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## THE KARABAKH THEME IN AZERBAIJANI THEATER AFTER THE VICTORY

**Abstract.** This report discusses the stage representations of works on the Karabakh theme in Azerbaijani theaters after the Victory. Following the Victory, these performances became a source of pride for the people, inspiring them with a renewed zeal for creativity and cultural development. Among the post-Victory productions were “The Road to Victory” at the Azerbaijan State Academic National Drama Theater, authored and directed by Azer Pasha Nematov; “The Voice from Shusha” at the Aghdam State Drama Theater, directed by Karim Hasanov and based on Nadir Gadimli’s work; “Mission” at the Sumgait State Drama Theater, authored by Mubarez Hamidov and directed by Firudin Maharramov; “44 Days of Justice” at the Lankaran State Drama Theater, authored and directed by Anar Babanli; “Free Shusha” at the Aghdam State Drama Theater, directed by Karim Hasanov and written by S. Ibrahimli; and “Victory with the Scent of Inspiration” at the Qusar State Lezgi Drama Theater, directed by Rafiq Rahimli. These performances highlighted the appreciation and recognition given to martyrs, veterans, and the families of the fallen.

**Key words:** Karabakh theme, Patriotic War, Victory Day, historic victory, in memory of our martyrs.

**Introduction.** Performances devoted to the Karabakh theme have been staged on the scenes of Azerbaijani theaters since 1992, instilling in audiences a sense of love for the homeland, courage, and determination to resist the enemy. Productions on the Karabakh theme include, at the Azerbaijan State Academic National Drama Theater, Ilyas Efendiyev’s “The

Ruler and His Daughter,” later staged under the title “Karabakhname,” as well as Huseynbala Miralamov’s “Shame” (16 June 2006) and “The Gates of Ganja” (24 June 2012); at the Young Spectators’ Theater, Ali Amirli’s “The Addressless Train” (24 April 2017) and Huseynbala Miralamov’s “The Pain of Memory” (7 November 2004); at the Yerevan State Azerbaijani Drama Theater named after Jafar Jabbarli, Zalmakhan Yagub’s “The Displaced” (9 June 2017) and Agarahim Rahimov’s “The Soldier’s Mother” (28 December 2000); at the Sumgait State Musical Drama Theater, Huseynbala Miralamov’s “The Verdict of Conscience” (11 February 2015); at the Ganja State Drama Theater, Ilyas Efendiyev’s “Karabakhname” and Huseynbala Miralamov’s “The Verdict of Conscience” (2004); and at the Shusha State Musical Drama Theater, Huseynbala Miralamov’s “The Cry of Executed Statues” (2004).

**The interpretation of the main material.** After the Victory achieved in the Second Karabakh War under the leadership of our Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijani playwrights and writers created works depicting the heroism displayed in the battles fought for the homeland by our martyrs, including Mubarez Ibrahimov, Polad Hashimov, Ilgar Mizzeyev, Fuzuli Huseynov, Vusal Valiyev, and others.

The play “The Road to Victory,” which premiered on 28 May 2022 at the Azerbaijan State Academic National Drama Theater, was dedicated to the historic victory won by our people in the 44-day Patriotic War. The author and stage director of the production was People’s Artist Azer Pasha Nematov. The stage design was created by Honored Cultural Worker Ilham Elkhanoglu, and the music was composed by People’s Artist Siyavush Karimi.

The performance stood out for its originality. While the audience was in the foyer, recordings of statements by the country’s leader and Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev about developments in the frontline zones were played. Actors mingled among the audience, then entered the hall and came onto the stage shouting, “Give us weapons!” and “Enroll us in the army!”

The roles were performed by Nureddin Mehdikhanli, Hijran Nasirova, Elchin Efendi, Ali Nur, Matanat Atakishiyeva, Elnar Garayev, Khadija Novruzlu, Ilaha Hasanova, Anar Heybatov, Ilyas Ahmadov, Afat Mammadova, Ayshad Mammadov, and others.

The most powerful and natural scene of “The Road to Victory” was the moment when Vaqif, portrayed by People’s Artist and father of a martyr Ali

Nur, receives the news of his son's martyrdom. In this scene, everyone in the auditorium felt to the core the pain of hundreds of fathers who, during the war, kissed the flag draped over their sons' coffins and pressed it to their eyes. The audience could not hold back their tears.

On 6 May 2023, the premiere of a performance based on the work "The Voice from Shusha" took place at the Aghdam State Drama Theater. The production was staged by the theater's chief director Karim Hasanov, based on the play of the same title by local author Nadir Gadimli. The stage design was created by artist Mushfig Garayev, and the musical design was provided by Azer Shukurrov.

Among those seated in the auditorium during the performance were living witnesses of the Karabakh war—our heroic veterans who have never abandoned the fighting spirit. One of them was Yashar Huseynov, who fought to the very end in our just struggle and fulfilled the promise he had made—above all to his martyred brother and to all the brave sons of the homeland—"I will plant our flag in Shusha!" The performance itself was devoted precisely to his life and heroism.

