

ABSTRACT

of the dissertation titled “The Process of Staging the Works of Mukhtar Auezov: Tradition and Innovation”

submitted by Askar Akimbek for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty 6D040600 – Directing

Relevance of the research topic

The Kazakh National Drama Theatre, with its century-long history, has been closely associated with the name of our nation's great writer and playwright, Mukhtar Omarkhanuly Auezov, from its very inception. His life and creative work have played a multifaceted and active role in shaping the theatre's dramaturgy, defining its theoretical direction, developing directing techniques, and advancing the art of acting. In his speech at the 4th session of the National Kurultai, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev emphasized the direction of the national theatre and gave high praise to its current development.

He noted: “A great deal of work has been accomplished in the field of culture during the years of independence. Magnificent buildings have been constructed for classical and contemporary music. Many new theatres have opened. Interest in theatre art is growing in Kazakhstan. Auditoriums are filled with audiences, and tickets for premieres are sold out two to three weeks in advance. It is especially heartening to see so many young people among theatre enthusiasts.” This observation on the current vitality of Kazakh theatre serves as a high acknowledgment of the tireless efforts of past theatre professionals and the unceasing creative search of today's artists who have successfully continued that legacy.

The growing artistic level of national theatre and the keen interest of young audiences highlight the unique place of Mukhtar Auezov's works in the history of Kazakh theatre. Behind the theatre's current achievements lies the profound influence of Auezov's plays and prose works, which paved the way for reviving national identity and cultural values. The relevance of this dissertation topic stems from the process of tradition and innovation in staging Mukhtar Auezov's works—an area that has not been previously studied as a distinct and systematic subject. At a time when national theatre art is aiming for a presence on the global stage, artistic excellence in dramaturgy, directing, and acting must not fall below the standards set by a master like Auezov. This comprehensive research is the first to explore, within an academic framework, how Auezov's works are staged in Kazakh theatre, focusing on the balance between adherence to tradition and the pursuit of innovation as part of the continuous process of artistic growth and renewal.

Object of the Research – The staging of Mukhtar Auezov's dramatic and prose works in the theatre.

Subject of the Research – The artistic expression of traditional and innovative approaches in the stage interpretations of Mukhtar Auezov's works.

Purpose of the Research – To identify the continuity of tradition and the elements of innovation in the directing of Auezov's dramatic and prose works, and

to scientifically assess the influence of this process on the artistic development of Kazakh theatre and its distinctive features.

Research Objectives:

- To study the formation of Auezov's dramaturgical mastery by analyzing the artistic level of his early plays;
- To determine the place and role of Auezov's dramaturgy in shaping and developing the repertoire during the formative and developmental stages of the national theatre;
- To evaluate the distinctive features of staging Auezov's plays in Kazakh-Soviet theatre directing practices;
- To investigate how Auezov's dramaturgy, which has become a part of the national classical canon, has served as a school for enhancing the professional skills and artistic competence of domestic theatre directors;
- To analyze how, during the years of independence, Auezov's works have become a key source of the country's spiritual revival through directorial innovation;
- To identify modern theatrical forms and directing innovations in the staging of Auezov's prose works.

Level of Research on the Topic

Over the course of a century of professional Kazakh stage art, numerous scholarly works have been written concerning the formation and development of the national theatre. The creative legacy of Mukhtar Auezov—particularly his plays, which form the golden treasury of national dramaturgy and have become part of the national classical canon—has received special attention from scholars in the field of Kazakh philology. Foundational research on dramaturgy has been carried out by prominent scholars such as S. Ordaliyev, A. Tazhibayev, R. Nurgaliyev, A. Nurkatov, Sh. Yeleukenov, Z. Kabdolov, and G. Piraliyeva, whose monographs laid the groundwork for the field.

A substantial body of work has also been produced by theatre experts who have explored Auezov's unparalleled plays—the artistic jewels of the national theatre repertoire from its inception to the present day—and their stage adaptations. Among the leading scholars who have studied the history of Kazakh theatre and its development from a theatre studies perspective are K. Kuandykov, B. Kundakbaiuly, L. Bogatenkova, A. Syghai, S. Kabdieva, and B. Nurpeis. Their monographs and academic collections contribute significantly to the understanding of Auezov's role in the evolution of Kazakh theatre.

