

NATIONAL REFORMS IN UZBEK THEATRE DURING THE INDEPENDENCE YEARS AND THEIR ROLE IN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: This article discusses the national reforms that took place in Uzbekistan during the years of independence, with a particular focus on the spiritual and cultural significance of theatrical art. Thanks to independence, a new wave of creative tendencies and innovations emerged in Uzbek theatres, based on national heritage and traditions. These processes are illustrated through the examples of theatres in the capital and the Fergana Valley.

Keywords: world and national classical dramaturgy, national values, national reforms, modern themes, repertoire, Teatr magazine, spiritual and cultural life, historical themes, moral-ethical comedies.

Following the declaration of Uzbekistan as an independent state, a new era began in the life of Uzbek theatre. Independence brought a serious commitment to creativity rooted in national heritage and a renewed emphasis on reviving national values and traditions. During this period, several innovative trends and creative pursuits became visible in Uzbek theatre:

Firstly, the share of historical themes in theatre repertoires increased significantly. Dozens of plays were created portraying the lives and struggles for progress of great ancestors—scholars, poets, statesmen, and military leaders. For instance, during the Soviet era, figures such as Bahouddin Naqshband, Hakim at-Termizi, and Imam al-Bukhari were practically taboo. However, in the independence years, plays about these figures, as well as stage works based on the Avesta and Zoroastrian life, enriched the spiritual awareness of contemporary audiences and reshaped their views on historical and religious identity. In particular, around 20 plays dedicated to Amir Temur and the Timurids became major events in the cultural life of the nation.

Secondly, the modern Uzbek theatre began boldly exploring complex Sufi-related themes in performances such as *The Sultan of Love*, *Mashrab* (National Theatre), *The Secret of the Chinese Princess* (Russian Theatre), *Omar Khayyam*, *The Path of Bestowed Love* (Youth Theatre of Uzbekistan), *Neither Sky nor Angel* (Muqimi Theatre), *Sheikh San'on*, and *Dance and Sama* (Old Mosque Theatre Studio). These works show that our theatres are courageously tackling profound spiritual topics and exploring new sources of inspiration. In this direction, reinterpretations of Alisher Navoi's works have also begun appearing on stage.

Thirdly, productions of classical works—both world and national—have adopted modern interpretations and techniques. The staging of works by Navoi, Shakespeare, Molière, Ayni, Behbudi, Fitrat, Qodiri, Cholpon, Avloni, and G'afur G'ulom are testimony to this ongoing trend.

Fourthly, elements of ethnography and folklore, once viewed as signs of backwardness, are now

being incorporated into productions as a prominent stylistic direction, strengthening the national distinctiveness of stage art. Approximately ten performances based on the heroic epic Alpomish have been staged in theatres across the capital and regions, demonstrating the promise of this approach.

Fifthly, plays on contemporary themes are increasingly being created and staged each year. These topics are mostly developed within the genres of melodrama, comedy, and tragicomedy. Notably, moral-ethical comedies have occupied a prominent place in theatre repertoires.

During the independence years, puppet theatres were established in cities such as Fergana, Khiva, Karshi, Namangan, and Termez. The youth theatre named after Abbos Bakirov, which had been operating on a volunteer basis, was brought under state management and transformed into the Andijan Children and Youth Theatre (1990). Marg'ubaxon Akbarova, [13.06.2025 17:12]

Theatre festivals such as East and West International Theatre Festival, Humo International Youth Theatre Festival, Navruz, and Andijon Spring Republican Theatre Festivals, as well as collaborations with Germany's Ander Ruhr Theatre and the Dialogue Theatre Studio, have also played an important role in the ongoing development of theatre art in Uzbekistan.

As part of the project "Silk Road – Theatre Journey", jointly established with international partners, bilateral conferences and puppet theatre festivals are being held, playing a crucial role in the development of theatrical art under new social conditions. Uzbek theatre troupes have gone on creative tours in several countries, showcasing the achievements of Uzbek theatrical art.

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 26, 1998, "On the Development of Theatre Art in Uzbekistan," and the subsequent resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the Organization of the Activities of the 'Uzbekteatr' Creative and Production Association" outlined the strategic direction for theatrical art in the country. Based on this, the "Uzbekteatr" Creative and Production Association was established, along with the "Atrmadad" Foundation and the Union of Theatre Artists. The journal "Teatr" began publication. Various seminars and festivals are held regularly. In accordance with intergovernmental agreements, ties have been established with creative organizations and international associations abroad.

Notable examples include American director David Kaplan, British director Michael Berkut, and others who staged plays in Uzbekistan, while B. Yuldoshev staged productions in France, N. Abdurakhmonov in Israel, and M. Yusupov in the USA.

