



The Lighthouse (2006) by Maria Saakyan

Thursday 7th March 2019
7.00pm 76 Dean St, Soho House

A burnt book flutters its tattered pages; a long-legged foot skips on a deserted railway platform; a raucous celebration of peasant dancing erupts; a grainy black and white sequence of birds in flight – how do we connect these vivid fragments? The opening of *The Lighthouse* is as disorienting, yet absorbing, as the lyrical journey that lies ahead.

We stumble across a barren landscape, scarred by conflict, and are transported into a timeless mountain village swirled by mist. A young woman, Lena (Anna Kapaleva), is apparently coming home. But where is this place? And when? As Lena removes the dust sheets from her long-abandoned furniture she notably listens to a record of Alice in Wonderland - appropriate for a world where war has made nonsense of the normal. And *The Lighthouse* is best approached as a tumble down a temporal rabbit hole, where grainy flashbacks of a pre-war past are elided with an ever-pervading fear of future destruction and a fleeting respite is found in the mundane, domestic present. Shots of a child being bathed or hands sawing logs for a fire, sing with a simple beauty.

Like Lena, her 20-something heroine, the then 27-year-old director Maria Saakyan was a young woman displaced by war. Aged 12 the conflict in the Caucasus forced her and her family to flee Armenia to Moscow. *The Lighthouse*, her remarkably confident debut, was not just about realising her own vision as a film maker - an uphill enough challenge given she is the first female director to complete a feature in the history of Armenian cinema. It was also a way of exploring the trauma of her own past and that of her fellow collaborators which, on *The Lighthouse*, included a Serbian set designer and a Georgian screenwriter, both similarly swept up in the mass migration that followed the break up of the Soviet Union after 1991.

Saakyan trained as a film maker in Moscow and it's the Russian master, Andrei Tarkovsky, whose influence ripples most strongly through *The Lighthouse*, most notably in the repeated use of water and mirrors that provide its more sublime moments of reflection. However her influences run wider. She has said she was inspired to the 'magical' possibilities of film when she saw Peter Greenaway's *A Zed And Two Naughts* as a child and Saakyan's unique, dreamy visual style here also occasionally recalls two other 'outsider' British auteurs - Lynne Ramsay and Derek Jarman. Certainly *The Lighthouse* was enthusiastically appreciated by British critics, many of whom ranked in their top 10 films of 2007 purely on the basis of its two screenings at the London Film Festival that year.

Refreshingly for a war film, certainly for one shot by an Armenian, Saakyan focuses her lens mainly on women and girls and their concerns and everyday struggles. Men are absent (away fighting) or disembodied as a 'threat' located in the black army helicopters that roar overhead or the radio voices that announce fatalities. Both of these represent the powerful external forces that dictate the women's lives and that are, terrifyingly, beyond their control. The penultimate shot of the film is that of a female refugee silently screaming. With *The Lighthouse*, Saakyan has finally given that nameless woman, and thousands like her, a voice.

Written by Givi Shavgulidze
Music by Kimmo Pohjonen and Oleg Mazny.
Starring Anna Kapaleva, Olga Yakovleva, Sofiko Chiaureli
Running time 76 minutes

The organisers would like to extend special thanks to Mehelli Modhi of Second Run DVD and the Boghossian Foundation.

About Kino Klassika Foundation

Kino Klassika creates programmes of film restorations, publications, art commissions and events to educate audiences about cinematic traditions of Russia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. This includes the *Eisenstein Programme*, a 2-year project spotlighting the pioneering work of Sergei Eisenstein, ongoing film screenings in London and the new *Kino Klassiki* restoration program. Kino Klassika's patron is Ralph Fiennes and its Trustees include: Professor Ian Christie, Daniel Jowell QC, Roger Munnings CBE and Justine Waddell. This evening could not take place without the dedication of the Kino Klassika team: Joe Andreyev, Tatiana Isaeva, Zoryana Mischiy and Bella Radenovic. We would like to thank Daniel Bird, Victoria Lupik and Fixafilm for access to tonight's screening of the newly scanned 4k DCP master.

About *Kino Klassiki*

Kino Klassiki is a unique partnership between Kino Klassika, cinema studios and film directors from the Caucasus and Fixafilm Studios (Poland), under the supervision of experienced producer, Daniel Bird. The aim of the program is to rescue and restore classic films from the region, so that they can be saved for posterity and enjoyed by international audiences. Presently we are fundraising to restore and create an archive print of Maria Saakyan's beautiful debut *The Lighthouse* (2006), which was one of the first Russian language films to be shot digitally.

Support Us

Kino Klassika is a UK registered charity (1150791) and we rely on the generosity of our supporters. If you want to encourage education, engagement with and restoration of classic Russian and Eastern European films, please support us by making a donation. Our bank details are as follows:

Account no. 69358087

Sort code 60-15-33

Or please donate on our website:

www.kinoklassikafoundation.org

Social Media Handles

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COMING UP NEXT:

Sergei Parajanov's *Hakob Hovnatanyan* (1967) will screen at the National Portrait Gallery, 22 March 2019 introduced by the Guardian's lead film critic, Peter Bradshaw. The first film to be restored as part the *Kino Klassiki* project, *Hakob Hovnatanyan* combines sights and sounds from both Hovnatanyan's portraiture and 19th century Tiflis, and is often seen as a stylistic precursor to Parajanov's masterpiece, *The Colour of Pomegranates* (1969).

About Larushka Ivan-Zadeh, Chief Film Critic, Metro

For over a decade Larushka Ivan-Zadeh has been Chief Film Critic at *Metro*, the UK's most read daily newspaper. She is also a broadcaster who appears regularly across the BBC as well as Sky News. Larushka has served on numerous film juries including the BAFTA EE Rising Star Award and the British Independent Film Awards. She is a contributor to the *Rough Guide to Cult Movies* and presents the BBC Film podcast *Mind the Gap*.

The Audacity of La Grande Dame de Champagne

Madame Clicquot was a trailblazer of her time. Widowed, in October 1805, she single-handedly took on her late husband's champagne business, and went on to pioneer several industry innovations whilst demonstrating her unparalleled creative dexterity. Businesswoman, entrepreneur, inventor, cellar master, Madame Clicquot was also a skilled host in the art de recevoir and an icon of the French Art de Vivre.

About The Boghossian Foundation

Founded in 1992 by Robert and his two sons Jean and Albert Boghossian, Lebanese jewellers of Armenian origin, The Boghossian Foundation aims to contribute to development and education of young people in Armenia and Lebanon. The Boghossian Foundation hosts a rich artistic program which includes exhibitions, concerts, conferences, dance performances, workshops for children, artist encounters, guided tours, film screenings, and performances.



KINO KLASSIKA REVIEWS:

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian's lead film critic on Kino Klassika's Christmas Screening of Ryazanov's Carnival Night

“A little miracle of innocence, gaiety, mischief and fun, proof that Soviet cinema could do musicals to be compared to Hollywood's MGM greats, in spirit, if not exactly in budget.”

David Nice (The Arts Desk) on Eisenstein on Paper: Graphic Works by the Master of Film

“From perfectionist Kino Klassika foundation this book is a work of art to set alongside Eisenstein's major achievements.”