

Research Article

Askar Akimbek, Ordabek Khozhamberdiyev, Zukhra Islambayeva*, Amankeldi Mukan, Yelik Nursultan

The Transformation of Kazakhstan's National Classics in World Performing Arts

<https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2025-0049>

received October 29, 2024; accepted February 6, 2025

Abstract: The study of transforming national classics within the performing arts highlights the innovative reinterpretations of dramatic masterpieces by contemporary creators. This exploration examines the intricate system of these transformations, delving into the role and function of each element that underpins them. Employing structural problem analysis, comparative studies, and systematization, the research integrates these methods into a cohesive artistic framework. The study conducted from February to June 2024 identifies challenges in unifying national classics into a singular, comprehensive performing arts system, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of its components. Kazakhstan's national performing arts are spotlighted as a distinctive segment of global culture, showing the richness of Kazakh traditions in acting, stage imagery, costume, and scenic design within the context of globalization. This research holds a practical value for the scientific study of performing arts and serves professionals, including actors, directors, and designers in modern productions. It also informs educational curricula in drama and theatre studies, providing insights into innovative interpretations of classic works and their application in the global artistic landscape. By exploring the synergy between tradition and modernity, the study underscores the enduring significance of national classics in shaping contemporary performing arts.

Keywords: performance modernization, innovative staging techniques, classical dramaturgy, national scenographic traditions

1 Introduction

The way national classics are reimagined in global performing arts reflects contemporary artistic trends. This transformation occurs in diverse and unexpected ways, often stemming from individual directors' creative visions. While modernized interpretations of dramatic classics have sparked significant public debate, understanding their underlying principles and future directions remains challenging. A key research question emerges: How can we understand the evolving nature of national classics within the broader context of performing arts, viewing it as an interconnected system with essential components? The rich possibilities for reinterpreting classic narratives in modern theatre have driven extensive scholarly investigation throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

* **Corresponding author: Zukhra Islambayeva**, Department of History and Theory of Theatrical Art, T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, e-mail: zukhra.isla@gmail.com

Askar Akimbek: Department of Acting and Directing, T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Ordabek Khozhamberdiyev: Department of Stage Speech, T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Amankeldi Mukan: Department of Theater and Cinema, Institute of Literature and Art named after M.O. Auezov of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Yelik Nursultan: Department of Musical Theater, T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Theatre practice in Kazakhstan exemplifies a dynamic interaction between cultural preservation and modernization, reflecting an initiative to adapt traditional works for current audiences. European national theatres mirror this initiative, reimagining classical works to align with contemporary sensibilities while preserving their original cultural significance. Kazakh theatre aims to reinterpret its cultural legacy and participate in the worldwide discourse on the evolution of performing arts through new staging techniques, the incorporation of symbolic elements, and the application of advanced technology. Kazakh theatre situates itself within the broader framework of global theatrical practices, embodying the dual objectives of cultivating a unique national identity and engaging in worldwide cultural exchanges. The current research analyzes how these techniques position Kazakh theatre as a leader in innovation, providing a persuasive framework for the modernization of classical works within a globalized cultural environment.

Zaghloul (2022) emphasizes the significance of integrating theatrical aspects into educational environments, a notion that aligns with advancements in Kazakh theatre. The use of theatrical approaches in education in Kazakhstan is manifested through the adaptation of classical works for instructional objectives. These adjustments not only augment cognitive abilities but also familiarize pupils/students with the fundamental components of national classics, such as Mukhtar Auezov's "Enlik-Kebek" (1922), a dramatic play that tells a tragic love story often reflected in songs, poetry, and oral traditions. The modernization of educational theatre frequently incorporates media resources designed for current contexts, producing formats that are both accessible and culturally pertinent (Kantor & Kubiczek, 2021). Zaghloul (2020) emphasizes the application of advanced technology, including holography and 3D visualization, in theatre productions. In Kazakhstan, these technologies have been employed to enhance stage shows by fulfilling essential criteria such as dynamic lighting, inventive scenery, and immersive theatrical illusions, thereby connecting classical dramaturgy with contemporary educational settings.

May et al. (2021) examine the pedagogical capacity of theatre in promoting social consciousness among adolescents, a topic of considerable significance in Kazakhstan's school theatre programs. These programs frequently reinterpret Kazakh classics, highlighting communal ideals and social resilience, and providing pupils with resources to address societal difficulties. Athanasiou-Taki (2021) analyzes the rise of modernized theatrical genres in periods of crisis, a characteristic reflected in Kazakhstan's theatre landscape. The nation has used new staging techniques, including improvised theatre and localized plays, to recreate national classics in a manner that mirrors sociological and political reality (Zhumatay et al., 2024). This method corresponds with Kazakhstan's emphasis on employing dramatic expression for cultural preservation and social critique.

Figzał-Janikowska (2011) examines the transforming function of music in dramatic theatre, a concept that mirrors the incorporation of traditional Kazakh music into modern theatrical performances. In Kazakhstan, music functions not just as an accompaniment but as a narrative instrument that enriches the retelling of national classics, integrating old works with contemporary musical innovations. This method reinterprets the traditional framework while preserving the cultural integrity of the original works. Notwithstanding these developments, a thorough investigation of the interrelated development of traditional Kazakh theatre, encompassing its pedagogical and technological aspects, remains a domain for additional inquiry. This research aims to address this gap by conducting a thorough examination of the adaptation of classical works in Kazakh theatre. It analyzes how Kazakh directors rework national and global classics, merging cultural legacy with new staging approaches to captivate modern audiences.

2 Materials and Methods

The research methodology involved analyzing structural problems, examining the subject characteristics of various elements in the theoretical framework, and systematically categorizing aspects of the artistic object as a comprehensive whole. Through structural analysis of how national classics are transformed in contemporary theatre, we identified key components, each serving specific functions within the broader framework that underlies this phenomenon.

Through a comparative analysis of the problem components, we uncovered their content, purpose, and role within the modernization system of classical heritage on stage. This provided a foundation for comprehending the modernization process of classical artistic heritage in the theatre as a multifaceted, three-dimensional system. The method of categorizing the topic under study and combining it with a complex, multifaceted mechanism contributed to the development of a transformative concept of the achievements of national artistic culture through modern dramaturgy, which is a large-scale, multifaceted phenomenon with elements that are inextricably linked and complement each other.

