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THE HISTORY AND REVIVAL OF KARABAKH THEATERS

Abstract. The theme of theater building as a type of public building entered Azerbaijani architecture in the mid-19th century. Along with the rapid growth of industry, there was a revival in the cultural and social life of the city. Interest in European theater and circus performances was growing.

The first theater performance in Azerbaijan was staged in 1848 in the Shusha theater in the Karabakh region, which was located in a private house that did not meet the requirements for a theater building [2, s.59]. The elements of the performance in ceremonies, rituals and games played an important role in the creation of an independent folk theater. The Karabakh folk theater had a realistic character and was associated with the working classes. The repertoire of the folk theater was made up of small performances with a certain ethical content. The folk theater played an important role in the formation of the Karabakh professional theater. Thanks to this, starting from the 19th century, a professional theater was established first in Shusha and then in Agdam and functioned very effectively.

Key words: Azerbaijan, Karabakh, Shusha, Khankendi, theater.

Introduction. In the first half of the 19th century, Shusha had reached a level capable of competing even with Tbilisi due to its trade and economic opportunities. Shusha merchants conducted trade with the major cities of Iran, Iraq, India, Turkey, Russia, and Europe (Leipzig, Marseille, London, Manchester, etc.). At the same time, Shusha had become a center that attracted all the noble families of Karabakh, who wanted to build magnificent palaces and buildings [1, s.157].

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Shusha was famous throughout the Near and Middle East as the conservatory of the Caucasus, as well as a vocal school. Shusha Castle, rich in material and spiritual monuments, has been a cultural center that has attracted European and Eastern travelers and merchants with admiration since its foundation. Regarding this fact, which was called the Italy of the Caucasus, the newspaper «Kaspi» wrote: – «The position that the Italian vocal school occupies in the history of European music, the Shusha vocal school occupies the same position in the history of Eastern music» [3].

The interpretation of the main material. After the occupation of Azerbaijan by the Soviet authorities, the Shusha Theater continued its activities. Baku artists often came to Shusha. In 1926, a group of actors led by Abbas Mirza Sharifzadeh staged various plays in Shusha.

During the World War, the Shusha State Musical Drama Theater named after Uzeyir Hajibeyli was established (1943). The theater, which has its own rich tradition, did not stop its creative activity despite the difficulties it faced [4].



Fig. 1. General view of the summer public meeting (assembly) building

The opening of the Cultural Education Technical School in Shusha in 1982 almost marked the beginning of a new stage in the life of this theater. Theater critic Yagub Alioglu writes: «In 1987, the Shusha Musical Folk Theater successfully performed in front of the capital's theatergoers with the performance of U. Hajibeyli's opera «Asli ve Kerem» on the stage of the Sh. Mammadova Opera Studio in Baku, proving their professionalism.» Finally, on May 11, 1990, by the decision of the Council of Ministers of Azerbaijan, the status of the Shusha theater was restored. Thus, the State Musical Drama Theater opened its doors to the audience again in Shusha [5]. Unfortunately, two years later, in 1992, the theater moved to Baku in connection with the well-known Karabakh events. For many years, it settled in the building of the Young Spectators Theater (1992-2005). Since 2005, the theater has operated in the building of the "Savalan" cinema in Baku.

Azerbaijan's 28-year longing has ended, and on November 8, 2020, Shusha, which has a special place in the historical and cultural heritage of our people, was returned. The liberation of Shusha is the most glorious victory in the history of Azerbaijan in the last century.

The rapidly ongoing construction work in various fields in all corners of Karabakh continues successfully at a high level. In 2020, the Minister of Culture Anar Karimov announced the list of cultural institutions to be restored in Shusha. He stated that 210 historical and cultural monuments, 20 houses of culture, 19 libraries, 8 music schools, 7 museums, 1 gallery, and 1 theater will be restored in Shusha.

The theater operating in the building of the House of Culture is also on the list that will restore its function. Measures to establish cultural institutions and facilities are planned for 2023-2026.

The Agdam State Drama Theater, the cradle of Karabakh culture, was an association established in 1902 with the help of Karabakh intellectuals and under the organization of the outstanding theater and public figure Abdurrahim bey Hagverdiyev. It was not only one of the drama theaters operating in Azerbaijan, but also an example of Karabakh culture (Fig. 2).

In 1923, the theater was given the status of Agdam State Drama Theater. During these years, many well-known directors and producers in the republic worked at the theater. The theater operated as the State Drama Theater in 1937-1950, and as a drama collective and folk theater in 1950-1968. Since 1937, this art center has continued its activities as the Aghdam State Drama Theater named after A. Hagverdiyev. The theater's repertoire includes classical

plays, as well as works written on historical and contemporary themes. The 1970s-1980s in particular are remembered as the most productive and famous years for the Aghdam State Drama Theater (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. General view of the Aghdam Drama Theater before the destruction

The Aghdam State Drama Theater named after Abdurrahim bey Hagverdiyev also suffered its fair share of Armenian vandalism. When the terrible scenes of destruction in the once prosperous lands of Karabakh appeared before the eyes of the whole world after the brilliant Victory of the Azerbaijani army in the Second Karabakh War, the Aghdam Drama Theater was also on the list of destroyed buildings and structures (Fig. 3).

