

antropologia e teatro

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Fairy Tales in Georgian Theatres: Entertainment, Allegory, Transformation

Elene Gogiashvili

Abstract – ENG

The entertainment landscape for children and adults has significantly transformed over the past four decades, and in it fairy tales have evolved beyond their traditional role in collective communication. This paper examines the presentation of fairy tales in Georgian theatres, their entertaining and allegorical functions in the 20th century, and their cultural significance in the present day. The aim is to gain insight into the role of the theatrical setting in the continued survival of the fairy tale as a form of oral narrative. The success of fairy tales as both literary and scenic genres can be attributed to their capacity to respond imaginatively to the interests of any given epoch.

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Introduction

In the twentieth century, fairy tales became a significant element in various forms of entertainment, including theatre, radio, television, video games, and social media. The success of fairy tales as both literary and scenic genres can be attributed, at least in part, to their capacity to respond imaginatively to the interests and daily lives of a growing mass-reading public, as well as to the evolving needs of an expanding and diversifying media landscape¹.

In the 1980s, the folk narrative tradition was still observed in Georgia. Folklorists carried out fieldwork to collect folktales from a variety of geographical regions². It was a common practice among young readers to read folktales. In elementary schools, the practice of children telling stories to one another was a common occurrence. Additionally, they recounted fairy tales to one another, as well as providing summaries of stage plays and films. The children enacted selected scenes, assuming the roles of both storyteller and actor, as well as that of the fairy-tale characters.

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² The collection and documentation of Georgian folktales has a rich history. The earliest recorded Georgian folktales were written down by the Italian Catholic missionary Bernarde of Napoli, who travelled through Georgia between 1670 and 1680. His archive at Torre del Greco contained twelve Georgian folktales, which were later published in Georgia (Virsaladze 1948; Kavtaradze 2009). The first anthology of Georgian folktales was published in 1890 by Lado Aghniashvili. Subsequent collections appeared between 1890 and 1930, Tedo Razikashvili (1909) and Ekvtime Takaishvili (1919) among others. Russian periodicals in Tbilisi, such as *Sbornik materialov dlja opisania mesnostej i plemen Kavkaza* [Collection of Materials for the Description of the Places and Tribes of the Caucasus], also made a significant contribution by publishing Georgian folklore between 1881 and 1915. Systematic field research into Georgian folklore began in the early twentieth century, leading to the establishment of several specialised archives. These include the *Folklore Archive of the Institute of Georgian Literature*, the *State Folklore Centre of Georgia*, the *Folklore Archive of Tbilisi State University* and various regional research centres. Georgian folktales have been translated and published in several European languages, including English, German, French, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch (Wardrop 1894; Papashvili 1946; Dirr, 1922; Fähnrich 1980; Baye 1900; Istvánovits 1958; Minčeva 1957; Jedlička, 1949, Urushadze 1958; Tuite 1994, Walraven 2015; Hunt 2019). Notable contributions to the study of Georgian folktales and mythology have been made by scholars such as Mikheil Chikovani (1947), Elene Virsaladze (1948, 2017), Ksenia Sikharulidze (1949), Teimuraz Kurdovanidze (2000), Zurab Kiknadze (2001), Ketevan Sikharulidze (2018), Rusudan Cholokashvili (2009), Elene Gogiashvili (2006, 2011, 2023) and others. *Web Platform of Comparative Narrative Research* of Georgian folklore archives was carried out by Elguja Dadunashvili <http://www.folktreasury.ge/>.

With time, fairy tales have receded from the repertoire of Georgian storytelling. Currently, only children between the ages of one and six are exposed to fairy tales. The entertainment landscape for children and adults has significantly transformed over the past four decades. Since fairy tales have evolved beyond their traditional role in communal communication, the study of transitions and intermediate forms between oral, written, and visual communications provides folklorists with an opportunity to examine a range of processes associated with cultural transfer in traditional folklore. This paper examines the presentation of fairy tales in Georgian theatres, their entertaining and allegorical functions in the 20th century, and their cultural significance in the present day. The aim is to gain insight into the role of the theatrical setting in the continued survival of the fairy tale as a form of oral narrative.

Fairy tales must be studied in the context of larger, culture-specific systems of communication. This shift towards intermedial studies is not solely a result of their growing prestige within the cultural sciences. It is also a reflection of their enhanced capacity to address the complexities of cultural globalisation. The theoretical framework of the present paper is based on the research of fairy tales in their transformative context.

