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***AMATEUR AND PROLETARIAN THEATER IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA***, By Ayse Dietrich\*, Published by: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, Edited by Stefan Aquilina, Year of Publishing: 2021. Subject Area: Russian Amateur Theater. Book Type: Russian Performing Art. Total Number of Pages: 217. ISBN: 978-135-017-097-1, hardback, \$ 135,77.

Shortly after the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917 they issued a decree of *the Soviet of People's Commissars* on 9 November 1917 that placed all the theaters under the authority of the arts section of *the State Commission for Education*, and all served as *agitprop* (agitation and propaganda) theater. So the Soviet theater was a *director's theater*, but not a *writer's theater*. It was utilized to do what has been ordered rather than provide only entertainment, and used as a propaganda and communication agent.

An experimental artistic institution, *the Proletkult* was founded in September 1917 by Alexander Bogdanov during the course of the war. Its stated goals were a total break with the bourgeois past, radically modifying existing artistic forms, rejecting all existing professional theater and promoting a new, so-called *proletarian culture*. However, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party approved a decree on 1 December 1920 which condemned both the institution as a duplication of services that competed with existing bureaucratic systems, like *Narkompros* headed by Anatoly Lunacharsky, and its hostile idealist philosophy. As a result, *Proletkult* was integrated into *Narkompros*.

During the Civil War, *Proletkult* opened theaters in factories, and supported amateur theater activities all around the country that helped to transmit the culture of the working classes.

This book is a collection of translations of primary sources related to the amateur and proletarian theater. It is about how the proletarian theater was used as a propaganda agent and the difficulties faced by the amateur theater and their actors after the Bolshevik Revolution.

The book consists of five parts. The first part, "Aims and Objectives" includes nine articles by Lunacharsky, Bogdanov, Kerzhentsev, Lvov, Kogan, Piotrovsky and Shklovsky. Those by

Lunacharsky and Bogdanov contain information on proletarian culture. The Kerzhentsev, Lvov, Kogan, Piotrovsky and Shklovsky articles provide information on amateur theater, explain what drew people to the amateur theater, and how it diverted the workers from tackling the difficulties of real life.

The second part of the book, “Amateur-Professional Relations” includes three articles by Kalinin, Pletnev and Kerzhentsev, that are concerned about the relations between amateur and professional theaters; they discuss how the proletarian theater functioned as an “amateur-professional hybrid”.

The third part, “Repertoire Issues” includes six articles by Mgebrov, Kerzhentsev and Pletnev that discuss the repertoire of the proletarian theater which was mostly an imitation of the professional stage and adaptation of old plays.

The fourth part, “Production Approaches and Examples” includes thirteen articles by Kerzhentsev, Mgebrov, Kalinin, Gaideburov, Smyshlaev, Tikhonovich, Moscow Proletkult and N.N.V. that examine the amateur stage performances and the aesthetics of the amateur theater.

The fifth part, “Training” includes four articles by Smyshlaev, Kerzhentsev and Moscow Proletkult, discussing how to raise the standards of the artistic formation of the workers.

The book which consists of primary sources related to the amateur and proletarian theaters are the first-hand accounts from the first decade of the Revolution. It is a valuable source for researchers who are interested in the amateur and proletarian theater of this specific period.

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