The research unfolded across five stages. The first stage involved studying, collecting, and systematizing sources from diverse scholars across different countries, cultures, and research directions, which formed the foundational information base. In the second stage, researchers analyzed the key components of performing arts as a comprehensive entity, examining how literary works are adapted for modern stage performances and evaluating the elements that determine theatrical productions' significance and execution quality. The third stage focused on investigating how the staging process has modernized, particularly comparing theatrical techniques before and after the advent of computer software. This included assessing how technological advancements in the globalization era have influenced dramatic arts. During the fourth stage, researchers examined the fundamental elements of contemporary theatrical performance, including modern production methods and principles. They studied directors' and artists' innovative approaches, particularly in modernized interpretations of classical dramatic works. The final stage synthesized all findings into a comprehensive system. This framework outlined the foundations for both contemporary theatrical adaptations of classics and the implementation stages for modernizing classical national heritage in contemporary theatre, with particular attention to global performing arts and specifically the Kazakh context.

The research drew upon diverse international sources, including scientific articles, essays, and books, which provided a comprehensive foundation for examining the problem at hand. These materials helped reveal key elements and their functions while exploring the specific aspects of the topic. The study also incorporated insights from Kazakh scholars regarding the current state of performing arts in their country.

3 Results

The transformation of classical works in the context of modern theatre suggests an internal renewal of the three main blocks in the execution of dramatic performances. These blocks include the structure, the performance, the material and technical foundation, and the principles and mechanisms of the stage interpretation of theatrical works. Figure 1 is an illustration and confirmation of this idea.

The main task of modern theatre is to search for new forms of performance visualization, make original decisions as a director, and create high-quality dramaturgy with well-defined images of heroes (Barakovic et al., 2020; Islami, 2024). In Kazakhstan, this problem is solved by revealing and implementing the versatility

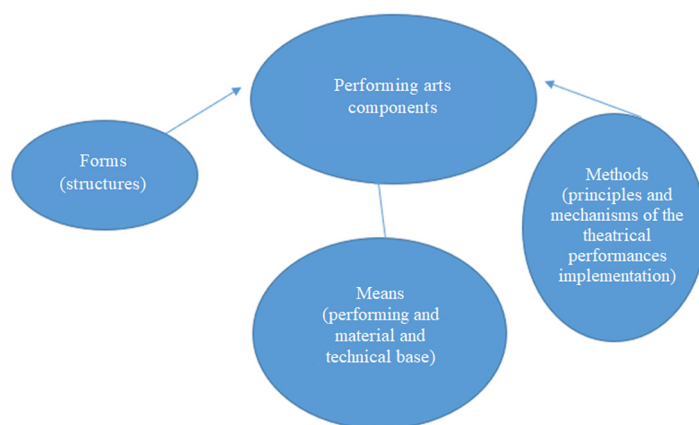


Figure 1: Stage process system and its main elements.

of national performing arts. The latter is made possible through creative experiments with the playful ritual nature of folklore. Consistent with Krebs's (2014) notion that theatrical translation necessitates the re-contextualization of narratives, contemporary Kazakh theatre innovatively engages with the extensive legacy of folklore, employing inventive staging methods to rework ancient stories for modern audiences. These innovative initiatives maintain the cultural integrity of national folklore while rendering it accessible to contemporary sensibilities. Modern directors and playwrights, using this technique, discover new stage forms of ideas and character interpretation (Pogrebniak, 2023). These include the use of metaphors as the foundation for the director's decision-making, the implementation of multifunctional imaging systems, and the creation of multi-level figurative scenes. The evolution of performance styles transcends aesthetic preferences, focusing instead on the generation of new meanings in the interplay between performers and spectators (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). This is especially pertinent in Kazakhstan's theatre, where directors use Graham-Jones's (2020) concept of theatre as cultural diplomacy, promoting international conversation via innovative performance selections. Thus, genre varieties of staging decisions arise, typical for the current period, when the performance turns into a concert, improvisation, performance project, physical theatre, as well as a dance theatre in the productions of the national team of Kazakhstan, including in cooperation with world figures of dramatic art. The dynamic negotiation between cultural settings during the translation and adaptation of theatre is crucial when performing national classics internationally (Laera, 2019). This change transcends basic linguistics, necessitating profound cultural reinterpretation, as underscored by Fischer-Lichte, who accentuates the transformational capacity of performance in generating new meanings through the live interaction between performers and the audience.

At the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, representatives from the national cultures of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, particularly Kazakhstan, showed an increased interest in the history of ethnos, especially its less-explored aspects (Latif, 2015). The repertoire of Kazakh theatres includes the classical drama genres "Enlik – Kebek" (Kazakh social and everyday poem, telling the love story of the horseman Kebek and the beauty Enlik, and the tragic death to which they were doomed by cruel customs), "Karagoz" (Turkish shadow theatre), "Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu" (based on the old Kazakh legend about the tragic fate of those who died in battle), "Akan Seri – Actokty," and "Kyz Zhibek" (Silk Girl). Simultaneously, national directors such as Zh. Khadzhev, E. Obaev, R. Andriasyan, E. Tapenov, N. Zhakypbai, A. Rakhimov, and B. Atabaev strive to modernize their performances and integrate them into the global public consciousness as a contemporary artistic phenomenon. This is the process through which theatrical compositions emerge, incorporating elements of folklore and a metaphorical approach to the interpretation of ideas, images, and actions, thereby elevating them to the level of large-scale philosophical generalizations. This type of staging acquires the characteristics of a parable. The process of exchanging professional creative experience and traditions between masters of the world and Kazakh performing arts is taking place (master classes by Markus Zohner in Almaty, early 2000s). The tradition of implementing this principle has a long history. Many decades ago, in 1933, M. Auezov's play "Enlik-Kebek" was staged by director M.G. Nasonov in Semipalatinsk. Later, the play was also performed in Russian and Korean. In the twenty-first century, the Republican Academic German Drama Theatre offered the audience's attention to a version of the drama "Karagoz" by M. Auezov, prepared by Kazakh director N. Dubs, with the participation of the choreographer Florian Bilbao. The work was also translated into German.

Updating the system of means and methods for an idea's transmitting, as well as its directorial interpretation, is manifested through the experimental work, including through the principle of interaction with the theatrical traditions of world stage masters and the exchange of cultural and professional acting experience with them (Bazaluk, 2019a, b). In particular, the directorate of the German Drama Theatre implements the aforementioned (on its initiative, scripts belonging to H. Boll, S. Mrozhek, A. Jarry, and T. Williams were staged). Directors and translators are not simply transmitters of a text (Barnette, 2018). They are active agents who shape the work's meaning within different cultural circumstances. In Kazakhstan's national theatre, directors such as B. Atabaev reinterpret traditional works with innovative interpretations that appeal to both local and international audiences.

The most common method for implementing performances in modern times is improvisation by "ARTiSHOCK" (Art and Shock) theatre, as demonstrated in one of the best performances, "Back in the

USSR.” This method is carried out in various forms such as pantomime and street staging, which are based on the theatricalization of reality as a whole. These performances feature innovative mechanisms that facilitate interaction with the audience. The use of technology in theatre, such as virtual stages and special effects, enhances the expressiveness of the performance and allows for a deeper engagement with contemporary issues (Anderman, 2005).

