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THE EMBODIMENT OF IMAGE OF NIZAMI GANJAVI AND HIS CREATIVITY IN AZERBAIJANI BALLET PERFORMANCES

Abstract. In the article the staging of Azerbaijani ballets dedicated to image of great Azerbaijani poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi and ballets, based on the themes of poems “Khamsa” by Nizami is studied. The ballets “Seven Beauties” and “Leyli and Majnun” by Gara Garayev, “Nizami” by F.Amirov, “The Kind and Evil” by T. Bakikhanov, staged many times and in different countries by different ballet producers, “Leyli and Mejnun” by U.HAJibeyli, staged by USA vocal-dance group are analysed, the position and role of these stagings in Azerbaijani and world ballet art are defined also.

Keywords: Nizami Ganjavi, “Khamsa”, ballet of Azerbaijan, choreography, stage art.

Introduction. The epoch of the Oriental Renaissance (IX–XII centuries) gave birth to the greatest minds of mankind - scientists and poets, such as Firdausi, Rudaki, Saadi, Hafiz, Khagani, Jami, Navoi, Dehlevi and others. Among them the brilliant Azerbaijani poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi occupies a special place.

After Azerbaijan withdrew the Arab Caliphate, Ganja was ruled by the Turkic dynasties of Sajids and Sallarids. Later from the middle of the XII century to the middle of the XIII century Ganja was the residency of the Atabek state or the Turkic dynasty of Ildeguizides. In the XII century, the city of Ganja, where the great poet was born and spent his life almost without leaving, was the intersection of the most important trade routes (the Silk Road, etc.) and became important economical and cultural center of the Middle East. The outstanding scientists – academicians E.E. Bertels, I.Y. Krachkovsky, A.E. Krimsky (the author of article about

Nizami in “Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary”), Azerbaijani scientists H. Arasli, J. Heyat, R. Aliyev and others, always emphasized the Turkic, namely Azerbaijani roots of Nizami Ganjavi creativity. So, Y.N. Marr (orientalist, son of academician N.Y. Marr) wrote: «the unvarying character of Turkic woman as poetic symbol of feminine beauty <...>, numerous aphoristical expressions, linguistic forms, peculiar for Turkic, Azerbaijani folklore, folk language (this feature is also often pointed out by specialists), many direct notices and inklings of poet himself—all these facts confirm that Nizami was namely Azerbaijani Poet and that his creativity has deep national roots. It’s no coincidence, that representatives of Persian intellectuals admit, that «Nizami wasn’t Persian poet. He lived and worked in Azerbaijani surrounding, so his poems are not understandable for Persians [2, p. 266]. Well-known Iranian scientist, Nizami scholar Vahid Dasgirdi wrote: «According traditions of Turks Nizami’s body was buried in turbe» [2, p. 26].

The interpretation of the main material. Nizam ad-Din Abu Muhammad Ilyas ibn-Yusuf ibn-Zaki ibn-Muayad (the poet’s full name, 1141–1209) lost his parents at an early age and was raised by his uncle, his mother’s brother, and got a brilliant education for those times. The poems and lyrics by Nizami convincingly confirm his encyclopedic education, the thorough knowledge of Persian, Arabic, Turkish literature, medicine, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, Euclidian geometry, botany, theology, Christianity, Islamic law, Judaism, Persian and Indian mythology, philosophy, esoterics, ethics, architecture, music, dance, fine arts and other spheres. Nizami began writing poetry at a young age. His lovely wife, the proud, wise, beautiful Afag was former slave. She was presented Nizami by Derbent ruler Dara Muzaffar ad-Din in 1170 as a punishment for her shrew, disobedient character. But Nizami liberated Afag and married her, so she became his timeless Muse. From that marriage one child – son Muhammad came into the world. (born about 1174). Afag died in 1179 when Nizami was finishing his second poem “Khosrov and Shirin”. All the beautiful female characters in his poems were inspired namely by her image. And after Nizami wrote the third poem of “Khamsa” – “Layla and Majnun”, he became famous as a talented poet throughout all Oriental countries.

