

A Multinational Jamboree of Theatrical Trend Setters

by Henry Popkin

A FLAMBOYANT feast of avant-garde theater was served up in Belgrade this fall under the aegis of an aging but still lively festival known as Theater of the Nations. For years this was an annual springtime event in Paris, a gathering of the theatrical clans that ran the gamut from Brecht's Berliner Ensemble to the Peking Opera. About a decade ago, Theater of the Nations went into a decline and briefly disappeared from view altogether. Now it has rejuvenated itself by going on the road. Last year, Theater of the Nations was held in Warsaw, and this year it ran for three astonishing weeks in Belgrade, where it was united for the occasion with that city's annual Bitef Festival of New Trends in Theater, now in its tenth year.

The big news was the presence of Moscow's Taganka Theater, which international festivals and canny impresarios have been passionately courting almost since its founding, in 1964. The who's who of the world theater has scrawled its homage on the wall of the director's office, but until very recently the Taganka was not permitted to travel abroad, perhaps because its style does not accord with the socialist realism to which the Soviets still pay lip service. The Taganka's director, Yuri Lyubimov, is a brilliant showman who employs all the arts of the theater—including music, dance, and ingenious lighting and scenic design—to illuminate texts that are generally of his own devising, based on fiction or poetry or world classics of drama. He detests naturalistic scenery, scenic divisions, and makeup on actors, and that sort of thinking can unhinge the tidy minds of cultural bureaucrats. Also, Lyubimov implies that he is critical of things as they are.

Henry Popkin, a professor of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo, is currently on leave, writing a book on contemporary theater through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Taganka Theater's *Hamlet*, which won one of three equal prizes awarded at Belgrade, is certainly a brilliant and provocative re-creation. It is dominated by a curtain, a huge, thick hempen object that can take any position onstage. It helps to clear the stage, too, thereby eliminating conventional scenic breaks, but it has a symbolic function as well. The curtain seems to act as an accomplice of political oppression. When Claudius and Gertrude lean against it, it mysteriously gives them something to rest upon; it does no such favors for Hamlet. Behind this curtain Polonius eavesdrops and Claudius plots. The Taganka's *Hamlet* takes place in a contemporary world, where most of the men wear turtleneck sweaters. Hamlet himself carries a guitar and sings, appropriately because he is played by Vladimir Vysotsky, a popular balladeer. His foes are all external. Although Stanislavski's portrait hangs in the Taganka's lobby, beside Vakhtangov's, Meyerhold's, and Brecht's, Lyubimov shows little interest in Stanislavski's meticulous character analysis.

The Taganka *Hamlet* was accompanied by two plays that are politically safer—*The Dawns Are Quiet Here*, from a novel by Boris Vasilyev, and *Ten Days That*

Shook the World, a colorful vision of the Russian Revolution inspired by John Reed's book. If *Hamlet* was dominated by a hempen curtain, *Dawns* is dominated by pieces of lumber. Some inexperienced girl soldiers and their hard-boiled sergeant major hunt Nazis, but the play's suspense has nothing to do with their mission. The real question is: what will Lyubimov do next with those boards? They start out as parts of a truck; then they conceal the girls as they shower and sunbathe. Stepping warily through a swamp, the girls tread them lumberjack-style. Becoming hysterical, one girl whirls around on a board. In a flashback, a board becomes the wall of another girl's apartment. At the end, when all the girls have been killed, each turns slowly on a board to music; a moment later, the boards are turning alone. *Ten Days* is "a popular entertainment" with singing, dancing, gunfire, and other diverting sights and sounds—a portrait of excitement and only incidentally of history.

