



Tuesday 1
 December 2020

Falling Leaves (1966) by Otar Iosseliani

It had been observed that if you were waiting for the rebirth of Soviet cinematography in the 1960s, it might be better to wait for its appearance not in Moscow but in the republics of the Soviet Union, where freedom found itself an easier road. The gorgeous Georgian film - Листопад in Russian - Falling Leaves in English - actually refers to the time of year in Georgia when grapes are heavy on the vine. And the film itself starts with documentary footage from the 1930s onwards of wine making. This goes on for about 10 minutes, and when it seems you are getting bored, gradually you begin to catch the unusual in people and things, a life that already passes the border of realistic representation and that is filled with humour, half-tones and detailed observations.

In every shot of this film, there is beauty. But not the poetic beauty that the title might suggest, but the poetry of everyday life. To see this, you have to know that life very well, and as importantly, you have to love that life and be able to communicate that love to your audience. Otar Iosseliani is a little ironic and sarcastic. But his smile is kind, he loves the earth of his homeland and the people living on her. The poetic and at the same time vibrant atmosphere of Iosseliani's film is like a human organism, rejecting a foreign heart, an organism that already will not accept foreign artificiality.
 - *Cinema Journal, 1968*

Notes from the director

Otar Iosseliani The author of the first version of the screenplay was actually a former engineer. When he had finished studying for his screenwriting diploma, he wrote a story about a young engineer, and called it 'Familiar Faces'. The conflict that takes place in his story, situated in a factory where they produce transformers, is about how the young engineer finds a way of cleaning the mechanism of the transformers in a radical and innovative new way. Because of the appearance of this innovation, he comes into conflict with the retrograde: all the

meetings, the expertise, the people who are enemies of new ways of doing things, etc. All this conflict happens in the background of the private life of the progress-obsessed hero. In the foreground are agreements and disagreements with his mother, his sister, his family. The hero's name was Levan.

My assistant, Lali Mzhavia, put together a list of factories and workshops, where we could possibly shoot this story and make it not about transformers. We stumbled across a winemaking factory... those huge wine-making vats, the aesthetic pleasure, the drinking, the culture, and added to that the age of the skill. We re-wrote the film in this new shape. The first thing I allowed myself to change was the name of the hero. I changed his name from Levan to Niko. It is a well-known fact that screenwriters always believe their vision is disfigured in the final version of a film. Our film was censored. I was the only one responsible for that. After this experience, I never worked with other people's texts. It means I take the responsibility totally on myself. Like that things are simpler. - *Otar Iosseliani*





Otar Iosseliani

Otar Iosseliani (born 2 February 1934) first studied composition, and piano at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire. He then went to Moscow to study Mathematics and entered the State Film Institute (VGIK). In 1966 he directed his first feature film *Giorgobistve* which was presented at the Critics' Week of the Cannes Film Festival and won a FIPRESCI award. When his 1976 film *Pastorali* was shelved and then granted only limited distribution, the director moved to France. In 1984 he made *Les Favoris de la Lune*, winning a Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival. Venice has become a showcase for his subsequent films. In 1989 he again received a Special Jury Prize for *Et la Lumiere Fut* and in 1992 the Pasinetti Award for Best Direction for *La Chasse aux Papillons*. In 2011 his film *Chantrapas* was selected as the Georgian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards. In 2011 Otar Iosseliani received a lifetime achievement award – the CineMerit Award at the Munich International Film Festival.

About Klassiki

Klassiki screens a highly curated selection of director led films, with each week's choice introducing UK audiences to an important filmmaker's work. An opportunity to experience online a weekly curated selection of the best of Soviet, Russian, Caucasian and Central Asian cinema, and KLASSIKI choices range from early silent cinema, to masterpieces of animation, from post-war classics to contemporary Cannes winners. Supplementing the film experience, KLASSIKI offers specially commissioned and downloadable programme notes as well as podcasts and filmed introductions. We also program film seasons, including RED FRONT: 75 YEARS OF RUSSIAN WAR CINEMA and TASHKENT FILM ENCOUNTERS, to spotlight classic cinema from Central Asia. This is the birth of Klassiki, our planned free streaming platform, which will allow you to stream great cinema from the region.

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 bank details are as follows:

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www.kinoklassikafoundation.org

About Kino Klassika Foundation

Kino Klassika is the only organisation in the world dedicated to spotlighting cinema from Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The foundation 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 *Hakob Havnatanyan*, *Arabesques on the Pirosmami Theme* and *Jirdan (1969)*. We have recently completed *Melodia! Discovering Musicals from Russia and the Caucasus*, a screening season in partnership with the British Film Institute, Institut Francais, Bristol Watershed and Broadway Nottingham.

KLASSIKI continues Kino Klassika's longstanding undertaking to showcase classic films from the region. By giving audiences access to unseen gems as well as the opportunity to meet and chat with directors and filmmakers from Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Kino Klassika are a trusted, credible and essential part of the UK's specialist film exhibition sector.

Kino Klassika was founded by Justine Waddell. The trustees are Professor Ian Christie, Daniel Jowell QC, Roger Munnings CBE. The patron of Kino Klassika is Ralph Fiennes.

The Kino Klassika Team

This screening could not happen without the unstinting support of the Kino Klassika team: Joseph Andreyev, Alexia Claydon, Olga Doletskaya, Seraphina Paisey, Talitha Piggott and Jack Weeks.

Upcoming Klassiki Screenings

Klassiki will screen a new film in our weekly curated series, every Tuesday from 2pm. Please check in with us on social media or via our website to access each week's new screening. And please share the news with your friends!

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