

Mamedova, U. (2023). The role of translated works in the repertory policy of the Azerbaijan State Theatre of Young Spectators (1930–1970s). *Culture and Arts in the Context of World Cultural Heritage. Klironomy*, 8, 31–39. Ostrava.

DOI: 10.47451/art2023-05-01

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## **The Role of Translated Works in the Repertory Policy of the Azerbaijan State Theatre of Young Spectators (1930–1970s)**

*Abstract:* The relevance of the study of this topic lies in the fact that foreign dramaturgy has always been in the center of attention of the Azerbaijani theater. This interest also applied to the Theater of Young Spectators. The directors of this theater often turned to the works of foreign playwrights to show the Azerbaijani audience the culture, lifestyle, national drama of other countries. From the 1930s to the 70s, the works of many famous world playwrights were staged: Y. Shakespeare, A. Pushkin, N. Gogol, N. Ostrovsky, I. Stock, Yu. Chaplygin, etc. It is true that the creative path of the Theatre of Young Spectators has always been the research object of national theater studies. However, the works of foreign playwrights included in the repertoire of the theater were not studied separately as a study subject. The study subject was foreign dramaturgy included in the repertoire of the Azerbaijan State Theatre of Young Spectators. The study object was the 1930s–1970s repertoire of the Azerbaijan State Theater of Young Spectators. The study purpose was to study the role of translated works in the repertory policy of the Azerbaijan State Theater of Young Spectators (1930s–1970s). To achieve the study purpose and solve the tasks, such scientific methods were used as historical-chronological, comparative, typological. The study used scientific works and articles of such Azerbaijani researchers as Z. Aghayev, N. Babayev, B. Boquslavski, İ. Karimov, C. Mammadov, İ. Novruzov, İ. Zamanlı, I. Karimov, I. Ragimli and K. Abdullayev. The article talks about performances based on translated works on the stage of the Azerbaijan State Young Spectators Theatre in the 1930s–1970s. The author tries to show the reasons for giving a special place to the works of Russian-Soviet dramatists among the translated works included in the repertoire of the theater, and to explain the influence of the time on literature. The author noted that the plays written by Russian dramatists during the mentioned period were received with interest on the stage of Azerbaijan, associates this with the fact that these plays resonate with the time in terms of theme, ideas and style, their adequacy to the taste and psychological perception of the Azerbaijani audience, the compatibility of the principles of humanism, internationalism and equality in these stage works with national values.

*Keywords:* Azerbaijani theater, theater of youth spactators, foreign dramaturgy, director, play, idea, genre, problem, time.

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## **Роль переводных произведений в репертуарной политике Азербайджанского государственного театра юного зрителя (1930–1970-е гг.)**

**Аннотация:** Актуальность исследования данной темы заключается в том, что зарубежная драматургия всегда была в центре внимания азербайджанского театра. Этот интерес относился и к Театру юного зрителя. Режиссеры этого театра часто обращались к произведениям зарубежных драматургов, чтобы показать азербайджанскому зрителю культуру, образ жизни, национальную араму других стран. В 1930–70-е годы были поставлены произведения многих известных мировых драматургов: Ю. Шекспира, А. Пушкина, Н. Гоголя, Н. Островского, И. Штока, Ю. Чаплыгина и др. Правда, что творческий путь Театра юного зрителя всегда было объектом исследования национального театроведения. Но произведения зарубежных драматургов, вошедших в репертуар театра, отдельно не изучалось как предмет исследования. Поэтому тема данной статьи является актуальной. Предметом исследования было зарубежная драматургия, вошедшая в репертуар Театра юного зрителя Азербайджана (ТЮЗ). Объектом исследования было репертуар ТЮЗа, 1930–70-х годов. Целью исследования было изучат роль переводных произведений в репертуарной политике Азербайджанского государственного театра юного зрителя (1930–1970-е гг.). В ходе исследования были использованы такие научные методы как историко-хронологической, сравнительной, типологической. В ходе исследования использовались материалы таких азербайджанских исследователей как З. Агаев, Н. Бабаев, Б. Богуславский, И. Каримов, Ч. Мамедов, И. Новрузов, И. Заманлы и К. Абдуллаев, И. Рагимли. В статье рассматриваются спектакли, подготовленные на основе переводных произведений на сцене Азербайджанского государственного театра юного зрителя (ТЮЗ) в 1930-70-е гг. Автор пытается показать причины отведения особого места творчеству русско-советских драматургов среди переводных произведений, входящих в репертуар театра, и объяснить влияние времени на литературу. Автор отмечает, что пьесы, написанные русскими драматургами в указанный период, были с интересом восприняты на сцене Азербайджана, а также на сцене ТЮЗа, и это связано с тем, что эти пьесы соответствовали периоду по тематике, идеям и стилю, были адекватны вкусу и психологическому восприятию азербайджанской публики, а также соответствовали гуманизму, интернационализму и равенству в этих пьесах с национальными ценностями.

