



Valentina Khodasevich (Russian, 1894–1970)

Poster: *Nashestvie Napoleona: P'esa v 7-mi kartinakh. Gosdrama* (Napoleon's Invasion: A Play in Seven Acts), State Drama Theater, Leningrad (July 6, 1931), 1931

Lithograph

35 7/16 x 25 3/4" (90 x 65.4 cm)

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A niece of the important Russian poet and literary critic Vladislav Khodasevich, Valentina Khodasevich was an accomplished stage designer for various theaters in Moscow and Petrograd/Leningrad. She studied with Hugo von Habermann in Munich in 1911 and 1912, and then at the Académie Vitti in Paris under the Fauve painter Kees van Dongen.

In 1912 Khodasevich returned to Moscow and studied in the studio of Vladimir Tatlin. Around 1914, she was close to the circle of artists and critics associated with the journal *Apollon* in Petrograd. In 1919, she made her debut as a stage designer at the *Prival komediantov* (Comedians' Halt) theater studio in Petrograd, for which she designed twelve plays. In the 1920s, Khodasevich was a major contributor to Petrograd/Leningrad's thriving theater culture, creating agit-prop decorations for streets and squares as well as sets and costumes for productions at the Theater of People's Comedy, Bolshoi Drama Theater, and Academic Drama Theater, among others.

The play *Nashestvie Napoleona* (Napoleon's Invasion) was presented in Russia in 1930 and 1931. It was based on the 1929 satirical comedy *Napoleon greift ein* by German Expressionist poet and playwright Walter Hasenclever. Hasenclever used the historical figure of Napoleon to critique contemporary Weimar society and its politics. Anatoly Lunacharsky, Soviet People's Commissar of Education, personally delivered the original German text of the play from Berlin to Moscow in 1930. In collaboration with Lunacharsky, the Russian translator A. I. Deich revised the play significantly, turning it into a satire on contemporary bourgeois Europe.

*Napoleon's Invasion* was shown in three Russian productions, two in Moscow—*Moskovskii teatr satiry* (Moscow Theater of Satire) and MKhAT-2 (Moscow Art Theater-2)—and one in Leningrad *Gosdrama/Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii teatr dramy* (The State Drama Theater). This poster advertises the Leningrad performance, under the directors N.V. Petrov and V.N. Solov'ev, with stage designs by Nikolai Akimov. While all three Russian performances were important theatrical events that attracted great interest, the experimental production in Leningrad was severely criticized by Soviet press, who called it "vicious" and "completely alien to the Soviet audience."