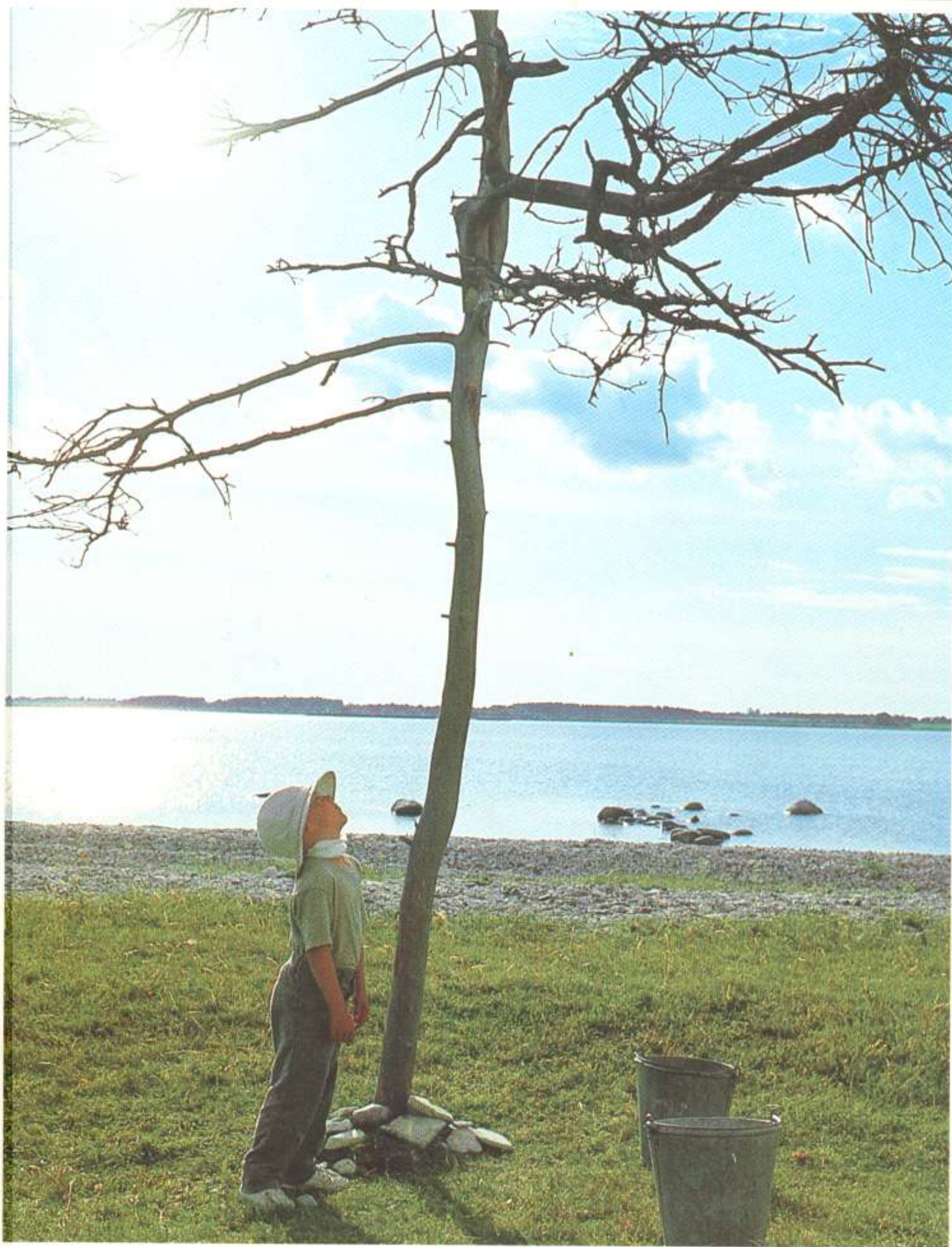


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Марк



My discovery of Tarkovsky's first film was like a miracle.  
Suddenly, I found myself standing at the door of a room  
the keys of which had, until then, never been given to me.  
It was a room I had always wanted to enter  
and where he was moving freely and fully at ease.  
I felt encouraged and stimulated: someone was expressing  
what I had always wanted to say without knowing how.  
Tarkovsky is for me the greatest, the one who invented  
a new language, true to the nature of film,  
as it captures life as a reflection, life as a dream.

Ingmar Bergman

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Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Endowment  
and the  
The Hopkins Center  
of  
Dartmouth College  
present

THE FILMS  
OF  
ANDREI TARKOVSKY  
A COMPLETE RETROSPECTIVE

Loews Theatre  
Hood Museum of Art

October 9 - November 20, 1986

With program notes by  
Barry Scherr,  
Professor of Russian, Dartmouth College

And an introduction  
by  
Ian Christie, Archivist, British Film Institute



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## Visionary Realism

### The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky

In all my ways let me pierce through  
Into the very essence,  
At work, or following my path,  
Or in heartfelt perturbation.