Yashar Huseynov's brother, Fuzuli Huseynov, who was martyred in the First Karabakh War, was a chief warrant officer of the Special Forces and a Hero of the Patriotic War. Having taken part in the April battles of 2016, Yashar was wounded but neutralized six Armenian servicemen. On 27 September 2020, during the Patriotic War, he was again wounded but did not retreat and fought all the way to Shusha. It was Yashar who, amid the call to prayer, planted the tricolor Azerbaijani flag at the highest point in Shusha.

When the curtain rises, we see on stage black-and-white photographs of several Aghdam fighters from the First Karabakh War whose names have become legendary among the people. Among them is a photograph of Fuzuli, the martyred brother of Yashar Huseynov, the hero of the play. The mother, whose pain has not subsided for years, once again calls out to her child through tears. Despite being bent under the weight of grief, the father consoles his wife, saying, "He was not only our son, but the son of this whole land; enough now, woman, cry less," offering her solace.

The performance concludes with Yashar Huseynov ascending the stage and symbolically planting the Azerbaijani flag on the fortress of Shusha.

The roles were performed by Elmir Humbatov (Ahad, the father), Nurana Aliyeva (Zarnigar, the mother), Farhad Farhadzada (Yashar), Hakim Jafarli

(Karim), Jamal Zamanov (Farman), and Ikhtiyar Mammadov (the spirit of the martyr Fuzuli).

On 3 March 2024, the Lankaran State Drama Theater staged Gafar Jafarli's "The Martyr's Flag" in a production directed by Emil Asgarov. The stage design was by Tarlan Sadiqov, and the musical design was by Vugar Farajov.

The performance "The Martyr's Flag," staged by Emil Asgarov, evoked deeply emotional moments among the audience. As Asad Jahangir writes: "According to the members of the troupe, during rehearsals, while setting the *mise-en-scène* for the scenes in which news of the martyr's death arrives, the director was unable to restrain his emotions and burst into tears, and this emotional intensity spread to the stage, passed through the actors, and reached the auditorium as well" [1].

In this work devoted to the theme of heroism, Polad, the only child of the family, returns to battle despite already being a veteran. The role of Polad was performed by Saleh Azimzade. Despite the objections of his parents, he goes to defend his homeland and returns as a martyr.

Polad's father and mother are the central characters of "The Martyr's Flag." His father Farhad, played by Sujaddin Mirzayev, and his mother Sevda, played by Aynur Ahmadova, kept the audience in a state of intense emotional engagement with their performances. Upon hearing the news of their son's death, both parents—the actors—experience an unimaginable shock. Hearing the dreadful news, Sevda (Aynur Ahmadova) involuntarily drops the tray from her hands and collapses onto the floor, speechless. Farhad (Sujaddin Mirzayev) is instantly bent with grief. Clutching to his chest the flag stained with his son's blood, the father declares, "Thank God that our son was martyred for the homeland, for the land, for our people," thereby expressing the central idea of the performance and being met with prolonged applause from the audience.

On 3 December 2024, the Jafar Jabbarli Yerevan State Azerbaijani Drama Theater staged the play "The Voice from the Hereafter," written by Adila Nazar in memory of martyr Major Vusal Valiyev. The premiere of the play had been held earlier at the Azerbaijan State Young Spectators Theater. The author and director, İftikhar Piriyeu, titled the stage production "The Voice." This "Voice" represented not only the sounds of war but also the voice of justice, our anthem, our people, unity, and the blessed souls of our martyrs, ultimately becoming the voice of our Victory.

Iftikhar Piriyeu gave the stage work an avant-garde style. “Director Iftikhar Piriyeu, in a short period, sought to express stage images that are extremely difficult to convey or depict in a conceptual language; he brought to life dreams, thoughts, and desires through the language of symbols and imagery, and even telepathy and extrasensory perception (the transmission of information between people without the known five senses), successfully accomplishing this” [3].

Before the performance began, the Azerbaijani National Anthem was played on stage. The events unfolded in two main locations. The first was the family of Major Vusal Valiyev, depicting his meetings with his beloved, their engagement ceremony, and his sudden call to the army with the outbreak of war.

The second main location of the play was the frontline zone. This illustrated that Vusal Valiyev’s family, in spirit and heart, was present alongside the events at the front. Symbolically, through them, it represented the beating hearts of all Azerbaijani families in Karabakh and, indirectly, the unity of people, army, and state forming a single force.

A notable element of the play was the appearance of the shadow-spirits of our National Heroes, Mubarez Ibrahimov and Polad Hashimov. Their shadow-spirits called the people to Victory. At the end of the play, following Vusal Valiyev’s martyrdom, we hear the “Voice” of his soul rising from the heavens:

*“I died once, mother, but rose a thousand times,  
I brought Victory with those who followed my path.  
My soul, my life, and my body remain in my soldier;  
My homeland, my people, my country exist and will endure!”*

The actors—Parvin Dadashova (Inci), Niyamaddin Safaraliyev (Islam, father), Esmiralda Shahbazova (Medina, mother), and Samaya Nabiyeua (Samaya, mother)—skillfully brought the realities of life to the stage.

