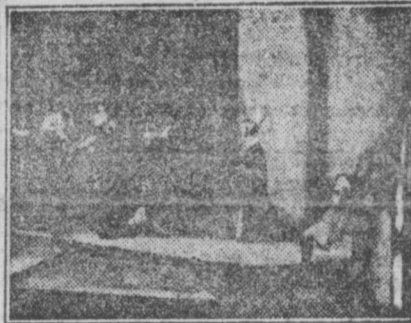


# The Theater Season in Moscow

By RUTH EPPERSON KENNEL.

AT the Dramatic Theater of the Trade Unions appeared early in the season the first of two successful historical plays, by the playwright, Bill-Belotserkovsky, who is best known as a chronicler of revolutionary events. "Storm," gives an intimate and sympathetic picture of the Russian Communist Party during the bitter days of civil war. In the eighteen episodes are developed the struggles of the local Communist group in a small town at the time when Denikin was operating and typhus raged. Here we find some of the Meierhold stagecraft: a single set which is ingeniously reversed and altered to form a dozen rapidly changing scenes—two walls forming an angle with a large window thru which action can be seen outside, and the walls hinged so that they can be lifted to form a larger room. The lighting is an important feature, a scene being shifted to another section of the stage simply by transferring the light, the spotlight



Kamerny Theater Moscow.  
Scene from Phedre, by Racine.

AT the Kamerny Theater, the first production of Eugene O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape" was given a few weeks ago. The play does not seem to appeal greatly to the Russians, but this is probably due to a great extent to the poor interpretation and bad production.

The first scene when the stokers are drinking and singing has that sympathetic realism, to a lesser degree, which the Russian theater creates in scenes among the workers, but the second scene on the upper deck is the usual Meierhold burlesque of bourgeois society. Like every other impersonation of American girls on the Moscow stage, this girl wears an amazing red wig, is sensuous and altogether a caricature of the frivolous society girl. The scene in the hold on the first instant holds the audience spellbound by the striking picture: the stokers stand before the glowing ovens and shovel in unison; above the sing-song of their voices, the machinery grinds and the whistle shrieks. But later one is irritated by the absence of a realistic touch—the stokers are all so clean and cool, not a trace of coal black on their chests and smooth faces. One is willing to overlook the absence of hair on the powerful, white chest and fresh face of the "Hairy Ape," but at least he might have been a little dirty. In the lull, when the apparition of the red-haired fashion plate appears on the stairs, it is difficult to understand why such a sophisticated young lady should be terrified at the Russian swear words and appearance of this young man.

The scene on Broadway with its whirling electric signs and the parade of degenerate society men and women is very picturesque, but here again the Russian conception of bourgeois society cannot be applied entirely to the United States, which is as yet saved by its youth from the degeneracy of Europe. Judging from the scene in the I. W. W. hall, the producer is wholly ignorant of this militant labor organization and presents a characterless picture. The closing act is very weak and leaves one with a feeling of uncertainty and unreality. The Russians, of course, do much better in their own new drama than in foreign plays, which seem weak and futile in comparison.

THE Kamerny is presenting a new melodrama, "Rosita," apparently a political satire on King Alfonso of Spain. Rosita is a beautiful gypsy street singer, the idol of the people, with whom the king is so infatuated that he grants a pardon to her lover who had been condemned to death. When the play reaches what we suppose is the climax—the unexpected execution of the lover—it continues in two more exciting acts. Rosita leads an uprising, gains admission to the palace and kills the king. The anti-climax occurs when the lover comes to life, just as the people storm the palace. Altho so similar in plot to the old French melodrama "Marian de Lorm" (which is much better acted at the Arbat Studio), and so long drawn out, it makes an absorbing spectacle. The stage settings are simple and beautiful, following the present custom of altering by decorations a single set; the singing and dancing are charming and the caricature of the king very clever.



PLETNEV

President of the Moscow Proletcult and Workers' Theater.

is also generously applied and the titles of the episodes are cleverly announced by throwing the words along a beam of light so that they race all about the walls and ceiling of the theater, thus distracting the attention of the audience from the darkened stage while the rapid shifting of scenes is in progress.

Here is no sentimental idealization of the characters, or melodramatic portrayal of heroic deeds, but just the simple, everyday trials of this heterogeneous little group of workers and intellectuals. A wholesome characteristic of the Russians is their ability with such insight to stand aside and make fun of themselves—in this play are humorously portrayed the human frailties found in Communists as well as other human beings: there is the commissar who thought his position gave him the right to desert his wife, the girl who thought she wanted to join the party, but who ran away when the secretary assigned her for party duty to the typhus hospital, the secretary himself, their leader, one of those simple, self-effecting men whom history records as heroes, his right-hand man, a one-legged sailor, the doctor, the school mistress, the factory girls and young men, and the girl soldier who overhears a non-party man in a high military post plotting a counter-revolution. The counter-revolution occurs; in the party headquarters the ill and exhausted secretary sticks to his post while thru the window the glow of conflagration can be seen and the sound of firing can be heard. Finally, he too joins in the street fighting, and his body is carried in and laid upon the table at which for months he had worked unceasingly day and night. As the grief-stricken sailor stands beside the body, he hears his comrade call from the window: "We are winning!" Lifting in his arms the lifeless body, he tries frantically to rouse him: "Dadushka, listen—ours have won, ours have won!" But his leader is at last beyond responding to words of hope or of despair.

