

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

*Gulbahar*, an Intercultural Chinese-Uyghur Dance-Drama

Inspired by *Romeo and Juliet* and *Medea*

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre

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## DEDICATION

I am fortunate that I was born in an artistic family; my mother is a piano teacher. The reason why my sister and I are so passionate about art is entirely due to the cultivation my mother has given us since childhood, as well as the influence of the living environment my mother has created. My sense of rhythm of music, the emotion of dancing and my passion for singing and performing are all inherited from my mother's genes. I pursued theatre arts in graduate school after completing my undergraduate study as a dance major, because I think no matter what form I take, I cannot leave the stage!

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## ABSTRACT

*Gulbahar*, an Intercultural Chinese-Uyghur Dance-Drama

Inspired by *Romeo and Juliet* and *Medea*

By

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Master of Arts in Theatre

In this graduate project, I have explored a new intercultural dance drama by bringing together my background as a traditional Uyghur dancer with my studies into the Western theatre history and dramatic literature. The story of *Gulbahar* is informed and inspired by the ancient Greek tragedy, *Medea*, by Euripides and *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. As for the dance performance, the artistic impulse comes from my experience of watching Martha Graham's "Cave of the Heart" based on Euripides's *Medea*. The title of this dance-drama *Gulbahar* is a common girl's name in the Uyghur community. Uyghur is a region in China; its official designation is Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where rich arts and culture developed through its long history. Uyghur remains as one of the most underrepresented regions in the Western hemisphere. By incorporating story elements from the well-known Western canon of dramatic literature, I have created a new dance drama rooted in Chinese Uyghur performing arts tradition. The integral part of this graduate project is the presentation of the traditional

Uyghur costumes, props, music and songs. The visual images of costumes, instruments and props are given detailed explanations uncovering the origin and each of their symbolic meanings. Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, my proposed plan for a live public performance for general audiences became no longer possible. For archival purposes, the first act of *Gulbahar* and a solo dance which I recorded and edited myself are uploaded to the CSUN Electronic Thesis and Dissertation and published on Youtube (<https://youtu.be/9Hd74Ejykg>).

Keywords: Chinese-Uyghur, Dance- Drama, *Muqam*, *Meshrep*, *Medea*, *Romeo and Juliet*

## Chapter 1

### A Brief Introduction: The Chinese Uyghur

China is a multi-ethnic country. A well-known folk song called “Love My China” celebrates its diversity with this famous line, “56 constellations, 56 branches of flowers, 56 ethnic brothers and sisters is a family, 56 languages into a sentence, Love My China, Love My China, Love My China.” I am a Uyghur, one of the ethnic minorities in China. For millennia, the Uyghur people have inhabited an area now known as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China.

Xinjiang<sup>1</sup> is one of the five ethnic autonomous regions in China.<sup>2</sup> The Uyghur, also called Chinese (Pinyin) Weiwu'er, or Uighur, or the Uyghur are Turkic-speaking communities in the Uyghur Xinjiang Autonomous Region and in the Central Asian republics. The Uyghurs are the fourth largest ethnic group in the country with a population of 10 million. A majority of the Uyghurs are Muslims with a distinct cultural heritage and common history. The ethnic group uses the Uyghur language, classified under the Turkic group of Altaic languages. The Uyghurs have various physical characteristics resembling the European that makes them distinguishable from the Han (Abdukeram et al. 301). For many years, the Uyghur communities have lived in XUAR and areas outside the XUAR, including Mianchi County in Henan Province and Taoyuan County in Hunan Province (Erkin 424).

Since the current graduate project, *Gulbahar*, is set in the Uyghur community, it is important to review the geographic information as a backdrop. The Uyghur people dwell in a network of oases (“Kashgari,” “Khotanese,” and “Keriyane”) and villages established alongside

Tien Shan, Pamir and other associated mountain systems (Rudelson et al. 21). These are generally arid areas; consequently, they have practiced irrigation for centuries with their principal food crops being melons, corn (maize), wheat, and sorghum/kaoliang (Ayofu et al. et al. 766). The community's chief industrial crop is cotton. The costumes and props for the production of *Gulbahar* utilize the natural materials made from these regional agricultural products. A majority of the community working members are employed in the mining, petroleum extraction, and manufacturing in the cities within the regions. Trade is essential for the Uyghur economy during the ancient past as well as the modern times.

### History

The Uyghur ethnic community is among the oldest Turkic-speaking communities living in interior Asia. The Chinese history records their presence in the 3rd Century CE. In the 8th century CE, the Uyghur Khanate was established in north-central Mongolia, the then Orhon Riverbanks. However, the Uyghur later migrated to the Tien (Tian) Shan ("Celestial Mountains") southwestward from the Orhon Riverbanks in the early 9th Century CE. After settling in the Turpan Depression region, the Uyghur established a new independent kingdom, Gaochang. In the 13th century, the new kingdom was overthrown by the Mongols. Throughout its long history, multi-religious influences have shaped the Uyghur history and culture. The residents of Turpan and Besh Balik regions had been Nestorian Christians, Buddhists, Manichaeans, and Tengriist. But during the expansion of the Yarkent Khanate in the 15th century, the Uyghurs converted to Islamic faith.

### Silk Road

Xinjiang is famous for the ancient “Silk Road” which was an overland route from China to Europe and Africa. The term “Silk Road” was coined by a German traveler, Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905) in his book, *China: The Result of My Travels and the Studies Based Thereon*. The “Silk Road” covered more than 7,000 kilometers, of which over 5,000 kilometers crossed Xinjiang. Throughout ages, Xinjiang was a crossroad for the Eastern and Western peoples and cultures. From the standpoint of China, Xinjiang was a remote place. Thomas Barfield asserts that despite four millennia of existence, the Xinjiang area was “glossed as a new province, new dominion, or new frontier” (Barfield 286). It is important to note that this graduate thesis builds on the ideology of multiculturalism embedded in the performing arts and culture of the Uyghur people. Ancient Greek, Romans, Persians, Indians, Russians, Turkish as well as Chinese people brought each of their unique cultures to this region. Multiculturalism became a way of life and an integral aspect of the Uyghur history and identity in Xinjiang. In *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*, Professor Rian Thum explains how multiple influences were assimilated into the Uyghur culture over time as follows:

A millennium ago, when Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Manichaeism in Altishahr [Uyghur] began succumbing to the swords and sermons of Muslims, the region also started to inherit the heroes and villains of a wide Islamic world’s vision of the past. From Indian roots came the fabulous tales of Hazār Afsāne; from a distant Greek memory, the story of Alexander the Great; from Persia, the Shāhnāmāh’s account of great epic warriors; from the biblical tradition, tales of prophets; and from Arabia, chronicles of the Caliphs and star-crossed lovers. (Thum 17)

These influences would be assimilated into the Uyghur culture and arts. Xinjiang is more than a trade route; it is where different cultural influences came together to form a new and

unique culture of the Uyghur people. Today, there are hundreds of cultural landscapes and sites along the ancient Silk Road in Xinjiang including relics of ancient cities, tombs and caves of thousands of Buddhas. These relics record the history of the integration of Chinese and Western cultures and show the multiculturalism of Xinjiang's history and culture.

