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The Use of the Art of Askiya in Comedy-Genre Performances

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Abstract

This article analyzes the role and artistic-aesthetic characteristics of the art of askiya, one of the important genres of Uzbek folk oral tradition, in national theatre, particularly in performances of the comedy genre. It examines the potential of expressive devices characteristic of askiya, such as wordplay, irony, witty retorts, exaggeration, quick-wittedness, and improvisation, in creating stage comedy. Using specific comedies as examples, the article considers the significance of askiya elements in revealing the characters of protagonists, enhancing the impact of dialogues, and strengthening the national spirit of theatrical performances. The role of askiya traditions in developing actors' speech skills, stage freedom, speed of thought, and improvisational abilities is substantiated.

Keywords: uzbek theatre studies, the art of askiya, folk oral tradition, national theatre, comedy genre, performing arts, wordplay, irony, witty retorts, quick-wittedness, improvisation, acting skills, national colour.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the centuries-old cultural heritage of the Uzbek people, folk oral tradition occupies a special place. Within this heritage, the art of askiya is distinguished by its unique artistic characteristics, subtle expression of thought, mastery of words, and performance style based on quick-wittedness [1]. Askiya is an art form that embodies the people's observations of life, social relations, worldview, and aesthetic thinking. The main characteristic of the art of askiya lies in the ability of two or more performers to respond promptly to one another within a specific topic, make use of the figurative and multiple meanings of words, and create laughter through unexpected shifts in meaning. In the art of askiya, speed of thought, speech abilities, powers of observation, and artistic thinking are of great importance [2].

Today, in the process of developing national theatrical art, the issue of making use of folk artistic traditions is becoming increasingly relevant. In particular, the use of askiya elements in comedy performances makes it possible to strengthen the national spirit of a work, reveal the characters of its protagonists, create stage situations, and establish direct emotional contact with the audience [3]. The role of the art of askiya on the

professional theatre stage and the mechanisms of its application are clearly manifested in the following aspects:

1. The dialogues between characters are built on high dynamism and wordplay. They pick up on one another's words and respond with ironic or witty retorts. This keeps the audience's attention constantly engaged [4].
2. Improvisation (spontaneous verbal composition). During a performance, actors do not remain confined to the framework established by the director; rather, drawing on the situation on stage or the audience's reaction, they spontaneously compose an example of askiya (improvised verbal exchange). However, it must be logically substantiated.
3. Ridiculing social shortcomings. One of the main functions of askiya is to expose shortcomings in life through humour and satire. In comedies, positive characters morally defeat negative characters (for example, corrupt managers, miserly rich people, or indifferent individuals) by directing askiya at them [5].

2. METHODOLOGY

The successful use of askiya elements in comedy performances requires a high level of acting skill. An actor must not only pronounce the text correctly but also understand the inner meaning of words, their underlying implications, and the precise point at which they generate laughter. Pauses, stress, intonation, facial expressions, and gestures are of particular importance in dialogues characteristic of askiya. This is because, in some cases, the effectiveness of humour depends less on the words themselves than on the tone and circumstances in which they are expressed. For example, an actor may refrain from responding immediately to the words of an interlocutor and, through a brief pause, create a sense of anticipation in the audience. The actor then generates laughter through an unexpected yet logically substantiated response. This style of performance is characteristic of the natural performance traditions of askiya and enhances the stage effectiveness of comedy performances. The important artistic devices of the art of askiya in the comedy genre include the following:

1. Wordplay. Creating unexpected humorous meanings through the use of different meanings of a single word.
2. Irony. Expressing an attitude towards a particular person, event, or situation not directly, but indirectly and sarcastically.
3. Witty retort. Responding artistically to an interlocutor through the subtle and ingenious expression of an idea.
4. Exaggeration. Deliberately overstating an event or situation in order to create a humorous impression.
5. Quick-wittedness. The performer's ability to quickly grasp an interlocutor's thought and provide an appropriate and unexpected response is one of the fundamental requirements of askiya.
6. Satire and humour. Revealing certain shortcomings in society, flaws in human character, and contradictions in everyday life through laughter.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

These characteristics of the art of askiya establish its close connection with theatrical art. This is because theatre, too, serves to express human character, conflicts in life, and social relations through artistic means. Although laughter lies at the foundation of both art forms, their modes of expression are distinctive. In the comedy genre, laughter is primarily generated through the sequence of events presented by the playwright, conflicts between characters, and dialogues, whereas in askiya, the performer's ingenuity, mastery of words, and quick-wittedness occupy the leading position [6]. In this respect, askiya performs the following functions in comedy performances:

- Intensifying humorous situations on stage;
- Revealing the character traits of the protagonists;
- Contributing to the naturalness and expressiveness of dialogues;
- Enriching the national spirit of the performance;
- Engaging the audience's attention;
- Expressing social and everyday problems through laughter [7].

When askiya elements are appropriately used in comedy performances, the events on stage are expressed more effectively. In particular, in arguments, disputes, or conversations related to everyday life between two characters, witty retorts and wordplay characteristic of askiya help laughter arise naturally. The possibilities of the art of askiya on the theatre stage are manifested, first and foremost, in the system of dialogues. In comedy performances, conversations between characters do not merely serve as a means of developing the plot, but also function as an artistic mechanism that reveals their inner world, character, and mutual relationships [8].

