

Interpretations of National Classical Literature on Stage

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Abstract: This article discusses the staging of examples of Uzbek classical literature and the actor's skill in their theatrical interpretations.

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"The national theater is the main, leading theater of the country, which, in accordance with its name, embodies the feelings and aspirations cherished and trusted by the nation, reflecting its struggles and concerns. The development of national thought, imagination, character, worldview, and culture is the eternal and fundamental task of our national theater."

The history of Uzbek theater spans millennia. The long-term research of theater scholar and academic M. Rahmonov shows that theater has existed in our land since ancient times, and its elements have been preserved in various sources. Over the centuries, the theatrical art, which has been fulfilling the spiritual needs of our people, adopted a European style by the 20th century. Its formation was based on the spectacle art that existed up until that time. The day when the "Turan" troupe, formed by the Jadids in 1914, staged the first performance of *Padarkush* marked the beginning of a new era in Uzbek theater. The early creative activities of the theater are linked to the work of figures such as M. Behbudi, A. Avloni, A. Fitrat, Cholpon, G. Zafariy, M. Uyghur, and E. Bobojonov. These creators dedicated their lives to the development of Uzbek theater and the progress of the nation.

During the era of Soviet ideology, theater continued to develop gradually. Despite various pressures and constraints, works were created not only about contemporary figures but also about historical personalities, and these were staged for theater enthusiasts. In conveying these work to the audience, the unity of the playwright, director, and actor played a crucial role.

During the Soviet era, actors such as Abror Khidoyatov, Maria Kuznetsova, Zamira Khidoyatova, Masuma Qorieva, Sora Eshtonqurova, Mirshohid Mirokilov, and later Olim Khojaev, Shukur Burkhonov, and Nabi Rahimov were active in the theater. During these years, various performances based on examples of our national dramaturgy were staged, such as *Alisher Navoi*, *Mukanna*, *Jaloliddin Manguberdi*, *Mirzo Ulugbek*, *Ayajonlarim*, *Tobutdan Tovush*, *Qiyomat Qarz*, *Yulduzli Tunlar*, and *Kelinlar Qozgaloni*. These performances reflected the rich history of our people, their dreams, hopes, and belief in the future.

The last quarter of 1991 gave us the gift of Independence. From the first days of Independence, reforms in the theater arts also began. To show our great history to our people and to celebrate the bravery of our ancestors, a number of performances dedicated to historical figures were staged on the stages of our theaters.

The theater aimed to satisfy the spiritual needs of our people and the need to understand our rich history by staging national classical work. In the early years of Independence, performances of national classical works such as *Yorqinoy* (playwright Cholpon, director N. Otabaev) and *Ufq* (director O. Salimov) on the stage of the Uzbek National Academic Drama Theater each achieved their own distinct success.

Classical literature and classical works are invaluable treasures for every nation, serving as a spiritual heritage that is preserved like the apple of one's eye and passed down to future generations. Not every work can be considered a classical work. For a work to remain as a classical piece in history, it must meet many criteria, and most importantly, it must express universal human ideas. Works by authors who have left a deep mark on the spiritual life of the country and whose relevance has not faded over the years can be called classical literature.

One of the biggest challenges faced by a director when bringing classical literature to the stage is the issue of adaptation. Staging an adaptation requires great skill from the director because the adaptation cannot encompass all the events from the novel. Based on the dramaturg's perspective, some events are omitted. From the early years of independence, experiments were carried out in adapting classical literature to the stage. One such work is the "Shum Bola" performance by the Uzbek National Academic Drama Theater. Director Sergey Kapriev adapted the story himself and called it "A Two-Act Musical and Playful Comedy." The events of the work differ from the original story. The performance was enriched with improvisation and the actors' creativity. The fact that the production involved mainly young actors allowed them to express their individuality and provided an opportunity for self-expression. Each scene begins with large-scale crowd sequences, where the actors perform various songs, sing, and carry out acrobatic movements. After the dance and singing, the actors fade into the darkness, leaving only the participants of the story on stage. In the performance, T. Saidov, R. Karimov, B. Muhammadkarimov, M. Bobotillaeva, and A. Abduvokhobov created a variety of characters. The main achievement of the performance lies in the portrayal of the character *Shum Bola*, brilliantly performed by M. Mukhtorova. M. Mukhtorova moves very gracefully on stage. The audience may not even realize that the role is being played by a woman rather than a man. The actress's supple movements and voice tones truly evoke the image of a young man. This enhances the value of the performance. Her portrayal was able to evoke a sincere mood among the audience.

One of every creator's eternal dreams is to turn to classical literature. The desire to give it new life and to showcase its full potential on stage is the dream of directors. Especially when a work is beloved and cherished by all, its value becomes even higher. One such work is Abdullah Qodiriy's novel "*Otkan Kunlar*" (*The Past Days*). This work can be described as the love story of Otabek and Kumush, and it is impossible to imagine it without the social significance and ideas it conveys. Abdullah Qodiriy was able to reflect the life and values of the Uzbek nation in the novel. For this reason, the work has been translated into many languages, and numerous analytical studies have been conducted based on the analysis of the novel.

The first adaptation of Qodiriy's works on the theater stage took place in 1973 by the Fergana Theater. The talented director Nosir Otabaev, who adapted the novel, brought it to the stage. The Uzbek National Academic Drama Theater also staged adaptations of Qodiriy's works. One such performance was the 2013 staging of "*Otkan Kunlar*" by Marat Azimov, based on the adaptation by Erkin Khushvakhtov.

