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NAMANGAN REGION MUSICAL DRAMA THEATRE: PAST AND PRESENT

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Abstract: This article analyzes from a scientific and art-historical perspective the history of the establishment of the Namangan Regional Musical Drama Theatre, its initial steps in the 1920s–1930s, the creative activities of theatre pioneers, as well as the transition period during the years of independence and contemporary development trends. It also highlights the role of the theatre company in the development of national art, staged classical and modern performances, and the creative work of prominent directors, actors, and vocalists.

Keywords: Namangan theater, musical drama, stage art, performance, tradition, actor, director, singer (khananda), performer, transition period.

The history of the formation and development of the musical drama and comedy theater in the Namangan region dates back to the 1920s; it played a fundamental role in revitalizing the region's cultural and educational environment and in establishing the roots of national theatrical art. Emerging from the activities of early amateur circles and traveling troupes, this creative hub soon developed its own distinct aesthetic principles. During that period, theatrical art was viewed as a powerful medium for engaging with the spiritual life of the people, popularizing social and educational ideas, and shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of the audience. In this sense, the early theatrical groups that formed in the Namangan area laid a vital creative and organizational foundation for the eventual emergence of a professional theater. Established in 1931 as a shining example of the literature and art of a new era, this institution later expanded its scope significantly, eventually becoming the Alisher Navoi Namangan State Drama Theater. A notable milestone in its history is the commencement of its professional operations on June 15, 1931, with the staging of A. Sultonov's play *Intilish* ("Striving"). The very title of this play embodies a spirit of aspiration toward innovation, enlightenment, and creative exploration. Through the arduous efforts of dedicated figures in the theatrical arts—such as Hakim Fayziy, Khamroyev, Khayriniso Khonturayeva, and others—the first stage productions were presented, laying a solid foundation for professional theater in the region. In the early years, the primary objectives were to promote ideological and educational goals and to elevate the cultural level of the general public. During the challenging and demanding period between 1930 and 1939, the theater troupe demonstrated true

devotion, striving to satisfy the spiritual needs of the people and playing an active role in the region's intellectual and cultural life. This era can be characterized as a formative period in the creative history of the Namangan Theater—a time for gathering experience and mastering the standards of professional stagecraft. Indeed, the theater's subsequent achievements are rooted in the traditions of hard work, exploration, and creative discipline established during these formative years.[1]

[1]Mannonova F. *Alisher Navoiy nomidagi Namangan viloyat musiqali drama va komediya teatrining shakllanishi va taraqqiyot bosqichlari (1931–1939). // O'zbekiston madaniyati va san'ati*.

In its early years, the theater sought to shape its repertoire by synthesizing elements of folk art, local values, and the realities of contemporary life. The troupe's founding members worked tirelessly to master stagecraft, delve into the intricacies of acting, and instill a national spirit in their audiences. In this process, it became clear that an actor's task went beyond merely memorizing lines or crafting an external appearance; it required understanding the character's inner world and revealing their personality through stage movement, speech, and musical expression. According to the press and archival documents of the period, the theater company traveled not only within the city center but also throughout the region's districts and villages, presenting various theatrical performances and concert programs to the working public. This played a crucial role in bringing the theater closer to the people and expanding its social reach. These touring performances also served as a creative training ground for the troupe; performing in diverse settings before audiences with varying levels of familiarity with theater demanded that the actors possess naturalness, quick thinking, adaptability, and a strong sense of creative responsibility. The theater's initial steps served as the foundational base for its transformation into a center for professional art in the region, paving the way for future major achievements. In this sense, the early activities of the Namangan Theater can be viewed not merely as the formation of a specific troupe, but as part of the process through which a professional theatrical sensibility took shape across the Fergana Valley.

The inclusion of works from both classical Uzbek literature and contemporary drama in the theater's repertoire significantly enhanced its ideological and artistic potential. Productions such as *Gulsara* (1944), *Qurbon Umarov* (1941), *Tohir and Zuhra* (1943), and *Alisher Navoiy* (1948) earned widespread acclaim from audiences. The addition of these works to the repertoire not only broadened the theater's thematic scope but also served to more fully showcase the artistic possibilities of the musical drama genre. In musical drama, the integration of dramatic action with music, song, vocal performance, and stage movement is of particular importance; in such productions, a singer functions simultaneously as both a performer and an actor. Consequently, the synthesis of vocal and acting skills into a unified performance system became a distinctive hallmark of the Namangan Theater's creative school. In this creative process, the role of the theater's vocalists and skilled performers is incomparable. People's Artist of the Republic of Uzbekistan Alikhon Khaydarov, Honored Artists of Uzbekistan, and other leading singers and actors have made a tremendous contribution to elevating stage culture and shaping the national school of vocal and performing arts. Through their creative work, the traditions of national singing, the specific characteristics of traditional performance, and the principles of crafting dramatic characters have come to complement one another. As a result, the musical segments within a production are presented not merely as standalone concert numbers, but as integral components of the dramatic narrative.

