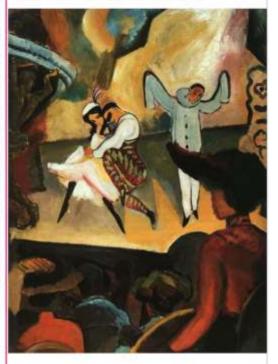
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Modern interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedies

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to consider modern interpretations of Shakespearian tragedies by Kazakh, Russian and Georgian theatre directors. The wise combination of different stage readings – the Eastern and European ones – served as a basis of the article effective research method. As a result, each theatre strives to comprehend the high poetry and inherent lyricism of Shakespearian drama and, at the same time, to enhance the social agency and significance of the tragic character. In conclusion, a theatre production may acquire national tints in order to be better understood by the audience.

Keywords: Shakespearian, classics, theatre, production, director.

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Interpretaciones modernas de las tragedias Shakesperianas

Resumen

El propósito de la investigación es considerar las interpretaciones modernas de las tragedias de Shakespeare por parte de los directores de teatro kazajos, rusos y georgianos. La sabia combinación de las diferentes lecturas de las etapas, las orientales y las europeas, sirvió de base para el método de investigación eficaz del artículo. Como resultado, cada teatro se esfuerza por comprender la alta poesía y el lirismo inherente del drama shakesperiano y, al mismo tiempo, mejorar la agencia social y el significado del personaje trágico. En conclusión, una producción teatral puede adquirir tintes nacionales para que el público la entienda mejor.

Palabras clave: Shakespeare, Clásicos, Teatro, Producción, Director.

1. INTRODUCTION

The works of William Shakespeare have been attracting the world theatre practitioners and audience for centuries (Bourne, 2015; Brockett et al., 2016). Since the day of its founding, the Kazakh theatre has repeatedly referred to Shakespearian works. His plays, as well as cultural awareness of humanity, renew by virtue of director's interpretations. The life of Shakespearian characters is full of movement and development over time. They always help us in an endless process of reflecting on moral problems and fighting for lofty humanness. At the turn of the twentieth-twenty first centuries the

Kazakh theatre tries to keep up with global theatrical process and year after year it makes the efforts to read famous Shakespearian tragedies in a new way. Thus, the Kazakh actors have love and ability to perform Shakespeare's plays. The history says that the professional Kazakh theatre was founded in 1926. As early as in 1928 the director Shanin already produced Hamlet.

This does not suppose that all Shakespearian plays produced in Kazakhstan were met with equal universal success by the audience. The spectators were attracted rather by the performing manner of certain actors, than by the director's conception. The first theatre production of Othello was made in 1939 by the director Sokolovsky who was invited from Russia. It proves that on the initial stage of its development the Kazakh theatre leaned upon the well-established theatre school. A further acquaintance of Kazakh-speaking audience with Shakespearian works became possible by virtue of translations made by Bopezhanova. Thus, the purpose of this article is to consider the modern interpretations of Shakespearian classics in order to define and compare the peculiarities of theatre productions by Kazakh, Russian and Georgian theatre directors.

1.1. Interpretations of Hamlet

The most famous Shakespearian tragedy Hamlet has been occupying the main place in the world theaters' list of productions for already four hundred years (Degrazia, 2007). "It comprises the whole world, visible and invisible, its scale is truly cosmic" (Anikst, 1986:

20). In the 1970s the famous Russian director Liubimov produced Hamlet in Moscow Taganka Shed theatre. Hamlet became the most famous role of Vysotsky. The director elaborated his own expressive and plastic language both in relation to the scenographic version and to the actors' performing manner. Hamlet performed by Vysotsky is dressed in velvet jeans, black, knitted woolen sweater. He holds a guitar in his hands.

