

# STAGE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE POEM KYZ ZHIBEK: ARTISTIC TRANSFORMATION IN DRAMA, BALLET, AND OPERA

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**Abstract.** The article examines the pearl of Kazakh classical oral literature – the lyric-epic poem «Kyz Zhibek», first staged on the Kazakh stage in 1934. It highlights the history of its stage interpretations to the present day, including a deep fundamental analysis of the individual characteristics of actors and directors. The development and history of the lyric-epic work are investigated. As research *methods*, a list of "Kyz Zhibek" theatrical productions was compiled, as well as a chronological comparative analysis of the performances for each year. The article *examines* the history of writing and the style of works by specialists who adapted it into drama, opera, and libretto, particularly the dramatic productions by Evgeny Brusilovsky and Gabit Musirepov, as well as ballet and opera versions, which are subjected to in-depth scientific comparative analysis. In the period from 2017 to 2023, special attention was paid to modern stage productions presented in independent theaters of Kazakhstan, their role and artistic significance in the renewal of national culture. The authors focus on the innovative representation of the image of "Kyz Zhibek" and describe the process of its reinterpretation in modern cultural and artistic discourse. The set design of the play, the dramatic structure, and choreographic solutions give this epic work a new artistic content. Special attention is paid to the interpretation of the Kyz Zhibek aria performed by Bibigul Tolegenova, as well as the synthesis of stage movement and plasticity. The performance, based on the lyrical epic poem "Kyz Zhibek" by Zhusipbek Shaikhislamuly, was subjected to an in-depth analysis. The research was based on the works of Russian theater and art critics such as Gulnara Dzhumaseitova, Dauren Abirov, and Bulat Ayukhanov.

The work "Kyz Zhibek" retains its relevance and artistic power in the history of Kazakh classical art for decades and has become an important example of the interpretation of epic heritage from a director's and stage point of view. The *results* of the study demonstrate narrative and artistic innovations in modern Kazakh stage art. The study invites an international art historian reader to evaluate the creative view of the directors, production designers and actors who staged the play "Kyz Zhibek", and presents new content and images in the interpretation of the Kazakh lyrical epic. The scientific study of various approaches to the scenic interpretation of the national heritage opens the way to a deeper understanding of the development of the Kazakh theater.

**Keywords:** Kyz Zhibek, theatre, scenography, stage interpretation, dramaturgy, ballet, opera aesthetics, transformation.

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## Introduction

Kyz Zhibek, as a poetic chronicle of love and honor transmitted through generations, continues to capture the attention of audiences and critics alike, maintaining its relevance on the contemporary stage. The commemoration of Kazakh women through historical accounts, monuments, and memorial practices demonstrates the pragmatic role of public memorials in reinforcing officially sanctioned gender roles in public space (Rees 445). One of the most significant examples of Kazakh classical literature – the lyrical-epic poem (a genre combining epic narrative and lyrical expression) that for centuries has been preserved as a poetic chronicle of love and honor. Kyz Zhibek – is a spiritual and cultural phenomenon that has had a profound influence on the development of national theatre, music, and choreography. This article discusses the significance of the libretto "Kyz Zhibek" by playwright Gabit Musirepov in the development of Kazakh theater art. The new staging models of performances that have appeared on the theater stage over the years are analyzed in terms of

scenographic, musical, and choreographic interpretations.

The interplay of music, scenography, dramaturgy, and choreography in the performance creates an artistic unity that reveals the aesthetic potentials of national art. The widespread use of extended reality (XR) technologies in theater and performance arts complicates the understanding and creation of scenography (Rixon 484). The study places special emphasis on the performance tradition and staging decisions in the interpretation of arias by opera singer Küläsh Bäyseitova. Additionally, the article examines the cultural representation of the character Kyz Zhibek over time, focusing on its stagings in independent Kazakh theaters between 2017 and 2023, as well as the issues of revitalizing national identity within this process. The research aims to identify the transformation process of national art through contemporary stage productions of Kyz Zhibek.

## Methods

The primary material for this study is the play Kyz Zhibek by Evgeny Brusilovsky,

which has remained relevant for many years and is recognized as a landmark event in the history of Kazakh classical literature and theater. This production serves as an exemplary model of staging the Kazakh epic on stage, where directorial vision and scenographic decisions vividly reflect the richness of national culture and artistic traditions.

