

sensibilities of its time and place. Contemporary Moscow is clearly not like present-day New York—ethically, politically, or artistically. Thus, even if a Soviet artist produces a stylistically competent Abstract Expressionist or Surrealist painting, it cannot derive from the same ideological impulse and carry the same meaning. Insofar as such a work borrows an established Western style (without reinventing it in Russian terms), it obscures its own originality behind the implications belonging to the borrowed language. For this reason I firmly agree with John Bowlt, who finally admits that “unofficial art in the Soviet Union has produced little of permanent aesthetic worth” (p. 21).

A few artists (Komar and Melamid, the Gerlovins, and perhaps Kabakov and Povovarov) are making contributions of interest. Some (for example, Nemukhin, Belutin, and Iankilevskii) at least display a considerable artistic sensibility, but the essays in the book do not illuminate their qualities enough to convey this impression. Instead, the essayists (Bowlt, Golomstock, and others) speculate on how the present situation possesses the key elements for a great flowering in the future. Comparisons are made with the derivative early phases of Malevich and others, prognostications are cast about the future relation of Soviet unofficial art to Western vanguardism. But as Paul Valery once pointed out, “the trouble with the future is that it isn’t what it used to be.”

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THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN THEATRE. By *Herbert Marshall*. Introduction by *Harold Clurman*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1977. xvi, 208 pp. Photographs. \$14.95.

Few know the Soviet theater more intimately than does Herbert Marshall, and his *Pictorial History of the Russian Theatre* is a treasury of theatrical memorabilia. The book adds valuable visual material to already known historical information as well as detailed descriptions of many theatrical troupes in existence in the two cultural capitals of the USSR, Moscow and Leningrad.

The book contains over five hundred black-and-white photographs and prints of stage sets, play scenes, graphic works, and portraits of theater personalities. A short section summarizes the history of the theater up to the year 1900. The main part of the book discusses the histories of various theatrical endeavors in the two cultural capitals. Of priceless value are Professor Marshall’s own photographs taken during his years in the Soviet theater which, happily, coincided with its best years, namely, the 1920s and early 1930s. A large portion of Marshall’s photos was taken of the avant-garde productions, notably those in the Kamernyi, Vakhtangov, and Meyerhold Theaters. The narrative is unfortunately sprinkled with various minor inaccuracies—for example, Blok’s *Showbooth* or, better, *Puppet Show* (*Balaganchik*) mistranslated as *Showman* (p. 127)—and some phrasing could have been better edited; but these factors should not detract from the general value of the book. This reader has never encountered such a rich collection of photographs in any volume on Russian theater, Soviet or otherwise. Herbert Marshall’s commentary is seasoned with his opinions and recollections of this period.

The book is no doubt intended for a general rather than a specialized audience, but no Russian scholar should be without it. When it goes out of print, it will become a collector’s item.

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