On the stage, there was a moving curtain knitted of heavy, rough woolen threads. It embraced the whole stage space. In Markov's words: "The famous curtain – the director and designer D. Borovsky's precious solution – hides the deepest internal meaning. It exerts emotional impact, catching the spectator" (Markov, 1977: 10). It either turned into a wall that approached people with mortal danger, or transformed into a giant web that swarmed around helpless people. All the stage space was captured by the curtain. Its endless movements, spins captured the spectator's attention. The curtain turned into a certain symbol of fate, death. Hamlet was not able to overpower it. He was aware of this. An interesting interpretation of Hamlet was produced by Haning-Beknazar in Auezov Academic theatre.

The struggle in Shakespearian Hamlet is not against an explicit tyrant, the idol of evil and violence. The noblest king's descendant enters a battle, not with another medieval Genghis Khan. His uncle, his mother's brother, turns out to be the source of all the miseries of the Prince of Denmark. These family relations that tie into a mortal knot around Hamlet have him bound hand and foot. Even the logic of the

Ghost's honor demands from him the esteem to his mother.

The roles of the newly married are marked with a strong belief in the right to be happy at any cost. It makes them, perceive Hamlet's behavior as an attitude of an unkind and dangerous troublemaker. Claudius monologue sounds with frank tears. It seems that in a minute this man will become incapable of remorse. Whereas in the scene with Gertrude his behavior is perceived as a sharp contrast: with a righteous pathos, with the confidence of a demagogue, he calls himself to responsibility for the danger and harmfulness of insane Hamlet's behavior. This is the moment when the question arises whether his interests need to be naturally defended from wicked intrigues of an unwise adolescent who does not want to comply with "moral stereotype" (Bachelis, 2007: 10).

Elegant, delicate, intellectual Hamlet performed by Uteulov was, first of all, a philosopher, who observed the imperfection of the world with a wise irony and skepticism. First of all, he tries to comprehend what happened, to understand its essence. The image of Ophelia performed by Muzaparova was full of charm and poetry. Ophelia appears being lit up with a light of love to Hamlet. She is immersed in her internal world. She feels happiness, tranquil pleasure. After this moment she lives like in a dream, mechanically subduing to someone else's will. Ophelia performed by Muzaparova left the world in the same sad half-dream that she lived in without Hamlet. The creators of performances were attracted by the passion and depth of Shakespearian dramatic art. Hamlet performed by Chakhonadsky is sincere and naïve, he trusted the father's ghost unconditionally. Matveev's role of

Claudius seems to be the most outstanding achievement of this theatre production.

The scenes change each other very smoothly. They are connected by the actors themselves who stepped into the stage a few seconds earlier and entered the performance without long pauses. That is why there was no harsh when the light was dimmed and when the decorations were planned to be rearranged. There are also a lot of interesting solutions in the scene of Ophelia funeral. With her face covered, Ophelia is walking alongside the stretcher that carries some garment. The soul walks alongside the body. The traditional skull of a poor Yorick that the Prince of Denmark must speak to is replaced with a mask. Like any of us, each character puts on a mask in his life. Kanevsky's production becomes unexpected and original through such metaphorical solutions, through object manipulation.

Kanevsky's thoughtful direction, actors' talented performance, stage designer Amansakhatov's perfect work, meaningful impersonation of supporting roles – all these elements were brought together, and the play sounded in a clear, purposeful and modern way. The crucial issue that the director was caring about was the audience not carried away by the dramatic story, not distracted by the previous readings of Hamlet. He produces a simple family story, not a play of global scale.

The theatre production of Hamlet by the famous Shakespeare's Globe in the capital of Kazakhstan Astana in 2014 became an outstanding event. This play revealed all the power of Shakespearian tragedy to the Kazakh audience, and, hopefully, served as an impulse

for the new director's readings of the great playwright's works. The spectators had a chance to see with their own eyes the actors of the glorified English theatre who performed the tragedy Hamlet in an old theatre fashion. The artistic director and one of the stage managers Dominic Dromgoole drops the following words in the performance program: Thank you for joining our joyful venture. He makes it clear that this performance is nothing more than entertainment. Thus, the spectator should prepare himself for entertainment, for a play.

