

THE WORLD OF DIAGHILEV. By *John Percival*. London: Studio Vista. New York: Dutton Pictureback, 1971. 159 pp. \$2.25, paper.

Percival relates that one early morning a drunk waiting outside Covent Garden to buy ballet tickets asked, "Did you ever see that Daggylev? He was the greatest dancer that ever lived." Sergei Diaghilev was no dancer, of course, but in 1909 he presented his astonishing Ballets Russes to Paris. Earlier he had brought Russian operas starring Chaliapin to the West. Subsequently few men in history have left a greater imprint on the history of Russian artistic life. After studying memoirs and histories written by Diaghilev's artistic collaborators, Percival wove together a narrative focused on the dancers in his company, the choreographers, designers, and composers, taken in that order.

Diaghilev's special genius, it seems, was excellent taste. He recognized the talent of a dancer such as Nijinsky. He could appreciate the worth of a young, quite unknown composer such as Stravinsky. He realized the scenic potential of his own entrancing Russian folklore, and was able to present it to the world in such memorable productions as *Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and *Le Coq d'Or*. His own artistic career began with exhibitions of paintings, and the scenic collaboration of artists such as Bakst, Benois, Larionov, Goncharova, and Picasso lent a very special panache to his works.

Positively speaking, this is an interesting bit of "instant Diaghilev." It was not intended to be a scholarly tome; Percival wanted to produce a readable volume bearing witness to the vast influence of Diaghilev. The illustrations alone convey that message. Its numerous photographs and costume drawings depict the very first productions of works which are still standard ballet fare, such as *Spectre de la Rose*, *Apollo*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Prodigal Son*, and *Les Sylphides*. The book would be a worthy addition to a course on Russian culture where small, compact paperbacks are desired.

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MEYERHOLD'S THEATRE OF THE GROTESQUE: THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY PRODUCTIONS, 1920-1932. By *James M. Symons*. Books of the Theatre Series, no. 8. Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971. 231 pp. \$7.95.

The name of the innovational Soviet theater director Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold has finally reappeared in the USSR, out of the total vacuum that has surrounded his work since his arrest and disappearance in 1939. Some excellent Soviet books have been published in the last decade, following his gradual rehabilitation. These are largely based on factual material—actual recollections, conversations, and memoirs of the young people who were drawn into Meyerhold's vortex of activity. In addition, a two-volume collection of Meyerhold's own articles, letters, and speeches for the first time presents a true and unbiased picture of the many-faceted ideas of the radical director.

James M. Symons uses this new material to present, in English, an account of Meyerhold's work between 1920 and 1932, his artistic prime, when he had a theater of his own and freedom enough to pursue his own theories. Though his experiments with the nonrealistic theater began before 1917, it was only after the Revolution that he was able to put into effect his theatrical methods, which ranged from im-