

WORLD STARS



DIRECTORY OF
**WORLD
CINEMA**



EDITED BY
BIRGIT BEUMERS

Volume 29

**DIRECTORY OF
WORLD CINEMA
RUSSIA 2**

Edited by Birgit Beumers



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DIRECTORY OF WORLD CINEMA

RUSSIA 2

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Transliteration is a perennial problem with Russian: this volume follows Library of Congress transliteration throughout, with the soft sign marked by an apostrophe. The sole exception are the names of the studios Mosfilm and Lenfilm, which have been adapted to common usage in English instead of adhering to the transliteration Mosfil'm, Lenfil'm (and the same goes for Soiuzmultfilm and Soiuzdetfilm).

Birgit Beumers

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

If the first edition of the *Directory of World Cinema: Russia* presented the classical genres of Russian and Soviet cinema, then this second volume tries to discover its less obvious genres. The adventure film (*priključencheskii film*) is a genre that was popular throughout the Soviet era, but the films remained blockbusters at home, with rare exposure to international audiences. Science fiction is often neglected in Soviet film history, partly because the sci-fi films never competed with their American counterparts, which were deemed to have better special effects – and once again most films remained within Soviet or Eastern bloc distribution only. The war film is included in this volume in the more specified genre definition of the ‘Cold War thriller’, which often remained within the Soviet distribution system as it provided an answer to American spy- and Cold War-movies of the same period. So these three sections are likely to acquaint the reader with a number of relatively unknown films, which are, nevertheless, important to get a full picture of Soviet film history.

The horror film is a genre that officially did not exist in Soviet cinema, although several films speak of attempts to experiment with the genre; it is not until recent years that horror movies have been made in Russia, and – due to a lack of experience – often unsuccessfully, clearly without interest for international audiences. An exception, and a breathtaking one at that, is Timur Bekmambetov’s *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012), made in the United States.

The genre of *chernukha* is a specifically Soviet and post-Soviet phenomenon. Most of these films were not aimed at international audiences, but they were specific to the time of the collapse of the Soviet system, showing the bleakness of life in a world of political and social turmoil, one freed from the demands of portraying only a positive world, thus rejecting vehemently – almost violently – the Socialist Realist method.

The blockbuster (*blokbaster*), on the other hand, is a very recent phenomenon; however, we can again observe a tendency to cater for the national rather than international market, although some of the earliest box office hits, such as Timur Bekmambetov’s *Nochnoi dozor/Night Watch* (2004) and *Dnevnoi dozor/Day Watch* (2005) (included in *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*) went into international distribution also. The remake and the sequel are phenomena specific to the post-Soviet era, and – like the blockbuster – focus on commercial success at home. The section includes some of the best-known films which have undergone serialization to exploit their commercial potential to the full. The television series ties in with this phenomenon, working on commercial success, but – as the section shows – it too has its roots well in the Soviet era.

The sections on animation and documentary have both chosen a specific focus: the section on animation explores some of the best-known auteur films of the 1970s, while the documentary section uncovers experiments in documentary film-making that have been relegated to oblivion in scholarship, which has focused instead on other, more conventional films. The section of directors' biographies is more extensive in this volume than in the first, including the key players in Soviet and Russian cinema.

The volume devotes a special feature to a 'film of year', and – as with the first edition – this is a contemporary film: Mikhail Segal's *Rasskazy/Short Stories* (2012), which also features on the cover. The choice is maybe not an obvious one, but Segal's film takes the form of an almanac, consisting of four novellas; this form of a collection of short films has become popular not only in Russia (*Korotkoe zamykanie/Crush* [dir. Aleksei Popogrebskii, Igor' Voloshin, Aleksandr Veledinskii, Andrei Zviagintsev, Petr Buslov, Aleksandr Lungin, Sergei Osip'ian, 2009]; *Eksp'eriment Sive/Experiment Sive* [dir. Petr Buslov, Ivan Vyrypaev, Aleksei German Jr; Kirill Serebrennikov, Boris Khlebnikov, 2011]; *Moskva, ia liubliu tebia!/Moscow, I Love You!* [dir. Nana Djordjadze, Ekaterina Kalinina, Iraklii Kvirikadze, Artem Mikhalkov, Georgii Natanson, Ivan Okhlobystin, Georgii Paradzhanov, Andrei Razenkov, Vera Storozheva, Elina Suni, Alla Surikova, Oleg Fomin, Ekaterina Dvigubskaja, Murad Ibragimbekov, Aleksandr Kasatkin, Egor Konchalovskii, Vasilii Chiginskii, Aleksei Golubev, 2010] etc.), but also in world cinema. Second, the film consists of four short stories – the short story being a literary genre – transposed onto the screen; each of the stories experiments with genre, from mystical thriller to political satire to romance and comedy, so that this mix seems particularly well-suited for a book that is organized along different genres. And finally, the film garnered a considerable range of awards, nationally and internationally, overshadowed in that year only by Sergei Loznitsa's war drama, *V tumane/In the Fog* (2013).

Instead of offering a survey of a Russian film festival and its history, the volume presents a detailed survey of one single event: the very first Moscow International Film Festival, held in 1935, often ignored for its political association with the Stalin era, and left out of the historical count when the festival was revived (or re-conceived) in 1959. This text uses extensive archival material and official publications of the time about the event.

Birgit Beumers

Mikhail Segal, *Short Stories* (2012).

Courtesy of Anastasia Shabunina, Ru.Media



**FILM OF THE YEAR
MIKHAIL SEGAL'S
RASSKAZY/SHORT STORIES
(2012)**

Country of Origin:

Russia

Language:

Russian

Studio:

RUmedia

Director:

Mikhail Segal

Producers:Anastasiia Kavunovskaia,
Sergei Kretov**Screenplay:**

Mikhail Segal

Cinematographer:

Eduard Moshkovich

Art Director:

Vitalii Trukhanenko

Composer:

Andrzej Petras

Editor:

Mikhail Segal

Duration:

105 minutes

Genre:

Drama

Cast:Vladislav Leshkevich
Dar'ia Nosik
Andrei Merzlikin
Igor' Ugol'nikov
Konstantin Iushkevich
Andrei Petrov
Liubov' Novikova
Tamara Mironova
Sergei Fetisov**Year:**

2012

The writer Boris Vasil'ev once said that cinema begins when you cannot tell with words what you have seen; everything else is literature. The writer Mikhail Segal has given his film a simple and simultaneously provocative title, proposing a text, whose narrative quality is already designated in the title. The narrative here is not linear; the text of *Short Stories* can be told in different ways. From this interpretation of a continuous process, where the author and the hero constantly change places, stems also the film's dynamic and energy. As a matter of fact, the film 'grows' from a waste-paper basket where the story is thrown after being rejected as a manuscript by an unknown author that lacks topicality. The secretary of the publishing house (Dar'ia Moroz) 'kicks off' the engine, getting out the first short story and recognizing her own.

The waste-paper basket and toilets (as disposal units) are prominent trash elements which serve as a background for the conversation 'about the main thing'. As in a medieval carnival the use of excrement in the script of a holiday specifies the value of life; and 'the main thing', of course, is choice: marriage, life, death and love.

In three of the four stories the 'places for public use' have no utilitarian purpose at all. In 'Mir krepezh'/'World of Fixtures' the toilet in the cafe is the place where Moroz's heroine remembers an important moment of her life: when he proposed to her, and they exchanged desires and wishes, but this contravened the main principle of her life: no improvisations! – and the proposal came without any precaution. The filthy toilet of the military enlistment office (the story 'Krugovoi dvizhenie'/'Circular Movement') is a place for the exchange of money that does not smell. The carnivalesque element in this episode is amplified by an incident as a result of which, alas, money may well stink. Finally, the European-style office toilet is a place of erotic fantasies and peaceful rest after stormy sexual encounters for the aged hero-lover, the editor of the publishing house who has rejected the book for publication, but who has become the hero of the last story. In this ambivalence lies Segal's talent: extremely serious and boundlessly ironic. The author operates within the rules of a certain genre ('Circular Movement'), and can easily play with the limits of genres ('Energeticheskii krizis'/'Energy Crisis'). Segal masterly knows the laws of classical literature and, no less masterly, uses the narrative strategies of post-classical novels. The director authentically recreates the circumstances of life in modern Russia, taking on the role of a sociologist-positivist and a cultural anthropologist, yet he is not an artist raised on classical realism and classical philosophy, but a practitioner and designer of transgression, of 'a gesture concerning the limit', to speak with Michel Foucault. He takes a recognizable situation up to a limit, up to the 'impossibility' which possesses the quality of the ontological characteristic of existence. Modern



Mikhail Segal, *Short Stories* (2012).
 Courtesy of Anastasia Shabunina, Ru.Media

Russia and its inhabitants as presented in the film are not objects of critical analysis, but natural givens who cannot be used in any gnosiological procedures. Not accidentally is the story 'Energy Crisis' a mix of detective story and mystical thriller, where the deductive method fails.

The four stories of the film are connected not only through the waste-paper basket, out of which appear the heroes and circumstances of life; each part of *Short Stories* tells about mutually exclusive choices of life strategies.

The provincial couple that starts a new phase of their life in 'World of Fixtures' are the product of a mass culture with its advice-compulsion and pseudo-rationality. The business project for the arrangement of one's life thus finds understanding from the representative of a new Russian trade: the event manager. The life strategies of the soon-to-be-married couple and the manager (Andrei Merzlikin) coincide: one is assured of the necessity to plan for everything, the other of the possibility for foresee everything. The world is presented as a simple system of linear dependencies, with simple plots – a wedding with a bestowal, a planned extramarital affair, children in a special school with English and a small variety for the ending (cremation or burial). In general, the variety of choices is reduced to the world of fixture, where the main thing is the correct selection of materials and sizes; hence the mythical European quality (the samples of rice offered to the pair instead of the traditional millet, as in the story from Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov's novel *Dvenadtsat' stul'ev/Twelve Chairs* (1927) with the offer of the tea strainer for the cannibal Ellochka).

