THEATER AND DANCE TOUR TO THE USSR
Summer 1971

Spend nine weeks attending theatrical and dance productions, rehearsals, and dance and theater schools in various centers in the USSR. The tour will cover the following cities: Leningrad; Tallin, Estonia; Kiev, Ukraine; Baku, Azerbaijan; Yerevan, Armenia; Tbilisi, Georgia; and Moscow. The aim will be to see the lesser known national minority theaters and dance groups in the Soviet Union. Returning back through Europe, there will be brief stays in Bucharest and Belgrade. The tour is from June 21 to August 28 and the cost is approximately $1,300. Details of the itinerary and applications are available at the Center. Tour Director—Herbert Marshall.

THE POETS OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES OF USSR

Through the years many friends and colleagues have complained that in the English-speaking world the overwhelming bulk of translations of Soviet writers is from the Russian. They point out that today 50% of the population of the Soviet Union are National Minorities! Each with its own language and culture.

Our Center will try, in a modest way, to redress the balance. We shall be interested in hearing from anyone who can translate or has translations from any of the languages of the National Minorities of the USSR. Particularly poetry and plays.

In response to the promptings of Mikola Buzhan, one of the leading poets of the Ukraine, I translated from the Ukrainian a large number of poems from KOBZAR by Taras Shevchenko for the UNESCO centenary of that bard. It was published in the centenary volume "TARAS SHEVCHENKO—SELECTED WORKS" by Progress Publishing House, Moscow in 1964. At the same time my wife made a 1½ life-size statue of Shevchenko for his Museum in Kiev.

Then Irakli Abashidze and Joseph Noneshivili, leading poets of Georgia, asked me to tackle Georgian! Well, I did, and have completed 'PALESTINA, PALESTINA' by Abashidze, a modern epic on the 12th century Bard of Georgia, Shota Rustavelli, as well as poems by Noneshivili and Tabidze.

Tabidze was known as the Mayakovsky of Georgia, he and his close friend and poet Paolo Yashvili were both innocent victims of The Stalinist Period, the first was executed and the second afterwards committed suicide.

Ehrenburg writes: "Many Russian poets loved Tittian and Paola: Yessenin, Pasternak, Tikhonov, Zabolotsky, Antokolsky." ("First Years of Revolution," p. 117, McGibbon & Kee, 1962.) And that love still persists, as the following poem by the young Soviet poetess, Yonna Morritos shows and the poem by Bulat Okudjav "Guard and Protect Us Poets."

Here, as far as I know, is the first translation into English of Tabidze’s now classic poem “The Poem Avalanche” which was also translated beautifully and faithfully into Russian by Pasternak.

I am firstly indebted to Joseph Noneshivili, who painstakingly went over the poem in its original and explained it to me in Russian.

I am also indebted to my friend Professor David Lang, Reader in Caucasian Studies at the London School of Oriental Languages, for introducing me to two pupils of his, Mr. George Sasoon and Miss Eliz Fuller who have helped me to check the accuracy of my translation and its transliteration.

I give it here in its original language, in its transliterated form, with a literal translation and my final translation.
Transliteration of Georgian Text
with Literal Translation

Me ar vts'er leks'eb... leksi tvit'on misera,
I not write poems... (a) poem itself writes—me,
Chemi sito'tskhile am lekx tan akhlavs,
My life with poetry is linked,
Lek's me vu'tsozedb movardenil metseres
Poetry I call gushing ice-breaking
Rom gigan'es da tootkhlad dagmarkhavs.
That carries-away and alive buries.

Me dav'bade aprills tvesh
I born April month
Vash'lebis gash'il qvavilebidan
Apple blossoming from-flowers
Mats'mins sitret'e da tsvimis tkeshi
Rains whiteness and pours shower
Modis tremlebdad chems tvalebidan.
Flows like-tears from my-eyes.

Ak'edan vits'i me, rom movk'debei
From this know I, that I-shall-die
am leks rom vambob, esets darch'ebia
this poem that I-pronounce, this remains
ert' poeats maints guile mokhvdeba
one poet at-least in-heart will-fall
da es eqop'a
gamosarchlebad.
and its existence (for him to) defend-me.

