

UOT 792

**Rana Sarabskaya (Mammadova)**

*Dc. Sc. (Art Study), Professor, correspondent member of ANAS  
Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS  
(Azerbaijan)*

*renasabarskaya@mail.ru*

---

## **ABOUT THE THEATRICAL LIFE OF BAKU IN THE BEGINNING OF THE XX CENTURY**

**Abstract.** Theatrical life of Baku in 1907-1908 is characterized in presented article. Materials of Russian-speaking press functioning in Azerbaijan from the end of XIX century underlie on the basis. The activity and status of Russian-speaking press of the city. It promotes character of Russian-speaking press concluding in itself and social aspects, professional and artistic aspects of reflection of theatrical life of the town.

Systematic character and frequency of publications of Russian-speaking press witness about the interest and cultural life of Baku and reflects the intensity of connections of Azerbaijan and Russia.

The significance of survey of theatrical life exactly in 1907 is accentuated of the article, for in 1908 there was realized the erection of the first opera in the Near and Middle East, the opera of U.Hajybayli “Leyli and Majnun”. Correspondingly, the survey of theatrical life of Baku on the eve of this event there witnesses about prerequisites of this event.

The attention in the article is concentrated in tours of some theatrical troupes which became bright impressions for Bakuers. So, in September 1907 theatrical troupe of brothers Gonsales played on tour on September, 1907. Undoubtedly, all performances of the troupe were reflected in the press. These were by G.Verdi’s, P.Mascagni’s, P.Leoncavallo’s, Sh.Gounod’s, G.Meyerbeer’s, D.Rossini’s, G.Bizet’s works. Reviews distinguishing with professional character are arranged in the article. Laudatory reviews and critics were sounded in the articles.

The articles of Russian-speaking authors on the occasion of performances of Jewish dramatic troupes. The author of articles using the pseudonym Di

---

Kodl repeatedly performs in press. In his articles there were raised serious problems of Jewish theatre, repertoire, actors and language.

Speaking about the tours of Russian dramatic troupes under the management of A.N.Kruchinin, Russian-speaking press accentuated the facts of their charitable activity in Baku.

**Key words:** theatre, culture, music, press, Baku.

**Introduction.** Starting from the second half of the XIX th century, the process of learning about the cultures of the East, including the Caucasus, intensified in Russia. A powerful enlightenment movement both in Russia and in Azerbaijan stimulated the desire of cultures to meet each other. Thus, the activities of V. Odoevsky, A. Serov, V. Stasov in Russia, M. F. Akhundov, G. B. Zardabi, A. Bakikhanov, U. Hajibeyli in Azerbaijan played a huge role in the interrelations of cultures. The ideological realities of the studied period of history were associated with the Enlightenment. As the material presented in the article shows, through the mediation of Russian culture, European art classics penetrate into the Caucasus. Symphony orchestras, choirs, theater troupes and organizations appear, systematic concerts and performances are held, secular schools and gymnasiums are opened. Theater troupes from Italy and Russia come to Baku on tour. F. Chaliapin, A. Nezhdanova, L. Sobinov, pianists V. Safonova, A. Ziloti, composer S. Rakhmaninov and others perform here. an appeal to folk culture and, at the same time, a synthesis with the forms of European professional art.

**The interpretation of the main material.** The Russian press had a social, professional, and artistic character. Along with announcements, ascertaining the facts of artistic culture, the events of the cultural life of Baku were objectively covered here. And, of course, the first tasks facing the Russian press, along with informing, were the tasks of educating artistic taste, analyzing certain trends in the development of Azerbaijani culture. An interesting form of peer review was formed. Along with the announcements, various reviews of the theatrical life in Baku were published. Almost all components of the performances were brought up for discussion - actors, directors, composers, scenery, choristers, orchestra, etc.

M. Dandeville wrote in *Theatrical Russia*: “Until now, there were three theaters in Baku: Tagiyev, the circus theater of the Nikitin brothers, the people’s house in Balakhany. All three theaters have consistently done excellent things. So, in general, Baku is a “theatrical” city [1].

Various articles in *Theatrical Russia*, *the Musical World*, and *the Russian Artist* served as confirmation.