Segal masterfully shows the logic of the absurd when the Apollonian beginning ignores the challenges of the Dionysian chaos. The event manager, like a classical artist, arranges the *mise-en-scène*, moving the pair away from the window and showing his skill not only in riddles and competitions, but also in designer thinking as he easily handles the laws of light exposure (at 15.00 there is a shadow, at 17.11 sunset, therefore we organize a hearth). After the scene change, the spectator looks at the sad urban landscape with a high-voltage line, which does not look creative at all. In this

case one even feels sorry for the couple as they strip themselves of the secret of the project called 'life'. The professional manager, an expert in psychology, masterfully manipulates the consciousness of the young people, putting a choice of minor things before them and thus creating the illusion of independence. The jazz music chosen by bride and groom in the end shows good taste at first, but Segal is ruthless: the singer, who has come with heavy bags, efficiently and wearily putting them down, starts to sing in English with a school Russian accent. Alas, jazz – that lives basically on improvisation – has no place in the world of fixture...

The rational strategy of the first story is taken to the point of absurdity and then tested in the other three stories. In 'Circular Movement' cultural phenomena acquire once again the character of natural phenomena. A bribe, like a drop of water from a lesson about the atmosphere, triggers movement in this world. In this story Segal transforms rhythm, music and image into a single whole, expressing the tragic discrepancy of a grandiose, perfect nature through nasty and trivial matters of human culture. The cameraman Eduard Moshkovich has 'pushed' the real landscapes into bright light (as did the Russian painter Arkhip Kuindzhi) with a glamorous simulacrum in the form of the governor Egor Sergeevich (Sergei Fetisov) and the President (Igor' Ugol'nikov). The camera plays with general takes and panoramic views of East European plains, as well as the awe-inspiring quality of Russian nature. That's how the actor and writer Evgenii Grishkovets would remember things, reflecting on what each Russian should feel when looking at birches through the window of a train. According to Grishkovets he must say: 'How beautiful!' So, a white horse, a white suit, white shoes with white socks and the thin white porcelain of the tea cups, along with volumes of Karamzin and Tolstoy and some casually dropped volume of Kliuchevskii on the grass are images of cleanliness and chastity, of natural and cultural richness. The white colour emphasizes the sacredness of authority, which is elevated as much as the fields, the lakes, the rivers. Dirty money, with which imperfect people potter, and authority in snow-white clothes make a harmonious pair symbolizing the nature/culture of Russia.

The bribe is like a divine watchmaker-creator, who sets the entire world to work. Thus the ward, where the old mother of the university professor is hospitalized without any hope for surgery, sets to work. Later, the tempo-rhythm reminds one of Dziga Vertov's aesthetics in *Chelovek s kinoapparatom/The Man with the Movie Camera* (1928), when – at the nod of the Creator – the gates of the Bakhmet'ev bus park open. Likewise for Segal: the professor meets with the head of the ward; the bribe (a pack of money) is put in the table drawer; a call is made to the anaesthetists and surgeons; the camera flies downwards into the hospital square, where the surgeons – as if on command – throw away their unfinished cigarettes and get up; then the light of the operating theatre appears. And all this is shot without a single word. The emotional and graphic dominant here is the music by Andrzej Petras, which precisely transfers the pressure of the disaster to come and the happiness when the tragedy is averted.

The simulative nature of all kinds of activity from 'Circular Movement' (from the car mechanic to the governor and higher) is taken to the absurd in the third story, 'Energy Crisis'. Segal here works with the Soviet myth about Russia as a country of bookworms. This myth also incorporates that of the valorous Russian detectives and the story about the 'unknown force' of the provincial librarian Anna Petrovna (Tamara Mironova), investigating all complex cases in the area. The imitation of activity by a crowd of uniformed people (inspectors, the police), who intensely and attentively listen to the lofty style of Russian poetry (an excellent stylization à la Pushkin) is one of the most absurd scenes. The inspectors and the policemen receive a translation from Russian into Russian of what Anna Petrovna says. The search for the missing girl turns into a concert of Russian poetry in the open air, but even this concert comes to a close.

The symbolical capital of Russian culture is exhausted, and Anna Petrovna senses this perfectly well. She can find maniacs and murderers, swindlers and thieves; she can help victims of violence, but once the girl has set fire to the volume of Pushkin, the librarian takes upon herself the role of the victim and her energy expires. In this story, too, Segal resorts to the demonstration of an exchange: the girl, who saves her life by making a fire in the cold, and Anna Petrovna, who is consumed by the flames of the tragic destruction of the last remaining cultural capital – even if that is mythical. The time when ‘manuscripts don’t burn’ has come to an end, and this precisely is the ‘energy crisis’. No consumer society can find a way out. The simulation continues in the last story, ‘Vozgoritsia plamia’/‘Inflamed’.

In ‘Inflamed’ the editor (Konstantin Iushkevich) is himself the protagonist. The flame of passion has flared up in a traffic jam, continued along several Moscow locations (the cafe Jean-Jacques, the Arts Cinema), and ended in the apartment of the elderly bachelor who has grown up on Vysotsky and ‘Murka’. His incredibly sexy and charming girlfriend at first completely satisfies him (a term from the world of consumption), but then ... The conflict, which starts with her not knowing some words (like handball and Cheka) grows into a clash of worldviews, which cannot be resolved even through excellent sex. The leitmotif ‘we should talk more’ leads to the comprehension of an insurmountable precipice, not so much generational as anthropological. The heroine is quite honest: ‘I don’t know much, but you can fuck me.’ Iushkevich’s hero, ready and willing to give and spend, gets little pleasure; the laws of consumer culture with its dialectics of production and pleasure kick in. The conflict of different discourses begins: ‘I know, the Germans didn’t get as far as IKEA’, and ‘What can we fuck about?’ The connection of questions on Russian history with desperate, heavy petting in the car is the last attempt at sublimation before the hero’s return to his coeval, with whom he can, after all, talk about Trotsky.

All the characters of *Short Stories* are formally united through the location, and conceptually through the absence of a common language, not on the level of semantics and syntax, but on the level of contextual memory. No fixtures will help here: ‘The link of time is out of joint.’

Mikhail Segal has made an absurdist comedy, which makes pleasant viewing and entertains through the language of the protagonists (their ability to not hear each other), the ingenuity of the plotlines and the author’s fine irony and self-irony. Segal does not assume a position of ‘You can’t live like that!’, rather, his intonations remain soft and therefore dramatically authentic.

Lilya Nemchenko

Translated by Birgit Beumers

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FILM OF THE YEAR

INTERVIEW WITH MIKHAIL SEGAL

'Cinema continues to develop, but the magic has gone...'

My first question concerns the form, and indeed the title, of your film: Rasskazy/Short Stories (2012) is a rather unusual name for a cinematic work. Why did you adopt a literary approach, and why is literature so important to provide a structure for your film?

Mikhail Segal: I first made a short film, which became the first novella in the film, 'Mir krepezha'/'World of Fixtures'. Then the producers suggested I should make a full-length film composed of novellas whilst using the existing half-hour short film. They thought this was a good idea, and – economically speaking – a quarter of a film had already been made, because we thought right away it would have four parts. I had some vague ideas what that film might be, but it did not take shape until I came up with the title. And the title came unexpected, but almost immediately: *Short Stories* seems a very bold title to me, but without that title, the structure might not have emerged.

I don't think you can possibly completely explain this: it's an irrational feeling, you've come up with an artistic idea, but you feel it's right but can't articulate why, but you sense it's the right path that gives you creative energy to flesh this idea out.

Mikhail Segal, *Short Stories* (2012).
Courtesy of Anastasia Shabunina, Ru.Media



I came up with the title *Short Stories* because it is bold and unlike a film title; films are not called that. It's nonsense. It can't be the title of a film, and I liked that idea of teasing the viewer. The structure came right away with it: a writer brings his manuscript to a publisher, a script in which all the stories are his own. This idea itself is not extraordinary but it helped me move forward and find the stories for the film. I'm actually showing off, doing a bit of coquetry here, because the structure of a film almanac is not that of a completed, accomplished, rounded script: some people can't shoot a full-length film and therefore make short films. So I use this structure to justify such an approach.

At the beginning the writer brings his work to the publisher and it is rejected; he is told that short stories are not needed. Then everybody in the publishing house who reads the stories turns into a hero of each respective story: they are enchanted and experience a kind of catharsis, after which their lives change. At the end the writer returns, but all the people who read the stories have been affected, almost crushed by the reading. So I came up with a structure that would work for me as an author of short films.

And the literature ... it also worked out well because the film's narrative reflects on culture in general and literature in particular, since Russian culture is dominated by literature. The film analyses contemporary society, and within that analysis my authorial reflection on culture and literature is embedded, so that allowed me to move the story and justify the style. The dialogues and the text are the most valuable element in the film, and this approach justifies the literary basis for the script.

You speak about the literary basis. The collection of short stories which the writer brings to the publisher is brought together, yet these stories are quite different, or maybe not so different? When organizing the stories you have different readers for each story: the secretary, the cleaner – how much does the prism change for you as director who films the stories and for the spectator who watches them? You present not only a short story but also its reader, and this is a different reader every time.