Another of the prizes went to *The Ik*, performed by Peter Brook's International Center for Theatrical Research, based in Paris. Here the production and even the theater itself are stripped bare of theatrical devices. This is Grotowski's "poor theater" with a vengeance! The dramatization by Denis Cannan, Colin Higgins, and Colin Turnbull of Turnbull's *The Mountain People*, an anthropological study of a hard-pressed tribe in Uganda, needs a ruined theater like the torn-up playhouse in Paris where I saw it last year; the Yugoslavs compromised by giving Brook a theater under construction. The actors represent a diversity of origins, and some take more than one role; all convey the brutal reality of this tribe's wretched situ-

The Taganka Theater's Hamlet—"A brilliant re-creation."

Sovfoto



ation with laudable economy of word and gesture. Driven from their hunting grounds, the Ik are starving to death. As they struggle vainly to survive, they reveal the worst of human nature. Parents laugh when their children hurt themselves; a husband withholds medicine from his wife; anyone who finds food wolfs it down at once so that he will not be asked to share it. This terrifying play, which is currently touring American college campuses, is so simply done that it is utterly convincing.

Einstein on the Beach, which was presented at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on November 21, won the third of the three prizes. This play, presented by the Byrd Hoffman Foundation, of New York, looks as complex as *The Ik* is simple. It is composed chiefly of images by Robert Wilson and music by Philip Glass, with a few spoken passages supplied by others. The authors mysteriously insist that they are not concerned with what the piece means but only with making it work. Nevertheless, they celebrate Albert Einstein, a great scientist, a lovable person, and a violinist by avocation. A man made up to resemble him occasionally comes onstage to play the violin, and Einstein's scientific endeavor is symbolized by great images of trains that give way to rocket ships, culminating in a dazzling vision of the interior of a rocket ship. Equally grandiose trial scenes beguile us with a homely touch now and then; nearly everyone in the courtroom eats lunch out of a brown bag. Why trials? Because, we are told, science is on trial. I would have preferred to see an image of Einstein as victim of injustice and champion of justice, but then meanings are not the authors' strong points.

IT WOULD be impossible to do justice in this brief report to every company that distinguished itself during the course of this theatrical jamboree. The exemplary production of *Waiting for Godot* at the Schiller Theater, of West Berlin, directed by the author, was admirable for its perfect balance between the two tramps—Vladimir: tall, lean, visionary, an ideal Don Quixote, “like a tree,” in Beckett's concept; and Estragon: short, squat, cynical, “like a stone.” It was gratifying to see how much the Russian visitors liked it. Lyubimov thought that Beckett's direction had given the play “more warmth and humanity.” (More than what? More than he expected, I guess.) Incidentally, the Schiller's *Godot* is presently scheduled

for a short run in New York beginning March 29.

The Bread and Puppet Theater of Vermont, scheduled too late to be eligible for a prize, won our hearts with what must surely be the most incompetent circus of all times. It made us receptive to something more poetic, the parable of an old white horse that dies and is resurrected.

In an “environmental” setting that permitted spectators to wander about and select what they wanted to see, London's Joint Stock Theatre Company created sympathetic portraits of some intrinsically obnoxious types; the play was *The Speakers*, adapted by William Gaskill and Max Stafford-Clark from Heathcote Williams's study of Hyde Park orators. The beautiful Nuria Espert led her Spanish company through a moving performance, danced nearly as much as it was acted, of Villa-Inclan's drama of passion, greed, and violence: *Divine Words*. And the National Theater of Iceland brought *Inuk*, a commendably unpretentious exposé of the corruption of Eskimo by civilization.

The concern of *The Ik* and *Inuk* with primitive peoples was echoed in two other productions. Eugenio Barba, a protégé of the Polish experimental director Jerzy Grotowski, directed his Odin Teatret of Denmark in a drama of mime, song, and scattered words (from *Romeo and Juliet* and other unlikely sources) that interpreted the cultural conflict between American Indians and their white enemies. From France, Patrice Chéreau brought Marivaux's *The Dispute* in a production muffled in shadow but nevertheless achieving moments of real intensity; its subject was two pairs of young people brought up in isolation from the civilized world but capable, as it turned out, of all the deceptions and infidelities that polite society fosters.