While performance-focused folklorists questioned the value of certain comparative analysis procedures, their objective was not to discredit the comparatist endeavour nor to divert folkloristics from examining diachronic processes. Folklorists aim to reconstruct how items and genres originated in the past, utilising examples from the present and employing an analogical approach (Degh 1992; Dorson 1977). The objective of the contextualists was not to discredit previous folklore studies and methodologies, but rather to enhance them through a new form of critical examination informed by alternative models of social, literary, and linguistic analyses.

The initial discussions of 'fakelore' in the 1960s represented one of the most acute expressions of anxiety surrounding the perceived threat to the field of folklore. The central issue under discussion was the further evolution, transformation and displacement of traditional genres. The acknowledgement that traditions were either modified or invented had an impact on the legitimacy of the subject matter under study by folklorists (Bausinger 1980).

Notable contributions to the field of folkloristics have been made by scholars including Lutz Röhrich (1964), Jack Zipes (1988, 2006, 2011), Regina Bendix (1990, 1983), Cristina Bacchilega (1989, 1997), Maria Tatar (2010), Pauline Greenhill, Jill Terry Rudy, Naomi Hamer, Jennifer Schacker (2018), Mayako Murai (2013) and others who have initiated examinations of folk narrative transformations within the sphere of literature,

poetry, cartoons, opera, and ballet. The folktale has not been entirely eradicated from the cultural landscape. In her argument, Regina Bendix posits that composers benefit from the use of folk plots on two levels. The initial challenge is to create an aesthetic elaboration of folk materials, thereby appropriating them for the domain of art. Secondly, the familiarity of folk narrative plots allows for their politicisation and the expression of individual or societal concerns. Composers and librettists endeavour to create works that resonate with, challenge or interrogate dominant cultural identities. In this regard, folk narratives constitute a readily available repertoire of plots that can be imbued with new objectives. Bendix outlined the theoretical framework within which the study of folk narrative-based opera is situated.

The transformative power of fairy tales can be approached from a variety of theoretical perspectives. In her analysis, Maria Tatar suggests that fairy tales themselves can be considered shape-shifters, transforming as they are retold and adapted into other media. She posits that fairy tales can evoke transformative experiences in readers and listeners, prompting sensations that are 'vertiginous.' (Tatar 2010: 57).

The process of adapting fairy tales for the stage entails stylistic modifications that are essential to align with the conventions of dramatic theatre as a performance genre. This study examines the ways in which Georgian theatres adapted fairy tales into scenic performances. It considers the ways in which these adaptations engaged and informed audiences, the functions they served in society, and the role of the theatrical setting in the continued survival of the fairy tale as an oral narrative.

Georgian Theatre for Young Audiences in the Twentieth Century

Georgian Theatre for Young Audiences began its journey as an independent state theatre in 1928. The repertoire of the early 1930s was significantly shaped by Soviet ideology. In 1934, during the First Congress of Soviet Writers, the theory of "socialist realism" was adopted as the official artistic doctrine. At the congress, Soviet writer Samuel Marshak urged his contemporaries to create new fairy tales infused with Soviet ideology (Marshak 1971). This decision marked a turning point in acceptable literary genres. Classical literature and fairy tales were once again permitted but had to align with the principles of socialist realism. During the 1930s to 1950s, the Georgian Youth Theatre's repertoire heavily reflected these ideological influences, featuring numerous plays about historical-revolutionary battles. By the late 1930s, however, classical dramaturgy began to take its place alongside ideological works. The theatre introduced plays by Molière, William Shakespeare, Friedrich Schiller, and Anton Chekhov. Fairy tales—particularly those by Alexander Pushkin and Hans Christian Andersen, adapted by Evgeny Schwartz—also found a home on the stage. A notable milestone was the 1936

adaptation of the Georgian folk tale *Nazarkekia* by Giorgi Nakhutsrishvili, marking the theatre's embrace of local folklore. Georgian plays held a prominent position in the repertoire, reinforcing the cultural connection to national traditions.