The creative heritage of the highest literary great of Oriental Renaissance, Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi, is a powerful creative treasury, source of inspiration for many generations of artists. Creativity

by Nizami covers a wide range of art and science spheres. It had deep influence both on further development of Oriental and Western literature and philosophy (e.g. after Nizami numerous imitations – “nazire” of “Khamsa” were created by Dehlevi, Jami, A.Navoi and others.) In West-European literature I.V. Goethe, H.Heine, W.Shakespeare also turned to Nizami’s creativity. E.g. the plot of the poem “Seven Beauties” (“Haft Peikar”) by Nizami became the basis for opera “Turandot” by Giacomo Puccini. Creativity by Nizami Ganjavi had influence not only on world literature, but also on related spheres of culture and art, such as theater, cinema, fine arts, sculpture, etc. As for the ballet art both in Azerbaijan and all over the world, the image of Nizami Ganjavi himself and characters from his works took one of the important places here. E.g. ballets based on Nizami’s works, such as “Seven Beauties” and “Layla and Majnun” by Gara Garayev, the American dancy-vocal stage-play “Layla and Majnun” by Uz.Hajibeyli, ballet “Nizami” by F. Amirov, ballet “Sher ve Kheir” (“The Good and Evil”) by T. Bakikhanov are repeatedly staged both in Baku and world ballet stages. As a matter of fact, all these performances were the attempts to achieve the highest ethical and aesthetic philosophical ideas, expressed by Nizami Ganjavi in his poetic works.

The ballet “Seven Beauties” by Gara Garayev was staged in Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in name of M.F Akhundov in 1952 in connection with 800th anniversary of the great Azerbaijani poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi, the creator of the monumental philosophical and poetic cycle “Khamsa” (“Quintet”). That ballet was based on the plot of poem “Seven Beauties” by Nizami. The idea of of “Seven Beauties” staging was suggested Gara Garayev by I. Idayatzadeh (libretto by I. Idayatzadeh, Y. Slonimsky, S. Rahman; choreographer P. Gusev, consultant and director of individual dances G. Almaszadeh, painters F. Gusak, E. Almaszadeh). The role of Aisha was played by L. Vekilova, role of Bahram Shah – by Y. Kuznetsov, Menzer – by K. Batashev, Vizier – A. Urvantsev. In 1953 the ballet “Seven Beauties” was staged in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Maly (Small) Ballet Theater (choreographer - P. Gusev, the painter- S.Virsaladze.) Later the same ballet was staged in Lvov, Tashkent, Kuibyshev (Samara), Saratov, Kiev, Novosibirsk, Prague, Dessau, Rostock, Tehran, Moscow, Washington, Stockholm and many other cities.) Despite the fact that for staging of performance a large and long-term work of scriptwriters, composer, choreographer, artist was

carried out, it was the dramaturgy of the ballet that became the weak point in that work. "Seven Beauties" is a symphonic ballet created at the turn of centuries. It was period, when effective ballet, "overloaded" with details began to give place to ballets with a philosophically generalized plot and dramaturgy. In 1959, the second author's edition of the ballet was carried out by P. Gusev (the ballet was reduced to 3 acts with a prologue, artist V. Dorrer, conductor Niyazi). That ballet performance was shown at the Decade of Azerbaijani Art and Literature in 1959 in Moscow. The third edition of the ballet was also carried out by P. Gusev in 1969 (libretto by M. Plakhov, clothes designer N. Kirilov). The leading roles in this edition were played by: T. Shiraliyeva, Ch.Babayeva (Aisha), V. Pletnyov (Bahram), M. Mammadov (Menzer). All mentioned actors were representatives of new young, talented generation of Azerbaijani ballet performers. In 1978, the famous Azerbaijani ballet masters Rafiga Akhundova and Magsud Mammadov, with the blessing of Gara Garayev, resumed the ballet "Seven Beauties" by G. Garayev in their own, quite new, creative edition. In the new edition, the mimic scenes staged by P. Gusev (the trend of the 50s), as well as the entire ballet, were solved in a principled approach based on the symphonization of the choreographic development of the action, on a new dynamic choreographic concept (requirements of the 70s). The last edition of the ballet, which took place in 2008 (ill. 1), is an absolutely original performance (libretto by Yana Temiz, choreographer Vasily Medvedev, scenography designer Dmitry Cherbadzhi, clothes designer Tair Tairov, conductor Elshad Bagirov.) The role of The Most Beautiful was played by K. Huseynova, the role of Bahram Shah was played by I. Islamov). So, the last edition was created like a fairy play, and was reduced to a 2-act ballet with 13 scenes. Famous clothes designer Pierre Cardin, having watched the last Baku edition of the performance, said: "Paris must see this ballet!" [1]. The ballet "Seven Beauties" by G. Garayev charmed Paris at an international festival in 1970. Moreover the success of the ballet, it's clear, that Nizami's philosophical concept about the improvement of the world and society, about noble maturity and the school of life of Bahram Shah and the knowledge of laws of the world embodied in "Seven Beauties" and in Oriental Sufi philosophy cannot be perceived explicitly, head-on. As a matter of fact Seven Beauties, are the personification of seven planets, situations, characters, colors, notes (mughams), gates of Cognition, directions, etc. but all these were not

presented, “read” in the scenario plan. In the dynamics of this ballet, everything, of course, should be concentrated around the evolution of the development of seven images, characters, colors, meanings, etc. The ballet “Seven Beauties” by Gara Garayev has an inexhaustible creative potential for staging solutions, since the endless philosophy of Nizami’s poems contains deepest secrets of ways of cognition of the life meaning. As for the music of Gara Garayev, as we see in ideal case, it is still waiting for its psychologically – in-depth choreographic solution, both on Baku stage, and on the best ballet stages in the world.