Pasternak

There is an instructive anecdote from the making of *ANDREI RUBLEV*. The original script called for a peasant to launch himself from the cathedral tower on a pair of home-made wings, before crashing to his death. But something seemed wrong with this – too symbolic of human aspiration in the abstract; too precisely evocative of the myth of Icarus. The solution? To make the peasant's flying machine a primitive balloon, patched together from skins and rags, which dispels the "spurious rhetoric" of the scene and transforms it into "a concrete happening, a human catastrophe." The method recalls Auden's evocation of the everyday context in which the Old Masters portrayed suffering:

They never forget  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life

We are indeed in the presence of an Old Master, who is also our contemporary, our conscience, our critic. A master who claims his place amongst such others as Bresson, Mizoguchi, Dovzhenko, Paradzhanov, Buñuel; and who sternly recalls us to an almost forgotten rubric – the art of cinema.

1. Andrei Tarkovsky's films arouse strong passions. For some, they provide the equivalent of a religious experience, an indescribable encounter with a sensibility that seems almost to belong to another age: a seeker after spiritual values in a cynical, materialistic era; a maker of haunting, enigmatic images amid the shallow fluency of contemporary culture – in short, a true artist. For others, correspondingly, they represent a withdrawal into pretentious obscurity and aestheticism, the ultimate hypertrophy of "art cinema." Above all, they require a personal response by the spectator, a willingness to cast away the props of genre and, increasingly, narrative, and follow the films intuitively, patiently wherever they lead. They are, says Tarkovsky, for the discriminating few. Let the rest settle for mere entertainment.

Perhaps the best way to understand Tarkovsky's trajectory up to the present is to see it as a continuous process of paring away the inessential to discover the irreducible. It began early, when he started as a student at the central film school in Moscow, VGIK, in 1954 and wrote an essay condemning the monumental



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style of historical epic that was still prevalent in the aftermath of Stalin's reign. Already in this precocious text, as the Russian critic Maya Turovskaya notes, he attacked the use of artificial "metaphors" in film and insisted on the "creative" potential of the audience. Six years later, his graduation film, *THE STEAMROLLER AND THE VIOLIN*, made good use of the great liberation that Soviet filmmakers experienced in the post-Stalin years, allowing its powerful physical images to carry as much weight as the slender story of a boy befriended by a steamroller driver. Mirrors, a rainstorm, an apple – the icons of Tarkovsky's future work are all present in this first short film.

With his first feature, he took on the accumulated tradition of the Soviet war genre, but *IVAN'S CHILDHOOD* rejects any conventional heroics and, in one quintessentially Tarkovskian scene, shows the youthful Ivan "playing" at war, when he is in fact embroiled in an all too real war. In his epic fresco of the life of Russia's greatest icon painter, *ANDREI RUBLEV*, Tarkovsky created what has been hailed as the only *real* historical film of the Soviet era. But the reality in question was not a matter of scholarly authenticity. It derived in large part from the freedom which Rublev's virtually unknown biography granted; and from Tarkovsky's painstaking insistence on thinking through the *human* – rather than superficially symbolic – significance of such episodes as the peasant's flight and the casting of the bell. For similar reasons, *SOLARIS* disappointed many science fiction enthusiasts (including the author of the novel on which it was based, Stanislaw Lem) because it introduced a Tarkovskian "nostalgia for the particular" in the haunting earth sequences with which it begins and ends. And in *THE MIRROR*, Tarkovsky finally abandoned all reference to genre, basing the film's bewildering structure on a counterpoint between dream and memory.

Since this turning point, his three subsequent films, *STALKER*, *NOSTALGIA* and *THE SACRIFICE* have ventured into a subjective terrain that is his alone. Increasingly freed from the dynamic of narrative, they open onto an interior landscape of intense dream-like images which aim to strike an emotional chord in the viewer. Tarkovsky vehemently insists that they are neither allegorical nor deliberately enigmatic. They embody a restless, unfettered search for meaning and value in an era where these have been obscured by banal slogans and stories.

2. If the first half of Tarkovsky's career represents a ruthless demolition of the conventional structures of film communication, his later work reveals the birth of a new aesthetic. His recently published writings, entitled *SCULPTING IN TIME*, make clear the terms of this hard-won definition. Its cornerstone is a rejection of all dialectical or montage-based theories of cinema. For Tarkovsky, these are based on the fallacy of locating meaning *outside* the image itself and on the mistaken belief that cinematic rhythm is *constructed* by the director. Instead, he argues in a



striking metaphor, it would be truer to say that the filmmaker carves his finished work out of the pre-existing reality of the film itself. His responsibility is to organize the "flow" of time through the temporal structure that is the film's primary material. What attracts audiences to films, he believes, is the opportunity to enter another modality of experience and participate fully in it.