Multi-cultural aspects of the current project, *Gulbahar*, a new dance-drama performance reflects my cultural roots in the plural cultures celebrated historically in the region of Xinjiang. In *Gulbahar*, I draw upon this tradition of multiculturalism by incorporating aspects of native Uyghur performing arts, *Muqam* and *Meshrep* into a new story inspired by the Western dramatic traditions. Chapter 2 provides an overview of Chinese Uyghur *Muqam* and folk art, *Meshrep*.



(Fig.1) Present Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region



(Fig.2) Ancient Silk Road

## Chapter 2

### *Muqam and Meshrep*

As a native Uyghur dancer, I find it natural to draw upon the familiar performing art forms for the creation of *Gulbahar*. Two traditional Uyghur performing art forms unique to the people of Xinjiang are “*Muqam*” and “*Meshrep*.” *Muqam* is a large-scale, classical musical art form which integrates song, dance and music. It is based on folklore passed down orally from master to apprentice. *Muqam* includes more than 340 pieces of classical recitative songs including folk narrative group songs, dance music and impromptu music. *Meshrep* is another traditional Uyghur performing art form which incorporates music, dance, folk entertainments, and local customs. Besides music and dance, *Meshrep* performers present singing, couplet, storytelling, jokes, games, and improvisational chanting.

*Muqam* and *Meshrep* contain the cultural memory of the Uyghur people. They play an important role in organizing and promoting the literature and art of the Uyghur nationality in China. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Muqam* and *Meshrep* function as essential bridges for researchers and tourists to experience the Uyghur art and culture in China. Yunxia Han writes in “A Study on the Formation of Uygur Drama,”

Uyghur people have handed down the art of *Muqam* from generation to generation, the theatrical performances of Uyghur folk dance and *Meshrep*, if there is no music of Uyghur *Muqam*, and it will not be spread today. At the same time, if there is no Uyghur folk dance and *Meshrep* and its various theatrical and artistic performances, Uyghur *Muqam* music will not be known to the world. (Han119)

*Muqam* and *Meshrep* both originated from folk tradition, but the two forms became distinct from each other in the early 16th century during the Yarkent Khanate (1514-1677) founded in 1514 in the old land of the former Chaghatai Khanate by Sultan Saiyid, a descendant of the Chaghatai (Hays). The Central Asia Khanate of Chaghatai was ruled by Genghis Khan's second son Chaghatai and his descendants. It embraced most of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and western Xinjiang. From their seat on Lake Balkhash, Asia's third largest lake, in present-day Kazakhstan, the Mongol leader ruled over a rough, frontier kingdom made up mostly of horsemen tribes similar to the Mongols. Chaghatai attempted to preserve the nomadic tradition of the Mongols. For a while their "capital" was a tent encampment. Over time the Chaghatai became more settled and formed closer ties with their Muslim subjects. This was when many Mongols converted to Islam (Ibid.). Yarkent Khanate was therefore a Mongol dynasty that believed in Islam which means the ruling class of the Khanate as descendants of Chaghatai embraced Islam. Yarkent Khanate lasted for 163 years until Junggar Khanate destroyed it. This merging of two cultures—Mongolian and Islamic is significant since it was during this period that *Muqam* took on its unique form with the support of King Abdurshit Khan, the son of Sultan Saiyid (Liu 141). The Yarkent Khanate (1514-1677) under the rule of Sultan Saydi Khan (1490-1530) and his son, Abdureshid Khan (1509-70) sought to build a Uyghur empire expanding outward from Tengritagh region, which was both culturally and economically rich. Both men were considered accomplished poets and musicians and were determined to develop Uyghur culture through arts and culture. Their advocacy resulted in the compilation of the first large-scale collection of Uyghur *Muqam* (Liu 141).

It is important to note that the formal collection and collation of *Muqam* was initiated by Abdureshit Khan's wife Amannisa Khan. This historical anecdote affords us a glimpse into

gender politics in Uyghur history when Amannisa Khan collaborated, with the king's permission, with court musician Yusup Qadirhan. Amannisa Khan was a talented village girl. She was a poet who could sing and dance. By chance, Abdureshit Khan got acquainted with her and was deeply affected by her artistic talent before they were married. Yusup Qadirhan was a court musician and also a poet with considerable reputation and popularity. Zhou Ji, author of *Interpreting the Uyghur music treasures of Muqam: Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, writes,

There are few musicians as accomplished as Qadirhan, many of whom traveled thousands of miles across the Gobi, from Iraq, Iran, Samarkand, Istanbul, Kashmir and other countries to learn music from him. He is the creator of the instruments Rawap and Silk strings, and the author of the book of poetry "Qadirhan Anthology." (Zhou 148)

After Amannisa Khan entered the palace, she decided to sort out and regulate the scattered folk *Muqam* with Yusup Qadirhan. They collected, organized, and improved the popular folk *Muqam* which had been popular among the common people, it was during this time of improvement that literati poems replaced original folk lyrics. From this top-down intervention, *Twelve Muqam* was established. The *Twelve Muqam* are:

1. Rak Muqam
2. Chabayat Muqam
3. Sigah Muqam
4. Charigah Muqam

5.Penjigah Muqam

6.Uzhale Muqam

7.Ajam Muqam

8.Oshshaq Muqam

9.Bayat Muqam

10.Nawa Muqam

11.Mushawirek Muqam

12.Iraq Muqam

Each of *Twelve Muqam* is composed of Daqu, Dastan and Meshrep, all of which take more than 20 hours to sing. Most of the names for these *Twelve Muqam* are derived from Persian and Arab origins. Except for Sigah, Charigah and Penjigah, which are clearly from Persian for set three, set four and set five respectively, there is no consensus on the remaining titles of the *Twelve Muqam* in the academic world. (Zhou 30)

*Twelve Muqam* is not just a musical form. The cultural environment of its creation, its rich content and its formation of music theory all indicate that *Twelve Muqam* integrated the knowledge, thoughts, and skills of all creators. Thus, *Muqam* serves as a normative and authoritative classical music while the diversity within this musical mode makes the artistic expression of the Uyghur drama unique (Han 91). Chinese Uyghur *Muqam* has been designated by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity. On the UNESCO website, *Muqam* is described as a folk performing art characterized with a variety of songs,

dances, folk and classical music (UNESCO). It highlights the unique diversity of *Muqam* which is the characteristic of the Chinese Uyghur culture and people. Upon inscribing as the Intangible Heritage of humanity, UNESCO describes the rich variations in the Chinese Uyghur music as follows:

[s]ongs vary in rhyme and meter and are performed solo as well as by groups. The lyrics contain not only folk ballads but also poems written by classical Uyghur masters. Thus, the songs reflect a wide range of styles such as poetry, proverbs, and folk narrative, bearing witness to the history and contemporary life of the Uyghur society. In *Muqam* ensembles, the lead instruments are made from local materials and vary in form (they may be bowed-stringed, plucked or wind instruments).

