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## **SHEIKH NASRULLAH ON THE OPERA STAGE**

**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the characterization of the image of Sheikh Nasrullah from the opera “The Dead” by Vasif Adigozalov, a prominent XX century Azerbaijani composer. This first satirical opera in the national musical culture is distinguished by its high artistic qualities. Among them, it is important to note the composer’s ability to create a bright imaginative world. V. Adigozalov depicts Sheikh Nasrullah, one of the main characters, by means of a grotesque, recitative-recitatorial style, and the method of generalization through the genre.

**Key words:** opera, grotesque, recitative, satire, Sheikh Nasrullah.

**Introduction.** In 1963, the People’s Artist of Azerbaijan Vasif Adigozalov wrote an opera based on the play “The Dead” by the outstanding Azerbaijani playwright Jalil Mammadguluzadeh. Appeal to this masterpiece of national literature was a brave step made by a young author who had just stepped on his independent creative path. It is surprising that at the early stage of his compositional career he seeks to create a satirical opera that was unprecedented in the national musical art.

According to the memoirs of V. Adigozalov, even during his student years, he was obsessed with the desire to write an opera based on the play “The Dead” and even made several sketches for the future composition [4, p. 43].

After graduating from the conservatory, the composer began working on this composition and created the first sample of opera satire in the history of Azerbaijani national music. The impetus for the writing of this musical-stage work was the order of Azerbaijani television.

**The interpretation of the main material.** The opera “The Dead” was put on the stage on November 11, 1963, in the Azerbaijan State Opera and

Ballet Theater named after M.F. Akhundov. The director of the performance was Honored Artist of Azerbaijan Sh.Badalbeyli, the conductor was People's Artist of the USSR Niyazi, the artist was A.Fataliev, and the choirmaster was Honored Artist of the Republic N.Melikov. The main roles were played by the People's Artists of the USSR L.Imanov (Iskandar) and F.Akhmedova (Nazli), People's Artist of Azerbaijan A.Bunyatzade (Sheikh Nasrullah), F.Mehdiyev (Sheikh Ahmed), G.Aliyev (Haji Hasan), H.Gurbanova (Fatma Nisa Khanum). The premiere was broadcast on radio and television.

V.Adigozalov already had some experience in writing a stage composition to the moment when he started working on a satirical opera. So, in the musical comedy "Haji Gara", written in collaboration with R.Mustafayev, he found certain means of expression in the musical embodiment of satirical images. However, a special responsibility was placed on the young composer while appealing to such a complex genre as the satirical opera.

In the play "The Dead", which is a milestone in the development of Azerbaijani dramaturgy of the twentieth century, J.Mammadguluzadeh exposes ignorant people who have lost their human feelings and turned into an unconscious mass and clergy who use all kinds of deception to rob people. The hero of the "world of the dead" Sheikh Nasrullah, became a means of religious income, or in other words, turned into a "robbery rifle."

In the play, cruelly mocking the world of ignorance, J. Mammadguluzadeh, with the words of the protagonist Iskander, calls on his citizens to revival. Kefley Iskandar in this work is a generalized image of the national intelligentsia, who began playing a prominent role in Azerbaijani society at the beginning of the XX century. A graduate of university, Iskandar, is deeply aware of what is happening around him, and he is trying his best to convey this truth to his compatriots and "open their eyes". However, the "urban people", firmly rooted in fanaticism, do not understand him [3, p. 17].

The difficult psychological moments in the disclosure of the spiritual world of the characters that are contained in the work, as well as the high level of dramatic tension are important features that characterize the play "The Dead".

V.Adigozalov tried to show the comedy of J.Mammadguluzadeh, consisting of 4 mejlises and 5 acts, in a generalized form of 4 acts and almost halved the number of characters. However, this did not violate the integrity, did not change the idea, dramatic development and the figurative world of the play.

Although Aslan Aslanov and Firudin Mehdiyev are cited as authors of the opera libretto in most sources, the initial version of the script for the opera

“The Dead” by V.Adigozalov was provided by Javid Hilaloglu, director of the Agdam Drama Theater. This information was shared by the composer’s son, People’s Artist of Azerbaijan Yalchin Adigozalov. However, due to his political views, J.Hilaloglu was arrested and his name was forbidden to be mentioned in any source.