At the core of his ontology, then, is a conception of the filmic image as an element of reality in which time itself is inscribed. It is not therefore a complex sign or referent, but a kind of artistic "raw material" like the sculptor's medium. We can certainly compare this view with Bazin's notion of "mummified time," and his theological commitment to film's intrinsic realism; but it would be wrong to see Tarkovsky's ultimate aim as simply the revelation of reality in all its diversity. He maintains that not only most cinema, but the main thrust of 20th century art, has taken a "wrong turn." Preoccupied with society as it is (or might be), and with the ideal of scientific knowledge, it has abandoned the spiritual quest for the infinite, the absolute. And nothing less than this ultimate duty will satisfy Tarkovsky as the true purpose of art. But what saves the work from a collapse into mysticism is his rigorous insistence on the intrinsic "realism" of film art — a realism that includes memory and dream within its epistemology and can properly be characterized as visionary.



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3. Tarkovsky is already becoming a remote figure, prematurely shrouded in the mystic aura that seems in danger of clouding his hitherto clear vision. The hypnotic intensity of his rhythm now appears sometimes mechanical or merely sluggish. For all his genuine admiration of such diverse filmmakers as Bresson, Ford, Mizoguchi, Fellini, and among his Soviet contemporaries Paradzhanov and Ioseliani – he seems to find comfort in a hagiographic view of himself as “the last master.” In the eyes of some, this is a deserved canonization. It confirms their own reaction against the politicization of cinema, against experimentation, against the journalistic and naturalistic imperatives of television. It restores art, understood in a purist sense, and reverence for genius to their proper centrality. Indeed it reaffirms the tarnished conviction that cinema is indeed the greatest art of this century, and in some respect the culmination of man’s artistic striving through the ages.

But while we may agree that in Tarkovsky’s searing vision of a world fallen from grace “the time of the image has come” (as an earlier prophet, Abel Gance, declared), we may also regret the accelerating retreat of this lonely visionary from the world around him. This seems to be an inevitable consequence of his tragic separation from the “great theme of Russia” that so powerfully inspired his finest works. For Tarkovsky remains, even in exile, indelibly a Russian artist, nourished by the same tradition that produced Rublev, Pushkin, Gogol and his revered Dostoevsky. And it is my belief that he cannot finally be understood outside that tradition, however much he may despise its satraps and its (relatively mild) reproaches towards him. Whether he can continue to create outside it with his earlier conviction and true originality remains an open question.

Ian Christie, August, 1986

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## Biography

Andrei Tarkovsky was born in Zavrozje in the district of Ivanov in 1932. He grew up in Peredelkino, an artists' village near Moscow. His father is the well-known poet Arsenij Tarkovsky (born 1907). Some of his poems are quoted in *THE MIRROR* and *STALKER*. Tarkovsky's parents were divorced when he was a small child, but he had a close relationship with both of them. His mother – who was a proof-reader – took the main responsibility for Andrei's education, his father being on active service during the Second World War.

Tarkovsky at first studied widely differing subjects – music, painting, sculpture, Arabic and geology. It was only in 1954 that he applied for admission to VGIK, the Moscow film school. Andrei Tarkovsky considers his master in cinema to be Michail Romm, who headed the film school for many years. In Tarkovsky's own words: "he taught me how to be myself."

In 1960, Tarkovsky made his graduate film *THE STEAM-ROLLER AND THE VIOLIN*. Two years later, at the age of 30, he made his feature film debut with *IVAN'S CHILDHOOD* which won several international awards, among them the Golden Lion at the Venice film festival.

From this moment, considerable resources were put at Tarkovsky's disposal. He could set about his huge project on the legendary medieval icon painter Andrey Rublev, which was finished in 1966. However, over the next five years the film could not be shown as it was accused of being antihistorical and anti-national. Later on, this film also received several awards.

Andrei Tarkovsky's third film was *SOLARIS*, based on the novel by Stanislaw Lem. *SOLARIS* was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the 1972 Cannes festival.

In 1975, he started the production of *THE MIRROR*, which is autobiographical. Its complicated structure was met with violent criticism in the Soviet Union and the film had only a limited distribution. Foreign sales were also prohibited for a number of years. It was not until 1978 that *THE MIRROR* was premiered in Paris in the presence of Tarkovsky who declared that uncompromising directors have problems wherever they make their films.

*STALKER* (1979) is based freely on the novel "Picnic by the Roadside" by the Strugatsky brothers. The production period of *STALKER* was very long as Tarkovsky disapproved of the color and interrupted the shooting for some time. In this film, he was also responsible for the art direction. His wife Larissa was his assistant director.