The *Muqam* dance is as varied and diverse in its skills and execution of the performers. *Muqam* dancing skills are sophisticated with the following elements:

[u]nique steps, rhythms and formations as well as figures such as flower-picking-by mouth, bowl-carrying-on-head and imitation of animals in solo dances. The Xinjiang Uyghur *Muqam* has developed four main regional styles, namely the Twelve *Muqam*, Dolan *Muqam*, Turpan *Muqam* and Hami *Muqam*. (Ibid.)



(Fig.3) Chinese Uyghur Twelve *Muqam* by Yongzhu © Zhe Jiang Zhi Qing



(Fig.4) Chinese Uyghur Folk Art *Meshrep* by Weina Zhu © Xinjiang Daily News

*Muqam* is an encyclopedia of Uyghur life and culture. Most of the famous *Muqam* masters are artists with a reputation of literary fame who master the genre of songs composed of both ariosos and narrative songs. *Muqam*'s repertoires reflect historical and cultural experiences of the people in various regions within Xinjiang.

The core part of each *Muqam* “*Chongnaghman*” is known as “大曲 (*Daqu*)”<sup>3</sup> which originated from the royal court, while the rest of the set has a lot of local flavor in its content (*The Art of Chinese Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam* 4). For example, the first part of each cycle “*Chongnaghman*” focuses on the philosophical thoughts and spiritual pursuits of the Uyghurs, which in the past were reserved for the enjoyment of the upper class and the intellectual class. In

the second part “*Dastan*,” the lyrics of each piece are mostly fragments of long narrative poems handed down among the folk, whether in the past or at present, mainly sung in public places such as teahouses, restaurants and family gatherings. The third part “*Meshrep*” consists of praise and supplication to god, the lamentation of human suffering, and expectation of a happy life, they are sung by folk musicians at mass gatherings or chanted begging in the streets by folk artists. The audio clip below contains excerpts from different regions of *Muqam*, including *Twelve Muqam*, *Hami Muqam*, *Dolan Muqam* and *Turpan*

*Muqam*:[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j14Erhtuu5AIbxTvOcsztJ\\_DwekeGKAy/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j14Erhtuu5AIbxTvOcsztJ_DwekeGKAy/view?usp=sharing)

To illustrate how *Muqam* reflects everyday Uyghur life, here is an example of one *Muqam* lyrics on the motto in life:

When you talk during the day, look around you,  
Whisper at night, and there will be those who have not fallen asleep.  
Don't look at those who smile at you, but beware of being taken in,  
Between blooming flowers, there are often thorns hidden.  
Don't think you're someone's son, and pride yourself on being wise and knowledgeable.  
On the stage of the world, like you, there are a lot of wise people.  
Keep the evil out of your mind and think more about good deeds,  
For the eyes of Allah, who knows all the little things, are bright. (Zhou 53)

*Gulbahar* is composed of five acts, in which the third act is *Meshrep*. By this I mean the act presents the form and content of *Meshrep*. I start with the prelude of the first set of *Muqam*, “Rak Muqam” by *Chongnaghman*. I chose this prelude because its lyrics contain the names of *Twelve*

*Muqam* and simply describe which set of *Muqam* to be sung under what circumstances. It expresses the poet's passionate love for *Muqam*. Here is an example of lyrics from the overture of *Rak Muqam* by Chongnaghman:

My Satar with the ties of life as strings,

It comforts the unfortunate, and its pathos.

I am deeply absorbed in the *Muqam*,

If addicted to the vision of love that is playing in front of her.

It is said that *Muqam* started from 《Huseni》 and 《Ajam》 ,

I would rather play 《Bayat》 because it is more melodious.

In honor of god, I played 《Bayat》 in succession,

To soothe the heartbroken, I speed up the 《Nawa》 .

I climaxed with 《Rak》 , sometimes interlude with 《Oshshaq》 ,

I would like to play 《Mushawirek》 and 《Penjigah》 day and night.

If 《Iraq》 , 《Chabayat》 and 《Uzhale》 are fascinating,

Playing 《Charigah》 in the morning is eager to meet a lover like the rising sun.

When I passed the mountain gained the grace of reunion,

Drink the wine of the gathering, I will play the 《Sigah》 again.

Oh, come on, Meshrep, get drunk on it,

Hold your Tambur in one hand and the glass of wine in the other. (Abasofu)

### Meshrep

*Meshrep* means “party, gathering, entertainment” in the Uyghur language; it is a comprehensive performing art form for men that includes song, dance and a variety of entertainment. Like *Muqam*, *Meshrep* is inscribed on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage list by UNESCO. According to the description on their website,

A complete *Meshrep* event includes a rich collection of traditions and performance arts, such as music, dance, drama, folk arts, acrobatics, oral literature, foodways and games. . . . *Meshrep* functions both as a ‘court’, where the host mediates conflicts and ensures the preservation of moral standards, and as a ‘classroom’, where people can learn about their traditional customs. (“Meshrep” UNESCO)

*Meshrep* contains folk songs, dances and music from various ancient periods including Buddhist and Islamic backgrounds. Thus absorbing diverse cultural influences, *Meshrep* developed as a unique performing art form, bearing regional characteristics of the Uyghur people.

A Uyghur philologist Mahmud Kashgari’s “Great Dictionary of Turkic Language” recorded that the Uyghur ancestors observed the custom of holding banquets in turn in winter, called “*solchuk*” and “*suhudi*” (Zhou 99). Men and women, old and young, sang, danced and played games together at these communal celebration events. This is considered the origin of

*Meshrep*. In the present day, *Meshrep* is a popular traditional folk entertainment in various regions of Xinjiang. There are regional characteristics to *Meshrep* performances, reflecting different customs and characteristics of each region.

*Meshrep* is often held in a township or a village as a unit, organized at a low cost. Thus, not constrained by the venue and performance time, *Meshrep* is a communal performing arts event that is easy to participate and watch. *Meshrep* presents singing and dancing, storytelling, jokes, games, improvisational chanting, oral art as it is part singing and narrative by musicians. *Meshrep* also includes humorous performances in which individual skills are featured. As part of the *Meshrep* event, the program can incorporate punishing those who misbehave in the community. As quoted earlier in the UNESCO inscription, this means *Meshrep* serves as a court where social mores and cultural standards are established. *Meshrep* does not have literary scripts as the performance is inherently improvisational. Set designs and props are simple, which make *Meshrep* performances highly mobile from community to community.

*Meshrep* is highly flexible and fluid and it adapts to the needs of all classes of people. It provides entertainment, while it also provides a certain guiding role in folk art. The purpose of *Meshrep* is didactic combining education with pleasure. In terms of the production process, *Meshrep* artists are assigned to perform different roles. The organizer (producer) is called “*Yigitbixi*,” and the executor (director) is called “*Pashap*.” They must exercise their right to organize and arrange various performances according to the needs of the occasion. *Yigitbixi* and *Pashap* do not participate in the performance but they are responsible for the orderly operation of the performance program. If anyone violates the order of *Meshrep*, both of them immediately interrogate and punish the “offender” (who broke the rules). The punishment here is to perform or do something physical exertion, and the accused must accept the punishment. Once the

punishment is completed, “freedom” can be attained with the consent of the organizers and the masses. This is akin to a scene in a court of law. Sometimes, the characters in *Meshrep* were based on actual examples of current events in the community, thereby contemporary issues are brought to the participants and audiences who will gain essential knowledge of the Uyghur conduct of life.