Beyond theoretical works, the history of staging Auezov's plays and prose has also been enriched by the memoirs, essays, and character portraits written by stage practitioners—directors and actors—who brought his works to life. This group includes distinguished figures of the Kazakh stage such as theatre directors and actors A. Tokpanov, S. Kozhamqulov, K. Badyrov, Kh. Elebekova, B. Rimova, K. Zhandarbekov, K. Baisetov, M. Baiserkenov, I. Shostak, and A. Rakhimov, among others.

Research Methods

In investigating the dissertation topic, the researcher employed a variety of methods to study Mukhtar Auezov's works and to identify the traditions and innovations in

their staging processes. These methods include empirical research, theoretical analysis, theatre studies approaches to analyzing performances, comparative analysis, and critical examination of various sources through historical-archival and objective-analytical methods. Additionally, logical and art-analytical techniques were applied to analyze the texts of the plays.

Methodological Foundations of the Research

The implementation of the defined objectives and tasks in studying directorial innovations in staging Mukhtar Auezov's works was guided by research conducted by both foreign and domestic theatre scholars. In examining the formation and development of professional theatre schools in the 20th century, the methodological foundation draws upon the theories and practices of Russian-Soviet and international theatre practitioners and theorists such as K.S. Stanislavski, V.I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, P. Markov, S. Popov, G. Tovstonogov, A. Artaud, E. Grotowski, P. Brook, A. Smelyansky, among others. Their scientific works on theatre theory and practice, as well as the aesthetics of stage culture, serve as essential references.

Attention was also given to the contributions of domestic theatre scholars including B. Kundakbaiuly, A. Sygai, A. Kadyrov, S. Kabdieva, B. Nurpeis, A. Erkebay, A. Mukan, M. Zhaksylykova, Z. Islambaeva, and to the practical insights derived from the experience of theatre directors such as A. Tokpanov, A. Mambetov, M. Baiserkeuly, A. Rakhimov, among others.

Scientific Novelty of the Work

During the course of this dissertation research, the author achieved the following scientific novelties. For the first time:

- The topic “The Staging Process of Mukhtar Auezov's Works: Tradition and Innovation” was studied as a distinct research object from a theatre studies perspective;
- The formation and development of Auezov's dramaturgical mastery, as well as the artistic level of his plays and their significant contributions to the formation and maturation of the national theatre repertoire, were re-examined through a novel analytical lens, highlighting the unique place and role of his dramaturgy;
- Through a comprehensive study of the dissertation topic, the place and role of the great national writer Mukhtar Auezov in the formation, development, and contemporary achievements of domestic dramaturgy were assessed from a fresh perspective;
- The distinctive features of creative searches in staging Auezov's dramaturgy within Kazakh-Soviet theatre directing were analyzed;
- The stage interpretations of Auezov's works, which serve as a school for the professional mastery and skill development of domestic theatre directing and acting, were examined;
- Contemporary directorial innovations in staging Auezov's plays during the period of independence were critically evaluated;
- Using Auezov's prose works as examples, traces of modern theatrical forms and innovations in directing were assessed, and the national theatre's artistic explorations were analyzed in the context of evolving time and societal demands.

Main Conclusions Proposed for Defense

As a result of the scientific study of Mukhtar Auezov's creative heritage, the following conclusions are proposed for defense:

– This research on the process of staging the works of writer-dramatist M. Auezov is the first to be analyzed specifically from a theatre studies perspective, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the artistic continuity between the classical heritage and contemporary directing practices within the domestic theatre space. It has been proven that the interaction between traditional staging models and new technological approaches allows for a multifaceted revelation of the staging potential of Auezov's works. The process of tradition and innovation, intertwined with the formation, development, and current trends of the national theatre art, is inseparably linked with Auezov's works.

–The formation of M. Auezov as a talented playwright and the artistic level of his plays are considered within the framework of national theatre repertoire policy and the creative collaboration between the theatre and the writer. The first chapter of the study examines this through the example of his earliest plays. From "Baybyshe – Tokal," "Enlik – Kebi," to classical plays such as "Karagoz" and "Tunge Saryn," the professional growth of the playwright and the fulfillment of the national theatre repertoire's needs are highlighted. The creative tandem between the author and theatre played a decisive role in shaping the artistic direction and spiritual content of the national theatre. The important place and role of the historically significant drama "Khan Kene," which provoked great debate after being staged, and the period staging of the tragedy "Abai" are analyzed.

–The next chapter evaluates Auezov's dramatic legacy as a creative phenomenon that laid the foundation for the formation and flourishing of Kazakh dramaturgy. It reveals that his plays elevated the artistic level of the national theatre repertoire and stimulated the professional development of national directing and acting arts. Auezov's historical role within the domestic theatre space and his masterful contribution to the development of stage art are defined through examples of theatre directing and stage interpretations. It is proven that his works became a model for harmoniously combining tradition and innovation on the theatre stage.

