The Main Trends in the Development of Theatrical Art in Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The article examines the beginning of the process of theatre renewal in the first years of independence, creative research, trends and problems of theatre art in a market economy. It describes the problems of the theatres in the capital, especially the successes of theatres in the regions, and the work that needs to be done.

Keywords: Culture, Art, Theatre, Repertoire, Festival, Performance, Drama, Director, Genre, Work.

Introduction

The implementation of reforms in the theatrical arts in Uzbekistan, the enrichment of the content of the performing arts, the expansion of forms and the movement for new creative development are closely linked to the period of independence. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 20 October 1995 "On measures for further development of theatre and music in Uzbekistan" and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers (28 October 1995) on ensuring the implementation of this Decree, the Presidential Decree of 26 March 1998 "On measures for further development of theatrical art in Uzbekistan" (22 May 1998) and on this basis the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "On establishing an art association "Uzbek theatre" (22 May 1998).

The Main Results and Findings

Decision of 21 September 2001 on awarding the Uzbek State Academic Drama Theatre named after Khamza the status of "National Theatre" attests to the special attention given by the State to the development of the theatrical arts.

In particular, over the past three years, concern for the development of the national theatrical arts has risen to the level of State policy. PF-4947 of 7 February 2017 "On a Strategy for Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan", PF-4956 of 15 February 2017 "On Measures for Further Improving the Management System in Culture and Sport", 2017 Decree No. PK-3022 of 31 May 2018 "On Measures for Further Development and Improvement of Culture and Art", 28 November 2018 "On Approving the Concept for Further Development of National Culture in Uzbekistan" are striking examples of our words.

In this connection, particular attention should be drawn to the Decree of President Mirziyoyev of 26 May 2020 "On measures to further enhance the role and influence of culture and the arts in society" (PF-6000). In order to accelerate reforms in culture and the arts, effectively fulfil the tasks facing the sector, further improve the activities of cultural bodies and institutions, and ensure the implementation of the Strategy of Action in the Five Priority Areas for the Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021, opportunities have been created.

Today, when we talk about our country in the world, the phrase "New Uzbekistan" is used. This is recognition of the tremendous achievements we have made in recent years, as we have entered an entirely new stage of development.

It is true to say that in our time, when the glorious power of our people is in full swing, a new awakening is being laid in Uzbekistan - the foundation of the Third Renaissance. For today's Uzbekistan is not yesterday's Uzbekistan. Our people today are not yesterday's people.

Looking back at the glorious path we have walked during the years of independence, our
confidence in the future, in our strength and opportunities is growing. The reforms we are implementing in all spheres and sectors in line with the strategy of action for the development of our country are becoming a decisive factor in this regard.

"The inspiring idea of "From National Renewal to National Exaltation" is penetrating deeper and deeper into our lives. On this basis, we are taking important steps to radically improve the lives of our people, to ensure human rights and freedoms, the rule of law and social justice, as well as innovative development" – Mirziyoyev, the President of Uzbekistan, has said.

The activities of theatres in Uzbekistan should therefore be based on these principles, and the Third Renaissance should mark the presentation of their work.

In the new socio-economic environment the transition of theatre companies to self-governance, the use of modern entrepreneurial principles in attracting audiences, the formation of management and marketing systems and economic reforms require analysis with regard to the repertoire policy of the theatre and creative processes. This complex process depends on an analytical study of the problems encountered in defining artistic criteria, development principles and trends in creative and organisational tasks.

The new period, the ongoing and ongoing process in the theatrical art of Uzbekistan, the creative, organizational, social and economic issues that need to be resolved require scientific analysis by specialists. After all, theatres and companies receive subsidies and work under special commissions; there remains the construction of new buildings for theatres, major repairs and maintenance of existing ones; and the allocation of large sums of money for new stage equipment and materials.

Over the years of independence, the State has given priority to the development of culture and the arts in Uzbekistan, the construction of modern cultural and artistic institutions based on the best world practices, the upgrading of their material and technical infrastructure and comprehensive support for the creative intelligentsia.

