



Article

The Artistic Interpretation of the Hero of Our Time on Stage

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Abstract: This paper examines the modern-day production of the "hero of our time" on the stages of modern-day Uzbek theatre, highlighting the deeper moral, social, and ideological contexts which reflect the contemporary artistic interpretation of this concept. While there has been considerable improvement since the country gained independence, the paper finds a lack of well-rounded, relatable and relevant characters based on the values and issues of today. The qualitative descriptive-analytic method, using data from theatre archives, performances (2020–2025) and critical reviews were used. Through interviews with directors, actors, and scholars the research engaged with issues of dramaturgical structure, directorial interpretation, and acting technique. Results show that although Uzbex theatres and productions engage decisively with social issues involving patriotism, independence and moral awareness, dramaturgical depth, as well as contemporary characters, remain largely absent. Mix in the fact that there is a lack of collaboration between playwrights, directors and actors that translates to a lack of preparation by the time new actors reach the professional level and you have a recipe for disaster. These findings call for an integrated approach to artistic education, the infusion of new dramaturgical voices, and the establishment of institutions that will help bridge the gap between social reality and stage representation. The study ultimately argues that making a more well-rounded vision of the contemporary hero will take cultivation of the next gen, and a deeper relationship between creative interests. These insights have valuable implications for reaching a higher level of cultural, artistic and educational status of the theatre art of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Actor, Tradition, Tone, Director, Creator, Performance, School, Hero of Our Time

1. Introduction

One of the great representatives of Uzbek theatre studies, our late mentor, Doctor of Art Studies and Professor Toshpulat Tursunov, in his 1978 article "*Time, Contemporary, Image, and Stage*", presented the following idea to the public:

"...Along with time, its creator — our contemporary — has also changed. He is no longer the same person as he was ten or even five years ago. His way of life and work is changing every single day..."

As can be seen from the above quotation, creating a complete image of the modern hero has always been one of the most pressing issues faced by literature, theatre, cinema — indeed, by all forms of art [1]. Life is in constant change; heroism is continually renewed, and every era gives birth to its own hero.

Indeed, humanity is constantly developing and perfecting itself. In particular, the long-standing dream and unfulfilled aspiration of our great ancestors — Independence — which has finally been achieved by our contemporaries, is calling our people toward great accomplishments. The modern individual is growing and maturing so rapidly that the criteria for the "hero of our time" are also becoming increasingly profound and demanding [2].

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At this point, several important questions arise: *“Must the hero of our time be flawless? Can an ordinary person be a hero? Should the main protagonist necessarily be an ideal figure?”*

In response to such questions, U. Normatov once wrote:

“A positive hero does not conform to any template or formula. There are countless ways and methods to create a hero, and innumerable undiscovered possibilities still remain. A social hero may take on extremely diverse forms — what truly matters is that, above all, they embody the type of their era and vividly, uniquely reflect the essence of the era’s leading and progressive forces.”

Let us also consider the views of Doctor of Art Studies Sarvinoz Qodirova, who notes:

“Modernity must become the very content of the work. By a work of modern subject matter, we mean not only a depiction of our present life, but also a truthful revelation of its problems and contradictions — so that it contributes to the moral and spiritual upbringing of the younger generation.”

2. Methodology

This qualitative descriptive Analytic research which in addition to its artistic exposure uses historical and interpretive methods about how the “hero of our time” is artistically represented on stage in Uzbekistan. Reduplicated data were collected from the following source: theatrical performances staged in Uzbekistan for the 2020-2025, official theatre archives, and published critical reviews and scholarly work from researchers in the field like Tursunov, Normatov, and Qodirova [3]. The performances were selected by a thematic lens, considering plays that illustrate modern social problems, national character and transformation of conscience. We examined each performance regarding its dramaturgy, directorial exegesis, acting methodologies, and how much dramaturgy, directorial strategies and acting techniques serve in creating believable, contemporary examples of the heroic. A content analysis was carried out to find recurring patterns, stylistic habits, and ideological themes in the performances [4]. Interviews as well as viewpoints from directors, actors, and theatre scholars were also taken into account to gain greater insight into the creative process behind character formation. The comparative evaluation examined both effective and ineffective dramatizations of modern heroes, illustrating the artistic and educational implications. Such an interdisciplinary methodological framework allows you to deepen the understanding of the work of contemporary Uzbek theatre, which establishes a bridge between the modern expressions corresponding to current ideals and values and the local traditions of dramatic art [5]. This aids the research in delivering data driven conclusions and actionable guidance to support the artistic and educational standards of present day stage works.

