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THE PLAY "FARHOD'S COURAGE": AN ARTISTIC COMBINATION OF ACTING SKILLS AND PUPPETRY

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Annotation: This article analyzes the artistic harmony between acting skills and the art of puppetry through the example of the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater's performance "Farhod's Courage." The author examines the dramaturgy of the performance, the director's conceptual solutions, the significance of stage movement as a means of expression, and the actors' technical and aesthetic mastery from a scholarly and theoretical perspective. The study explores how the philosophical and spiritual layers of the play written by Xayitmat Rasul based on Alisher Navoi's epic "Farhod and Shirin" are interpreted through the expressive means of puppet theater. In the course of the research, the performance's stage culture, musical dramaturgy, the harmony of lighting and movement, as well as contemporary aspects of theatrical aesthetics and acting technique are revealed through the portrayal of Farhod performed by actor Suxrob Isomiddinov. The article highlights the creative approach of the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater ensemble in presenting national literary heritage on stage through the performance "Farhod's Courage," demonstrating its contribution to the development of Uzbek puppet theater

Keywords: Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater, "Farhod's Courage," acting mastery, the art of puppetry, stage movement (plasticity), dramatic expression, directorial concept, Alisher Navoi, Xayitmat Rasul, theater aesthetics, musical dramaturgy.

In recent years, puppet theaters in our country have entered a new stage of development. Whereas previously the puppet stage was largely limited to cheerful, educational performances intended mainly for children, today it is expanding its expressive range by creating productions with artistic, philosophical and social depth. In contemporary stage practice, puppet theater increasingly relies on artistic means such as symbolism, plastic movement and musical composition, thereby addressing adult audiences as well. In this context, among the works written for the puppet theater stage in recent years, Xayitmat Rasul's play "Farhod's Courage" has gained particular significance. This work is based on the epic "Farhod and Shirin" from Alisher Navoi's Khamsa and expresses ideas of inner strength, loyalty, diligence and self-sacrifice in the human spirit through the aesthetic tools of puppet theater. With its philosophical orientation, system of symbolic images and dramatic solutions, the play is considered one of the works that has enriched the genre potential of Uzbek puppet theater.

The play was first staged in 2022 at the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater by Honored Artist of Uzbekistan Shomurot Yusupov. Reinterpreting the spirit of the classical epic through the language of modern puppet theater, he succeeded in further expending the artistic possibilities of the genre. By harmonizing stage movement, lighting, musical tone and the plasticity of the puppets, the director evokes in the audience not only aesthetic pleasure but also a state of philosophical reflection. The stage designer and puppet master Zavqiddin Yodgorov, along with composer Mixail Tyora, were among the creative contributors who, alongside the director, played a key role in achieving the artistic integrity of the performance. As a result of their creative collaboration, "Farhod's Courage" became a complete puppet theater work that

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embodies not only visual beauty but also a harmony of meaning and content. In recent years, the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater ensemble has been striving to find a balance in its repertoire between national values, literary sources, and contemporary stage language. The performance "Farhod's Courage" marked a new stage in the theater's history as a successful experiment in this direction.

In 2025, this performance was presented at the "Golden Autumn" Republican Puppet Theater Festival, held for the first time in the country, where it received recognition from both audiences and specialists. At the festival, the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater distinguished itself through its artistic maturity, stage culture and acting mastery. In particular, the depth of the dramatic foundation of "Farhod's Courage," the skill displayed in the plasticity of the puppets, the stage color design, and the harmony of music were highly appreciated by audiences. The participation of the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater in the "Golden Autumn" Republican Puppet Theater Festival with "Farhod's Courage" demonstrated the ensemble's professional growth, renewed directorial thinking and advancements in stage culture. Their success was evident primarily in their effective interpretation of classical literary heritage in puppet theater form, as well as in the perfect harmony between the actors' voice work, movement and puppetry techniques. The performance was acknowledged by audiences not only for its artistic qualities but also for its strong spiritual and aesthetic impact. Overall, "Farhod's Courage" is a work belonging to a new period of exploration in Uzbek puppet theater, successfully uniting national classical heritage with modern theatrical means. The success achieved by the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater ensemble at the festival with this performance stands as vivid proof of their stage culture, artistic vision, and creative contribution to the development of national theater.

