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THEATRE ART IN KASHKADARYA DURING THE “RECONSTRUCTION” YEARS: CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

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Abstract:

The article examines the changes in art and culture—specifically in theater—driven by the political processes of the 1980s and 1990s. It also outlines the establishment, activities, challenges, achievements, and repertoire policy of the "Muloqot" theater studio as a new creative direction. Furthermore, the article highlights the theater troupe's international tours and explores the themes and essence of its productions.

Keywords: “Reconstruction”, “Ilhom”, Glavlit, censorship, “Soyuzteatr”, A. Abdunazarov, Lenin Komsomol Prize, Grand Prix, Avignon Festival, Peter Brook

Introduction

“The reconstruction” policy implemented in the Soviet Union between 1985 and 1991 marked a fundamental turning point in Soviet cultural life. For years, Soviet theatre, which had lived under the influence of Glavlit and Soviet ideological censorship, was able to raise themes of past tragedies, the evils of the totalitarian system and the realisation of national identity. As a result, the establishment of independent theatre studios, both within and outside state theatres, became widespread. This process was accelerated by the formation of the “Ilhom” Theatre Studio, one of the first professional non-state theatres in the Soviet



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Union. It was founded in 1976 by director Mark Weil and a group of graduates from the Tashkent Institute of Theatre and Fine Arts as a theatre studio for professional actors.[1]

Research methodology

The study made effective use of methods such as chronological sequence, comparative analysis, historicity, a systematic approach and the principle of objectivity.

Results and discussions

The Mulla Toychi Toshmuhamedov Kashkadarya Regional Musical Drama Theatre, founded on the basis of amateur theatre troupes from Qarshi and Shahrisabz and granted the status of a state theatre, has passed through complex stages in its history. In the mid-1980s, the theatre moved into a new, modern building with full technical facilities, becoming one of the leading regional theatres in the republic in terms of its creative potential. However, until 1985, the theatre's repertory policy was strictly controlled by the Ministry of Culture of the USSR and the Main Directorate for the Protection of Printed Matter and State Secrets. Artistic councils, and the Ideology Department of the regional Party Committee, would check each play and performance for conformity with Soviet ideology before its premiere, banning any "deviations".

After the 1985 plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the mechanisms of censorship began to weaken. Theatre companies and directors were granted freedom in selecting plays and interpreting characters, as well as the right to conduct directorial experiments, and the barriers on previously banned topics were removed. This situation created the conditions for the release of the creative energy that had accumulated at the Kashkadarya Theatre for many years and for



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a sharp increase in artistic experimentation. In 1986, a three-month repertory plan was approved by the Ministry of Culture of the USSR for the Mulla Toychi Toshmuhammedov Kashkadarya Regional Musical Drama Theatre.[2] In particular, a total of 12 events were scheduled for March, comprising 11 performances and one comedy evening. “Hamla”, “Eringman-ku Sadoqat”, “Oqibat”, “Un uchinchi rais”, “To’ydan oldin tomosha”, “Paranji sirlari”, “O’jarlar”, “O’z arizasiga ko’ra”, Plans were made to stage plays such as “Toshkentning nozanin malikasi”, “Sevmaganga suykanma”, and “Ona allasi”. During this period, Karim Yuldashev, an Honoured Artist of the Uzbek SSR, served as the theatre’s chief director.

In November 1987, the next meeting of the Artistic Council of the Kerman Province Theatre was held. The agenda also included the casting for the play “Nurhon” and the staging of ‘The Shum Child’s New Year Adventures’ on New Year’s Eve. At the meeting, the theatre’s chief director, Abdurahmon Abdunazarov, spoke, stating that in the 1988 creative season, Maqsud Shaykhzoda’s “Mirzo Ulug’bek”, He noted that the creative plan also envisaged staging the comedy “Tartuffe” by the French playwright Molière, as well as “Anzura” by Sharofat Ashurova. In accordance with the plan for the New Year preparations, the staging of the work “Shum bolaning yangi yil sarguzashtlari” was entrusted to the director Muzaffar To’rakulov.

However, during this period, state-funded academic theatres that carried out ideological commissions began to fall behind the demands of society. People had grown tired of spectacles based on formalism. In contrast to traditional stage conventions, there was a growing need for a modern theatrical language and the pursuit of new dramaturgy. On 4 October 1988, under the leadership of director Abdurahmon Abdunazarov, 12 young actors and actresses broke away from the regional theatre to form the “Muloqot” Theatre Studio.[3] The following artists



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made a significant contribution to the establishment of the “Muloqot” Theatre Studio: Abdurahmon Abdunazarov - Artistic Director, Gulchehra Abdunazarova (wife of Abdurahmon Abdunazarov) - actress, Muzaffar To’raqulov - actor, Isoq To’rayev - actor, Abdunabi Bobojonov - actor, Oygul Xalilova (wife of Abdunabi Bobojonov) - actress, Ergash Vafojev - actor, Haydar Hotamov - actor, Malika Xidirova - literary collaborator, Xayrullo Haqberdiyev - actor, Karima Ismoilova - actress.

