

Russian Plays in French Land

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In one of the most elegant Parisian theatres, Comedie de Champs Elysees, Patrice Kerbrat staged Martin Sherman's "When She Danced ... " I expected a lot from this performance, but unfortunately I was disappointed. And I was not alone. Not in vain it remained on stage less than a month. (Probably it is worth reminding that in France the same production is performed daily, until it draws). One crazy day in the life of Isadora Duncan and her Parisian apartment in Rue de la Pompe in 1923. One crazy day in a crazy performance where one of the characters speaks only Russian, the second - only Italian, the third - a mixture of French and German. But I don't think it is the only reason of its obvious failure. Anny Duperey as Duncan is a wonderful actress. By the way, now we can fully appreciate her in a TV-cast of the film "Charles The Great" where she brilliantly plays the hero's mother. I happened to see her on stage later - fine, intelligent, elegant actress. She is slim, beautiful, charming. But Duperey's temper, light, typically French, and, it may sound a paradox, a wonderful quality - sense of proportion prevented her from expressing the impetuous unrestrainedness of Duncan's nature. But there's one unforgettable moment in her performance - the scene of rehearsal. Duncan-Duperey stands still, concentrated, as if absorbing Chopin's music she is going to dance, as if dissolving in it. Duperey who herself adapted Sherman's play, thinks that the most important in it are the meditations about the mystery of artistic gift, about the artist's ability to express what those lacking this gift must keep in themselves. And about inevitable damnation, the artist must pay for the gift sent down to him - loneliness. There are three creators in the performance: dancer Duncan, poet Esenin and a pianist who seem to pour music from his fingers. **A very young actor, Jerome Bertboud plays his part sincerely, with great tact, and you trust him.** The performance, planned as an artist's drama, inspires a man's image lacking creative gift.

Small Russian emigrant, who has suffered a lot, comes to Duncan offering her interpreting services to earn her living and to stay at the side of the one whose image helped her to overcome all the turmoils of her life. Catherine Rich fills her character with no smaller gift: the ability to understand and sympathize. She enlightens the performance with a special silent and even shine. And that's what a true professionalism is, implying the sense of responsibility and aspiration to perform on stage in the best possible way: with Rich - unlike with Menshikov - I understood every word pronounced in Russian (by the way, graduate of the School Studio at the Art Theatre Victoria Kuznetsova who now lives in Paris helped her). The actress herself said it was a kind of challenge for her, she wanted if at least one Russian happens to watch the performance, he would've taken her for his compatriot.

Submitted by Irina Kuznetsova (Moscow)