“38 or Karakurt,” a contemporary production, is by G. Mergaliyeva, the leading director of the Mangystau Regional Music and Drama Theatre, named after M.N. Zhanturina. G. Mergaliyeva created a modern free-stage interpretation of the 38th essay in A. Kunanbayev’s collection titled “Words of Edification” to implement Kunanbayev’s concept on stage (Sanbayev, 2012). Mergaliyeva aimed to expose the viewer to elements such as resolving the scenario plan in a dramatically heightened atmosphere and showing the distinct sharpness of the actor’s interpretation. The relevance of the performance as a whole is determined by its characteristic expressiveness, and the success of the interpretation as an individual drama project, the basis of which is a classical work of art of national culture. It reflects the postmodernist tendencies characteristic of the performing arts at the end of the twentieth and at the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. These tendencies encompass a variety of categories, including the director’s innovative approach to stage dramaturgy, the stylistic transformation of standard staging elements, and the unpredictable plot trajectory, which is shaped by the screenwriter’s ideological ambitions. The play “38 or Karakurt” embodies the world of images and the psychology of the universe, shaping the 1990s generation and modern society as a whole (Baigutov, 2023). However, in the realm of theatrical directing and acting, there is a tendency to imitate the music hall, resulting in “lifeless” performances such as “open stage,” “empty space,” and “theatre arena.”

Kazakh theatre functions as a vibrant space where traditional and contemporary practices intersect, providing a distinctive framework for the adaptation of classical works (Baigutov, 2023). Table 1 demonstrates the effect of native traditions, creative staging techniques, and global factors on the evolution of contemporary theatrical art in Kazakhstan. This interaction underscores Kazakhstan’s attempts to recontextualize its classical history while participating in wider global dialogues on the modernization of theatre.

Table 2 provides a description of the means of providing staging in the conditions of the performance of past years and the current period of time.

By using Figure 2, a panoramic display of the problems put forward by modern theatre is explained.

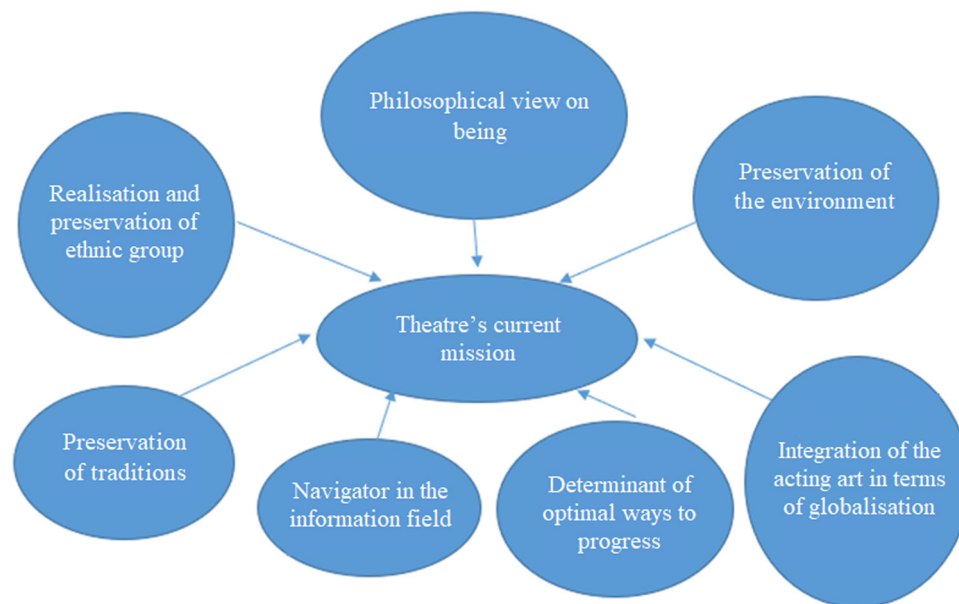
The field of spoken theatre, which focuses on narrative storytelling and dialogue-driven performances, has gained prominence in the current era. Outstanding producers and stage performers implement the listed

Table 1: Stage creativity aspects

Content factor	Modern producers strive to capture and deeply reveal those borders of classical works for the theatre, where vital ideas are impersonated. These themes include the spiritual rebirth of a human, the triumph over destructive beginnings, and the pursuit of not only material but also cultural and moral progress. The content components include objectivity (realism), an acute social focus, and the rigidity of the director’s decisions. Kazakh productions, such as Enlik-Kebek and Karagoz, have filmmakers who reinterpret spiritual and moral issues within the context of national history, included tenacity and cultural identity
Translation of works	A characteristic feature of this aspect is the flexibility in approaches to organizing stage events and formats for their interpretation. Popularity and distribution are increasing: festivals, theatre clubs (ARTISHOCK Theatre). Kazakh theatre captivates spectators by adaptable methods, shown by the ARTISHOCK Theatre, which merges classic storylines with experimental formats
Traditions of the performance formation	One of the fundamental principles in the creation of modern theatrical composition is the classical system of laws of realistic acting, which follows a psychological direction. However, it is enriched by the introduction of new elements for the implementation of ideas and images on stage
Genres demanded by time	The most popular in the realities of the current time are domestic comedies, musicals, melodramas, or commercial plays. Kazakh productions incorporate adaptations of classical works into musicals and improvisational endeavours, addressing a variety of contemporary audiences

Table 2: Technology for the implementation of staging before and after developments in computer software

Classical base of theatrical performance	Modern base of theatrical performance (contemporary approaches using advanced technologies)
The stage as a real-world platform for artistic expression Live acting Direct dialogue of the troupe members with the audience The depth of realization of the professionalism and talent of dramatic artists used to express the author's and director's concepts, ideas Philosophical and domestic concepts as the foundation of plot interpretation	The play that does not take place in a physical (real) location Digitally created characters Distant performance The use of special effects due to modern technological means to enhance expressiveness in showing the content of the work and its capacity Plurality of concepts, multi-ideology as a reflection of life diversity in modern society

**Figure 2:** The components system that determines the role and significance of stage works and skills.

categories to the greatest extent, contributing to the viability of this area of culture, its relevance to humanity, and the possibility of becoming an encyclopaedia of answers to the main questions of being – its meaning, ways of finding truth, and direction for the future (Baranski *et al.*, 2021; Efremov, 2025). The relationship between educational and professional theatres in Kazakhstan is essential to this development. Educational institutions establish a crucial basis for cultivating the talents and knowledge of emerging artists, whereas professional theatres serve as venues for the practical application of these skills (Altynbekova *et al.*, 2024; Burayeva *et al.*, 2020). Collaborative efforts, including internships and collaborative productions, promote originality and continuity, guaranteeing that the forthcoming generation of artists is prepared to advance the modernization of Kazakh theatre. This collaboration enhances the creative ecology and facilitates the adaptation and reworking of traditional works, which is a defining characteristic of Kazakhstan's theatrical identity. Table 3 presents a list and description of resource blocks that contribute to developing theatrical work for the stage.