–The Soviet-era theatre directing, in staging Auezov's plays, contributed significantly to the flourishing of the national theatre school and the achievement of new milestones through high artistic standards and interpretations corresponding to the era's aesthetic demands. The remarkable creative searches within Kazakh directing, including those by A. Mambetov and other domestic directors, found vivid expression in the staging of Auezov's works. These productions manifested a harmonious blend of the classical authorial text and modern directorial solutions, successfully merging national tradition with stage innovation.

–Staging Auezov's dramatic works became a rich creative experience and an important milestone in enhancing the professional skills of domestic theatre teams. The high artistic quality of his plays, written in verse and prose, encouraged directors and actors to undertake in-depth and quality research, deepen their artistic thinking, increase their historical and cultural knowledge, and improve their stage skills and culture. Each staging of a work from Auezov's pen, which became national classics,

was a rigorous school of professional mastery and skill for any theatre, directors, and actors.

–The creative freedom established in Kazakh theatre during the independence years opened the way for new interpretative approaches to Auezov's works related to folklore, history, and historical figures. The anniversaries of the great Abai, who was both the author and the subject of research, during these years, gave theatres the opportunity to reinterpret Auezov's plays with new directorial insights. The period of independence saw a renewed impetus in the direction and process of contemporary theatrical directing through the staging of Auezov's plays in modern styles.

–The experience of adapting the writer's prose works to screen was successfully realized during the Soviet period. In the years of independence, domestic theatres paid special attention to Auezov's prose, creating stage productions that introduced new directions and artistic forms of contemporary directing based on prose texts. It is clear that today's Kazakh theatre, which has reached new aesthetic heights, cannot be imagined without the modern theatrical forms and innovative searches in directing inspired by Auezov's prose works.

Scientific-Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Research

The results, conclusions, and findings derived from this dissertation can be utilized by students, master's candidates, and doctoral candidates studying at specialized educational institutions that train professionals in the field of stage arts. The outcomes of the scientific research can serve as supplementary teaching materials for courses such as History of Kazakh Theatre, Contemporary Global Theatre Processes, Acting Skills, Modern Directing and Acting Arts, and others.

Peer Review and Validation of the Research

The theoretical issues and conclusions forming the foundation of the dissertation research have been published and reviewed in accordance with the requirements of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education and Science Committee for Supervision and Attestation in Education and Science. The materials were disseminated in four nationally recognized scientific publications and one international journal indexed in the SCOPUS database with a non-zero impact factor.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three main chapters—each containing two sections (six sections in total), a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices.

The first chapter, titled "Mukhtar Auezov's Creative Heritage and the Formation of the National Theatre", examines Auezov's path as a writer and playwright, the formation and development of his artistic mastery, and the distinctive features of his creative style that emerged from his early dramaturgical steps. The first section details how the young author skillfully reflected social life in his works. The second section explores the place and influence of Auezov's dramaturgy in the formation and development of the first national theatre repertoire and the role of his plays in the formation of national dramaturgy.

The second chapter, titled "Issues of Directorial Interpretation in the Staging of Auezov's Plays", analyzes the successful directorial endeavors of Kazakh-Soviet era

national theatre in staging Auezov's plays. It focuses on landmark productions such as the period-defining staging of Abay tragedy by A. Tokpanov and subsequent productions directed by A. Mambetov, considering the particularities of directorial and acting approaches. The second section, "The Role of Auezov's Plays in the Development of National Directing", discusses how the author's legacy, now part of the golden fund of national dramaturgy, was interpreted through unique directorial approaches. It analyzes innovative readings of Auezov's plays in new productions, which contributed significantly to the fruitful history of Kazakh theatre. The third chapter, "The Influence and Innovations of Auezov's Works on the Development of Contemporary Kazakh Theatre", first reviews the stage-transformed models of Auezov's works during the independence period. It analyzes prominent contemporary productions created from the author's plays and prose that contributed to the development of modern domestic theatre, highlighting the directorial interpretations that demonstrated innovation on the Kazakh stage. The second section examines theatrical forms and innovations in the staging system of Auezov's works. It studies new directorial ideas and stage forms implemented in special projects by domestic theatres aimed at mastering innovative theatrical practices. This section also covers Kazakh theatre's engagement with global contemporary theatre processes, including productions following postdramatic theatre trends and newly staged performances based on Auezov's prose.