Interesting productions were carried out in 1905. *The Musical World* published the following information: “Baku. Lent (from March 7), opera performances will begin at the Tagiev Theater with the participation of guest performers; the soloist of His Majesty *Medea Figner*, the famous artist, coloratura singer *Alma Fostrom*, the artist of the St. Petersburg Mariinsky opera *M.Ya. St. Petersburg Mariinsky opera A.M. Davydov*, artist of the Kyiv opera *A.P. Bonachich*, artist of the Moscow Private opera *Maksakov*”.

Repertoire: “*Eugene Onegin*”, “*The Queen of Spades*”, “*Dubrovsky*”, “*Demon*”, “*Faust*”, “*Carmen*”, “*Rigoletto*”, “*Pagliacci*”, “*Country Honor*”, “*Aida*”, “*African*”, “*Huguenots*”, “*Mignon*”, “*The Barber of Seville*”, “*Lakme*” and for the first time in Baku “*Werther*”, music. *Massenet* and “*Nero*” music. *Rubinstein*. In addition, three Sunday morning performances will be staged for students – “*The Snow Maiden*”, “*Hansel*” and “*Gretel*” and “*Mermaid*” [2].

The frequency of publications in the Russian press testifies, on the one hand, to the interest in the cultural life of Baku, and, on the other hand, reflects the activity of Russia’s ties with the Caucasus. Thus, theatrical culture has certainly played a progressive role in the history of the culture of the Caucasus. Russian culture was an important “conductor” of the ideas of the Enlightenment. It was Russian culture that supported the aspirations of Azerbaijani enlighteners. And the press turned out to be an important component in this process. At the forefront of both the Russian press and the Russian-language press in Baku was the problem of the social significance of theatrical art, its professionalism. The reflection of the culture of Azerbaijan through the Russian press contributed to the expansion of ties between Russia and the Caucasus, strengthened educational tendencies in society, and raised the professional level of artistic culture.

Let’s start the review from the autumn of 1907, because 1907 was a significant year in the history of Azerbaijani theatrical and musical art. So, in 1908, the first opera in the Near and Middle East by *U. Hajibeyli* “*Leyli and Majnun*” was staged. Therefore, the cultural environment is interesting, in the context of which the birth of a new type of theatrical art took place.

The autumn of 1907 was rich in theatrical performances that aroused the interest of the public and the press. From September 2 to September

11, for ten evenings, the Italian troupe of the Gonzalets brothers presented famous works of Western European art at the Circus Theater of the Nikitin Brothers. *Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Hernani*, *Aida*, *Rigoletto* by G. Verdi, *Rural Honor* by P. Mascagni, *Pagliacci* by R. Leonkavallo, *Faust* by C. Gounod, *Huguenots* by J. Meyerbeer, “*The Barber of Seville*” by D. Rossini, “*Carmen*” by J. Bizet.

Judging by the press reviews, the artists who were part of the troupe could do honor to any opera stage. In Baku, the audience was distinguished by a high level of culture. The audience was very demanding, so all the shortcomings in the staging of performances, the performance of Italian artists were reflected in the reaction of the audience.

So, let me give you an example of the following review. On Saturday, the Italians put on “*Aida*”, or rather, sang a few arias from “*Aida*”. They sang well, beautifully, with due enthusiasm, but with extremely weak accompaniment, even for solo numbers. The conductor lost his temper, squeezed maximum energy out of the orchestra in pathetic places, but ... we listened not to the opera, but to the concert. Those who are accustomed to perceive the motive without fail along with the accompaniment must agree with this impression. And in “*Aida*” there is an ocean of sounds, deep chords and musical effects that require proportional cooperation between the orchestra and the choir. Once the proportion is violated - and this proportion is established by certain laws - the opera ceases to be an opera and becomes a concert. The laws of “proportion” were so obviously violated in “*Aida*” that we dare categorically call the reporting evening a concert, not an opera. As in previous performances, the most noisy success fell to Procacci. With extreme ease, without noticeable tension, he embraces the cloudless space between the upper and lower registers accessible to the tenor. His playing bore all traces of the old Italian school [3].