*Meshrep* contains and reflects the culture, history, and spirit of the Uyghur people. It is the foundation for the Uyghur folk culture and art. It reflects the Uyghur people’s lifestyles, customs and the formation of folk literature while demonstrating their love of performing art since ancient times. In the following chapter, I will discuss the story of *Gulbahar*, a new intercultural dance drama and explain how aspects of *Muqam* and *Meshrep* are utilized in the performance.

## Chapter 3

### Aspects of Chinese Uyghur Performance in *Gulbahar*

*Gulbahar* is an original dance drama I conceived in 2019 as an intercultural exploration combining Uyghur and Western theatre conventions. As a native Uyghur dancer and a graduate student in Theatre Arts, I felt a new drama with a simple and familiar storyline would serve as a vehicle to present traditional Uyghur culture and arts for the English-speaking readers.

The storyline of the Chinese Uyghur Dance Drama *Gulbahar* revolves around Gulbahar, the youngest daughter of the wealthy Ablikim family. Gulbahar's father, greedy for money and power, had married off his eldest daughter Guljanet to a prestigious family six years ago. This year, to establish another relationship with the rich and powerful Kasim family, Gulbahar's father again arranged Gulbahar's marriage to Tursun, son of the Kasim family.

The intercultural dance-drama, *Gulbahar*, is composed of five Acts, each of which is themed as follows:

Act I. "The Bride"

Act II "Love at first Sight"

Act III. "*Meshrep*"

Act IV. "Revenge"

Act V. "Mr. Apandim"

Cast of Characters:

GULBAHAR, seventeen years old, the youngest daughter of Ablikim Family, in love with Bahtiyar

BEHTIYAR, twenty years old, a village boy, in love with Gulbahar

NASIRDIN, forty years old, a wise gentleman also called Mr. Apandim, a hero who saves Gulbahar and Behtiyar; Apandim is a folk hero widely popular throughout history in Xinjiang.

GULJANET, twenty-one years old, the eldest daughter of Ablikim Family, who helps Gulbahar run away from the wedding

ZULHUMAR, twenty-five years old, servant of Guljanet, later serves Gulbahar

AKRAM, twenty-two years old, best friend of Behtiyar, who sets up Gulbahar and Behtiyar as couple

TURSUN, twenty years old, son of the Kasim Family, marriage object for Gulbahar

MAMATJAN, fifty-three years old, an old man from village, a character who tells the story of Mr. Apandim

ABLIKIM, about forty years old, father of Guljanet and Gulbahar

Guards/Villagers/Musicians/Dancers/Donkey

Time: around 100 years ago

Setting: Xinjiang Kashgar, China

Act I. "The Bride":

On the day of her wedding, Gulbahar the bride feels the injustice of her fate and fights to escape. Guljanet, the older sister, enters the chamber and sees Gulbahar not dressed up for the wedding. Argument between the two sisters ensues. Gulbahar begs her sister for help to assist her escape from their father's plan for arranged marriage. Guljanet was a victim of forced marriage; the father's order was too stern to disobey. But Gulbahar is unwilling and refuses to

repeat the same mistake. She has witnessed her sister's suffering from a loveless marriage. Gulbahar's earnest plea finally persuades Guljanet. By chance, Guljanet overhears her husband mention a man named Nasirdin in a conversation with someone else. Nasirdin (aka Mr. Apandim) is known to be eloquent and wise, and he is said to help the poor and oppressed people. Guljanet tells Gulbahar to find him for help. Guljanet entrusts her most loyal maid Zulhumar to fetch her dress for Gulbahar to disguise and they together find Nasirdin in the village to seek his guidance. Thus, Gulbahar successfully manages to escape from the wedding.

Act II. "Love at First Sight":

That afternoon, as night falls, Behtiyar and Akram return from hunting. They decide to rest for a night in the Gobi desert forest. Also walking through the Gobi forest are Gulbahar and Zulhumar on the run who also stop to rest. Behtiyar and Akram hear a noise nearby. They take their bows and arrows and go quietly to look for where the noise comes from. The four meet, but in darkness Gulbahar and Zulhumar become frightened and run away. Behtiyar and Akram run after them and finally catch up with the two women. After questioning their origins, Gulbahar and Zulhumar let down their guard. Upon hearing Gulbahar's present predicament from the arranged marriage, Behtiyar and Akram decide to help Gulbahar and they inform her Mr. Apandim is actually from their village. Meanwhile, on the other side of the stage, Tursun is angry, humiliated by Gulbahar's desertion. Tursun vows to bring Gulbahar back himself.

Act III. "*Meshrep*":

The following day, the four young men and women arrive in the village. But Behtiyar discovers that Mr. Apandim has gone out of town for a few days. Behtiyar brings Gulbahar and Zulhumar to the house of Mamatjan for lodging. Since Mamatjan's two daughters are married

and he lives alone in an empty house, he readily agrees to host Gulbahar and Zulhumar. He even lends his daughters' old clothes, lest they don't look conspicuous. In the courtyard, Mamatjan tells stories about Mr. Apandim. At that moment Behtiyar enters announcing that the village is about to hold the *Meshrep* event. As the village people gather around, the musicians begin to play the music of *Rak Muqam*. Everyone takes seats forming a large circle, quietly listening. A cheerful song follows, and the participants start to dance in the middle of the dance floor. The next segment is the game of passing the tea in the poetry section. The poet has a bowl of tea in his hand which he must gently roll out of his armpit while not spilling the tea. Then he recites two rhyming couplets or improvises a poem and passes the tea bowl to the next participant. The next person must say two rhyming couplets or improvise a poem before receiving the bowl in the same manner. Those who spill tea are asked to sing or tell jokes. This game is followed by demonstration of individual skills during which a participant with six bowls placed on the head and two small plates in hand walk to the center of the dance floor and dance with the music. The crowd cheered and clapped. Finally, the highlight of *Meshrep* follows which is the communal dance of celebration. Musicians play a few traditional songs, including an excerpt from *Muqam*. All participants spontaneously join in this communal dance at the center of the floor to see who can hold on until the music's over. While the merriment continues, on the other side of the stage Tursun and the two guards sneak in and watch Gulbahar in the crowd. Tursun stands with an ominous look on his face, then gestures his two guards out of the stage and exits together.

Act IV. "Revenge":

As the crowd disperses after the *Meshrep* is over, Gulbahar and Behtiyar enter talking with each other as they walk. Akram sees the couple and wanting to give them private time, he pulls Zulhumar away with some made up pretext. Now alone on the stage, Gulbahar and

Behtiyar perform a couple dance, expressing their feelings toward each other. After the dance, Behtiyar declares his love to Gulbahar, but Tursun enters with his guards and an argument follows. In a fit of rage, Behtiyar punches him in the face but the onlookers beat Behtiyar who gets badly injured. Gulbahar is forcibly taken away by Tursun.