**Ключевые слова:** азербайджанский театр, театр юного зрителя, зарубежная драматургия, режиссер, спектакль, идея, жанр, проблема, время.

## Introduction

The relevance of the study of this topic lies in the fact that foreign dramaturgy has always been in the center of attention of the Azerbaijani theater. This interest also applied to the Azerbaijan State Theater of Young Spectators. The directors of this theater often turned to the works of foreign playwrights to show the Azerbaijani audience the culture, lifestyle, national drama of other countries. From the 1930s to the 1970s, the works of many famous world playwrights were staged: Y. Shakespeare, A. Pushkin, N. Gogol, N. Ostrovsky, I. Stock, Yu. Chaplygin, etc. It is true that the creative path of the Theatre of Young Spectators has always been the research object of national theater studies. However, the works of foreign playwrights included in the repertoire of the theater were not studied separately as a study subject.

The study subject was foreign dramaturgy included in the repertoire of the Azerbaijan State Theatre of Young Spectators.

The study object was the 1930s–1970s repertoire of the Azerbaijan State Theatre of Young Spectators.

The study purpose was to study the role of translated works in the repertory policy of the Azerbaijan State Theater of Young Spectators (1930s–1970s).

According to the study purpose, the following tasks were solved:

- make a list of foreign works exhibited on the stage of the Azerbaijan State Theatre of Young Spectators;
- collect materials for each performance inserted on the stage of the theater on foreign drama;
- study the place and meaning of each foreign work in the repertoire;
- highlight the geography and typology of foreign works exhibited on the stage of the theater.

To achieve the study purpose and solve the tasks, such scientific methods were used as historical-chronological, comparative, typological.

The study used scientific works and articles of such Azerbaijani researchers as Z. Aghayev, N. Babayev, B. Boquslavski, İ. Karimov, C. Mammadov, İ. Novruzov, İ. Zamanli, I. Karimov, I. Ragimli and K. Abdullayev.

## Results

After the establishment of Soviet authority in Azerbaijan, preparing theater plays for children became a current issue. Appropriate ways were being sought to organize children's theaters in the central cities of other republics that used the work experience of children's theaters established in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkiv and other cities of the USSR. The creation of a children's theater in Azerbaijan could not be realized due to the lack of a building and the lack of suitable acting team.

In the first years, this responsible work was entrusted to the collective of the Azerbaijan National Drama Theater. Performances such as "Beautiful Spring" (Abdulla Shaig), "Captain Grant's Children," "Around the World in 80 Days" (Jules Verne), "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (Beecher Stowe) and "Uncle Tom's Hut" (Beecher Stowe), created on the stage of the Drama Theater by the order of the ideological department aroused great interest of the children. However, the theater staff had difficulties in fulfilling this obligation. The process could not continue like this. It was necessary to form the staff of the children's theater. Professional directors and actors of the theater organized drama clubs in schools and after-school children's institutions to increase interest in histrionics among the younger generation.

The need to create a separate theater for children became more evident over time. Finally, on October 5, 1928, by the decision of the Commissariat of Public Enlightenment of Azerbaijan, the Baku Children's Theater (now the Theatre of Young Spectators) was established. The first performance of the group, which was initially formed by the Russian branch, was the play "Five People" (Sherbakov and Simirnov) staged by A.A. Tuganov. At the beginning of 1929, the Azerbaijani branch of the theater was also created. The acting team of the department was selected from the drama clubs organized by the actors of the Academic Theater.