The research methodology is based on a systemic approach, incorporating analysis of directorial concepts, scenographic solutions, and a comprehensive examination of the dramaturgical structure of the performance. Special attention is given to the interaction between the director's vision and the artistic design, identifying contemporary methods of reinterpreting epic material in modern theater.

The *Kyz Zhibek* production is directly dependent on the creative approaches of the director and set designer, allowing for the introduction of new content and imagery in the interpretation of the Kazakh epic. A scholarly investigation of various staging concepts for national heritage opens pathways to a deeper understanding of the development trends in Kazakh theater.

On November 7, 1934, the official premiere of the *Kyz Zhibek* opera took place at the Abai Kazakh State Opera and Ballet Theater in Almaty. This historic event marked an important stage in the formation of Kazakh professional opera. The lyric-epic poem and epic *Kyz Zhibek* by Yusupbek Shaykhislamuly were brought to life anew in stage language, enhancing their relevance within the national cultural space.

As the research object, *Kyz Zhibek* performances staged in various theaters over 30 years after the 1971 premiere of E. Brusilovsky's ballet were analyzed.

## Discussion

Folkloric epic poems hold a special place in the spiritual heritage of any

nation. They are regarded as cultural and cognitive values that transmit a people's historical consciousness, worldview, lifestyle, traditions, and customs to future generations. The epic heritage preserved in Kazakh oral literature—particularly heroic epics and lyric-epic works—constitutes an inseparable part of the artistic system that defines national identity. While heroic epics emphasize themes of defending the homeland, bravery, and honor, lyric-epic poems depict everyday life, love, social relationships, and the inner emotional world of individuals. (Epic narratives in Kazakh culture, such as *batyr jyr*, serve as guardians of historical memory and social ideals, whereas lyrical-epic poems — *mahabbat jyr* — focus on personal feelings, love, and the tragic fate of the heroes. '*Kyz Zhibek*' belongs to the latter category, combining narrative structure with profound lyrical content.)

Epic poems such as *Kobylandy*, *Alpamys*, *Kozy Korpesh* — *Bayan Sulu*, *Aiman* — *Sholpan*, and *Kyz Zhibek*, which have been orally transmitted across the vast territories of the Kazakh people from generation to generation, constitute the golden treasury of the epic genre. All these works are founded upon moral ideals and evoke a deep interest in the traditions, customs, and ethnic characteristics embedded in the material and spiritual life of the Kazakh people (Vostrov et al. 82), and are regarded as cultural heritage (Reichl 45). Various versions of these works showcase the diversity of folk poetics and oral art. Among them, the lyric-epic poem *Kyz Zhibek* stands out for its artistic structure, poetic imagery, and richness of content. This work reflects the Kazakh worldview through its portrayal of concepts of love, notions related to the upbringing of girls, social environments, and models of personal behavior.

The lyric-epic poem (distinct from epic narrative, which focuses on collective memory and social values, whereas the lyrical-epic emphasizes personal emotions

and destiny) *Kyz Zhibek* is considered one of the highest artistic and ideologically rich works in Kazakh folklore. In literary studies, it has been proven that the poem is not a legend but a work based on real-life events and historical figures. The poem artistically portrays Kazakh customs, lifestyle, national consciousness, and themes of heroism and conscience. Through the love story between the main characters, *Kyz Zhibek* and *Tolegen*, the poem reflects the moral values and ethical principles of the people.

One of the earliest versions of the *Kyz Zhibek* poem was recorded from the narration of *Musabay Zhirauly*, who lived in the 17th century. This version was first transcribed onto paper by Evgeny Alexandrov. Later, in the 19th century, the Tatar teacher *Fatykh Tukhvatulin* recorded and published a version from the *Zaisan* region. *Yusufbek Shaykhislamuly* also submitted the poem for publication several times in Kazan. In 1927, *Yusufbek* mentioned in a meeting with academician *Mukhtar Auezov* that he had recorded the poem from a *zhirauly* in *Akshamshi* (*History of Kazakh Literature* 194).

The artistic power of the *Kyz Zhibek* poem contributed not only to its widespread presence within the folkloric genre but also to its prominent representation in professional theater and musical stage arts. In the development of scenography in Kazakhstan, the opera *Kyz Zhibek* holds a special place. This production became a milestone in the development of national scenography and directing.

In 1936, during the first Decade of Kazakh Literature and Art held in Moscow, this drama was staged and received high acclaim from audiences. The role of *Kyz Zhibek* was performed by the famous opera singer and renowned Kazakh nightingale, *Küläsh Bäyseitova* (Sygay, Akhmetova 25).

