

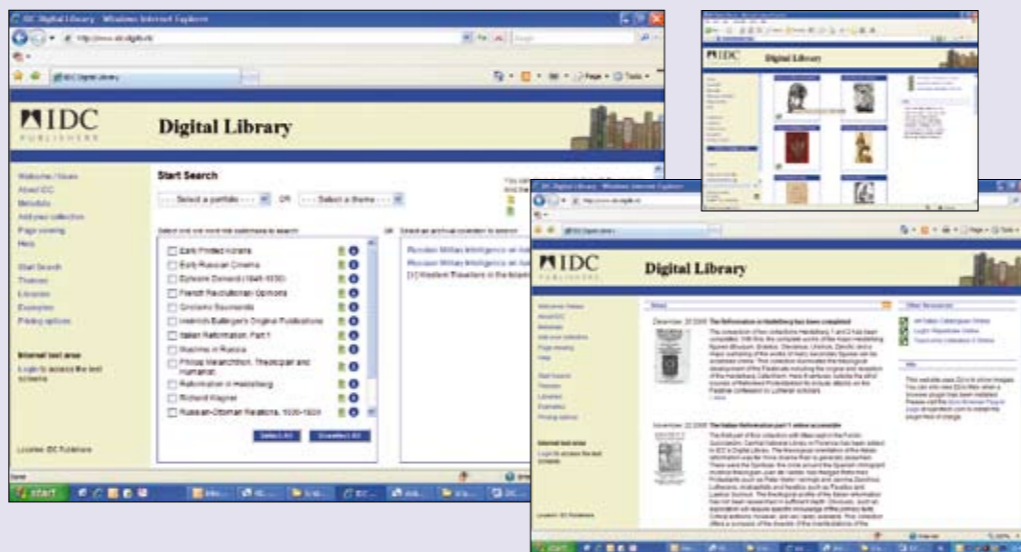


## IDC's Digital Library

[www.idc-digilib.nl](http://www.idc-digilib.nl)

### IDC's Digital Library: New Structure

A year ago IDC launched its Digital Library as a platform for online access to existing and new microform collections. Now we are happy to present a next step in the development of the digital library platform. As of now you can search by themes as *Mass Culture and Entertainment in Russia* as well as by collection, author etc. Find out more about the new search options by visiting the IDC Digital Library at [www.idc-digilib.nl](http://www.idc-digilib.nl).



## The IDC series *Mass Culture & Entertainment in Russia*

The IDC series *Mass Culture & Entertainment in Russia* comprises collections of extremely rare, and often unique, materials that offer a stunning insight into the dynamics of cultural and daily life in Imperial and Soviet Russia. The series is organized along six thematic lines that together cover the full spectrum of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian culture, ranging from the penny press and high-brow art journals in pre-Revolutionary Russia, to children's magazines and publications on constructivist design in the early Soviet Union.

The materials brought together in this IDC series are essential to Slavists and historians, but should be equally appealing to political scientists, art historians, and sociologists who no longer view mass culture as the *arrière-garde* of cultural evolution, but as a highly complex phenomenon that deserves to be studied in its own right.

The first sub-series – “Film” – comprises periodicals and archival material dating from the first decades of Russian cinema (1907-1940). The second – “Theater” – is devoted to Russian and Russian-Jewish theater history. The third – “Entertainment and Leisure Activities” – contains journals that reflect the changing lifestyles of the emerging middle class of pre-Revolutionary Russia. The fourth – “Mass Media” – has a more outspoken diachronic dimension. It includes the highly successful collection *Gazety-Kopeiki*, as well as lifestyle magazines and children's journals from various periods. The fifth sub-series – “Everyday Life” – focuses on the hardship of life under Stalin and his somewhat more liberal successors. Finally, the sixth – “High Culture/Art” – provides an exhaustive overview of the historic avant-garde in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Europe, which despite its elitist nature pretended to cater to a mass audience.



The entire series will also become available online in IDC's Digital Library.

Otto Boele,  
Leiden University

### Get free access to all metadata

Does this sound interesting? Then go to [www.idc-digilib.nl](http://www.idc-digilib.nl) and register to get free access to the metadata of all the collections included in the Digital Library.

### Free Trial

If you would like to get full access, we can offer you a free trial. Free trials are available to institutions on request: [sales@idc.nl](mailto:sales@idc.nl).

### More information

For more information on subscription rates, consortium prices or other information, please contact [sales@idc.nl](mailto:sales@idc.nl).



If you are interested in any of our other collections, please visit us at [www.idc.nl](http://www.idc.nl). Here you can also download our General Terms & Conditions of Sale.