*NOSTALGHIA* was made in Italy in 1982 and has been widely acclaimed all over the world. The film is a result of his collaboration with the Italian script-writer Tonino Guerra. This was also Tarkovsky's first encounter with Erland Josephson, for whom he then wrote the leading part in *THE SACRIFICE*.



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## Andrei Tarkovsky talks about . . .

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### *his first encounter with film-making:*

Some film-makers know from the start that cinema is the right thing for them. I had doubts, had little feeling for it. I knew there were major technical aspects but had not understood that cinema is a means of expression like poetry, music or literature. Even after shooting IVAN'S CHILDHOOD I had not understood the director's role. Only later did I realize that cinema gives you the possibility of achieving spiritual essence.

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### *auteur films:*

Cinema is based on two types of directors who make two different types of films: those who imitate the world they live in, and those who create their own world – the poets in cinema. And I believe only the poets will go down in the history of cinema, like Bresson, Dovzhenko, Mizoguchi, Bergman, Buñuel, Kurosawa.

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### *time:*

I think cinema is the only art that operates within the concept of temporality. Not because of its developing in time; there are also other art forms that do so: ballet, music, theatre. I mean "time" in the literal sense of the word. What is a take, from the moment we say "action" till the moment we say "stop"? It is the fixing of reality, the essence of time, a way of preserving time which allows us to roll and unroll it forever. No other form of art can do that.

Therefore, cinema is a mosaic made of time.

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### *water:*

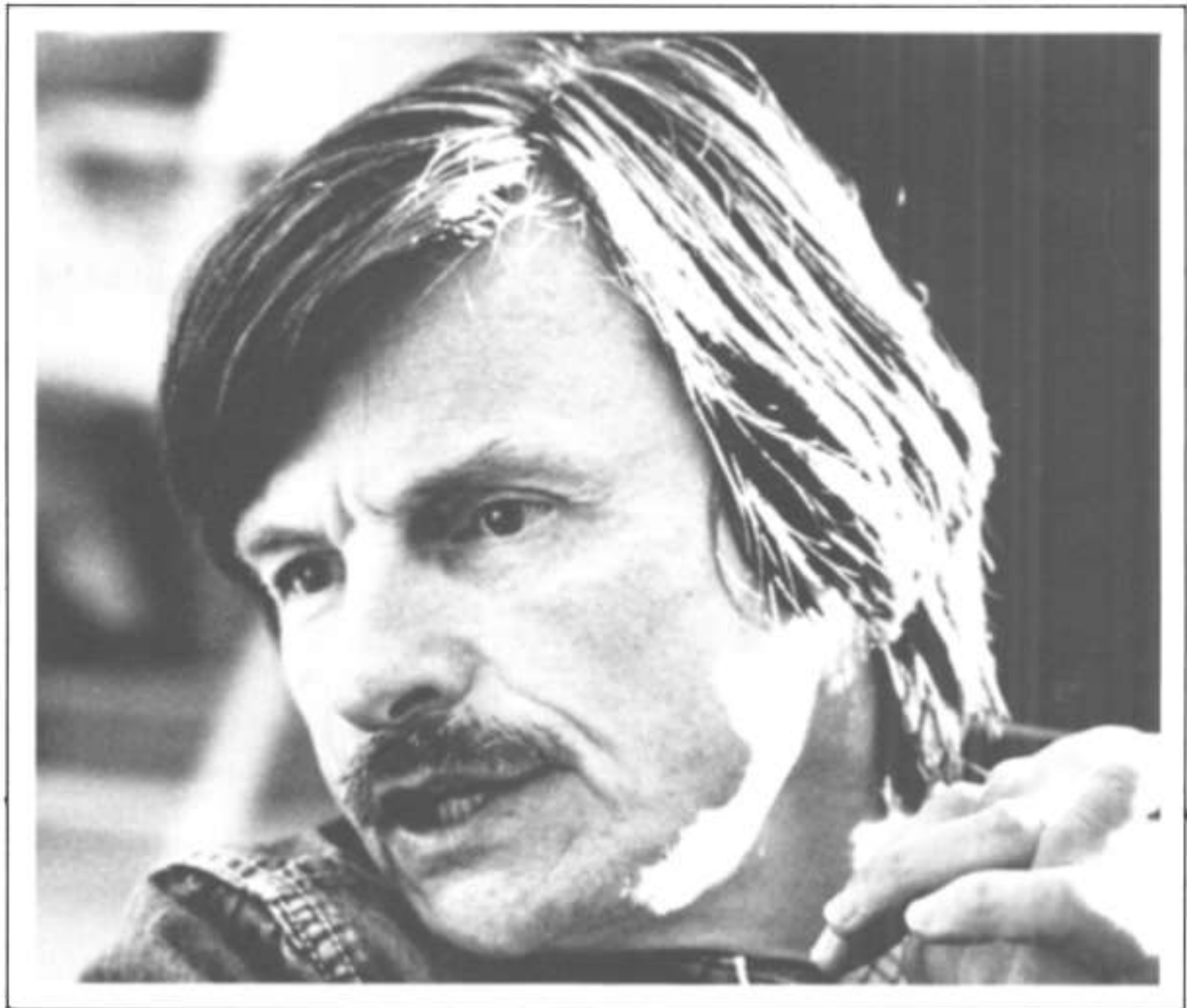
There is always water in my films. I like water, especially brooks. The sea is too vast. I don't fear it, it is just monotonous. In nature, I like smaller things. Microcosm, not macrocosm; limited surfaces. I love the Japanese attitude to nature. They concentrate on a confined space reflecting the infinite. Water is a mysterious element due to its monocular structure. And it is very cinegenic; it transmits movement, depth, changes. Nothing is more beautiful than water.