Aghdam is one of the ancient and historically rich cities of Azerbaijan. A rich and busy city with more than one hundred and fifty thousand working people... All this is no more. Now Aghdam, this once prosperous city is called the Hiroshima of the Caucasus. Only ruins remain after more than 28 years of occupation.

Even fascist Germany did not touch either administrative buildings or cultural monuments in the occupied territories in 1941-45, while the vandal

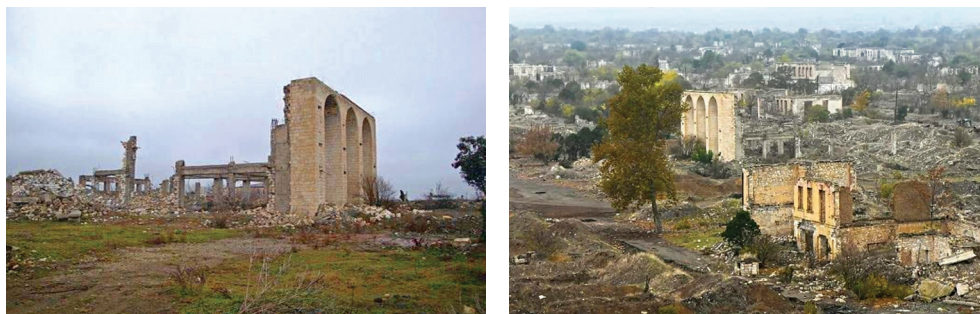


Fig. 3. General view of the destroyed Aghdam Drama Theater



Fig. 4. View of the destroyed Aghdam Drama Theater

the Aghdam State Drama Theater (Fig. 4).

The famous photographer noted that he found the statue a kilometer from the theater, that the statue was in a broken state, and that he could not find the head part (Fig. 3). Yes, this is not the enemy's first act of terror against Azerbaijani culture. Along with the Aghdam Theater, our once-famous Shusha Theater was also subjected to Armenian brutality.

After the occupation of Aghdam, the theater continued its activities, although it was located in an unsuitable building for some time. In 2011, the Culture House in the village of Guzanly was thoroughly renovated and put into operation as the building of the Aghdam State Theater (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. A. Hagverdiev Aghdam State Drama Theater in the village of Guzanli

Today, a new magnificent building will be built on the site of the former theater in Agdam, which was liberated from occupation. The Agdam State Drama Theater will return to the place that bears its name and continue its activities with a new repertoire. This issue is in the focus of the government's attention.

Another cultural center that continues the rich theatrical tradition of the Karabakh region is the Fizuli State Drama Theater. The Fuzuli region has a rich theatrical tradition. Thus, the Garyagin State Musical Drama Theater was founded in the 10s of the 20th century (1913-1914).

In the 1930s, it operated in the city of Fuzuli (then Garyagin district) under the name Garyagin State Kolkhoz and Sovkhoz Theater.

Later, Huseyngulu Sarabsky was elected a deputy to the State Duma from the Garyagin region, and the theater was named after the master artist in 1940-1953. H. Sarabsky repeatedly played his beloved role of «Majnun» on the stage of the Garyagin Musical DDT. In 1953, the Sarabsky DDT was closed for certain reasons. Although the theater was closed, it continued its activities in the form of a folk theater. Actors whose hearts burned with love for art continued their glorious artistic path by creating a folk theater for themselves.

Later, by the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR No. 292 dated July 5, 1989 and the order of the Ministry of Culture of the Azerbaijan SSR No. 3459/1, the Fuzuli State Drama Theater was established on August 4, 1989. Since 1992, the region has been periodically attacked by Armenians, so from February of that year, the Fuzuli Theater had to continue its activities in the Horadiz settlement culture house. Normal creative rehearsals and normal work harmony continued in Horadiz until August 23, 1993, when the Fuzuli Theater was transferred to Sumgayit due to the known occupation.

On December 16, 1999, the Fuzuli State Drama Theater successfully performed with J. Jabbarli's «Aydin» at the «National Classics Festival» held in Baku on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the Azerbaijani Theater and was awarded a diploma and a souvenir of the festival.

Since November 2003, the theater has returned to the Horadiz settlement of the Fuzuli region. The theater was moved to the Horadiz settlement culture house with the consent of the Ministry of Culture and the Fuzuli region Executive Power.