Considerable work has been done to raise the cultural level of the population, particularly young people, to provide them with the best examples of national and universal culture and on that basis to foster spiritually mature and harmoniously developed personalities and to realize the abilities and potential of young talent.

At the same time, the old methods of managing culture and the arts, the lack of an integrated approach to solving existing problems, the organization of cultural institutions, the lack of cultural services to the population and the lack of material and technical resources for culture and the arts persist in many places. It should be noted that this does not meet the requirements. In particular, the lack of a well-thought-out system for training, retraining and improving the qualifications of highly qualified personnel for the sector makes it impossible to effectively implement a unified State policy in the area of culture and fully realize the priorities in this sphere. Decision of 31 May "On measures for the further development and improvement of the sphere of culture and the arts".

The reforms undertaken in our country at the initiative of the President have a direct impact on the arts and culture. Pursuant to a Cabinet of Ministers Decision of 5 January 2018 on the programme of measures to strengthen the material and technical base of state theatres and develop their activities for 2018-2022, work has begun to strengthen them. In particular, new buildings are being constructed for the Andijan Regional Youth Theatre, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, Jizzakh and Khojor Regional Puppet Theatres. A ceremonial handover of the new building of the Puppet Theatre in Jizzakh Province. We know that such constructions, which require huge investments, are connected with great attention of our state to theatrical art.

Calling the years a "new era" the subject of our study based on the facts, the overall picture of theatrical art in Uzbekistan as a whole, the contradictions that began during the "reconstruction" phase of the crisis of the dictatorial Soviet regime. The process of freedom and independence started during the period of independence, and a number of special resolutions and decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers on cultural policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan played an important role in this process.

The path of Uzbekistan's theatrical art in the new era is based on step-by-step analysis of performances, changes in theatrical art during the "reconstruction" phase, and the beginning of theatre renovation process in the early years of independence, creative pursuits, trends and problems.

The following trends can be traced in the art of theatre during the Reconstruction period:

First, creative stagnation in a number of theatrical companies, aggravation of contradictions, division into opposing groups.

Second, the beginning of creative competition between official theatres, which work on state subsidies, and informal studios, working with the help of sponsors and non-governmental organizations.

Third, in staging national and world classics and works on contemporary themes, Uzbek traditional theatre styles have moved closer to elements of Western theatre, creating a link in the best examples.
Fourth, regional theatres with musical drama status have reduced their staffs to musicians, singers and ballet dancers and moved in the direction of drama.

Fifthly, the repertoire of theatres is small, with a proliferation of house productions, concerts and laughing nights.

Sixth, the emergence of serious problems in logistics, organisation, creative work, staffing and building renovation.

During the period of reconstruction, along with the positive aspects of selecting works, forming the repertoire, and transitioning to an independent and free creative path, it was not possible to eliminate negative trends and solve problems. Only after Uzbekistan gained its place in the world community as an independent, sovereign state, it became possible to resolve major problems in this area through proper organization of art and culture, including theatrical art and forming management system.

In our study, the creative achievements of Uzbekistan's theatres during the years of independence are as follows.

- First of all, it should be noted that the process of cultural and artistic renewal did not begin all of a sudden, when independence was declared and the country and society followed a new path. Changes and renewal in the theatrical arts also took place gradually, and the creative work that had begun in the early years of the reconstruction period continued. Neither playwrights nor directors knew exactly what themes to work on in the field, whom to portray as characters in them, and the process was left to time. Since 1996, when the Year of Amir Temur was declared, the national idea and principles of national ideology were developed. This is reflected in the works of Amir Temur, Jaloliddin Manguberdi, Ahmad al-Farghani, Imam al-Bukhari, Cholpon, Abdullah Kadiri and studies on contemporary themes, among others.

- In the first 10 years of independence the repertoire of theatres was based on historical drama and works on contemporary themes, and creative quests and experiments in these fields defined the trends of development of theatrical art. In directing, generalisation, figurative interpretations, wider use of traditional theatre style and tools, conventionality, exaggeration and improvisation led the way to the actor's art. Consequently, the genre of comedy has been gaining increasing attention on the Uzbek theatrical stage. In some cases, due to the inability of theatre management to function properly in a market economy, home-made comedies have been overvalued and overshadowed by serious, highly artistic historical and classical works, undermining the importance of theatre art.