In this performance, the main focus is on the storyline of Otabek and Kumush. Their tragic fate and love story are shown as the central plot of the play. The performance consists of 12 scenes and lasts for two and a half hours. Since the novel is well-known to Uzbek audiences, the director moves straight to the key events of the work without excessive explanations. Questions about where the events are taking place or whose house it is happening in are deliberately left open for the audience.

It is worth highlighting that the unique set design for the performance played a significant role in revealing the ideas of the work and conveying the atmosphere of the era. In this regard, we can see the important contribution of the theater's chief artist, Bakhtiyor Turaev.

The performance involved the leading and experienced actors of the theater. Fathulla Masudov, Dilnoza Kubaeva, Gulchekhira Ibrahimbekova, Yoqub Ahmedov, Tohir Saidov, and others fully demonstrated their skills in the performance.

The character of Otabek was portrayed by two actors, Fathulla Masudov and Feruz Burhonov. Fathulla Masudov's portrayal of Otabek closely matched the character described by the author. This was due to the actor's vast experience and high level of skill. Masudov depicted Otabek as a serious, reserved character who reflects on his actions, but also as a passionate young man with a devoted heart.

Feruz Burhonov, while closer in age to Otabek, lacked experience, and this hindered his ability to fully grasp the hero's character, affecting his performance. However, it is worth noting that the actor did not simply follow his counterpart's interpretation and created his own version of Otabek, which is commendable. Yet, Feruz Burhonov's Otabek appears weaker, more fragile, as the actor seems to struggle to distinguish between shyness and timidity.

As for the portrayal of Kumush by actresses Dilnoza Kubaeva and Shahlo Temirova, both positive and critical remarks can be made. Dilnoza Kubaeva is a well-known actress in both theater and cinema, with a dedicated fan base. However, her portrayal of Kumush did not fully express the character. "Dilnoza Kubaeva failed to grasp the delicate aspects of Kumush's character, including her elegance, wisdom, sincerity, lyricism, and spiritual refinement. In many cases, in her attempt to express the romantic spirit in an exaggerated theatrical form, she succumbed to unnecessary emotional outbursts, and, under the shadow of the director's unclear instructions, she was unable to reveal her individual traits, instead wasting her potential."

There is a noticeable similarity between the performances of Dilnoza Kubaeva and Shahlo Temirova. The lack of distinct interpretations of their characters suggests that the issue lies not with the actors themselves but with the director's approach and the mistakes made in directing.

Other participants in the performance also tried to create distinctive characters. The portrayals of the character of Aftaboyim, played by actresses Zuhra Ashurova and Shohida Ismoilova, also deserve attention. Zuhra Ashurova's portrayal of the mother character is filled with maternal emotions such as love, concern for her child's fate, and a striving to protect him. These are all qualities typical of mothers. On the other hand, Shohida Ismoilova's portrayal depicts a more submissive mother, one who accepts her fate, keeps her pain to herself, and resigns herself to destiny.

The portrayal of the character of Mirzakarim by actor Saidkomil Umarov is also distinctive. His Mirzakarim is portrayed as a thoughtful person, someone who reflects on the unfolding events and expresses his thoughts accordingly.

Yusufbek Khoji is one of the central characters of the play. Yoqub Ahmedov successfully embodies this role. In his performance, Yusufbek Khoji appears as a firm and strong figure, but with a heart full of compassion. He recognizes that his wife's capriciousness is unwarranted, but he accepts it for the sake of family peace. His double, Muhammadali Abdulkunduzov, on the other hand, brings a more noble aspect to the role, which causes the character to appear more rigid and less dynamic.

In conclusion, it must be stated that this performance represents a fresh perspective on approaching the works of A. Qodiriy. Staging adaptations of national classic works requires not only great skill from the director but also from the actors. This performance demonstrates that exploring the relationships between the characters, depicting their personalities, and linking the sequence of events in a coherent way require thorough research and effort.

Today, theater continues to pay significant attention to the adaptation of literary works. The 110th season opening of the Uzbek National Academic Drama Theater began with the play *"The First Swallow"*, based on the novel *"Masuma"* by writer Isajon Sulton, with an adaptation by Askar

Kholmominov and Shahboz Fayzullayev. The director, Askar Kholmominov, placed particular emphasis on the courage of female actresses in shaping the European-style Uzbek theater. One of these actresses is Masuma Qorieva, who has played a pivotal role in the development and professional growth of Uzbek acting.

In the performance, the character of Masuma was portrayed by leading actresses Lola Eltoeva and Dilnoza Kubaeva, each approaching the role in their unique style. Lola Eltoeva's Masuma is portrayed as a serious, composed woman, full of romantic emotions, who loves theater more than life itself. She pays special attention to monologues, delivering them powerfully and vividly portraying the tragic atmosphere of the play. Her entire life is linked to theater. The actress's melancholic tone, physicality, and eye movements make her portrayal emotionally impactful.

Dilnoza Kubaeva's Masuma, on the other hand, is more simple, cheerful, and possesses complex human emotions. She is a woman with pure love for her husband, intelligent and quick-witted. Her sincere emotions play a significant role in winning the audience's affection. This performance also serves as an important example in adapting classic works to the stage.

The stage interpretations of the aforementioned works reflect the attitude towards adaptation works in Uzbek theater. The new discoveries in the performances and the unique approaches in the acting were well received by the audience. We hope that this tradition will continue and that unique stage interpretations will emerge in the future.

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