An outstanding ballerina, choreographer and educator Khumar Zulfugarova, as being the choreographer of the “Dzhangiri” ensemble (Theatre of Rashid Behbudov), staged the “Seven Beauties” divertissement basing on the plot of Nizami Ganjavi and the music of Gara Garayev and melody of “Sevgili Janan” romance by U. Hajibeyli (soloists – Jamile Bayramova and Khanlar Bashirov). In 1996 that performance had a brilliant success on tour of the ensemble in USA (Chicago, New York) and Canada (Toronto, Montreal). American choreographer Laurel Victoria Gray - director and choreographer of the “Silk Road Dance Company” dance group- also staged the “Seven Beauties” divertissement on the music of Gara Garayev, and this performance has great success in USA, Canada, and Europe.

In general, the specificity of ballet music requires of the composer special musical and expressive techniques that create a wide sphere of activity for the choreographer. But the history of the world ballet theater knows a number of successful ballets, the music of which, was not written specifically for the ballet performance, but in spite of this fact created a brilliant “canvas” for ballet performance (e.g. ballets “Chopiniana” by F. Chopin, “Mugham” by N. Aliverdibekov, “Rast” by Niyazi and etc.). Thus, the symphonic poem “Layla and Majnun” by Gara Garayev was created particularly as ballet and was first performed by the Symphonic Orchestra of the Azerbaijan State Philharmonia in name of M. Magomayev under the direction of Niyazi in Baku in September 29, 1947, at a gala night dedicated to the 800 anniversary of Nizami Ganjavi. So, the symphonic poem “Layla and Majnun” by Gara Garayev was created particularly as ballet and was first performed by the Symphonic Orchestra of the Azerbaijan State Philharmonia in name of M. Magomayev under the direction of Niyazi in Baku in September 29, 1947, at a gala night dedicated to the 800 anniversary of birth of Nizami Ganjavi. In 1969, the

young choreographer Nailya Nazirova staged the one-act ballet “Layla and Majnun” based on mentioned work by Gara Garayev and on motifs of the third poem of “Khamsa” by Nizami Ganjavi. The roles were brilliantly performed by the outstanding Azerbaijani dancers Tamilla Mammadova and Vladimir Pletnyov. The premiere of the ballet “Layla and Majnun” by Gara Garayev took place in May 25, 1969 at Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in name of M.F. Akhundov (libretto and choreographer of the first production – N.Nazirova, artist-E.Almaszadeh, conductor – R. Abdullayev.). As we have already noted, although choreographic and musical dramaturgy has its own specific laws, properties and requirements, in mentioned case this experiment produced brilliant results. It was on Azerbaijani stage for a long time, was demonstrated by Azerbaijani ballet troupe on tour in France, Morocco and Nepal in 1971–1973 years and had a colossal success. It should be noted that the choreographic dramaturgy of this ballet, following the symphonic music, was of a generalized symbolic character and contained generalized imagery in its dance plasticity. The ballet is solved through the prism of perception and emotional intensity of Majnun’s feelings, when Layla appeared to him like an unachievable dream. Young lovers appeared in front of ballet goers as exalted symbols of pure love. The corps-de-ballet, playing the role both of mountains, counteracting lovers and clouds, drowning in high emphasized the spiritual collisions of the heroes. N. Nazirova’s staging formed the basis of the film-ballet “In the World of Legends”, filmed by the creative association “Ekran” (“Screen”) in 1975. The main roles were played by their first performers Tamilla Mamedova and Vladimir Pletnyov.

In 2001 (February 17), a new production of the one-act ballet “Layla and Majnun” was staged in the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater. It was based on poem “Layla and Majnun” by great Azerbaijani poet Mohammad Fizuli and was staged by guest choreographer Georgy Aleksidze. The ballet had premiered on 17 of February (soloists R. Iskenderova and G. Mirzoyev). On 4 of December of the same year the performance was shown on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater on the days of memory of Gara Garayev held in Moscow.

