

The Folk Epic and Theatrical Art of Central Asia

Oltinoy Kasymovna Tadjibaeva

Doctor of Arts Sciences (DS), Professor at the Institute of Arts and Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan. oltynoykosimovna@yandex.com

Abstract: This article discusses the role and importance of folk art heritage in the development of national theater art in Central Asia. To date, the theatrical art of the region has great experience and the opportunity to compare its culture with others. The epic tradition is one of the mainstays, one of the heights from which one can look at the experience and trends of world theatrical art.

Keywords: Theater, folk art, transformation, artistic image, method, tradition, trends

1. INTRODUCTION

The theatrical art of Central Asia was formed on the basis of forms of European theater culture that were brought into it. The process of forming and developing new-type theaters was influenced by the whole millennia-old layer of culture and the richest artistic traditions of the region. Of particular importance in this process were folk epics, which played an exceptional role in shaping the features of poetics and aesthetics of national theaters in the region, having a significant impact on the originality of acting schools. All national epics of the peoples of Central Asia vividly reveal the philosophical and moral interpretation of culture, customs, and the originality of the national character of an individual people. Not only in similar works, but even in epics with common plots, the development of events, the characters of heroes, and the resolution of the conflict differ. One folk epic never repeats another. And in this, the originality of each national culture is also visible. Today, this sense of national identity is necessary for theaters in the region that are looking for their unique appearance. The transformation of the epic in the theater requires endless searches for ever new forms, styles, and modern artistic solutions. But this difficult path of search is extremely fruitful, thanks to the rich artistic resources laid down in folk art. Therefore, there has come an understanding that the national epic should not remain under the influence of uniform methods of study and stage interpretation but should be free from the influence of templates of sociological, politically motivated readings. One of the central trends in the development of theatrical art in Central Asia today is the trend of deep awareness and comprehension of its own origins and those unique features of artistic expression of the world and man that are inherent in national aesthetic traditions. Indifference to the folk heritage is fraught with sad consequences - the theaters have already gone through this in the recent past. Currently, national theatrical art has the right to operate with all available theatrical methods and techniques, using the entire palette of theatrical ideas that exist in the practice of world theater. In comprehending the national heritage, one cannot be limited to only one theatrical method; as practice shows, the theater requires free orientation and knowledge of the creative methods not only of K. Stanislavsky but also E. Vakhtangov, V. Meyerhold, B. Brecht, P. Brook, E. Grotowski, and other major figures of world theater for a full-fledged interpretation of the epic heritage. Among the theatrical systems of the twentieth century, the theory of epic theater by B. Brecht is the closest to understanding the national epic of Central Asia. The German playwright and theater theorist already in the very name of his theory precisely defined the key feature of his theatrical system, which is based on the specifics of the epic character and conflict. In Brecht's "Epic Theater," the visible boundaries between reason and emotion are important, not the conventional ones. This is also observed in the interpretations of the epic on the stages of the region, in which the deep excitement and experiences of the hero coexist with "detachment" and direct appeals to the auditorium. And in the practice of interpreting epic works in the national theaters of Central Asia, proximity is most often noticeable not to the words of K. Stanislavsky, who believed that "the viewer should forget that he is in the theater," but to the words of his student E. Vakhtangov, who argued that "the viewer should never forget that he is in the theater." Such a practice is quite justified because the heroes of national epics were never ordinary people; usually in epics, the central place was occupied by the hero-superman. He was above all and therefore the bakshi glorified

his exploits. This tradition was naturally adopted by the young theaters of the region. The audience of the new time does not need ready-made answers to simple questions; they are interested in deeper, thought-provoking performances. Giving a person immersed in the world of modern technology and mass culture an opportunity to reflect is a task worthy of the art of theater. This problem can only be solved if the theater sees an individual in each viewer. The formation of an independently thinking personality capable of acting is the main task, the goal of the epic tradition in theatrical art. Perhaps that is why the path to the stage for the epic heritage was so difficult during the times of socialist realism, and especially during the times of the totalitarian regime, when not the individual but the masses were the object of the ideological impact. The unique value of folk heritage today has become even more valuable when it is appreciated for its own worth.

The European-type theater of Central Asia has come a long way. On this path, there were many successes and achievements, mistakes and omissions. Today, theaters are faced with questions that were asked in the 1920s about what the national theater of Central Asia should be like. In the development of the epic tradition in the modern period, the following trends are of particular importance:

The first trend is associated with dramaturgy. It revealed itself and developed under the influence of Chingiz Aitmatov's innovations, who in his work showed new possibilities for studying and interpreting folk epics. A detailed study of folk heritage and its individual elements opens up new resources for dramaturgy and modern forms of stage interpretation of epic legends.