The group, established in the city of Qarshi, was officially granted the status of a theatre studio by the Union of Theatre Workers of the USSR, the Uzbekistan branch of “Soyuzteatr”. [4] Young people who had left the regional theatre to pursue new work in a fresh creative environment had neither a place to go nor a building. They only had the intention of setting up a theatre studio and staging performances. The regional cultural department turned a blind eye to the “street-based” artists, not believing they could establish a “second theatre” in Qarshi. The city’s clubs, however, did not provide temporary premises for the theatre studio’s creators. Nevertheless, Roziddin Rahimov, the director of the city’s 4th Vocational and Technical School, showed concern for the young people and granted them permission to use the school’s club building. This became the only refuge for these “amateurs.” Alongside their creative work, the actors themselves handle all the technical tasks, from preparing the stage decorations to operating the lighting and sound equipment. They also pooled money from their own pockets for the production costs (set design, costumes). As a result of three to four months of unpaid, non-stop work, the theatre studio launched its activities with Sharof Boshbekov’s play “Temir xotin”. The play was staged in this very club. A creative commission from Tashkent – theatre scholars Kamariddin Ortiqov, N.P. Kroshkov and G. Famandi – expressed warm praise for the production. The play “Temir xotin” was a significant event that ushered in a new



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era in the history of regional theatre art. At that time, this work, approached with a fresh interpretation and renowned throughout the union, was also met with great interest at the Qarshi Theatre. The young creatives, breaking away from traditional moulds, revealed the work's essence in their own distinctive directorial interpretation. The play's themes of the problems of the socialist transition period, family relationships, changes in people's consciousness, and the small calculations within society resonated strongly with the spirit of the era. The enterprising young people of the "Muloqot" theatre studio clearly demonstrated their potential as an independent and free creative collective through this production.[5] In 1989, the theatre company staged the comedy "Janonga bordim bir kecha", based on Hamza's play "Kim to'g'ri?", and Abdulla Qahhor's satirical drama "Ayajonlarim". The initiative of young creators to revive the forgotten traditions of the national theatre and to employ modern means in their stage interpretations that directly engage the audience was warmly received by the general public. In the following period, H.H. Niyoziy's "Zaharli hayot yoxud ishq qurbonlari", "Meni saylang!", R. Farhodiy's "O'tkir shoxli buqacha", E. Sobirov's "Baxtiyorni uylantiramiz", A. Abdunazarov's "Jo'jaxo'roz", "Shaytoncha", S. Aliyev's "Nasriddin va Azroil", O. Genri's "Qizil tanlilar sardori yoki sariq mashak", M. Bayjiev's "Gulya va Edik" ("Kelin-kuyov" pyesasi asosida), Sh. Sa'dulla's "Chol bilan bo'ri", A. Nesin's "Uch qismat", T. Zulfiqorov's "Nasreddin", M. Hasanova's "Zumrasha" Sh. Bashbekov's "Tikansiz tipratikanlar", "Qanotsiz farishtalar", and K. Dilmonov's "Vijdon qo'shig'i". In a short time, the "Muloqot" theatre studio became famous not only in Uzbekistan but also abroad. The theatre company took part in the 1989 Regional Festival of Central Asian Theatre Studios held in Tashkent, with Sharof Bashbekov's participated with the production "Temir xotin", winning the nomination for "Best Female Role" and "Best Director", the nomination for "Best



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Set and Costume Design”, and the nomination for “Actor Who Best Realised the Director”’s Concept in the Production” were also won. The Grand Prix also went to the artists from Qashqadaryo. [6] In 1990, it was awarded a special prize at the “Nowruz-90” festival held in Dushanbe, a city in the Central Asian republics. After this, the theatre studio was deemed worthy of the Lenin Komsomol Prize of Uzbekistan. The People’s Poet of Uzbekistan and People’s Deputy of the USSR, Abdulla Oripov, personally visited the theatre to see how its creators were getting on, familiarised himself with their work, and did not withhold his selfless help. The world-famous French director Peter Brook, after seeing the play “Communication”, sent 4,000 soms (a very large sum for that time) to support the theatre. Theatre scholars from countries such as Finland, the United States, France, Italy, Belgium and Egypt came to see the performances and invited the theatre abroad.

At the invitation of international partners, under bilateral agreements, the theatre company took part in the 1991 International Theatre Festival held in the Italian cities of Modena and Volterra with Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziy’s “Janonga bordim bir kecha” (‘Kim to’g’ri?’ based on the play) took part and won the hearts of the audience. Also that year, as the first theatre company to represent Uzbekistan at the International Festival of Avignon in France, it took part in a tour of Martigues, Avignon and Paris, presenting its stage productions. The comedy “Janonga bordim bir kecha” which had been well received by audiences in Italy, was also met with great delight and interest on French theatre stages. In the following period, the theatre studio took part in International Theatre Festivals in Brussels and Antwerp, Belgium, and in the “Theatre Square” traditional-seasonal theatre meeting of the “Ande Ruhr” Theatre in Mülheim, Germany, It also took part in the “Bumborambiya” International Street Theatre Festival in Kuznetsk, Penza Oblast, Russia, representing the CIS and Baltic states, and won



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prestigious awards. As a result of these tours, the company showcased to the world the progressive achievements of theatre art in Uzbekistan, paving the way for an increased interest from theatre scholars worldwide in our country, and particularly in the theatre of Kashkadarya.

Conclusion

In the 1980s and 1990s, creative and institutional changes were observed in the theatre activity in Kashkadarya. At the start of the period, theatres operated under strict templates and plans set by higher authorities and were obliged to stage only those productions prescribed by the Ministry of Culture. By the late 1980s, the “Muloqot” theatre studio had broken away from the Kashkadaryo Regional Musical Drama Theatre as an independent creative ensemble. In the 1990s, the theatre’s repertoire was enriched with stage productions that reflected national history, cultural heritage, and contemporary issues. The theatre’s creative team actively responded to societal changes and social processes, presenting a number of productions to audiences. Historical plays, the activities of the Jadids, and the fate of persecuted intellectuals—all of which had been banned from the stage for ideological reasons during the Soviet era—returned, along with the finest examples of world classics.



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