One can note the director follows Brook's (2005) manner that was stated as early as in 2000. However, he decides to further simplify the emphases of meaning and leans towards narration, naïve improvisation and sometimes primitive play-acting. The performance starts with the actors' improvisational hits. In the first scene, Polonius performed by Keith Bartlett thoroughly checks the props, rearranges travel bags and trunks of various shape, sorts the clothes that hang on the stage dividing walls and bear no signs of belonging to a certain epoch. Then he would get down to the auditorium and start to speak to the audience, to ask questions, get in contact with the public.

Each of 12 actors plays different roles during the performance. Hamlet performed by Ladi Emeruva narrates his monologues in a simple way, without any tension, exaggerations and pompous intonations. He does not look like a prince at all. Neither his stateliness nor his appearance point to this status. He wears the worn out trousers and all his appearance is far from the ordinary, established stereotype. He is an ordinary lad with an open, kind face. His look is a bit sad. Having discovered the truth about the way the murder took place, he

would helplessly hang his head. The expression of emotional outburst through the body and facial gestures, through the words, is marked by temperance and simplicity.

The originality of production of the key episode with mouse trap attracts special attention. The scene of murder of Hamlet's father would be performed by Claudius and Gertrude. They are dressed like the troupe actors. The curtain would fall. For a short moment the spectator is not able to understand how Claudius and Gertrude would suddenly run to the stage from the auditorium with a request to stop the performance. This solution possesses a certain meaning – the director emphasizes the complicity of spectators in creating the mouse trap, making them the witnesses of what is happening on the stage. The ending is especially impressive: the moment when all the dead would come back to life, get up and start to amuse the public via dancing, playing musical instruments and singing a gamy song. The circle would be closed. Such solution proves the director's message once again – troupe actors play out prince Hamlet's fate in a free stage narrative.

2. METHODOLOGY

Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet has not been leaving the stages of world theatres for many centuries, it stimulates directors for new queries. In 2000, the invited Chezh director Joseph Kazourek produced his own version of this play named The lake of love, or

Italian frescos in G. Musrepov Kazakh Academic Young theatre. The director brought the tragedy events closer to the current needs and made it sound in a modern way. The director interpreted the immortal Shakespearian text in his own, completely new way and showed the whole story of Romeo and Juliet in 50 minutes through dances and plasticity. Its main artistic feature is that music, songs and verses, dance movements, scene and lightning design were fused in a way so that entire stage production remained somehow holistic and complete. The Kazakh audience perceived it as an innovative reading of the classic work

Stage interpretation of a famous work can turn to be very simple, the one that only illustrates the plot and characters development. At the same time, it can result in the creation of a complex system of extraordinary human relationships. The desire to step away from the habitual reading of Shakespearian play, to consider the true causes of tragedy development, to interpret the characters in their complex internal contradictions stimulated the director Kasymov to read Romeo and Juliet tragedy text in an absolutely new way on the stage of Western-Kazakh Regional theatre. Through widening the original content of the play, the director tried to fully apply the theatre methods of reality representation in terms of historical realism. In Kasymov's reading, religion became the root of ancient hatred between

The director showed a lack of understanding and contraditions in the modern world through the tragic love of Muslim Romeo and christian Juliet. Flaming love, the power of love that excites a person,

Montecchi and Capuleti.

heart beating and anxiety are easily felt in the performance. Stage movements of Romeo and Juliet are marked with passionate feeling and internal fight of moods. The tragedy of two people who fought and died for their love, for their cherished dream, elevating the humanistic idea of Renaissance can be seen. The Kyrgyz folk designer Sharafidinov made a significant contribution to the creation of the stage model of the play. The full use of the stage space allowed the designer to provide the actors with maximum opportunities to free their moves. The director used the light with equal success. This especially refers to the scenes where Thibault kills Mercutio and Romeo kills Thibault.