In January 1930, the Azerbaijani branch of the theater began its activities with the performance of the play "Against the Red Tie" (Ivanter, directed by Gabriele Cornelli). The director changed the play so that the children could better understand the essence of the text. The name of most of the characters in the play was changed, the location was moved to Azerbaijan. Despite all the director's efforts, the superficiality of the translation and the "fictionalism" of the events were the target of criticism and were highlighted as weaknesses of the play in the written reviews. The critics did not consider it appropriate that the director exaggerates the negativity in the play to an extreme degree. Despite all these shortcomings, the

performance aroused the great interest of children and was successful by being shown to schoolchildren of several cities.

While there was no shortage of repertoire in the Russian section during the first years of the Baku Children's Theater (they connected with children's theaters in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkiv, Kiev and other cities and bought artistic materials), the situation in the Azerbaijani section was dire. The slowness of the creation process of national children's drama made section's repertoire choice difficult. Therefore, the director of the section, Gabriele Cornelli, saw the way to fill this gap in the transformation and translation of the plays of Russian dramatists. However, in many cases, the confusion of ideas and the abundance of superficial words and expressions in the changes and translations made by Cornelli and Berak weakened the idea-aesthetic effect of the artistic materials. For this reason, some of the actors of the Academic Theater, who are competent in translation, started doing translation in order to improve the repertory situation of the children's theater.

In previous years, the repertoire of the Azerbaijani section of the theater was based on translated works only. In 1930–1933 “Vur-Gur” (R. Berak, translated by Asad Tahir, directed by G. Kornelli), “Uzag Yaylagda” (Yaltseva, translated by F. Akhundov, director by G. Kornelli), “Fight in Bazaar” (E. Valerik, translated by Asad Tahir, edited by G. Cornelli), “Savada Doghru” (Y. Chaplygin, translated by Yusif Shirvan, edited by G. Cornelli), “Pambigh Verek” (adapted by G. Cornelli, directed by Cornelli), “Besh Illikhi Iki Il Yarima” (Yuri Chapligin, dir. Asad Tahir, director G. Cornelli), “Zagfederasia” (Y. Chapligin, dir. Asad Tahir, directed by G. Cornelli), “A Cat Walking Alone” (G. Cornelli, translated by Mustafa Mardanov), “Dashgin” (Anna Jan, translated by Rza Tahmasib, directed by R. Tahmasib), “Pambigh Dostlari” (Y. Chapligin, translated by Asad Tahir, edited by G. Cornelli) and other plays produced in this section had similar themes. In the idea of plays, expression of collective labor, kolkhoz, sovkhoz, and factory themes were predominant.

In 1933–1934, to enrich the repertoire of the Azerbaijani section of the theater, the young actors of the collective began to write small plays, which were the first steps taken in terms of the appearance of national dramaturgy in the repertoire. Although the plays written by Almammad Atayev, Jafar Jafarov, Ali Hasanov, Zafar Nematov, Adil Iskenderov, Shamil Malikyeganov, and Mammadaga Dadashov were short and had a simple plot, they were valuable as early examples of national children's drama. “Kuchalarda,” “Chelyunskchilar,” “Papiro Chakma!” and other children's plays written by them played a certain role in enriching the existing repertoire.

In 1935-37, the repertoire of the Azerbaijani section still consisted mostly of translations from Russian. From the reviews written about the plays “Uzag Yaylagda” (Pavel Malyarevsky, translated by Soltan Dadashov, directed by S. Dadashov), “Seryozha Streltsov” (Valentina Lyubimova. trans. Mustafa Mardanov, directed by Maharram Hashimov), “Ardi Var” (Brunstein, translated by Maharram Hashimov, director Shua Sheykhov), “Emrin Esirleri” (Leonid Markov, translated and directed by Maharram Hashimov), “Balda” (Alexander Pushkin, translated by Mustafa Mardanov, directed by Alexander Tuganov) and others produced in those years, it is clear that the audience of the theater watched those translated works with great interest.