Act V: “Mr. Apandim”:

Two days pass. Mr. Apandim returns with his donkey. A villager rushes over to tell him about what has happened to Bahtiyar. On the third day, Mr. Apandim and Behtiyar arrive in Gulbahar’s village to find that she is now locked inside her home. Mr. Apandim visits Gulbahar’s home and presents himself to Gulbahar’s father, Ablikim, as the butler of a rich merchant from a neighboring village. Mr. Apandim says he came to verify the reputation of Gulbahar’s beauty and if she is indeed beautiful, he has a marriage proposal on behalf of the wealthy merchant. Greedy Ablikim falls for this trick. Overjoyed at the prospect of marrying his daughter off to a rich merchant, he allows Mr. Apandim to meet with Gulbahar. Upon seeing Gulbahar, Mr. Apandim praises her beauty. Ablikim sees the opportunity and interrogates Mr. Apandim on the financial prospect of his master. Mr. Apandim presents a contract stating that if Gulbahar marries his master, she would receive much more money than the Kasim family once offered. If the contract is signed, it will take effect immediately, Mr. Apandim tells Ablikim who is pleased but hesitates because he does not want to provoke the powerful Kasim family. Mr. Apandim persuades with the promise of the power and wealth of the neighboring village and at last the contract is signed. Mr. Apandim then prepares to bring with him Gulbahar, once again promising all the betrothal gifts to be sent the following day. Ablikim is a little hesitant. Mr. Apandim assures him pointing at the contract. If any problem occurs, it will be handled according to the law as stated in the contract. Ablikim agrees to send off Gulbahar with Mr.

Apandim, without knowing that the name on the contract does not exist. No property or land promised on the contract is existent, not even the government authorities cited in the paper.

### Dances:

There are five dances presented in the story of *Gulbahar*, among which the first act solo dance and the fourth act pas de deux are choreographed and directed by me. These dances will combine the classical Xinjiang Uyghur dance with elements of modern western-style dance. The concept is to keep representative movements of traditional Uyghur dance with supplemental elements of modern dance. The typical Uyghur dance moves are neck-shifting, eye-moving, wrist-turning, waist-bending, and rotating. The application of posture, movement, and skill mainly emphasize the sense of standing when holding your head high and pulling your back (see figure 5). Traditional Uyghur dance combines static with dynamic movements, big and small actions, in addition to the embellishment of the neck-shifting, eyes, wrist-turning, and other decorative actions. All of this ensures the whole dance program to convey alternating feelings of hardness with softness, rising and falling in cadence. The Uyghur dances are mainly concentrated on a variety of lower waist and rotation movements.

Modern dance is not bound by stylized dance conventions. It draws on the nuances of characters' movements in life and expresses the full capacity of human body movement. In *Gulbahar*, I employ free, improvisational modern dance with traditional Uyghur dance.

Act III presents to the audience the atmosphere of folk art and *Meshrep*. The dance movements are derived from the Uyghur folk dances: 1. Select the Kashi-characteristic repertoire Kashgar Sanam in the opening mass entertainment dance. Sanam is a widely popular folk dance among the Uyghur people. The word, "Sanam," means "lover and beauty." There are

subcategories such as Kashgar Sanam, Kucha Sanam, Khotan Sanam, and Kumul Sanam and so on according to different local styles. Among them, Kashgar Sanam has light dance steps, flexible body moves, delicate movements, while also being cheerful and enthusiastic. The changes of the wrist and the dance moves are extremely rich. The dance style of Sanam is free and lively with no fixed program. Dancers can improvise and they just need to keep up with the rhythm. During the dance, the melody of the music is generally accelerated from the middle speed. As the music reaches its climax, the dancer's mood will also reach the highest point, pushing the essence of Sanam folk dance to the point of exhilaration.

Sanam's dance postures are mostly derived from daily behavior. For instance, the most common postures are called, "the hat-holding type," "sleeve-rolling type," "skirt-pulling type," "watching type," "chest-caressing type," and so on. The lower leg movements are also very rich, with tipping, kicking, stamping, rolling, turning, etc. Its pace uses one lift after three steps (the first three steps) at most, with a smooth, slightly quivering step, and a small kick from the back of the power leg as it moves the fourth step. The characteristics of this step is that the knee is both controlled and not stiff, the lower leg combines closely with the drumbeats flexibly and dexterously, showing the footwork to be very light and dexterous.

In the middle of the *Meshrep* event, a Uyghur folk dance called "Balancing Bowl Dance" is inserted. For the current project, this dance piece is performed by Runquan Ma, an undergraduate student in the Department of Theatre at CSU, Northridge. Her dance piece is included in the YouTube link. "Balancing Bowl Dance" demonstrates a combination of skill and dance performance. This act originates from an area called Kucha and is widely popular in many regional places including Yili, Kashgar, and Urumqi. In the 1940s, the famous dancer Kemberhan Amet officially performed the folk Balancing Bowl Dance on the stage, which

became a classic repertoire for many Uyghur dancers. Kemberhan Amet founded the dance department at Xinjiang Art Institute where I was trained as an undergraduate student in dance.

For the “Balancing Bowl Dance,” the performer holds small plates in each hand, clips bamboo chopsticks between fingers, and plays while dancing with the music. In addition to chopsticks, dancers can sometimes wear a thimble to knock beats on the small disc, with five or more water-filled tea bowls on her head. The dancers’ steps are small and gentle and dignified (see figure 6). With elegant dance steps, dancers gradually speed up the pace to the changing tempo of the music. The bowls must be kept still during head spinning. This complex mixture of light, smooth, and steady dance styles demonstrate the unique charm of the Uyghur dance.

To signal the end of *Meshrep*, Sama dance is selected to end the show. Sama is popular in Kashgar and Shache in Xinjiang. It is one of the five folk dances along with the traditional Uyghur Sanam dance, Dolan dance, Shadiyane dance, and Nazirkoom dance. Sama is the most representative celebrational group dance. Movements in Sama dance form are different from other Uyghur dances. It begins with single-foot hopping and both-hands raising. Hands are mostly in the form of natural half fisting type. The body with the leisurely pendulum of hands has the feeling of slightly shaking from left to right. One leg jumps up, connecting with 180 degrees or 360 degrees rotation. The dancer’s movement, particularly her footsteps, match the drumbeat.



(Fig.5) “Uyghur Dance Posture”



(Fig.6) “Uyghur Balancing Bowl Dance” photo by Lei Zhang © 2018 Sohu.com Inc.