- The domestic and foreign theatre festivals held in the 1990s enabled Uzbek theatres to find their way into a new era, to create with the currents, styles and tools of national and world performing arts, and to present their works at international festivals not only in our own country but also abroad. To this end, theatre managers have begun to learn how to find sponsors, work with sponsors, and create important productions with grants from non-governmental organizations.

- The twenty-first century has seen a radical change in the work of the theatres in Uzbekistan, particularly in the minds and attitudes of stagehands, as theatre management and the Artistic Council are responsible for an independent process from the selection of works to the production. But at the same time, with 39 state theatres, the complete absence of private theatres and unresolved marketing and management issues hinder the free and normal functioning of theatre in our country at the level of international theatrical standards.

- Currently, the state finances a huge network of theatres. But every year theatrical art becomes more expensive. In the coming years, the state will continue supporting theatres, moving from quantitative support to qualitative support. It is this quality that can be one of the basic principles of the theatrical model in a competitive market. At the same time, provincial and municipal governments and other relevant agencies should take more responsibility for theatre. They can sign a contract with a talented director and finance the production of some productions. It is also necessary to find new forms and ways of supporting the artists of the theatre and the stage, to use the help of different national and international foundations, personal sponsors and to work on the basis of financial agreements. Therefore one of the important principles of renewal of the theatrical model in the coming years is formation of the system of theatrical art support in these spheres. An information bank should be in every theatre.
Modern information technology and the Internet have, of course, penetrated into some theatres. The Academic Bolshoi Theatre named after Alisher Navoi, the Youth Theatre of Uzbekistan, the Academic Russian Drama Theatre of Uzbekistan and the Republican Theatre of Young Spectators have their own email addresses and websites. It is no secret, however, that many other theatres look at the issue from behind bars. However, whichever theatre has this information and cannot use it in accordance with the laws of the market, its creative work will improve and it will be able to tour abroad.

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Alongside the successes, there are many problems and things that need to be done:

First, although there are courses for playwrights at the Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture, there are few young playwrights. Our theatres have many historical plays, many productions on everyday themes, but few productions embodying the image of the modern hero. True, there are workshops and methodical creative tours for playwrights and directors. But one should not forget that the solution to the problem depends more on the initiative of the theatre community. It is desirable that the theatres in the capital and in the region find their own dramaturgy reflecting the work of a hero of the times, so as to involve as many young directors as possible in this work.

Secondly, there is the problem of a shortage of young personnel in theatres. That's right, "37 + 1", "Debut", "Let's sing to you, friend"! The results of the festivals have seen a number of young directors, some of whom have settled in theatres. But some young professionals lack patience and dedication to their chosen profession. Recently, young professionals have been reluctant to go to theatres and work in Tashkent, where they work in television or other institutions. In recent years, regional theatres have had to replenish their troupes with young people who have graduated from local colleges. It is therefore necessary to ensure that young people are directly exposed to the theatres of their region during their studies at the Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture, through internships and dissertation defences there.

Thirdly, in a market economy, theatres need to strengthen themselves materially and technically through additional funds, opening of paid services and attracting sponsors, in addition to fulfilling established repertoire and financial plans. Undoubtedly, the entrepreneurial spirit of the theatre director will be an important factor. In particular, theatres need to fundamentally rethink their service system. The theatre should pay particular attention to issues such as the rental of shop goods (clothing, equipment, cosmetics for rent), the production and sale of new goods (tailoring), the development of restaurants, cafes, cafeterias, and the rental of free space in the theatre.

Fourthly, special attention should be paid to advertising in the theatre, and every work should be presented to potential audiences in a timely manner. In doing so, it is necessary to create all the opportunities available in our country, in particular to form a system of sending short messages to Internet users, broadcasting through social networks, developing television and radio advertising, using the existing possibilities of the media. In this regard, discounts for theatre groups on public television and radio should be made, and commercials should be broadcast in the status of "social advertising".