3. Results and Discussion

Currently, there are 37 theaters operating in our republic. If we take the 2020–2025 seasons as an example, nearly 150 stage productions of various genres, styles, and forms have been presented to audiences in our theaters. The artistic quality and creative standards of these performances vary in level.

An overview of our theaters’ repertoires shows that there is a sufficient number of productions addressing socially significant and pressing issues such as child upbringing, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS, terrorism and religious extremism, as well as human trafficking.

Nowadays, playwrights have access to an abundance of rich and diverse material and themes for creating dramatic works. If such plays are staged at a high artistic level, and if the actors’ performances are filled with genuine creative discoveries, the production will naturally resonate more deeply with the audience and become truly meaningful to

them [6]. There is no doubt that creating complete and convincing images of their contemporaries remains one of the highest aspirations of every actor.

Plays based on contemporary themes always attract audiences. This is because every person can, to some extent, see themselves in performances that reflect the pressing issues of their time — the lives, activities, and aspirations of their contemporaries. Such works make it easier for audiences to understand the motivations and struggles of modern individuals [7]. Therefore, it is truly gratifying that theater halls are filled to capacity for productions that vividly portray both the achievements and shortcomings, as well as the contradictions, of our present day.

An analysis of our theaters shows that their repertoires are filled with works on diverse themes that provide moral and spiritual nourishment to the people of our time. Naturally, questions arise about which themes are the most important. However, this does not diminish the value of any genre, style, or subject matter; on the contrary, each has its own audience and admirers. During the years of independence, we have entered a completely new system. Understanding our identity, fully grasping the meaning of independence, and charting our own path was not an easy task. Throughout the centuries, theater has always been a leading force and a powerful instrument in instilling the highest human values in the minds of people. From the very first years of independence, the state has regarded this task as a crucial part of its policy [8]. Forming a national ideology and instilling in people a sense of freedom and liberty requires that every citizen first of all possess a patriotic spirit. At the same time, it is an undeniable truth that the prosperity of the nation depends on the presence of truly cultivated individuals — physically healthy, morally upright, and intellectually accomplished, with a refined inner world and extensive knowledge and experience.

The Uzbek National Academic Drama Theatre has held a prominent place for several decades as a beloved and leading institution of the arts, as well as a university of moral and spiritual enlightenment [9]. From its earliest days, patriotism, selflessness, and the ideal of enlightening people have been among its core themes. Even in today's repertoire, the theatre continues to present vivid images of contemporary heroes — individuals whose hearts burn with love for their homeland, who prioritize the welfare of others above their own, and whose minds and souls are filled with light and knowledge [10]. The artistic quality and completeness of these portrayals vary, of course.

In such explorations, the performances of Uzbek People's Artist Tesha Mominov as Jora, and actress Shodiya Tokhtayeva as Shabnam, can be considered significant achievements in the creation of fully realized contemporary characters. Similarly, Hoshim Arslonov's portrayals of Hokim and Yusuf in the Uzbek State Drama Theatre productions "*The Path of Goodness*" and "*Balance*", Habibullo Ortiqov and Gulnoza Alimova as Samandar and Ona in the musical drama "*Love in Pawn*" at the Muqimi Uzbek State Musical Theatre, and Nuriddin Ismoilov and Ravshanoy Rajabboyeva as Sodiq and Shohista in the Namangan Regional Musical Drama Theatre production "*Spring Breeze*", have all quickly attracted public attention due to their high artistic standards, particularly in acting [11]. It is natural that, alongside these achievements, minor shortcomings may occur. However, despite some minor flaws, the overall results demonstrate that ongoing efforts are fruitful. These successes not only provide audiences with spiritual nourishment but also inspire confidence that even more fully realized images of contemporary heroes can be created in the future.