Let us dwell on a series of performances by the Jewish drama troupe, which raised in the press quite serious problems of the Jewish scene related to language, repertoire, and creativity. The review of the “*Bakinets*” newspaper dated September 3, 1907 can be considered interesting from the point of view of critical analysis.

During the last “pogromous twelve-fifth years” (1882-1907), Jewish life has been incessantly seething and agitated, groaning and crying, tirelessly and energetically looking for a way out of that accursed labyrinth of bullying, insults, humiliations in which this exiled people got so deeply stuck. New

parties are born, new people, new ideas, new desires and aspirations, new dreams.

Show us these people from the stage, explain them to us, tell us about him! We have Moikher-Sforim Mendele, Ash Sholom, Chukhok-Leybush Peretz, D. Pinsky, Sholom Aleichem - talents that any Jewish literature would not be ashamed of. They are talented writers of Jewish life, real Jewish life with its sorrows and joys. Among the Baku theatrical audience, Jews make up a very solid percentage. You will find them among the Little Russians, on the “Neva farce”, among the “Japanese geishas”, in the operetta. But in vain you will look for the Jewish bourgeoisie at the performance of the Jewish troupe. She does not honor ... But the Jewish troupe could tell their soul and feeling much more than Simonov’s farce, Japanese beauties and celebrities from the Palais de Cristal. Not to mention the fact that the debt to the emerging Jewish scene should have forced them to look into the Jewish theater. Who will support her if not you? But how can one show before the whole world that they still remember the Hebrew language?..

The Russian drama troupe under the direction of A.N. Kruchinin played in the season of 1907 on the stage of the Tagiev Theater the plays “The White Crow” by E. Chirikov, “The New Generation” by A.N. Ostrovsky, “At the Royal Doors” by K. Hamsun, “Renaissance” by I.V. Grenevsckaya, “Devil” by A.G. Mulner, “Leaders” by Prince A.I. Sumbatov-Yuzhin, “Wave” by V.A. Ryshkov and others. Specially for the benefit performance of one of the leading actresses of the troupe K. M. Astrov, the play “Among the Flowers” by G. Zuderman was presented [4].

However, this dramatic troupe did not always manage to maintain the interest of the public. The newspaper “Bakinets” notices a noticeable drop in collections. The author of the note explains this by the lack of new products and requires the troupe to update, revise its repertoire, explaining this by the fact that the circle of the theatrical public is limited, and the repetition of already ongoing plays will not give the expected success.

Speaking about the theatrical season of 1908, one cannot fail to note its charitable orientation. Thus, in the theater of Z.A. Tagiev, the Russian drama troupe of A.N. Kruchinin staged E. Paleron’s play “Society for the Encouragement of Boredom” in favor of the Society for the Fight against Child Mortality. Another example. In October, the Skobel Committee for the Issuance of Benefits to the Military, who had lost the ability to work in the

war with Japan, in the theater-circus of the Nikitin brothers, an evening was organized, where the Association of Russian-Little Russian Artists under the direction and direction of A.L. Sudoholsky presented the “Sorochinskaya Fair” [5].

In parallel with the reviews of the Russian-language press in Baku, there was also criticism in the Russian capital. It is necessary to emphasize the identity of the statements in the discussions of both the Baku press and the capital’s critics. Thus, the author of a number of articles wrote; “Baku. The benefit performance of the premiere of the troupe of A.N. Kruchinin, M.B. Azarevskaya, can be considered the most successful in terms of choosing the play - “The Martyr” by Rishpen”. Of course, the performance was provincial with a chronic ignorance of the roles, but M.B. Azarevskaya, with her artistic play, made the viewer forget about these rough edges. It is safe to say that the role of Flalingola will take first place in the repertoire of Mrs. Azarevskaya. The artist’s partner should not have spoiled her performances, and if she wanted to play, then she had to first learn the role, and not read poetry ”like a sexton”. The staging of the play was mediocre, but thanks to the management that, although late, they began to introduce more serious and interesting plays into their repertoire. Good afternoon [6].