What did these performances differ with from each other? First of all in the staging by G. Aleksidze almost all the characters of Fizuli’s poem-Ibn-Salam, Layla’s father and Keys’ (Majnun’s) father, Bedouins and even

Fizuli himself took part. The dance plastics used by ballet-master was solved by means of the concrete characters of the heroes and emotional scenes. As for the choreographic solution, made by Nailya Nazirova, it was more generalized and abstract. So, the choreographers “read” this great work of Nizami-Fuzuli and Gara Garayev – i.e. the symphonic poem “Layla and Majnun” in different ways.

An interesting project at the Meany Center (California), which took place on October 6-8, 2016 became quite unexpected synthesis of Oriental mugham music, vocal and Oriental dance plastics, stylized in Western interpretation. That project had a successful continuation, there were 19 performances in major cities of USA and in London). This was a staging of “Leyla and Majnun” by Uzeyir Hajibeyli (mugam-dance composition for 65 minutes) performed by Mark Morris dance group with the “Silk Way” ensemble (directed by the famous violoncellist Yo-Yo Ma) and with vocal performance by Alim Gasimov and Ferghana Gasimova. It must be pointed out, that mentioned project formed wide creative horizons for the synthesis of Oriental and Western arts. (ill. 2).

The ballet “Nizami” by Fikret Amirov was written in 1984 just before the death of the composer. That’s why the orchestrating of this work was performed by the outstanding Azerbaijani composer Musa Mirzoyev. That ballet was first staged in 1989 by Nailya Nazirova, but, unfortunately, after going through the entire production process, up to the general presentation, due to unforeseen circumstances, it was not shown the audience. N. Nazirova, as a choreographer, was distinguished by the creation of her own deep, scrupulous working out not only of choreographic dramaturgy, but also of all plot. Thus, the scene of the birth of Nizami in her interpretation in this ballet can be an obvious example of such approach. It’s known, that two years before the poet’s birth, the city of Ganja was destroyed by a strong earthquake. So, Nailya Nazirova by means of her creative imagination decided to unite in scenery node these two events – the birth of Poet and the earthquake. The displacement of rocks, which gave rise to Lake Goygol transformed on the stage into the scene of water stream. That stream was presented in unusual way – as an endless string of girls in blue flowing dresses, going below directly onto the audience to the forestage from top to bottom. From this stream of elements, the Poet, born of this element, appears! It’s wonderful, very expressive stage metaphor, a powerful accord in the composition of this

ballet performance. In performance by Nailya Nazirova, the image of Nizami acquired bright human features of a person, who fought for his freedom and happiness.

In 1991, in honor of the 850th anniversary of the birth of Nizami Ganjavi, the ballet “Nizami” by F. Amirov was re-staged by the ballet master V. Budarin invited from St. Petersburg. The scenography of that performance was worked by T. Narimanbekov, costumer was T. Tairov. The role of Nizami was performed by B. Poladkhanov (Nizami elderly - by Ramazan Arifulin), the role of Afag was played by L. Poladkhanova.

By the Decree of President of Azerbaijan Republic Ilham Aliyev, this year – 2021 is declared the “Year of Nizami Ganjavi”. Today, in honor of the 880th anniversary of the birth of the great poet and thinker, the Azerbaijani State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater is preparing a new production of the two-act ballet “Nizami” by F. Amirov. The musical director of the project is the chief conductor of Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater, Honored Artist of Azerbaijan Eyyub Guliyev. The author of the ballet libretto is the playwright Azhdar Ulduz. The ballet master of the performance is People’s Artist of Azerbaijan, Honorary Professor of the International Academy of Choreography Kamilla Huseynova. The production designer is the Honored Worker of Culture of Azerbaijan Tehran Babayev. According the plot of the ballet, the events of the Poet’s personal life are connected with his literary heroes and the dramatic collisions of his poems “Khamsa”. The initiator and leader of the project is theatre manager of the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, Honored Art Worker Akif Melikov. Wishing this ballet a great success, we hope to see a breathtaking performance filled with medieval Oriental wisdom and contemporary applicability.

On February 27, 2008 at Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater, the premiere of the play “Kheir ve Sher”, (“The Good and Evil”) by outstanding Azerbaijani composer, People’s Artist of the Republic, professor Tofiq Bakikhanov took place. That ballet was based on the work “Hamse” by Nizami Ganjavi (namely, on short story from the poem “Seven Beauties”). The ballet was staged by People’s Artist of Azerbaijan, laureate of the State Prize of the USSR, holder of Shohrat (“Glory”) Order Tamilla Shiraliyeva. The musical director of the ballet and conductor was People’s Artist of Azerbaijan Javanshir Jafarov, production designer-Honored Artist of Azerbaijan Tair Tairov. The leading roles were played

by Honored artists of the Azerbaijan Republic Gulagasy Mirzoyev, Rimma Iskenderova, Elena Skomoroschenko and Samir Samedov. The work was written by Tofig Bakikhanov in 1990 and had an experimental production performed by choreographer Rashid Akhmedov at the Chamber Ballet (on the stage of the Baku Music Academy and Young Spectators' Theater) in 1993.