The role of Juliet became a new, remarkable milestone in Bakaeva's creative activity. The participation in the production helped to discover the actress's potential as a lyric heroine, showed the width of her creative scope. Honesty, emotionality, internal dramatism endowed Juliet with special charm and exciting sincerity. However, her childish worldview, her playfulness leave Juliet when she meets Romeo. The actress managed to plausibly show Juliet's spiritual maturing. Romeo performed by Mukhtaruly is full of joy, youthfulness and life. The audience remembered Juliet's nurse performed by Abdinabieva. The actress avoided the extremes and followed the golden ratio of the role having captured a thin string of the performing manner. The nurse performed by Abdinabieva is full of internal dignity and human charm. She created an eccentric, but, at the same time, an extremely true-life image.

Her costume also looks more like a Kazakh one, and the nurse's hat is similar to kimeshek – a national headdress of Kazakh women. The image of father Lorenzo also reached full vitality with the performance of Turys. Lorenzo fervently worries about the fate of Romeo and Juliet, his empathy and concern for them is felt. This work discovered Turys's disposition toward a bold interpretation, satirical pointing that is inextricably bound to everyday truth, toward the accuracy of the external picture, toward the brightness of scenic details. The actor B. Kaptagay depicted the duke as a ruler who feels compassion for all his subjects, who tries not to resort to the power he has in his hands. The duke is lonely, he is on his own. He is the only one who feels the disaster that is going to happen from the very beginning. The work of the designer E. Tuiakov deserves special attention. Monumental decorations and splendid costumes provide an excellent opportunity to see the picture of Renaissance epoch.

The floor element was initially raised to the level of a bench, then to the level of a table and transformed into fencing podium or balcony, and all this was happening during the course of actions. When the ball dance scene was taking place, the low podium played the role of a close-up shot, with all the dancers moved to the background, and with only Romeo and Juliet left of the podium. Even the actors' movements were slowed down like it is practiced in movies. This technique is called slow motion. The production of crowd scenes in the performance was also justified in terms of scale and dramaturgy. Battle scenes expressed through movement, choreographic elements are produced in a spectacular, though not consistent, way. Crowd scenes

and scenes of street battles with swords decorated with acrobatic elements were well performed by the theatre artists.

The turning points of action and the moment of the highest emotional tension were emphasized by the clear-cut mise-en-scenes and slow movements. At the same time, Salimov's traditionally performance provokes cinematographic produced associations. Especially, the meeting of Romeo and Juliet on a balcony is unwittingly associated with a scene from Zeffirelli's famous screen version. This association is intensified by a modern adaptation of Nino Rota's music that accompanies the scene. Anyway, the performance that is produced in a traditional manner, introduces the spectator to the great classic work from the Renaissance period. Continuing the idea conception of the work, the director emphasizes the pathos of love that is stronger than death and will definitely prevail over evil. The eternal theme of love and hate, of fidelity and revenge, of generation gap captures the audience's attention for two and a half hours.

The presents the public emotional performance with purification, helps to orient in Shakespearian and life twists and turns, helps to believe in the power of true love. Once again, the production of Romeo and Juliet demonstrated the hidden potential of the Auezov theatre to face difficult creative challenges. The work of Auezov actors proved the justifiability of referring to this play. Since its foundation and until now, the Georgian theatre has constantly referred to Shakespearian dramaturgy. Such directors as Chkheidze left their mark in the development of Shakespearian stage direction of the twentieth century. The ballet Othello produced by Chabukiani became a great event in theatre life. Robert Sturua's theatre productions of Shakespearian plays contributed to the most treasured works of the world theatre. The modern young generation of the Georgian directors still achieves new great success in opening up Shakespeare's creative heritage.

There are small pieces of everything in this performance. The characters are people from the sixteenth century, and, at the same time, they are our contemporaries. Not declaring his interpretation as the only true one, Akhmetelli theatre read the famous work in a new way, made the audience to reflect. Strive to get free of traditional frames, the search for the new means of scenic impact is evident in this performance. The performance represented the relationships between young people not within the banal frames of lyric melodramatics, but in a tense atmosphere of powerlessness, betrayal and of the now ubiquitous corruption. Through the love of modern Romeo and Juliet, Akhmetelli theatre managed to outline a complex range of spiritual and moral problems of modern times.