Itq'ayan ase: iquo satsagali
Will-say this: lived poor-fellow
orpi'ris p'shanze garr'dji bichi
Orphir sapling grown-up boy

I don't write poems. Poems write me.
My life with poetry inextricably merges.
Poetry is an avalanche surging, submerging
burying alive in snowy whiteness.

The month of April I was born in
'neth apple blossom, flowerest of flowers,
petals snowy whiteness falling
like my own tears, they shower, shower.

Thus I know I shall die and depart
leaving behind this poem in evidence
and if it touches but one poet's heart
without me he'll say a good word in my defence.

Yes, he'll say, there lived one poor chap,
a grafted sapling from Orphir's* fertile earth,
Poems he carried like rations in his knapsack,
along his chosen path, from which he never swerved.

The sun and earth of Georgia's loneliness
tortured to death that poor Georgian lad,
yet he never enjoyed any happiness
for he gave to poetry all the happiness he had.

I don't write poems. Poems write me.
My life with poetry inextricably merges
Poetry is an avalanche surging, submerging,
and burying alive in snowy whiteness.

* A district in Abkhazia, West Georgia, where Tabidze was born,
renowned for its fertility and vineyards.

YUNNA MORRITS
In Memory of Titian Tabidze
Authorized Translation by Herbert Marshall

Over Mtskhet* falls a star,
flaming hairs disintegrate,
inhumanly my cry reverberates.
Over Mtskhet falls a star.

Who decreed its execution?
Who gave that right to a cretin?
To thrust a star beneath the guillotine.
Who decreed its execution?
Who decided its death in August?
Who rubber-stamped its death-warrant?
To execute a star—how abhorrent.
Who decided its death in August?

War—on you! Plague—on you
earth, where they dragged to the block
a star, to hack down like a dog!
War—on you! Plague—on you!

Over Mtskheta falls a star.
There’s no pain now in its dying,
But Titian Tabidze is crying.
Over Mtskheta falls a star.

*Mtskheta—Ancient Capital of Georgia.

(Original published in the Soviet magazine “Yunost,” 1963.)

GUARD AND PROTECT US POETS

by Bulat Okudjava

this poem is dedicated to Titian Tabidze

Authorized Translation by Herbert Marshall

Guard and protect us poets, guard and protect us, we cry,
A century’s left, a half, a year, now a week, an hour goes by,
three minutes, two, the seconds tick, four, three, two, one, zero falls!

Guard and protect us poets—so that one should be for all.
Guard and protect us, with our sins, our joys, without,
early, late,
for our d’Anthes,* young and handsome, always lives in wait.
Curses he’s not forgotten for the deed he long has done,
but alas his destined calling demands he load his gun.

For our Martynov’s** crying, remembering blood he shed before.
Once already he has killed—nor wants to kill once more.
But his destiny is such, the bullet’s die is cast,
thus the twentieth century will summon him at last.

Guard and protect us poets from the hands of fools and knaves,
from far too hasty judgments, from friends so blind, oh, save.
Guard and protect us poets, while to preserve there’s time.
Only do not preserve us, so we lay our bones in lime.

Only do not protect us, as wolfhounds hunters guard.
Only do protect us, as hunters guard the Tsar.
Then for you poems will be written, songs sung unendingly.
Only protect and guard us poets—let us protected be.

*d’Anthes was the provocateur who shot the poet Pushkin in a duel.
**Martynov shot the poet Lermontov, also in a duel.

FROM COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

In a recent letter from Professor Harold B. Segel of the Department of Slavic Languages, Columbia University in the City of New York, Professor Segel wrote

“This is a long overdue note simply to thank you for the Bulletin, which comes to me regularly and which I find interesting and helpful, and to tell you how impressed I am with the activities of the Center under your direction. The arts, and drama and theater especially, were too long neglected within the community of American Slavists; the Center is doing a fine job in correcting that situation.”