Mikhail Segal: Of course, that's why I have made it possible for the reader to be the story's hero. I worked backwards, as it were: one story is about a young girl who wants to get married, so I invented a secretary who reads this story as if it was about herself. In the other story we have an elderly woman, a mystical heroine, so I invented the elderly cleaning lady. That way I determined the story first, and then its reader in the publishing house. The last story about the young girl and the middle-aged man who have an affair was written a long time before I even thought about the film. When I decided to use it, I determined it would be the last story, and the person to read it would be the one who has most doubt: the editor-in-chief. That story had to happen to him.

Every story comes in a different genre. I don't know how they were conceived as literary texts, but in their transposition onto the screen you play with a different genre in every novella: horror, love story, comedy, melodrama.

Mikhail Segal: There are different reasons for this. First, we wanted to have diversity so that the crew would not get bored. When shooting for a month or longer, things get boring for the film crew. When you shoot different genres – comedy, then horror – of course, you are fresher and it's more interesting. The same goes for the viewer: you have to take pity on the viewer. It's much more interesting to watch four

genres. And finally, as my cinematographer used to joke: we have made a show-reel that we can use for our next producer to prove that we can shoot comedy, horror, melodrama... You'd have to shoot four films to show that kind of versatility, but we created a great portfolio with a single film.

If you had not shot 'World of Fixtures' a year earlier, but together with the rest, would you have changed anything?

Mikhail Segal: No, I think it would have been worse. But there was less than a year between the films. In April we made 'World of Fixtures', in the summer we won at Kinotavr, and right afterwards we went on to shoot the other episodes. I think it's good that 'World of Fixtures' was shot separately, because I looked at it not as a part of a larger film, but I gave everything to this film as a self-standing piece. That's why it's maybe the best. I concentrated fully on 'World of Fixtures' and did not have to spread my attention across several films, as with the other novellas.

Your choice of actors is fantastic, and this determines to a large extent the genre and style of each novella. When you wrote the script, did you have any actors in mind?

Mikhail Segal: On the whole, no. When working on 'World of Fixtures' I knew that Andrei Merzlikin would play the main part. That helped, because knowing who would play you can adapt the way in which the character speaks. You write the text in a more organic way. When writing the novella about the teacher and librarian, I knew which actress would play her, because she was in my previous film – *Franz + Polina* (2006), where she played Polina's mother. Apart from that, we held a casting session when the script was completed.

To return to the question about literature: the act of writing and the written text play a huge role in each of the stories. Why have you chosen to transfer this issue to the screen? Why did you entrust the values of literature to the cinema?

Mikhail Segal: I'm a film-maker, so I had to make some movie. It became a literature-centric film only as a result. But it is a film that also speaks of something else: it is a social film about Russia and its people. It tries to find a solution to problems, and literature here does not play the role of literature at school level – whether you know it or not – but it is a means of saving society and people from hell. I did not conceive this specially; rather the theme of literature is auxiliary, as is the story with the manuscript. The novella uses a banal, simple, secondary approach, but it helps us to highlight another meaning of the novellas, as they show one after the other a new type of man emerge in society: they show into what Russian or modern man has mutated.

Mutated – in the absence of culture, literature, tradition, writing?

Mikhail Segal: Yes, probably.

If we project this idea on all the novellas, then 'World of Fixtures' stands apart, because there is no representative of the older generation here.

Mikhail Segal: I have no conflict of generations, even if there is a bit of that somewhere. 'World of Fixtures' is about two young protagonists, who think in a different manner; it is about the absurdity of a new way of thinking of these two



Mikhail Segal, *Short Stories* (2012).

Courtesy of Anastasia Shabunina, Ru.Media

young protagonists. They plan their life, and that is the norm for them. The first novella shows a new way of thinking of younger people. The second novella is more of social cinema, showing the individual in society. The novella reveals not so much what is bad in society, but it shows people and tries to figure out what they think and how they tick. The first novella is about the individual and a modern, unhealthy conscience. The second is a social anecdote about the ineradicability of corruption in Russia, where corruption is not just a bad thing (in the sense of paying bribes), but it is another circle of inevitability – the social circle of a Russian man: inevitability and the sense of despair. The third novella is metaphorical, and follows the horror genre: I show the reason, or rather I take the liberty to show what happens when society deliberately rejects Russian culture. As long as culture was present, people did not appreciate it; once gone, we see the results, and it can't be brought back. The last novella forms a culmination, but it also continues the theme of the third novella: of the loss of roots, when man lives as if no one had lived before him and he has no values other than his own life, which is another step towards an abyss, and I lead this to its logical culmination at the end of the film. So on the one hand all these things are literary inventions, but on the other hand they are a means to talk about human values and the social situation.

And in the last novella we return with the female character, the girl, to the first novella: both women are detached from society, from their cultural context and tradition, or not?

Mikhail Segal: But the first novella is built on another principle. Only both heroines are young and beautiful.

A circular structure also lies at the basis of the absurd: the circularity of movement without escape. How do you understand the absurd and how you manage to render it in each novella and in the film?

Mikhail Segal: The Theatre of the Absurd is something I feel close to. The play with the absurd is everywhere, and it is the atmosphere in which I immerse myself as an author: this is how I write, how I speak, how I joke. The lightness of the dialogues and their absurdity flares up and then dissolves into the whole work.

The comic and tragic balance has to be very fine to create the world of the absurd.

Mikhail Segal: That's what I tried to do.

Do you see any links between Short Stories and your previous film? Is this an experiment or a continuation of what you'd begun earlier?

Mikhail Segal: My first film was not based on my own script, so it's not my dramaturgy. Also, it was about the war, and that is a tragic theme, so the task was different. Here I am the scriptwriter and therefore in charge. If I can make my next film based on my own script then we can talk about continuity. I don't want to repeat myself. I have just made a short, six-minute film for an almanac and my friends said that they liked it. One person said: I liked it a lot, but at heart it is just another story of *Short Stories*; the actors exist on-screen in the same manner. I was very grateful for that comment, as I don't want to repeat myself. So it's good to make a short postscript to *Short Stories*, but I won't now fall into the trap of repeating myself in my third film. I want to make my films as different as possible. It's a difficult question whether a director should have his style: yes, of course, because that's what people love and know directors for, be it [Quentin] Tarantino or [Pedro] Almodóvar. On the other hand, there are new stories and new contents, and each story must have its own style. I understand this with my head, but I have yet to do it.

How would you define the traditions that you follow in your work, and what has influenced you?

Mikhail Segal: I would not want them to be obvious. Of course, I have seen a great number of films, and I have lived my life. These experiences accumulate and shape an influence. But you can't single out one event and say: today I am influenced by what happened on 5 April 1985; or the way I acted last night was determined by an experience from 20 September 1994. Influences form a whole. Of course we want to believe that they enrich, inspire and push rather than shape your style: what you do ultimately has to be your own. There are people who liked the Beatles when they were young; then they organized a band and played all their life like the Beatles; and then there were people who liked the Beatles – and take a guy called Kurt [Cobain] to organize the group Nirvana, who takes an inspiration but creates his own music.

Your film is a success in distribution: one cinema in Moscow shows it to the present day.

Mikhail Segal: Yes, the film has been released in 180 copies in a range of cinemas. It is still running in the Kino-Centre. I would have liked to see wider success in all sorts of ways. What many consider a success, I consider as flop, because I wanted more. I expected more resonance from the spectators, but it's producers and distributors who have to give the film a chance to be seen, and that's where I'd expected more. The film was released on DVD and immediately appeared on the Internet, where many people watched and discussed it. And

if the advertising campaign had been organized differently, or been organized at all, people could have seen the film on the big screen. But we have what's there, and that's good.

You have a scene where your heroes go into the cinema and eat popcorn: how do you see the future of cinema, technologically speaking? Did you have this episode specially: they go to the cinema rather than the theatre?

Mikhail Segal: There is no profound meta-cinematic message intended here: cinema is a good place for lovers, where else should they go? Cinema develops, it mutates in a changing reality. There is a TV programme on channel Rossiia called *Magiia kino/The Magic of Cinema*: cinema develops, but the magic has gone, for various reasons. There is no magic any more. [...] Films are being made, there are more technological opportunities, but what actually made cinema in the twentieth century? A whole generation has gone, and with it the magic; cinema has become something else. This is a natural process and nothing to worry about. But for people of my age, who were enchanted by cinema when it still had its magic, it is an internal drama that you have to accept, you have to come to terms with the loss of that magic.

Can we regain it?

Mikhail Segal: You mean resurrect it? No. Magic requires a ritual, that is: a miracle, for which you have to perform some act; a miracle cannot be easily accessible. The quantity of films and television production downgrades the film. When there were only a few films per year, people awaited them: you buy a ticket, sit in the chair, the light goes out – a ritual. But when cinema is screened on 23 channels simultaneously, the process is different and a new type of spectator has already been shaped. Yet a true work of art always captures man and takes him out of reality. Technology advances, and we have to come to terms with it. Production has become easier and it is now possible for anyone to make a film; of course; this is democratic, but the number of trash will increase not because of TV production but because anyone can film anything. This changes the psychology and the conditions of watching films: not just on television, but on the computer or on YouTube, and you can stop at any time. Many psychologists speak about the impossibility of people's perception of the long form. A few generations down the line people will have forgotten the viewing culture of the past. But then there will be a renaissance: Rome, its decline, the dark ages and a renaissance, which is not bad: the renaissance unearthed what had remained of the old Rome, its paintings, its architecture. [...]

A final question concerns the novella where Igor' Ugol'nikov plays the Russian president: did you have no problems with censorship?

Mikhail Segal: That's a question I have been asked ever so often, and I'd like to respond with my well-rehearsed answer here: Ugol'nikov plays the Russian president. We had no problems, and that's scary: either our film has no bite and lacks satire, so that it presents no problem for the authorities, in which case I failed as an artist. On the other hand, if it is sarcastic and satirical, and you have no problems, you wait for bigger problems to come: and that's worrying, too.