The interpretation of classical works in contemporary theatre involves several creative methodologies, each showing unique goals and artistic perspectives. These methods tackle the difficulty of preserving the original text's core while captivating modern audiences. Table 4 categorizes these tactics into essential groups, offering a framework for comprehending the many strategies directors employ to rework ancient storylines.

Table 3: Leading elements of the performance base for creating a dramatic performance

The director and their concept	Directors shape classical plays through their philosophies and interpretation of the source material, particularly their understanding of humanity's place in the cosmos. Their artistic choices are guided by how deeply they embrace core theatrical principles: creating believable settings, developing authentic characters through performance, and striking a balance between realism and artistic interpretation. The success of a theatrical production hinges on how well directors and artists weave together spiritual, ethical, social, and historical elements while bringing fresh, sustainable creative approaches to the work
Means of the performance interpretation	It provides a wide range of possibilities for decorating the setting in terms of which the theatrical action takes place and the plot of the original is happening. It is possible to use classical elements characteristic of scenery, costumes; and modern special effects; combining traditional and modernized components of the stage design and the appearance of the actors

The table emphasizes the balance between maintaining traditional features and pursuing contemporary expressions, demonstrating the flexibility of classical works in the changing environment of modern theatre.

Contemporary theatre has evolved several strategies to reimagine classical works, each presenting distinct adaptation methods that address changing creative and societal circumstances. These methodologies might be perceived along a spectrum, extending from rigorous adherence to the original text to abstract reinterpretations that highlight universal themes. Figure 3 presents a conceptual framework that illustrates the development of tactics employed by theatrical companies to balance tradition with innovation. This continuum demonstrates the shift from maintaining historical and cultural authenticity to investigating new aspects of meaning and audience involvement, emphasizing the fluidity and adaptability of contemporary theatre methods.

Techniques for transforming examples of world classics in the theatre at the moment, in the era of globalization and integration of national cultures into the international space, are illustrated in Figure 4.

The use of these techniques stems from their ability to accurately reflect the conditions of modern life, the attire of heroes, and the introduction of motives related to the topic at hand. The stagings of “The Kid with a Bike” (2011) by the Dardenne brothers, “Macbeth” (2015) by Justin Kurzel, and “She” (2016) by Paul Verhoeven serve as evidence of this. Kazakh theatre exhibits these principles by adapting both native and international classics. Kazakh directors have reinterpreted Shakespeare’s Hamlet within nomadic contexts and infused local customs into Molière’s comedies, resulting in works that merge universal themes with a unique Kazakh

Table 4: Ways to implement the performance in the current time period

Traditionalism	Depicting the events of both the past and the present in a straightforward and rational manner, without artistic excesses, while faithfully recreating the primal essence of the narrative (this approach was used in the staging of “Karagoz,” based on the drama by M. Auezov and directed by Kyrgyz director Sadyr Niyazakunov). The set designers aimed to replicate the expanses of the steppe, characterized by their breadth, to convey a sense of boundlessness. The characters acted as an integral part of their native land, a symbol of its past, present, and future
Academism	Chanting of sublime ideas, genres of drama and tragedy; the desire to most convincingly and vividly convey to the viewer the atmosphere of the era and the location of the action
Modernization	A theatrical play often creates an original, unique time-space during its performance. This factor spreads to almost all elements of the performance design (set design, costumes, indoor furnishings), emphasizing the difference between the perception and interpretation of the primary source by modern directors and artists from generally accepted, classical interpretations (an example is the replacement of natural reservoirs and fountains by pools, as well as aquariums in staging: “Romeo + Juliet” (1996) by Baz Luhrmann; “Hamlet” (2000) by Michael Almereyda; “Boris Godunov” (2011) by Vladimir Mirzoyev)
Avant-garde	Abstraction of the process of plot interpretation from specific historical and folk conditions directly connected with its creation; the desire to impersonate by means of directing and acting, aspects of the timeless, eternal principles beginning in the author’s ideas and images

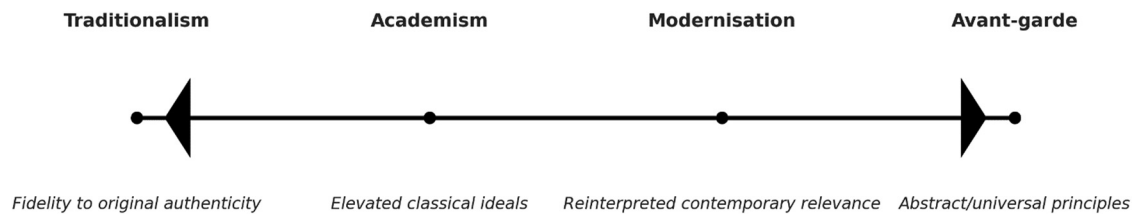


Figure 3: Continuum of approaches to adapting classical works in modern theatre.

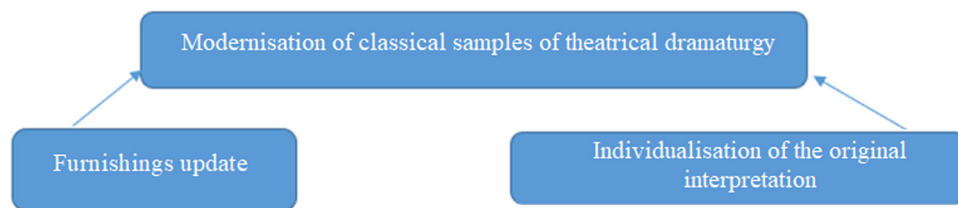


Figure 4: Principles of updating works of world classics in terms of modern theatre.

aesthetic. These efforts demonstrate Kazakhstan's contribution to the worldwide dialogue on the modernization of traditional theatre. Table 5 lists the aspects of classical examples of world drama in terms of modern staging.

Good examples of updating the staged version of primary sources include plays such as “Enlik – Kebek” by M. Auezov, which served as the basis for an opera of the same name with music by G. Zhubanova; “Ayman and Sholpan” by M. Auezov, which served as the material for a musical comedy staged by the artists of the music studio that later became the Kazakh State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet named after Abay; and “Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu” by G. Musirepov, which was filmed in 1954 under the title “Poem about Love.” This is the process by which a dramatic performance undergoes genre transformation, resulting in a plot that remains relevant across different periods. Table 6 reveals the leading properties of the transformed classics on the stage of modern theatre.

Understanding and performing contemporary works demands a thorough knowledge of historical context, particularly the environment in which classical pieces were developed and preserved. In addition, these performances must incorporate modern technological advances, which help demonstrate how the original works remain relevant and universal across different periods (Figure 5).

