



22 January 2020
6.30pm Cine

A Man from Boulevard des Capucines (1987) *Alla Surikova*

***A Man from the Boulevard des Capucines* (Russian: *Chelovek s bulvara Kaputsinov*) alludes directly to the Lumière brothers and their first cinema screening, famously projected onto the walls of a building in the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris in 1895. It might be a surprising (and long) choice of title but this is a film of surprises. After all, this 1987 Soviet musical is both a loving homage to the birth of cinema and also one final ray of light from a golden age of Soviet musical comedy.**

The connection to the Lumières comes about through the speech of protagonist Mr. John First (Johnny) played by the Soviet theatre and film star Andrei Mironov. Mironov, one of the great Soviet stars, died the same year, making this his penultimate film role. Mr. First is a travelling cinematographer. Attending the first Lumiere film screening in Paris, he is mesmerised by the beauty of the new art, and decides to dedicate his life spreading it to all corners of the world.

His first stop is the small town of Santa Carolina in the American West (shot, like many exotic locations of Soviet films, in Crimea). Town life is turned upside down by the arrival of Mr First's film projector. Educated by the power of cinema, the hard-drinking, hard-fighting, hard-swearing cowboys of Santa Carolina give up their bad habits and swap whiskey for milk, barroom brawls for small talk about theatres and libraries (a word which they cannot quite pronounce!), and time-wasting for daily cinema visits. Cabaret girls start to wear full-length dresses on and praise the cinema in their shows, while the soloist Miss Diana Little (Aleksandra Yakovleva, whose singing voice is dubbed by prominent Russian jazz and pop singer Larisa Dolina), whose heart was 'locked tighter than Fort Knox', falls in love with Mr. First, and begs him for a life like in the movies.

The film with its all-star cast including Nikolai Karachentsov as cowboy Billy King, Oleg Tabakov as saloon owner Harry McKew (who went on to become Director of the Moscow Art Theatre) and Mikhail Boyarskiy as a robber Black Jack among others, was a huge success. Back in 1987 it had 51 million viewers, a Soviet box-office record of the late 1980s, beaten only by the controversial and shocking *Little Vera* the following year. *A Man from the Boulevard des Capucines* brought immediate fame to its director Alla Surikova, a student of the Soviet comedy master Georgiy Daneliya, whose dry and acerbic style in films such as *Mimino* and *Autumn Marathon* is clearly present in this film. She

became one of the very few female directors of the comedy genre to have a prominent voice in the Soviet film industry.

The film itself stands on the crossroads of genre. On the one side, it is an 'eastern' or 'red western' – a specifically cold war genre presenting films set in America's Wild West, but shot in the Asian part of the Soviet Union, or films presenting these parts of the Soviet Union through the aesthetics of a western. On the other hand, the film draws from the already established tradition of Soviet comedies, especially fantasy musical comedies, such as *Ordinary Miracle* (1978, also starring Andrei Mironov) or *Charodei* (1982; which shares the female lead Aleksandra Yakovleva); and a broader tradition of allegorical comedies by Surikova's master Georgiy Daneliya, whose dystopian cult film *Kin-dza-dza!* was out just two years prior. Like these comedies, with all the comic effects, the movie brings to light what may seem to us surprisingly philosophical issues of life and death, and the role of art in culture. These would have been read simultaneously by Soviet society as both humour and satire. One of the opening lines of the film 'Remember, gentlemen, this country will die of corruption', for example, is readable both as a reference to American society and to the final era of *perestroika*. The arrival of Mr. Second and 'second class' cinema, with its addictive demoralising effect on audiences, anticipates the state the film industry both in the West and at home.

However, what is truly extraordinary about this film is its relationship not to any genre or context in particular, but to the history of cinema in general. Its replay of the *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* or *L'Arroseur Arrosé* by the Lumière brothers (a wonderful film within a film technique) and the awe and childlike admiration before the power of the celluloid by the newly converted cowboy cinephiles is magical. When watching this constellation of Soviet actors in their response to the Lumières legacy it is hard not to get nostalgic for the life captured in that celluloid world, which we know we cannot repeat. For its 99 minutes, *A Man from the Boulevard des Capucines* gives us a temporary ticket to the magic and lightness of a lost and long gone world. It manages to remain a quintessential Soviet musical as the culture itself was dying.

Programme notes written by Dr Maria Korolkova
Introduction by filmmaker Hope Dickson Leach

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)

HERBERT RAPPAPORT

Introduced by Owen Hatherley

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

Screening on rare 35mm.

8 Jan, 6.30pm

CARNIVAL NIGHT (1956)

ELDAR RYAZANOV

Introduced by Dr Maria Korolkova

A brilliant parody of Soviet top-down bureaucracy, Carnival Night satirise 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

Introduced by Mako Abashidze

Melodies is a charming tale that clearly has its origins in folklore. The film's context is infused with marvellous Georgian music and dance and featuring performances from great Georgian actors Vakhtang Kikabidze and Sofiko Chiaureli, Melodies is a celebration of Georgian culture's vibrancy.

Screening on rare 35mm.

15 Jan, 6.30pm

KARINE (1969)

ARMAN MANARYAN

Preceded by expert panel discussion

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 'Stilgyagi' 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)

KIRIL SEREBRENNIKOV

Introduced by Roman Bilyk

Kiril Serebrennikov's film is a foray into Leningrad's 1980's music scene. Depicting real cult figures from the time like Viktor Tsoy, the

film is a nostalgic exploration of Western music's impact on the underground scene.

Friday 31 Jan, 7.30pm

Alla Surikova

A Soviet and Russian filmmaker (1940), she was born in Kyiv and graduated from the philological department at Kyiv University with a degree in Russian Language and Literature. As a filmmaker she has had a prolific career, one which began in the Soviet Union and continued into the present. One of a small handful of female directors working in the Soviet Union, her focus was comedy. *Be My Husband* (1981), *Seeking a Woman* (1982) and *I Want to go to Jail* (1998) are successful comedy films she directed which showcase a dark and irreverent brand of humour.

Hope Dickson Leach

A Scotland-based highly acclaimed director, Filmmaker Magazine named Hope one of the '25 New Faces of Independent Film'. Her debut feature, *The Levelling*, had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2016 receiving unanimous praise, receiving numerous prizes worldwide including for Hope, a Scottish BAFTA for Best Screenwriter. Hope was awarded the inaugural IWC Filmmaker Bursary Award in Association with the BFI, in October 2016 and was also named a BAFTA Breakthrough Brit.

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*. 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.

This evening's screening could not happen without the support of Joseph Andreyev, Nathan Dampier, Maria Egieva, Tatiana Isaaeva, Zoryana Mischiy, Seraphina Paisey, Talitha Piggott & Tom Rebour.

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. Our trustees are Ian Christie, Daniel Jowell QC, Roger Munnings, CBE and Justine Waddell. Our patriot is Ralph Fiennes.

We are fundraising to complete a restoration of **Parajanov's *Arabesques on a Pirosmeni Theme* (1985)**. This short film, about Georgian painter Niko Pirosmani, is a meditation by one great Georgian artist (Parajanov), on another (Pirosmani). 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 has 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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