Birgit Beumers

Interview conducted in Sochi, June 2013

FESTIVAL FOCUS

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL...:

ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

On the eve of every Moscow International Film Festival, when the number of the next edition is announced at the press conference, I involuntarily shudder and begin to fidget. The reason is the same every time: I cannot reconcile myself to the fact that the organizers of the Moscow International Film Festival should act like an old lady and hide the festival's true age.

Where, then, does this additional, 'extra' festival edition – and with it a quarter-of-a-century increase in age – come from? Well, from the distant year 1935.

The family tree of the Moscow International Film Festival, abbreviated MIFF, can be traced seamlessly since 1959, when it was launched successfully in Moscow; for some reason this is considered to be the first edition. Actually, it was not at all the first, but the second edition. The first International Film Festival in Moscow was held in February 1935 – and this was neither some small, insignificant event nor an occasion where the proverb 'You must spoil before you spin well' would apply, but a genuine, serious and representative international film festival. Making a big splash in the style of the grand and stately events of the Stalin era, it was acknowledged to have been quite successful both by the Soviet authorities and the world film community. For many foreign guests, the preparations were so impressive and exemplary that they asked the organizers of our first-born film-festival to share their experience with them. The resonant and victorious echo of the first MIFF strengthened the already excellent reputation of Soviet cinema and forced a change in the obviously discriminating policy of other foreign festivals to allow the participation of Soviet films and Soviet film-makers. In any case, the first parade of world cinema in Moscow became a brilliant and important event for the fate of our domestic cinema, and there is not the slightest reason to dismiss and condemn it into shameful oblivion.

Today it may seem strange and quite illogical that during the most terrible isolation from the hostile capitalist world that surrounded the Soviet Union in the 1930s, Stalin allowed the Soviet film community to hold in Moscow a large-scale review of world cinema with all the ensuing consequences that were not the most pleasant for the regime. In fact, carrying out an international festival in the heart of the Soviet Union inevitably meant not only the demonstration of plenty of foreign films – not always with 'progressive' content –, but also the arrival en masse of overseas visitors, of which the overwhelming number could not in any way be considered 'friends' and most of which were not even disposed towards the Soviet Union. Indeed, at the time of the first MIFF foreign films had practically been entirely removed from Soviet screens, and crossing the sacred boundaries of the native land of socialism to travel abroad was possible only for a few, chosen individuals who represented the creative intelligentsia. And now a whole horde of unknown people had to be let into the country.

Besides, the internal political situation would seem to have been completely unsuitable for the arrival of a large number of dubious foreigners. After the murder of Sergei Kirov, a new wave of political repressions had struck with all might and main. Nevertheless, the event went ahead.

Why? Soviet cinema was on rise at the time. After the avant-garde experiments and turbulences of the 1920s, Soviet cinema had got the hang of audience success and, since *Putevka v zhizn'*/*The Road to Life* (Nikolai Ekk, 1931) and the legendary *Chapaev* (Vasil'ev Brothers, 1934), the industry produced films that were acclaimed by the Soviet viewers and even much liked by the great leader in the Kremlin. Moreover, these films successfully made their way to foreign screens and triumphed at the first international film festivals (for example in Venice).

In view of these circumstances, the ambitious head of film production (GUKF),¹ Boris Shumiatskii, apparently managed to convince the country's 'chief spectator' that such a large-scale international film event in Moscow would be not only another triumph for Soviet cinema, but would also have political benefit.

Thus he was given the green light and the express train of this rather risky venture promptly set into motion. A set of regulations was quickly drawn up and approved, and invitations were dispatched into all corners of the world. A peculiarity of the first MIFF was the fact that not individual films would compete, but entire programs of films presented by each of the participating countries.

As far as the invitation of guests was concerned, the first MIFF acted like a genuine innovator in the festival movement of the time. Unlike the Venice Film Exhibition, as the future Venice Film Festival was then called then, not only the businessmen of the film industry and producers were invited to Moscow, but also creative artists. Moreover, the emphasis was placed on well-known masters of cinema instead of the bosses. Alongside the competition films, GUKF also planned to organize a number of closed public screenings, where – apart from completed films – fragments of films in production in the Soviet national republics would be shown. Of course, the visitors would also be treated to a fair portion of the latest Soviet documentaries so that they could properly acquaint themselves with the great achievements of industrialization, collective farming and Soviet culture.

On 23 January 1935 the selection committee was established. Soon, the first films arrived in Moscow from behind the cordon, as well as the first messages from overseas visitors accepting their invitations.

On 4 February the newspaper *Kino* published an article by Shumiatskii's deputy head at GUKF, Vladimir Usievich, 'The first Soviet film festival',² where he tells in detail about the preparation for the festival, giving details of its programme and participants. The opening of the film-forum was planned for 20 February. The main screenings would take place in the Moscow House of Cinema, where work was already under way, full steam ahead, on the preparation of a jubilee exhibition to mark the fifteenth anniversary of Soviet cinematography.

In the building of the Scientific Research Institute of Cinema (NIKFI) in Moscow, an exhibition of samples of foreign equipment was to be organized, which aimed at acquainting the key technical staff of Soviet film factories – engineers, technicians and designers working in the film industry – with the latest achievements of film mechanics in the West. Usievich's article also reveals that the first Soviet film festival found a wide response abroad.

At the festival, significant number of European countries, the US, and also countries from the Far and Middle East (Japan, China, Turkey, etc.) would be represented. From Paris we are informed that the delegation of the French filmmakers will be led by Charles Delac (the president of the *Chambre Syndicale Française de la*

Cinematographie). The delegation comprises such big names of French cinema as [head of French Pathé] Bernard Natan, N. Keim, Vandal, representatives of the press, creative and artistic staff of French cinema, including the actress Annabella, and [the painter] Henri Beau. Among the French delegates is also André Debie, the vice-president of the Chambre Syndicale, who is also the head of firm Debie that produces cinematographic equipment.

The European Cinema Trust would be presented by its executive director (this trust is the counterpart to Soyuzintorgkino for the distribution of Soviet feature films in Europe). [...] The French delegation decided to bring a number of films, including *Grand Jeu* [Jacques Feyder 1934], *Pension Mimosas* [Feyder, 1935], *Maria Chapdelaine* [Julien Duvivier, 1934] (a film awarded in France), and a number of others.

The Italian film industry would be presented by the secretary general of the Institute of Educational Cinema in Rome, Mr Fontana, who would come to the festival with several Italian journalists. This delegation, we are told, will bring with it some films of Italian production to be screened at the festival.

Polish cinema would be broadly presented with a delegation headed by the president of the Main Council of Polish Cinema and the Union of Polish Producers, Mr Ryszard Ordynski, and his deputies Mr S. Zagrodzinski and [the scriptwriter] Mr Józef Relidzyński. The Polish delegation will also include a number of prominent film figures, such as Messieurs Rozen, [the producer, Marek] Libkow, and Denkerowski, the filmmakers [Mieczysław] Krawicz, [Michał] Waszyński, [Józef] Lejtes, film critic Sofia Zagorska, the well-known actor Adolf Dymcza and others. The delegation also includes Mr [Seweryn] Romin from the Polish Telegraph Agency. The delegation has sent six Polish films to be screened at the event.

Significant interest was also shown in England, whence we had a message about the arrival of Mr Pallos (from London-Film) who will bring a series of English films and several American-English productions. The participation of some English firms that manufacture cinematographic equipment is also confirmed. Mr Pallos will bring with him also a film that has been a great success and is widely known in Europe: *The Private Life of Henry VIII* [Alexander Korda, 1933].

The editor in chief of the newspapers *Politiken* (Copenhagen) Anker Kirkeby and the critic Henrik V. Dingster have been invited to participate in the festival.

Czechoslovakia has sent for screening at the festival two films: *The Inspector General* [Martin Frič, 1933] and *Workers, Let's Go* [*Hej rup!*, Martin Frič, 1934].

Japan will be presented at the festival by Mr Fukuro and Mr Mutsisaki, who will bring along some Japanese films. Representatives of the Chinese company Star-Moving-Picture-Company and United China Moving Picture Company are invited, and the well-known Chinese actress Mrs Xu Ti.

Turkey will be presented by Mr Halil-Kamil, the head of the film organization making documentary films about Turkey with the help of Soviet directors and cameramen.

The invitation has also been accepted from the representatives of the largest Swedish film firm, Svenska-Film Industry, which will deliver to the festival films of Swedish production.

There is no final list yet of the representatives of the American companies, which have in their majority already sent their films for screening at the festival. As we are told, the company Radio Corporation sends the films *Little Women* [George Cukor, 1933], *A Gay Divorce* [Mark Sandrich, 1934] and some of its animated films; United Artists sends the films *Our Daily Bread* [1934], directed by the known director King Vidor, and some colour animations by Walt Disney. Universal has sent the film *The Invisible Man* [James Whale, 1933], based on the well-known novel by H. G. Wells.

American Fox has sent a large newsreel about the world war and an expedition film about Africa. Apart from that, we have information on the dispatch from America of a colour film, *La Cucaracha* [Lloyd Corrigan, 1934]. Several American companies are sending samples of microphones of their own manufacture for the technical exhibition.

From Romania representatives of the large film company Rex are expected.

It must be noted that very few people changed their mind about visiting the USSR, and Moscow really brought together a selection of representatives for its world film-forum. Only the Chinese were late, almost by a month, but they had their own, very special reasons. However, they also eventually accepted and were greeted as special visitors and supported in every possible way.