The role of performing arts in Kazakhstan is to bring a unique and original ethnic atmosphere into the global cultural space while ensuring its integration. It embodies the distinct characteristics of both classical and modern origins. It successfully emulates the contemporary technological advancements, such as digital gadgets, remote control, and virtual reality technologies (Shamne et al., 2019). It also promotes the fusion of the deep spiritual and moral traditions of the ethnic group, their worldview through games and rituals, and the dynamics of the modern view of the surrounding reality. The masters of Kazakh national drama had a chance to fulfil one of the leading missions to preserve and popularize their native culture due to the attention to stage and costume design that conveys the environment and costumes of the characters of the plays. The use of innovative materials and technologies manifested itself most clearly in the area of scenography in Kazakhstan.

Table 5: Aspects through which the innovation of directors and stage performers is manifested

Modernization of thinking	Perception of a classic work and its ideas from a modern perspective
Modernization of the creative process	Performance presentation using modern means, both human resources and technology (special effects)
Modernization of concept	Deepening expressiveness through individual dramatic decision

Table 6: Characteristic features of modernized versions of classical dramaturgy

Actualization of ideas, plots, thinking, and actions of characters	Critics and theatre experts universally praised the performances for their profound examination of artistic, spiritual, and moral concepts, skilfully executed through a blend of naturalistic and stylized approaches that honoured the authors’ vision
Thought and action symbolization	The mechanism of transmission of high, positive, and progressive ideas at its core about the value of a single individual, the cultural, spiritual, moral, and material heritage of the ethnic groups that inhabited and currently inhabit the planet, and the indestructibility of the will to live, despite the tests
Modern formulation of classical primary sources	Revealing the difficult conditions of life in the current period is one of the forms of reflection on the eternal problems and questions that have not left humanity alone for millennia. Added to this is the desire of directors and artists to combine the atmosphere, attributes of the original plays, and storylines that arise in the current period
Synthesis of classical and modern beginnings in contemporary staging	Respect for an objective, multilateral understanding of one’s own and world history, adoption of its lessons and achievements, and popularization of these through modern theatre using updated decorative and practical staging techniques and words from today’s language are all signs of a high level of culture in a country, an ethnic group, or individuals



Figure 5: Blocks that create the foundation for a progressive theatrical interpretation of the classics in modern conditions.

Ecological materials, reflective fabrics and decorative finishing materials, mobile systems, transformer constructions, and chameleon materials have all been used to their full potential (Figure 6) (Zhanguzhinova et al., 2022).

The transformation of national classics into modern theatrical staging aims to enrich and expand the boundaries of stage creativity. The uniqueness of this process lies in the selection of the most promising

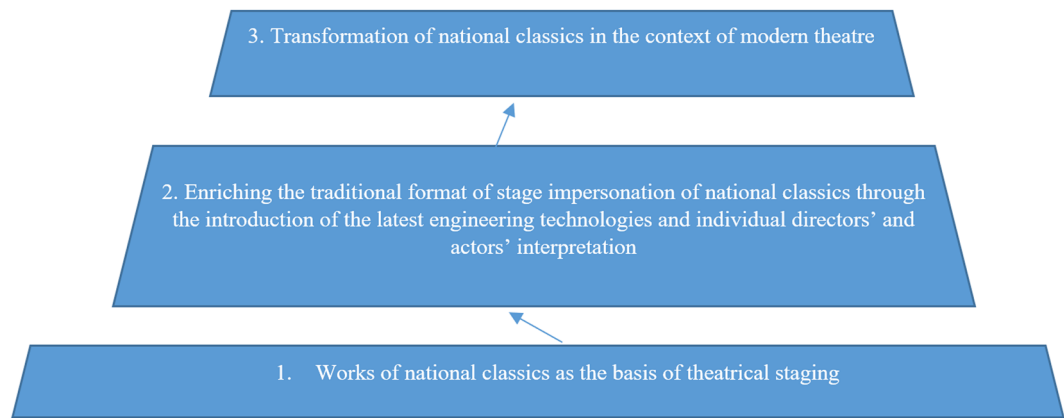


Figure 6: Implementation stages of the modernized version of the classical national heritage staging in terms of modern theatre.

technological advancements and their highly artistic fusion with the national traditions of various cultures, particularly those rooted in Kazakhstan's century-old history. Kazakh theatre holds a distinctive role in the global theatrical arena, acting as a bridge between entrenched cultural traditions and modern performance innovations. Kazakh directors utilize dual tactics in modernizing traditional works, focusing on adapting Kazakh classics and integrating Kazakh cultural components into international pieces. The works of Auezov, including "Enlik-Kebek" and "Karagoz," are reinterpreted using contemporary staging methods, symbolic set design, and the incorporation of advanced technologies, similar to adaptations such as Almereyda's "Hamlet," which modernizes Shakespeare for today's audience. Kazakh theatre concurrently integrates local traditions, including folklore, music, and visual elements, into adaptations of Western classics, such as the works of Shakespeare and Molière. These hybrid interpretations integrate global themes with unique Kazakh aesthetics, establishing Kazakh theatre as a distinctive participant in the worldwide discourse on the evolution of classical works. This simultaneous emphasis on safeguarding national identity while interacting with global trends underscores Kazakhstan's contribution to the discourse on theatrical globalization. By amalgamating traditional Kazakh motifs, including folklore, music, and symbolic scenography, with cutting-edge technologies such as multimedia projections, virtual staging, and interactive set designs, Kazakh theatre not only revitalizes its cultural heritage but also enhances the global repertoire of contemporary theatre practices. These initiatives illustrate Kazakhstan's capacity to serve as a cultural intermediary by promoting international discourse through the performing arts and establishing its theatre as a paradigm of innovation that honours both local authenticity and global interdependence.

4 Discussion

Kazakhstan integrates traditional cultural aspects with contemporary staging methods, mirroring a wider worldwide trend in theatre. The reworking of ancient works functions as a method for maintaining national history and as a platform for confronting urgent social, cultural, and environmental challenges, thus establishing theatre as a dynamic and adaptive art form. The comparison of Kazakhstan's theatrical infrastructure with worldwide practices involves not only the adaptation of classical works but also a larger discourse on how modern theatre infrastructures facilitate both current and traditional performances. The theatrical scene in Kazakhstan, like that of several nations, is profoundly anchored in its cultural past while also adapting to include contemporary trends and technical advancements. Kazakhstan has progressively embraced novel digital technology and multimedia components, including virtual reality and interactive stage designs, to captivate spectators with more immersive experiences. This indicates a worldwide transition towards the implementation of advanced technologies in performance venues to improve audience engagement and the overall theatrical experience (Qarkaxhja *et al.*, 2021).