Over the years, the theater's repertoire was enriched with new works that captured the spirit of contemporary life. Productions staged in the post-World War II era—such as "Oltin ko‘l" (Golden Lake) and "Qora ko‘zlar" (Dark Eyes)—expanded the theater's creative horizons and fostered a seamless synergy between directorial vision and the acting ensemble. The post-war period was

– 2025. Ushbu tadqiqotda teatrning tashkil topishi, dastlabki faoliyati, repertuari va 1930-yillardagi professional shakllanish jarayoni arxiv hujjatlari, matbuot materiallari va teatr arboblarining xotiralari asosida tahlil qilingan. SSlib.uz

marked by new artistic explorations, the emergence of fresh themes, and the arrival of a new generation of creative talent. During this time, the theater placed a greater emphasis on exploring human character, an individual's role in society, moral choices, love, loyalty, and the complexities of human relationships. The company has been highly acclaimed, not only on local stages but also through its active participation in prestigious, republic-wide festivals. Such creative exchanges have enabled the theater to draw upon the experiences of other professional troupes, re-evaluate its own artistic standards, and refine its repertoire policy.

In the post-war years, the theater company welcomed new talent into its ranks and embarked on fresh aesthetic explorations within the performing arts. Drawing on the unique characteristics of the musical drama genre, the theater selected works specifically designed to showcase the vocal capabilities of its singers and actors. The incorporation of traditional vocal styles and national melodies further enhanced the impact of the performances. In their work with the actors, the directors applied the principles of ensemble performance, ensuring that every vocal number was intrinsically linked to the dramatic action—a key professional criterion for musical drama theater. This is crucial, as any disconnect between the musical components and the unfolding dramatic events could compromise the integrity of the production. The creative approach at the Namangan Theater consistently sought to achieve a seamless synthesis of music, acting, and directorial vision. During this period, every work staged served to cultivate the public's aesthetic sensibilities and foster a sense of national identity. Through the dedicated efforts of its theater practitioners, the Namangan Theater emerged as one of the republic's leading companies, establishing its own distinct creative school. This school was characterized by the integration of acting and vocal artistry, a reliance on the national musical heritage, and the fusion of contemporary dramaturgical thought with the full potential of the stage.

Throughout the creative evolution of the Namangan Theater, repertoire policy has always remained a vital concern. The repertoire is one of the primary factors defining a theater's artistic identity; it reflects the company's aesthetic vision, the needs of the audience, and the social and spiritual demands of the era. In this context, the Namangan Theater developed a tradition of drawing upon classical literature, folklore, contemporary drama, and musical stage works. This repertoire policy served, on one hand, to preserve the historical roots of national art, and on the other, to satisfy the artistic needs of the modern audience. In particular, the incorporation of traditional national melodies and vocal styles into the musical drama repertoire helped define the theater's distinct regional artistic character.

The years of independence and the subsequent transitional period marked a fundamental turning point for the Namangan Regional Musical Drama Theater. Against the backdrop of socio-political and economic changes in society, the theater re-evaluated its repertoire, prioritizing principles such as the cultivation of national identity, the restoration of historical justice, and the engagement with classical heritage. During the early years of independence—much like in other art forms—the approach toward historical memory, national values, spirituality, and the legacy of ancestors took on a new, profound significance within the realm of theater. For the theater, this process created an opportunity not only to explore new themes but also to reinterpret existing artistic heritage. During this period, the primary aspirations of the theater company included enriching the repertoire with a contemporary spirit, synthesizing national classical works with world classics, and directing the audience's attention toward spiritual and moral values. Despite the complexities of this transitional era, the theater's creative team demonstrated great dedication, ensuring the continuity of the performing arts. Notably, historical-biographical works such as *Uvaysiy* and *Nodirabegim*, as well as musical dramas based on classical epic poems

(*dostons*), were presented on stage through fresh artistic interpretations. Through the lives of historical figures, these works explored themes such as the human spiritual realm, the role of the artist in society, love and loyalty, and one's responsibility toward the homeland and the nation. Drawing upon the traditions of ensemble performance, the directors and young actors at the theater placed special emphasis on developing traditional vocal styles and the national art of singing.

The complex economic and social challenges of the transitional period demanded greater fortitude, unity, and creative exploration from the theater company than ever before. Shifts in the material-technical infrastructure and the changing composition of the audience inevitably influenced the creative process. However, the core strength of theatrical art stems not merely from material resources, but primarily from the spiritual and professional potential of its creators. Throughout this time, the theater company remained steadfast in its fundamental mission: to continue its service while holding the banner of national art high. The productions staged during this period centered on themes of humanity, patriotism, spiritual purity, and the honoring of historical memory. By adopting a new way of thinking and staying in tune with the times, directors and actors successfully integrated classical and contemporary drama. During the era of independence, the increased focus on themes related to national history and spiritual heritage within the theater's repertoire further enhanced its role in the spiritual and educational life of society. At the same time, engaging with world drama has broadened the artistic horizons of the theater's creative team, enabling them to connect national stage traditions with global theatrical developments.