The repertoire of the children's theater was mainly selected and approved by three age groups. The 1939 repertoire included the comedy “Inspector” (Nikolai Gogol). It was already

called the Theater of Young Spectators. According to its new name, certain changes in the repertoire selection of the theater attracted attention. Theater criticism did not unequivocally welcome the preparation of this play for children. Some critics wrote that the play does not correspond to children's psychology. However, after the production of the play, it became clear that the director adapted the artistic material to both the spiritual and psychological understanding of the young audience by making interesting changes and reductions in the play. The play criticized liars, fraudsters and people who believed in negative types and fell into a despicable situation. In the idea of the play, spiritual and moral principles such as truthfulness and honesty were appreciated, as well as flawed aspects such as lying, tufthunting, ignorance, dullness and conceitedness were criticized. Removing some scenes from the play to ensure the play's role in educating the younger generation also had a positive effect.

The role of Zafar Nematov, the second director of the play, in the positive resolution of the case should be noted. A. Tuganov always worked together with local directors to ensure that every translated work he prepared on the stage of the Academic Drama Theater was suitable for national values. The director was not mistaken in the choice of the second director, relying on his experience in the previous years on the stage of the Theater of Young Spectators, where he was newly appointed. The director, who considered it suitable to work with Zafar Nematov, guessed that he knows the national and mental values well. The directors shortened some of the actions and words of the characters, removed unnecessary erotic scenes from the text, adapted the main events that served the educational value of the play, and as a result built an interesting plot line.

At the play's premiere, theater critics were satisfied with the work done and liked the play's role in shaping the moral education of young people. As an example, it is appropriate to highlight a part of the article written together by the theater critics of the time, I. Zamanli and K. Abdullayev. The authors of the article wrote: "From the very first scenes of the play, it was obvious that the directors took a line-movement completely suitable for the play and worked hard on it. As the scenes replaced each other, the audience's interest increased, colorful people who differed from each other in terms of their inner worlds, consciousness and thoughts passed before their eyes." (*Zamanli & Abdullayev, 1946*)

On the eve of the Second World War and in the years after the war, the majority of translations from Russian drama in the repertoire of the Theater of Young Spectators was due to the ideological demand of the time. The political-revolutionary pathos prevailing in Russian-Soviet drama was also interesting for the Azerbaijani audience. The main theme in the literature and drama of the time was revolution, party, Komsomol, pioneer, partisan movement, collective labour indicators and other actual problems, so it corresponded to the moral taste and socio-public dreams of the audience already living with the Soviet ideology. During those years, "Partisan Kostya" (Filippov, translated by Mustafa Mardanov, directed by Shua Sheykhov), "Your Home" (Valentina Lyubimova, translated by Muharram Hashimov, directed by Zafar Nematov), "Khususi Tapshirig" (Sergei Mikhalkov, translated by Mammadsadiq Allahverdiyev, directed by Zafar Nematov), "In Early May" (Valentina Lyubimova, translated by Mammadsadiq Allahverdiyev, directed by Karim Hasanov) and other similar children's plays were translated from Russian and prepared for the performance. In the plays, we mentioned, all Soviet youth

were invited to solidarity for the sake of the revolution, unity and equality in the fight against the enemy and freedom.

The themes, ideas and philosophical framework of most of the plays prepared for the performance corresponded to the requirements of the time as they served to form the principles of communist morality. Critics unequivocally liked this type of children's performances and appreciated their role in the moral and psychological education of the young generation. For example, in the article of the same name written by the critic Ibrahim Zamanli about the play "Djabha Boyundja Emr," it is clear that the play was liked and greeted with applause by the audience. The critic noted the work of the collective, especially the actors, who created a figurative expression of the idea of the staged play, and wrote about the actor of the Lenin role: "The glorious role of the leader is skillfully played by the honored artist of the republic A.D. Gurbanov. He was able to successfully fulfill this responsible role and deeply understood the main characteristics of the character." ([Zamanli, 1942](#))

Reviews written about the performance of the play "Khususi Tapshirig" made in those years are also interesting. In the article of the same name written by the critic Nurettin Babayev, the opinion was expressed that the idea of the play had a special role in its success. The critic appreciated the dramatist's creativity and wrote: "Stalin Prize laureate S. Mikhalkov won the respect and love of Soviet children in his wonderful works. Mikhalkov, who is able to present the interesting life of our schoolchildren with artistic images, masterfully recreates their most beautiful images before the eyes of young people, has recently written several beautiful children's plays, one of which is the play "Khususi tapshirig" produced at the Theater of Young Spectators named after M. Gorky." ([Babayev, 1947](#))

