

# National History and Opera Art: The Artistic Interpretation Of “Qirq Qiz” In Karakalpak Theatre

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**Abstract:** This article examines the artistic interpretation of the opera “Qirq qiz” within the context of Karakalpak theatre, focusing on the interconnection between national history and operatic art. The study demonstrates that the transformation of a heroic epic into an operatic form represents not only a process of aesthetic adaptation but also a reconstruction of cultural memory. In particular, the research analyzes the narrative structure, musical language, vocal characterization, dramaturgy, and visual components of the opera. Furthermore, it highlights the synthesis of traditional Karakalpak folklore elements with classical operatic techniques, which creates a unique artistic expression. The findings reveal that “Qirq qiz” functions as a symbolic representation of collective identity, unity, and resilience, while also contributing to the development of national theatre. Consequently, the opera serves as both a preservation of cultural heritage and a dynamic medium for contemporary cultural expression.

**Keywords:** Karakalpak theatre, opera art, Qirq qiz, national history, folklore, epic transformation, musical dramaturgy, cultural identity, artistic interpretation, collective memory.

**Introduction:** National history and opera art are deeply interconnected forms of cultural expression; therefore, their synthesis allows nations not only to preserve but also to reinterpret their historical memory through artistic means. In particular, Karakalpak theatre has played a significant role in transforming folklore and epic narratives into operatic works that reflect both historical consciousness and aesthetic values. Among such works, “Qirq qiz” occupies a central position, since it not only represents a heroic past but also embodies the collective identity, ethical ideals, and spiritual resilience of the Karakalpak people. Consequently, a deeper analysis of this opera reveals the complex interaction between history, folklore, music, and theatrical expression, thereby demonstrating how cultural memory is continuously reconstructed in artistic form [3].

First of all, it is essential to consider that “Qirq qiz” originates from one of the most prominent heroic epics in Karakalpak folklore, and therefore its narrative foundation is deeply rooted in oral tradition. In this respect, the epic tells the story of forty courageous girls led by a heroic female figure who defends her

homeland against invading forces. Thus, the narrative inherently reflects themes of patriotism, unity, sacrifice, and resistance. Moreover, the epic is not merely a historical account; rather, it represents a symbolic reconstruction of collective experience, in which mythological and historical elements are intertwined. In addition, such epics traditionally function as a means of transmitting moral values and social norms from one generation to another. Therefore, the transformation of “Qirq qiz” into an opera can be seen as a continuation of this cultural transmission in a new artistic medium [5, 318-324].

Furthermore, the adaptation of an epic narrative into opera involves a complex and multi-layered process. On the one hand, the extensive and episodic structure of the original epic must be condensed into a coherent dramatic form suitable for stage performance. On the other hand, the emotional and symbolic richness of the narrative must be preserved and even intensified through musical expression. Consequently, composers and librettists are required to make careful decisions regarding which elements of the story to emphasize and how to structure the dramatic progression. In the

case of “Qirq qiz”, this process results in a balanced integration of narrative clarity and emotional depth. Moreover, the introduction of operatic conventions such as arias, recitatives, ensembles, and choruses allows the story to unfold in a dynamic and expressive manner. As a result, the epic gains a new dimension, in which music becomes a primary vehicle of meaning [6, 88-101].

In addition to structural adaptation, the musical language of the opera plays a decisive role in shaping its artistic identity. Specifically, the combination of traditional Karakalpak musical elements with classical operatic techniques creates a distinctive stylistic synthesis. For example, folk melodies, modal structures, and rhythmic patterns are incorporated into orchestral and vocal compositions, thereby maintaining a strong connection to national musical heritage. At the same time, harmonic development, orchestration, and vocal techniques reflect broader operatic traditions. Therefore, the opera functions as a meeting point between local and global artistic practices. Furthermore, this synthesis enhances the emotional expressiveness of the work, as it allows audiences to experience familiar cultural elements within a more complex and layered musical framework.