A new, modern and magnificent building was constructed for the Hamza Theatre to replace the old one. By a special presidential decree issued on September 21, 2001, this theatre was granted the status of "National Theatre."

Today, many theatres are actively operating across the country. In particular, the Fergana Valley, known as the cradle of professional theatrical art and the training ground for numerous theatre luminaries, has also undergone a series of reforms and updates. Over the 32 years of independence, many prominent directors and actors emerged from the valley's theatres. Documenting their unique creative contributions is a pressing and important task today. After all,

there is no future without understanding the past. Their innovative creative styles and the directing and acting schools they established serve as important masterclasses for young artists. Moreover, the lessons of history always inspire thoughtful action.

Thanks to the creative freedom brought about by independence, a series of original productions were staged, in which the Fergana theatre's unique approach to real-life subjects was prominently displayed. A sense of pride in historical heritage was vividly expressed in works such as "Amir Temur and Tokhtamysh Khan" (T. Mirzo), "Love Too Vast for the Sky" dedicated to Al-Farghani (Y. Sulaymon), "A Trip to Paris" (a play by Molière adapted by Sh. Boshbekov), "Can You Find Me a Granny, Daddy?" (A. Khursandov), "The Thief of Happiness" (I. Tursunov), "Hedgehogs Without Thorns" (Sh. Boshbekov), "The Trap" (R. Tom), and others—considered some of the best recent productions of the theatre.

Leading artists of the Fergana theatre include S. Akhmedov, Yo. Khatamova, Kh. Ikromov, S. Hakimov, I. Sultonov, M. Shomurodova, R. Kholbekov, Q. Khudoynazarov, A. Ishaqov, director M. G'ulomov, and conductor A. Umarov.

In the Andijan Theatre as well, the spirit of independence became increasingly noticeable. The arrival of actors such as H. Okhunova, U. Nuraliyev, H. Olimjonov, S. Ulugov, M. Qodirov, M. Boymatova, and others contributed to the enrichment of the repertoire and allowed for the inclusion of major works of world dramaturgy.

Notable productions staged at the Andijan Theatre include "King Lear", "Richard III" (W. Shakespeare), "Scorpion from the Altar" (A. Qodiriy), "The Saint Who Brought Water" (N. Safarov), "Stone in the Heart" (Z. Muhiddinov), "My Daughter, My Mother" (Shuhrat), "Babur" (Z. Muhiddinov), "The Rich Man and the Servant" (Hamza), "Till Dawn in Fergana" (M. Ismoiliy), "Toshbolta in Love" (H. G'ulom), "The Iron Woman" (Sh. Boshbekov), "Nodira" (H. Razzokov), "The Crossroads" (A. Jabbor), "Lullaby" (T. Minullin), "Zebunniso" (Uyg'un), and others.

The theatre continues its creative journey with artists such as A. Aminova, H. Olimjonov, O. Saidburhonov, F. Khojiqulov, M. Boymatova, N. Hakimova, M. Yo'ldosheva, S. Umarov, O. Makhmudova, Kh. Soliyev, Kh. Yunusov, and Sh. Tojiboyeva actively contributing to its artistic life.

At the Namangan Theatre, independent selection of repertoire and the expansion of thematic and genre diversity have become noticeable. A new era began in the theatre's activities following independence. In the mid-1990s, the theatre was headed by Karim Yo'ldoshev. During this period, the theatre's productions consisted of works reflecting the nation's history, contemporary themes, and world classics, including:

"Mashrab" (A. Tursun), "Yearning for a Beloved" (H. Sharipov), "Kashmir Song", "Alpomish's Bow and Arrow" (A. Jabbor), "Where is Usmon Nosir?" (A. A'zamov), "The Grandchildren of King Lear" (based on works by W. Shakespeare, A. Pushkin, M. Bulgakov), and other recent acclaimed performances of the theatre.

Among the leading artists of the theatre are People's Artists of Uzbekistan M. Ubaydullayev, U. Nuraliyev; Merited Artists of Uzbekistan O. Tojiboyeva, K. Rasulova, M. Rahmonov, V. Saydaliyev; as well as S. Sarimsoqova, S. Omonov, M. Niyozov, M. Fakhriddinova, Kh. Madrahimova, U. Mirzayev, A. Tojiboyev, A. Karimova, M. Abdullayeva and other actors who are now regarded as the leading creative figures of the theatre.

In conclusion, it can be said that art plays an invaluable role in expressing a nation's identity and introducing it to the world. The art of theatre, in particular, holds a special place not only in expressing national identity but also in providing spiritual nourishment to the audience. Every form of art stands out through the ideas it embodies and its moral-ethical dimensions, distinguishing it from other fields.

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