

Title: "Sooner Silent than Mute": Soviet Pantomime after Stalin
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This paper explores how post-Stalin practices of silent performance fostered and frustrated specifically Soviet productions of racial subjectivity in the contact zones between the state's official and disability cultures. It looks at the popularization of dramatic forms that thematize vexed speech, especially theatrical pantomime, simultaneous with the reinvigoration of the clinical-pedagogical discipline of defectology, which studies speech pathology and "deaf-muteness." In order to ask after pantomime's ambivalent impacts, this paper maps out the multiple racial formations operating in socialist Russia at this time: colonial racism against black Africans (which infected the Soviet cultural imagination even if explicitly officially opposed); and scientific racism against "defective" populations, comprising the disciplinary subjects of Soviet defectology. How did pantomime consolidate existing oppressions along the axes of race, gender, sexuality and ability even as it enabled positions of resistance and empowerment? If, as this paper argues, pantomime equated performative quiet with political speech, *could* the Soviet subaltern be silent?