The American Mabou Mines Company was apparently the victim of local circumstances that forced it to make great cuts in its show. The Poles offered a straightforward but commonplace drama, directed by Andrzej Wajda, vindicating Robespierre against Danton. And Peter Zadek's *Othello*, from Hamburg, which got laughs when Othello's black makeup came off on Desdemona, was evidently intended as an attack on the idea of playing Shakespeare.

All in all, the jamboree had a good batting average. The French were to play host to Theater of the Nations in 1977, but the new austerity program there may force a change of plans. Hamburg looks certain for 1978. ©

WATCH



Television discussions
of crucial interest

Recent guests have included
DONALD RUMSFELD,
DANIEL YANKOLOVICH,
LOUIS NIZER,
Sen. HENRY M. JACKSON,
BETTY FRIEDAN,
NATHAN S. KLINE, M.D.,
Sen. EDWARD M. KENNEDY,
EDA LESHAN,
ELLIOT RICHARDSON,
JOHN CHANCELLOR,
HARRISON SALISBURY,
JOHN H. KNOWLES, M.D.,
B.F. SKINNER...

Produced by WPIX, New York,
in cooperation with
Saturday Review/World, Inc.
moderated by

Richard D. Heffner,

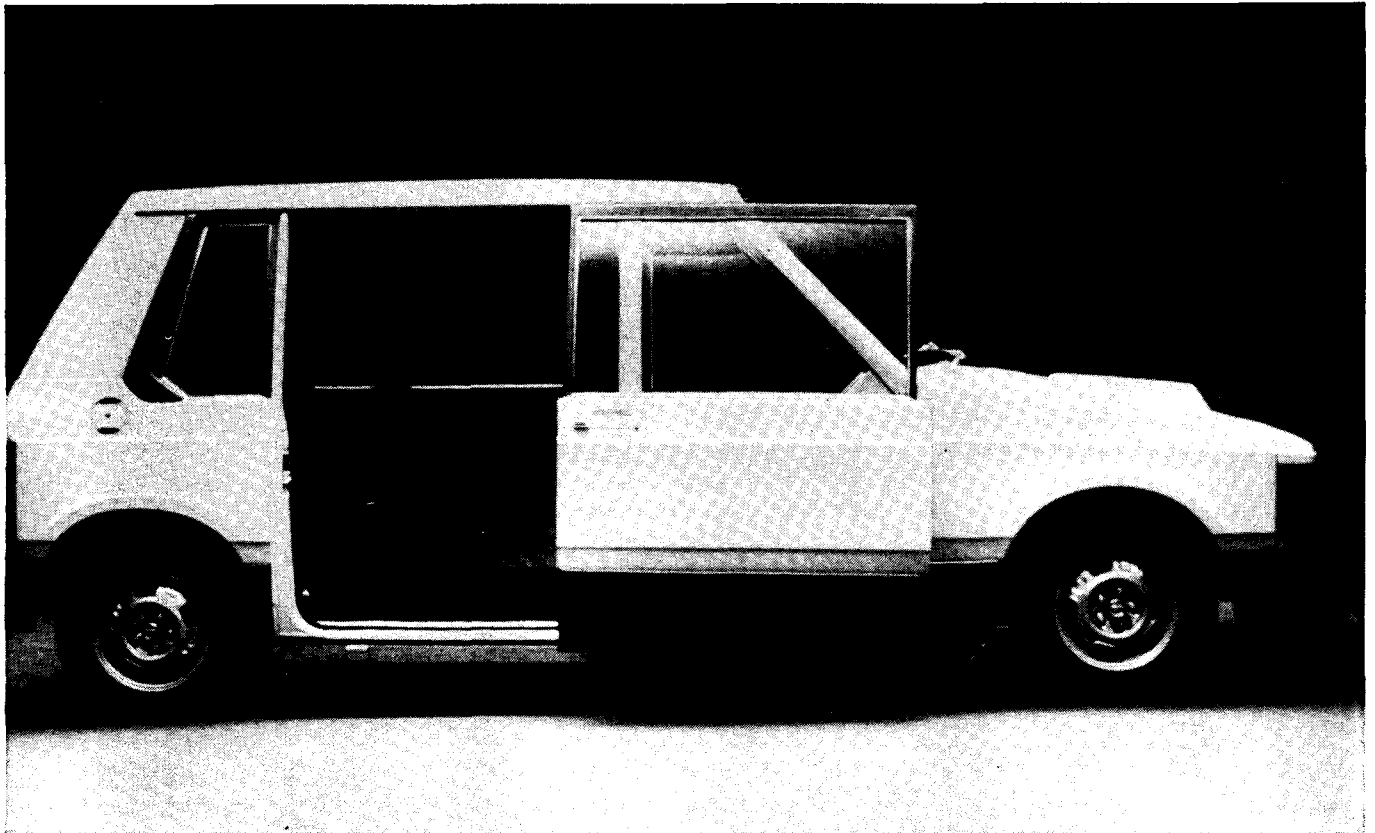
Professor of Communications
and Public Policy at Rutgers
University, author of *A Documentary
History of the United States*;
and editor of Tocqueville's
“Democracy in America”