The theatrical infrastructure in Kazakhstan is characterized by an increasing variety of venues and performance spaces, ranging from conventional proscenium theatres to innovative and adaptable structures that support immersive and site-specific performances (Sarzhigitov *et al.*, 2024). This reflects global trends, wherein creative venue designs are utilized to adapt to the changing nature of theatre, which progressively amalgamates genres and formats. Furthermore, contemporary performance methodologies, including environmental or ecological theatre, are gaining prominence in Kazakhstan (Ivashko *et al.*, 2020). These methods, encompassing issues of sustainability and environmental consciousness, are progressively integrated into both classic and modern performances, in accordance with worldwide trends in the theatrical industry (Afonina & Karpov, 2023). As worldwide theatres include ecological themes and sustainable practices, Kazakhstan is starting to mirror these concerns in its plays, ensuring that contemporary theatrical practices are both pertinent and progressive.

The transformation of examples of national classics has been explored across various cultures and examined by scientists from perspectives that emphasize the aspects of the phenomenon they considered most significant. Amalowicz (2021) analyzes the factors influencing the audience's perception of theatrical situations. In particular, Amalowicz focuses on the desire of modern theatre architects to implement the idea

of art synthesis in their projects, creating unusual objects that arouse deep interest among the public. Kershaw's (2007) book offers essential insights into the interplay between theatrical performances and their surrounding settings. Kershaw's research indicates that the physical and social settings of performance substantially affect the creative process and audience reaction. He illustrates that the incorporation of environmental factors, such as stage design, spatial dynamics, and audience interaction techniques, augments the immersive nature of performances and cultivates a more profound connection between the production and its audience. Kershaw's research highlights the efficacy of Kazakhstan's modern theatrical practices in integrating traditional cultural elements with current staging methods. Kazakh directors use environmental aspects to craft shows that both maintain national heritage and engage contemporary audiences. This alignment with Kershaw's results shows how environmental factors can be used strategically to make classical adaptations more important and effective. Thus, Kazakhstan's strategy illustrates how the deliberate incorporation of environmental factors may enhance theatrical performances, rendering them both culturally genuine and dynamically captivating.

Preedy (2022) focuses on the expressive and artistic effects of theatrical dramas intended for performance in the open air. She studied more than a hundred works staged in London's open-air theatres between 1,576 and 1,609. Doroshenko and Umanets (2021) consider the theatre a centre for the preservation of the ethnic self-identification of the people, the revival of the national spiritual culture's origins, the philosophical and moral assertion of the national foundations of the worldview, and the creation of a synthetic artistic space. They conclude that an innovative element in the puppet versions of Lesya Ukrainka's works is the emphasis on mental markers of the national worldview, saturated with national attributes and folk rites. Ward (2021) analyzes the theatre's role in the political and socio-legal areas of social life. In particular, they consider the work of such playwrights as David Hare, Richard Norton-Taylor, Caryl Churchill, Howard Brenton, Mike Bartlett, Sarah Kane, Bryony Lavery, and Evan Placey.

McCarthy (2022) examines the history of performing arts in Europe during the New Age, specifically in England, with a focus on practices such as acting among adolescents. The process of preparing adolescents to perform on stage, the development of theatrical plays for them, and their cultural contexts are examined. Iudova-Romanova et al. (2022) investigate the use of virtual reality images in modern theatres. The latest technologies penetrate various areas of life, including the acting environment (Tkachenko et al., 2024). This fact, according to the authors, is important for a qualitative understanding of the development trends of the modern theatre stage in terms of the artistic development of the current period. Bal (2020) analyzes the reflection in the content of theatrical plays (in the example of works of Caryl Churchill and Sarah Kane) and their staging of such elements as philosophy and politics, the transformation of the traditional aspects of realism, and the epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht. Aki (2022) studies another trend in modern theatre, which is connected with the search for ways to impersonate epic dramaturgy, which is designed to contribute to the study and popularization of the traditional culture of the specific ethnic group. Taxidou (2021) studies the stylistic dialogue in the conditions of modern theatre between such branches of dramatic art as epic, drama, and tragedy.

Karzhaubayeva (2011) considers renewal in the area of stage dramatic art by studying its theatrical and decorative parts. The author points out that Kazakhstan's culture has a long history of developing world artistic traditions in this area, dating back to the nineteenth century. She believes that one of the outcomes of this process was the discovery and incorporation of "new" art forms into Kazakh stage art. According to Karzhaubayeva (2011), the progress in Kazakhstan's national theatre can be attributed to its figures' deep attention and response to the artistic experiences and achievements of other countries, which in turn contributed to their successful accomplishment of a large-scale cultural breakthrough in a qualitatively new dimension of the staging process. Renewal in various areas of society (socio-economic, political, and ideological) has become the basis for the multifaceted revealing of constructive and creative potential by national scenography, the vectors of which are the features of life understanding and aesthetic values (Orlenko et al., 2020). The researcher concludes that the performing arts of Kazakhstan preserve the traditions of folk art, in particular, the elements of the performance of the bearers of the musical and oral-poetic form of *сал* (sal) and *cepi* (seri), folk comedians *кү* (күақы) (ku, kuaky). At the same time, it actively responds to the trend toward the modernization of performances through directorial and acting experiments, as well as updates in the area of sets and costumes that reflect the reality of the current time.

Khalykov and Mihaly (2016) focus their work on national self-identification in the art field, specifically in the context of theatrical direction, which aligns with the globalization era. The monograph reveals the fact that the theatre of Kazakhstan, through its staging, seeks to raise the problem of deep philosophical understanding of the surrounding world and the fate of a man in it. To implement this aspect, the playwrights turn to the national epic as well as folk choreography, which includes various examples of traditional dance. The genre features and general formative factors of dance folklore, which constituted the fundamental basis for the development of folk (more broadly, national) choreography, as well as the methodological foundations of teaching Kazakh dance in higher educational institutions, are being studied.

Khalykov and Mihaly (2017) delve deeper into the mission of Kazakhstan's modern drama theatre. In particular, the desire of artists of the current period to show life in all its diversity, including rough negative manifestations in society, is stated. The modern era has given brilliant names to producers of dramatic performances: B. Abdrakhmanov, D. Zhumabayeva, B. Shambetova, G. Kumisbayeva, and E. Nurtazin. Their mission is to search and find ideas for overcoming a difficult fate, a way out of a crisis (spiritual and material).

Also, the creative principles for implementing performances by participants in the large-scale festival "Art-Ordo" are examined. The festival is dedicated to the preservation and popularization of the cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples, with a particular focus on scenography. The discussion also raises questions about how modern performing arts address and resolve political and critical societal issues in the current period, using the work of Frances Eliza as an example (Hellings, 2014).