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### *color:*

Color films seemed more realistic at their dawn but now they are in a blind alley. Color cinema is a great mistake. All forms of art aim at truth and then seek a generalization, a model idea. But truth in life does not correspond to truth in art.

Color is part of our physiological and psychological perception of the external world. We live in a colored world but don't realize that unless something makes us aware of it. We don't think of color while looking



at this colored world. But when shooting a color scene we organize it and close it up in a frame that we force upon the audience and we give them thousands of such color postcards. To me, black and white is more expressive and realistic because it does not distract the spectator but enables him to concentrate on the essence of the film. I think color made the cinematographic art more false and less true.

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*film-making as a profession, and as a way of life:*

I enjoy inventing my films – writing the script, creating the scenes, looking for locations. But the shooting is not interesting. Once all has been thought out you have to shape it into a film technically, and that is boring.

I never managed to separate my life from my films, and I have always had to make crucial choices. Many directors manage to live one way and express other ideas in their work; they are able to split their conscience. I am not. To me cinema is not just a job. It's my life.

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*audiences:*

I never think of the audience's attitudes. It is difficult to be in their shoes; it's useless and unpleasant. Some people try to predict the future success of a film. I am not one of those. The best attitude towards the audience is to remain oneself, to use a personal language they will understand. Poets and authors do not try to be liked, they do not know how to please. They know the public will accept them.





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October 9 at 7:30 p.m.

**My Name Is Ivan** (1962)

also **The Steamroller and the Violin** (1960)

MY NAME IS IVAN (the Russian title, translated literally, means Ivan's childhood) is Tarkovsky's first full-length film and in some ways a less complex work than those that follow. It offers, though, tantalizing glimpses of what Tarkovsky was to do in his later films. The dream sequences, while not yet as abstract as they were to become, nonetheless produce a powerful impact. Tarkovsky's fascination with water imagery and his use of religious motifs (a chief setting is a bunker in an abandoned church) are already evident. The arresting camera angles and scenic compositions anticipate the remarkable cinematography of ANDREI RUBLEV and subsequent works. Especially prominent is the sense of texture: it is almost possible to feel the trees, the mud, the stone. And of course the hero, the 12-year-old Ivan, is indicative of a profound interest in children and childhood, as could already be seen in Tarkovsky's diploma film, THE STEAMROLLER AND THE VIOLIN. For the latter, by the way, he had already assembled part of the team – including his cameraman, Vadim Yusov – that was to work with him until he left the Soviet Union.

For all the similarities, MY NAME IS IVAN differs radically from the later films. Despite the dreams, the narrative is relatively straightforward and easy to follow; the symbolism seems more an adornment than the very core of the film. This is a realistic work, not without a sense of poetry, yet for the most part lacking the highly subjective and complex viewpoint that has now come to be associated with Tarkovsky. For all that, MY NAME IS IVAN is neither an immature nor a minor work, simply different – indeed, the jurors at the 1962 Venice Film Festival saw fit to have it share the grand prize. Like many Soviet films then and since, it deals with the Second World War: western viewers rediscovered the Soviet cinema largely through such films as BALLAD OF A SOLDIER and THE CRANES ARE FLYING. MY NAME IS IVAN is distinguished from its predecessors first of all by its story. Rather than explore the traumas of adults in wartime, it tells of a child, a war orphan, who works behind enemy lines as a scout. Little of his dangerous work is actually shown, though; at the beginning he returns from one mission and towards the end he sets off on another. The film concentrates not on battles, but on the psychological makeup of Ivan, who has lost his mother, his father, and his sister in the war. He is consumed not just by a hatred of the enemy (which would be understandable enough) but also by a fierce determination to continue his personal fight, even as the older soldiers who have befriended him want him to attend school instead. The adults – the youthful Lt. Galtsev, the more experienced Capt. Kholin – seem almost gentle when juxtaposed with Ivan's fanatic dedication. The dream sequences go back to the era before the war, to Ivan's childhood – perhaps real, perhaps partly imagined – where he is often a playful, happy boy. We see what was and what should have been. The tragedy that the film depicts is not just in its ending, for long before then Ivan had already been robbed of his past and his innocence.