The second trend is associated with directing and raising the issue of theatrical dialogue between East and West. The synthesis of modern art with archaic elements of folk epics resulted in original stage versions, so interesting that they got the opportunity to be performed on the world stage in the original language. In the work of the Uzbek director Bakhadir Yuldashev, the Kyrgyz directors Bekbolat Farmanov and Nurlan Asanbekov, the Tajik directors Farukh Kasymov and Barzu Abdurazakov, and the Turkmen director Kakadzhani Ashirov, the search began for a new style that combines elements of outdoor performances and various archaic rituals of the so-called "proto theater" into a unified spectacle. In the development of the acting school in the region, experiments using elements of the skills of folk storytellers, ancient shamans, meditation, etc. play a role.

The third trend concerns acting skills. To date, we can state there is a revival process of the director's theater occurring. This is what caused the success of theater studios. However, one should not forget that the actor has always been the main figure in our theaters. For the development of national theatrical art, strong actor-driven performances are needed. For many years, the theatrical art of Central Asia admired great actors. Many of them became famous thanks to their portrayal of characters from folk heroes and warriors. The image of man stands at the center of all epics, so this image, worthily embodied by the actor, should always be the focus of the theatrical art's search. How to return the theater to the style of heroic and romantic performance of epic works, considering how urgent this need is, and in principle, whether it is possible - this is a debatable but urgent issue.

In the development of the epic tradition, theaters in the region have the following problems to solve:

The first problem: The character and plot of epic works that passed into classical literature were distorted under the influence of socialist realism. Therefore, at the present stage, it is necessary to re-read them and write new dramatizations and plays based on the originals of classical poetry. This is an acute and still insufficiently solvable problem of creating fundamentally new dramaturgical versions of classical epics.

The second problem: More and more often there are new spectacular interpretations based on epics, with an abundance of plastic elements. Unfortunately, they are often far from the national style and eclectic. In such performances, actors do not pay due attention to the meaning and significance of the word; all their efforts are spent on plastic scenes. It seems that the novelty in the transformations of folk epics should be in close connection, first of all, with national and, of course, universal values.

The third problem: For a long time, the Tashkent Theater and Art Institute trained actors, directors, and playwrights for the region. It was the only educational theater center in Central Asia. With the acquisition of Independence, theatrical universities or departments at universities have been created in all republics of the region. But so far, close ties between these universities have not been established. Although, having common ethnic roots, a common historical fate, and common folk epics, we all need the creative experience of our neighbors. It seems necessary to

radically change this situation - institutions need to exchange teaching methods for special disciplines, textbooks, and teaching aids, establish educational and scientific relationships between universities in the region, and practice mutual invitations of leading specialists to lecture and hold special courses.

The fourth problem again concerns the problem of acting. In the transformations of epic works, the actor occupies a special place. Today, the general decline in the level of acting skills is disturbing. The epic needs pathos, and heroic characters - such is its nature. But the tendencies of heroic and romantic art are fading into the past. The magnificent style, romance, temperament, special attention to the meaning and significance of the words of outstanding artists such as Abror Hidoyatov (Uzbekistan), Muradbek Riskulov (Kyrgyzstan), Asanali Ashimov (Kazakhstan), Amon Kulmamedov (Turkmenistan), Ato Muhamedjanov (Tajikistan) should continue in the acting game of the region. How to return the theater to the style of heroic and romantic performance of epic works, how urgent is this need, and in principle, is it possible - this is a debatable but topical issue.

The fifth problem: At one time, to strengthen creative contacts, and identify new names and trends in the theatrical art of the region, the regional festival "Navruz" was regularly held. This festival managed to travel around the entire region once and stopped its activities. Instead of it, another has not been created so far. Although such international festivals as "Art Ordo" (Bishkek), "Tuganlik" (Ufa), regional festivals in Almaty and Tashkent are held, their activities and concepts do not yet have a permanent nature. Thus, today we do not have a festival that connects the regional theaters.

2. CONCLUSION

In the active processes of cultural globalization, the process of studying and theatrical conceptualization of the national epics of Central Asia is a path leading, on the one hand, to the past, to its roots, and on the other, to the future - to a renewed world of universal tolerance and mutual understanding. In this complex creative process of worldwide cultural exchange of values, the theaters of the region can and should play a leading role in creating a dialogue between the cultures of East and West. They should and can make their significant contribution to promoting folk masterpieces and conveying to the rest of the world the high spirituality and unsurpassed artistic features of the epic heritage of the peoples of Central Asia.

3. REFERENCES

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15379/ijmst.v10i2.3087>

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