The new reading of Romeo and Juliet is very unusual in its character. Georgian Romeo and Juliet are not sublime romantic characters, but the neighborhood youngsters, they like to have a good time and laugh. They come to know each other at the disco and die in Verona of the Renaissance period. This emphasizes that the love story of Romeo and Juliet is eternal: it was in the past and it is still present. The director produced a very interesting, meaningful performance with plenty of splendid stenographic effects. Following the director's idea, the stage designer placed clock wheels of different sizes on the stage to

form the timeless image of the classic. These wheels convey the feeling of anxiety, emptiness and approaching death. The image of Juliet is characterized by decisiveness, courage, integrity of feelings.

Sincerity and firm passion of the actress's every intonation conquer the audience.

Romeo is clever in a modern sense, but he is deprived of flaming youth. At the same time, the actors perform the scenes of love, farewell and death in a delicate and soulful way, without any elevated declamations and not resorting to previously learned poses. The director brought the roles of Lorenzo and the nurse to the foreground. The lines of many other characters are also read by them. The performance is not about romantic love of Romeo and Juliet, but about their teachers, about their mistakes, the death of lovers may be their fault. The director represented the inauthenticity of our everyday life and its pointless rush in the manner of silent movies. The characters' fussy moves, demonstrative poses emphasize the spiritual emptiness of modern people. Akhmetelli theatre actors perform fervently, at full psychological and physical capacity. In Robert Sturua's opinion, the Georgians feel keen that they must die, and they do not delude themselves of it as others do. That is why they play with such despair. This is the main thing that distinguishes the Georgian actors from all the others.

Gogia's performance is free from the ties to any specific historical or social context. However, on the Georgian theatre stage, the saddest story in the world sounded in a strikingly sharp and modern way. Whereas in its following the Renaissance idea, the performance of the Kazakh theatre was saturated with the pathos of fight for freedom and love, the Georgian performance shows the relationships of Romeo and Juliet and their attitude to love through the lens of time. The Russian theatre started to introduce its audience to Shakespearian works in the eighteenth century. As early as in the twentieth century the theatre productions of the great playwright's plays became the hallmark of many directors. Popov (2012) is among many other Russian directors whose stage versions of Romeo and Juliet became part of the Russian Soviet theatre.

The new epoch, new historical formation influenced the producing techniques of modern directors as well. By the 1990s, Shakespearean production was characterized by eclecticism and variety, although market forces combined with reduced subsidies were beginning to threaten those qualities (Chambers, 2006). Thus, Romeo and Juliet were produced in Satirikon theatre in 2012 under the title Die of love. It was directed by the theatre art director Konstantin Raikin. The roles were performed by the young theatre actors and by the students of Raikin at the Art School-Studio MKHAT. The designer Razumov built an ultramodern Verona on the stage. At the forefront, downwards, there were metropolis outskirts, ravines, or, to be more precise, the tracks for skateboarders. While upwards, behind the horizon, the metropolis lights, amusement park and rollercoaster can be seen.

Not only through decoration, but through every mise-en-scene, K. Raikin proves that the events are taking place here and now. Romeo and Juliet meet each other not at the ball, but in the night club where modern dances escalate into a great fight (Kosari, 2018). Konstantin Raikin's performance shows an arrangement of the scenes that are amazing in their purity and emotional intensity (for example, the scenes of death of Mercutio and Thibault, the scene with Romeo, drunk

of his happiness and trying to reconcile everybody, or the final scene of the young couple's death) with moments of clumsy glamour with all these roses-stars-ropes-sirens (Alpatova, 2012: 20).

The strive to read the famous classic work in the context of the twenty-first century, modern innovations in art was felt in the director's and stage designer's version of the performance. These introduced modern theatre techniques provided the performance with a certain pace, dynamics, projection onto urgent problems of modernity. However, the performance was deprived of Shakespearian passions, ambivalence, choice and characters' reflections upon the true values. The external attributes came to the foreground leaving the penetrating Shakespearian spectacle between the play lines. Nevertheless, the main theme of the performance is modern.