Other theaters in Azerbaijan have also staged plays on the Karabakh theme. For example:

- Sumgait State Drama Theater staged Hafiz Atakhanli’s “Mission” (10 November 2021), and Ali Amirli’s “Good News” directed by Fuad Javadzade (25 June 2024);
- Qusar State Lezgi Drama Theater staged Rafiq Rahimli’s “Victory with the Scent of Inspiration” (9 March 2022);

- Lankaran State Drama Theater staged Anar Babanlı's "44 Days of Justice" (16 September 2022);
- Aghdam State Drama Theater staged Shahnaz Shahin's "Mubariz" directed by Karim Hasanov (8 November 2024);
- Gazakh State Drama Theater staged Ali Amirli's "Martyr Father" directed by Musa Eyubov (8 November 2024).

Each of these productions highlighted the honorable victory of our country in the 44-day Patriotic War, the courage of our martyrs and veterans, and the heroic feats that are almost legendary.

Those who gave our people Victory at the cost of their blood knew, as Mehmet Akif Ersoy said:

*«What makes a flag a flag is the blood on it,  
If someone dies for the land, that is the homeland!»*

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, we can state that the performances of "The Road to Victory" at the Azerbaijan State Academic National Drama Theater, "The Voice from Shusha" at Aghdam State Drama Theater, "The Martyr's Flag" at Lankaran State Drama Theater, and "The Voice" at Jafar Jabbarli Yerevan State Azerbaijani Drama Theater further amplified and celebrated the joy of our people's Victory.

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**Mələhət Ağayeva (Azərbaycan)**

**AZƏRBAYCAN TEATRINDA ZƏFƏRDƏN SONRA  
QARABAĞ MÖVZUSU**

Məruzəmdə Zəfərdən sonra Qarabağ mövzusunda olan əsərlərin Azərbaycan teatrlarındakı səhnə təcəssümündən danışılır. Zəfər günündən sonra bu tamaşalar insanların qürur mənbəyi olaraq, onları daha da qurub-yaratmaq eşqi ilə alovlandırır. Zəfərdən sonra oynanan Azərbaycan Dövlət Akademik Milli Dram Teatrında Azər Paşa Nemətovun müəllifi və rejissorluğu ilə göstərilən “Zəfər yolu” tamaşasında, Ağdam Dövlət Dram Teatrında Kərim Həsənovun quruluşunda Nadir Qədimlinin “Şuşadan gələn səs” tamaşası və Sumqayıt Dövlət Dram Teatrında Mübariz Həmidovun müəllifi və Firudin Məhərrəmovun rejissorluğu ilə “Missiya”, Lənkəran Dövlət Dram Teatrında Anar Babanlıın müəllifi və rejissorluğu ilə “Haqqın 44 günü”, Ağdam Dövlət Dram Teatrı Kərim Həsənovun quruluşunda S.İbrahimlinin “Azad Şuşa”, Qusar Dövlət Ləzgi Dram Teatrı Rafiq Rəhimlinin “İlham ətirli Zəfər” şəhidlərə, qazilərə və şəhid ailələrinə verilən qiymətdən danışılırdı.

**Açar sözlər:** Qarabağ mövzusu, Vətən müharibəsi, Zəfər günü, qazandığı tarixi qələbə, şəhidlərimizin xatirəsinə.

**Малахат Агаева (Азербайджан)**

**ТЕМА КАРАБАХА В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОМ ТЕАТРЕ  
ПОСЛЕ ПОБЕДЫ**

В статье рассматривается сценическое воплощение произведений на тему Карабаха в азербайджанских театрах после Победы. После Победы эти постановки стали источником гордости для людей, вдохновляя их на новые творческие достижения. Среди постановок после Победы следует отметить «Путь к Победе» в Азербайджанском государственном академическом национальном драматическом театре (автор и режиссёр Азер Паша Нематов); «Голос из Шуши» в Агдамском государственном драматическом театре (режиссёр Карим Гасанов, автор Надир Гадимли); «Миссия» в Сумгайитском государственном драматическом театре (автор Мубариз Гамидов, режиссёр Фирудин Махаррамов); «44 дня справедливости» в Лянкяранском государственном драматическом театре (автор и режиссёр Анар Бабанлы); «Свободная Шуша» в Агдамском государственном драматическом театре (автор С. Ибрагимли, режиссёр Карим Гасанов); «Победа с ароматом вдохновения» в Государственном Лезгинском драматическом театре Кусара (режиссёр Рафиг Рагимли). В этих постановках освещалась оценка и признание, оказанное шехидам, ветеранам и семьям погибших.

**Ключевые слова:** тема Карабаха, Отечественная война, День Победы, историческая победа, в память о наших шехидах.