Critic Nurettin Babayev's opinion about the performance and the play is typical for most of the plays translated from Russian in those years. In this regard, it is enough to consider the article of the same name written by critic Jalal Mammadov about the performance of the play "Mayin evvellerinde" (Gold Medal, Valentina Lyubimova, translated by Mammadsadiq Allahverdiyev, directed by Karim Hasanov). In the article written by him, the idea of the play, the sounding of episodes over time and the interest of the audience were positively evaluated.

It was legitimate for writers to write works on topics that were relevant to the times. The question of turning to stage performances that respond to the ideological problems of the time and attracting attention to the positive role they play in the moral education of young people was the responsibility of theater critics. Therefore, the similarities of the reviews written in those years attracted attention. The same picture could be seen in the article written by the critic Jalal Mammadov. In his review of the play "In Ealy May," he first of all emphasized the educational importance of the play: "In Early May" is a necessary and valuable work that helps in the communist upbringing of students, inculcates a passionate love for life, school, family and comrades in Soviet schools. This work is of great importance not only for students, but also for young teachers and parents." ([Mammadov, 1947](#))

In the 1940s and 1950s, the problems of the period of the Second World War and the period of spiritual and material difficulties experienced in the following years were the main themes of the drama. In the plays written and staged in those years, the main idea served to promote hatred of fascism, criticism of the occupying forces, and the dedication of people, especially young people, involved in restoration and reconstruction. In the translated works produced on the stage

of the Theater of Young Spectators, the main problems of the time were in the spotlight, including directed by Zafar Nematov), “Polad Neca Barkdir?” (Nikolay Ostrovsky, translated and directed by Hasan Aliyev), “Sehrli Guvadj” (Pavel Malyarevsky, translated by Mammadsadiq Allahverdiyev, edited by Karim Hasanov) etc. Because patriotism, militancy, humanism, and high moral values were preached in those performances, their themes were relevant and their ideas were attractive.

Especially during these years, the translated works of the talented director Zafar Nematov were received with great interest by the audience. His translated works for different age groups corresponded to the requirements of the time in their idea and subject matter. Among these plays, “Castello” (1951, Isodor Stock, translated by Mehdi Mammadov), “Radish” (Pavel Malyarevsky, translated by Mustafa Mardanov), “On the shore of a Forest Lake” (Cesar Solodor, translated by Alesgar Sharifov), “Agbaniz” (Valentina Lyubimova, 1948), “The Inspector” (Nikolai Gogol, 1945), “Special Assignment” (Sergei Mikhalkov, 1947), “Gone with the Wind” (Boris Gamrikeli, 1948), “The Green Chest” (Ivan Vasilenko, 1949), “The Snow Queen” (Yugen Schwartz, 1951), “Gikor” (Ovanes Tumanyan, 1955), etc. are considered successful performances of Z. Nemetov’s creativity. Highly appreciating his performances, professor Ilham Ragimli linked his successes with his work experience in Moscow in 1948 and St. Petersburg in 1950 and wrote: “In all the performances staged by Zafar Nematov, he paid special attention to the level of professionalism and genre sophistication, and, in his native theater, he created a fantasy full of courage, sought to form a new directorial style with an inspired imagination.” ([Ragimli, 2010](#))

The play “Aghbaniz” criticized the conflict between the nations living in America and the discriminatory attitudes of whites against blacks. Critic Ibrahim Novruzov explained the idea of the play, the relevance of its theme and its influence on modern youth and wrote: “On the other side of the ocean live two opposing forces. The first of them is called Roosevelt’s America, which supports truth, justice, peace, and wishes for the unity and brotherhood of the peoples of the world. The second is the Dollar America, which strives to drag nations into new wars and claims to dominate the world.” ([Novruzov, 1948](#))