Galenson (2009) notes that the complexity and versatility of modern art, including performing arts, are due to the controversial and complex artistic practice of the twentieth century in general and its last decades in particular. The author subdivides the activities of culture representatives, to whom theatre directors and artists are most directly related, into experimental innovation and conceptual renewal. Innovators–experimenters, according to the expert, operate by the trial-and-error method and consider the creation of art as a search process in which images, as well as innovations, are revealed in the creation process. Followers of conceptual updates formulate their ideas and purposes. At the same time, their creative potential manifests itself brightly and suddenly.

Khalykov (2017a) examines the key elements involved in the implementation of classical dramatic art. Modern scenography encompasses four key elements. It begins with an associative–metaphorical approach that reveals the evolving conditions of a play through choreography, singing, and set design. Next, it explores theatre's cosmic role in understanding fundamental questions about existence, dreams, fear, and violence. The third aspect examines how performing arts are woven into society's social and political fabric. Finally, it utilizes technological tools to synthesize historical imagery, tracing the evolution of Kazakh identity and analyzing the nation's cultural codes and phenomenology. Khalykov (2017b) is attempting to identify common Turkic traditions in the art of the Kazakhs, including performing arts. In particular, the unity and diversity of manifestations of the Turkic artistic worldview in various types of artistic creativity in Kazakhstan is revealed. This happens by identifying common and universal themes, motives, artistic images, and symbols.

One of the articles by Khalykov (2013) addresses the study of the popular musical genre, its development and popularization, the unique characteristics of musical theatre in its integration with modern music, and the comparison and application of classical elements of choreographic art in contemporary contexts. This direction provides an opportunity to establish the connection between the economy and art and to trace the emergence of a new alloy of performing arts and production, management, advertising, and the mass media.

The work of Ryabova *et al.* (2022) is devoted to the issues of interaction between the creative beginning and the business industry based on the first independent theatre in Kazakhstan, ARTiSHOCK Theatre. Experts assert that the creative enterprise can effectively manage both competition and environmental shocks through a process that transforms competence into a dynamic ability to adapt to environmental changes. This process involves experimental organization, which in turn leads to the development of "complex stereotypes" that serve as the foundation for the industry's functioning. However, in the cited works, there is no revelation of the transformation problem of national classics in terms of modern drama theatre as a single, multi-vector system. We have made an effort to address this phenomenon in this study.

5 Conclusions

This study analyzed the topic of modernizing the stage interpretation of works from national classical literary and dramatic art within the theatrical environment of the contemporary period. The central features of the phenomenon under study were identified. These are forms of interpretation of primary sources on the stage; means of interpretation of modern performance; and translation methods of ideas and images of the primary source in terms of their renewal. As a result of this study on the modernization of stage interpretations, aspects of stage creativity were also identified. These include the content factor, work translation, traditions of staging formation, and genres in demand. The technologies used in staging productions, both before and after advancements in computer software, have been examined. Specifically, the study focused on the traditional and contemporary foundations of theatrical performance. The examination of how national classics adapt to modern theatre revealed both the societal frameworks that shape theatrical performances and the artistry needed to bring them to life on stage. Along with this, the main components of theatrical performance were clearly defined, contributing to the creation of a modern performance. These components include the director, their concept, and the methods they use to guide performers in embodying their roles.

In the process of studying this topic, the methods of interpretation of theatrical performances in the current period were covered. These approaches include traditionalism, academism, avant-garde, and modernization. The analysis of the modernization of classical primary sources in the context of global and national dramatic art revealed principles and aspects, such as the modernization of thinking, the modernization of the creative process, and the modernization of concepts, which contribute to updating works of art in the current period's stage environment. Finally, we have come to understand the building blocks that form the foundation for the progressive theatrical visualization of the classics in modern conditions. These include a scientific and historical approach to reading the sources and their visualization, along with the active use of the latest technological means to translate the ideas of classical playwrights. At the same time, the main stages involved in implementing the modernized version of the staging of the classical national heritage in terms of the modern theatre were established. This topic holds significant potential for in-depth study in the future, as the performing arts are constantly experimenting with discoveries and achievements that have the potential to become classics over time.

Funding information: The authors state no funding involved.

Author contributions: Askar Akimbek – conceptualization, methodology; Ordabek Khozhamberdiyev – investigation, resources, writing – review and editing; Zukhra Islambayeva – data curation, investigation, writing – review and editing; Amankeldi Mukan – methodology, writing – original draft preparation; Yelik Nursultan – investigation, resources, writing – review and editing.

Conflict of interest: The authors state no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

References

- Afonina, O., & Karpov, V. (2023). Art practices in modern culture. *Culture and Contemporaneity*, 2, 76–81.
- Aki, E. (2022). A study on von Trier's *Dogville*: An Amalgam of Aristotelian Dramatic Theatre and Brechtian Epic Theatre. *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 20, 77–90.
- Altynbekova, Z., Bostanov, B., Kenesbayev, S., Ongarbayeva, M., & Sadirmekova, Z. (2024). Methodology of teaching future computer science teachers to create and use open educational resources. *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University. Series Physics*, 55, 2337–2347.