This is not just the love of two adolescents, but the relationships between the young people and their parents. If they were aware of their children's love, then the tragedy that is still mourned upon by the whole world would never happen. Several theatre productions of Shakespearian works appeared in Kazakhstan (not mentioning the rest of Europe and other world) in 2014. These performances were produced on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the great playwright. Taken separately, they may not create new avenues.

However, when considered in combination, they provide an overview of the modern theatre and public opinion development.

Senkebaev's Iago seems to fade away by the end of the second act.

With the awareness of his victory, having fully realized the inevitability of bloody self-directed conditions, being full of hatred, his daggers Othello. However, the not fully reasoned reductions of Shakespearian text shadow the philosophic outcome of the characters' confrontation. The actor's goal was to conceal the roughness of the direction through a kind of one-man performance about Iago. Though this goal was not fully reached, it did not spoil the spectators' impression. Even a spatial environment and the whole stage atmosphere offer no help to the actor. Though it was evident that the director has carefully studied K.S. Stanislavsky's director plan and the works of other great forerunners'. However, the performance showed that the Kazakh theatre possessed a great creative potential for a deep stage reading of complex dramatic works, including Shakespearian ones.

3. RESULT

As a result, All the performances that were considered in this article are different in their genre, stylistics and expression of movement. Both the geographic location of Kazakhstan, Georgia, Russia and the history of theater development in each of these

countries should be taken into account. Whereas in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries the performances in the Russian and Georgian theatres were in high gear, the Kazakh audience was first introduced to the European theatre model only in 1920. These facts motivate the Kazakh theatre directors to represent the heritage of world dramaturgy in a mainly traditional manner. Kazakhstan modern theatres are obviously in a constant search of the new forms and methods of real representation. Nobody will be surprised by the sound design, by the digital lighting technology, computer graphics, video-screens system, transformable stage and costume design.

Each director tries to reach the philosophy, high poetry and internal lyricism in Shakespeare's work, but, at the same time, to find the parallels with modernity, to give answers to the young generation (Kidnie, 2008). The works of the Georgian and Russian directors seek for the new interpretations in the expression of movement and comprehend

Shakespeare's drama in a new way. The Kazakh theatre, on the contrary, reproduces the poetic world of the great English playwright through the habitual performing techniques of the psychological traditional theatre (Bartoshevich, 2013). The directors do perceive and interpret

Shakespeare's works in their own way. Elaboration and improvement of the works that were created by the forerunners is the main interest for those directors, who love and value the tradition. The search for a new art language and a new vision is in the focus of the directors, who like experiments, avant-garde and pop-cultural preferentiality to

Shakespeare's works. Anyway, the interest to Shakespeare on the part of theatres will never disappear.

4. CONCLUSION

The theatre productions based on Shakespearian works raised the Kazakh performance culture to a new level, extended the range of artistic tools. The Shakespearian performances helped the Kazakh art of acting to show its deep connection with national performing traditions in a complex performing structure of modern directing. Thus, it revealed its close relations with the most advanced theatre tendencies in solving the most important problems of acting art. The images created by the actors preserve their national character. The actor should not blindly imitate the form that is imposed from outside, he must immerse into the essence of the image performed, understand its gist, turn its experiences into his own.

It is not a big deal if the actor will fill the character with some distinctive features of his nation, and the whole performance will acquire a national tint to fit this team. The best performances captured a thoughtful study of Shakespeare's modern interpretations, strive to perform his dramas in a strict and uncompromising way, avoiding any form of idealistic idealization. Referring to Shakespeare, the director finds in his works something that provides the space for artistic fantasy when touching with an inherent inexhaustible power of his dramaturgy. Today the theatre is rapidly renewing in technical terms and continues

to surprise us. It becomes brighter than everyday life, it tries to solve the eternal problems that were raised by Shakespeare in a new way.

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