In New York:
first Sunday each month,
10:30-11:00 PM WPIX 11
In Washington, D.C.:
WETA, Channel 26

In other PBS Cities, consult local listings.

“Nothing is more onerous than debt and taxis. The former is easy to get into, but the latter is harder to get out of.”

Credit: MOMA



“Says one driver, ‘For New York you need a tank, not a car.’ A realistic alternative to sheer violence is a cab that can turn on a tuppence.”

Sharing a common suspicion that the standard taxi is a spinoff on an original design by Torquemada, TIME Magazine recently hailed with enthusiasm a display, staged by New York’s Museum of Modern Art, of what a taxi might be: safe, comfortable, economical and rational.

Not an earth-shaking issue, certainly. And visionary to a degree. But to the artic-



ulate and imaginative people who read TIME regularly, even pie in the sky is food for thought.

By indulging these wide-ranging interests, TIME regularly serves up a feast for the mind that is unique in publishing. Another reason why TIME has won more awards for editorial excellence than any other magazine.

The Weekly Newsmagazine

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Seasoning of Cookbooks

by Horace Sutton

THE character of cookbooks, like the appetites of Americans, is veering sharply, conditioned by wars, wanderlust, and the irrepressible waves of travelers who have spent the last three decades poking about in the world's backwaters. Is it possible we are rolling sushi in the same kitchen where apple pie was once the specialty? Is it not a wonder that the Robot Coupe, scaled down to a home-sized Cuisinart, has brought a status symbol to the border of the kitchen sink? To meet the shift, the style in kitchen books has headed into highly rarified realms. Here is *CUISINART FOOD PROCESSOR COOKERY*, by Carmel Berman Reingold, Dell, 250 pp., \$4.95, a manual of recipes to be prepared with a high-speed pulverizer. So popular (and yet so *recherché*) has become the so-called *cuisine minceur*—an effort to eat in high Gallic style without gourmandizing—that we have at hand Michel Guérard's *CUISINE MINCEUR*, Morrow, 283 pp., \$12.95. Anybody who can recognize the difference between zwieback and *mille-feuille* knows Guérard, who was the force behind the celebrated Pot-au-Feu restaurant, in a remote corner of Paris, and who left it for Eugénie-les-bains, in the Pyrenees, where he created the *cuisine minceur*. Besides the art of macerating and the *minceur*, here is what is new, as well as warmed-over, this winter:

THE WISE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COOKERY, William H. Wise Company, distributed by Grosset & Dunlap, 1,329 pp., \$12.95. This handbook is as useful to the crossword-puzzle freak as to the cook. Handy for copy editors, too. Arranged in alphabetical order are all possible terms pertaining to gastronomy (and even the ills that attend culinary malpractice). Where else would one find out about tuschink cheese or twankey tea? Or get a full course in camp cookery with diagrams or, among the 5,100 recipes, directions for making Red Gunnard en Papillote à l'Italienne?