MUSIC

The Center is planning a future concert dedicated to Vladimir Mayakovsky. This will include:

1. the Oratorio Pathetique by Georgy Sviridov, a leading Soviet composer and pupil of Shostakovich, who has taken certain Mayakovsky poems and put them to music as part of a symphonic poem. This is an officially authorized translation in English by Herbert Marshall, and the text was published by the Soviet Composer’s Publishing House, Moscow, in 1960.

2. A young modern Soviet composer, A. Tariverdeyev, has put certain of Mayakovsky’s texts to music, and created what is, for Russia, quite modern songs. They will be sung in both Russian and in Marshall’s translation.

3. A symphonic portrait entitled Tragedy of a Poet and dedicated to Mayakovsky by the late Leonard Rafter. Rafter was a very promising English composer who, unfortunately, died an untimely death at the height of his powers. He wrote music that was performed by symphony orchestras and the BBC and wrote for films and television, and wrote the music, incidentally, for Herbert Marshall’s Edinburgh Prize-Winning Film Tinker. The strange thing is that he and Marshall first met because he had read, in the late thirties, some of Marshall’s translations of Mayakovsky, and was so inspired that he wrote a symphonic poem On the Tragedy of a Poet, which has never been hitherto performed.

Professor Marshall has just received from the Union of Soviet Composers the text and vocal score of Dimitri Shostakovich’s latest work, the 14th Symphony. This work is based on a series of poems by Lorca, Appollinaire, Rilke, and Kuchelbecker and Herbert Marshall will now prepare the English version for future performance. He was previously commissioned by Shostakovich personally to translate the text of the 13th Symphony and has completed Opus 119, Symphonic Poem “The Execution of Stepan Razin,” for future performance.

Anyone interested please write.

LIONEL BRITTON

(1885-1970)

As this Bulletin goes to print I heard that Lionel Britton died in Margate, England, on 9th January. He was a world genius and my lifelong friend. I am his literary executor and have already arranged the acquisition of his archives by S.I.U., and the bulk of them are already in the Rare Books Room, available for research and study. Though in the thirties considered a successor to Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, in later years he sank into obscurity, almost by his own choice, but the unpublished work, both prose and drama, he leaves behind will prove a mine of riches to posterity. His philosophy parallels that of Professor Buckminster Fuller and indeed he was the first man to postulate a world brain, a world computer of man’s mind, in his play 'BRAIN.'
Newsweek

A review of a new book on THE LIFE OF MAYAKOVSKY in NEWSWEEK Feb. 22, page 94, ends with the following paragraph:

...Fortunately Mayakovsk is available in several English versions. Two volumes I especially admire are Max Hayward & George Reavey’s “The Bed Bug & Selected Poetry” (with a marvellous biographical introduction by Patricia Blake) and Herbert Marshall’s version of the best poems.*

—Geoffrey Wolff

*(MAYAKOVSKY published by Hill & Wang, N.Y. and Dobson, U.K.)

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

1970-71

1. Tatjana Trifonov—Research assistant working with Professor Marshall on translating the 2nd volume of the Selected Works of Sergei Eisenstein, the Soviet film director of the 30’s. Graduated in 1967—University of Montreal, Canada. Received Masters degree in Russian Language and Literature at Case Western Reserve University in 1970. Now pursuing a Ph.D. in dramatic literature at S.I.U.


3. Darlene Peitz—Research assistant working with Professor Herbert Marshall on gathering and ordering material for his autobiographical work relating to cinema and theatre. (The material covers his Russian period from 1930 to 1937). Received B.A. degree from Yankton College, Yankton, South Dakota in the liberal arts with a concentration in theatre. Spent one year in New York, working at Barnes & Noble Bookstore. Now pursuing an M.A. in Theatre from Southern Illinois University.

Graduate Assistants are required periodically by the Center. Candidates must have thorough knowledge of Russian and/or other East European languages and an interest in the Performing Arts. Details will be sent upon application.

CORRESPONDENTS are welcomed from any of the countries and spheres covered by the Center.