Fig. 6. View of the Fuzuli State Drama Theater

According to the order No. 89 of the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan dated February 20, 2015, the Horadiz Palace of Culture, together with its property, was transferred to the balance of the Fuzuli State Drama Theater. Today, the theater operates in the Horadiz City Palace of Culture, which has undergone major renovation (Fig. 6).

Another Karabakh theater that has made its contribution to the theater architecture of Azerbaijan is the Khankendi State Drama Theater, located on an area of 0.594 ha. The construction area of the building is 1777 m². The total area of the building is 2671 m², the area of the 1st floor is 1349 m², the area of the 2nd floor is 1062 m² and the area of the basement is 260 m².

The Khankendi State Drama Theater, whose construction began in 1926, was completed on August 11, 1932. In the initial version, from that moment



Fig. 7. General view of the Khankendi Theater

on, the building was intended for holding various meetings and events under the Soviet government Communist Party. From that same year until 1949, it was decided to operate as the “House of Social Culture”.

Since 1953, the Khankendi Drama Theater was named after the Soviet writer Maxim Gorky, and the theater continued to operate under this name until 1989 (Fig. 7).

In 1988-1989, weapons and ammunition were stored in the theater building. Bearded Armenian militants from Armenia were also hidden in this building. Although the building was used for military purposes for a while after 1989, it functioned as a theater in a certain sense until 2012.

When specialists from the Ministry of Culture and other institutions monitored cultural institutions in the city of Khankendi in November 2023, the theater building was also inspected. It turned out that the building was rendered unusable during the occupation and therefore needs major repairs (Fig. 7).

Conclusion. In accordance with the «I State Program on the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan», within the framework of the restoration and construction projects carried out in the liberated territories, it was prepared by order of the State Service for the Protection, Development and Restoration of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. A project for the repair, restoration and reconstruction of the building of the Khankendi State Drama Theater (inventory number 5015), which was taken under state protection by the Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated August 2, 2001, has been prepared and work is continuing under this project.

The theater building was included in the «List of Immovable Historical and Cultural Monuments of Local Importance» as a 20th century monument by Resolution No. 132 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated August 2, 2001.

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QARABAG TEATRLARININ TARİXİ VƏ MÜASİR DÖVRDƏ YENİDƏN DİRÇƏLİŞİ

Azərbaycan memarlığına məhz ictimai binaların növü olan teatr tikilisi mövzusu XIX əsrin ortaları gəlib çatmışdır. Sənayenin sürətli artımı ilə yanaşı şəhərin mədəni və ictimai həyatında canlanma duyulurdu. Avropa teatr və sirk tamaşalarına maraq hissi güclənirdi.

Azərbaycanda ilk dəfə teatr tamaşası 1848-ci ildə Qarabağ bölgəsində, teatr binası tələblərinə cavab verməyən xüsusi evdə yerləşdirilmiş Şuşa teatrında qoyuldu. Mərasim, ayin və oyunlardakı tamaşa elementləri müstəqil xalq teatrının yaranmasında mühüm rol oynamışdır. Qarabağ xalq teatrı realist özəllik daşımış və əməkçi təbəqələrlə bağlı olmuşdur. Xalq teatrının repertuarını müəyyən etik məzmunlu kiçik tamaşalar təşkil etmişdir. Qarabağ professional teatrının təşəkkülündə xalq teatrı əhəmiyyətli rol oynamışdır. Bunun sayəsində XIX əsrdən başlayaraq əvvəl Şuşada sonra Ağdamda professional teatr yaranmış və çox səmərəli fəaliyyət göstərmişdir.

Açar sözlər: Azərbaycan, Qarabağ, Şuşa, Xankəndi, teatr.

Севиндж Тангудур (*Азербайджан*)

ИСТОРИЯ ТЕАТРОВ КАРАБАХА И ИХ ВОЗРОЖДЕНИЕ В СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ ПЕРИОД

Тема театрального здания, являющегося типом общественного здания, пришла в азербайджанскую архитектуру в середине XIX века. Наряду с бурным ростом промышленности наблюдалось возрождение культурной и общественной жизни города. Рос интерес к европейским театральным и цирковым представлениям.

Первое театральное представление в Азербайджане было поставлено в 1848 году в Карабахском регионе, в Шушинском театре, который располагался в частном доме, не отвечавшем требованиям, предъявляемым к театральному зданию. Элементы представления в обрядах, ритуалах и играх сыграли важную роль в создании самостоятельного народного театра. Карабахский народный театр имел реалистический характер и был связан с рабочими классами. Репертуар народного театра составляли небольшие спектакли с определенным этическим содержанием. Народный театр сыграл важную роль в становлении карабахского профессионального театра. Благодаря этому, начиная с XIX века, сначала в Шуше, а затем в Агдаме был создан и весьма эффективно функционировал профессиональный театр.

Ключевые слова: Азербайджан, Карабах, Шуша, Ханкенди, театр.