In 1936, the Decade of Kazakh Literature and Art held in Moscow became one of the significant historical moments that stimulated the development of national stage art. During this period, *Küläsh*

*Bayseitova*, who performed the role of *Zhibek* in the *Kyz Zhibek* opera, captivated the audience with her mastery and won a special place in the hearts of viewers. Following this performance, she earned the unofficial title "Kazakh Nightingale" and became a symbol of national opera art. Despite living only 45 years, *K. Bäyseitova*'s name has become ingrained in the spiritual memory of the Kazakh people and left an indelible mark on cultural history (Sygay, Akhmetova 42).

A significant contribution to the stage success of the *Kyz Zhibek* production was made by *Jumad Shanina*, one of the founders of Kazakh theater art. He worked with great responsibility in shaping the scenographic, musical, and acting components of the performance. *Shanina* paid meticulous attention to every detail of the stage, including *mise-en-scène* and the system of images, enhancing the artistic quality of the work.

## Results

The study's findings demonstrated that a harmonious fusion of traditional Kazakh cultural elements and contemporary stage technologies forms the scenographic solutions in the *Kyz Zhibek* ballet. Through skillful use of spatial design and color schemes, a profound emotional atmosphere is created that vividly expresses the inner world of the characters. The dynamic interplay between light and shadow enhances dramatic tension and intensifies the audience's emotional experience.

The traditional narrative core of the plot remains intact while fostering the emergence of a new stage atmosphere. In this context, scenographic projections, mobile sets, and lighting solutions generate a cinematic effect that allows viewers to immerse themselves in the artistic space of the Kazakh epic. Such approaches link traditional cultural codes with contemporary artistic discourse, outlining

new developmental prospects for national stage art.

The interplay of musical, choreographic, and scenographic elements serves as the foundation for creating a unified artistic image in the production. Composer Evgeny Brusilovsky's musical score intensifies the emotional load and facilitates deep immersion into the characters' world. Arrangements and musical themes based on Kazakh national melodies adapt the epic content to modern stage language. These approaches play a crucial role in shaping the audience's emotional and aesthetic reception of the *Kyz Zhibek* poem's stage representation (Tabački 119).

The choreographic solutions developed by Bolat Ayukhanov make a significant contribution to revealing the psychological portraits of the characters. The dance elements play a crucial role in conveying their internal tensions and emotional states. By synthesizing traditional Kazakh dance movements, the stage scenes gain authenticity and emotional depth. The interactions between dancers on stage provide momentum to the dramaturgical structure of the production and enhance its artistic expression.

Additionally, attention was paid to the stage revival of the *Kyz Zhibek* ballet, which serves as the object of this study. The ballet of the same name by Yevgeny Brusilovsky, premiered in 1971, was not long retained in the theater repertoire after its initial performance. According to art historian LySarinova, the one-sidedness of the plot structure and the weak portrayal of antagonistic forces became the work's weaknesses, leading to its removal from the stage (Sarinova 64).

Recent interpretations have aimed to improve artistic quality in this respect. The professional experience of director Aktoty Rayimkulova, choreographer Georgiy Kovtun, and international creative teams invited from Ukraine and Russia played an important role in the stage renewal of the ballet. The new production offered a model



Figure 1. People's Artist of the USSR Bibigul Tulegenova as Zhibek in the opera *Kyz Zhibek* by Y. Brusilovsky. Stage of the Abai Kazakh Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, 1974. Archival photograph.

for approaching the stage interpretation of national heritage with a contemporary aesthetic perspective.

On the stage of the Abai Kazakh Academic Opera and Ballet Theater, the prominent representative of Kazakh musical art, People's Artist of the USSR Bibigul Tolegenova performed the role of *Kyz Zhibek* in the opera "Kyz Zhibek" by the composer Yevgeny Brusilovsky. (see Fig. 1). Her vocal interpretation, especially the "Gakku" which became the artistic pinnacle of the production, was highly praised by audiences and critics alike. This aria became an artistic hallmark of Bibigul Tulegenova's stage persona during that period and secured its place as a vocal masterpiece in the national opera repertoire (Sputnik Kazakhstan).

The staging of the *Kyz Zhibek* opera not only contributed to the development of musical dramaturgy, stage culture, and acting performance but also represented a major creative achievement that defined the trajectory of Kazakh classical art. Such artistic accomplishments were harmoniously combined with the production's scenography and dramaturgical composition.