Fifthly, it is necessary to modernize the internal system of theatrical communities, gradually reduce state subsidies to some theatres and elaborate on the issues of providing some theatres with soft loans or similar financing. At the same time it is necessary to simplify the organization of tours of theatrical collectives, to simplify tax and customs issues in order to facilitate travel abroad and the organization of visits of foreign theatrical collectives to our country. In this connection necessary decisions, normative-legal documents should be developed at a state level.

Sixth, it is time to think about transferring directors and actors to a contractual system. Even the biggest academic theatres do not justify keeping a company of 150-200 people. The theatre staff must work out new regulations and a contract by mutual agreement and provide them with legal guarantees. Because of the actors involved, the theatre company often changes and new directors and actors may be invited for one or two performances from other companies. This, in turn, can lead to drama, directing, genre diversity and an influx of new audiences.

Seventh, the question of the participation of theatre groups in international festivals around the world is not based on science but on the personal initiative of theatre managers. In fact, we believe that the Ministry of Culture should
give the "Department of Theatre Development" a special staff dedicated to the issue of sending theatres abroad, which has a map of all traditional theatre festivals in the world. International theatre festivals are different. Some work at a purely amateur level, and participants also perform mostly in the margins. The programmes of such festivals cannot be the standard of professional art. The influence of the representatives of the state theatre involved in them will also be relative. It is therefore very important to choose the right one among the various categories of international festivals and to recommend the theatre company accordingly. In particular, theatre festivals in the Russian Federation (especially the A.P. Chekhov conference) are mainly focused on professional theatres. Participating theatres (e.g. the Youth Theatre of Uzbekistan) are happy with the productions, high-level discussions and conversations held during the festivals and are coming up with new projects.

Eighth, a theatre that has participated in international festivals may stage one or two productions. It is difficult to present the creative image of a participating theatre. That is why it is important to organise official tours of theatres in foreign countries. To date, the ballet company of the Uzbek State Academic Theatre named after A. Navoi has toured to a number of Eastern countries; the Uzbek Academic Russian Drama Theatre, the Uzbek National Academic Drama Theatre and the Youth Theatre of Uzbekistan have toured only to cities in Russia. However, no Uzbek theatre has ever toured to any Western country before or now. True, this is hard work; such tours require a lot of money. But this is something to strive for. A program on tax and customs issues must be devised to make it easier for Uzbek theatres to tour abroad and for foreign theatres to visit our country.

Ninth, the need to create a platform for the development of culture and arts management in our country should be considered an urgent task. The issue of training professional personnel, industry representatives such as managers and producers, will today form the basis for establishing an economically independent system of theatres. Although the Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture has opened a department called "Organization and Management of Cultural and Art Institutions", unfortunately there are no practical results yet. The department was established in 2012, with students enrolled in 5А151700 - Organization and Management of Cultural and Art Institutions, and 5А151701 - Masters of Culture and Arts. After eight years, Uzbek theatres still lack a professional artistic director. In this sense, the activities of the department need to be fundamentally revised and the scope and volume of the disciplines taught at the department needs to be redefined. Entering the market economy, attracting more customers by increasing purchasing power and improving production quality, developing theatres with appropriate and efficient internal resources, and developing and implementing a management style that serves their material and spiritual growth. The desired result can only be achieved if a new theatre manager does so. After all, it is impossible to achieve development today without harmonising with the economy and using it to one's advantage. However, it should also be borne in mind that if the manager acts only for profit, spirituality may fall back to the second level, the theatre may retreat from its original function. Managers are therefore first and foremost required to find a 'middle ground'. In the future, theatres need to attract people with management skills and knowledge working in film and show business.

Conclusion

If theatre companies delegated all economic affairs to experienced managers, artistic theatre managers would take on big creative tasks. Finding sponsors, contributors, NGOs, foundations, embassies for some projects; When involving international organisations such as UNESCO, ASSETEJ, UNIMA, the manager can be the right hand of the theatre director.

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