

# The Problem of Creating Historical Imagery in Uzbek Opera Scenography

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**Received:** 14 March 2025; **Accepted:** 10 April 2025; **Published:** 12 May 2025

**Abstract:** The article examines the scenography of a historical opera created in the first years of our country's independence and the problems of creating a historical image in it.

**Keywords:** Historical image, scenography, opera, pictorial and artistic solution.

**Introduction:** Opera is an extremely complex form of artistic creation, representing a musical theater genre that encompasses unique forms as well as a broad range of creative, aesthetic, and technological issues. Interest in opera is primarily determined by the synthetic nature of the genre and its powerful artistic impact. As scholars note, "The opera genre integrates vocal and instrumental music, poetry, theater, visual arts, dance, and plastic movement. To this must be added theatrical technical effects, particularly lighting technologies."

The famous composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart once said: "In opera, the most important thing is the music." These words emphasize that while music is central, other components that complement it and transform it into a complete work—such as scenography—cannot be disregarded.

In any traditional theater, the first impression as the curtain rises is born from the artistic labor of the stage designer. The setting, time, and place of a staged opera are naturally conveyed through the accurate use of visual and artistic means on stage—this being the product of the scenographer's vision and creativity.

Since the early years of independence, an increase in the staging of historical works on the theater stage has been observed. This trend emerged from the shift in the creators' consciousness, sparking an interest in the lives of historical statesmen, their paths, and the cultural and spiritual legacies they left behind. As a

result, many works in the historical genre were produced.

Among these is A. Ikromov's opera "Amir Temur", which portrays the great statesman Amir Temur—a personality still studied in world history, art, and culture today. The first Uzbek art scholar to investigate Amir Temur's representation in European opera was Professor T. Gofurbekov, Doctor of Art Studies.

According to his research, one of the first composers to depict the image of Amir Temur in Europe was Alessandro Scarlatti, founder of the Neapolitan opera school, followed by Italian composers such as Leonardo Leo, Niccolò Porpora, Antonio Vivaldi, Antonio Sacchini, and Antonio Sapienza (the younger). Unfortunately, many musical and stage works in which Amir Temur was declared the main character have not survived to this day.

As noted by Ghulom Mirzo, a well-known Uzbek scholar and translator, "In 2015, a translation of the opera 'Amir Temur' by the great German composer Georg Friedrich Händel was presented to the Uzbek public in Uzbek language, published by the 'Yangi Asr Avlodi' publishing house, from the archives of the National Library of Uzbekistan."

In 1996, A. Ikromov's opera "Amir Temur" was one of the first productions in Uzbek theaters to address this theme, directed by B. Yuldoshev in collaboration with debuting stage designer Z. Botirov. The staging of this historical subject marked the beginning of Botirov's

search for a scenographic solution to such a monumental production. Director B. Yuldoshev, while adhering to the professional conventions of the opera genre, approached the task of recreating the national mentality and historical atmosphere with seriousness and respect. Among the earliest European operatic works depicting Amir Temur are also mentioned I.F. Forche's "Bajazeth and Tamerlano" (1690) and M.A. Ziani's "Il Gran Tamerlano."

In A. Ikromov's opera Amir Temur, the image of the great historical figure was uniquely interpreted through the vision of Z. Botirov. In depicting the character of Amir Temur—a prominent statesman and military commander—through scenography, the artist had to rely on accurate, source-based historical knowledge about the era and the individual being portrayed. The scenographer explains: "In my first sketch, I depicted a bright red background with a glowing white dome—symbolizing the arrival of bright days after bloody battles. The dome served as a metaphor for the future state to be built by Amir Temur and its might."

On stage, this concept was conveyed through a construction of spears merging at the top, with a blue dome against a blue sky as a symbol of peace and the newly formed state. Patterned carpets and shields were suspended from the structure. On the ground, a large map was used as a platform, next to which stood a globe. Another globe, slightly tinted red, was placed farther away. This symbolically expressed the idea that conquering lands without bloodshed is difficult, a concept captured by the artist's sharp observation.

