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THEATRE – THE HEART OF MAN AND THE CONSCIENCE OF SOCIETY: ITS TASKS AND PLACE IN THE XXI CENTURY

Otegenov Ayapbergen Allambergenovich ¹

¹ Department of Musical Pedagogy of the State Conservatory
of Uzbekistan. Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article provides an in-depth scholarly analysis of the role of theater in the spiritual and moral development of both individuals and society. In the 21st century – an era marked by ethical decline, cultural disorientation, and global crises – theater serves as a vital medium to restore humanity, inspire moral values, and foster social justice. The article discusses the philosophical, social, and educational functions of theater, examines relevant themes for modern plays, highlights problems within the theater system of Uzbekistan, and proposes state-level solutions and developmental strategies.

Keywords: *theater, society, spirituality, dramaturgy, morality, cultural policy, Uzbekistan theater, social criticism, contemporary stage*

Theater is a reflection of human emotions on stage, a reflection of the spiritual state and moral standards of society. It is an artistic phenomenon that has been living with humanity from ancient times to the present day. Theater is a unique art form that awakens human thinking, leads society towards spiritual freedom and promotes moral values. It is truly the conscience of the people, the guardian of the times, a place of sober reflection and free thought.

Theater is not only an art form, but also a complex social system that serves the moral health, cultural stability and intellectual development of society. Any national theater not only preserves aesthetic traditions associated with the past, but also forms the

worldview and spiritual immunity of future generations.

In the 21st century, when humanity is faced with unexpected global problems – spiritual decline, moral confusion, technological changes and social indifference, theater is becoming increasingly important, fulfilling the role of a spiritual bridge between man and society. Now theater should become not only a staged reality on the stage, but also an integral part of social life as a means of enlightenment, education, balance and the formation of social beauty. In Uzbekistan, too, the cooperation of state policy, the potential of creative people, cultural institutions and the public is of paramount importance in the process of forming a national theater school.

Theater not only embodies history on the stage, but also finds answers to modern problems, educates the future.

Theater is not only a social critique, but also a field of spiritual purification, enlightenment, and dialogue. One of the world's leading experts in theater studies, Hans-Tis Lehmann, defines theater as "an expression of human consciousness, a way of understanding society" (Lehmann, Hans-Thies. 2006).

Philosophical and social functions of theater

1. Moral purification (catharsis)

Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, describes the main purpose of theater as "the purification of man by arousing feelings of fear and pity" (Aristotel. 1978). Theater encourages a person to understand, feel, and reevaluate his own feelings.

2. Social criticism

Theatre plays an important role in raising public awareness by bringing to the stage issues such as injustice, inequality, corruption, migration, and gender violence in society. For example, the play "The Pain of Others" staged at the National Academic Drama Theatre of Uzbekistan addresses the issue of social inequality (Mamrasulov O., 2021).

Reviving Historical Memory

Reviving national history on stage through plays such as "Jaloliddin Manguberdi", "Amir Temur", and "Ibn Sino" increases a person's sense of patriotism. Such plays serve to form national pride and historical awareness.

Theatres of Uzbekistan: Problems and Solutions

Identified problems:

1. Lack of financial support – Some theaters do not meet modern requirements in terms of technical equipment, stage costumes and scenery.
2. Low interest in theater among the younger generation – The cinema and Internet environment are leaving theater in the shade.
3. Fewer themes in dramaturgy – There is a lack of new scripts and modern playwrights.
4. Weak promotion – There is not enough information about performances among the public.

Current solutions:

– In 2021, a project for digitizing and archiving theaters was implemented at the initiative of the Culture and Arts Development Fund (Website ministry of culture: <https://culture.uz/press-center/news/3221>).

– A mechanism for allocating separate grants and subsidies for theaters is being developed;

– Theater promotion is being strengthened in universities and schools within the framework of the "Youth Theater" project.

Current topics and directions of modern dramaturgy

1. Ecology and global tragedies

Performances on the Aral Sea problem, global warming, water shortage (for example, "Hope from the Aral Sea" – Nukus Theater).

2. Cyber-technology and loneliness

Internet addiction, false life, a person living in a virtual environment – as a theme of modern psychological dramas.

3. Women's and children's rights

Gender equality, domestic violence, and child abuse are the most painful points of civil society.

4. Citizenship and role in society

Philosophical questions like "Who am I?" and "What is my role in society?" are one of the main dramatic constructions in the theater.

Compatibility of theater and state policy

Theater should become a major part of the state's spiritual policy. Because it shapes the public consciousness. It is advisable to implement the following measures:

1. Theater policy strategy – a separate "Scientific-Theoretical Council on Theaters" should be established under the Ministry of Culture.
2. Support of regional theaters – modern theater infrastructure must be created in each region.
3. Creation of creative laboratories – creative centers for young directors, playwrights and composers.
4. Introduction of theater knowledge into the educational system – establishment of the science of "theatre culture" in schools and universities.

In conclusion

Theater is the heart of society, a mirror of humanity, the conscience of society and a liv-

ing wisher of spirituality. It awakens the most delicate feelings in the human heart, brings meaning, spirit and questions into its world. Against the background of the main problems facing humanity in the 21st century – a spiritual crisis, moral confusion, weakening of human values and apathy in society, theater is taking on new tasks.

It should no longer be just an artistic performance on stage, but a mechanism that maintains moral balance in society. To do this, it is necessary to rediscover and reassess the social, spiritual and philosophical functions of theater. Theater should not only prepare a qualified audience, but also educate responsible individuals with an active civic position.

The problems raised in the article – financial support, lack of topics in dramaturgy, declining interest among young people, and inability to adapt to digital media – are real threats. They require solutions. While the reforms, grant systems, and digitization initiatives currently being implemented by the Ministry of Culture are encouraging, they are not enough.

In this regard, the following proposals can be put forward:

1. Integrating theater into the general education system – introducing the subjects of “theater culture” and “fundamentals of dramaturgy” in schools.
2. Organizing creative laboratories for young playwrights, directors, and actors – this will encourage the creation of performances with modern themes.
3. Bringing theaters into the digital environment – expanding the audience by presenting performances online, live broadcasts, and on AR/VR platforms.
4. Strengthening international cooperation and mobile touring projects between national theaters.
5. Strengthening the dialogue between theater and the public – holding “open discussions,” exchange of views, and theater forums after each performance.

In conclusion, if we value theater as a spiritual, not a material, wealth; if theater becomes the center of society, then the future generation will become spiritually mature, socially responsible, and aesthetically high-minded people. Theater is the heart of the nation.

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Contact: navouzbek@mail.ru