



Two Comedies by Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia: Oh, These Times! and The Siberian Shaman (Russian Theatre Archive)

Catherine Great, Lurana Donnels O'Malley

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Catherine the Great (1729-1796) wrote over two dozen plays and operettas, but not until this edition has a complete translation of any of them been available to an English- speaking readership.

Oh, These Times (1772) is a satirical attack on many vices Catherine wished to root out from her society: religious hypocrisy, superstition and slander. The main character, Mrs. Pious, is a superficially religious old woman who resembles Moliere's Tartuffe.

Catherine again sets her sights on superstition in The Siberian Shaman (1786), this time by satirizing shamanism as a deceitful profession which preys on the gullible. This play was part of a group of three plays usually known as Catherine's "anti-masonic" trilogy, written as a warning against the growing influence of the freemasons.

In a comprehensive introduction, Lurana Donnels O'Malley relates the plays to Catherine's status and philosophy.

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