Z. Botirov not only recreated the setting and spirit of the time, but also managed to reflect the emotions, dreams, and aspirations of the historical figure through a lyrical stylistic approach. The translation of his sketches into stage design embodied grandeur and majesty. Rather than merely decorating the scene with historical fabric prints, the scenographer used appliqué elements and ornamental motifs reminiscent of Samarkand architecture, which helped convincingly convey the historical atmosphere on stage. This production clearly adhered to the principles of opera scenography, where each decorative element and pattern contributed to the meaning and depth of the performance, while reflecting the solemnity and magnificence of the era. The success of the stage design was directly linked not only to the quality of the libretto, but also to the unity and creative strength of the production team. The opera Amir Temur also took part in the "Festival of Theatres" held in honor of the Year of Sahibqiron. It can be stated that this successful debut in the historical genre by Z. Botirov marked a new step in his creative path.

When reflecting on scenographic works of this historical period, D. Qodirova, in her monograph "20th Century Scenography", highlights that the artist was able to work on par with the director. She emphasizes that the scenographers of the time predominantly opted for symbolic, grand, and imaginative solutions, and that the stage designer was able to integrate themselves into the creative process as an equal collaborator within the overall conceptual framework of the performance.

Based on the reflections presented in N. Tashpulatova's dissertation regarding the scenography of the opera "Amir Temur", several factors must be taken into account. She notes that color composition is a leading feature of scenography in musical theater productions and emphasizes that this quality serves as a foundational element in the work of all scenographers operating within the musical theater genre.

In her analysis, the artist is praised for not merely decorating the stage with historical images printed on fabric, but also for using appliqué techniques and ornamental motifs reminiscent of Samarkand architecture, thereby authentically representing the historical atmosphere of the era on stage. "This historical opera genre raises complex spiritual and moral issues and conflicts, all derived from the unique aesthetics of theater art. The expressive tools used by the artist in designing the opera's stage scenery serve as a source of inspiration and 'impulse' for the director's creative exploration. This production has been recognized as a clear example of successful scenographic resolution and effective collaboration between the scenographer and the director." Operas dedicated to Amir Temur continue to be proudly staged on world stages today. For instance, in 2017, the opening season of La Scala Opera House began with a performance of G. F. Handel's opera Tamerlano. The opera's characters were presented in allegorical form, resembling historical figures of the 20th century. According to the author, this type of interpretation not only breathes new life into the opera seria tradition—whose stage life is slowly diminishing—but also serves as a creative and experimental method of introducing contemporary audiences to classical masterpieces. In the early years of Uzbekistan's independence, when historical genre performances were being staged at the Alisher Navoi State Academic Theater, scenography played a critical role in conveying the historical setting and atmosphere. In the development of scenographic art, visual sketches, pictorial expressions on stage, props, stage decorations, costumes, and all additional accessories hold great importance. To authentically recreate a historical environment on stage, the artist must have a broad worldview and an in-depth

understanding of the era and life of the historical figure portrayed. When designing scenography for a musical theater performance in the historical genre, the scenographer must consider not only the stage as a space for action and movement, but also its compatibility with sound clarity and acoustic performance. "In opera theater, an inseparable and fundamental component of scenography is acoustics. Therefore, the selection of materials must be approached with the utmost responsibility. If the stage design is meant for an open space, it is crucial to execute it using methods and materials that ensure the best acoustic conditions." An artist designing scenography for an opera must sense every inch of the stage, take acoustic factors into account, and find an artistic solution accordingly. This ensures that every scene of the performance is conveyed to the audience clearly and effectively, resulting in a complete and immersive theatrical experience.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, during the 1990s, the repertoire of the Alisher Navoi State Academic Grand Theater expanded and was enriched with works in the historical and classical genres. Over time, the illusory pictorial expression that dominated previous productions gradually gave way to new solutions characterized by artistic qualities. These new scenographic approaches began to shape the visual aesthetics of both opera and ballet, marking a shift toward the artistic-visual trends of contemporary scenography. This transformation was also driven by the need to make full and effective use of the stage's updated technical capabilities following theater renovations. As a result, the possibilities for scenic design expanded, becoming more modern and versatile, and creating favorable conditions for the development of contemporary scenographic trends. Consequently, these changes led to the emergence of stylistic innovations in the scenography of historical operas, reflecting a broader evolution in the visual and conceptual language of the national theater.

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