The 1960s brought a wave of fresh ideas and innovative forms to youth theatre, driven by a new generation of directors and actors. They tackled complex artistic challenges, striving to produce performances that resonated with contemporary audiences. This period saw a notable shift in repertory policy, including a reimagining of classical works. By the late 1960s, the theatre transitioned from being primarily focused on children and teenagers to becoming a space oriented toward youth. Performances for preschool and younger children (ages 6–10) decreased, while the theatre adopted a more dramatic, sophisticated approach akin to mainstream dramatic theatres (Mirianashvili 2022: 145).

The socio-political crises of the 1990s in Georgia had a significant impact on the theatre. The interpretation of fairy tales during this period reflected the prevailing turbulent social conditions. Alongside the State Youth Theatre, a private initiative, the “Fairytale Theatre”, emerged for a short period. Operating with limited resources, it produced small-scale performances with minimal casts and portable props, often staged in unconventional spaces such as apartments.

Despite numerous financial and creative challenges, the youth theatre experienced remarkable developments. Productions emphasized classical fairy tales, musical performances, and visually captivating spectacles—elements that had been sorely missed. The repertoire was thoughtfully designed to cater to all age groups, from infants and young children to teenagers. Performances for younger audiences prioritized sensory-rich and visually stimulating experiences, while those for teenagers explored more complex narratives and themes that addressed their evolving interests and challenges. This inclusive programming ensured that the theatre remained a vibrant space for nurturing imagination, creativity, and emotional development across all stages of childhood and adolescence (Mirianashvili 2022: 148).

Reflecting on the evolution of professional children's theatre in Georgia throughout the twentieth century reveals a multifaceted trajectory. Initially, the theatre served as a tool for Soviet propaganda, aimed at shaping a revolutionary generation. In the 1920s, the Georgian theatre for young audiences had become an integral part of middle school activity programs. Memoirs of Georgian writers highlight the theatre as a cherished aspect of their childhood, recalling how they experienced the stories on stage with wide-eyed immediacy, often returning to performances multiple times (Gviniashvili 1950). By the mid-twentieth century, however, its pedagogical function began to wane, giving way to more diverse and imaginative programming.

The Georgian Youth Theatre has been instrumental in fostering positive emotions, stimulating imagination, and enriching the inner world of children and teenagers.

Fairy Tales as Dissident Allegories in the Soviet Era

The infusion of ideological persuasions and societal fascinations into fairy tales presented on the stage is a phenomenon that has occurred with some regularity throughout history. During the Soviet period, for instance, such works frequently espoused romantic nationalism or socialistic realism. However, the stage plays based on fairy tales in Georgia exhibited a dissident character.

In contexts where free expression is constrained, allegories may become the primary means of articulating the author's ideas. To fully comprehend a film, play, or book, it is essential to understand the circumstances surrounding its creation, including the historical and political context in which it was written, staged, or filmed. The fairy-tale plays in drama theatres functioned as parables about societies in which terror and oppression were prevalent. I examine two examples from the 20th century to illustrate the goals of directors who used fairy tales. The following plays were performed in drama theatres: The Rustaveli Theatre and the Marjanishvili Theatre in Tbilisi. The typical repertoire of drama theatres is designed with an adult audience in mind but, in order to circumvent censorship, these fairy-tale plays were presented in the mornings as plays for young audiences.

The Scenic Adaptation of Georgian Folktales Featuring Chinchraka

Chinchraka is a play-tale by the playwright Giorgi Nakhutsrishvili, written in 1962. The play was first staged by director Mikheil Tumanishvili (1921-1996) in 1963, with musical decoration by composer Bidzina Kvernadze (1928-2010).

The nickname Chinchraka has its etymological roots in the Georgian designation for the Eurasian wren (lat. *Troglodytes troglodytes*). The hero Chinchraka features in a number of Georgian folktales, including those belonging to the following categories: ATU 1640 The valiant little tailor (Das Tapfere Schneiderlein KHM 20), ATU 1137 The Blinded Ogre, ATU 327 The Children and the Ogre, ATU 327B The Brothers and the Ogre, ATU 327C The Brothers at the Witch's House, ATU 328 The Boy Steals the Ogre's Treasure.

The plot of the play can be summarised as follows: the kingdom was ruled by a monarch who had two children, a daughter named Mzia and a son named Lasha. Additionally, the king's domain encompassed a dense forest, which served as habitat for a variety of animals, including bears, wolves, jackals, and foxes. The

idyllic existence was abruptly disrupted by the ascendance of a nasty despot. The king was able to conceal Mzia in the forest, but he was ultimately vanquished and slain in combat with the giant. His son, Lasha, was rendered powerless and unable to confront the enemy. In the forest, Mzia encountered a peasant boy named Chinchraka, who provided assistance in her encounter with wild animals. The two young people developed an affection for each other. By combining their strength and utilising the moon's assistance, they were able to appropriate the magical items belonging to the giant and, as a result, ultimately vanquish him.

