**Erdman, Nikolai Robertovich (ЭРДМАН НИКОЛАЙ РОБЕРТОВИЧ) (1900-1970)**

Nikolai Robertovich Erdman was a Soviet playwright, screenwriter, and poet. He was born and died in Moscow. In his youth he associated with the Russian avant-garde movement and became known for his two tragic-farcical plays, *Mandat* [*The Mandate*, 1924 and *Samoubiitsa* [*The Suicide*, 1928]. Both plays were staged by the famous avant-garde director Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940) – although the latter production was stopped by the Soviet authorities for its subversive content. Further attempts to stage *The Suicide* in the early 1930s were also thwarted. Also during the 1930s, Erdman co-wrote screenplays for the two blockbuster comedies, *Veselye rebiata* [*The Jolly Fellows*, 1933] and *Volga-Volga* (1938), directed by Grigorii Aleksandrov (1903-1983). In 1933 Erdman was arrested for writing political poetry and exiled to Siberia. After World War II he worked primarily on theatrical sketches and librettos for Moscow theaters, but his most significant achievement belongs to children’s cinema and animation. He created screenplays for such immensely popular fairy tale-films, as *Gorod masterov* [*The City of Masters*, 1965] and, with Mikhail Volpin (1902-1988), *Morozko* [*Jack Frost*, 1964] and *Ogon’, voda i . . . mednye truby* [*Fire, Water and Brass Pipes*, 1968]. In the 1960s Erdman was active at Moscow’s Taganka Theater, which tried to revive the theatrical tradition of the Russian avant-garde.

**References and Further Reading:**

Freedman, John (1992). *Silence’s Roar: Тhe Life and Drama of Nikolai Erdman*. New York: Mosaic Press. The most authoritative study of Erdman’s life and work in English.

Listengarten, Julia (2000). *Russian Tragifarce: Its Cultural and Political Roots*. Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses. Erdman’s plays are mentioned in the context of Meyerhold’s dramatic experiments in the 1920s.

Freedman, John, ed. (1995). *The Major Plays of Nikolai Erdman: The Warrant and The Suicide*. Australia; UK: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Erdman, Nikolai, Vladimir Mass et al. *A meeting about Laughter: Sketches, Interludes, and Theatrical Parodies*. Ed. John Freedman (1995). New York: Harwood Academic Publishers.

**Major works:**

**Plays:**

Mandat (*The Mandate*) [1924]

Samoubiitsa (*The Suicide*) [1928]

**Screenplays:**

Dom na Trubnoi (*The* *House on Trubnaia Square*) [1928] (with Viktor Shkolvsky, Vadim Shershenevich et al.)

Veselye rebiata (*The Jolly Fellows*) [1933] (with Vladimir Mass and Grigorii Aleksandrov)

Volga-Volga [1938] (with Mikhail Vol’pin and Grigorii Aleksandrov)

Prints i nishii (*The Prince and the Pauper*) [1942]

Smelye liudi (*Brave People*) [1951] (with Mikhail Vol’pin)

Rasskazy o Lenine (*Stories about Lenin*) [1957] (with Mikhail Vol’pin)

Kain XVIII [1963] (with Evgenii Shvarts)

Morozko (*Jack Frost*) [1964] (with Mikhail Vol’pin)

Gorod masterov (*The City of Masters*) [1965]

Ogon’, voda i . . . mednye truby (*Through Fire, Water and Brass Pipes*) [1968] (with Mikhail Vol’pin)

**Screenplays for animated films:**

Fedia Zaitsev [1948]

Dvenadtsat’ mesiatsev (*The Twelve Months*) [1956] (with Samuil Marshak)

Snezhnaia koroleva (*The Snow Queen*) [1957] (with Lev Atamanov and Georgii Grebner)

Prikliuchenia Buratino (*The Adventures of Buratino*) [1959] (with L. I. Tolstaia)

Chelovechka narisoval ia (*It Was I Who Drew the Little Man*) [1960] (with Mikhail Vol’pin)

Diuimovochka (*Thumbelina*) [1964]

Samyi glavnyi (*The Most Important One*) [1970] (with A. Snesarev)

**Awards:**

1941--The State Stalin Prize of I degree for the screenplay of *Volga-Volga* [1938]

1951-- The State Stalin Prize of II degree for the film Smelye liudi (Brave people) [1951]

**Larissa Rudova, Pomona College**

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