectly combines the features of both the recurring and variable elements of the rondo form. The author approaches the consecutive arrangement of these regular metric themes with freedom and creativity, developing each in different dynamics. As a result, the structure of the piece is formed in accordance with the main elements of sonata form—exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda. This approach enriches the rhythmic and melodic repetitions of the piece, imbuing each section with deeper meaning.

The work begins with a broad prologue in Moderato tempo, which reflects the fullness of the “Shikasta” music. The prologue can conditionally be considered as having three themes. First, the lively and optimistic primary theme begins in the first violins, accompanied by other instruments with simple harmonies. Then, the same melody, maintaining its pitch, passes to the piano. In the next passage, the first violin and piano carry the melody in a polyphonic imitation, gradually leading the violin part to a higher register. This development continues up to the 20th measure, but a relative calm emerges in the last two measures, and from the 21st measure, a new theme is introduced into the prologue. This two-phrase theme, sounding like a duet between the violins and the piano, makes the prologue even more engaging and evokes subtle feelings of love in the listener. The third theme begins with the solo piano. Chromaticisms and rapid thirty-second-note passages add a fresh mood to the piece. Afterwards, the quartet joins the piano with full accompaniment, concluding the prologue (Figure 21).

Figure 21*The Prologue (Ahmadov, 2020)*

After the prologue, the main theme of the piece starts—the primary section of the sonata form, which also plays the role of the refrain in the rondo-sonata structure (Figure 22). This transition happens very smoothly, as both sections feature closely related thematic material in terms of intonation and overall texture. The main section—the refrain—is presented with pizzicato eighth notes in the strings and a lively rhythmic pattern in the piano, where the piano takes the leading role. After 12 measures of the main theme, a more lyrical new melody begins in the strings (arco), with the piano moving into an accompanying role. The first violin and viola, as well as the second violin and cello, pair off to develop the theme with a rich sound. From measure 82, the character of the melody changes, with quarter notes in the first violin and undulating accompaniment in the piano. Two measures later, the lyrical melody returns, and the section ends by repeating the initial theme, leading into the next part.

Figure 22*The main party (Ahmadov, 2020)*

A very brief piano transition, serving as a bridge between the primary party (refrain) and the secondary party (first episode), follows (Figure 23). From measure 103, the secondary party (first episode) begins with a more lyrical, dreamy, and romantic character in the first violin, in contrast to the main section. The second violin imitates this theme at a fifth interval one measure later, and ten measures after that, the other strings join, creating rich polyphonic texture. The piano accompanies with arpeggiated chords.

Figure 23

Secondary party (Ahmadov, 2020)

A brief concluding section follows the first episode (secondary party), serving as a bridge to the second transition of the main section. The concluding section features elements from the first theme in the prologue, preparing for the return of the primary party (refrain).

The refrain, repeated for the second time, appears in a slightly altered and incomplete form, with an almost imperceptible transition to the concluding section (Figure 24). Thus, the exposition section of the piece comes to an end.

Figure 24

The Complementary part (Ahmadov, 2020)

The central development section (C) starts with an episode of lyrical and polyphonic character (Figure 25). Next, the refrain is presented with attention-grabbing modulating development, serving as a bridge to the following episode included in the recapitulation section of the rondo-sonata form.

Figure 25

Development section (Ahmadov, 2020)

The recapitulation is built upon themes presented in the exposition. Both the main and secondary parts are expanded here and develop dynamically, creating a rich sound in the work.

Generally, the transitions between sections in the piece are extremely fluid and not sharply differentiated. The composer himself notes: "The organic connection of episodes and refrains through linking parts eliminates the feeling of borders between sections and determines a unified dramaturgical development line of the work" (Ahmadov, 2020).

In "Shikasta," K. Ahmadov composed the coda section characteristic of the rondo-sonata form using the musical material of the refrain (Figure 26). The coda, with its festive character, completes the work with high-register chordal passages in the piano and confirming intonations in the strings.

