

THE INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL “LAZGI – 2026” AS A FACTOR IN THE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHOREOGRAPHIC ART

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Abstract

This article examines the significance of the International Dance Festival “Lazgi – 2026” in preserving and developing national choreographic art, promoting the Khorezm dance Lazgi on the international stage, strengthening cultural ties among nations, and fostering professional cooperation in the field of dance. Particular attention is paid to the role of the festival in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and supporting young talents.

Introduction

Dance art is an essential component of the spiritual culture of every nation. It reflects historical memory, national traditions, worldview, and artistic thinking of society. Among the rich heritage of Uzbek dance culture, the Khorezm dance Lazgi occupies a special place and has remained one of the brightest symbols of Uzbekistan’s national culture for centuries.

Distinguished by its unique plasticity, expressiveness, and emotional depth, Lazgi is widely recognized beyond the borders of Uzbekistan. International recognition of this art form was further strengthened when the “Khorezm Dance Lazgi” was inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This event confirmed the outstanding artistic value of Lazgi and its importance to world culture.

In order to preserve, promote, and further develop this unique art form, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan initiated the International Dance Festival “Lazgi” in 2022. The festival has been held biennially since then. Beginning in 2026, the festival has also been organized in partnership with the international organization TURKSOY, significantly expanding its international status and cultural influence.

Main Objectives of the Festival

The International Dance Festival “Lazgi” aims to promote the art of the Khorezm dance Lazgi, preserve its traditions, support talented performers, and strengthen international cultural cooperation.

The main objectives of the festival include:

- preserving and developing national dance heritage;
- promoting Lazgi among younger generations;
- strengthening friendship and mutual understanding among peoples through art;
- developing international cooperation in choreography;
- creating opportunities for scientific and creative dialogue;
- facilitating professional exchange among dance specialists;
- implementing joint international creative projects.

Lazgi – 2026 Festival Activities

The International Dance Festival “Lazgi – 2026” was held from April 25 to April 30, 2026, in the ancient city of Khiva, Khorezm Region, within the historic architectural complex of Ichan-Kala. The event was dedicated to International Dance Day, celebrated annually on April 29.

More than 300 dancers, choreographers, art historians, musicologists, educators, and cultural experts from over 30 countries participated in the festival.

In-person participants represented countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Serbia, China, Japan, India, Egypt, Georgia, Brazil, Qatar, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Online participants joined from the United States, Austria, Jordan, Mexico, Ghana, Iran, Pakistan, Italy, China, and several other countries.

Such extensive international participation demonstrates the growing prestige of the festival and the increasing global interest in Uzbek dance culture.

Scientific and Educational Activities

An important component of the festival was the Third International Scientific and Practical Conference entitled:

“Dance Art in the Development of World Culture: Traditions and Universal Values.”

The conference brought together scholars, art historians, musicologists, choreographers, and representatives of arts education institutions from various countries.

The festival program also included:

- round-table discussions;
- master classes;
- creative meetings;
- the Third Session of the Uzbekistan–Turkey Joint Cultural Commission;
- the Third Meeting of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions of Art and Choreography from TURKSOY member states;
- the conference “Anthology of Traditional Dance of the Turkic World”;
- the Ethnocultural Forum.

These activities contributed to the development of academic cooperation, professional exchange, and international partnerships in the field of culture and arts.

International Jury

To evaluate the competition performances, an International Jury composed of seven leading specialists in choreography, musicology, and art studies was established.

The chairperson of the jury was **Tarana Muradova**, People’s Artist of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Associate Professor, and Vice-Rector for International Relations of the Baku Academy of Choreography.

Participants were evaluated according to the following criteria:

- preservation of authentic national dance characteristics;
- artistic and aesthetic value of the performance;
- technical and artistic mastery;
- stage culture;
- costumes and artistic presentation.

Winners of “Lazgi – 2026”

The festival competition identified outstanding performers and ensembles in several categories.

Best Solo Dance Performer

The winners were:

- **Karina Kalpakova** (Republic of Bashkortostan, Russian Federation);
- **Nodira Seyjanova** (Republic of Uzbekistan).

Their performances demonstrated exceptional artistic excellence, emotional expressiveness, and profound respect for national dance traditions.

Best Dance Ensemble

The winners were:

- State Russian Folk Ensemble of Omsk (Russian Federation);
- **Shattik Dance Ensemble** (Kyrgyz Republic).

Both groups displayed remarkable professionalism and creative stage interpretations.

Best Choreographic Production

The winner was:

- Beijing Dance Academy Ensemble (People's Republic of China).

The performance received high praise from the jury for its originality, artistic composition, and professional choreography.

Competitors from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Uzbekistan also successfully contended for prize-winning positions, reflecting the high level of artistic competition and the growing international reputation of the festival.

The Festival's Contribution to the Development of Choreographic Art

The "Lazgi – 2026" Festival became an important international platform for preserving and promoting national dance traditions. It demonstrated the ability of dance to unite different cultures through artistic expression.

The festival is particularly significant for professional choreographic education. Participation by students and young performers contributes to the development of their professional skills, broadens their artistic outlook, and introduces them to international best practices.

Furthermore, the festival serves as an effective instrument of cultural diplomacy, enhancing Uzbekistan's international cultural image and promoting its national heritage worldwide.

Conclusion

The International Dance Festival “Lazgi – 2026” confirmed its status as one of the most significant cultural events in the field of choreographic art. It has become an effective platform for preserving and developing the art of the Khorezm dance Lazgi, expanding international cooperation, and strengthening friendship among nations.

The festival contributes to safeguarding unique intangible cultural heritage, supporting talented youth, developing professional choreographic education, and promoting Uzbekistan’s cultural heritage on the global stage.

Thus, “Lazgi – 2026” serves as an important factor in the development of contemporary choreographic art and demonstrates the significant contribution of Uzbek culture to the cultural diversity of the world.

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