While searching for a talented librettist V.Adigozalov appeals to F.Mehdiyev and he introduces the composer to A.Aslanov. The incontrovertible fact is that the librettists did a great job on the opera script. According to the laws of opera drama, they completely updated the literary text, summarized some of the events in the play and made a number of additions: one of them was the appearance of Iskandar on the stage in the shroud. In this scene, not only the “poor and uneducated people”, but Sheikh Nasrullah is also amazed by the happened “miracle” and turns out to be in a funny position.

A prominent Azerbaijani literary critic Mir Jalal notes that in the play “The Dead” of J.Mammadguluzadeh, a person can feel the influence of the critical realism of “The Government Inspector” of the outstanding Russian writer N.Gogol [1, p. 508-509]. The scientist draws a parallel between the arrival of Sheikh Nasrullah in the city .... and the arrival of Khlestkov in the city N; finds common features in storylines, satirical targets, and in the types of images. To confirm his observations, he quotes from the article of J. Mammadguluzadeh about N. Gogol, published on the pages of the magazine “Molla Nasraddin”: “... 100 years ago in Russia appeared a man who wrote such a comedy about Russian officials, that even reading it now, it seems that in Nakhchivan, Shusha, in all villages of the Caucasus and small towns, an “inspector” will arrive” [1, p. 508-509].

In the words of Mir Jalal, “Sheikh Nasrullah is such a typical character that is difficult not to find not only in Azerbaijani literature but throughout the Middle East ... Sheikh Nasrullah is a very cunning, treacherous, and far-sighted person ... and a scene in the cemetery is a good confirmation of this. Ordinary fraudsters would not come there. The sheikh goes to the cemetery, although he knows that the dead will not resurrect again, and the hopes of the people will collapse ... he goes there because the resurrection will not happen, people’s attention would be distracted to the other side. He knows well about strife and conflicts between the alive and the dead in religious families.” [1, p. 570-571].

One of the composer’s valuable artistic findings in the characterization of the image of Sheikh Nasrullah in the opera “The Dead” is his image through

marches-processions of the grotesque plan. The depiction of a grotesque procession of satirical images that concentrate negative features in themselves can be considered as a new means of musical expression for Azerbaijani composer music.

Certainly, there have been similar examples in the history of world music. For example, in Russian classical opera, the musical characteristics of negative characters are often found, summarized through marches. In many cases, they are associated with fantastic images. An example of this is the march of Chernomor from the opera "Ruslan and Lyudmila" by M.I. Glinka, the procession of Tsar Berendey from the opera "The Snow Maiden", the procession of Tsar Dodon and the Tsaritsya Shemakha from the opera "The Golden Cockerel" by A.N. Rimsky-Korsakov. At the same time, ceremonial marches are encountered as a means of depicting comic images. I.Efendiyeva notes a certain similarity between the procession of Sheikh Nasrullah and the march from A.N. Rimsky Korsakov's "The Tale of Tsar Saltan". Indeed, it is obvious that in this work V.Adigozalov relied on the best traditions of Russian opera. You can also draw a parallel with another work – the opera "The Golden Cockerel" by A.N. Rimsky-Korsakov. It is well known that this opera was written based on the tale of the great poet of the XIX century A.S. Pushkin. Actually, in the literary source, the story of Dodon is presented in a humorous manner; however, in A.N. Rimsky Korsakov's opera, the tale rises to the level of a political satire. Compared to the image of Saltan from "The Tale of Tsar Saltan", Dodon is a cruel and incompetent ruler. The creation of a musical caricature of such a ruler, allowed A.N. Rimsky-Korsakov to present the world a vivid example of opera-satire.

Interestingly, there is a certain similarity between the procession of Sheikh Nasrullah and the rambling march of King Dodon, "preparing for battle". Although they are different characters, in both cases the solemn, majestic music masterfully conveys their grotesque features.

Considering the role of the procession in the musical outline of Sheikh Nasrullah, one cannot forget to mention the fact that when composing this episode "before the eyes" of V. Adigozalov, there was a similar example from the music of his outstanding teacher G.Garayev. This is the "Procession" from the ballet "Seven Beauties", in which the Vizier, who wants to hide his evil deeds with all his might, tries to cover Bahram Shah's "eyes" and organizes a "false procession" for this purpose. With its artificial solemnity and grandeur, it characterizes Vezir himself, and is a reflection of his inner world.