On 21 February the first Soviet international film festival solemnly opened in Moscow. The participants of this event included delegations of cinematographers from France, Italy, England, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, the United States, Poland, Norway and Persia.³ Sixty-five films were submitted for the competition, of which the selection committee chose 26 titles. The films included in the Soviet program were *Chapaev, Krest'iane/The Peasants* (Fridrikh Ermler, 1934), *Iunost' Maksima/Maxim's Youth* (Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, 1934), *Goriachie denechki/Hectic Days* (Aleksandr Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits, 1935), *Chastnaia zhizn' Petra Vinogradova/The Private Life of Peter Vinogradov* (Aleksandr Macheret, 1934), *Letchiki/The Pilots* (Iulii Raizman, 1935), *Novyi Gulliver/New Gulliver* (Aleksandr Ptushko, 1935) and *Liubov' i nenavist'/Love and Hatred* (Al'bert Gendel'shtein, 1935).

In connection with the festival opening, the newspaper *Kino* devoted a special issue to this event. In the editorial, 'For competition and cultural rapprochement', Shumiatskii promised a fair competition:

We are not going to compete ideologically. In this area we, a country of proletarian dictatorship, have always been immeasurably higher than the capitalist world, and we have no need either to catch up or overtake the capitalist world. We shall compete in the area where foreign cinema is strongest: in the area of film technology and in formal skills.⁴

Welcoming the international festival, the head of Soviet cinema noted with a touch of hospitality:

Foreign cinematography is deprived of most valuable property: the duty to speak the truth. Therefore foreign cinema suffers from an acute lack of formal composition, the denial of a plot, the fragmentation of the world into atoms, which spread across a range of works – a sort of Joyce-ism in cinema. A tendency towards external monumentalism, towards special architectural films, and towards the engagement of several masters in factography is a logical result.

Therefore we, the Soviet filmmakers, go to the festival with the great confidence that our art – fostered personally by the great Stalin and grown under his management – has the greatest mass appeal of all our arts, surrounded by the care and love of the government, the Party and all the workers – should win this competition, too.⁵

These bright expectations would certainly come true.

During the first MIFF another tradition of the subsequent Moscow film festivals was established. Some days before the end of the festival, the most important foreign visitors were taken to Leningrad. The guests were shown the studio Lenfilm and the factory Kinap, the laboratory of Professor Aleksandr Shorin. Sharing his impressions about the Moscow International Film Festival, Debrie could not hold back some critical remarks: 'Unfortunately, we must note that Moscow's House of Cinema has a very bad sound projection, and consequently the films lost a lot.'⁶

The wonderful festival days – filled with viewings, meetings, trips, lavish receptions for the visitors and our film-makers – flew by. On 2 March the final session of the jury and the closing ceremony of the festival took place in the Pillar Hall of the House of the Unions, as the newspaper *Kino* reported:

The spacious Pillar Hall is packed. The foreign delegations are almost all there. On the presidium B. Z. Shumiatskii, his deputies Ia. E. Chuzhin and V. F. Pletnev, his assistants K. Iu. Iukov, Comrade Arosev (the chairman of VOKS),⁷ Messieurs Eisenstein, Ermler, G. Kozintsev, L. Trauberg, G. Vasil'ev, G. Roshal', Chiaureli, Bek-Nazarov, and others are seated. Among the representatives of the foreign delegations are André Debrie, Vandal (France), Pallos (England), Fontana (Italy), Cai Chusheng (China), etc.

The floodlights are bright, the cameramen of the newsreels turn the handles of their cameras with great concentration, press photographers run across from one place to another, continually aiming their Leikas at somebody or other; there is music and applause.

The evening, devoted to the results of the first Soviet film festival, is opened.

Comrade Arosev (the chairman of VOKS and competition jury member) reads out the greetings received from various public figures and organizations [...]

On the tribune, the Honoured Arts Worker S. M. Eisenstein, announces the decision of the competition jury to another burst of applause.

Here are the representatives of the decorated Lenfilm studio: G. Vasil'ev, G. Kozintsev, L. Trauberg, F. Ermler and A. Piotrovskii. The best people of Lenfilm, having earned the factory a high award from the Party and the Soviet government of Soviet Union with their highly talented skills, garnered with their superb artistic works at the studio Lenfilm, thus the USSR, the first place in the competition of the first Soviet International Film Festival.

The first prize – a Silver Cup for Lenfilm – goes to them! The hall accompanies the award with applause and music.

The second prize – also a silver cup, but smaller – goes to France, and is accepted on behalf of the French delegation by the talented director René Clair for his film *The Last Billionaire* (1934). Again the hall applauds.

And finally, the third prize – the same cup – goes to America and is accepted by the director of Disney for his remarkable work in the field of animation. And again a storm of applause in the hall.⁸

As an eyewitness of these events, the film historian RN Iurenev, remembered:

This festival excelled through the high quality of films in competition. The names of the filmmakers included the Americans King Vidor, Cecil DeMille, Walt Disney, Jack Conway, the Frenchmen René Clair, Jacques Feyder, Julien Duvivier, Marcel L'Herbier, Mark Allégret, the Englishman Alexander Korda, the Italian Alessandro Blazetti, the Czechs Gustav Machatý and Martin Frič, the Hungarian Herman Kosterlitz, who all went into film history, just as much as the names of the actors of the lead roles – Wallace Beery, Charles Laughton, Jean Gabin, Françoise Rosay, Franciska Gaal, Claudette Colbert, Jerzy Woskowski, Jan Werich, Gaby Morlay and many others. Modern film festivals can envy such constellations. And still, the international jury under the chairmanship of Eisenstein unanimously awarded the main prize to the film studio Lenfilm for the films *Chapaev*, *Maxim's Youth* and *Peasants*. The jury decision, as delivered by Eisenstein, stated that these films 'confirm the realistic style of Soviet cinema and combine ideological depth, truthfulness to life and simplicity with a high quality of directing and acting skills as well as camerawork.

This huge victory of Soviet cinema confirmed Eisenstein's profound adherence to principles, awarding his opponents, whose films he highly esteemed, but it also

highlighted his patriotic love for Soviet cinema.

The other awards also testified to the fairness and fine taste of the jury.⁹

In short, according to all the rules, the first edition of the MIFF was a glorious success, and the team that had prepared it rose above itself.

However, as at any other festival, the first MIFF also had its scandals. The Italians took offence at the organizers. The head of the Italian delegation, Fontana, showed his acute discontent with a reception that was organized for his delegation in Moscow

According to Fontana,

At the centre of all the festival stood the French delegation, which enjoyed an exclusively goodwill relationship to the festival management, while the latter showed this preference in particular towards the Italian delegation. Maybe this was due to political considerations, but it made a painful impression on the Italian delegation. While, for example, the heads of the French delegation were received by Comrade Shumiatskii on seven or eight occasions, he received Fontana only once, despite their personal acquaintance and the good relations established in Venice.¹⁰

A special discontent of the Italian delegation was caused by the circumstance that the MIFF management did not keep its promise to show an Italian film in a double bill with a Chinese film, as agreed, but with a Soviet film, whose success overshadowed the Italian film.

[I]n the end the Soviet film passed to a round of applause while the Italian film went by to complete silence. Only the Italian delegation applauded – nobody from the festival management applauded, even out of politeness, as is always the case at international festivals, in particular from Italians in Venice. Nobody came up to shake hands and say some polite words.

The jury was composed in such a manner that it included only the head of the French delegation [...]. According to their decision, two awards were given to French films, besides the awards for the Soviet films. The Italians received no mention at all. This compelled him to get up and leave the hall. Only subsequently, following a conversation with Attolico¹¹ at the NKVD, additional awards were given to the efforts of Italian cinema.

[...] Even the French, according to Fontana, were surprised at such an attitude and, ostensibly, spoke to him about it.

Shumiatskii's article in the *Kino* newspaper, in which he said that the whole world regards Soviet cinema highly, also caused the Italians' discontent. Shumiatskii declared that only the fascists do not want to accept the decisions and publish all sorts of insinuations.

Further, from Fontana's speech for the sound newsreel, the main thing was cut out and only some words remained that meant little and perverted the sense of what he had said. Fontana learnt about this only during the demonstration of this reel at the festival, and even the American sitting next to him expressed his surprise.

In conclusion Fontana declared that, if our organizations had shown even a gesture of the intent to buy the Italian film, then this would have made an exclusively strong impression and broken many barriers to release Soviet films in Italy. The Italians would have sold their film for almost nothing.¹²

Yet there was also a serious, internal Soviet scandal. The screenings of foreign films in the House of Cinema saw an unexpected and hitherto unheard of stir: there were real fights over the invitations for screenings at Vasilievskaja Street 13. As Shumiatskii reported later:

For the first viewing, cinematographers received 640 tickets; workers of related professions (theatre, literature, painting, architecture, music) and the press received 350 tickets; representatives of the trade-union and party organizations – 200 tickets;

Soviet organizations – 270 tickets; bodies with foreign connections – 40 tickets.

For subsequent viewings these figures changed, leading to a continuous reduction of places for cinematographers in favour of various organizations whose continuous pressure threatened to push out the cinematographers altogether. Only the intervention of authoritative organizations put an end to this.