Various stage versions of Yusupbek Shaykhislamuly's *Kyz Zhibek* poem (opera, ballet, drama) have retained their relevance in the 21st century. The premiere

held on February 10, 2017, at the Astana Opera Theatre elevated the modern interpretation of the work to a new level. Through Gabit Musirepov's dramaturgical version, Yevgeny Brusilovsky's opera, and Bylat Ayukhanov's ballet production, *Kyz Zhibek* was enriched not only musically but also through new artistic solutions in scenography, choreography, and dramaturgy.

These productions preserved the profound meaning and artistic nature of the Kazakh epic while offering information about the director, designer, and year of performance. Additionally, they presented the work anew through contemporary stage techniques. In Bolat Ayukhanov's ballet interpretation, the character of Zhibek was revealed to the audience from a completely new perspective, serving as a successful example of introducing contemporary artistic language into national choreography. Based on the data considered in the article, Table 1, compiled by the author, systematizes the various interpretations of *Kyz Zhibek* across different years and theater stages. Table 2 provides information on the director, designer, and year of the *Kyz Zhibek* production premiered in various cinemas.

In the present period, active efforts are underway to revive, condense, and reinterpret classical Kazakh literature and epic works on the theatrical stage, making them accessible and engaging for contemporary audiences. One such creative collective is the Youth Theatre in Astana. Recently, this theatre premiered a musical *Kyz Zhibek* based on Gabit Musirepov's epic. The director, Nurkanat Zhakypbai, an honored cultural worker of Kazakhstan, emphasized that staging the performance as a new interpretation was the result of comprehensive research and creative exploration.

Relying on the epic text, the director selected only the main plotline of Zhibek and Tolegen's destinies. On stage, the characters of Zhibek, Tolegen,

Bekejan, Duria, Shege, and several others representing youth appeared. The performance placed the lovers' story at the forefront, highlighting the theme of love. In this case, integrity and coherence function as fundamental and constructive features of the artistic text, constituting its substantive and structural essence (Baybekova et al. 88).

Nurkanat Zhakypbai provided each actor with an individual interpretation and constructed the performance through contemporary stylization. This demonstrates the director's thorough study of the work and the harmonious integration of stage space and musical rhythm. The concept of the performance was clearly expressed through vocal composition, dance, singing, acting, scenographic conventions, and effective *mise-en-scène* solutions, making the staging notably distinctive in its choreographic-based directorial signature. Particular attention was paid to the seamless compositional continuity between consecutive stage actions.

Musically, the production utilized the famous aria «*Gakku*» and the phrase «*Zhana ai zharlyka, eski ai esirke*» from E.G. Brusilovsky's *Kyz Zhibek* opera as leitmotifs. The musical arrangement, developed by Yerbolat Kudaibergen and Zhandaulet Batai, presented these themes to the audience in a rock style that preserved traditional national motifs alongside contemporary melodies.

Set designer Erlan Tuyakov made a notable contribution to the scenography. His creative decisions were evident from the moment the curtain rose. The director and designer's shared vision materialized in a nearly five-meter-long prop structure resembling a large boat, composed of three parts. This apparatus served various functions throughout the performance, defining characters' images and allowing actors freedom of movement on stage. It immediately captured the audience's attention and was highly praised as a

**Table 1. Chronology and theatrical geography of stage interpretations of Kyz Zhibek from 2019 to 2023**

Nº	Theatre	Title of the Production	Director	Choreographer	Set Designer	Year of Staging
1	Astana Opera	Kyz Zhibek	Mikhail Pandzhavidze	Mukaram Avakhri	Sofya Tasmagambetova, Pavel Dragunov	2017
2	Zhastar Theatre	Kyz Zhibek	Nurkanat Zhakypbay, Shyrin Mustafina	Gulzhan Tutkibayeva	Yerlan Tuyakov	2018
3	Abay Kazakh National Opera and Ballet Theatre	Kyz Zhibek	Mikhail Pandzhavidze	Aigul Tati	Sofya Tasmagambetova, Pavel Dragunov	2019
5	Azerbaijan Mambetov State Drama and Comedy Theatre	Kyz Zhibek	Dina Zhumabayeva	Anna Tsoy	Ainur Esbolatovna	2020
6	Kalibek Kuanyshbayev State Kazakh National Musical Drama Theatre	Kyz Zhibek	Alibek Omirbekuly	Gulzhan Tutkibayeva	Shynar Elembayeva	2023

**Table 2. Key details of the Kyz Zhibek performance staged in various cinemas in 1972**

Nº	Cinema	Title of the Production	Director	Production Designer	Year of Premiere
1	Tselinny Cinema	Kyz Zhibek	Sultan-Akhmet Khodzhiikov	Gulfairus Ismailova	1972

meaningful decoration that brought catharsis to the human spirit through stage effects.