Equally important is the role of vocal characterization in conveying the psychological and ideological dimensions of the narrative. In particular, the protagonists’ arias are often characterized by strong melodic lines and dynamic intensity, which emphasize their courage and determination. Conversely, lyrical passages and slower tempos are used to express moments of reflection, vulnerability, or emotional connection. In this way, music becomes a means of exploring the inner world of the characters. Moreover, the chorus serves as a representation of the collective voice of the community, thereby reinforcing the central theme of unity. Consequently, the interaction between solo and choral elements creates a multi-dimensional soundscape that reflects both individual and collective experiences.

At the same time, the dramaturgical structure of the opera contributes significantly to its overall impact. Initially, the narrative establishes a context of threat and instability, thereby creating dramatic tension. Subsequently, this tension develops through a series of conflicts and confrontations, which highlight the moral and physical strength of the protagonists. Finally, the resolution of these conflicts affirms the triumph of unity and justice. Therefore, the opera follows a classical dramatic arc while remaining deeply connected to the narrative logic of the original epic. In addition, the pacing of the drama is carefully synchronized with musical development, which

ensures a cohesive and engaging performance.

Moreover, the visual and performative aspects of the opera further enhance its symbolic and cultural significance. For instance, costumes often incorporate traditional Karakalpak patterns and ornaments, thereby visually representing cultural continuity. Similarly, stage design and scenography frequently draw on historical and natural motifs, which create an immersive environment for the audience. In addition, choreography and movement patterns reflect both traditional dance forms and modern theatrical techniques. As a result, the opera becomes a comprehensive artistic experience in which visual, musical, and dramatic elements are closely integrated.

Importantly, “Qirq qiz” is also rich in symbolic meanings that extend beyond its immediate narrative. First and foremost, the number forty symbolizes unity, collective strength, and completeness, which are fundamental values in Karakalpak culture. Furthermore, the depiction of female warriors challenges conventional representations of gender roles, thereby highlighting the importance of women as active agents in historical and cultural processes. In this regard, the opera not only reflects historical memory but also contributes to the re-evaluation of social norms and cultural narratives. Additionally, the themes of resistance and defense of the homeland resonate with broader historical experiences, which makes the opera relevant across different periods and contexts.

In this connection, the cultural and ideological significance of the opera becomes particularly evident. On the one hand, it serves as a means of preserving national heritage in the face of globalization and cultural homogenization. On the other hand, it provides a platform for expressing contemporary concerns and aspirations. Therefore, “Qirq qiz” functions as both a historical narrative and a living cultural text. Moreover, its continued performance in Karakalpak theatre demonstrates its enduring relevance and its ability to adapt to changing cultural conditions.

Furthermore, the opera has played a crucial role in the institutional and artistic development of Karakalpak theatre. Indeed, its production has encouraged the growth of professional musical theatre, including the training of performers, the development of orchestras, and the refinement of stagecraft. In addition, it has contributed to the formation of a national repertoire that reflects local cultural identity. Consequently, “Qirq qiz” can be regarded as a cornerstone of Karakalpak operatic tradition. At the same time, its recognition beyond regional boundaries has facilitated cultural exchange and dialogue, thereby enhancing the visibility

of Karakalpak art on the international stage.

In a broader perspective, the opera illustrates how national history can be transformed into a universal artistic language. While it is deeply rooted in a specific cultural context, its themes of courage, unity, and resistance are universally understandable. Therefore, it bridges the gap between local specificity and global relevance. Moreover, the integration of traditional and modern elements reflects the dynamic nature of culture, which continuously evolves while maintaining its core values.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the opera “Qirq qiz” represents a profound and multifaceted synthesis of national history and artistic expression, as it successfully transforms a traditional epic into a complex operatic work that resonates on both cultural and emotional levels. On the one hand, it preserves the rich heritage of Karakalpak folklore; on the other hand, it expands this heritage through innovative musical, dramaturgical, and visual techniques. Furthermore, the use of linking artistic elements ensures a cohesive and powerful representation of collective identity. Consequently, “Qirq qiz” stands as a significant achievement in Karakalpak theatre and a compelling example of how national traditions can be revitalized and sustained within the framework of modern opera.

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