## Where to Order

If you require further information or wish to place an order, please contact:

IDC Publishers  
P.O. Box 9000  
2300 PA Leiden  
The Netherlands  
T +31 (0)71-53 53 500  
F +31 (0)71-53 17 532  
[info@idc.nl](mailto:info@idc.nl)

[www.idc.nl](http://www.idc.nl)

[www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTION



## Jewish Theatre under Stalinism:

*Moscow State Jewish Theatre (GOSET)*

Materials from the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), Moscow



BRILL



BRILL

**IDC**  
PUBLISHERS

## Jewish Theatre under Stalinism:

*Moscow State Jewish Theatre (GOSET)*



In their time, the Moscow State Jewish Theater (GOSET) and the affiliated Moscow State Jewish Theater School (MGETU) were outstanding phenomena. GOSET was a pioneer enterprise that merged Yiddish art with Soviet ideology and avant-garde ideas. The character of the theater was determined by a galaxy of outstanding Jewish writers, actors, and artists of the 20th century, namely Marc Chagall, Robert Falk, Peretz Markish, Solomon Mikhoels, and many others. IDC Publishers brings you a collection of archival documents from the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI) containing unique material on Jewish avant-garde art, Stalin's repressions, and the history of Soviet culture and theater.

This collection containing material in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, English, French, and other European languages, allows us not only to further our knowledge of Yiddish theater and Jewish culture in the Soviet Union, but also to deepen and revise our understanding of the Kremlin's policy toward Jewish society and culture, and of the reality of everyday life of Jews in the

1920s-40s. The collection will appeal to theater specialists, art historians, specialists in Soviet and Jewish political history, historians of Jewish literature, sociologists of Jewish culture, historians of the theater, and music scholars.

Jewish Theatre under Stalinism continues the new IDC series Mass culture and Entertainment in Russia. This series comprises collections of unique material about various forms of popular culture and entertainment industry in Tsarist and Soviet Russia.

### THIS COLLECTION CONTAINS

- Jewish avant-garde art
- Marc Chagall, Robert Falk, Peretz Markish, Solomon Mikhoels and many others
- Soviet culture and theatre
- Stalin's repressions
- Anti-Semitism

### National Theater

In the 1920s-1930s, Moscow was unique in having a truly multicultural theater, something that other great cities could boast of only some 50 years later. During this period, Moscow was home to studios and theaters of various origins: Georgian, Armenian, Ukrainian, Latvian, and even German and Polish. It was here that the Jewish theater managed to accomplish a great leap from the rearguard to the vanguard of theatrical art. In 1919, the theatre that six years later would become GOSET opened in Petrograd under the name of the Jewish Chamber Theater; in 1920, it was transferred to Moscow. The founder of GOSET, and the artistic supervisor and director of almost all its productions until 1928, was Aleksei Granovskii (Avraam Azarkh), who defected during the troupe's first European tour. From 1929, GOSET was headed by Solomon Mikhoels (Shlomo Vovsi). GOSET reflects not only the most inspiring artistic achievements but also the successes and failures of Soviet nationality policy. The theater became the most important, and after WWII the only, center of Yiddish culture in the USSR, and introduced many innovative ideas about theatrical performance and art. In 1928, GOSET embarked on an extensive and highly successful European tour. In 1948, during Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign, Solomon Mikhoels was killed by the Soviet Secret Police; a year later, GOSET was closed down.

### Left-wing Art

Although left-wing art of the 1920s positioned itself to a significant degree as non-nationalist, GOSET combined avant-garde devices with national themes. To a significant extent, the character of the theater was determined by a galaxy of outstanding artists, namely Mark Chagall, Natan Al'tman, Isaac Rabinovich, Robert Falk, Aleksandr Tyshler, and others. For the artists of GOSET, their excruciating existence in the ghetto became a source of both tragic and comic elements. For them, to live meant to preserve their national and cultural identity in a situation of diaspora. In the 1920s, life in a small Jewish town became GOSET's principal theme. From satirical sketches and theatrical parodies, GOSET moved on to the theatrical experience of the tragic fate of the Jewish people.



### Touring

The artistic universalism of GOSET made a significant creative contribution to both the Jewish and the Russian theater. Touring began as early as October 1921, when the troupe traveled to Belarus, Ukraine, and Leningrad. In 1928, GOSET embarked on an extensive and highly successful European tour. Performances in Germany, Austria, France, Holland, and Belgium are evidence that the art of GOSET was an essential component of European theater in the 1920s. In the 1930s – the years of Stalinist repression and severe censorship – the theater continued to attract the attention of broad groups of spectators, to expand the geographical scope of its touring, and to triumphantly mark its twentieth anniversary. By 1940, the troupe comprised some 50 people. During the years of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), the

theater was evacuated to Tashkent (from December 1941 through September 1943), where the military sponsored some 400 performances.



### Solomon Mikhoels

From 1929, GOSET was headed by Solomon Mikhoels (Shlomo Vovsi, 1890-1948). Mikhoels was a major figure in European theater: He was both an actor and a prominent politician with an international reputation. As an artist, he combined the tradition of Jewish roving comics with the technical achievements of avant-garde theater. Mikhoels was highly regarded not only in theatrical circles. Broad Jewish masses saw him as their representative and intercessor with the authorities, and also used him for their own propagandistic goals. In 1941, Stalin appointed Mikhoels head of, and chief spokesman for, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Through media propaganda and their own personal contacts with Jews abroad, the members of the Committee were expected to influence public opinion and to enlist foreign support for the Soviet war effort. In 1943, Mikhoels made a trip to the USA, Canada, and Great Britain, soliciting contributions for the Soviet Army. His murder in Minsk in 1948 – which, there is reason to believe, was carried out on Stalin's orders – marked the beginning of the elimination of Jewish culture in the USSR.

