

Document Citation

Title	War and peace
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Source	<i>Reader (Chicago, Ill.)</i>
Date	2007 Jun 01
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	12
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Voyna i mir (War and peace), Bondarchuk, Sergei, 1967

Critic's Choice

War and Peace

Sergei Bondarchuk's epic 1967 adaptation of the Tolstoy novel, screening in four parts, is the most expensive movie ever made, and though it can be bombastic and mind-numbing, it's often lively and eye filling. The balls and battle scenes are monumental, and Bondarchuk (who plays the bumbling Pierre, as Orson Welles would have in the 40s if he'd realized his own version with Alexander Korda) moves his camera a lot, incorporating some expressive 60s-style flourishes. Even at 415 minutes (over an hour shorter than the Soviet release) this rarely suggests the vision behind Tolstoy's set pieces or populist polemics; his feeling for incidental detail is more evident in (non-Tolstoyan) films like *The Leopard* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*. This is a landmark in the history of commerce and post-Stalinist Russia, but not cinema. If you'd like to merely sample it, try parts one and three. With Lyudmila Savelyeva (graceful as Natasha), Vyacheslav Tikhonov (suitably morose as Andrei), and more than 100,000 extras. In Russian and French with subtitles. Part one: 147 min. Part two: 86 min. Part three: 83 min. Part four: 98 min. ▶▶ Part one: Fri 6/1, 6 PM, Sat 6/2, 2:30 PM, and Mon 6/4, 6:30 PM; part two: Fri 6/1, 8:45 PM, Sat 6/2, 5:15 PM, and Tue 6/5, 6:15 PM; part three: Sun 6/3, 2:30 PM, Tue 6/5, 8 PM, and Wed 6/6, 6:15 PM; part four: Sun 6/3, 4:15 PM, Wed 6/6, 8 PM, and Thu 6/7, 6:15 PM; \$9 per part or \$30 for all four; Gene Siskel Film Center. —Jonathan Rosenbaum

