

BŪLGARSKIIAT VŪZROZHDENSKI TEATŪR NA OSVOBODITELNATA BORBA: OT PROSVESHCHENIE, KLASITSIZŪM I SANTIMENTALIZŪM KŪM GEROICHNA ROMANTIKA, REALIZŪM I REVOLIUTSIONNA DEMOKRATSIIA, 1858–1878. By *Stefan Karakostov*. Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1973. 765 pp. Illus.

At first glance, one is appalled by the size of this volume (765 pages plus 112 pages of illustrations), which covers only twenty years of the infant Bulgarian theater. A closer look discloses that the author has taken "theater" in the widest possible sense, meaning any dialogue, monologue, or declamation in any kind of literary form, not excluding liturgies. The subtitle of the book reads *From Enlightenment, Classicism and Sentimentalism toward Heroic Romanticism, Realism, and Revolutionary Democracy*.

The work is both chronological and topical, roughly divided between the 1860s and 1870s. Whereas 1878 and the liberation of Bulgaria is a meaningful demarcation, 1858 is a less significant chronological division. There is duplication in treating similar categories in each decade. The author has exhaustively combed all available material; his pages are filled with authors' names, titles, publication and performance data, profuse references in the text, and generous quotations and synopses. It would be a valuable encyclopedic reference work if an index were included in addition to the detailed table of contents. The 185 annotated illustrations, including photographs of the first actresses (1868), are significant, although some of the facsimiles are illegible.

Karakostov, the author of a sizable work, *The Bulgarian Theater: Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment* (1972), considers himself an authority on the early Bulgarian theater. He has taught the history of the Bulgarian theater at the Institute for Theatrical Arts and has been a member of the Academic Council of the Institute of Fine Arts of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Considering the mass of detail in this work, errors are to be expected; for example, *Luboslovie* was not published in Smyrna in 1858–59 (p. 52), but in 1844–46; Robert College in Constantinople was not English (p. 160), but American. More serious is the unfounded allegation that *Zornitsa* and other American missionary publications were hostile to the Bulgarian liberation movement (p. 721).

The author emphasizes the originality of the Bulgarian theater but stresses that Russian literature, original and in translation, was a prime stimulus, thereby downgrading the early influence of Hungarian and Polish émigrés. The author tries too hard to categorize his material and to look for progressive and class aspects. Although the Bulgarian theater was born at home (Lom and Shumen), he also notes the importance of the Bulgarian émigré theater. In line with his thesis, Karakostov focuses on the theater as a promoter of patriotism, on its ties with revolutionary activity and the national liberation struggle, and on the important role of historical drama.

The Bulgarian theater, as the author shows, progressed from the school to the reading room (*chitalishte*), to the professional stage, and from enlightenment and sentimentalism to revolutionary romanticism and realism. During the theater's evolution, an active school of dramatic criticism developed which was actually more of a political polemic between liberals and conservatives involving the leading literati. Karakostov also notes the use of Bulgarian themes in the theater of neighboring countries. As a result of his avowed objective to be exhaustive, the book reads like a collection of choppy lecture notes, requiring a dedicated student of the *Vŭzrozhdane* to cope with it. The work has no conclusion, but ends with a short chapter on the Turkish theater in Constantinople. A readable history of the preliberation theater would be a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Bulgarian national revival.

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