In the staging of T. Shiraliyeva, the eternal struggle between Good and Evil is interpreted as generalized images of the Universe, where the ever-raging forces of Evil inevitably break off and are absorbed by the all- triumphant impulses of Life. The original choreographic findings of the choreographer – the diagonal “molding” of the mosaic of the choreographic pattern, the contrast between the grotesque angular plastics of Evil and the gentle, flowing plastics of Good, etc., create the image of a accomplished choreographic canvas of the ballet. It should be noted that the best Azerbaijani ballet traditions are skillfully developed here and successfully implemented by the choreographer into a smaller, “chamber” form, in accordance with the modern needs of contemporary audience.

So, the plots of the poems cycle “Khamsa” by the genius Azerbaijani poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi have numerous and bright stage performances both on the Azerbaijani and world ballet stages. They enrich the world ballet art with interesting humanistic, philosophical performances and are great achievements of the creative searches of the world ballet art. Well-known fine art expert Fazilya Suleymanova in her album about miniatures, dedicated to “Khamsa” by Nizami said: “The real reason of popularity of “Khamsa” by Nizami lies in fact, that great poet managed to express in his work the dreams and people’s aspirations, propagandized high ideas of humanism, freedom, justice, equality, pure human love, aroused hatred of all violence and oppression, mercilessly castigated oppressors, narcissistic egoists. In differ from the official religious literature and epigonous works, praising the deeds of small and large rulers, that were widespread at that time, Nizami put forward the most urgent life problems of his time, created a gallery of brightest images. His creative genius, original style, high poetry – all these features attracted attention of art masters of different epochs” [3, p. 17-18].

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Afaq Hüseynova (Azərbaycan)

AZƏRBAYCAN BALET TAMAŞALARINDA NİZAMİ GƏNCƏVİNİN OBRAZI VƏ YARADICILIĞININ TƏCƏSSÜMÜ

Məqalədə dahi Azərbaycan şairi və mütəfəkkiri Nizami Gəncəvinin surətinə həsr olunmuş və şairin “Xəmsə”sinin mövzuları əsasında yaranan Azərbaycan balet tamaşaları təhlil olunur. Müxtəlif dövrlərdə və ölkələrdə ayrı-ayrı baletmeysterlər tərəfindən səhnəyə qoyulmuş Qara Qarayevin “Yeddi gözəl” və “Leyli və Məcnun”, F.Əmirovun “Nizami”, T. Bakıxanovun “Xeyir və Şər”, ABŞ rəqs-vokal qrupunun səhnələşdirdiyi Ü.Hacıbəylinin “Leyli və Məcnun” kimi tamaşalar araşdırılır, həmin balet tamaşalarının Azərbaycan və dünya balet sənətində rolu və yeri müəyyən edilir.

Açar sözlər: Nizami Gəncəvi, “Xəmsə”, Azərbaycan baleti, xoreografiya, səhnə sənəti.

Гусейнова Афаг (Азербайджан)

ВОПЛОЩЕНИЕ ОБРАЗА И ТВОРЧЕСТВА НИЗАМИ ГЯНДЖЕВИ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКИХ БАЛЕТНЫХ СПЕКТАКЛЯХ

В статье рассматриваются азербайджанские балетные спектакли, посвященные образу великого азербайджанского поэта и мыслителя Низами Гянджеви и поставленные на сюжеты его поэм «Хамсе». На примерах таких балетов, как «Семь красавиц» и «Лейли и Меджнун» Кара Караева «Низами» Ф.Амирова, «Хейр ве Шер» Т.Бакиханова, американской танцевально-вокальной постановки «Лейли и Меджнун» Уз.Гаджибейли, дается анализ этих спектаклей, поставленных разными балетмейстерами в разное время и в разных странах. В статье также обозначается роль этих балетных постановок в азербайджанском и мировом балетном театре.

Ключевые слова: Низами Гянджеви, «Хамсе», балет Азербайджана, хореография, сценическое искусство.

FIGURES



1. Scene from ballet "Seven Beauties" by Gara Garayev



2. Scene from ballet "Layla and Mejnun" by U.Hajibeyli