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LIGHTING AND SCENOGRAPHIC EXPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY PUPPET THEATRE: A CASE STUDY OF THE PRODUCTION "THE SCARLET FLOWER, OR THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

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Annotation: This article analyzes the role of scenographic as well as lighting, projection and stage technologies in the artistic-dramaturgical process of contemporary Uzbek puppet theatre. Using as an example the performance staged by Shomurot Yusupov based on S. Aksakov's fairy-tale play called "The Scarlet Flower or The Beauty and the Beast", the article examines from a scholarly and theoretical perspective the process by which scenography— clearly stage graphics which are harmonized with dramaturgy, directing and musical design. The interaction of 3D projection, DLP technology, and light dramaturgy is going to be analyzed and demonstrated their aesthetic impact on the audience's emotional perception. The article also substantiates the significance of "The Scarlet Flower, or The Beauty and the Beast" in the formation of a scenographic school within Uzbek puppet theatre, as well as the artistic and theoretical importance of a technological-theatre approach.

Key words: Scenography, puppet theatre, Brightness, stage technology, projection, stage graphic system, 3D projection, aesthetic expression.

In recent years, Uzbek performing arts have continued to preserve the traditions of the national theatre school while becoming enriched through modern technologies, new stage tools, and innovative forms of artistic expression. Specifically, the art of puppet theatre has become a unique field of synthesis in this process, where traditional imagery and technical innovation are developing as a complementary artistic system. In contemporary theatre practice, this development is manifested through scenography—meaning the integration of stage graphics with dramaturgy and directing. In today's theatre, scenography expresses a new philosophy of creating stage space: it elevates set design from being merely a background to becoming an active participant in artistic thought. When lighting, color, form, projection, and sound merge into a unified image, the stage acquires a new semantic character. In this sense, "The Scarlet Flower or The Beauty and the Beast" that staged on the basis of S. Aksakov's well-known fairy-tale play is one of the most noteworthy productions demonstrating the practical embodiment of the scenographic approach in Uzbek puppet theatre.

The director who staged this production is Honored Artist of Uzbekistan Shomurot Yusupov, the stage designer is Mu'tabar Ro'zimetova, and the composer is Mikhail Tyora. Their creative collaboration has vividly revealed the scenographic potential of puppet theatre. The multilayered stage space, lighting design, and visual projection techniques created by designer Ro'zimetova guide the viewer across the boundary between the real and the magical worlds. Every detail (the tonality of the lighting, the dynamic structure of the décor, and the shifts in color) directly serves the dramaturgical mood.

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The performance was first presented from October 31 to November 4 of this year within the “Golden Autumn” forum for talented young creators which is held in Tashkent, as part of the national puppet theatre competition. It attracted the attention of both audiences and theatre scholars with its contemporary scenographic solution, masterful use of multimedia tools, and overall aesthetic harmony. Particularly noteworthy is the dramaturgical language of lighting established in “The Scarlet Flower, or The Beauty and the Beast”: light here is no longer merely an illuminating device but has become an image that shapes emotional and psychological dynamics. In this way, “The Scarlet Flower or The Beauty and the Beast” has become a practical embodiment of scenographic principles in Uzbek puppet theatre. It interprets theatrical space not only as a visual medium but as an integral element of dramaturgical thought. For this reason, the work represents a new stage in the development of Uzbek performing arts, not only artistically but also theoretically.

S. Aksakov’s play “The Scarlet Flower, or The Beauty and the Beast” has its roots in ancient motifs of folk oral tradition. The work is a Russian interpretation of the “Beauty and the Beast” storyline. However, Aksakov adapts it to his own national spiritual environment, enriching it with moral-philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic layers. Through this tale, the author promotes the idea of triumphing over evil through spiritual growth, love, and devotion. The core essence of the work is the notion that inner beauty surpasses outward appearance. The Beast is portrayed as a symbol of human malice, fear, and darkness, whereas the character Nastya embodies purity of spirit and the divine power of loyalty and love. Thus, Aksakov expresses the internal mechanism of moral transformation (the process of spiritual purification) through artistic form.

Director Shomurat Yusupov reveals its philosophical layers through the language of contemporary theatre in staging the work. In his interpretation, “The Scarlet Flower, or The Beauty and the Beast” becomes not only a magical object but an artistic metaphor for humanity, love and devotion. The image of the flower functions as the central semantic axis of the performance: through it, transformations of the human heart, love, and forgiveness are expressed symbolically. Yusupov’s directorial approach amplifies this idea through the language of scenography. For instance, in every scene where the Scarlet Flower appears, the tonality of the lighting changes-the harmony of red, gold, and pink shades expresses the warming process of love. Through this, the director constructs the dramaturgy of emotional states using visual imagery. Thus, the Scarlet Flower becomes the symbolic core of the work, conveying to the audience the philosophy of inner purification.

The idea developed by S. Aksakov is the principle that a person should be valued not by their outward appearance but by the beauty of their heart. This is a poetic expression of ancient folk wisdom. In this respect, “The Scarlet Flower or The Beauty and the Beast” holds significance not only as a fairy tale but also as a moral-philosophical drama. The movement of a person from evil to goodness, from darkness toward light, constitutes not only the plot of the play but also the aesthetic essence of the entire work.

The central stage solution of the performance is the creation of an artistic contrast between a fairy-tale magical realm and real life. Director Shomurat Yusupov achieves this contrast not merely through simple stage decorations but through a synthesis of modern stage technologies. In his approach, he integrates the traditional expressive tools of puppet theatre with contemporary multimedia scenography, unifying live acting, mechanical puppet techniques, video projection, and lighting dramaturgy into a single artistic system. One of the most impressive scenes in the production is the view of the magical castle where the Beast lives. The castle’s interior is created not through traditional set construction but by means of

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computer-generated 3D projection. This technology produces multilayered visual depth on stage: the patterns on the walls, columns, windows, and domes come to life and move as though breathing. As a result, the audience feels themselves positioned at the intersection of the real and virtual worlds.

The projection system operates using high-resolution DLP (Digital Light Processing) projectors, which adjust the intensity and color temperature of the light in synchronization with the stage music. This transforms the visual imagery into a dynamic dramatic element. For example, during the first meeting of the Beast and the Scarlet Flower, the rhythmic alternation of light impulses conveys their emotional agitation. Light, therefore, is no longer a simple stage illuminator but becomes a stream of psychological energy which is dramatic factor that influences the audience's perception.

This system introduces a kinetic element into the stage design meaning that light, projection, and puppet movements synchronize with one another to create a digital symphony. Such an approach carries historical significance as one of the first scenographic experiments of its kind applied in Uzbek puppet theatre.

The production staged by Sh. Yusupov based on the fairy-tale play "The Scarlet Flower or The Beauty and the Beast" holds particular importance as an expression of modern scenographic thinking and a technological-theatre approach within Uzbek puppet theatre. The artistic idea of the work is the triumph of inner beauty, devotion, and the power of love over evil and it takes on a deeply poetic dimension through the harmony of light, color, sound, and movement on stage.

Director Shomurot Yusupov expands the traditional aesthetic boundaries of puppet theatre by synthesizing puppet mechanics, computer projection, and modern lighting systems into a single artistic unity. As a result, the stage transforms from a simple visual backdrop into a meaning-bearing, interactive space, valued both as an artistic achievement and as a scientific-practical experiment.

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