The procession from the opera “The Dead” is built on the intonations of chargah and sounds with ostinate chords on the background. Despite the modality of concreteness, the theme appears in a completely different harmonious “attire”. On a strong part of the beat at the background of rhythmic chords, the sound of a B natural creates a sharp dissonant effect. In the melody itself, after a chromatic downward movement, an abrupt jump to a perfect fourth up and a diminished fifth, and also after a “vernacular” for the mood augmented second (for a flat B natural), the appearance of tritonic tone (for A flat B natural), and emphasis on a strong beat of the tact instead of maye (tonic) – the sound of B strengthens the dissonance. The sound in the upper register of the flute and clarinet, the “knocking” motives of the melody intensify the artificial beginning in the melody. The key of the melody often changes and gradually rising to the upper registers, the sound reaches the level of “stun”, that is, the dynamics grow, the texture thickens. Throughout the whole procession, the rhythmic ostinato is invariably present, which further enhances its grotesque character.



In the aria, Sheikh Nasrullah, as in the literary source, addresses the people in the Farsi language, which also strongly emphasizes the satirical beginning. This aria characterizes not only Sheikh Nasrullah, but also people who do not understand a word from what he is talking about. The theme of the aria is written in the mode of shur, from the beginning to the end the melody sounds against the background of an organ point from one tone – maye shur.

**Andante**

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A - də - mi dər vəq - qi mə - rəz iş ta - ha - yi

(8)

tə - am nə mi - ba şod dil - niz - dər vəq - ti.

(8)

Recitatives play an important role in the accusatory-satirical scenes of the opera. The composer admitted that, while composing them, he relied on the rich intonational potential of Azerbaijani national music, especially the mughams, and did a great job in this direction. V. Adigzalov also relied on the experience of the great Uzeyir Hajibeyli, who created samples of a highly artistic recitative style in the opera *Koroglu*. It is also not a coincidence that the author of the opera “The Dead”, consisting mostly of recitatives, among the composers, whose compositions served as an example for him while writing this work, called the name of the

outstanding Russian composer of the XIX century M. Mussorgsky [4, p. 45]. Throughout his life, M. Mussorgsky sought for the unity of word and music and achieved significant achievements in the recitative field. V. Adigözəlov, who followed the traditions of his great predecessors – M. Mussorgsky and U. Hajibeyli, managed to create original and surprisingly expressive recitations in the opera “The Dead”.

**Conclusion.** In the musical characteristics of the satirical images of the opera, the method of generalization through the genre also shows itself in recitatives.

If we take into account that the composer uses the intonational potential of the mugham-daskah genre in the opera in a “distorted” and meaning-changing manner for depicting negative characters, then we can again talk about the method of generalization through the genre.

Thus, V. Adigözəlov’s opera “The Dead” was the first example of a satirical opera in the history of Azerbaijani composer music and a remarkable result of the creative search of a young author. Those successes were manifested in the skillful use of satirical methods in work, in the creation of grotesque musical images based on the intonational dictionary of national music.

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### OPERA SƏHNƏSİNDƏ ŞEYX NƏSRULLAH

Məqalədə XX əsr böyük Azərbaycan bəstəkarı Vasif Adigözəlovun “Ölülər” operasındakı Şeyx Nəsrullah obrazından bəhs olunur. Milli musiqi mədəniyyətində ilk satirik opera nümunəsi olan bu əsər özünün yüksək bədii xüsusiyyətləri ilə seçilir. Onların sırasında bəstəkarın parlaq obraz aləmi yaratmaq bacarığını qeyd etmək lazımdır. Əsas personajlardan biri olan Şeyx

Nəsrullahın xasiyyətnaməsində bəstəkar qrotesk, rəçitativ-deklamasiya üslubuna üstünlük vermiş və janr vasitəsilə ümumiləşdirmədən istifadə etmişdir.

*Açar sözlər:* opera, qrotesk, rəçitativ, satira, Şeyx Nəsrullah.

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### **ШЕЙХ НАСРУЛЛА НА ОПЕРНОЙ СЦЕНЕ**

Статья посвящена характеристике образа Шейх Насрулла из оперы «Мертвецы» видного азербайджанского композитора XX столетия Васи́фа Адигезалова. Эта первая в национальной музыкальной культуре сатирическая опера отличается своими высокими художественными качествами. Среди них необходимо отметить умение композитора создавать яркий образный мир. Одного из главных персонажей Шейха Насрулла В.Адигезалов обрисовывает посредством гротеска, речитативно-декламационного стиля и методом обобщения через жанр.

*Ключевые слова:* опера, гротеск, речитатив, сатира, Шейх Насрулла.