Choreographer Shyrin Mustafina skillfully incorporated traditional Kazakh dances, enriching the director's and designer's artistic ideas and enhancing the overall aesthetic atmosphere. Individual and group stage solutions aligned with the maqams of national dances increased the composition's coherence and expressiveness.

In the exposition, the role of Kyz Zhibek was performed by Nazerke Serikbolova, who danced the Karazhorga with her female companions, executing thousand-twists with expressive style. The harmonious ensemble and musical rhythm impressed the audience. However, while Serikbolova's

portrayal of Zhibek tenderness, further work on expressing the character's inner emotions would be beneficial. Focusing more on acting skills, beyond appearance and vocal performance, would enhance her role.

The play continues its life, evoking a deep emotional reaction from the audience. In the film "Kyz Zhibek," based on Gabit Musirepov's screenplay, the role of the main character, played by Meruyert Utekisheva, gained special significance. The actress vividly portrayed the image of Zhibek, showcasing the beauty of Kazakh women. This film remains a work that successfully conveys the theme of love to the audience.

At the same time, the performance emphasizes the values of patriotism while



Figure 2. Meruert Otekeshova, a Soviet and Kazakh cinema and theater actress, at the moment she played the role of Zhibek in the film «Qyz Zhibek» shot in 1972.

celebrating the spirit of heroism, loyalty in friendship and love. Additionally, the deep philosophical ideas of a person's right to personal happiness and free emotions are conveyed to the audience in a compelling manner (Kazakh Romantic Epic 439).

The scenographic solutions in the Kyz Zhibek opera and ballet stand out for their exceptional simplicity and clarity. The harmony between the decorations and costumes is constructed on an artistic prism that vividly reflects the national character on stage. This tandem work, combining the creative collaboration of the scenographer and choreographer, successfully conveys the Kazakh word with an epic voice and achieves harmony through the flexibility of dance language.

The unity of scenography is expressed through a palette of national colors, with costumes expressively conveying the characters' inner world, genuine emotions, and interpersonal relationships (Mosienko 126). Decorations, based on straightforward simplicity, were created according to sketches corresponding to the historical period, and minimalist design elements predominate in the production. For example, the symbolic image of swans represents the emotional transition between light and darkness, while the image of Zhibek metaphorically stages purity and readiness for sacrifice.

In 2019, the opera "Kyz Zhibek" at the "Astana Opera" theater significantly differed from its initial debut performances. The production utilized modern 3D technologies portraying the four seasons for the audience, expanding the artistic possibilities of the theater stage. (Figures 3, 4). The decorations were developed by the theatre's Italian partners; each detail was crafted to correspond stylistically to the historical period and organically integrated into the architectural environment. Contemporary spatial and urban elements, including towers and brick walls, were presented in a monotonous yet impressive manner. For instance, plastic bricks appeared realistic from a distance, enhancing the stage's visual perception.

The joint work of scenographers Sofia Tasmagambetova and Pavel Dragunov ensured the production's integrity. Their costume designs featured traditional patterns, with nearly three hundred and fifty costumes adorned with hand-sewn beads (astanaopera.kz).

Two distinct costumes were prepared for the main role portraying Kyz Zhibek.



Figures 3 and 4. Stage scenes from the Kyz Zhibek production performed in 2019 at the Astana Opera Theatre.

The hero's attire expresses her character traits clearly through its color scheme. The geometric patterns on the shapan (traditional cloak) signify Zhibek's strong-willed and determined personality, while the soft embroidery on the dress beneath the chest piece conveys the delicate and sensitive nature of the young woman. Decorative elements of the costume include artificial stones and natural jewelry made from sea pearls.

The "Bridal Outfit" in the play gained a special significance. This outfit, depicted through the traditional white and red colors of the Kazakh ceremonial attraction ritual, leaves a symbolic meaning for the audience. The scenographic solution distinguished by the pearl and coral hues embodies the purity of the young woman's soul and the reflection of unfulfilled hopes. The main features of the costume include the embroidered patterns with stones and beads on the lace skirt, as well as the striking silver ornaments. (Abenova).