- Amalowicz, P. (2021). The synthesis of the arts and its influence on modern theatre architecture. In J. Charytonowicz, A. Maciejko, & C. S. Falcão (Eds.), *Advances in Human Factors in Architecture, Sustainable Urban Planning and Infrastructure, Proceedings of the AHFE 2021 Virtual Conference on Human Factors in Architecture, Sustainable Urban Planning and Infrastructure* (pp. 3–10). Springer.
- Anderman, G. (2005). *Europe on stage: Translation and theatre*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Athanasiou-Taki, M. (2021). The Cypriot theatre in the midst of global crisis. *Acotaciones*, 1(46), 103–120.
- Baigutov, K. (2023). Comparative analysis of Kazakh and Lithuanian mythology in art. *Logos (Lithuania)*, 114, 126–137.
- Bal, M. (2020). Elements of Brecht's epic theatre in Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* and Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*. *Rumeli DE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8, 678–692.
- Barakovic, S., Husic, J. B., Maraj, D., Maraj, A., Krejcar, O., Maresova, P., & Melero, F. J. (2020). Quality of life, quality of experience, and security perception in web of things: An overview of research opportunities. *Electronics*, 9(4), 700.
- Baranski, E., Gardiner, G., Lee, D., Funder, D. C., Beramendi, M., & Bastian, B. (2021). Who in the world is trying to change their personality traits? Volitional personality change among college students in six continents. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 121(5), 1140–1156.
- Barnette, J. (2018). *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg's art and theatrical adaptation*. SIU Press.
- Bazaluk, O. (2019a). Plato's traditions in modern educational theories. *Analele Universitatii din Craiova, Seria Filozofie*, 43(1), 5–20.
- Bazaluk, O. (2019b). The revival of the notion of arete in contemporary philosophy. *Schole*, 13(1), 198–207.
- Burayeva, Z., Berkimbayeva, K., Kerimbayeva, B., Semiz, K., & Atikol, B. U. (2020). Creativity potential management in a higher education context. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(9), 1439–1456.
- Doroshenko, V., & Umanets, O. (2021). Lesya Ukrainka creativity in the aesthetic parameters of modern national puppet theatre. *Problems of Interaction Between Arts Pedagogy and the Theory and Practice of Education*, 59(59), 37–50.
- Efremov, A. (2025). The fear primacy hypothesis in the structure of emotional states: A systematic literature review. *Psychological Reports*, 1, 1–6. doi: 10.1177/00332941241313106.
- Figżał-Janikowska, M. (2011). Współczesna polska muzyka teatralna (Music in Contemporary Polish Dramatic Theatre). *Postscriptum Polonistyczne*, 2(8), 95–109.
- Fischer-Lichte, E. (2008). *The transformative power of performance: A new aesthetics*. Routledge.
- Galenson, D. (2009). Conceptual revolutions in 20th-century art. *Historically Speaking*, 10(5), 20–22.
- Graham-Jones, J. (2020). Translation and/as theatre and performance historiography: Towards a reconsideration of a neglected but omnipresent challenge. In *The Routledge companion to theatre and performance historiography*. Routledge.
- Hellings, J. (2014). Contemporary art itself thinking: Making the invisible visible? In J. Hellings (Ed.), *Adorno and art* (pp. 129–143). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Islami, V. (2024). Mythological motifs in the heroic epic: Analysis of the artistic function and influence on the formation of the hero's image. *Logos (Lithuania)*, 118, 165–178.
- Iudova-Romanova, K., Humenyuk, T., Horevalov, S., & Honcharuk, S. (2022). Virtual reality in contemporary theatre. *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage*, 15(4), 75.
- Ivashko, Y., Kuzmenko, T., Shuan, L., & Peng, C. (2020). The influence of the natural environment on the transformation of architectural style. *Landscape Architecture and Art*, 15(15), 98–105.
- Kantor, A., & Kubiczek, J. (2021). Polish culture in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 14(4), 181.
- Karzhaubayeva, S. (2011). Kazakh theatrical and decorative art. *Bulletin of KazNU*, 134(4), 317–320.
- Kershaw, B. (2007). *Theatre ecology: Environments and performance events*. Cambridge University Press.
- Khalykov, K. (2013). Modern theatre: Problems of performing arts musical in Kazakhstan. *IOSR Journal of Engineering*, 3(10), 22–29.
- Khalykov, K. (2017a). *The problem of artistic and technological synthesis in the scenography of Kazakhstan*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323572014>.
- Khalykov, K. (2017b). The Kazakhs art in the aspect of the common Turkic cultural traditions. In G. T. Zhumaseitova (Ed.), *The Kazakhs art in the aspect of the common Turkic cultural traditions* (pp. 210–246). Print Express.
- Khalykov, K., & Mihaly, F. (2016). *Features of development of Kazakh drama theatre and scenography in recent years*. <http://surl.li/ecmdn>.
- Khalykov, K., & Mihaly, F. (2017). *Preservation, development and integration of the cultural heritage of Hungary and Kazakhstan*. Savaria University Press Szombathely.
- Krebs, K. (2014). *Translation and adaptation in theatre and film*. Routledge.
- Laera, M. (2019). *Theatre and translation*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Latif, H. E. (2015). To the question on research of craftsmanship traditions of Ganja of XIX – first half of XX centuries. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(151), 433–437.
- May, H., Kloess, J., Davies, K., & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. (2021). Young people's experiences of attending a theater-in-education program on child sexual exploitation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 609958.
- McCarthy, H. (2022). *Boy actors in early modern England: Skill and stagecraft in the theatre*. Cambridge University Press.
- Orlenko, M., Dyomin, M., Ivashko, Y., Dmytrenko, A., & Chang, P. (2020). Rational and aesthetic principles of form-making in traditional chinese architecture as the basis of restoration activities. *International Journal of Conservation Science*, 11(2), 499–512.
- Pogrebniak, G. (2023). Stage as an expanse of artistic research by director-author. Part 3. A. Vaida, K. Zanussi: Theatre as an experimental field of activity. *Notes on Art Criticism*, 43, 211–217.
- Preedy, C. (2022). *Aerial Environments on the Early Modern Stage: Theatres of the Air, 1576–1609*. Oxford University Press.

- Qarkaxhja, Y., Kryukova, N. I., Cherezova, Y. A., Rozhnov, S. N., Khairullina, E. R., & Bayanova, A. R. (2021). Digital transformation in education: Teacher candidate views on mobile learning. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 16(19), 81–93.
- Ryabova, K., Fomina, V., & Ghosh, A. (2022). “Challenging Stereotypes” as a core competence in creative entrepreneurship: Insights from ArtiShock Theatre, Kazakhstan. *South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases*, 11(3), 242–253.
- Sanbayev, S. (2012). Translation of “Words of Edification” by A. Kunanbayev. <https://abai.kaznu.kz/rus/?p=113>.
- Sarzhigitov, Y. T., Imangazinov, M. M., Zhumakyeve, B. D., & Koch, K. (2024). The role and place of Zhyrau poetry in the world literature. *Bakhtiniana*, 19(4), e65434p.
- Shamne, A., Dotsevykh, T., & Akimova, A. (2019). Psychosemantic peculiarities of promotional videos perception. *Psycholinguistics*, 25(1), 384–408.
- Taxidou, O. (2021). Epic, tragic, dramatic theatre and the Brechtian project. In O. Taxidou (Ed.), *Greek tragedy and modernist performance* (pp. 119–162). Edinburgh University Press.
- Tkachenko, O., Chernykh, M., Kuznetsov, I., Karpovich, V., & Jatkiewicz, P. (2024). An impact of web animation on user perception and engagement. *Journal of the Balkan Tribological Association*, 30(5), 875–897.
- Ward, I. (2021). *The play of law in modern British theatre*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Zaghloul, H. (2020). An exploratory study on the use of 3d hologram visualization in Egypt's educational theater. *Education and Information Technologies 14 Project: Educational Media*, 14, 31–44.
- Zaghloul, H. (2022). Research gaps and future trends in educational media and educational theater research: Analytical study in scopus and web of science databases. *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)*, 18(2), 295–324.
- Zhanguzhinova, M. Y., Yerbol, A. Y., & Kumargalieva, N. R. (2022). Stage costume – as an educational tool of scenography in the conditions of the creative industry. *Keruen*, 2(75), 241–258.
- Zhumatay, G., Yskak, A., Magier, D., & Kruszynski, M. (2024). The deportation of the Poles to Kazakhstan: Ethnic cleansing, collective suffering, and cultural assimilation. *Historia i Swiat*, 13, 413–438.