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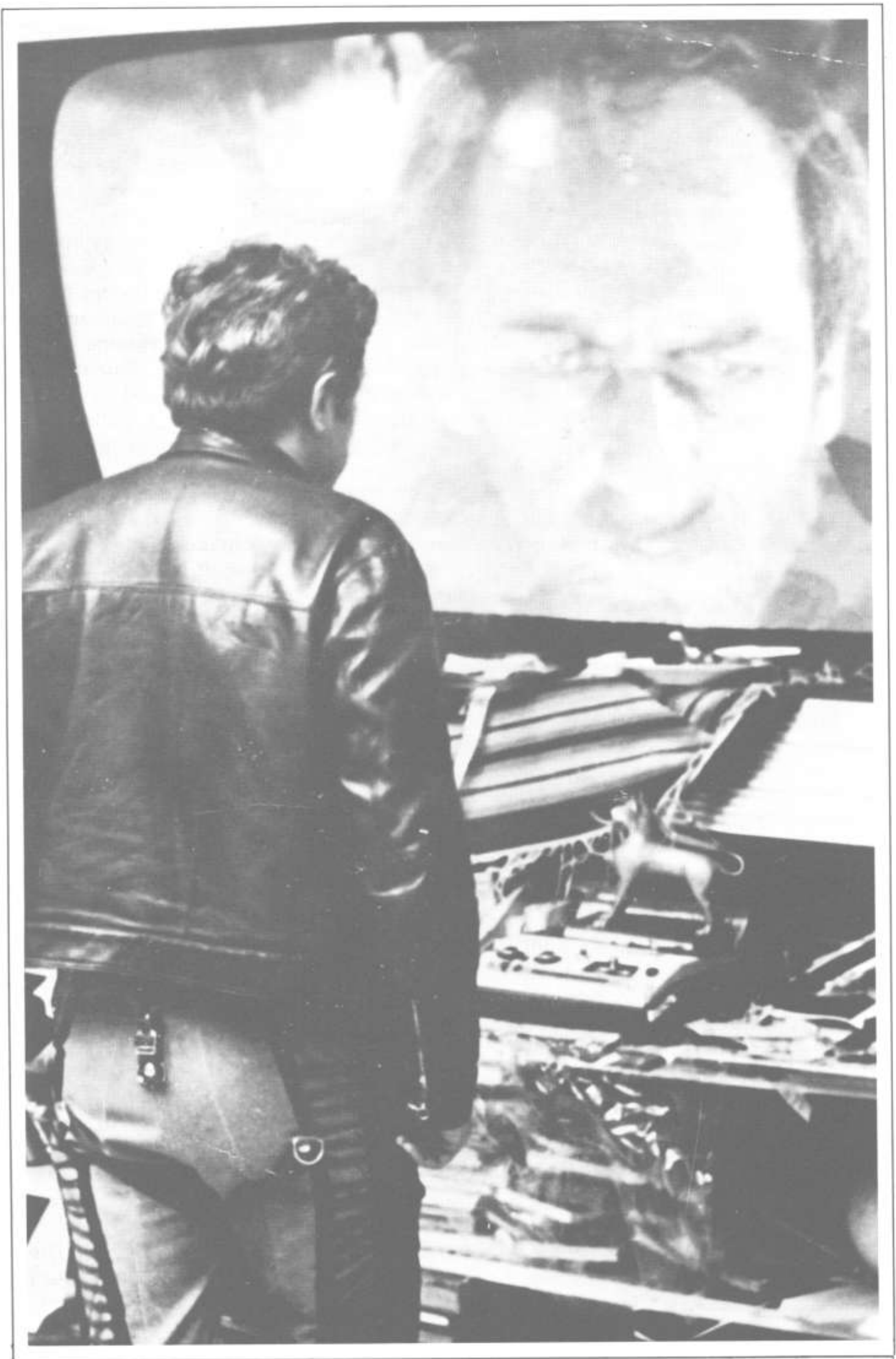
October 16 at 7:30 p.m.  
**Andrei Rublev (1965)**

