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'Galvanize the Streets to Life with Joy of Celebration.' V. E. Meyerhold and Demonstration Decoration

Abstract

The avant-garde director V. E. Meyerhold accepted the ideas of the October Revolution of 1917 with enthusiasm. His search for new theatrical forms seemed interconnected with agitation mass art and grandiose festivities on the days of revolutionary holidays in particular. The article sequentially reviews several documents on preparation of the 15th anniversary of the October Revolution (1932) and activities of the Central Art Commission (the October Commission) under the Moscow Soviet. V. Meyerhold took part in the work of the Commission. In his report 'On artistic design of demonstrations,' Meyerhold underscored main features of the demonstration,

he assessed stage space for theatrical presentation of the holiday within the urban landscape and conditional and imaginative idiom of the theatrical performance scenography as parts of the festive culture stylistics. A tradition and rituals of celebrating the revolution anniversaries had already taken shape by 1930s. V. Meyerhold evinced the causes of mistakes inherent in all festive events of 1930s, such as passivity and even apathy of participants, clichés in design, redundancy of slogans. Moreover, he made recommendations for decorating festive demonstrations and even city squares, streets, and houses. Following the meeting of the Moscow City Committee of the VKP(B) and of the Mossovet (Moscow Soviet of People's Deputies), a series of methodological recommendations and guidelines on the procedure for conducting and decorating holiday demonstrations was written. The main idea was to involve the demonstrators themselves in the festive events, to engage massoviks (organizers of popular cultural and recreational activities), athletes, entertainers, harmonists, chorus, orchestra, to use allegorical signs and emblems. And yet all activities were controlled and coordinated by central and district commissions, whose function was to instruct factories to organize demonstration columns with stylistic and topical continuity.

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Keywords

Source, Soviet festive culture, demonstration, 15th anniversary of the October Revolution, V. E. Meyerhold, decoration, festive ritual.

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