Today, the Namangan Regional Musical Drama Theater has evolved into a center for spiritual and educational enrichment that meets modern standards. Systematic efforts are underway to train young professionals and elevate the ideological and artistic quality of the theater's productions. The company's experienced vocalists and talented performers ensure the continuity of national theatrical art by harmoniously blending tradition with modernity. The theater's official historical records document its long-standing creative journey, the contributions of prominent actors and directors, and the ongoing enrichment of its repertoire over the years.[2] Theater artists, who have been participating successfully in both national and international theater festivals, continue to promote our people's rich spiritual heritage alongside staging works of contemporary drama. The theater's current achievements inspire confidence in its future development and in the further strengthening of its position within the world of art.

At this contemporary stage, the theater is implementing large-scale projects that incorporate not only traditional dramatic works but also the finest advancements in music and choreography. In this process, key elements include the integrity of the stage imagery, the harmonious balance between music and movement, and the actors' ability to simultaneously showcase both their vocal and dramatic capabilities. In new productions staged by young directors and actors, special attention is given to the upbringing of the younger generation and the cultivation of their aesthetic taste. In particular, strengthening the theater's engagement with young audiences, drawing them toward the national performing arts, and utilizing the theater more actively as a tool for spiritual development are among the pressing priorities. Furthermore, the creative studios and workshops

[2] Alisher Navoiy nomidagi Namangan viloyati musiqali drama va komediya teatri. *Teatr haqida*. Teatrning rasmiy tarixiy ma'lumotlarida uning 1931-yil 15-iyunda "Intilish" spektakli bilan ochilgani, ijodiy jamoaning shakllanishi, turli davrlardagi repertuari va teatr san'atiga hissa qo'shgan ijodkorlar haqida ma'lumotlar berilgan. ННаманган вилояти мусиқали драма театри

affiliated with the theater are highly effective in identifying young talent and providing them with professional training. Such a creative environment is essential for developing young people's skills in stage speech, acting, vocal performance, physical expression, and ensemble performance. Moreover, the continuation of the "master-apprentice" tradition serves as one of the most effective methods for passing on the theater's long-standing experience to a new generation of artists.

From the perspective of art studies, the historical development of the Namangan Regional Musical Drama Theater can be traced through several interconnected processes: the transition from amateur and educational theatrical activities to a professional theater; the formation of national dramaturgy and the musical drama genre; the development of schools of acting and singing; the renewal of the repertoire and artistic vision during the era of independence; and the contemporary theater's pursuit of a synthesis between tradition and innovation. Each of these processes has left a distinct mark on the theater's artistic identity. In particular, the creative expertise cultivated within the musical drama genre remains a key factor that defines the unique character of the Namangan theater. The synthesis of national melodies, songs, dramatic action, dance, and acting has shaped the artistic language of the theater.

In summary, the Namangan Regional Musical Drama Theater has traversed a complex and glorious creative path over the past century, evolving into a significant hub of cultural life—not only within the region but across the entire republic. Its historical trajectory is inextricably linked to the cultural and educational life of the people, the formation of a national theatrical tradition, and the development of a professional school of performance. What began with amateur circles and traveling troupes eventually led to the establishment of a professional theatrical company. While the activities of the 1930s laid the organizational and creative foundations of the theater, subsequent years of exploration—encompassing repertoire, acting craft, vocal performance, and directing—further enhanced its artistic potential. Stage productions such as *Gulsara*, *Qurbon Umarov*, *Tohir and Zuhra*, *Alisher Navoi*, *Oltin Ko'l* (Golden Lake), and *Qora Ko'zlar* (Dark Eyes) reflect the theater's creative pursuits across various eras; meanwhile, historical-biographical works from the period of independence—such as *Uvaysiy* and *Nodirabegim*—embody a fresh perspective on national history and spiritual heritage. One of the most significant tasks facing the theater today is to preserve these rich creative traditions while harmonizing them with contemporary theatrical sensibilities. There is no doubt that the dedicated efforts—aimed at cherishing our national values, fostering a love for high art among the younger generation, supporting talented youth, ensuring the continuity of the national school of vocal performance and musical drama, and elevating the art of theater to a new level—will continue to yield excellent results. After all, just as the theater's past defines its current creative identity, its present-day explorations lay the foundation for the artistic school of the future. In this sense, studying the history of the Namangan Regional Musical Drama Theater is not merely an examination of the activities of a single theater company; it holds significant scientific and practical value for understanding the regional schools of Uzbek national theater, the developmental patterns of the musical drama genre, the evolution of acting and vocal performance, and the processes that have shaped our national theatrical consciousness.

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