The premiere of the play *Chinchraka* had twofold significance: it marked the inauguration of the Small Stage at the Rustaveli Theater. Furthermore, it was the inaugural experimental play to be staged in an academic theatre. The original draft of the playwright and director was successfully realised by the actors. The actors introduced a number of new elements to their performances, which were well received by the audience.

The play's content has based on allegorical themes and draws upon a range of Georgian folktales and other forms of Georgian folk oral literature, including poems, songs, proverbs, and figurative sayings. The author reflected the conflict between good and evil in the second half of the 20th century by using traditional characters and attributes from magic tales, namely the evil demon Devi, the princess, and the poor boy who is in love with her, as well as the flying carpet, the miraculous pomegranate, and the magic mirror.

The play received a mixed response from critics. Some critics deemed the portrayal of negative social phenomena to be inappropriate for Soviet art, perceiving it as a form of national insult. On the other hand, the staging of *Chinchraka* is regarded as marking the advent of the New Georgian Theatre.

The character of the giant in the play exhibited a combination of physical strength and intellectual cunning, coupled with a lack of empathy and cruelty. In the view of Georgian critic Akaki Bakradze (1928-1999), the author may be alluding to the imperialist forces in possession of nuclear weapons, represented as a demon in the form of a pomegranate (Bakradze 1989: 399).

The principle of parallelism is deliberately employed in the play *Chinchraka*. The fairy-tale narrative, in addition to the conventional fairy-tale characters and objects, presented in the play incorporates numerous elements that are characteristic of the modern era. The costumes of the characters in the play were also selected in accordance with the principle of parallelism. The princess was attired in a ballerina's tutu, the prince in traditional Georgian attire, the giant's servant in an oriental robe, and the giant wears the jeans. Similarly, the objects have been also arranged in two groups: one includes a flying carpet, a magic mirror, a chandelier, and a ring; the other, a telephone, firearms, pyjamas, and jeans.

Furthermore, the malevolent forces at play in the narrative are similarly multifaceted. First, the traditional giant of the fairy tale characterised by masculinity; then, the pomegranate, which has acquired the properties of a modern atom: since it is possessed by evil, it becomes a destructive force. But in the hands of the hero, it is not.

Furthermore, the musical elements of the play were structured in accordance with the principle of parallelism, juxtaposing traditional Georgian polyphonic folk songs with rock and roll, and creating a dynamic and intriguing auditory tapestry. The bear, wolf, fox and jackal were depicted with distinctly individualised facial features. The audience responded with considerable mirth when the bear and his companions made their entrance.

Later, the director Mikheil Tumanishvili wrote in his memoirs: "*Chinchraka* was a very simple fairy tale: good won against evil. A peasant boy and the princess defeated a giant. This is too simple. But we were more interested in what we wanted to say about the story than the story itself. In the play, we made fun of three types of evil: Evil - thirst for power, evil - stupidity, evil - greed. We used these types of evil to make fun of a fairy tale. Everything we used in the play had its origins in folklore" (Tumanishvili 1989: 212).

The Blue Monster by Carlo Gozzi as Political Allegory

Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) is a favorite playwright among Georgian theatrical directors. In the 20th century many of his plays including *The Love of Three Oranges*, *The Serpent Woman*, *Turandot*, and *The King-Stag*, were staged in various Georgian theatres.

The Blue Monster by Carlo Gozzi was staged in the Marjanishvili Theatre in 1985, directed by Medea Kuchukhidze³.