Let’s complete the picture of the cultural life of Baku with an overview of the so-called “Muslim Evenings”. Thus, the first Muslim evening was held in the halls of the Baku Public Assembly to strengthen the means of the Muslim Literacy Society “Neshr Muarif”. The program of which included a theatrical performance, a literary and musical department, a vaudeville in Russian. At the end, national and European dances and live pictures were arranged. The press wrote: “The first Baku Muslim evening in favor of the Muslim Literacy Society was held on Saturday, December 13, in the halls of a public meeting. The hall was luxuriously decorated: Persian carpets, greenery, multi-colored fabrics, many electric lamps, and other decorative decorations made up a magnificent picture.

The people of Baku, without distinction of nationalities, reacted warmly to the first Muslim evening, which brought together the chosen society.

A comedy in the Tatar language by S.M. Ganiev “Take it and remember” performed by Mislavskaya and Messrs. Aliyev and Kazimov, as well as Shcheglov’s joke in Russian “Women’s nonsense” performed by Astrov, Ryumshina and Nadezhdin, were a huge success and the performers were given a standing ovation” [7].

In the Azerbaijani culture of the late XIX th - early XX th century, she organically accepted the ideas of the Enlighteners of Russia. Such spheres of culture as education and printing, literature, art, theater received a powerful stimulus for development. In the context of the cultural development of the late XIX th - early XX th centuries, strong ties between the cultures of Azerbaijan and Russia were formed. Suffice it to say about the functioning of the Russian-language press in Baku, which was readable and in demand in Baku. In 1871, the newspaper “Bakinski Listok” was published, in 1881 the newspaper “Kaspiy”, which is published to this day in Azerbaijan, “Bakinskie Izvestia” in 1876, “Bakinskie Gubernskie Vedomosti” in 1894 and other worthy Russian-language publications. Among the Russian-language newspapers were such as “Review of theaters”, “Baku theatrical courier”.

**Conclusion.** The Russian-language press actively covered not only the repertoire policy of entrepreneurs and theater owners, but also analyzed each performance. Criticism was sometimes quite harsh, but the objectivity of the assessments remained. Summing up the presented archival material, we emphasize that this material reflects the individual stages of the Azerbaijani-Russian cultural ties, testifies to the history of these ties, and their activity. The humanitarian dialogue between Azerbaijan and Russia is a tradition of communication that enriches the culture of both Azerbaijan and Russia.

#### REFERENCE:

1. «Театральная Россия», № 38, 1905.
2. «Музыкальный мир», № 9, 1905.
3. «Бакинец», № 2, 10 сентября, 1907.
4. «Бакинец» № 1, 3 сентября, 1907.
5. «Бакинец» № 42, 20 октября, 1908.
6. «Русский артист», № 5, 3 февраля, 1908.
7. «Каспий», № 214, 16 декабря, 1908.

#### *Rəna Sarabskaya (Məmmədova) (Azərbaycan)*

#### XX ƏSRİN ƏVVƏLLƏRİNDƏ BAKININ TEATR HƏYATI TARİXİNDƏN

Məqalə XX əsrin əvvəllərində Bakı şəhər əhalisinin teatr bağlı həyatının tarixindən bəhs edilir. Burada 1907-1908-ci illərdə Bakının teatr mühiti xarakterizə edilməklə, məqalə həm də XIX əsrin sonlarından Azərbaycanda fəaliyyət göstərən rusdilli mətbuatın materialları əsasında hazırlanıb.

Məqalədə Bakı şəhərinin mədəni mühitini obyektiv işıqlandıran rusdilli mətbuatın fəaliyyəti vurğulanır və burada şəhər əhalisinin həm sosial aspektləri, həm də şəhərin teatr həyatını əks etdirən peşəkar, bədii fikirlər öz əksini tapmışdır.

Rusdilli mətbuatda Bakının sosial həyatından xəbər verilməklə yanaşı, Azərbaycan və Rusiya arasında mədəni əlaqələrin intensivliyi də öz əksini tapmışdır.

Eyni zamanda məqalədə 1907-ci ildə Bakının teatr həyatı işıqlandırılır və 1908-ci ildə Yaxın və Orta Şərqdə ilk opera olan Üzeyir Hacıbəylinin “Leyli və Məcnun” operasının səhnəyə qoyulmasından bəhs edilir. Müvafiq olaraq, bu hadisə ərəfəsində Bakının teatr həyatına nəzər salınması, şəhər mühitində sosial-mədəni inkişafın xüsusiyyətlərini aydınlaşdırır.