In the performance, the reality of the classical work is reinterpreted through the lens of contemporary puppet theater thinking. Director Shomurot Yusupov constructs the sequence of events not merely as a narrative, but as the evolution of the human spirit as a series of internal and external trials leading toward a dream. For this reason, in the dramatic structure of the performance, each scene functions not only as an event, but as an artistic stage of spiritual growth. In every scene, the director transforms puppet plasticity into an emotional language. The success of the staging is decisively determined by the harmony between acting mastery and the art of puppet manipulation. A puppet theater actor is required not only to think artistically, but also to possess a perfect sense of the unity of plastic movement, voice, rhythm and action. The hand movements, shoulder inclinations, and head turns of the Farhod puppet resemble the physical manifestation of love awakening in the human heart. By contrast, Shirin expresses spiritual beauty through light movements and silent, delicate gestures. In this scene, despite the few words, through movement and vocal intonation the harmony of two souls is deeply felt.

This encounter between Farhod and Shirin leads the audience from calmness to divine inspiration—as if the process of the human heart awakening toward goodness is unfolding before their eyes. The Farhod puppet is performed by the leading actor of the Bukhara Regional Puppet Theater, Suxrob Isomiddinov, who stands out for his high level of stage culture and subtle sensitivity in puppet control. In his interpretation, the image of Farhod rises not only as a symbol of courage, diligence, and devotion, but also as an artistic embodiment of the perseverance of the human spirit. By aligning the puppet's movements with inner emotional experiences, the actor creates the impression that it is not a puppet, but a living character in motion. His precision in working with vocal composition is also noteworthy. He skillfully controls timbre, rhythm and intonation in accordance with each stage situation. Especially in scenes depicting Farhod's inner torment and the struggle between love and loyalty, the actor's

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vocal expression appears in complete unity with the puppet's movement. This fully realizes the fundamental artistic principle of puppet theater as the expression of "living emotion through symbolic movement."

For example, in the stone-cutting scene, Farhod's actions continue in a steady rhythm, under consistent, measured blows. This scene transforms into a kind of poetic music of human labor. Each strike signifies an inner struggle against the obstacles created by Ahriman. The lighting gradually illuminates the darkness (embodiment) of the victory of the human spirit.

The performance of the puppet representing the character Shopur also demonstrates distinctive and synthetic expressive means. Actor Pirnazar Imomnazarov brings dramaturgical lightness to the stage through the dynamism and musicality of Shopur's movements, as well as a vocal interpretation that combines humor and wisdom. Through this character, Farhod's inner experiences, along with the concepts of friendship and devotion, are revealed more deeply.

From the perspective of puppet manipulation technique, "Farhod's Courage" represents a new level of harmony between plasticity and artistic expression in Uzbek puppet theater. Despite the structural complexity of the puppets created by the puppet master and designer, the actors succeed in controlling them with ease, rhythm, and meaningful movement. The coordination of the puppets' head, hand, body and facial movements imbues each stage situation with deep psychological content. In the harmony of stage movement, lighting, and music, every detail performed by the actors such as a turn, pause, glance, or gesture carries meaning. Especially when movement is synchronized with music, the puppet's dramatic power is intensified, requiring from the actor a heightened sensitivity to musical rhythm and precise coordination. Overall, in "Farhod's Courage," acting mastery and puppet manipulation technique merge to create a unified artistic whole. This process expands the aesthetic scope of Uzbek puppet theater, presenting it not only as entertainment for children, but as a theatrical form rich in philosophical, social, and artistic meaning.