On October 24–25, 2023, a new staging of this work was performed at the K. Kuanyshbayev State Drama Theatre. The adaptation's authors are Miras Abil and Lazzat Alpysbayeva, and the director is Alibek Omirbekuly. Presented in the genre of dramatic opera, the production features music by composer Evgeny Brusilovsky. The performance lasts approximately three hours and is built upon continuous and engaging events.

At the beginning of the performance, the image of Bazarbai appears on stage, with actor Nurken Oteuilov bringing nine white cradles to the front stage. In Kazakh culture, the cradle symbolizes the purity, health, and safety of the child and is treasured as a cultural emblem. The cradle wishes the child a long and prosperous life and, consistent with nomadic customs, can be conveniently placed on a camel or cart, emphasizing the importance of this national tradition.

Throughout the performance, the stage space is presented with a unique

directorial and scenographic approach. During the exposition, actor Nurken Oteuilov, portraying Bazarbai, sequentially carries nine white cradles to the left side of the stage (see Figure 5), sharing tragic memories associated with each. Each cradle symbolizes the fate of a newborn and their premature departure from this world, leaving a profound emotional impression on the audience. This staging choice is executed with notable artistic innovation, skillfully conveying tragic content through the language of the stage. The harmonious creative collaboration between the director and scenographer transforms the depiction of Tolegen's birth into a poetic and metaphorical stage image.

The scenes in this depiction beautifully illustrate the condition of Bazarbai, who is shrouded in mourning for his 9 children that he buried after their birth, including Tolegen, Sansyzbai, and Karylgash mentioned in the song.



Figure 5. Stage performance of actor Nurken Oteuilov portraying the character of Bazarbay in the production

In the stage design, the actors wear uniform white costumes, ensuring compositional unity. The color white was chosen as a symbol of purity, hope, and innocence, enhancing the aesthetic impact of the performance.

Director Alibek Omirbekuly's creative decisions fully align with the innovative demands of contemporary theatrical direction. By integrating traditional staging methods with modern artistic tools, he presented a new level of interpretive

approach. Previously recognized for his avant-garde directorial style through productions such as *The Rooster* in Shymkent and *Don Quixote* at the K. Kuanyshbayev State Academic Kazakh Musical Drama Theatre, the director once again effectively utilized experimental techniques to exploit theatrical space.

One of Kyz Zhibek's notable achievements is its use of decoration—both spatial and costume design. Observing Omirbekuly's work reveals his particular attention to stage decoration and costumes in his productions. This careful craftsmanship is evident in collaboration with scenographer Shynar Elembaeva, as both invested equal effort in the visual aspect of the production. The white world on stage, the open spatial freedom and metaphors, minimalism in the setting, the stylistic solutions of the costumes worn by the actors, and their symbolic undertones—all are clearly perceptible (Zhumabay).



Figure 6. Stage performance of the dramatic opera Kyz Zhibek presented in 2023 at the K. Kuanyshbayev State Academic Kazakh Musical Drama Theatre

The lyrical-epic poem Kyz Zhibek by Yusipbek Shaykhislamuly was staged in 2020 at the A. Mambetov State Drama and Comedy Theater under the direction of Dina Zhumabaeva (see Fig. 7). This production preserved the original narrative of the epic poem while revitalizing it with the artistic tools of contemporary theater. In this version, the audience experienced not only the folkloric content but also a

deeper understanding of the inner worlds of the epic's characters through stage movement and acting.

Yusipbek Shaykhislamuly himself noted that he did not simply copy the poem but introduced his own artistic additions. About his version, he wrote:

«At first it spread from me, This Zhibek became a story. From beginning to end, it is all incomplete words, Sobbing and weeping, aching. When it came from me, those who heard it cried, I want to kiss it and breathe on it once» (Babalar sozi 84).

Special attention was given to the choreographic solution in the production. Choreographer Anna Tsoi deeply revealed the interrelation between dance and stage action, prioritizing the expression of characters' psycho-emotional states through plastic movements. Here, the actors' inner worlds are woven in the language of dance, with scenes based more on movement than on words. This directorial and choreographic approach



Figure 7. Kyz Zhibek stage production at the State Drama and Comedy Theatre named after A. Mambetov, 2020.

aligns with Konstantin Stanislavski's principles of acting mastery: "One must act on the stage. The foundation of acting and drama arts is activity and action." (Stanislavski)

Through this staging, the poem's content entered a new artistic space and harmonized with contemporary aesthetics. This stage interpretation offered a renewed perspective on the Kazakh epic, allowing its artistic potential to be communicated aesthetically to a modern audience.

