

## ***The Power of Pictures: Early Soviet Photography and Film***

Schedule of Film Screenings and Film Synopses (April 18–July 4)

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### **Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays\***

- 10:30 a.m. *Mother* (87 min.)
- 12:00 p.m. *Man with a Movie Camera* (67 min.)
- 1:10 p.m. *October* (102 min.)
- 3:00 p.m. *Storm over Asia* (125 min.)
- 5:25 p.m. *The House on Trubnaya* (84 min.) **Fridays only**

\*See synopses for rotating Friday evening schedules.

#### **Tuesdays, Thursdays\*, and Saturdays**

- 10:30 a.m. *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (87 min.)
- 12:00 p.m. *Battleship Potemkin* (72 min.)
- 1:15 p.m. *Turksib* (57 min.)
- 2:15 p.m. *Aelita: Queen of Mars* (111 min.)
- 4:10 p.m. *By the Law* (79 min.)

\*See synopses for rotating Thursday evening schedules.

#### **Sundays**

- 1:30 p.m. *Man with a Movie Camera* (67 min.)
- 3:00 p.m. *Salt for Svanetia* (52 min.)
- 4:00 p.m. *The Overcoat* (63 min.)

### FILM SYNOPSES AND EVENING SCREENING SCHEDULES

*Aelita: Queen of Mars*, 1924

Directed by Yakov Protazanov

Black-and-white film, 111 minutes

The early Soviet science fiction film *Aelita* tells the story of Los, an engineer who, as he builds a spaceship, is observed through a giant telescope by the Martian queen Aelita. When Los arrives on Mars, Aelita and Los fall in love. Los incites Martian slaves to rise up in rebellion, but then Aelita forms her own totalitarian regime. Los, disillusioned, tries to stop her, only to wake up and discover that it was all a dream. Based on a novel by Alexei Tolstoy, the film has remarkable Constructivist sets and elaborate costumes for the scenes on Mars.

Thursdays, April 21, May 19, and June 16, at 7:00 p.m.

*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925  
Directed by Sergei Eisenstein  
Black-and-white film, 72 minutes

Sergei Eisenstein's masterpiece *Battleship Potemkin* commemorates the Revolution of 1905 and, indirectly, that of 1917. Conditions on the armored cruiser *Potemkin* are deplorable, conveyed by shocking close-ups of maggots infesting the ship's meat. Enraged, the crew contemplates the unthinkable—mutiny. They seize control of the ship, and their revolt becomes the rallying point for a Russian populace crushed beneath the heels of the tsar's Cossacks. When the ruthless tsarist soldiers arrive, a massacre ensues on the grand Odessa Steps. The scene is one of the most quoted sequences in cinema history for its pioneering use of montage.

Thursdays, April 28, May 26, and June 23, at 7:20 p.m.

*By the Law, or Dura Lex*, 1926  
Directed by Lev Kuleshov  
Black-and-white film, 79 minutes

Based on Jack London's 1907 novel *The Unexpected*, *By the Law* is a Constructivist western about five prospectors in the Yukon. The laborer Dennin, whose job it is to manage the camp, discovers gold, but the other four continue to assign him domestic duties. Dennin snaps and kills two of his companions. The remaining two, a husband and wife, debate how they should deal with him, and eventually decide, strictly "by the law," that they must hang him. This allegory on the hypocrisy of capitalistic and bourgeois life was made on a very small budget but had great international success.

Thursdays, April 28, May 26, and June 23, at 6:00 p.m.

*The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, 1927  
Directed by Esfir Shub  
Black-and-white film, 87 minutes

Esfir Shub, perhaps the best known among the women filmmakers of the Soviet avant-garde, created this powerful documentary of tsarist Russia. Her technique is itself revolutionary: the film, stitched together from archival and found footage, includes selections from forgotten films she discovered in storerooms and cupboards all over the Soviet Union, footage that had been sold to the United States, and newsreels and home movies made by Tsar Nicholas II's film crew. A pioneer of editing, Shub spliced key images and fragments to contrast the privileged life of the imperial family with the backbreaking labor of the masses.

Fridays, May 13 and June 10, at 7:00 p.m.

*The House on Trubnaya*, 1928  
Directed by Boris Barnet  
Black-and-white film, 84 minutes

This film, considered among the best of the Soviet silent comedies, follows the trials and tribulations of Parasha, a peasant girl who finds romance and political consciousness after moving to Moscow. As the film begins, Parasha, clutching a duck, has just arrived from the countryside and is searching for her uncle's address, only to be led in all the wrong directions by passersby. Boris Barnet fuses the popular with the avant-garde while satirizing Moscow life during the New Economic Policy (NEP) period in a series of comic scenes that verge on the absurd.

Thursdays, May 5, June 2, and June 30, at 6:00 p.m.

*Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929  
Directed by Dziga Vertov  
Black-and-white film, 67 minutes

*Man with a Movie Camera* is one of the silent era's most influential films. Startlingly modern, it features a groundbreaking style of rapid editing, done by Dziga Vertov's wife, Elizaveta Svilova, and innumerable other cinematic effects. Shot in Odessa, Kiev, and Kharkiv over three years, the film captures twenty-four hours in the life of a Soviet city. It presents urban Russian life as a dizzying montage of people at work and play, and the machines that endlessly whirl to keep the metropolis alive. It is also about the artifice of filmmaking, with scenes of film being edited and of a film audience.