The festival had in total almost 30,000 visitors (including specially organized screenings for party activists, theatre workers, etc.), that produced over 20,000 visits. Such a breadth and volume of visits to the festival were not known at the international film-exhibition in Venice. Our festival had a widely public and open character.¹³

However, some of the functionaries of *Izvestiia*, the second most important Soviet newspaper, were not among the 30,000 lucky people with invitation cards. The newspaper hit on the festival organizers with crushing feuilletons. Before that, the paper managed 'to shoot down' the film *Chapaev*, accusing it of plagiarizing Isaak Dunaevskii's music from *Veselye rebiata/Jolly Fellows* (Grigorii Aleksandrov, 1934). In these publications the edition noted a harmful tendency of Soviet cinema's muse. Joseph Stalin interfered in the conflict and lowered the boom on Nikolai Bukharin, the curator of *Izvestiia*. In addition, the slanderers of *Izvestiia* got their full share from the newspaper *Pravda*. A completely insignificant story – because of the tickets for festival viewings – developed into a serious political 'sorting-out' at the highest level.

Yet these and other scandals only added some kind of special charm and importance to Moscow's debut film festival.

During the summer of 1935, Shumiatskii made a long official journey to Europe and the United States. Upon his return from his distant wanderings in the autumn, he immediately sent a note of intent to the secretary of Central Committee VKP(b) Andrei Andreev and to the chairman of Sovnarkom Viacheslav Molotov with the suggestion to hold in 1936 in Moscow the second International Film Festival.

The decision taken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the summer of 1934 to hold in Moscow the first Soviet film festival with participation of foreign cinematographers raised a wave of original creative competition in cinema and appreciably promoted the appearance by the end of 1934 and early 1935 of films of the highest quality, such as the unforgettable *Chapaev*, namely: *The Last Ball* [Mikhail Chiaureli, 1934], *Bouile de Suif* [Mikhail Romm, 1934], *Maxim's Youth*, *The Peasants*, *New Gulliver*, etc.

Now, with the release of *Aerograd*, it is in the interests of a further rise of the ideological and artistic quality of our films to use once again the stimulus of an international creative competition in the form of a convocation in 1936 of the second Soviet film festival to expand the front of this competition into distribution, alongside with artistic problems and formal devices in our art, especially the technical level of films, which still strongly lags behind and which is, on orders of the Party and personally Comrade Stalin, our top priority.

With the transfer of some cinemas, and especially the former New Theatre (House of the Government), we will equip it for cinema to such a technical level of projection and quality, and with such cultural and community conditions that we shall this time avoid those organizational malfunctions that affected the organization of our first film festival. Above all, we shall have an auditorium that accommodates not 300–350 people, as last time in Vasilievskaya Street 13, but a fine venue with a capacity of 900 seats with all conveniences, including a central location, a respectable foyer, refectories, vestibules and a comfortable hall.

In this connection we ask for a corresponding decision of the Central Committee of the Party.¹⁴

Simultaneously Shumiatskii presented to the Head Office of Sovnarkom the following information on the expenditure for the first international film festival:

Expenditure for the organization and conduct of the first Soviet Film Festival:

In Soviet currency – 361,000 roubles

In foreign currency – 35,000

On expenses for the second Soviet Film Festival, according to rough calculations, are required:

In Soviet currency – 500,000 roubles

In foreign currency – 50,000.¹⁵

The decision of the highest Party organ came right away, and – as Shumiatskii had expected – it was positive.

On 29 November 1935 the Orgburo of the Central Committee VKP(b) allowed GUKF to hold the second International Film Festival in Moscow and Leningrad, 'to show the best and newest films of GUKF and the national republics, and also the latest foreign films'. It would be permitted to invite to the festival one hundred foreign cinematographers and include also in the structure of the jury, composed of ten people, 'three of the most authoritative and loyal figures of foreign cinema'.¹⁶

Well, if the Orgburo gave its consent, full steam ahead?

Alas, no. Maybe this happy decision was somehow made without the participation of the Kremlin's boss, or maybe he suddenly changed his mind, but the turn came already on 4 December. At the session of the Politburo of the Central Committee of VKP(b), the decision of the Orgburo of the Central Committee of 29 November 1935 that resolved the organization in 1936 in Moscow and Leningrad of the second International Film Festival was annulled at Stalin's initiative.

In a note to the People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, Stalin sketched out: 'it could be postponed for a year. Last year the festival was badly prepared. I am concerned that the same thing could happen this time. The foreign currency could be spent on other, more serious needs of the film-business.'¹⁷ After this resolution from the leader, the members of the Politburo reversed their decision and the express train to the second edition of the festival that had already loomed on the horizon suddenly derailed ...

Postscript

The ensuing political events in the country – the war, the ruin after the war and the time of the 'Iron Curtain' – should have forced Soviet cinematographers to abandon forever any dreams about an international film event in the country. But as strange as this may be, in 1952, at the height of the Cold War, the then head of Soviet cinema, Ivan Bol'shakov, suddenly initiated a debate about the renewal of the Moscow film festival. Apparently, the proposal had been sanctioned from very high up, because the preparation for a new, large-scale festival developed with some degree of urgency. The regulations were prepared, a list of participants drawn up, the circle of organizations responsible for the preparation of the festival confirmed. And unexpectedly ... everything came to a halt once again.

Nevertheless, both the intention and the quite advanced level of preparation for the 'next' Moscow film festival are quite indicative, and this experience turned out to be not completely futile. It was quite useful some years later, when in 1958 the Organizing Committee of the Union of Cinematographers that had been created by Ivan Pyr'ev nevertheless received from the Central Committee of the CPSU the permission to revive an international film festival in the Soviet capital.

Pyr'ev and his associates, who all perfectly well remembered the international film feast in Stalin's Moscow of 1935, did not remind the authorities that this would be not to the

first, but next, hence the second festival. Probably the political opportunism of those years shows here: after the 20th Party Congress the country took every possible measure to eradicate any resonance of the notorious 'cult of personality'. But it cannot be excluded that the initiators of the Moscow International Film Festival 1959 were simply gripped by the demon of ambition, and Sergei Iutkevich and other 'internationalists' of the Union of Cinematographers of that time wanted to enter the history of the domestic festival movement as the first apostles and founding fathers.

However that may have been, they renounced the experience of the first successful attempt to hold an international film festival in Moscow, which does not do credit to any of the initiators of the Moscow Film Festival of 1959; not does it do credit to us today, continuing – out of ignorance or habit, out of fear – to recognize an old mistake and correct the family tree of our remarkable festival, counting not from the true date of birth under Stalin, but from a birthday during the liberal Thaw of 1959. Yet even the oldest festivals in Venice and Cannes, whose histories also have considerable breaks connected with tragic events of world history, for some reason are not embarrassed to remember all the dates and editions. So why do we stupidly continue to 'rejuvenate' the festival and omit a year from our international film history?

Valerii Fomin

Translated by Birgit Beumers

Notes

1. Glavnoe upravlenie kinofotopromyshlennosti (GUKF) – Main Directorate of Cinema and Photo Production: formed 19 January 1933 as successor of Soiuzkino (established 1930), headed by Boris Shumiatskii with his deputy Vladimir Usievich until 1938, when both were arrested and executed.
2. 'Pervyi sovetskii kinofestival': Beseda s upravliaiushchim Soiuzintorgkino V. A. Usievicha', *Kino* 6 (1935), p. 1
3. 'Inostrannye delegatsii', *Kino* 9 (21 February 1935), p. 1
4. Boris Shumiatskii, 'Za sorevnovanie i kul'turnoe sblizhenie', *Kino* 9 (21 February 1935), p. 1.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
6. 'Andre Debri v Leningrade', *Kino* 11 (5 March 1935).
7. Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi svyazi s zagranitsei (VOKS) – Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (1925–58).
8. 'Zakrytie kinofestivalia', *Kino* 11 (5 March 1935).
9. Rostislav Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein. Zamysli. Fil'my. Metod. 1930–1948*, Vol. 2, Moscow: Iskusstvo (1988), p. 97.
10. RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art: fond/inventory/document) 2456/4/8, pp. 36–39.
11. Bernardo Attolico (b.1880–d.1942), Italian diplomat; from May 1930–July 1935 Italian Ambassador to Moscow.
12. RGALI 2456/4/8, pp. 36–39.
13. Boris Shumiatskii, 'Pis'mo v redaktsiiu', *Kino* 12 (10 March 1935).
14. RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History) 17/114/726, pp. 141–44.
15. RGALI 2456/4/8, p. 45.
16. RGASPI 17/114/598, p. 41.
17. RGASPI 17/163/1207, pp. 141–44; RGASPI 17/163/599, p. 15.

DIRECTORS

IAKOV PROTAZANOV

Date of Birth:

4 February (23 January) 1881

Date of Death:

8 August 1945

Place of Birth:

Moscow

Places of Residence:

Moscow, Berlin, Paris

Nationality:

Russian

Awards:

1937 Golden Medal at Paris
World Exposition

1935 Honoured Artist of the
RSFSR and Uzbek SSR (1943)



Iakov Protazanov

Iakov Protazanov graduated from Moscow Commercial School in 1900, but he was not happy with his career in business. In 1904 he received an inheritance from a relative and in the summer of that year he left Russia for a long voyage around Europe. During his travels, Protazanov visited the Pathé Studio in Paris and decided to work in the film industry. Upon his return to Moscow in 1907, Protazanov started working as an interpreter in the small film studio, Gloria, where – besides gaining experience in film-making – he met and later married the sister of Gloria's owner, Frida Kennike. Gloria did not last very long and Protazanov went to the Thiemann and Reinhardt Studio. There he received an opportunity to direct his first film. Story has it that during one of the shoots in Kiev an actor sang 'A Convict's Song', after which Protazanov drafted a screenplay of the same title and sold it to the studio's owner. Accidentally, Protazanov became the film's director. Thus, *Pesn' o veshchem Olege/ The Convict's Song* of 1911 marked the beginning of Protazanov's directing career.