CRAIG CLAIBORNE'S FAVORITES FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES, Vol. 2, Quadrangle, 386 pp., \$12.50. Himself is back, as promised, with a collection of last year's recipes and culinary essays reprinted from the Wednesday food pages of *The New York Times*. Trying to clip, paste, and

save recipes printed in newspapers being a messy business, Claiborne sweeps up an annual collection between hard covers. If you missed the best of Uncle Tai (Hunamese and hot), it's here. So is the overfamed \$4,000 meal for two, a *tour de force* meat that brought, along with the check, a fallout of controversy.

THE GREAT FOOD PROCESSOR COOKBOOK, by Yvonne Young Tarr, Random House, 406 pp., \$12.95. Food processors, it says here, represent the greatest single change in American cooking since the pots were moved from the fireplace into a regular kitchen. The cookbook writers are sure to lay down a barrage of books about them. This one is for owners of Cuisinart, Kitchenaid, or Starmix processors. Each recipe is coded for the respective machines, the versatilities of each being different. Assuming anyone possessed of (or by) a processor is an upgrade cook, the recipes are often unusual and imaginative.

NOODLES GALORE, by Merry White, Basic Books, 280 pp., \$9.50. Nobody's talking about boiled noodles with butter sauce. Merry has sailed into a far more mysterious world, beyond the shores of lasagna. She talks in terms of mafalda, gemelli, and rotini. She deals with shirataki and phaluda. And what results are such diversities as Chinese periwinkles with linguine, fried Thai noodles, and mussels Leopardo. But then there is Grandmother's Chicken Noodle Soup, too. In all, enough to make you cry, *Basta pasta!*

THE COMPLETE ASIAN COOKBOOK, by Charmaine Solomon, McGraw-Hill, 511 pp., \$15.95. The fascination of Americans with the kitchens of the Far East may only have just begun. No matter that New York now seems to have as many Japanese restaurants as Italian; to say nothing of Chinese salons representing the cuisines of provinces not yet recognized by Peking. What seems in the offing is the exotica of India and Pakistan—and not just curry, either; the spicy peanut sauces and sambals of Indonesia; the Chinese-influenced Vietnam cuisine, already popular in Paris; and dishes from Sri Lanka, where Solomon began to publish recipes. Easily the most handsome and the most varied and complete book of Asian cookery yet pub-



From *The Complete Asian Cookbook*

lished. Photographs, by Reg Morrison, are page-lickin' good.

THE SETTLEMENT COOK BOOK, The Settlement Cook Book Company, Simon & Schuster, 567 pp., \$9.95. Seven decades of kitchen commandos have learned that the way to a man's heart is through *The Settlement Cook Book*. First organized as a means of helping Milwaukee immigrants learn American ways, it has been a staple since it arrived with the spring of 1901. Simplified now, and easier to read, it has reorganized recipes to conform with social changes, especially easier entertaining in a servantless world, and ingenious use of leftovers in an inflated economy.

THE WORLD OF CHEESE, by Evan Jones, Knopf, 292 pp., \$12.50. More than you want to know, and then some, by the noted food writer who cut his eyeteeth on Sunday suppers based on cheese "week after week, year after year." The feast of fromagerie is divided into three parts. In the first Evans sings of the blues, intones prayerfully over the holey cheeses, divides the goats from the sheep. Secondly, and briefly, he tells how to buy, how to cut, how to store, and such. Finally, there is a sixty-page portfolio of recipes, everything from cheesecake to spanikopitta, both of which I tested. The former was a *succès fou*, the latter, bland without dill and onions. No matter. There is enough here for some lively experiments, as well as a lexicon for a lagniappe.

THE THOUSAND RECIPE CHINESE COOKBOOK, by Gloria Bley Miller, Grosset & Dunlap, 926 pp., \$12.95. A new edition of the massive book that Anne Willan, of