### Music:

There are wind instruments, playing instruments, bowstring instruments, and percussion instruments. Most of the materials used to make musical instruments are wood, animal bones, fur among which wood is mainly composed of Chinese parasol, mulberry, walnut, and other trees. The following is a brief introduction of the Uyghur folk musical instruments that are used in the accompaniment of the dance part of the current work, *Gulbahar*:

1. Satar: This is a bowstring instrument that provides main accompaniment. Satar

originates from the southern region of Xinjiang *Twelve Muqam* and the eastern region of Xinjiang *Turpan Muqam*. As early as the 10th to 12th century AD, Satar was reformed based on the ancient musical instrument Kubuz. It became first popular in southern Xinjiang Kashgar, Shache area, and gradually spread later to northern Xinjiang (Zhou 90). Satar is a special instrument for singing *Twelve Muqam* in which the musician performs while sitting cross-legged or kneeling down. This instrument appears as the opening part of the third act *Meshrep* in *Gulbahar*, that is, a piece of an actor's live show of the *Rak Muqam* prelude. In addition, Satar plays the main melody in the music of the pas de deux in Act IV of *Gulbahar*.



(Fig.7) “Uyghur Instrument Satar”

2. At the beginning of Act III, the communal dance is accompanied by the music from Kashgar Sanimi whose folk lyrics and notes have been passed down through oral tradition. Sanam's instruments generally include Tambur, Rawap, Satar, Dap (hand drum). Dap plays an important role in Sanam, not only to master the speed but also to render the atmosphere with a loud and smooth drum. For Balancing Bowl Dance music, generally lyrical folk songs, with smooth rhythm, melodious tune are used and they are similar to Sanam.

3. The main instruments to accompany Sama dance are Sunay and Nagra. Sunay is an ancient Uyghur folk playing instrument, known as Suona in Chinese and Sunay in Uyghur. The

main instruments of wind and drum music originated from Persia and were introduced into Xinjiang and then into the other parts of China (Kashgar 60). It is soft and round in pronunciation, with a bright tone. It can be solo, ensemble, or act as singing and dancing accompaniment. Its solo repertoire is rich, mostly from the music of *Muqam* and *Sanam*. *Nagra* (iron drum) is a musical instrument played with a mallet. Its rhythm determines the speed of the dance and the harmony of the movements. Sama music is often played before the beginning for familiar music derived from *Muqam* or *Sanam*. Sama dance is strong and powerful. Sometimes, two or three groups plus one more tonal drum can be used for a large-scale performance event. The music of the Sama dance in *Gulbahar* will appear as a closing act in *Meshrep* of Act III. It will be in the background evoking a strong rhythm leading to a piece of passionate music, and finally a cheerful dance by participants.



(Fig.8) “Uyghur Instrument Sunay”



(Fig.9) “Sunay and Nagra” © radio@compound-eye.org

The following are additional instruments used in the music:

Rawap: This is a popular plucked string instrument used for *Twelve Muqam*. It is more commonly used in southern Xinjiang, often accompanied by other musical instruments for singing and dancing. It is used as a solo and in ensemble performance. During Rawap performance, the Rawap is placed horizontally on the chest with the left hand holding the pole, the index finger, the middle finger, the ring finger pressing the string, the right-hand wrist holding the sound box, the thumb, the index finger playing with the dial.



(Fig.10) “Uyghur Instrument Rawap”

Tambur: This is an accompaniment and solo instrument for the Uyghur folk classical music, folk songs and other vocal art forms. It is often used in *Meshrep* with other instruments to accompany the song and dance. It is originally popular in southern Xinjiang and later spread throughout the entire region of Xinjiang. It has become a favorite plucked string instrument of the Uyghur people.



(Fig.11) “Uyghur Instrument Tambur”

Dap: Dap is an ancient percussion instrument widely used among the folk musicians and also a main instrument of the Uyghur *Muqam*. The surface of Dap is made of sheepskin, cowhand, or python skin, among which python skin has the best tone color. Its pronunciation is clear and loud, and the intensity of the voice varies greatly, which plays a role in setting off the mood of different music. There are three kinds of Dap: 1. Small Dap of *Muqam* and Dolan Sanam used by folk singers for folk songs and dances; 2. Medium Dap, as an accompaniment instrument to stage song and dance. 3. Big Dap, as a prop of the folk wizard to “exorcism” and healing.



(Fig.12) “Uyghur Instrument Dap”

Props:

In *Gulbahar*, in addition to the props used in dance or music mentioned above, some Uyghur daily necessities are also involved. The following is the introduction of the traditional props used in each prologue in turn:

1. In Act II, Gulbahar and Zulhumar use a gourd during their escape. Gourd is a common object as well as an indispensable tool for the Uyghur people. Many families use gourds as a ladle for water or rice, and they take them as kettles when they go out. The use of gourds is decreasing as the Uyghur society is being modernized. Nowadays, gourds are made into exquisite folk handicrafts. The gourd is used as a kettle for the protagonists’ fleeing scene in Xinjiang’s water-scarce Gobi desert. Additional props used in Act II that are worth noting are a torch and a bow and arrows. The male protagonist Behtiyar and his good friend Akram meet Gulbahar and Zulhumar just after hunting and preparing to find a place to rest for the night. The torch is held by the Akram. The bow and arrows are carried by Behtiyar to highlight his masculinity, which will impress Gulbahar that helps explain their love at first sight.



(Fig.13) “Uyghur Handicrafts Gourd” photo by Xiaoxi- Cathy

2. The first stage scene of the third act was Mamatjan sitting alone on the carpet, drinking tea with his legs crossed. Gulbahar and Zulhumar also sit on the carpet after having changed into Mamatjan’s daughter’s clothes. This emblematic staging technique using a simple carpet to represent various meanings will be necessary. In order to depict authentic Uyghur living environment, the production of *Gulbahar* will require extravagant stage constructions. For instance, a traditional Uyghur house must have a courtyard. Regardless of social class, every family has a courtyard which has grape arbors or corridors. Another feature of a raised wooden platform (Chuang Ta in Chinese) is also required. For these various scenic requirements, a simple carpet will be used in a symbolic method for the production of *Gulbahar*. Secondly, chatting on the bed and drinking tea is the setting at the beginning of the third act. Therefore, the tea set is indispensable. The Uyghur tea set is unique. Instead of teacups, they usually drink tea in small tea bowls, called *Piyale* in Uyghur language. Tea is important for the Uyghur people; three meals a day must be equipped with tea. Therefore, there are many teahouses in southern Xinjiang, which serve as a location of culture and arts where local people come to be entertained and socialize. For the production of *Gulbahar*, the tea bowl will not only appear while they are

chatting but also in later *Meshrep* activities. The last place where the tea bowl will be featured is during the Balancing Bowl Dance. Dancers perform six tea bowls overhead to highlight their skills. Therefore, the tea bowl serves as an important prop and a metaphor to highlight the cultural uniqueness of the Uyghur nationality in this work.