In Gozzi's play, the action is set in China. In a forest near Nanjing, there resides a man named Dzelu, who was previously cursed and transformed into a blue monster. In order to regain his human appearance, he places a spell on the Nanjing prince Taer, who is passing through the forest. The latter and his beloved, the Georgian princess Dardana, are compelled to endure a series of arduous trials. The princess must assume the garb of a male servant, take up residence within the palace, demonstrate not only cunning but also physical endurance, vanquish the machinations of the emperor's wife, and engage in a multitude of other challenges. However, the primary objective is for the princess to develop romantic feelings for her betrothed, who has been

³ Medea Kuchukhidze, a prominent figure in Georgian scenography, is known for her work on literary fairy tales and masterpieces of classical literature, including works by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, John Boynton Priestley, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Chikamatsu Monzaemon, among others. In this case, she chose Carlo Gozzi's play for satirical purposes.

transformed into a monster, and to discern the benevolent nature within the disfigured figure, thereby breaking the spell. Ultimately, the couple is reunited and finds happiness. The magician Dzelu makes an appearance in the final scene, delivering a monologue that asserts the truth is revealed in light.

The play *The Blue Monster* was first performed in the winter of 1985, during the tenure of Chernenko as the leader of the Politburo in Soviet Union. As a consequence of Chernenko's tenuous grasp on power throughout his tenure, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Defence Minister Dmitriy Ustinov wielded considerable influence over Soviet policy. The play reflects numerous coincidences with the everyday life of the period, particularly the weakness of the ruler and the economic and political crises afflicting the Soviet Empire.

I was nine years of age when I attended the aforementioned theatrical performance with my parents. The play was replete with jokes that were beyond my comprehension, despite the fact that it was officially presented in the morning for a young audience. At the time, I was unable to comprehend the allegorical nature of the play. However, I distinctly recall my father remarking as we departed the theatre, "They could not name the play Red Monster, but at least they succeeded."

The Georgian stage play *The Blue Monster* was the subject of critics from the Soviet censors on the grounds that it lacked a clear concept. Additionally, the musical aspect of the performance—which encompassed Georgian folk dance, classical opera arias, and Chinese music—was subject to criticism. (Gugushvili 1985: 2).

Fairy tale-based plays provide an excellent illustration of the shifting interpretation of fairy tales in opposition to prevailing norms. During the period of Communist rule in Soviet states, fairy tales were frequently employed as a means of circumventing censorship while simultaneously elucidating the inherent contradictions of societal structures. The frequent motif of good fighting evil could be interpreted as an allegorical representation of resistance to oppressive authorities.

Contemporary Life of Fairy Tales in Georgian Theatres

In the present era, stage adaptations of fairy tales serve a dual purpose, combining didactic and entertaining elements. Additionally, they are employed as a metaphor for a protagonist's inner world. Discussing the contemporary Georgian theatrical repertoire presents several challenges, including the question of whether theatre is primarily an entertainment or an educational medium. What is the optimal approach for theatre companies in terms of their repertoire policy? Do those responsible for creating theatre productions have an understanding of the needs and interests of contemporary children? (Mirianashvili 2022: 6).

There are 46 theatres in Georgia, comprising 38 state-funded and eight private establishments. Of these, 20 are functioning in the capital city, while 26 state-owned and privately-owned theatres are spread across the regions. The theatres exhibit a synthesis of archaic cultural layers with modern trends, a richness of artistic resources from directors, actors, and scenic design that is characteristic of the southern temperament, to a special sense of humour, and an interchange between comic, tragic, and tragicomic elements (Chkhartishvili 2018: 196).

In addition to drama theatres, Georgia also boasts state-run professional theatres for young audiences and puppet theatres, including regional theatres. Their repertoire encompasses theatrical works tailored to diverse age groups. The stage adaptation of Georgian folktales includes *Natsarkekia* [Ash-raker], *Komble* [The man with a cudgel], *Khutkunchula* [The clever boy], *Rtskili da Chianchvela* [The Flea and the Ant], and *Melias Oinebi* [Foxy Tricks]. Some of these folktales are related to the folktale types ATU1135, ATU1137, 1640, and 1641 according to *The Types of International Folktales* (Uther 2004). The stage adaptation of Georgian literary fairy tales includes works of Georgian writers, for example, *Salamura* [The boy with a flute] by Archil Sulakauri (1927-1997), *Sataguri* [Mousetrap], *Chkhikvta Kortsili* [Jay's Wedding] and *Shvlis Nukris Naambobi* [The Story of the Roebuck] by Vazha-Pshavela (1861-1915).

European fairy tales have also been adapted for the stage: Charles Perrault, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Wilhelm Hauff, Carlo Gozzi, the Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde, Carlo Collodi, Gianni Rodari, and others are notable examples. Similarly, the fantasy fiction and young-adult literature of authors such as Pamela Travers, Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, Astrid Lindgren, and James M. Barrie are noteworthy adaptations. The adaptation of Disney's animated films—including *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Lion King* and *Frozen*—into musical theatre has become a popular trend.