ANDREI RUBLEV explodes before the viewer with its strange but powerful scenes from Russia's dark past and it ultimately offers a very individual meditation on Russian culture and its meaning for the present day. Very little is known about Rublev, who is universally acknowledged to be Russia's greatest icon painter. He was born between 1360 and 1370 and died between 1427 and 1430. Although certainly not quite as in the film, he did know Feofan Grek (Theophanes the Greek), another great icon painter, who had an early influence on Rublev but whose own icons seem sterner, in contrast to Rublev's representing more of an Old Testament spirit than a New. Rublev worked in Moscow, then in 1408 he painted the frescoes and the iconostasis for the Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir (an event described in the film). Later, in the 1420s, he is known to have worked on the iconostasis in Zagorsk, which to this day is the center for the Russian Orthodox Church. Rublev's biography is dotted with lacunae, which Tarkovsky fills in with fragments of Russian history and legend, along the way creating a historically fictionalized yet spiritually plausible account of his life.

The eight scenes which, along with a prologue and epilogue, comprise the film may at first seem only loosely related, but numerous links exist. Thus the bell tower in the prologue foreshadows the eighth scene, devoted to the casting of a giant bell; the conversation between Feofan and Andrei in the third scene is followed by the appearance of Feofan's shade to a distraught Andrei in the sixth. Also running through the film are specific references to aspects of early Russia. The buffoon who performs in the first scene is a *skomorokh*, one of the wandering minstrels of the time. His bawdy song is indicative of Russia's pagan past, a topic treated as well in the fourth scene ("The Holiday"), where Andrei is captured by some revelers celebrating a pre-Christian rite and then freed by a naked woman. The sixth scene, "The Raid," shows the destruction wrought by the Mongols, who had subjugated Russia a century and a half earlier and played upon divisions among the Russian princes to exercise their control. Hence the rivalry in the film between the Great Prince and his brother, the Lesser Prince, who are played by the same actor.

Ultimately, though, the film is not just about Russia's past or Rublev but about the need to follow a personal vision, a belief in mankind that can transcend one's immediate surroundings. The third scene, "The Passion According to Andrei," shows the crucifixion taking place in winter, in a Russian setting. Andrei is willing to assume Christ's burden; he has a faith that survives all the temptations and violence that he witnesses. Still, he is forced to endure much; finally driven to a vow of silence, he is inspired in the eighth scene by Boriska (played by Nikolai Burliaev, who had the lead role in MY NAME IS IVAN). The youth oversees the casting of the bell, and at the end the images of Russian spirituality come together: church, bell, and then icons. Despite horror and ugliness, faith can create ineffable beauty.





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October 23 at 7:30 p.m.  
**Solaris** (1971)

After completing *ANDREI RUBLEV*, set in Russia's distant past, Tarkovsky set to work on a film that seems the exact opposite – *SOLARIS*, the first of his science fiction films, which is set in the distant future and is not directly concerned with Russia. In discussing the novel by Stanislaw Lem on which the film is based, Tarkovsky claimed that the essence of the novel is "the moral education of man in connection with new discoveries in the field of scientific perception." It is important for Tarkovsky that the protagonist "does not betray those moral norms which he considers obligatory. For to do so in this instance would have meant staying on the old level without even trying to climb to a new one." Thus in a sense the problem of the two films is the same – both deal with the spiritual quality of man, with the need to remain true to and to grow through a set of beliefs in the face of external challenges.

The film's hero, Kris Kelvin, comes to a space station that hovers above the mysterious planet of Solaris, which contains a vast Ocean that appears to be a form of intelligent life. Not long before his arrival one of the three crewmen has committed suicide, and the remaining two have been reduced to a state of terror. Through the influence of this Ocean each person on board the ship comes to materialize a copy of some individual who haunts his conscience. In the case of Kris he eventually comes face to face with Hari, his young wife who had committed suicide after he left her. Kris wants to understand Solaris, to conquer it, to release the hold that Ocean has on him. But to do so means destroying this double of Hari, toward whom he begins to experience some of the same feelings that he had for the actual Hari. On the one hand the past cannot return and the memories of it are painful; on the other memory brings self-recognition and growth. Kris is caught in a dilemma which has no easy resolution.

*SOLARIS* is in most respects a relatively straightforward adaptation of Lem's novel. The plot, the characters, the names, even many of the minor incidents are all retained. However, two significant differences illustrate Tarkovsky's own stamp. First, while Lem himself is always primarily interested in philosophical and moral issues, he does include much in his novel that is indeed based on science: many pages are given over to describing such features of Solaris as extensors, mimoids, symmetriads, and asymmetriads. The film, while including enough scientific paraphernalia to create a realistic space station, spends little time exploring scientific jargon and includes relatively few special effects: people, not science, are the topic. Second, the novel hardly deals with Kris's life on Earth. The film, though, opposes the Earth to the Ocean of Solaris. In the course of an illness Kris imagines his childhood, his mother, the wooden home in which he grew up. These memories, of Earth and a time of innocence, stand in opposition to the memories summoned by the Ocean; *SOLARIS* becomes a battle between these two essences.





