

## Document Citation

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## ZVENIGORA

### ZVENYHORA

(USSR/1928)      silent      \$30.00

102 minutes at silent speed of 16 fps (75 minutes if projected at sound speed)  
English titles.

Directed by Alexander Dovzhenko - Screenplay by Yuri Yurtik, Mikhail Johansen - Cinematography by Boris Zavelyov - Art Direction by Vasili Krichevsky - A VUFKU (Odessa) Production. Players: Mikola Vademsky (*Grandad and General*), Semyon Svashenko (*Tymish*), Alexander Podorozhny (*Parlo*).

As yet unhampered by bureaucratic production committees and strict-and-shifty party-line critics (such as the one who, by his disapproval alone, was able to have several scenes excised from the later masterwork, *Earth*), Dovzhenko here let soar his imagination, his creative spirit and his love for his homeland of the Ukraine to create a myth, a legend, a poem, a revolutionary tract, a theatrical dramatization, a document, a song, a black comedy. All of these are in this film, his first major creative work.

*Zvenigora* has no conventional story; instead, it has a theme: a love of the land symbolized as a treasure buried in the land. From the repulsion of the Polish invaders 1,000 years before (they encounter a death figure who presages Death in *The Seventh Seal*) to the revolution of 1918 and the civil war that follows, a grandfather figure spans the ages, mystically intent on protecting the "treasure". He even resolves to dig it up when the land is threatened by the ebb and flow of civil strife.

One of his grandsons (Tymish) becomes a revolutionary soldier and foreshadows the hero of *Arsenal*; the other (Parlo), having helped dig for the treasure (the excavation is terminated by a passing, obese military commander), becomes a bandit and counter-revolutionary and still believes that the riches lie buried. He manages to raise money abroad, to renew the treasure hunt by charging for a lecture that he promises will conclude with his suicide on the stage in front of the audience (presaging *Network?*). The sadistic anticipation of the audience is brought to fever pitch by Parlo's preparations for his death and then suddenly extended as he remembers he has something more to tell them—resulting in a scene of comic, grotesque satire. But even Parlo, with all his ingenuity, cannot "rob" the land of its treasure, for as in *Blockade*, in which Henry Fonda senses just such a treasure in the land—the treasure is inherent. —KP

... *Zvenigora* has remained <sup>the maker</sup> my most interesting picture for me. I made it in one breath—a hundred days. Unusually complicated in structure, electric in form, the film gave me, a self-taught production worker, the fortuitous opportunity of trying myself out in every genre. It was a catalogue of all my creative abilities." —Alexander Dovzhenko  
*The Poet as Filmmaker: Selected Writings*  
Edited and translated by Marco Carynnyk

NOTE: Print quality varies, but is the best available.

1979