The evidence presented in this list suggests a preference among Georgian theatrical producers for European fairy tales over those of Georgian folklore. Even though *Thumbelina*, *Town Musicians of Bremen*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella* and *Snow White* are not traditional Georgian fairy-tale characters, they have nevertheless achieved considerable popularity among Georgian audiences. *Little Red Riding Hood* is a particularly popular stage play in children's and puppet theatres in various towns across Georgia.

The dissemination of West-European fairy tales in Georgia occurred through both literary and oral narrative channels. They have been retold and adapted in various forms over time. The incorporation of these emblematic fairy tales into the Georgian theatrical canon for young audiences may be attributed to the

prevalence of European fairy tales in Georgian children's literature. As Maria Tatar has observed, the tales in the Grimms' collection have become part of a global storytelling archive drawn upon by many cultures. Furthermore, fairy tales can exert a transformative influence on the reader or listener, eliciting sensations that may be described as vertiginous (Tatar 2010: 57).

In the preceding two decades, Georgian youth and puppet theatres have presented adaptations of the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers including *The Princess and the Frog*, *Hänsel and Gretel*, *Snow White*, *The Town Musicians of Bremen*⁴. Georgian theatres have also staged adaptations of the fairy tales of Charles Perrault such as *The Little Red Riding Hood*, *Puss in Boots* and *Cinderella*⁵.

The popularity of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and Perrault can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that they were more closely aligned with traditional oral folklore, including that of the Georgian people.

Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales diverged from the oral narrative tradition of Georgian folklore, yet Andersen was held in high regard by Georgians as an author. Andersen's fairy tales permit readers and listeners to project their own interpretations onto the text. *The Red Shoes and the Steadfast Tin Soldier* (premiered in 2021) is a two-act performance comprising interactive elements. The younger audience members are engaged by the storyteller, who recounts his own experiences and engages in discussion with the children regarding the processes involved in the creation of fairy tales and the genesis of specific characters. *The Red Shoes* is a verbal performance, whereas *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* is presented as a pantomime, with only dance and musical accompaniment. Several stage adaptations of fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen have been presented by Georgian youth, drama and puppet theatres in Tbilisi and in other regional locations. These include: *Namtsetsa* [Thumbelina], *Megore da Printsesa* [The Swineherd], *Kaltevza*

⁴ *The Princess and the Frog* and *Hänsel and Gretel* were first performed in 2016 at the Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre. The 2018 production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was staged at the Batumi State Puppet and Youth Theatre. *The Town Musicians of Bremen* is one of the most frequently staged fairy tales in regional theatres. These include the Kutaisi Lado Meskhishvili Professional State Theatre (premiered 2020), the Poti Valerian Gunia State Drama Theatre (premiered 2019), the Sokhumi Professional State Youth Theatre (premiered 2016), and the Khulo Professional State Drama Theatre (premiered 2015).

⁵ *Puss in Boots* first premiered in 1987 and then in 2011 at Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre. In this theatre, in 2019 *Little Red Riding Hood* celebrated its 100th performance since 2015. *Cinderella* is one of the most popular fairy tales staged at Batumi State Puppet and Youth Theatre (premiered 2017), the Akhmeteli State Drama Theatre (premiered 2019), the George Eristavi Gori State Drama Theatre (premiered 2016), the Rustaveli National Theatre (premiered 2018), and the Children's Theatre "The Second Home" (premiered 2014).

[The Little Mermaid], *Makhinji Ikhvis Chuchuli* [The Ugly Duckling], *Mtskemi Gogona Da Bukhris Mtsmendavi Bichi* [The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep]⁶.

The scenography of fairy tales frequently draws upon the interpretations of Georgian writers, as well as other authors, particularly Evgeny Schwartz (1896-1958), a prominent Jewish-Russian writer renowned in the Soviet Union for his plays based on fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen. Evgeny Schwartz's four-act play, *The Snow Queen*, which is based on Hans Christian Andersen's story, has been performed on numerous occasions in Georgian theatres since the 1960s⁷.

