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**The Use of Karagoz Shadow
Theatre as a Way of Teaching
Traditional Turkish Theatre in
Performing Arts Training**

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An Introduction to ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. The papers published in the series have not been refereed and are published as they were submitted by the author. The series serves two purposes. First, we want to disseminate the information as fast as possible. Second, by doing so, the authors can receive comments useful to revise their papers before they are considered for publication in one of ATINER's books, following our standard procedures of a blind review.

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Abstract

...It is very important to teach traditional forms in performing arts training. It helps students to learn their own traditional theatre as well as universally accepted methods and forms.

...Karagoz shadow theatre is the most basic form of Turkish traditional theatre. It is a theatre show which is based on the stories of mainly two characters called Karagoz and Hacivat. It is a popular form of public entertainment. It can be assumed that the Turkish shadow theatre borrowed movements, postures and costumes of the Ottoman puppet theatre along with human actors such as Ottoman jesters and grotesque dancers. Karagoz is a rich cross section of Turkish culture of poetry, miniature painting, music, folk customs, shadow theatre and oral tradition.

...Today we teach our students traditional Turkish theatre by using Karagoz shadow theatre through modern techniques like animation as well as traditional methods.

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The shadow theatre, which involves two-dimensional figures casting their shadows on a screen, had important place in Turkey as well as throughout the larger area of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks, before they came to know shadow theatre in the sixteenth century, had enjoyed a long-standing established puppet tradition.

According to a famous Turkish theatre historian and researcher Prof. Metin And:

“In essence, Karagoz is a rich cross section of Turkish culture, namely, of poetry, miniature painting, music, folk customs, and oral tradition. So then, all these elements merged and fused in the early preparatory years of the sixteenth century to result in what is today known as Karagoz.”

Like all different cultures which has own shadow puppetry, Turkish Karagoz has also developed and fixed its own characteristics. Now every certain figure in Karagoz has certain characteristic postures and has certain speech and behaviour. Those are the unwritten, oral rules of the shadow puppetry art, passes generation to generation by imitating older examples.

Nowadays we are researching the opportunity and benefits of using a traditional theatre form like Karagoz in acting education.

First, let us look at the main technic which Karagoz manipulator uses. Above all Karagoz manipulator has to use his/her voice with in virtuosity. So we will especially focus upon the voice technic of the Karagoz and try to explain how we can use this traditional theatre form as a voice training method.

First step for a Karagoz manipulator/actor is learn to imitate figures voice characteristics. Those voice characteristics comes from its historical tradition. Shadow figures speaks in grotesque style more than dramatic style. While for a Commedia dell'Arte play, gestures and mimetic expressions become more important, Karagoz uses primarily vocal technics.

The other challenge is that, just one actor/manipulator performs all the figures in Karagoz. This is the indispensable point of a Karagoz play. So if an actor try to learn to manipulate a Karagoz, have to realize and develop his or her voice abilities first. Like Hamlet says to the actors in the play a Karagoz actor/manipulator must be careful about the actions and dialogue: “suit the action to the word, the word to the action”. And he or she has to consider a Karagoz play has not a dramatic action, actually it has a grotesque action. And his or her voice tension goes parallel with the grotesque action.

As I mentioned before certain figures has certain voice characteristics in Karagoz how they are performed traditionally before us.

For example:

Karagoz represents an ordinary citizen and he is uneducated but clever person. He acts in a rough manner when communicating with the other figures. He always tends to fight with the other figures. So he speaks with a rough, aggressive and funny voice.

Hacivat is well educated person and behaves in aristocratic and kindly manner. So, he use intellectual words. He can easily differs from Karagoz figure with his thin and artificial voice tune.

And all the other figures in Karagoz play differs from each other with their voice characteristics. One of them speaks endlessly, one of them speaks with ethnic dialect, other one speaks with a very slow tempo...

The actor/manipulator have to dub a lot of figures continuously at the same time. He or she have to learn how to change his voice characteristic rapidly. He/She dubs a women, then suddenly dubs Karagoz and then dubs a child... and it goes on... So, learning and using of this technic can help to improve a performing arts students voice abilities.

I would like to give you an example of vocal usage in Karagoz play. I will perform you a short passage written by Şahin Koçak.

HACIVAT- I want some fun.

Ohhh, welcome ladies and gentleman-the clever, the naive! It is only the evil who is unwelcome.

What I really come here to say is not what I have said so far. Where is my Karagoz, the apple of my eye, joy of my heart, total sum of my life? Where do you think he is in slumbering sleep? Or awake in his corner thinking deep? Or smoking his pipe singing a song of his type?

KARAGOZ- You, the good for nothing, with a head full of nothing! What do you want of me? What have you given that you want from me back? It is not once, or twice, or even thirice that you bang on my door. It is day and night. Do I have to suffer you sight? It is either a bribe or a trite.

HACIVAT- I want some fun.

KARAGOZ- I want you gone.

HACIVAT- I want some fun.

KARAGOZ- Hacivat! I will tie you up and drop you in a deep well with no sun.

HACIVAT- I want some...

KARAGOZ- (Karagoz jumps Hacivat. Sounds of a fight is heard) Oh! My poor bold head, my skull, container of my brain! Oh my, oh my, oh my. He went my jugular again, that traitor. Oh my, oh my, oh my. Help me friends, I am about to diminish in a minute.

BEBERUHİ- Who is this moaning senior around here?

KARAGOZ- And who are you, you junior?

BEBERUHİ- If you are asking from which lands I come to, it is Elbistan, but if ask of me by which name I go by, it is bold Hasan.

KARAGOZ- If one goes by the looks, it is more like a blind rat.

BEBERUHİ- I roamed from one place to another, wrestled with this manand many other, I did end their might by putting their backs on the floor on sight.

KARAGOZ- You don't say.

BEBERUHİ- No one dares to walk where I passed through.

KARAGOZ- Why? Pray tell.

BEBERUHİ- Wherever I put my foot, earth caves in, whoever follows me falls in.

KARAGOZ- We must make you dig holes.

ARAP- Oi am looking for a man my master wants to foind.

BEBERUHİ- What says this man I cannot decide?

KARAGOZ- He says a horse thief got away from the market and he is on the hide.

ARAP- That Nigar, the blood thirsty around?

KANLI NİGAR-(Calls from distance) Who is asking for me?

ARAP- My master sent me, wants to buy you whatever you need.

KANLI NİGAR-Tell that yellow livered fool, I won't fall that kind of line forever. Have him send me 5 gold coins, or else I go somewhere else.

It is very important to teach traditional forms in performing arts training. It helps students to learn their own traditional theatre as well as universally accepted methods and forms. Today we teach our students traditional Turkish theatre by using Karagoz shadow theatre through modern techniques like animation as well as traditional methods.

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