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Olga Petrova Magnificent In Her Play That Dishes Up Its Drama in Sordid Realism

(By FREDERIC BABCOCK.)

Picture yourself going out for a nice little evening of diversion and seeing a girl stab her father, then take up the oldest profession known to womankind, and finally, just as she is about to find the only true love she has ever known, discover that her body is diseased.

If you are inclined to be of morbid mein you will get great fun out of Olga Petrova's "The Hurricane," at the Broadway. If you believe in noble assassination you will be especially attracted. If you like to drink your drama straight you will be able to do so here. If you glory in calling yourself a lowbrow you will experience a gnawing of discontent as you demand to know what it's all about. If you like to think you belong to the so-called intelligenzia you will find in the play many flashes of finesse and faithful beauty. It all depends on how you approach the subject.

Speaking for himself, and without pretending to voice any more than one man's opinions, the writer can say that he spent a happy three hours Monday evening. He reveled in the muck. Here was a gaunt chromo of present-day America. Here was mortal suffering carried out to almost unbelievable extremes. Here was the seamy side of life, naked and unashamed, laid before a gasping audience. Here was sordid, acrid realism.

HARD-HITTING AND ELEMENTAL.

But here also was a drama that was workmanlike and vivid in its unpleasantness, that at least had the virtue of being introspective and exceedingly modern, that was hard-hitting and elemental, that was a thoughtful treatise on social problems of the day, that got away entirely from the oversweetening characteristic of so many stage productions, that at times was profound and most of the time poignant. And, just as there is humor tight up against tragedy in life itself, so was it to be found in "The Hurricane." It was encountered not only in the wittiness of the lines but in the author's subtle insight into the characters that live and walk thru her play.

The situations are not altogether new. There are touches of "Damaged Goods," of Ibsen's "Ghosts" and of many others. It could be criticized on the grounds that there is an overwordiness in spots and that the first act is so strong that it is difficult for the other three to maintain the pace set for them. It could even be said that it panders to the sex interest that exists in every human being worthy

of being called man or woman. Taking all this into consideration, however, I still insist that it is great drama.

In depicting the principal character in her own brain-child, Mme. Petrova offers a display of brilliance that almost takes away whatever bad taste might be left in the mouth of the theatergoer. All the time she is on the stage the streaks of gleaming silver show plainly thru the rather leaden surface of the play. Her personality, her beauty, her poise and her downright ability as an artist are everywhere in evidence.

STAR ADVANCED BEYOND STORY.

The star's admirers in Denver will receive the play with enthusiasm, for one reason, if for no other, that it has been written and produced with a view to appealing directly to those admirers. In fact, Petrova has been advanced beyond the story, the production and the supporting cast to a point where the entertainment almost becomes a series of living portraits of herself.

Those who don't care for this kind of an evening will point out that the Madame has taken somewhat of a narrow viewpoint in subordinating nearly every other element to the star. They also will recall the fact that the plot concerns Russian immigrants, and they will maintain that it should gain the honest plaudits of only the little broop of serious thinkers having an abiding love for a things that even faintly suggest the land of the late czar, the preser Bolshevists, and the Moscow theater.

As for the supporting cast, it easily manages to make its presence felt despite the brilliance of the lone star. Ludmilla Toratzka, who plays the mother; Lewis Willoughby, the leading man, and Percy Carr, the doctor, work with a fine reserve. George Pelzer, the father; Joseph Granby, villain, and Ann Reader, younger sister, capably fill difficult roles.

"The Hurricane" is not for children. It is for those adults who no longer believe in Santa Claus, have discarded the stork idea of babies and are willing to face the fact that there are problems that must be met and that they can't be met and solved unless they are discussed freely and frankly.