In his work "*High Morality — Invincible Power*", the First President of Uzbekistan, Islam Abduganievich Karimov, noted:

"At present, we must acknowledge that in our theatrical art, there are unfortunately few high-quality works that comprehensively and profoundly depict the realities of our contemporary life and the image of modern heroes, while captivating the audience from both dramaturgical and directorial perspectives [12]. On the contrary, it is more common

to see theaters filling their box offices with works that are far removed from reality and provide little spiritual nourishment to the audience."

"Of course, in the present time, it is necessary to take into account the demands of a market economy [13]. However, creating works imbued with high artistic value, honesty, and a spirit of serving noble goals—like in all forms of art—naturally remains a fundamental criterion for this field as well. To achieve this goal, it is especially important to nurture and develop young and talented playwrights, directors, and theater actors," he says.

Yes, it should be emphasized that today our theaters have all the necessary conditions to create contemporary characters. However, the question that has been on everyone's mind is why, in recent years, we see fewer fully developed, realistic portrayals of brave, courageous, and selfless yet ordinary people on stage, as our specialists have pointed out, than we would like.

At this point, it should be noted that all theater troupes continue their efforts to create contemporary characters [14]. Various experiments have also been conducted in this regard. However, why are these efforts not yielding sufficient results? In our view, the contemporary characters that we desire and that our theaters are searching for are still rarely found in our professional dramaturgy. It is a simple truth that theater cannot survive without professional dramaturgy.

It should be said that, if we observe our repertoires in recent years, the names of accomplished writers and experienced authors appear less frequently. In this context, it is appropriate to cite the words of N. Abdurahmonov, Honored Artist of Uzbekistan and Artistic Director of the Uzbekistan Youth Theater: "Of course, a well-developed image of our contemporaries is necessary for our stage. However, we must not forget that anyone approaching this task risks producing mediocre works. Strong, high-quality works are created through the collaboration of professional artists. Therefore, first and foremost, serious attention must be paid to training highly skilled personnel—actors and playwrights." Indeed, the director's remarks are well-founded. The development of fully realized characters of our contemporaries depends primarily on the training of skilled actors. It is worth emphasizing that this is one of the most important requirements. For this reason, the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts, which prepares personnel for our theaters, must pay even greater attention from today onward to nurturing knowledgeable, broad-minded, highly capable, and talented specialists who regard working on stage as their honorable duty.

Furthermore, theaters also play an important role in training skilled actors. It is time to consider providing opportunities for young specialists who have completed their acting studies, including assigning them to mentor actors [15]. This is because the knowledge a young specialist acquires over four years in the institute's training workshops alone is insufficient for them to reach the level of a fully skilled artist.

4. Conclusion

Ultimately, the analysis concludes that the meaning of the "hero of our time" resonating in modern Uzbek theatre represents the changing moral, cultural and ideological implications of the nation. Over the period 2020 to 2025, a study of theatre with socially relevant themes such as patriotism, independence and moral awareness shows that much has been accomplished, but there is still a shortage of real-life and three-dimensional depictions of today's heroes. There are several contributing factors to this limitation, namely the scarcity of powerful contemporary dramatic writing alongside young actors being prepared for these demanding roles with sufficient depth and believability. The results suggest that raising the bar for the arts is going to require more communication between playwrights, directors, and actors, as well as encouragement from institutions to develop writers within educational and pro settings. In addition, the

need for actor training programs and new dramaturgical voices to effectively bridge the divide between the reality of social life and its stage representation is vital. Some areas for immediate further study might include: how actor development is understood and taught in contemporary Uzbekistan, the extent to which global theatrical trends may be influencing national dramaturgy, and what underlying motivations prompt observers to perceive particular figures on stage as heroes or not.

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