In 1912, together with Thiemann's sister, Protazanov made *Ukhod velikogo startsa/ Departure of a Grand Old Man (Life of Leo Tolstoy)*, which became one of his most scandalous films. It depicts the last days of Leo Tolstoy with amazing detail and truthfulness. It is also known as the first film in Russia to combine documentary footage with acting. The achieved effect was powerful, but the film was banned from being screened in tsarist Russia. In the same year Protazanov directed *Anfisa*, based on Leonid Andreev's play, a dark family drama that is often considered one of Protazanov's best works of this period. However, the film that brought mass popularity to Protazanov was *Kliuchi ot schast'ia/Keys to Happiness* (1913; co-directed with Vladimir Gardin), an adaptation of a popular novel famous for its sexual overtones by Anastasiia Verbitskaia. The film was a box office hit, even though it was considerably longer than any other popular film of the time. The enormous success of another literary adaption, *Voina i mir/War and Peace* (1915; co-directed with Vladimir Gardin), strengthened Protazanov's position as a film director and he was invited to join the Ermoliev Studio – one of the biggest studios in Russia of the time.

Protazanov was incredibly productive. In 1916 alone, he made fifteen films, and has made over 100 films in total. He worked in different genres, as he famously said, 'All genres are good, except boring ones.' He filmed the first lyrical comedy in Soviet cinema *Gornichnaia Dzhenni/Jenny the Maid* (1918) and, arguably, the first Soviet science-fiction, *Aelita* (1924). He worked on multiple literary adaptations; hence dramas and melodramas were all part of his repertoire. Among them, such classics as *Nikolai Stavrogin* (1915) based on Fedor Dostoevsky's *Devils*, and *Pikovaia dama/ Queen of Spades* (1916), based on Pushkin's classic and starring Ivan Mozzhukhin (Ivan Mosjoukine). The latter film was known for its portrayal of the character's psychological depth. The famous theatre director Evgenii Vakhtangov famously exclaimed after watching the film, 'Finally cinematograph has gotten closer to the human soul.' Tolstoy's *Otets Sergii/Father Sergius* (1918), also with Mozzhukhin in the lead role, was one of the most significant films to appear immediately after the Revolution.

In 1917 Protazanov made the two-part picture *Satana likuiushchii/Satan Triumphant* (starring Mozzhukhin), which reflected modernist fascination with Satanism and mysticism. The film was very popular and is interesting for its use of dissolves, which were uncommon in the Russian cinema of the time. By 1920 Protazanov was regarded as one of the most prominent directors in Russia. However, during the Civil War he left Russia and started to work in France and Germany, where he made six films together with his companion actors, Ivan Mozzhukhin and Natalia Lisenko. He remained in Europe until meeting Moisei Aleinikov (at the time, director of the Rus Studio), who convinced Protazanov to come back to Soviet Russia. Upon his return in 1923, Protazanov started working on *Aelita*, a popular science-fiction film about a proletarian coup on Mars (starring Luliia Solntseva, Mikhail Zharov and Igor' Il'inski).

On the whole, Protazanov was fairly successful as director after his return, his films often ending up in the 'top tens' of the 1920s, even though the younger generation of the Soviet film artists often criticized his work for being old-fashioned, bourgeois or too westernized.

Between 1925 and 1930 Protazanov made several literary adaptations based on Chekhov's short stories and the controversial *Belyi orel/White Eagle* (1928), based on Leonid Andreev's novel *The Governor*. His last silent film was *Prazdnik sviatogo Iorgena/The Feast of St. Jorgen* (1930), starring Anatolii Ktorov and Il'inskii. This anti-religious comedy (based on a Danish novel by Harald Bergstedt) fitted well within Soviet atheist propaganda. *Bespridannitsa/Without a Dowry* (1937; with Ktorov and Nina Alisova) is considered to be Protazanov's last masterpiece. During World War II Protazanov was evacuated to Tashkent, where he made an 'eastern' comedy *Nasreddin v Bukhara/Nasreddin in Bukhara* (1943). He died on 8 August 1945 in Moscow while working on *Wolves and Sheep*, based on Ostrovskii's play.

Masha Boston

VSEVOLOD PUDOVKIN

Date of Birth:

16 February 1893

Date of Death:

30 June 1953

Place of Birth:

Penza

Place of Residence:

Moscow

Nationality:

Russian/Soviet

Awards:

1940 Merited Artists of the RSFSR

1948 People's Artist of the USSR

1941, 1947, 1950 Stalin Prize

1935, 1950 Order of Lenin

1944, 1953 Order of the Red Banner

Books:

Kinostsenarii. Teoriiia stsenarii/The Film Script. Theory of Scriptwriting (Moscow, 1926)

Kinorezhisser i kinomaterial/The Film-maker and the Film-material (Moscow, 1926)

Akter v fil'me/The Actor in Film (Moscow, 1934); translated by Ivor Montagu as *Film Technique and Film Acting* (London: Vision, 1954)



Vsevolod Pudovkin

Vsevolod Pudovkin was of Tatar extraction. In his youth, his interests included painting, music and, especially, theatre. In 1910 he entered Moscow University to study physical chemistry. In 1914 Pudovkin volunteered for service in the artillery. While a Prisoner of War, he learnt German, French and English. His enthusiasm for cinema was reputedly prompted by his first viewing of DW Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) in 1920: amongst critics (including Adrian Piotrovskii) and fellow film-makers (including Sergei Eisenstein) he soon acquired the appellation 'the Russian Griffith'. Pudovkin was then introduced to the director Vladimir Gardin, with whom he studied before joining Lev Kuleshov's workshop in 1922. Here he worked variously (as was standard collective and laboratory practice) as designer, actor and assistant – notably on *Neobychainye priklucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov/The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924). Pudovkin left the workshop in 1925 to make the short comedy *Shakhmatnaia goriachka/Chess Fever* (1925), co-directed with Nikolai Shpikovskii, and the educational film, *Mekhanika golovnogo mozga/The Mechanics of the Brain* (1926) – for which his training as a chemist proved beneficial. Here, at the Moscow studio Mezhrabpom-Rus', he formed an enduring relationship with the cameraman, Anatolii Golovnia. With Golovnia, the scriptwriter Natan Zarkhi, assistant director Mikhail Doller and designer Sergei Kozlovskii, Pudovkin made the great silent films that established his reputation at home and abroad, *Mat'/The Mother* (1926) and *Konets Sankt-Peterburga/The End of St Petersburg* (1927), appearing in cameo roles in both. In collaboration with the writer and eminent formalist critic, Osip Brik, he directed *Potomok Chingiz-Khana/The Heir to Genghis Khan* (1928), with Golovnia and Kozlovskii as cameraman and designer. In 1929 he starred as Fedia in Fedor Otsep's adaptation of Tolstoy's *Zhivoi trup/The Living Corpse* (1929), and played a cameo role in *Novyi Vavilon/The New Babylon* (1929) for Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. *Dezertir/The Deserter* (1933) was directed by Pudovkin, in Hamburg and Moscow, as a German co-production.

Meanwhile, Pudovkin wrote articles for the cinema press and two pamphlets. With Aleksandrov, he was famously a signatory to Eisenstein's 1928 'Statement on Sound'. In later years, Pudovkin continued to write, but devoted himself to safe and repetitious subject matter: his youthful enthusiasm for Kuleshov's notion of the actor as 'model' was discarded in favour of the application of Konstantin Stanislavsky's theories on acting to cinema.

Pudovkin's practical and theoretical work prompted criticism, notably from Viktor Shklovsky (himself a sometime screenwriter), who dubbed *The Mother* 'a centaur' in its awkward conjunction of prose and poetry; and from Eisenstein, who argued with Pudovkin over their preferred methods of montage – a routine bone of contention in the 1920s. Léon Moussinac, a promoter of Soviet avant-garde cinema in France, placed Pudovkin to the 'right' of Eisenstein, in his stylistic conservatism, and Eisenstein similarly to the 'right' of Dziga Vertov. However, Pudovkin's preference for positive heroes (from *The Mother* to the 1939 patriotic film *Minin and Pozharsky*) and readily accessible narratives secured official approval: before Eisenstein, he was rewarded as Doyen of Cinematography. A biography, enthusiastically written by Nikolai Iezuitov, was duly published in 1937. The success of the early films frequently cast Pudovkin as something of a cultural ambassador, delegated to represent Soviet Cinematography abroad. Even his later films, such as the heroic biopic *Admiral Nakhimov* (1946), in which Pudovkin appeared as Prince Menshikov, garnered awards at foreign film festivals.

Amy Sargeant

ALEKSANDR (OLEKSANDR) DOVZHENKO

Date of Birth:

30 August (11 September) 1894

Date of Death:

25 November 1956

Place of Birth:

Sosnitsa, Chernihiv Province, Ukraine

Places of Residence:

Kiev, Moscow

Nationality:

Soviet

Awards:

1941 Stalin Prize

1949 Stalin Prize

1950 People's Artist of RSFSR

1959 Lenin Prize

Other information:

Married to Luliia Solntseva (b.1901–d.1989)



Aleksandr Dovzhenko

The son of illiterate peasants, Dovzhenko wrote that his childhood shaped several of the recurring motifs of his films: funerals, mourning, nature and the lovingly drawn figures of mothers and grandfathers. In 1911 he entered Hlukhiv Teachers' College and from 1914 worked as a teacher. In 1920, Dovzhenko was a teacher at a Communist Party school in Zhytomyr when Polish forces invaded. After returning to Kiev, Dovzhenko was taken prisoner and hauled before a firing squad before escaping. In 1921 he was sent to Warsaw as member of a commission on repatriating prisoners of war, and in 1922 he served at the Ukrainian embassy in Berlin. Quitting his post, he began to study art in Berlin and became an illustrator for a newspaper in Kharkiv, where he worked from 1923 to 1926. He also began to draw posters for VUFKU, the Ukrainian cinema studio, and in 1926 he began studying as a film director in Odessa.

