



Article

The Issue of Creative Collaboration in Uzbek Musical Dramas

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Abstract: This study examines the problem of creative cooperation in Uzbek musical dramas, focusing on the tie between playwright, composer, and director in achieving artistic wholeness. The paper raises an issue that requires further exploration, considering the imbalance of relations between theme and genre in the modern practice of national musical theatre as one of the main drivers of performance fragmentation. Employing analytical and comparative methods, the research investigates the works of Xoliq Khursandov in collaboration with Farhod Olimov and Bahodir Nazarov at the Muqimi Theatre: O'lding, Aziz Bo'lding, Toptalgan Tuygu, and Mehr Nuri. The results show that the majority of works lack cooperation at the creation stage as they do not observe the wholeness of dramatic and music structures. It is found that when the music, dramatic text, and inscenation are developed separately, the performance loses the integrity that is the main determining factor of its artistic quality. Due to extreme autonomy of the elements and, thereby, weak emotional and theme-related connection, musical dramas created in this manner do not correspond to the general purpose of an artistic work. The research implies that the groundbreaking success of a musical performance is possible only with continuous and concerted effort of all creators involved. Overall, the realization of cooperative models is key to the recreating the integrity of Uzbek national musical theatre and increasing its potential in addressing contemporary social and cultural issues.

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1. Introduction

When we examine the works staged by the Muqimi theatre troupe during the years of independence, we witness that the laws of the national musical drama genre have gradually fallen out of practice. In particular, the inconsistency of the creative collaboration between the playwright, composer, and director, as well as the lack of harmony between the theme and genre in some performances, serve as clear evidence of this observation [1]. It is evident that the criteria of artistic truth are not being met in the staged works. In some performances, the value of the composer's creativity and the significance of music are hardly perceptible.

In the art of musical theatre, the composer's work plays a crucial role as the thread that unites the creativity of the playwright and director, serving as a link between them and also determining the tempo and rhythm of the musical drama. If we study the emergence of a musical drama performance step by step, we must first discuss the creative collaboration between the playwright and the composer. Subsequently, with the involvement of the director's creativity, a tripartite collaboration begins. Unlike drama theatres, the director in musical drama cannot assume absolute leadership [2]. Contemporary musical theatre directors following the approach of drama theatre directors disrupt the laws of musical drama.

In some productions staged at the Muqimi Theatre, which should hold leadership in the development of our national musical theatre art, the role of the composer's creativity is hardly noticeable. Examples include works such as Garovdagi Muhabbat, Matonat, Asl Hazina, and Afrika Go'zali. Similar issues are apparent in many other productions not listed here. To strengthen the significance of theatre art in society, all theatre creators must unite with a common goal to elevate the art of contemporary theatre. Specifically, the team comprising the playwright, composer, director, and actors – who form the essential components of our national musical theatre – should collaborate in unity and shared creative vision to achieve meaningful artistic results [3].

2. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this research is to find solutions to the issue of creative collaboration as a qualitative and collaborative analytical approach for creating a more integrated theatrical staging in Uzbek musical dramas. This approach focuses on the reciprocal relation of creative efforts and competing influences among the playwright, composer, and director. The research relies on the textual, comparative, and performance analyses of the selected works of the Muqimi Uzbek State Musical Theatre. Such works as O'lding, Aziz Bo'lding, Toptalgan Tuygu, and Mehr Nuri have been chosen due to their illustrative representation of both collaborative and non-collaborative compositional creations. The qualifying data have been achieved through reading the scripts, observing the recordings of the evaporated performances, and listening to the selected musical compositions. The aim was to find the inconsistencies between the thematic-content topic of the theatrical piece and its closely related genre-specific manner of expression through text, music, and staging [4]. The data are also collected through a close reading of related literature by means of scholarly articles, theatrical reviews, and critical essays on musical dramaturgy and principles of staging. The research takes a comparative approach to assess the degree of the dramatic, musical, and directing unity with respect to the dominance of either the playwright's, composer's, or director's conceptions and interpretations and to show how the collaboration falls apart. The results were interpreted by means of the critical discourse analysis to find the roots of creative imbalance and conflicts of interest. Such an approach facilitates the application to the situation of evaluative premises and recommendations with respect to the collaborative nature of modern Uzbek musical theatre.

3. Results and Discussion

The joint and harmonious work of the playwright, composer, and director is considered the fundamental factor in creating a perfected stage work. They must collectively choose an appropriate genre that suits the theme under discussion and work accordingly [5]. If the playwright chooses the drama genre for the piece, but the composer does not create music that enhances the dramatic tension of each scene, aria, and duet, a lack of proportion between the playwright's and composer's creativity becomes apparent. Conversely, if the piece is written as a comedy, but the music is overly dramatic, the proportionality between genre and theme is also violated. For a musical performance to achieve the status of an integral and complete work of art, the ideas of the playwright and composer must flow in harmony [6]. The playwright and composer creating their works independently at different times and places, no matter how skilled they are, cannot achieve the necessary integration and harmony between dramaturgy and music.

