



Wednesday 8 January  
6.30pm Cine Lumière

## *Cheryomushki (1963)* by *Gerbert Rappaport*

**Herbert Rappaport's 'Cheryomushki' (1963) is based on Dmitri Shostakovich's operetta of the same name. Exploring the USSR's extreme housing issue, the rarely screened film reignites the debate around Shostakovich.**

The real Cheryomushki lies in the South West of Moscow. It sits just below the Akademicheskii district and now houses the headquarters of Russian state gas company, Gazprom. Just past Moscow State University and within the Moscow Ring Road MKAD, Cheryomushki has truly been absorbed into the city. This architectural feat, hides another: that the Cheryomushki project became the blueprint for the hordes of industrial housing projects that sprung up across Moscow, and indeed the rest of the Soviet Union, in the 1950s and 1960s.

These mass built apartments came to be known as Khrushyovkas, as it was under Khrushchev that these ambitious building projects took place. An architectural contest in Novye Cheryomushki rendered apartment block 'K7' the winner. This prefabricated and industrialised building was replicated and rebuilt at breakneck speed across the Soviet space. Today, these projects are notorious, a ghostly and ever present imprint of the Soviet Empire's failure. But their present day notoriety has erased not only the hope they once represented but their initial overwhelming necessity.

Herbert Rappaport's 'Cheryomushki', released in 1963, and based on Dmitri Shostakovich's operetta was written in 1958 and first performed in 1959, three years after the real Cheryomushki project began.

As the mass industrialisation of the first five year plan of 1928, and the second plan of 1933 saw floods of peasants moving to cities with limited housing capacity. This housing shortage was further compounded by the war, with millions left displaced. Something had to be done, and fast. As Sasha sings to his wife Masha, 'I have long dreamed of my own window.' Their desire is communicated through a grand and emotive musical number which bolsters their desperation. Prior to 1950s an apartment of one's own would have seemed nothing but a desperate dream.

Rappaport's film aesthetic is unique. Shot in high colour, the Moscow he presents is preternaturally light, bright and spacious. The inventive and geometric set designs create a

beautiful and strange dreamlike space. The characters traverse through this surreal space and objects are transformed and repurposed. As Sasha and Masha sing about home ownership their gaze turns a birdhouse into a four storey apartment block. In another scene Lida and her father are lifted by a crane into Flat 48. The machinery itself out of shot, they descend emblazoned against a blue sky into their new home. The subtext of these breathtaking visuals are clear: the promises of the housing projects are fantastical and absurd.

Famously, Shostakovich's music has been performed differently depending on how individuals interpret his person and politics. Revisionism has suggested that Shostakovich may not be the ideologue we once assumed he was, and instead was a secret dissident. Whilst his musical genius is unquestioned, and indeed the film is worth seeing for the score alone, there is an ongoing debate surrounding his political opinions and position. 'Cheryomushki' houses the 'double' voice we have come to suspect Shostakovich of possessing. Rappaport's use of the material certainly suggests it is an incisive critique.

Shostakovich's dramatic score and Rappaport's dreamlike visuals combine to exemplify the absurdity of the situation. The film opens with the ode to 'Cheryomushki', or 'Cherrytown', which promises a land where 'all the inhabitants dreams come true'. Not only are these promises highlighted as absurd, it is also made clear that the very fact that their wildest dreams are about housing is because their living circumstances have failed them. Sasha and Masha rejoice as the roof falls in. The crowd of onlookers call them lucky! Whilst this is explored only lightly, the film undoubtedly dramatises the desperation of shortage.

This moral uneasiness that runs beneath the surface of the film is further compounded by a deeper discussion on morality and motivation. Olga reprimands Boris for his attempts, whilst justified, to take down the Drebednevs. She reminds him that crying wolf leads you to 'Become a wolf yourself.' Whilst the film's ending displays the moral fibre of the characters, the easy and insidious nature of corruption is explored throughout. It is a world where basic necessities are hard to obtain. It is a world, where you have to chase the phantom of a fantasy and it is far easier to be bad than good.

*This screening is introduced by author Owen Hatherley.*

**MELODIA! DISCOVERING MUSICALS FROM RUSSIA & THE CAUCASUS**

Melodia! celebrates the diversity and complexity of Soviet, Russian and Caucasian musicals. It gives UK and Russian speaking audiences a unique opportunity to explore an undiscovered musical tradition.

**WE ARE FROM JAZZ (1983)**

**KAREN SHAKNAZAROV**

Introduced by Peter Bradshaw

This film casts an eye back to the jazz's beginnings in 1920s USSR. Released into the harsh economic reality of the 1980s, it is an example of the loosening of censorship in the late Soviet film.

