

Guide to the East German poster collection performing arts series, 1955-1997

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History

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Guide to the East German poster collection performing arts series, 1955-1997

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

C0209

Date

1955-1997

Language

German

Abstract

This series contains posters advertising theater, opera, concert and dance performances in Berlin and other East German cities. This collection consists of 941 posters of various sizes. They range in size from 28 x 58 cm to 86 x 60 cm. The majority of posters measure 57 x 81 cm.

Creator

Hill, Thomas

Physical Characteristics

941 Posters

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections & Archives

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There may be use restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Purchased from Thomas Hill in 2009.

Processing Information

Processed by Lauren Schutt and Friedgard Cowan in 2010-2011. EAD markup completed by Jordan Patty in 2011.

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Related Material

Special Collections and Archives holds many other posters on the history of East Germany.

Historical Information

The chronology and content of the posters illustrate an undulating timeline of alternately liberal and conservative phases, during which artists crafted their work in periods of greater or more limited autonomy. The performing arts provided an outlet for dealing with tragedy and turmoil that defined the creation of East Germany. The performances often touched on the legacy of the Nazis, the persecution of the Jewish people, and the division of Germany. Despite the strict censorship in East Germany, during the liberal periods authorities allowed a substantial number of Western performances to take place. In the GDR, America was conceived of primarily as a system of production; its levels of profit and abundance both awed and provoked the war-torn and comparatively impoverished East Germans. The American obsession with productivity and consumption drew the most bitter criticism from German observers. Interesting to consider in this context is the performance of "Ein Yankee an König Artus' Hof" (1982), a play adapted from Mark Twain's novel "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court," in which the protagonist's escalating disillusionment with technology is a prominent motif. Even though Fordism may have been grudgingly accepted in the GDR as necessary for economic growth and the ultimate progress of the state, the assimilation of America's cultural barbarism through media imports was fiercely resisted. The state may have resisted America's cultural barbarism, but young people did not. Attending productions of the American media was a chance for them to distance themselves from their parents, from National Socialism, and from the failures of World War II. By the 1970s, changes in the performing arts community occurred, particularly in theatre, that included artists leaving as a result of increased censorship and smaller venues opening in cities and towns outside of Berlin.

Scope and Content

This series contains posters advertising theater, opera, concert and dance performances in Berlin and other East German cities. This collection consists of 941 posters of various sizes. They range in size from 28 x 58 cm to 86 x 60 cm. The majority of posters measure 57 x 81 cm. The performing arts posters present a complex and nuanced view of performance in the German Democratic Republic during the cold-war years. Most of the posters advertise performances in various venues in Berlin such as the Deutsches Theater, the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, the Komische Oper Berlin or the Palast der Republik, but performances in theaters in Leipzig, Dresden, Rostock, Erfurt, Halle, Gera, and Magdeburg are also included. The works advertised on the posters are predominantly classics: plays by Friedrich Schiller, Heinrich von Kleist, Georg Büchner, Shakespeare and Chekhov; operas by G. F. Handel, Mozart, Wagner, Puccini and Verdi, and ballets by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev. However, contemporary playwrights like Maxim Gorki, Heiner Müller and Peter

Weiss are also represented. Examples include posters from the Berliner Ensembles's premiere production of Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage"; Deutsche Theater Kammerspiele's "Der Blaue Boll" by the Expressionist playwright, Ernst Barlach; Landes Theatre Halle's cutting-edge production of "Tamerlan"; Ballet Company of Leipzig's historic performance of "Bilder Der Liebe"; and Maxim Gorki Theatre's "Sinulja" by Alexander Gelman. The majority of the posters consist of drawings or paintings that reflect the artist's interpretation of the works to be performed.

Index Terms

Persons:

Drescher, Karl-Heinz, 1936-

Grüttner, Erhard

Jütte, H. F.

Müller, Rolf F.

Pfennig, W. D.

Walter, Ekkehard

Werz, Wilfried

Corporate Names:

Berliner Ensemble.

Bühnen der Stadt Gera.

Bühnen der Stadt Magdeburg.

Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin.

Deutsches Nationaltheater. (Weimar, Thuringia, Germany)

Deutsches Theater. (Berlin, Germany)

Distel. (Cabaret : Berlin, Germany)

Friedrichstadt-Palast. (Berlin, Germany)

Goethe-Theater Bad Lauchstädt.

Hans Otto Theater. (Potsdam, Germany)

Kleist Theater.

Komische Oper Berlin.

Landesbühnen Sachsen.

Landestheater Halle.

Leipziger Theater.

Maxim Gorki Theater.

Mecklenburgisches Staatstheater Schwerin.

Oper Leipzig.

Palast der Republik. (Berlin, Germany)

Staatsschauspiel Dresden. (Dresden, German)

Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt.

Theater der Bergarbeiter Senftenberg.

Theater der Freundschaft.

Theater der Stadt Cottbus.

Theater im Palast.

Volksbühne. (Berlin, Germany)

Volkstheater Rostock.

Subjects:

Ballet--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.

Children's theater--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.

Comedy--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.

Concert--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.

Dance--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.

Musical Theater--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.
Opera--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.
Performing arts--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.
Theater--Performances--Germany (East)--Posters.

Document Types:

Exhibition posters.
Concert posters.
Dance posters.
Performing arts posters.
Theatrical posters.

Arrangement

The arrangement is by subject and a numbering system.

Contents List

Series 3: Performing Arts Posters

Unit Date 1955-1997

Scope and Content

[Poster Inventory with Brief Descriptions](#)

Sample images are also available. Please contact speccoll@gmu.edu for more information.