Bahodir Nazarov, a talented pedagogue and director who served for many years as the chief director of the Muqimi Uzbek State Musical Theatre, staged many performances that attracted audience attention. Among these, performances based on contemporary themes created in creative collaboration with playwright Xoliq Khursandov – such as O'lding Aziz Bo'lding, Toptalgan Tuygu, and Mehr Nuri – deserve particular analysis. Some critiques suggest a slight artificiality from a dramaturgical perspective in these works [7]. As mentioned earlier, the concepts of naturalness or artificiality in acting are

more appropriately applied to actors' emotional portrayals on stage rather than to the events in the play itself.

While analyzing any performance, reflecting on how realistic, unrealistic, natural, or artificial the event system is does not always lead to accurate conclusions. Skilled playwrights and directors can skillfully transform event systems that seem illogical in real life into convincing stage realities by clearly structuring the sequence of events according to thematic and genre requirements [8]. Therefore, it is essential not to forget that the main criterion for analysis is that the event system in the play develops consistently, the characters are united by a single goal and idea, or conversely, that intense conflicts unfold sharply in each scene without allowing the audience's attention to stray, with both main and minor characters' actions aligned to convey the core idea fully.

In the second chapter of this research, we will specifically address the analysis of Xoliq Khursandov's plays mentioned above. Meanwhile, here we will discuss the importance of creative collaboration among the playwright, composer, and director in these works, focusing on the balance between theme and genre [9]. The reason for focusing on these particular works is that they involve the creativity of one playwright, one composer, and one director, which allows us to evaluate the level of creative exploration in our contemporary national musical theatre through the study of this creative trio's collaboration.

Reviewing the path that the national musical drama theatre has traveled until today, we can achieve our goals by referring to the creative collaboration of the playwrights, composers, and directors who worked in each era. Studying the collaboration of master creators of national musical theatre offers a basis for comparison with the creative cooperation of today's artists.

Currently, the creative collaboration among creators in our national musical theatre is far from exemplary [10]. Therefore, this study focuses on the issue of the proportionality of theme and genre in musical theatre as a crucial factor in the development of theatrical art. Using the works of Xoliq Khursandov, Farhod Olimov, and Bahodir Nazarov as examples, we examine the significance of this issue in the creativity of the playwright, composer, and director.

The performances O'lding, Aziz Bo'lding, Toptalgan Tuygu, and Mehr Nuri – created by this creative trio – are still part of the theatre's regular repertoire. In our view, Xoliq Khursandov's plays do not fully meet the requirements of musical theatre dramaturgy, as they were not specifically written for musical theatre. These works were not created collaboratively with shared artistic vision; rather, a sense of creative fragmentation prevails. Some components of the performances seem to have been produced on commission by the director [11]. For example, the plays lack texts for arias, duets, trios, quartets, and choruses, prompting the director to commission a separate poet to write suitable lyrics, which are then given to the composer. Thus, the text of the play, the lyrics, and the music emerge independently, each reflecting individual approaches. Finally, the director arranges the prepared components according to their own vision.

A play written for musical theatre should be such that no matter how much a director tries, it cannot be adapted and staged for drama theatre. Only then can it rightfully claim the status of a musical drama or musical comedy. To achieve this, the weight of the play must be measured by its musicality [12]. A play without music, arias, duets, trios, quartets, and choruses cannot maintain its artistic integrity. Only a work created in harmony with the composer's ideas can achieve this potential.

It is evident that the plays by Xoliq Khursandov and Farhod Olimov were not created in creative collaboration [13]. These works had been staged in other theatres before being produced at the Muqimi Theatre with Farhod Olimov's music. In the Muqimi Theatre productions, the composer's music was written for scenes designated by the director, which is noticeable.

In our opinion, the lack of cohesive fusion of the components of these performances – prepared separately and later mixed by the director – diminishes the importance of creative collaboration [14]. This situation is the main reason why the proportionality of theme and genre is not found in many current musical performances. If the musical components of a performance are created together through the collaboration and consultation of creators, the music will naturally blend with the play and become an inseparable part, resulting in a perfect musical production. The limited understanding of music by contemporary playwrights has significantly hindered the development of our musical dramaturgy [15].

A composer aiming to contribute to the flourishing of musical theatre art should engage in creative dialogue with the playwright, clarifying the underlying ideas and objectives behind the events in the play, and create music aligned with the playwright's intended goals to achieve the desired outcome [16].

4. Conclusion

The results support the primary argument that the effectiveness of the Uzbek musical drama is impossible without a profound degree of interaction between the playwright, composer, and director, which is the only way for the latter to maintain the delicate balance between the theme and the genre. The fatal flaw, from the researched perspective, of any modern productions is the lack of overall unity between the different components of a show, such as a text, music, and their direction. The performed objective analysis of the provided modern performances, such as O'lding!, Aziz Bo'lding!, Toptalgan Tuygu, and Mehr Nuri, allows for the conclusion that the lack of unity between the play text and music and their further direction leads to the degradation of the general unity of the musical dramaturgy on a whole, which results in its failing to maintain a significant emotional and cultural impact of the subsequent performances in most cases. The restoration of genuine team interaction between theatre creators, therefore, is crucial for reviving the national musical theatre and making it more suitable for corresponding to modern requirements. Additional research, subsequently, will concern the investigation of new interaction models and modern technologies in contexts of current interdisciplinary demand and international practices to work out their adequate and successful adaptation to the development of the contemporary cultural demands of the Uzbek musical theatre on a sustainable basis.

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