(Fig.14) “Traditional Uyghur Courtyard” Photo by Haopei



(Fig.15) “Uyghur Tea Set” Photo by BaiJiaHao © Baidu



(Fig.16) “Uyghur Tea House” Photo by BaiJiaHao © Baidu

### Costumes:

The Gobi (“waterless place” in Mongolian) Desert is the main geographical and natural environment for Xinjiang. Contrary to the common misconception, Gobi is not made of dry sand and is made of bare rocks. Its greyish brown soil and waterless environment makes vegetation rare, but it is rich in quantity and colors in the riverbeds. Such a living environment prompts the Uyghur people to have a special love for plants which they use for architecture, clothing, and crafts. The Uyghur women like to wear earrings, rings, necklaces, brooches, bracelets and so on. Girls start getting their ears pierced and wearing earrings at five or six or even younger. They like to paint their eyebrows with Osman’s juice, to dye their nails with henna. They use the petals of the red flowers for rouge and lipstick and they mix cherry and rose juice to apply to the face and lips. These are natural cosmetics commonly used by the women in the Uyghur region. These customs fully express their pursuit of beauty. The majority of Uyghur women consider long hair as a symbol of beauty. In the past, unmarried girls used to wear many braids, which symbolize luxuriant trees and youthful vitality of young girls. After marriage, women would wear two long braids instead. Since the ancient Uyghur traditions in shamanism, Zoroastrianism and other forms of nature worship, natural objects and images found in the surroundings have

given impetus to the Uyghur artistic creations. Patterns were made of flowers, branches, leaves, tendrils, and fruits. The Uyghurs also decorate their pots, basins, bottles, furnaces, altars and instruments with patterns and forms, often regular or irregular geometric patterns such as square, rectangle, circle, triangle, diamond, star, crescent and zigzag with straight lines, curves and arcs. With the same design patterns, they make their culottes and shawls for women and coats and waists for men.

Women's Wear: Uyghur women love to wear skirts. They prefer those made of bright-colored silk or wool. The common colors are red, green, and golden yellow. In addition to a variety of colors of cloth for the dress, the Uyghur people are most fond of the original ethnic "etles silk" to sew the dress. In the streets, in the countryside, or in the mountains, people can see floral dresses made of etles silk in different colors and patterns. This is a kind of silk specially used for making dresses, rich in unique national style. Its patterns are from plants, utensils and geometric patterns. The patterns of its silk, such as colorful clouds, conjure up the meaning of spring and beautiful blessings. Women like to wear a coat or vest over the dress. Young women prefer red, green, purple and other bright colors for their coat, while the older ladies wear black, blue, dark green colors made of loose satin or fabrics, often decorated with copper, silver, gold spherical, circular, olive-shaped buckles. Well-dressed women would use embroidery for collars and cuffs and wear under the skirt trousers, most of which were sewn with colored printed cloth or silk. Some people like to make pants out of monochrome fabric and then embroider some flowers on the corners of the pants (Xu, et al. 36). These elements reflect the Uyghur people's great love for embroidering various flower patterns on the clothing.

Men's Clothes: It is rather simple for men; they usually wear a long coat with knees, wide sleeves and no buttons, and tie a long waist scarf. Waist scarf can function as buttons and pockets. Its color

is black, brown, blue and other dark colors. During the festival, usually they dress more bright-colored and some use printing or embroidery. For the shirts are mostly open-chested, reaching to the knees and buttocks, and the shirts of the young and children are laced. For the robes, they like to use color striped silk fabric, which is a popular traditional material called “Chiqman.” Old people use black, dark brown fabrics, looking simple and clean. The trouser legs are embroidered with flower patterns.

Headwear: There are many kinds of hats and headwear distinctive of the Chinese Uyghur nationality. The patterns of hats are varied and reflect the regional environment bearing distinct local characteristics. In addition to the obvious regional differences, affluent people wear hats made of fine workmanship, with good and expensive materials. Hats are regarded as a symbol of status. The older people wear hats with fewer flowers and patterns, while the youth prefer more colorful hats. In terms of colors, the base color of hat is usually deep dark color such as amaranth, dark blue, dark green, etc., and the pattern is relatively bright, the design is bright and pure, and elaborate. The contrast is made strong with such strong colors as black, white, orange, brown, grass green, peach, vermillion (Xu, et al. 43).

Crown: The name of the crown called *Tilla Qash* means “golden eyebrow.” *Tilla* means gold coin, *Qash* means eyebrow; the name *Kokrek Dozi* stands for chest ornament. The long pendant is called *Soke* and the semicircle is called *Zire*. It is a wedding decoration (see figure 17).

Shoes: The Uyghur ancestors led a nomadic life and they were hunters. Wearing boots is derived from this historical tradition from which they developed the custom of wearing leather boots, which is still loved by the Uyghur people.

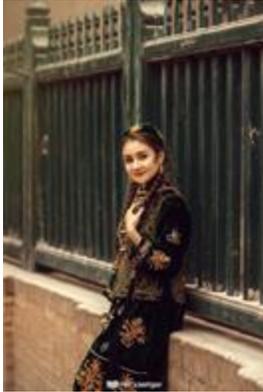
In *Gulbahar*, I adopt the authentic Chinese Uyghur costumes, particularly those of the upper class which were richly jeweled with gold bands in their garments and jewels in their headdresses, and crowns. Each ornament conveys symbolic meaning indicating their status and a high-quality life. For the low-ranking characters, their clothes are plain and monochromatic. For a few characters, some are required to go barefoot. To reflect the characteristics of *dramatis personae* in *Gulbahar*, the following pictures are listed for visual reference purposes for costume design:



(Fig.17) “Dress and Jewelry Collocation for Guljanet” photo by Mewlan Turaq © Tilla Qash



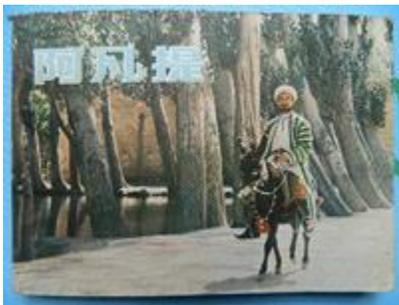
(Fig.18) “Dress and Jewelry Collocation for Gulbahar” photo by Mewlan Turaq © Tilla Qash



(Fig.19) “Dress and Jewelry Collocation for Zulhumar” photo by Mewlan Turaq © Tilla Qash