Despite the fact that there was enough national children’s drama in the repertoire of the Young Spectators Theater in 1951-61, translation works were also given a large place. Most of the translated works included in the theater’s repertoire were plays by Russian writers. Talking of translated works that gained interest and were remembered in those years, we can mention performances such as “Castello” (Isodor Shtok, translated by Mehdi Mammadov, directed by Zafar Nematov), “Marriage” (N. Gogol, translated by Aziz Sharif, directed by Karim Hasanov), “Mystery of Eternal Night” (I. Lukovsky, translated by Mammadsadiq Allahverdiyev, edited by Agaali Dadashov), “Radish” (Pavel Malyarevsky, translated by Mustafa Mardanov, edited by Zafar Nematov), “Pavlik Morozov” (Valentina Zubareva, translated by Mammadsadig Allahverdiyev, edited by Ulduz Rafili), “Gogol Evi” (Miroslav Stegluk, translated by Atamoglan Rzayev, directed by Karim Hasanov), “In the Forest Lake” (Cesar Solodor, translated by Alasgar Sharifov, directed by Zafar Nematov), “Umid Neghmesi” (“Zero According to Morals” by V. Stoyenko, translated by Anvar Mammadkhanli, directed by Ulduz Rafili). The performances that we mentioned were welcomed by the audience and theater critics because they served to form

high moral values such as Soviet morality, humanism, patriotism, and internationalism in terms of ideas, themes, and higher goals.

Critics unequivocally liked the character of Pavlik Morozov, “one of the real young Leninists educated by the Soviet school and pioneer organization” (*Aghayev, 1953*), who was an example to all Soviet schoolchildren and young people. Because the idea of the play was relevant for its time, it made young viewers think. They saw and applauded the example of their peers Pavlik that the love of the Motherland is “higher than all other loves.”

Also, the play “Pavlik Morozov” proved that the theater has a skilled team and that they mainly stand in the position of socialism and realism (*Karimov, 1969*).

In 1964–1970, successful plays were prepared on the stage of the Young Audience Theater based on translated works. “Azadlig adası” (“Fires of Puerto Sorido”, Y. Min and A. Menchikovski, translated by Islam Ibrahimov, directed by Karim Hasanov), “İngilab Namina” (Mikhail Shatrov, translated by Mirza Ibrahimov, directed by Karim Hasanov), “My Son Volodia” (Yuri Yakovlev, translated Iskander Joshgun, directed by Zafar Nematov), “Sukut Dairesi” (Paolo Messin, translated by Valid Sanani, directed by Huseyn Sultanov) show the moral values of the Soviet man, the invincibility and humanity of the golden army, the supremacy of the political-ideological course implemented by the state were appreciated as the main principle.

One of such interesting stage productions was the play “İngilab Namina.” In 1963–1965, the play was staged in both the Russian and Azerbaijani sections of the theater. In the Russian section, the critic B. Boguslavsky, who appreciated the structure given by the director Alexander Varshavsky, wrote: “This work can and should live on the stage of the theater of young spectators for a long time.” (*Boquslarski, 1963*)

That play was staged by the director Karim Hasanov in the Azerbaijan section in 1965. It is clear from the articles written about the play that this play was also successful and received applause from the audience (*Karimov, 1965*).

## Discussion

As a result of the study, the author puts forward a number of issues that need to be further investigated:

- There is a need to create a topic and genre typology of translated works.
- It is necessary to determine the geography of foreign dramaturgy examples.
- Parameters of influence of translated plays on national dramaturgy should be investigated.
- The role of translated works in the process of integration of Azerbaijani theater into the world theater space should be studied.

## Conclusion

The request of the Azerbaijan State Theater of Young Spectators for translated works not only served to solve the problem of lack of examples of national drama written for children and young people in the repertoire, but also played a big role in enriching the repertoire and expanding the range of topics. It was no coincidence that among the translated works included in the repertoire of the Theatre of Young Spectators, the most Russian children’s dramas were included. In the children’s plays prepared for the performance, schoolchildren were invited to

patriotism, struggle, and humanism, which was the main component of political-ideological propaganda for that period. Therefore, the Russian dramaturgy, which is ideologically not far from us, is easily adapted to the Azerbaijani theater, the performances were loved and watched by young generation and school children.

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