Fridays, April 22, May 20, June 17, and July 1, at 7:00 p.m.

*Mother*, 1926  
Directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin  
Black-and-white film, 87 minutes

*Mother*, based on a novel by Maxim Gorky, depicts a woman's fight against tsarist rule during the 1905 Revolution. She is not, at first, politically aware, but becomes involved in the struggle when her husband and son take opposite sides during a workers' strike. Her husband dies in the strike; her son is arrested, summarily tried, and sentenced to hard labor in a prison camp. Awakened, she joins the revolutionaries, who attempt to free the camp's prisoners. In the climax, tsarist troops suppress the uprising, and both mother and son are killed. Vsevolod Pudovkin uses crosscutting to enhance his narrative.

Fridays, May 6 and June 3, at 7:00 p.m.

*October, or Ten Days That Shook the World*, 1927

Directed by Sergei Eisenstein  
Black-and-white film, 102 minutes

Officially produced to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, *October* traces the fall of the tsar, the rise of Lenin, and the triumph of the Bolsheviks. As in *Battleship Potemkin*, Eisenstein experimented in film technique, using explosive montage to evoke the spirit of revolution—in this case, the events in St. Petersburg during the period leading up to the Bolshevik revolt—and deploying space, shadow, movement, and rhythm to convey mood and meaning. A workers' rebellion in the streets becomes a visual symphony of panic.

Thursdays, May 12 and June 9, at 6:55 p.m.

*The Overcoat*, 1926

Directed by Grigory Kozintsev  
Black-and-white film, 63 minutes

*The Overcoat*, based on Nikolai Gogol's 1842 story of the same title, was produced by FEKS (Factory of the Eccentric Actor), an experimental collective known for its stylized acting and expressionistic cinematography. An impoverished clerk in the tsarist government, Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, saves his rubles to have a fine new overcoat made. When a group of thugs attacks him and steals it, he seeks help from the bureaucracy, but is rejected. His world collapses and he begins to lose his grasp on reality. The film is distinctive for the use of enveloping shadows, strong contrasts, silhouettes, and radical camera angles.

Thursdays, May 5, June 2, and June 30, at 7:25 p.m.

*Salt for Svanetia*, 1930

Directed by Mikhail Kalatozov  
Black-and-white film, 52 minutes

Criticized when first released for its hyperbole and naturalism, *Salt for Svanetia* is now regarded as one of Mikhail Kalatozov's best films. A drama about the struggle for survival of a small isolated community in the Caucasus, the film is shot in a documentary, ethnographic style, recording the daily work of the villagers and their ancient ways of farming. High in the mountains, the people lack salt until the Soviet government builds a road to reach them. The camera becomes part of the story through dynamic movement, a characteristic of Kalatozov's later films.

Thursdays, May 12 and June 9, at 6:00 p.m.  
Fridays, April 22, May 20, June 17, and July 1, at 8:10 p.m.

*Storm over Asia*, 1928

Directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin

Black-and-white film, 125 minutes

In *Storm over Asia*, a young Mongolian trapper is cheated out of a valuable fur by a British trader. He subsequently joins a band of Bolshevik partisans fighting the occupying British army. He is captured and sentenced to death, but a document found in an amulet around his neck leads his captors to think that he is a descendant of Genghis Khan. The British hope to install him as a puppet ruler, but he rebels and leads his people to victory over their oppressors. The film was shot largely on location in Mongolia, with panoramic views of vast landscapes.

Fridays, April 29, May 27, and June 24, at 6:50 p.m.

*Turksib*, 1929

Directed by Viktor Turin

Black-and-white film, 57 minutes

A stirring chronicle of the building of the Turkestan–Siberia railway, Viktor Turin's *Turksib* had a major influence on British and American documentary films in the 1930s. The film recounts the construction of this important transportation link, one of the Soviet Union's earliest grand modernization projects. In addition to featuring camerawork with an epic sweep, Turin incorporates newsreel footage and stock shots from previous Soviet propaganda films into his documentary. The MIT-educated Turin learned the movie business at Hollywood's Vitagraph Studios and became a fan of westerns before returning to the Soviet Union to direct this career-defining film.

Thursdays, April 21, May 19, and June 16, at 6:00 p.m.

Please also join us for **special theater screenings** at Vanderbilt University's Sarratt Cinema, Third Man Records' Light + Sound Machine, and the Frist Center's auditorium. Visit [fristcenter.org/films](http://fristcenter.org/films) for more information.

*The Power of Pictures: Early Soviet Photography and Film* is organized by the Jewish Museum, New York. The exhibition is made possible by the Eugene and Emily Grant Family Foundation, The David Berg Foundation, Andrew and Marina Lewin Foundation, the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Exhibition Fund.

The Frist Center for the Visual Arts is supported in part by the Metro Nashville Arts Commission, the Tennessee Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts.