European Journal of Innovation in Nonformal Education (EJINE)
Volume 5 | Issue 3 | Mar - 2025 ISSN: 2795-8612

The Important Requirements of European Enlightenment Thinkers in the Field of Drama

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A B S T R A C T
This article describes the emergence of thematic and ideological struggles in European drama and the transition of social and political views into the field of theater.

A R T I C L E I N F O
Article history:
Received 15 Jan 2025
Received in revised form
15 Feb 2025
Accepted 06 Mar 2025

Keywords: playwright, enlightenment, play, idea, style.

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The 18th century is referred to as the Age of Enlightenment. It began its development in England and rapidly reached its peak. The essence of this era was the struggle against feudal relations, with the main goal of educating individuals through enlightenment and thus establishing just principles in society. Enlightenment thinkers effectively utilized theater art to implement their ideas.

During this period, prominent playwrights such as Sheridan and Garrick in England, Voltaire, Diderot, and Beaumarchais in France, Goldoni and Gozzi in Italy, and Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller in Germany made significant contributions to the development of Enlightenment-era drama.

It is impossible to discuss this period without mentioning Henry Fielding, who developed the style of critical realism, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the most prominent representative of 18th-century English drama.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) began his playwriting career at the age of 24 with *The Rivals*, followed by the ballad opera *The Duenna* and his most famous work, the comedy *The School for Scandal*. He also wrote *The Critic*, *St. Patrick's Day*, and *Pizarro*. With these five comedies, Sheridan secured a well-deserved place in the history of world drama.

In France, playwrights armed with Enlightenment ideals created works that fiercely opposed feudal backwardness and the tyranny of royal power, awakening Europe from its slumber.

French drama was enriched by the remarkable contributions of great writers such as François-Marie Voltaire, Denis Diderot, and Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais.

The first phase of the French Enlightenment theater would be incomplete without mentioning the eminent playwright Voltaire. Despite being sentenced to the Bastille for his relentless satire, he wrote his first play, *Oedipus*, at the age of 24 while in prison.

Voltaire's aesthetic views were shaped under the influence of Shakespeare, which led him to become one of Shakespeare's key promoters in France. His tragedies, including *Brutus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Mahomet*, *Merope*, *The Scythians*, and *Zaïre*, gained widespread popularity.

Denis Diderot, a major figure of the French Enlightenment, wrote only a few plays as a dramatist. Notably, he authored *The Illegitimate Son* and *The Father of the Family*. Additionally, he pioneered a new genre in European drama known as the "bourgeois drama," which focused on depicting the lives of broad social classes.

Fransiya ma'rifatparvarlik davri komediya san'atining yorqin namoyandasi bo'lmish Pyer - Ogyusten Karon Bomarshedan "Seviliya sartoroshi yoki Behuda ehtiyotkorlik", "Sertashvish kun yoki "Figaroning uylanishi", "Jinoyatchi opa" deb nomlangan trilogiyalari meros bo'lib qoladi. Figaro obrazi XVIII asr dramaturgiyasida paydo bo'lgan yangi obraz edi.

Ma'ruf Jalil translated Voltaire's tragedy *Zaïre* into Uzbek, while Tolqin Muhiddin translated parts of Beaumarchais' comedies *The Barber of Seville, or The Useless Precaution* and *The Marriage of Figaro, or The Mad Day*.

In Italy, where old-world beliefs and ideas still dominated social, political, and cultural life, the ideology of the Enlightenment began to take hold. This influence led to significant reforms in theater arts. It is impossible to overlook the contributions of two major playwrights, Carlo Goldoni and Carlo Gozzi, who developed a new form of literary drama based on progressive artistic traditions.

Carlo Goldoni is recognized as the reformer of Italian drama. By integrating advanced dramaturgical techniques, he laid the foundation for Italian national comedy. He wrote a total of 155 comedies, along with several tragedies and tragicomedies. Most of his works are characterized by theatrical vibrancy, universal themes, accessibility to the common people, and strong stage adaptability. Thanks to these qualities, Goldoni's plays continue to grace theaters worldwide to this day.

At the age of 20, Carlo Goldoni wrote *Servant of Two Masters*, followed by *The Mistress of the Inn*, *Momolo Cortesan*, *Momolo Brenteda*, and *The Beneficent Bear*. Even in these early comedies, he became the first playwright to reform the *commedia dell'arte*—a traditional form of Italian theater based on improvisation and stock characters using minimal script structure.

Goldoni's *Memoirs*, which provide valuable insights into theater history, remain relevant to this day. Along with Carlo Gozzi, he played a key role in transforming Italian theater by challenging the outdated conventions of *commedia dell'arte*, which had hindered Italian audiences from embracing modern theatrical standards.

Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters* was first translated into Uzbek by Cho'lpon and later by Javod Obidov, introducing it to Uzbek audiences.

Carlo Gozzi is renowned for his fairy-tale plays. With his work *The Love for Three Oranges*, he established the genre of theatrical fairy tales. His other notable plays include *The Raven*, *Princess Turandot*, *The Serpent Woman*, *The True Lover*, *Zobeide*, *The Blue Bird*, and *The Happy Beggars*.

In Uzbek theater, his comedy *Princess Turandot* was first staged in Cho'lpon's translation and later in Mannon Uyg'ur's adaptation. *The Happy Beggars* was translated into Uzbek by Shukrullo.

The great achievements of 18th-century drama owe much to German playwrights such as Denis Diderot, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, and Friedrich Schiller. These writers played a crucial role in transitioning from 18th-century Enlightenment realism to 19th-century critical realism.

In Diderot's works, events unfold in more natural and realistic conditions compared to Voltaire's plays. His characters speak in prose and live with the concerns of everyday life. However, despite his innovative approach, Diderot could not entirely abandon classicism in certain aspects. Like other Enlightenment thinkers, he failed to fully recognize the contradictions of bourgeois society, often portraying it in an idealized manner.

The blend of realistic and idealized principles is also evident in Diderot's treatises on theater. As an addition to *The Illegitimate Son*, he wrote *Conversations on The Illegitimate Son*, and alongside *The Father of the Family*, he included *Discourse on Dramatic Poetry*. In both treatises, Diderot presents numerous insightful reflections on theater, repeatedly emphasizing the inseparable connection between aesthetic perception and morality.

“Aesthetics must be based on ethics,” Diderot asserts. Moreover, he extends the concept of goodness beyond individuals to encompass citizenship. In *Discourse on Dramatic Poetry*, he exclaims, *“If all moral systems are corrupted, then judgment and perception are inevitably false as well.”*

“Truth and goodness are the true companions of art,” Diderot continues. *“Do you wish to be a writer? A critic? First, become a good person. What can be expected from someone who lacks genuine compassion? What, besides the grand creative gifts of truth and goodness bestowed by nature, can truly move the heart?”*

When analyzing the art of acting, Diderot’s treatise *The Paradox of the Actor* holds immense significance. Written in 1773, it was only published in 1830.

Among theorists before him, Diderot was the first to clearly and decisively distinguish between the art of emotional experience and the art of imitation. At the same time, he declared himself a supporter of imitative art.

“I want the actor to be highly intelligent," Diderot states. *"He should be calm, composed, and observant. This means that I do not demand absolute emotional sensitivity from him, but rather intellectual perception, for art is the imitation of everything, the ability to portray any role and character.”*

He further asserts, *"An actor’s talent should not be based on inner emotions but on the ability to perfectly convey the external signs of emotion."*

According to Diderot, the paradox of acting lies in this: a composed but skilled actor creates the impression of deep emotion and, in turn, moves the audience. Conversely, an actor who is genuinely overwhelmed by emotion may fail to evoke the same response in the audience. Theater has its own distinct language of expression. For an actor to appear as if they are behaving *just like in real life*, they must, paradoxically, avoid acting exactly as they would in real life. At the same time, if an actor relies solely on their personal emotions and plays themselves, they risk diminishing the depth of the character. The actor’s primary task is to enrich the poet’s creation with their own imagination and intellect, elevating the character to an idealized form. Moreover, emotions are unpredictable - *"feeling"* alone cannot guarantee consistency, meaning an actor cannot perform a role with the same intensity twice in a row. In contrast, an actor who masters imitative art can deliver a consistent performance in every show.

Thus, the Enlightenment era in Europe flourished with intense ideological struggles and the remarkable development of the arts.

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