



Collective of Masters of Analytical Art (also known as the School of Filonov)
Poster: *Revizor* (The Inspector General), Press House, Leningrad
(April 9, 1927), 1927

Including costume designs for four characters [clockwise, upper left to lower left]:

Warden (Stepan Ukhovertov) by Andrei Timofeevich Sashin
(Vas'kin; 1896–1965)

Priest by Rebekka Mikhailovna Leviton (1906–1987)

Merchant by Artrur Mechislavovich Liandsberg (1905–1963)

Policeman by Nikolai Ivanovich Evgrafov (1904–1941)

Lithograph

29 1/8 x 21 7/8" (81.5 x 56 cm)

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Nikolai Gogol's *Revizor* (The Inspector General) was a satire in five acts. It was produced by Igor Terentiev at the Press House, Leningrad, on April 9, 1927, with music by Vladimir Kashnitzky and designs by the Collective of Masters of Analytical Art, under the supervision of Pavel Filonov.

In 1925, the artist and theorist Pavel Filonov (1882–1941) drew around him an informal group of students known as *Mastera analiticheskogo iskusstva* (MAI; Collective of Masters of Analytical Art) or "Filonov School"; by 1927 the collective numbered over forty. MAI embarked upon several joint ventures, among the most important of which was the 1927 stage production of *Revizor* (The Inspector General) at Leningrad's Press House. Located in the former mansion of the Count Shuvalov, the Press House was an important cultural center of Leningrad, where many lectures, discussions, and meetings with poets and artists took place. It was work on *The Inspector General*, which included the collaborative creation of huge panels on the theme "The Downfall of Capitalism" for the walls of the theater auditorium, that transformed the informal group into "a real Academy."

This poster embodies the essence of "Analytical method," which Filonov formulated as early as 1912. This method sought to draw into the sphere of the artistic process the visible and invisible phenomena of nature. Filonov developed the dual notion of the "seeing eye" and the "knowing eye." On the basis of intuition, the "knowing eye" was believed to capture concealed processes. The artist painted these processes "with invented forms," i.e. in a nonrepresentational mode. In Filonov's works, and in the works of his followers, figurative representation is therefore often paired with nonrepresentational elements.

The highly experimental sets and costumes for the 1927 production of *The Inspector General* provoked outcry by both the public and the press for the group's perceived "irreverence" toward Gogol. By the 1930s, during the flourishing of the fight against experimental art, one critic attacked the group's "speaking costumes" and accused the Filonov School of manifesting "a public appearance of the class enemy." He continued: "in their artworks, they present a distorted view of life [...] this is a conscious distortion and a sneer at the Soviet reality." Some of Filonov's students were eventually imprisoned, or sent to labor camps.