

## **Archivist's notes for Workers Theatre, New Theatre, and New Theatre**

During the years 1931 thru 1937, the Communist Party USA and/or those very close to it put out in New York City a series of theatre publications.

These were:

**Workers Theatre** April 1931 - July/Aug 1933

**New Theatre** Sept/Oct 1933 - November 1937

**New Theatre and Film** April and March of 1937 (only two issues ever printed).

The publications came out roughly monthly.

### **Workers Theatre:**

Workers Theatre started out as a very crude effort. Entirely mimeographed. Rough sketches with red spot color at times on the covers. Mostly text, but with a very few crude line-drawn cartoons. It also featured printing of many communist mini-plays in its pages.

In May of 1932, Workers Theatre became typeset, and began to employ to a limited extent some half tone photographs.

Workers Theatre is today (July 2017) a rare and fragile publication. Individual issues sell from dealers to collectors for as much as \$250 each. The few special collections that hold significant runs of this publication that I have contacted were unwilling to let me scan the issues fully, properly. Thus I was forced, against my wishes and against what mostly are the principles of the Riazanov Library digital archive project, to make the archive of this publication from the record available from microfilm.

### **There are two microfilm records of Workers Theatre:**

One made by the NY Public Library, which is complete from the first issue in 1931 thru near the end of 1932. The quality of the images on that film is decent. To be sure, they suffer from the frequently-seen unconscionable failure of those making microfilm generally of not keeping the pages flat, and thus there's some mild distortion of the page, but mostly the images are clear, well-exposed, properly illuminated, in focus, and not that badly distorted.

Yale University in 1984 also made a microfilm record of its holdings of New Theatre. Yale did a wholly rotten, incompetent job of filming this publication. Doubly so in that this was filmed very late in the history of microfilm technology use, so there was not excuse for the job being that grossly badly done. Their images are characterized by gross special distortion of the page, bad focus, and bad lighting, to the point that some of the text is extremely difficult to make out, and some really is entirely lost. Unfortunately, Yale's obscenely shamefully badly made microfilm is

the only source for issues of New Theatre that I have for the last issue in 1932 and all 1933 issues.

### **Photos in this archive of covers and crops of photos and graphics of Workers Theatre:**

Tamiment Library has (in its far off site long term storage facility) a bound volume of many of the original rare and fragile issues of Workers Theatre. They permitted me to photograph some of the covers, and some of the photos and graphics on other pages of that holding. This imaging was compromised in many ways: The limited resolution of the digital camera, the fact I was not permitted to make the pages completely flat, and imposed limitations of what lighting I could use. Perhaps some day someone will get to unbind that volume (or have access to other original paper issues), and scan each page in proper archival fashion pressed flat against the glass of a flat bed scanner. Until that's done and made available, I've provided my crude selected photos of Workers Theatre pages here in three fashions:

(a) for some issues, I've added a photo of the cover I made at Tamiment Library to the files of the entire issues I created from microfilm.

(b) I include here a file of crops of the photographs on the covers of some of the issues of New Theatre, with an included table of contents that informs what page of the pdf file was from what cover of Workers Theatre.

(c) I include here also a file of photos I made of crops of photos and graphics from inside pages of Workers Theatre. Again, accompanied by a table of contents that informs what frame of the pdf file came from what page and what issue of Workers Theatre.

The images in the accessory pdf files, as explained in my intro in those files, would benefit from post processing, to turn them into gray scale images, adjust brightness and contrast, and set noted page size properly (it's currently set nowhere near the actual page size). This was just more work than I had time to do. And I'm still hoping someone, some day, properly scans all these issues from original paper.

### **New Theatre:**

In September of 1933, Workers Theatre became New Theatre. The issue gradually showed very significantly increased production values. By late 1934 the covers began to use color extensively. The covers are quite varied, and some very striking. Internally increasingly lavish use of half tone photos was used to document theatre and dance and film productions. The crude stick figure line drawing political cartoons in New Theatre in its mimeograph days is replaced in New Theatre by high quality political art by such greats in the field as William Gropper. For its three years of publication New Theatre was, I am told, a publication of significant influence in the NY City theatre community... and thus to some real extent world wide.

As of July 2017 I've managed to acquire for my personal collection all but one issue of New Theatre for 1935 and 1936. I have scanned the beautiful covers of those issues with the same care I gave to the lovely The Masses and Liberator covers. In the 2 year period of 1935 and 1936 the one missing (April 1935) issue I was able to scan from original paper from a University of California Davis holding I was able to access and borrow via U C Berkeley. I'm missing about half of the 1934 issues and the one 1933 issue, and may have to present some of those scanned from microfilm made by the NY Public Library for now.

In 1935 and 1936 New Theatre was at its peak of quality and influence.

Publication of New Theatre ended with the November 1936 issue.

### **New Theatre and Film:**

In March of 1937 the first issue of New Theatre and Film (Volume 4, Number 1) was published. This looked similar to its predecessor New Theatre, but had many more pages. In April 1937 a second issue of New Theatre and Film came out (v4n2). Then publication of a theatre journal by the CP USA ceased, for reasons I am not acquainted with. I have in my collection originals of the two issues of New Theatre and Film that were put out, and scans of these I able to make properly (pages pressed flat on the glass of a flat bed scanner, at proper resolution) are present in the archive presented here.

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