(Fig.20) “Dress for Lower-Class Women in *Gulbahar*” Photo by Xuehua



(Fig.21) “Dress for Nasirdin” photo by Mikhorban



(Fig.22) “Dress for Mamatjan” © alamy stock



(Fig.23) “Dress Collocation for Ablikum” photo by Mewlan Turaq © Tilla Qash



(Fig.24) “Dress for Bahtiyar and Akram” photo by Mr. Xiao Pa



(Fig.25) “Dress Collocation for Tursun” photo by Elizat © LENSTER ELIZAT

## Chapter 4

### *Elements of Romeo and Juliet & Medea in the Story of Gulbahar*

Chinese Tang scholar Mengman's work *Mengman Reads the Most Beautiful Poems of Tang* lists five basic human emotions--happiness, anger, sadness, cheerfulness, and resentment. These emotions are discussed in light of Tang poetry; "Where there are five emotions in human beings, beings are alive. Where there are five emotions in poetry, poetry will be eternal" "人有五情, 人就活着. 诗有五情, 诗就永恒") (Meng 3). In *Gulbahar*, these five emotions of Gulbahar's life will serve as the foundation for my dance-drama performance. The five emotions correspond to the characters and the stories of *Medea* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The purpose of this intercultural dance drama project is not to create a replica of these literary models but to draw upon similar as well as different aspects found in the characters and storylines. The differences are Medea's resentment of betrayal leads to an irreversible act of revenge; Juliet's pursuit of happiness disregards the age-old family feud. But it is different that unlike Gulbahar's father who is willing to send his daughter off a loveless marriage, King Creon in *Medea* cares about his daughter. To ensure Princess Glauce's marriage to Jason, he tries to exile Medea. *Romeo and Juliet* are similar to Gulbahar and Bahtiyar when they defy the patriarchal order and system to pursue true love in spite of threats and injustices. Mr. Apandim, the wise rescuer who champions the oppressed characters in *Gulbahar* is reminiscent of Friar Laurence in the sense that he is a kind priest willing to listen and help the young lovers. The following points analyze how these five life's emotions are embodied in the characters of *Gulbahar* by way of the Western inspiration.

#### **Happiness:**

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Gulbahar* are built around the theme of star-crossed lovers. The heroine Juliet parallels the heroine Gulbahar. Born into powerful families, they are both controlled by the patriarchal system. The hero Romeo is Behtiyar in this new dance drama with the exception that Romeo is from a noble family, whereas Behtiyar is a farmer who also hunts for a living. The two lovers Gulbahar and Behtiyar fall in love at the first meeting. Unafraid of the threat of power, the youthful pair stick to each other for love.

### **Anger:**

In *Gulbahar*, Gulbahar's father Ablikim corresponds to Creon in *Medea*, but Ablikim is different since he is largely motivated by anger once Gulbahar flees her wedding and he orders his guards to hunt her down. King Creon in the Greek tragedy *Medea* tries to protect his daughter Glauce. Ablikim is only concerned about his status and power being compromised by Gulbahar's errant behavior. This was the opposite anger of Creon's in *Medea*. The eldest daughter Guljanet has been a victim of forced marriage before. She empowers herself by turning her anger and helplessness to positive action, instead of succumbing to these emotions, and ultimately helps her sister Gulbahar escape. Guljanet and Gulbahar bravely show their resistance to patriarchy.

### **Sadness:**

At the beginning of the play, Guljanet comes to persuade her sister, Gulbahar, to put on the bridal dress. Because of her father's power, Gulbahar laments with a solo dance to vent her inner pain. The inspiration for this dance comes from Martha Graham's "Cave of the Heart," based on the Greek mythology of *Medea*. Graham is one of the founders of modern dance and has made modern dance accepted by the American traditional dance culture through her efforts. She created a new dance language that expressed the strong emotions of the dancers through

powerful dance movements. Branded “Dance of the Century” by the TIME magazine, Martha Graham (1894-1991) is the iconic dancer, choreographer, and teacher of Modern Dance. She created 181 ballets and a dance technique that is still used today (Martha Graham Dance Company). “Cave of the Heart” was a ballet dance choreographed and performed originally by Martha Graham in 1946. In this solo dance, Medea expresses her jealousy as her body begins to twitch, demonstrating her emotional state of anger. She pulls out her heart (red ribbon representing heart) and holds herself so tight describing her self-abuse and torturing of her state of mind. The difference between these two plays is that Medea’s internal heartbreak comes from her husband’s betrayal and ruthlessness, whereas Gulbahar’s internal heartbreak comes from her father’s oppression and persecution. Additionally, the similarity between these two dances is the red ribbon used in Graham’s “Cave of the Heart” resonated in *Gulbahar* as a red wedding veil.

### **Cheerful:**

In *Gulbahar*, Nasirdin Apandim is related to the priest Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, both of them try to help the young lovers. Nasirdin Apandim is a heroic figure embodied with chivalrous humor and wisdom. He is a brave fighter against upper classes and injustice and is the voice for the common people. It is unknown whether Nasirdin Apandim is a real historical figure or an ideal hero sprung from the imagination of the Uyghur people. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the priest Friar Laurence helps Romeo and Juliet, just like Mr. Apandim. The difference between the two stories lies in the ending; in *Romeo and Juliet*, even though the priest Friar Laurence helps them, the couple fails to escape the trick of fate and die due to a series of misunderstandings. In *Gulbahar*, Mr. Apandim engineers a plan to save Gulbahar and Behtiyar and ensures a happy ending for the story.

**Resentment:**

In *Medea*, the title character kills not only her rival Princess Glauce, but also her children in retaliation for Jason's betrayal. Medea is most ruthless in destroying any shred of happiness for Jason, and his downfall becomes the finale of the tragedy. In the case of *Gulbahar*, the desertion of Gulbahar angers Tursun (the object of marriage). In Act IV, Tursun chases Gulbahar. When he realizes the love between Gulbahar and Behtiyar, Tursun experiences great humiliation by a woman who betrays him and a man who is having an affair with the girl he is supposed to be married to. Tremendous anger drives Tursun to beat up Behtiyar with the help of his guards. Gulbahar kneels on the ground and cries begging Tursun to let Behtiyar go. But Tursun hits Gulbahar unconscious and seizes the moment and kidnaps Gulbahar away.

## Conclusion

Music and dance occupy an important position in Chinese Uyghur life and culture. The Uyghur people say, “One can sing if he can speak, one can dance if he can walk” or “Uyghurs born with music and dance.” Music and dance provide opportunities and facilitate environments where people gather and form a community; this aspect is in keeping with the essence of theatre art, which thrives in the live relationship between audience and performers.

As a Chinese Uyghur dancer, I was trained, witnessed and participated in many Uyghur performances. Music and dance are an integral part of the Uyghur culture as much as my own personal identity. Since coming to the United States, I have encountered numerous people expressing their keen interest in the Chinese Uyghur culture and performing arts traditions. It led me to this graduate project which became an intercultural exploration of traditional Uyghur performing arts combined with inspirations from the ancient Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, and Martha Graham. I conceived *Gulbahar* as a new intercultural Uyghur dance-drama for a live performance in the spring semester of 2020. Although the Covid-19 pandemic abruptly interrupted the original plan, this project has built a foundation for future development of a full production. For future development, I plan to create intercultural performing art works for broader audiences on the world stage to share the uniqueness of the Uyghur dance-drama in an effort to enhance understanding and communication between Chinese Uyghur art and the outside world.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Xinjiang (“new frontier”) was a relatively new designation by the Qing dynasty about 136 years ago. China has 56 ethnic groups in total, in Xinjiang including 13 native ethnic groups with a long history such as Han, Uyghur, Kazak, Mongolian, Kirgiz, Tajik, Hui, Xibe, Tatar, Uzbek, Manchu, Russian and Deur.

<sup>2</sup> Five Ethnic Autonomous Regions in China are Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Tibetan Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

<sup>3</sup> Daqu in Chinese is 大曲 (Daqu), is a large-scale musical composition that existed in various critical musical genres in Chinese history. Almost all of them are large songs and dances with instrumental music.