Dovzhenko's first works for the cinema were comic screenplays; in 1926 he began to direct them himself, gradually learning his trade as he went. Dissatisfied with the stern tone of this debut *Vasia-reformator/Vasia the Reformer* (1926), Dovzhenko took on the direction of a second comedy *Iagodka liubvi/Love Berry* (1926), about an abandoned child, where he demonstrated himself adept at visual gags. His first major success was *Zvenigora* (1928), based on a screenplay that Dovzhenko completely re-worked. Shot in 100 days, the film presents a complex narrative illustrating episodes of historical repression in Ukraine and the benefits of the Revolution. An early example of magical realism in cinema, *Zvenigora* enjoyed critical success but commercial failure. One of the protagonists, the young communist Tymish, became the central hero of *Arsenal* (1929). Despite its

focus on the events of the Civil War in Ukraine, *Arsenal* also features elements of the eccentric and the fantastic, most notably when the chest of the communist Tymish repels enemy bullets. Dovzhenko's lyrical or poetic style, which he claimed to be largely self-taught, reached its highest expression in *Zemlia/Earth* (1930). Set during collectivization in the Ukraine, with its characteristic conflict between the kolkhoz peasants and the rich kulaks, *Earth* seems more interested in capturing the cyclical rhythms of natural life, including the inseparability of birth and death, than in telling a story or conveying an ideological point. This caused some critics to reject the film as nostalgic to the point of being reactionary. Nonetheless, in their slow pace and pensive mood Dovzhenko's first three features exerted a formative influence on post-war exponents of poetic cinema, both in Russia and abroad, where they were received enthusiastically.

After a four-month sojourn abroad, Dovzhenko undertook to make a more orthodox Soviet film. When his idea of a film about Arctic exploration was rejected, he wrote the screenplay for *Ivan* (1932), his first sound film, set at the construction site of a hydro-electric dam. Dovzhenko later admitted that he had rushed the production of *Ivan* in a desire to address a topical issue more directly, resulting in a muddled narrative and flawed technique, but recent critical assessments have placed the film among his masterpieces. Dovzhenko's next attempt at an orthodox Soviet film was *Aerograd* (1935), which depicts the struggle to build a Soviet airbase in the Far East. Adopting the biographical emphasis of Socialist Realism, Dovzhenko then spent almost a year writing the screenplay for *Shchors* (1939), named for one of the Ukrainian heroes of the Revolution. After the war he also made *Michurin* (1948), the story of one of the Soviet Union's leading botanists, who was later discredited as a quack and a predecessor of Lysenko. Dovzhenko's first colour film, *Michurin*, uses time-lapse photography and other effects to examine the life of the plants which Michurin engineered, what Dovzhenko called 'the poetry of the seasons and times of day in [Russian] nature'.

From 1939 Dovzhenko focused on documentary films concerning the battles and, eventually, the victory in Soviet Ukraine, several of them in collaboration with his wife Iuliia Solntseva.

The last fifteen years of Dovzhenko's life were plagued by conflicts with authorities, the main cause of which was his 1943 screenplay for a film titled *Ukraina v ognie/Ukraine in Flames*, which was intended to chronicle the destruction wrought by the German occupiers. Stalin personally rejected the project as nationalistic; it was realized posthumously by Solntseva as *Povest' plamennykh let/A Tale of Fiery Years* (1960). A further film *Proshchai, Amerika!/Goodbye, America!* (1951) was begun but left unfinished, in part because of the changing ideological conditions.

In his final years Dovzhenko taught directing at the Film Institute (VGIK), exerting a powerful influence on the younger generation of film-makers who came of age during the Thaw, especially Andrei Tarkovskii and Larisa Shepit'ko.

Dovzhenko's death in 1956 interrupted work on a new project, *Poema o more/Poem of the Sea*, about the creation of a huge reservoir; it was completed by Solntseva, who went on to produce several other films under Dovzhenko's name. Opinions are divided, however, as to what degree it accords with Dovzhenko's plans. In a 1935 speech Dovzhenko asserted, 'All the years of my work I have created pictures with the thought that I am creating my Party membership card.' He is a signal example of how Soviet artists used the dictates of ideology to create films of lasting influence and appeal.

Robert Bird

ABRAM ROOM

Abram Room

Date of Birth:

28 June 1894

Date of Death:

26 July 1976

Place of Birth:

Vilno, Poland, Russian Empire

Place of Residence:

Moscow

Nationality:

Russian

Awards:

1946, 1949 Stalin Prize



Abram Room studied in Petrograd at the medical faculty of the Institute of Psychology and Neurology (1914–17), at the same time as Dziga Vertov, then transferred to Saratov State University (1917–22). During the Civil War he worked as a volunteer doctor for the Red Army. Room was always fascinated by the degree to which the psychology of an individual influenced social movements and upheavals, and this is reflected in his creative work. In Saratov, Room helped organize a theatre school. In 1923 Anatolii Lunacharskii, Commissar for Enlightenment, saw his work and invited him to Moscow to work at the Theatre of the Revolution, then under the artistic direction of Vsevolod Meyerhold. Room's directorial style in the theatre was influenced by the cinema, just as throughout his career the theatre remained an influence on his films, notably in his strong sense of spectacle and the musicality of the action, of character and plot development, and even in the actual use of music in his sound films.

Room made 26 films during his life, some of which were extremely successful, others artistically brilliant. Yet he had a very chequered career, which reduced his prominence. His early forays into film-making in 1924 were not particularly successful, but revealed his artistic ambition and creativity. It was not until *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia/Bed and Sofa*

(1927) that he really came to the fore. From 1924 until the mid-1930s Room made films and taught at the State Film Institute (VGIK). During the late-1920s and early-1930s, Room did pioneering work in film, not just visually but in his experiments with sound, and his *Plan velikikh rabot/Plan for Great Works* (1931) was the first Soviet sound film. During that period Room was considered to be one of the five great early Soviet directors, alongside Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Lev Kuleshov and Dziga Vertov.

Room suffered severe setbacks to his career. *Bed and Sofa* caused a scandal soon after its release in 1927, forcing it to close after less than a fortnight; Room was dismissed from the film he was working on in 1933, *Odnazhdy letom/Once in the Summer*, and banned from working for a couple of years. In 1936 *Strogii iunosha/A Stern Youth* was shelved prior to release. In 1939 and 1940 Room made two unremarkable films before being evacuated to Alma-Ata, where he made the short film *Tonia*, which was also shelved. However, there followed another war film, *Nashestvie/The Invasion* (1944), which was both popular and critically successful. But in 1946 *V gorakh Iugoslavii/In the Mountains of Yugoslavia* was banned. In 1948 and 1953 Room directed two films, which were creatively frustrating capitulations to political pressure, and then no others until 1964. Room's career took an upward turn once he began to compensate for his non-creative years, as he delivered the first of the literary adaptations which would comprise the rest of his oeuvre. *Granatovyi braslet/The Garnet Bracelet* (1964) marked the start of the successful, last period of Room's career, proving that he had managed to resurrect his talent.

Although official and public reception of Room's work varied throughout his career, there was a general consistency in the director's own attitude to film-making. Room's early films are marked by an experimental approach, revealing a preoccupation with aesthetic and symbolic use of lighting and close-up, which briefly break the linear narrative into a montage of almost abstract images. Although traces of these techniques are evident in Room's later films, they are less abrupt and shocking, more integrated into the general tone of the film. The same is true of the narratives. Whereas the earlier films show radical ambition, the later ones are more conservative in tone. With his early films Room had been keen to take risks and reach for artistic heights, but in his later years the director concentrated less on making innovative leaps forward and more on perfecting his art.

Milena Michalski

LEV KULESHOV

Date of Birth:

1 January 1899

Date of Death:

29 March 1970

Place of Birth:

Tambov, Russia

Place of Residence:

Moscow

Nationality:

Russian/Soviet

Awards/Positions:

Professor and Director (1944–46) of the State

Film Institute (VGIK)

1967 Order of Lenin

1969 People's Artist of the RSFSR

Books:

Fifty Years in Films (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1987; with Aleksandra Khokhlova)

Kuleshov on Film (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974; ed. by R Levaco)

Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh/Collected Works in 3 Volumes (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987–89)

Other information:

Married to Aleksandra Khokhlova



Lev Kuleshov

Kuleshov's contribution to Soviet film culture was two-fold: as a pioneering film artist and as a teacher who trained scores of Soviet film-makers.

Kuleshov acquired an interest in drawing as a boy in provincial Tambov. He dabbled in art education for several years and then found himself in Moscow in his mid-teens seeking employment as a commercial artist. He joined the staff of Moscow's Khanzhonkov Film Studio in 1916, doing costume and set sketches. He soon became a designer for the accomplished director Evgenii Bauer, whose work was admired for its elaborate *mise-en-scène*.

Kuleshov first tried his hand at directing in the action film *Proekt inzhenera Prita/Engineer Prite's Project* (1918). He extended his cinematic skills by making newsreels in 1918–19. He also worked in a 're-editing' facility, developing new shot combinations from extant footage. While working on *Prite* and in the editing lab, Kuleshov, dabbled with some of the sequences that would eventually be recognized as seminal experiments in filmic syntax, including the so-called Kuleshov effect and the fabricated landscape.

Kuleshov's seemingly modest experience as a director and editor was enough to bring him to the attention of Vladimir Gardin, the head of the newly established State Film Institute (VGIK) in Moscow. Gardin recruited Kuleshov in 1920 to begin teaching at the Institute under