## Basic Provisions

- The lyrical-epic poem *Kyz Zhibek* is a significant artistic work that reflects the spiritual essence and national code of the Kazakh people, offering broad opportunities for stage interpretations.
  - At every historical stage, theatre directors and scenographers have attempted to harmonize traditional folklore with contemporary stage technologies in adapting *Kyz Zhibek* for theatrical performance.
  - The harmony between scenography, musical accompaniment, and choreography contributes to a deeper artistic and ideological interpretation of the epic.
  - In modern productions (e.g., Astana Opera, Kalibek Kuanyshbayev Theatre, Zhastar Theatre), directorial and scenographic choices reflect a synthesis of national motifs and innovative artistic approaches.
  - Revitalizing the epic heritage through stage art enhances the artistic potential of Kazakh theatre and culture within the global space.

## Conclusion

Folkloric heritage serves as an essential foundation for theatre and dramatic arts. Kazakh epics preserve the spiritual and cultural code of the nation by embodying

legends, traditions, and admiration for heroic figures. These epics not only celebrate pure love but also express the ideas of individual freedom and the right to love through the characters' words and actions.

The characters in *Kyz Zhibek* signify a new direction in Kazakh folklore—one that emphasizes sincere and conscious love. However, the pursuit of this love and its resolution varies in each interpretation. Since the foundation of professional theatre and the arts in Kazakhstan, cultural figures have drawn on romantic epics to create drama, ballet, opera, and later, film adaptations.

In the context of globalization and multicultural environments, preserving and developing national epic heritage becomes increasingly important. This process is a prerequisite for national self-identity and cultural recognition. Hence, directors, scenographers, and choreographers must continue exploring innovative solutions for national stage productions. These should go beyond thematic boundaries and strive for visual coherence, plastic expression, symphonic structure, and clear dramaturgy.

This research emphasizes the need to reassess the epic narrative not just as dramatic plot, but as a broader spiritual and cultural space by reviving ancient wisdom and maintaining artistic depth and emotional subtlety.

The findings show that *Kyz Zhibek* and its stage interpretations represent a crucial avenue for exploring Kazakh spiritual and cultural identity. Future studies should focus on scenography and choreography interplay, and on uncovering the national and artistic identity of the Kazakh woman through the image of *Kyz Zhibek* within gender and national identity frameworks. Advancing these directions will expand the scope of national theatre studies and contribute to a deeper scientific understanding of Kazakh folklore and classical stage art.

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## СЦЕНИЧЕСКИЕ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ ПОЭМЫ «КЫЗ ЖИБЕК»: ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННАЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ В ДРАМАТУРГИИ, БАЛЕТЕ И ОПЕРЕ

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается жемчужина казахской классической устной литературы – лиро-эпическая поэма «Кыз Жибек», которая была впервые поставлена на казахскую сцену в 1934 году, и освещается история ее сценических интерпретаций до сегодняшнего дня, включая индивидуальные особенности актеров и режиссеров в глубоком фундаментальном анализе. Исследовано развитие и история происхождения лиро-эпического произведения. В качестве методов исследования был составлен список театральных постановок «Кыз Жибек», и проведен хронологический сравнительный анализ спектаклей за каждый год. Рассматривается история написания и стиль произведений специалистов, адаптировавших его в драму, оперу, либретто, в частности: драматическая постановка Евгения Брусиловского и Габита Мусирепова, а также балетные и оперные версии, которые подвергаются глубокому научному сравнительному анализу. В период с 2017 по 2023 годы особое внимание было уделено современным сценическим постановкам, представленным в независимых театрах Казахстана, их роли и художественному значению в обновлении национальной культуры. Авторы останавливаются на инновационной презентации образа «Кыз Жибек» и описывают процесс его переосмысливания в современном культурно-художественном дискурсе. Сценография спектакля, драматургическая структура и хореографические решения придают этой эпической работе новое художественное содержание. Особенно выделяется интерпретация арии Кыз Жибек, исполняемой Бибигуль Тулегенова, и синтез сценического движения и пластики. Спектакль, основанный на лиро-эпической поэме Жусипбека Шайхисламова «Кыз Жибек», подвергнут глубокому анализу. В исследовании в качестве основы были использованы работы отечественных театролов и искусствоведов, таких как Гульнара Жумасеитова, Даурен Абиров и Булат Аюханов.