7 Jan 6.30pm

**CHERYOMUSHKI (1963)**

**GERBERT RAPPAPORT**

Introduced by Owen Hatherley

An adaptation of Dmitri Shostakovich operetta, which subtly criticises Soviet life, raising intriguing questions about whether Shostakovich was a dissident or an ideologue.

Screening on 35mm.

8 Jan, 6.30pm

**CARNIVAL NIGHT (1956)**

**ELDAR RYAZANOV**

A brilliant parody of Soviet top-down bureaucracy, Carnival Night satirises the appointment of a new director at a House of Culture, who threatens the New Year's party plans of his co-workers.

14 May, 6.30pm

**MELODIES OF THE VERA QUARTER (1987)**

**GIORGI SHENGELAIA**

Melodies extols the quintessential Soviet values of socialism and hard work through a charming tale that clearly has its origins in folklore. The film's Soviet context is infused with marvellous Georgian music and dance and featuring a performance from Sofiko Chiaureli, is a celebration of Georgian culture's vibrancy.

15 Jan, 6.30pm

**KARINE (1969)**

**ARMAN MANARYAN**

Based on an operetta by Tigran Chukhajian, *Karine* includes everything an operetta is supposed to have. Performed in Armenian and released shortly after the 1965 demonstrations in Yerevan, it is important to see this film as a reclamation also of Armenian identity.

21 Jan, 6.30pm

**A MAN FROM BLVD DES CAPUCINES**

**ALLA SURIKOVA**

Introduced by Hope Dickson Leech

This rare red Western acts as an exploration into the nature of cinema. Lovingly playing with devices of American film and the birth of cinema, it is the only film in the season to be directed by a woman.

Wed 22 January 6.30pm

**HIPSTERS (2008)**

**VALERY TODOROVSKY**

Todorovsky's musical provides a contemporary view on the 'Stilyagi' counter-culture (parallel to the Beat Generation). A melange of 1950s music with contemporary score, this eclectic film contextualises Russian musical tradition within its Soviet past.

Screening on 35mm.

Sunday 26 Jan, 6.00pm

**LETO (2018)**

**KIRRIL SERREBRENNIKOV**

Introduced by Roman Bilyk

Kirill Serebrennikov's film is a foray into Leningrad's 1980's music scene. Depicting real cult figures from the time, and showcasing a nostalgia for the time's epoch, it explores Western music's impact on the underground scene.

Friday 31 Jan, 7.30pm

**About Herbert Rappaport**

Rappaport was an Austrian director, born 1908 in Vienna, he studied law before going on to work on films. He honed his skills and talents under the tutelage of G. W. Pabst, one of Weimar cinema's greats. He became his assistant director, and together they travelled to America where they continued to work on films. Pabst work spoke across the globe, and the Soviet Union were keen to work with him, or people who had worked closely with him. Lenfilm extended an invitation to Rappaport to come to the USSR to 'internationalise' Soviet cinema. He stayed for 40 years, being the only immigrant to forge a long lasting film career. His directorial practice was vast and varied- he worked on everything from humorous short films, a spy film and of course, Cheryomushki.

**About Owen Hatherley**

An expert on architecture, politics and culture, Owen Hatherley is the author of "Landscapes of Communism: A History Through Buildings", a history of communism in Europe told through the built environments of former socialist states, as well as the recently released "The Adventures of Owen Hatherley in the Post-Soviet Space".

**About Kino Klassika Foundation**

Kino Klassika creates programmes of film restorations, publications, art commissions and events to educate audiences about classic Russian language and Eastern cinema. This includes a 2-year programme to spotlight the pioneering work of filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, and our first restoration projects of Parajanov's *Hakob Havnatanyan*, and *Arabesques on the Pirosmeni Theme* as well as *Jirdan*. Kino Klassika's trustees are Professor Ian Christie, Daniel Jowell QC, Roger Munnings CBE and Justine Waddell. The patron of Kino Klassika is Ralph Fiennes.

**The Kino Klassika Team**

This evening's screening could not happen without the support of the Kino Klassika team Joseph Andreyev, Nathaniel Dampier, Maria Egieva, Tatiana Isaeva, Zoryana Mischiy, Seraphina Paisey & Talitha Piggott.

**Support Us**

Kino Klassika is a UK registered charity (1150791). We rely on the generosity of our supporters. If you want to encourage education and engagement with classic Russian language, Eastern and East European film, please support us by making a donation.

We are fundraising to complete a restoration of **Parajanov's Arabesques on a Pirosmeni Theme (1985)**. This short film, about Georgian painter Niko Pirosmeni, is a meditation by one great Georgian artist (Parajanov), on another (Niko Pirosmeni). Parajanov, of both Georgian and Armenian descent, is considered one of the most lyrical and imaginative figures of 20th century cinema, developing the art form with unique, poetic vision, and leaving a legacy that his influenced countless subsequent directors. He is arguably best known for his film *The Colour of Pomegranates*.

Our bank details are as follows:

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