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This article is about the only professional theatre of shadow-puppets in Russia and the whole Europe. It is an ancient art in the countries of Southeast Asia. Its historical forerunner—the theatre of shadows in Malaysia, China and other countries in this region—originated from a religious ritual cult. The Russian theatre was created by children...

S M I L I N G S H A D O W S

(Конец игры
Азвее)
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by Yelena KONSTANTINOVA
Photos from the theatre's archives

At present these "children" are in their seventies. In 1937, a studio of young graphic artists which admitted junior schoolchildren was organized at the Museum of Books for Children in Moscow. The children enthusiastically made drawings of their favourite literary characters. Once they cut their silhouettes out of cardboard, stretched a white cloth on a wooden frame and placed a lamp behind it. The shadows which appeared on the screen suddenly came to life... Grown-up people—actors and directors—got interested in the children's game. And this is how the theatre was born.

Since that time 80 plays have been staged based on Russian and foreign classics, fairy tales, myths and legends of various peoples. There are seven plays in the present repertoire of the theatre. The characters in them have come down to us from the pages of popular children's books. There are almost no dramatists who take the specifics of the theatre of shadows into consideration, so its workers have to use their own powers of imagination and abilities. Fortunately, the artistic