Произведение «Кыз Жибек» сохраняет свою актуальность и художественную силу в истории казахского классического искусства на протяжении десятков лет и становится важным примером интерпретации эпического наследия с режиссерской и сценографической точки зрения. Результаты исследования демонстрируют нарративные и художественные обновления в современном казахском сценическом искусстве. Исследование предлагает международному художественному читателю оценить творческий взгляд режиссеров, художников-постановщиков и актеров, поставивших спектакль «Кыз Жибек», и представляет новые содержания и образы в интерпретации казахского лиро-эпоса. Научное исследование различных подходов к сценической интерпретации национального наследия открывает путь к более глубокому пониманию процесса развития казахского театра.

**Ключевые слова:** Кыз Жибек, театр, сценография, сценическая интерпретация, драматургия, балет, художественные формы в опере, трансформация.

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## «ҚЫЗ ЖІБЕК» ПОЭМАСЫНЫң САХНАЛЫҚ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯЛАРЫ: ДРАМАТУРГИЯДАҒЫ, БАЛЕТТЕГІ ЖӘНЕ ОПЕРАДАҒЫ ҚӨРКЕМДІК ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ

**Анната.** Мақалада қазақ классикалық ауыз әдебиетінің жауһары – «Қыз Жібек» лиро-эпикалық поэмасының 1934 жылы алғаш қазақ сахнасына қойылғаннан бастап бүгінгі күнге дейін заманауи сахналық интерпретациялары жан-жақты сахналану тарихы мен актерлер, режиссердің өзіндік ерекшеліктерін фундаментальді терең талдау негізгі мақсатқа алынды. Лиро-эпостық шығарманың даму эволюциясымен шығу тарихы зерттелген. Зерттеу *әдістері* ретінде «Қыз Жібек» қойылымының театрларда қойылған тізімі кестеге түсіріліп әрбір жылдардағы спектакльдерге хронологиялық салыстырмалы талдау жасалды. Драма, опера, либреттоға айналдырған мамандардың жазу тарихымен стилі нақты айтқанда: Евгени Брусиловский мен Ғабит Мұсіреповтің драмалық қойылымы, балет және опералық нұсқалары негізінде қарастырылып, ғылыми салыстырмалы түрғыда терең талданады. 2017–2023 жылдар аралығында тәуелсіз Қазақстан театрларында ұсынылған заманауи сахналық қойылымдарға, олардың ұлттық мәдениетті жаңғыртудағы орны мен қөркемдік маңызына ерекше назар аударылды. Авторлар «Қыз Жібек» бейнесінің инновациялық репрезентациясына тоқталып, оны қазіргі мәдени-қөркем дискурста қайта ойластыру үдерісін сипаттайды. Спектакльдің сценографиясы, драматургиялық құрылымы мен хореографиялық шешімдері арқылы бұл эпикалық шығарма жаңа қөркем мазмұнмен толықкан. Әсіресе, Бибігүл Төлегенованың орындауындағы Қыз Жібек ариясының интерпретациясы мен сахналық құмыл-пластиканың синтезіне ерекше назар аударылды. Жүсіпбек Шайхисламұлының лиро-эпикалық поэмасына негізделген «Қыз Жібек» жырымен қойылған спектакль терең талданған. Зерттеуде Гульнара Жұмасейітова, Дәурен Әбіров, Булат Аюханов сияқты отандық театртанушылар мен өнертанушылардың еңбектері негіз ретінде алынды.

«Қыз Жібек» шығармасы ондаған жылдар бойы қазақ классикалық өнері тарихында өзектілігі мен қөркемдік қуатын сақтап келеді және эпикалық мұраны режиссерлік және сценографиялық түрғыдан түсіндірудің маңызды үлгісіне айналуда. Зерттеу нәтижесі заманауи қазақ сахнасы өнеріндегі наративтік және қөркемдік жаңауруларды қөрсетеді. Зерттеу халықаралық өнертану оқырманына «Қыз Жібек» қойылымын сахналаған режиссерлер мен қоюшы суретшілер, актерлердің шығармашылық қозқарасын бағалап, қазақ лиро-эпосын интерпретациялауда жаңа мазмұн мен образдарды танытады. Ұлттық мұраны сахналаудағы әртүрлі тұжырымдарды ғылыми түрғыдан зерттеу қазақ театрның даму үрдісін терең түсінуге жол ашады.

**Түйін сөздер:** «Қыз Жібек», театр, сценография, сахналық интерпретация, драматургия, балет, опера дағы қөркемдік форма, трансформация.

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