Figure 26

The Coda (Ahmedov, 2020)

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Kamal Ahmadov's music, especially his chamber instrumental works, can be an important teaching material for students studying music. Including these works in the curriculum will help students develop their music theory and application skills. Also, starting to analyze the composer's works written in other genres, such as symphonic and vocal-instrumental works, in the future will allow us to evaluate his work in a broader spectrum. This will be important for studying how Kamal Ahmadov's style manifests itself across different genres.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works represent a unique synthesis of national musical traditions and contemporary compositional techniques. Through the integration of mugham intonations, modal-harmonic frameworks, and modernist approaches such as dodecaphony, serialism, and polyphonic layering, Ahmadov has successfully established an individual creative language within Azerbaijani chamber music. Each of his compositions analyzed in this study — *Ballad*, *Capriccio*, *Variations on a Theme*, and *Shikasta* — demonstrates a coherent balance between intellectual design and emotional depth, reflecting both national identity and universal artistic expression. In this respect, Niyazi (Niyazi, 1982) stressed that the vitality of Azerbaijani music depends on the constant renewal of its traditional intonational core within modern frameworks.

The analytical results confirm that Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works are marked by an exceptional combination of rhythmic freedom, melodic inventiveness, and harmonic flexibility. His structural approach, characterized by logical thematic development and nuanced formal organization, aligns his oeuvre with the global trends of twentieth- and twenty-first-century compositional thought while maintaining strong connections to Azerbaijani folk and modal traditions. This dual orientation — toward innovation and heritage — underlines Ahmadov's role as a modern composer who transcends local stylistic boundaries and contributes to the international discourse on contemporary chamber music.

From a methodological standpoint, the integration of musicological, theoretical, and analytical tools in this research has provided a multidimensional understanding of Ahmadov's creative style. The study revealed how his individual compositional logic manifests through motivic transformation, rhythmic asymmetry, and modal-tonal duality. These findings enrich the academic perspective on Azerbaijani music and demonstrate that Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works can serve as a model for studying the interaction between national and post-tonal idioms in post-Soviet compositional practice.

Furthermore, the artistic and pedagogical significance of these works should be emphasized. Their inclusion in performance and educational contexts could foster the development of analytical thinking and interpretative skills among music students. On a broader scale, the dissemination and international performance of Ahmadov's chamber compositions would not only promote Azerbaijani musical heritage but also strengthen cultural dialogue within global contemporary music. As Cook (Cook, 2013) observes, chamber music interpretation embodies an analytical act itself, bridging theoretical understanding and performative intuition.

Future research may expand upon this study by examining the intertextual and semiotic dimensions of Ahmadov's other genres — including his symphonic, vocal-instrumental, and choral works — to establish a comprehensive overview of his stylistic evolution. Such comparative analyses could also contribute to defining the aesthetic tendencies of the modern Azerbaijani compositional school and its position within world musicology.

In summary, Kamal Ahmadov's chamber instrumental works stand as significant artistic achievements that synthesize tradition and innovation. They represent both a continuation of Azerbaijan's rich musical legacy and a meaningful contribution to the broader landscape of contemporary world music.

Ethical approval

This study does not require ethics committee approval as it does not involve human, animal or sensitive data.

Author contribution

Study conception and design: RM; data collection: RM; analysis and interpretation of results: RM; draft manuscript preparation: RM. Author reviewed the results and approved the final version of the article.

Source of funding

The author declare the study received no funding.

Conflict of interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Etik kurul onayı

Bu çalışma insan, hayvan veya hassas veriler içermediği için etik kurul onayı gerektirmemektedir.

Yazarlık katkısı

Çalışmanın tasarımı ve konsepti: RM; verilerin toplanması: RM; sonuçların analizi ve yorumlanması: RM; çalışmanın yazımı: RM. Yazar sonuçları gözden geçirmiş ve makalenin son halini onaylamıştır.

Finansman kaynağı

Yazar, çalışmanın herhangi bir finansman almadığını beyan etmektedir.

Çıkar çatışması

Yazar, herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmektedir.

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