The Georgian theatre for young audiences has consistently striven to ensure that its repertoire is both tasteful and of the highest artistic value, with due consideration given to the age categories of its intended audience. Those involved in the production of theatre for young audiences bear significant responsibility. This is particularly true of the directors, actors, scenic designers, composers and choreographers who work in this field. All the actors who work there assert that there is no greater joy than performing for them. Many actors from youth and puppet theatres in Georgia have stated that upon commencing their careers in children's theatre, they swiftly come to the realisation that they are unable to transition away from this field. Children constitute the most honest of all audiences. It is challenging to perform for a young audience. While positive sentiments may accompany this endeavour, the undertaking is arguably more challenging. It is a common perception that children are unforgiving of mistakes. If the dialogue is not sufficiently refined or of an excessive length, the audience will become boisterous and begin to speak out. Theatre productions based on fairy tales have played an instrumental role in the education of numerous generations. The child who enters the theatre today may, after fifty years, articulate how the theatre has influenced them. Even a seemingly inconsequential detail can exert a significant influence.

⁶ *Thumbelina, the Little Girl from the Land of Flowers*, an adaptation and musical arrangement of the Hans Christian Andersen tale by Manana Abramishvili, had its inaugural performance at the Tbilisi State Puppet Theatre in 2016. Subsequent performances were held at the Batumi State Puppet and Youth Theatre (2019) and the Zestafoni State Drama Theatre (2022). *The Swineherd* was initially performed with young actors in 2009 at the Children's Theatre 'The Second Home'. *The Little Mermaid* was initially staged at the Batumi State Puppet and Youth Theatre in 2021. The performance of *The Ugly Duckling* was held at Kutaisi State Puppet Theatre, in 2021. *The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep*, first performance: Tumanishvili Film Actors Theatre, 2009.

⁷ Evgeny Schwartz's four-act play, entitled *Snow Queen*, has been performed on numerous occasions in Georgian theatres since the 1960s. These include the Kote Marjanishvili State Drama Theatre (1992), the Poti Valerian Gunia State Drama Theatre (2019), and the Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre (1969, 1984).

Conclusion

There is a certain affinity between traditional storytelling and theatre, in that both forms of entertainment have similar expectations of their audiences. It can be argued that the interaction of actors and spectators has links to some of folklore's fundamental aspects, namely orality, variation, and improvisation.

The primary means of transmission of folklore is through oral communication. Oral narratives constitute a kind of virtual corridor, accessible for exploration according to the individual's preferences. They can be shaped according to the artistry of the storyteller and their interpretation of the context. The act of narration requires a process of transformation of the experience in question. It is typical for folk narratives to exist in multiple versions. It is not possible to identify a single text as the definitive or 'correct' version. Rather, different narrators perform narratives in different ways depending on the circumstances. A folk narrative is therefore contingent on the circumstances surrounding the character who is narrating the story; it must therefore be recreated with each telling. If we consider a stage play to be a variant or adaptation of the fairy-tale genre, we can see that in it the fairy-tale narrative continues to be a living form. The capacity to engage the mind and arouse emotions is contingent upon the sensitivity and artistry of the narrator, that is to say, the actor. An effective narrator may fully engage the audience, influencing their thoughts, emotions, and potential future actions. A fairy tale—in oral tradition as well as on stage—may be considered a form of renovation, whereby the past is made to speak in the present.

The practice of both telling and listening to fairy tales can be considered a collective experience that contributes to the formation of a collective identity. The act of storytelling is contingent upon the presence of a community, and the narrative material must be sufficiently appealing to the audience. The interaction between the audience and the narrator has a significant impact on the interpretation of the fairy tale. The narration of traditional narratives and those firmly anchored in a group's culture provides an opportunity for thought-provoking impulses to be given and meaning to be conveyed. Furthermore, it fosters language and stimulates the imagination. The traditional practice of recounting fairy tales was once a significant aspect of communal life. While things have changed, fairy tales continue to occupy a significant position in childhood. The act of listening to or reading fairy tales, or experiencing them on stage, constitutes an emotional interaction between the storyteller, the audience, and the fairy-tale characters. Despite the decline of traditional storytelling, fairy tales persist in other forms, particularly in theatrical performances. The act of storytelling fairy tales entails assuming the role of a character within the narrative, thereby becoming a fairy-tale figure and inhabiting the persona of that character. This unity of storytellers and collective listeners

occurs in the context of theatre when the actors and young audience members establish an emotional connection.

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