



## The Muses Are Heard

*Truman Capote*

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## **The Muses Are Heard** Truman Capote

"...a wicked, witty and utterly devastating account of the journey to Leningrad of 94 Americans and two dogs, all connected with the widely heralded production of PORGY AND BESS." - Sterling North

## **The Muses Are Heard Details**

Date : Published (first published January 1st 1956)

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Author : Truman Capote

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## From Reader Review The Muses Are Heard for online ebook

### **Elizabeth Pyjov says**

I enjoyed it. I love the way Capote writes.

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### **Brian E Whitlow says**

It was good but not great. I still look forward to reading other books from capote.

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Basically a book about an American opera company visiting Russia. Got slow at times but liked the characters.

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### **Jordan Kinsey says**

Even knowing how appreciated Truman Capote is, especially within certain circles, I still say he is the most under appreciated American writer. I love Hemingway and Steinbeck and Twain and Faulkner and Hawthorne and all the others (okay maybe not really Hawthorne), but Capote is better.

Also - how much different would things have been if he'd been born in 1974 instead of 1924?

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### **Mary says**

Capote went along for the ride in 1955 when "Porgy and Bess" was taken to Leningrad through a crack in the Cold War curtain for some Christmas-time performances. Mrs. Ira Gershwin was another of the non-cast members in the traveling company of nearly a hundred people and two dogs. Part of this book was in The New Yorker near that time, but I missed seeing it there. It's a sharp, shrewd, entertaining look at how the U.S. and Russia were doing a propaganda dance in the mid-1950's.

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### **ALLEN says**

In 1955, with the Cold War well in force, an American impresario arranged for his all-black theater troupe to visit Moscow and Leningrad to present PORGY AND BESS. Author Truman Capote attached himself to the company and the results are here in the wonderful nonfictional account he called THE MUSES ARE HEARD (1956).

When dealing with the twig-snapping severity of Russian winter, Capote could be lyrical. When confronted with the curlicues of Soviet society, he could be much more arch. For example, in an allegedly classless society there could be no talk of "First" or "Second" class on trains; travelers could, however, avail themselves of "hard" (seat) or "soft" (bed) comfort, making it the same experience as the West except for

semantics.

Capote is perhaps at his funniest when discussing the PORGY AND BESS performers and various hangers-on, such as Ira Gershwin's widow who always yearned for "cavy" (caviar) on the train, when raspberry yogurt was more the norm. The author observes sympathetically but sharply the curiosity Russian citizens showed the troupe when their train pulled into Moscow: PRAVDA spun it as mass appreciation for culture when in fact it was a matter of racial curiosity, most Russians of the time having never seen a person of African origin, much less a trainload of them.

Capote fans can see very well the kind of stylized but lean prose, eagle-eyed observation and sense of irony that would, ten years later, distinguish his masterpiece, the nonfiction *IN COLD BLOOD*. *THE MUSES ARE HEARD* is a similar treat, although, to borrow a line from Jack Dunphy, much too brief of one.

While this minor classic is not always easy to find used, the interested should the more recent of the two Capote anthologies that have been released in the last fifteen years, *PORTRAITS AND OBSERVATIONS* (Violet cover) -- this is the one that includes *THE MUSES ARE HEARD*.

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### **Ivan says**

In 1956 Truman Capote wrote an account of a trip he took to Russia with the wife of Ira Gershwin and a touring company of "Porgy and Bess." A more motley crew of diplomats and thespians had never made their way behind the iron curtain, in fact this was the first cultural exchange between the two super powers.

"Oh what a circus, oh what a show...." I know those lyrics aren't from "Porgy and Bess." However, they are apropos of the events documented in this savagely witty travelogue, and though adjectives such as "amusing," "delightful" and "whimsical" spring to mind, they seem altogether inadequate to describe this unique work of comedic reportage. Capote was a true American original, and "The Muses Are Heard" finds him at the very height of his literary powers.

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### **Karen says**

I heard this is Capote's account of his journey to the Soviet Union, which he visited along with an American cast of *Porgy and Bess*. I'm so curious about it!

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### **Kressel Housman says**

"When the cannons are heard, the muses are silent, but when the cannons are silent, the muses are heard." That is the quote that gave this book its title; it's Truman Capote's account of a trip he made behind the Iron Curtain with a theater company performing "Porgy and Bess." The show was meant as a cultural exchange and step toward peace, but I read the book in hopes of a slice of history. I suppose it was that, but it was a rather narrow one. Capote gave a clear enough picture of the Soviet propaganda machine and the reception the theater company got, but it wasn't nearly as clear a picture as we got of Holcomb in *In Cold Blood*. It was

interesting and sometimes funny, but it's easy to see why this remained one of Capote's lesser known works.

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### **Lesley says**

Very interesting, a true account, not fiction, lots of info that I had suspected but had not read about.

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### **Stan Lanier says**

One of, perhaps, Truman Capote's lesser known works, this narrative recounts an 8 day venture of an American production company which aims to perform Porgy and Bess to a Russian audience in Leningrad in 1955. Capote's outsized personality does not get in the way of the writing, and his command is excellent: an amusing, seemingly reliable, lengthy vignette.

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### **Ateles says**

Capote's account of the Soviet Ministry of Culture footing the bill to bring the entire American cast of Porgy and Bess to perform behind the iron curtain. It is so succinctly written.

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### **Alicia Nieman says**

Oh, this was just so-so. I do like the nonchalant way that Capote has a tendency to write; however, there could have been more excitement. I have enjoyed his other works more-so than I did this, but I think this was also important; however, I am not sure how much of this was fluff and how much may have been factual. Nonetheless, the effect of diplomacy was what drew me to this piece in the first place. If you are looking for a short story that bridges the gap in between multiple cultures, then you may enjoy this.

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### **Bryan Schwartz says**

I think I need to include this in my top ten favorite books of all time.

Reminiscent of Durrell's *Esprit de Corps*, Capote's coverage of Porgy and Bess in Russia is sublimely witty and surprisingly perceptive. His seemingly effortless command of the English language is really on display here. Perfect diction, syntax, and imagery. Read it.

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