Məqalədə diqqət bir neçə teatr truppasının Bakı şəhərinə qastrol səfərlərindən bəhs edilməklə yanaşı, burada şəhər əhalisinin teatr səhnələri ilə bağlı ən parlaq təəssüratlarından danışılır. Belə ki, 1907-ci ilin sentyabrında Qonzalets qardaşlarının teatr truppası Bakı şəhərinə qastrol səfərə gəlmiş və truppanın bütün çıxışları mətbuatda öz əksini tapmışdır. Burada Q. Verdi, P. Maskanni, R. Leonkavallo, C. Qunod, C. Meyerber, D. Rossini, C. Bizenin əsərləri Bakı teatr səhnələrində oynanılmışdır. Qəzetlərdə öz əksini tapan və peşəkar xarakteri ilə seçilən mövzularda həm tərif, həm də tənqidi yazılar var idi.

Burada yəhudi dram truppasının çıxışları haqqında rusdilli müəlliflərin məqalələri maraqlıdır. Di Kodl təxəllüsündən istifadə edən məqalələrin müəllifi dəfələrlə mətbuatda çıxış edib. Onun məqalələrində yəhudi teatrının, repertuarının, aktyorlarının və dilinin ciddi problemləri qaldırılıb.

A.N. Kruçinin rəhbərliyi ilə rus dram truppasının qastrol səfərindən danışan rusdilli mətbuat, onların Bakıdakı xeyriyyəçilik fəaliyyəti ilə bağlı faktları xüsusi vurğulayırdı.

*Açar sözlər:* teatr, mədəniyyət, musiqi, mətbuat, Bakı.

### **Рена Сарабская (Мамедова) (Азербайджан) ИЗ ИСТОРИИ ТЕАТРАЛЬНОЙ ЖИЗНИ БАКУ В НАЧАЛЕ XX ВЕКА**

В представленной статье характеризуется театральная жизнь Баку 1907-1908 гг. В основе лежат материалы русскоязычной прессы, функционирующей в Азербайджане с конца XIX века.

В статье подчеркивается активность и статус русскоязычной прессы Баку, объективно освещающей культурные события города. Этому



способствовал характер русскоязычной прессы, заключающий в себе и социальные аспекты, и профессиональные, и художественные аспекты отражения театральной жизни города.

Систематичность и частота публикаций русскоязычной прессы свидетельствует и об интересе и культурной жизни Баку и отражает интенсивность связей Азербайджана и России.

В статье подчеркивается важность обзора театральной жизни именно 1907 года, ибо в 1908 году была осуществлена постановка первой оперы на Ближнем и Среднем Востоке, оперы Уз.Гаджибейли «Лейли и Меджнун». Соответственно, обзор театральной жизни Баку накануне этого события красноречиво свидетельствует о предпосылках данного события.

Внимание в статье сосредоточено на гастрольях нескольких театральных трупп, которые стали наиболее яркими впечатлениями для бакинцев. Так, в сентябре 1907 года гастролировала театральная труппа братьев Гонсалес. Безусловно, что в прессе были отражены все спектакли труппы. Это были и произведения Дж.Верди, П.Масканы, Р.Леонковалло, Ш.Гуно, Дж.Мейербера, Д.Россини, Ж.Бизе. В статье приводятся отзывы, отличающиеся профессиональным характером. В статьях звучали как хвалебные отзывы, так и критика.

Интерес вызывают статьи русскоязычных авторов по поводу выступлений еврейской драматической труппы. Автор статей, использующий псевдоним Di Kodl неоднократно выступал в прессе. В его статьях поднимались серьезные проблемы еврейского театра, репертуара, актеров, языка.

Высказываясь о гастрольях русской драматической труппы под управлением А.Н.Кручинина, русскоязычная пресса акцентировала факты их благотворительной деятельности в Баку.

**Ключевые слова:** театр, культура, музыка, пресса, Баку.