### The Ideological Order

GOSET did not remain a favorite of the party-state leadership for long. In return for secure state support, the Soviet regime imposed its own ideological conditions. As early as the second half of the 1920s, GOSET and other Soviet theaters were ordered to portray on stage scenes of revolution and socialist construction; this order gradually assumed the form of an ultimatum. A huge number of plays performed by the theater, or submitted for its consideration, are preserved in the GOSET archive, even though many of them were never published. It is of

great interest to see in which years and on what basis plays were accepted or rejected: The press and the notes written by censors reveal the authorities' official reaction to the problem of the Jewish theater in Russia and, indirectly, to their relationship to Jews as a whole. By the end of the 1940s, anti-Semitism had become government policy and repressions were carried out on a national scale. In 1949, following the murder of Mikhoels and the arrest of Zuskin (1949), GOSET was closed down as part of the “struggle with cosmopolitanism.”

### Provenance

After the theater had been closed down, its archive was moved to the Aleksei Bakhrushin State Theatrical Museum, where it was stored (without being catalogued) along with the archives of other closed theaters, for example, the Chamber Theater and the Second Moscow Art Theater. In the night of January 6-7, 1953, a major fire broke out in the small room in which the archives of these discredited theaters were kept. The documents suffered considerable damage, and many were destroyed. The materials that survived were transferred by order of the Committee for the Arts of the Council of Ministers of the USSR first to the collection of the Main Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and then (in 1959) to the Central Archive of Literature and Art (TsGALI), which is now the Russian Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI).

### Moscow State Jewish Theater School (MGETU)

The archive of the Moscow State Jewish Theater School (1929-1949) forms part of the GOSET archive. E.B. Loiter and S.M. Mikhoels established the Moscow Jewish Theater Training School in 1929; in 1932, it became the Moscow State Jewish Theater School at GOSET. The School not only trained actors but also ran a department of drama study. This department was devoted to documenting the history of Jewish theatrical art.

### Unique material

The collection comprises both the archive of GOSET (Fond 2307, opis' 1-2 ) and that of the Moscow State Jewish Theater School (MGETU) (Fond 2308, opis' 1). The documentary materials are organized primarily chronologically (opis' 1) and in accordance with the various parts

of the theater (opis' 2). The materials related to the “Secretariat” reflect the administrative-managerial and creative activity of the theater; the struggle to impose state control on the theater; labor and financial discipline; the organization of tours; the contact with a broad audience; and the policies of the Soviet authorities in the sphere of national minorities. The second of the major categories is the “Literary Section,” which contains a large collection of Jewish plays, both in Russian and in Yiddish, that either were performed in the theater or were in the repertoires of other Jewish theaters. The small, but unique, “Musical Section” contains musical items for productions at GOSET. The impressive categories “Press about the Theater” and “Posters, Programs, and Librettos” constitute an important factual source. The category “Graphic Materials” is a valuable iconographic resource, the main body of which consists of photographs of GOSET productions and of the actors off-stage. The “Personal Documents” and “Personal Affairs of the Theater Employees” categories contain materials related to the creative lives of Granovskii, Mikhoels, Zuskin, and many other members of the GOSET troupe.




These materials offer historians of Jewish literature and sociologists of Jewish culture tremendous insights, as they provide information about the reality of daily life, Russian relations to Jews at that time, and anti-Semitism.

Dr. V. Ivanov  
State Institute of Art Studies, Moscow

### GENERAL INFORMATION

## Jewish Theatre under Stalinism:

*Moscow State Jewish Theatre (GOSET)*

- Medium: online and on microfilm
- Will become available in IDC's Digital Library at [www.idc-digilib.nl](http://www.idc-digilib.nl)
- Number of reels: 86
-  Including EAD Finding Aid
- Part of the new IDC series *Mass culture and Entertainment in Russia*.

### VISIT WWW.IDC.NL

Visit [www.idc.nl](http://www.idc.nl) for price information.

A title list can be downloaded from [www.idc.nl](http://www.idc.nl). Here you can also find the EAD Finding Aid in English and Russian. For a printed version of the title list please email [info@idc.nl](mailto:info@idc.nl).

### SUBJECT AREAS

Slavic and Eurasian Studies  
Arts  
Cultural Studies  
Literary Studies  
Musicology  
Social Sciences  
Theater Studies

### RELATED TITLES

Early Russian Cinema:  
*The Russian Cinematographic Press, 1907-1918, Part 1 & 2*  
Screen and Stage:  
*The Russian Cinematographic and Theater Press, 1889-1919*  
History of Modern Russian and Ukrainian Art 1907-1930, *Part 1*  
History of Modern Russian and Ukrainian Art 1907-1930, *Part 2*  
Russian Avant-garde, 1904-1946  
*Gazety Kopeiki*