The art of askiya, as an independent form, is usually performed at gatherings such as weddings, public festivities, and feasts. In the comedy genre, it generally emerges through the characters' responses to one another, their attempts to achieve intellectual superiority, and their skilful use of the possibilities of their vocabulary. Since theatrical art is considered a synthetic art form, askiya is also incorporated into certain performances. In particular, speech devices characteristic of askiya can be observed in such classical works of Uzbek dramaturgy as Hamza's "Maysaraning ishi", Hamid G'ulom's "Toshbolta oshiq", Erkin Vohidov's "Oltin devor", and Said Ahmad's "Kelinlar qo'zg'oloni" [9],[10].

In Hamza Hakimzoda's comedy "Burungi qozilar yoxud Maysaraning ishi", elements of askiya are manifested primarily in the speech of the character Maysara. Maysara stands out from the other characters through her intelligence, quick-wittedness, and eloquence. In particular, her use of irony, witty retorts, and colloquial expressions in conversations with such characters as Qozi, Mulla A'lam, and Hidoyatxon is noteworthy. For example, when Qozi attempts to put pressure on Maysara by relying on his position and authority, Maysara interprets his words in her own distinctive way and places him in an awkward situation through her unexpected responses. In this case, laughter arises not only from the characters' external actions but also from their verbal confrontation. The combination of proverbs, proverbial expressions, forms of expression characteristic of anecdotes, and ironic attitudes in Maysara's speech shapes her character as one particularly suited to askiya. The character of Maysara demonstrates the possibilities inherent in the art of askiya, such as responding intelligently, achieving superiority through words, and exposing social vices through laughter [11], [12].

In Hamid G'ulom's comedy "Toshbolta oshiq", artistic features resembling those of askiya are primarily evident in the speech and stage actions of the protagonist Toshbolta. The comic impact of the character Toshbolta is determined by his distinctive worldview, simple-minded reasoning, eloquence, and manner of responding to various situations. For example, Toshbolta's conversations in situations related to marriage, love, everyday life, and old traditions give rise to comic conflicts. He approaches certain issues seriously in his own way; however, the difference between his way of thinking and the views of those around him creates humorous situations. In these instances, colloquial expressions, witty retorts, and unexpected responses in the character's speech intensify the humorous effect. The performance of Soyib Xo'jayev holds particular significance in the history of this production. In creating the character of Toshbolta, the actor skilfully employed the possibilities of improvisation, facial expressions, imitation, resonant speech, and wordplay characteristic of traditional folk comedy performance.

In Erkin Vohidov's comedy "Oltin devor", speech devices characteristic of the art of askiya play an important role in revealing the comic conflicts of the work. The main events of the play revolve around the discovery of gold, a circumstance that reveals the true nature of people with different characters. In particular, in conversations arising around the issue of gold, the self-interest, greed, and attempts at self-justification of the characters are revealed through laughter. Verbal conflict emerges as the same event is interpreted differently by different characters. Irony, hints, witty retorts, and unexpected responses play an

important role in the way the characters respond to one another. For example, during disputes concerning who owns the gold, how it should be disposed of, and how it should be used, each character attempts to defend their own interests. In this process, the discrepancy between their words and their actual intentions creates comic situations [13].

In Said Ahmad's comedy "Kelinlar qo'zg'oloni", the characteristics of the art of askiya are particularly evident in the interactions between Farmonbibi and her daughters-in-law. In the work, the conflict between the mother-in-law and her daughters-in-law is interpreted not merely as a domestic disagreement, but as a difference in the worldviews, attitudes towards life, and ways of thinking of representatives of different generations. For example, in situations where Farmonbibi opposes her daughters-in-law making independent decisions and freely expressing their wishes, their conversations take on a humorous character. The daughters-in-law's ironic and, at times, witty responses are contrasted with Farmonbibi's firm and demanding speech. As a result, a verbal confrontation emerges on stage [14].

The skill of the stage directors must certainly also be commended for ensuring the artistic integrity and audience appeal of the comedies discussed above. In every performance incorporating the art of askiya, the director's task is to select askiya elements in accordance with the content, genre characteristics, and overall rhythm of the performance. This is because excessive use of askiya may have a negative impact on the dramaturgical integrity of a performance. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance between traditional verbal art and the expressive means of contemporary theatre.

The role of the art of askiya is also highly important for actors, and studying it contributes to the development of the following aspects:

- Improving speech fluency and expanding vocabulary;
- Developing speed of thought and quick-wittedness;
- Fostering stage freedom;
- Strengthening the ability to perceive comic situations;
- Establishing sincere communication with the audience;

Creating the individual speech characteristics of a character [15].

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the art of askiya, as part of the rich spiritual and artistic heritage of the Uzbek people, is of great importance in enriching the content and form of comedy performances. Its characteristics, based on wordplay, irony, witty retorts, exaggeration, quick-wittedness, and improvisation, contribute to the natural and effective creation of stage humour. Through the use of askiya elements, it is possible to reveal the characters of protagonists more deeply in comedy performances, construct dialogues, strengthen national colour, and establish direct communication with the audience. The traditions of askiya play a particularly significant role in developing actors' speech skills, stage freedom, and improvisational abilities.

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