## A PEEK EACH WEEK AT MOTION PICTURES

### "MEN OF STEEL."

AT last it is here: the classic of Class-Collaboration. One view of this "thunderous drama from the fire-bosom of the steel-mills" and you will kiss your boss good morning and bring flowers for his wife. Here is the class propaganda picture in all its glory—glorifying the boss, damning the Reds, preaching to the workers that their interests are the same as the bosses.

The story is old-fashioned melodrama overloaded with absurd plot. But it moves swiftly and on this hook, calculated to catch the interest of the gullible worker, is hung the bait of the boss. A poor foreign-born steel worker thru "human heroism, human sacrifice and superhuman strength," proves by study, devotion and damnation of the Reds that one can rise in America to the very pinnacle of success which includes marriage to the owner's daughter and the management of the works. It takes the hero all of six reels to prove to the men in the mills and to the kind-hearted steel-master that the dirty, dirty Reds and revolution are unnecessary in this land of glorious opportunity. "It is not a question of wages as the Reds would have you believe!" No sir. And no siree! It is "only a question of a share in the management!" There you are! Nothing less will our hero have and he has it, by George! He wins the daughter, the men in the mills come to his wedding and receive stock that makes them partners in the concern (not wage slaves!) and the violence-advocating Reds are forced to slink off in disgrace. I should add that no union was necessary. What good is organization of labor when God is good and sends us good bosses! Is this vicious boss propaganda? Brother—it has never been equalled in this country.

The photography is quite splendid. The majestic steel mills hold a spell over you it seems. There is fire and motion and POWER—hard, unbending power—STEEL. The men that make steel must surely feel it in their bones. What a magnificent theme this will make some day for a picture when labor will produce it! The pictures were taken in the mills of Alabama. A scene of the burial of a steel worker in the cauldron of steel into which he fell is beautifully impressive. A battle between two cranes conveying moulten metal is an unusual bit.

Milton Sills (remember his "Sea Hawk"?) gives more evidence of his ability. Doris Kenyon and Mae Allison are both beautiful and gifted. Ability, beauty, time and expenditure have been lavishly given to this vicious production. If labor-hating Judge Gary did not pay for this picture he surely ought to.

We are sure that Gary will pronounce the film (showing at the Roosevelt Theater) a masterpiece. But we are not interested. This column,



Milton Sills in "Men of Steel"

however, will reserve space for 1,000 words or less (and furnish the price of admission) to any steel workers of Gary, Pittsburgh or Birmingham who will tell us what they think of it. Speak up brother steel workers!

—W. C.

### A DOZEN MORE

- THE PASSAIC STRIKE—A picture that will make you proud of your class. To be shown October at—
- VARIETY—A splendid picture (Belmont).
- MARE NOSTRUM—State war propaganda.
- THE ROAD TO MANDALAY—Save your money.
- MANTRAP—Good and bad.
- SON OF THE SHEIK—Valentino on the desert again.
- THE AMATEUR GENTLEMAN—Early England nicely photographed.
- TIN GODS—Not bad.
- UP IN MABEL'S ROOM—Funny capers in chemise.
- LA BOHEME—A better movie.
- ACROSS THE PACIFIC—Title suggests where they should take this (Orpheum)
- ALOMA OF THE SOUTH SEAS—Gilda Grey wearing only a brassier get awfully sunburned. (Tivoli).

Note: Only Chicago theaters showing a program for one week are listed. Pictures of current week changed Monday.

AT the state circus, a troupe of American Negroes are appearing in an operetta, "The Chocolate Children." A Negro in Moscow is still a



The State Circus.

curiosity to be wondered and laughed at in a friendly, child-like way, but Moscovites are just as charming to foreigners of the black as any other race, being completely free from race prejudice. More than that, the Negro has become the mode of the hour—a fashionable millinery shop window on Tverskaya is displaying its hats on a black model. Of course, the jazz band is a feature of the performances and also is beginning to appear at the moving picture theaters.

THE Proletcult players gave the first performance a few weeks ago of an amusing burlesque on the Dayton trial, which has aroused great interest in Russia. They have taken this skit, "The Monkey Court," to the villages. The judge in the case bears a comical resemblance to an ape. It is the prevailing belief in Moscow that Dayton, Tennessee represents the intellectual viewpoint of America and that the teaching of evolution is forbidden thruout the United States.