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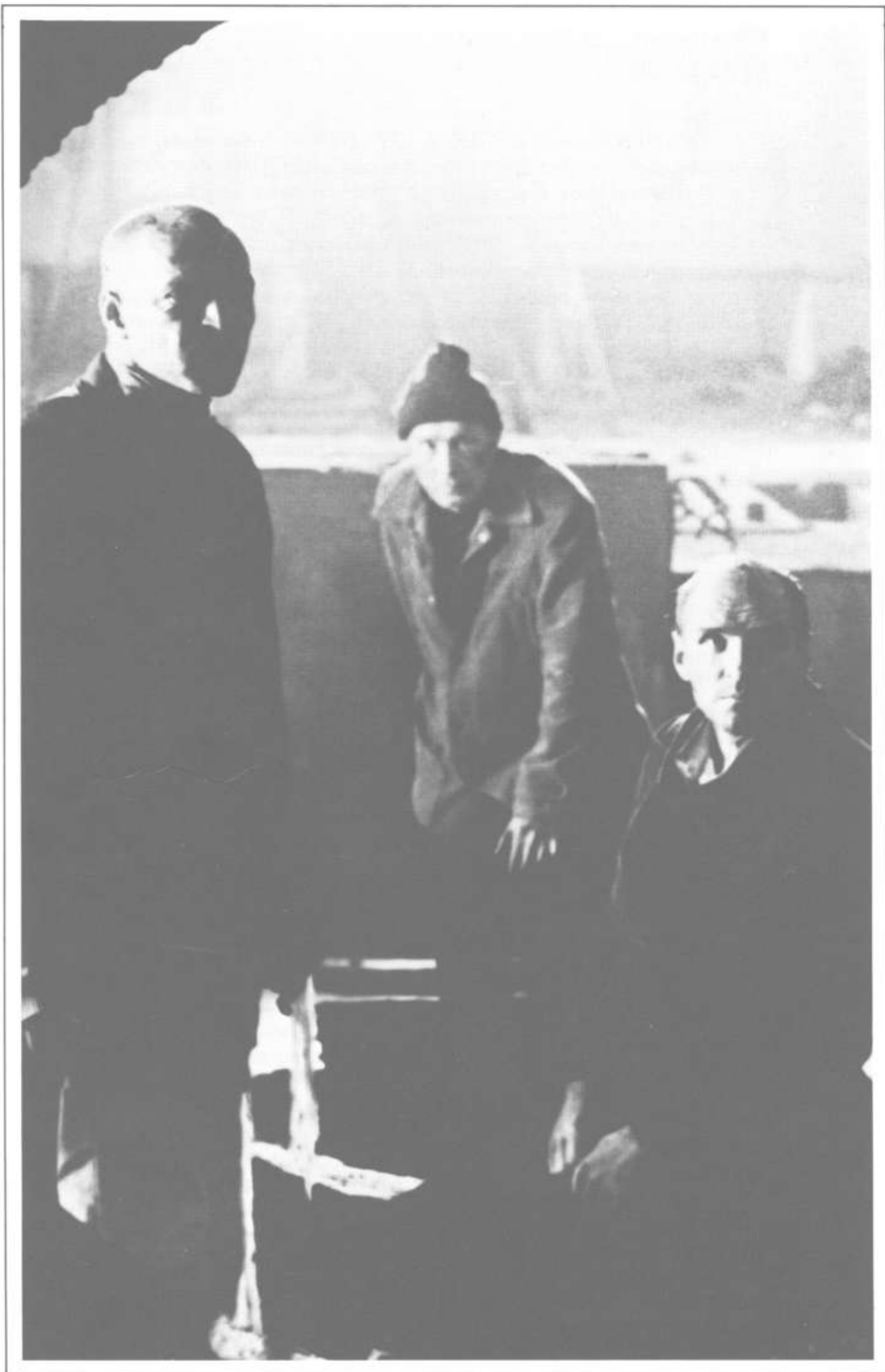
October 30 at 7:30 p.m.  
**The Mirror** (1975)

Of all Andrei Tarkovsky's films, *THE MIRROR* is the most autobiographical. Leaping back and forth between adulthood and several stages of his youth, it represents an attempt at capturing the "I," at attaining a unified sense of the self. Only a few facts are given. We learn that Tarkovsky's parents separated in 1935 (when he was three), that his mother worked as a proofreader, that his father, while not totally absent from his life, was a shadowy figure during his upbringing, and that he has a son who in many ways reminds him of himself as a child. If there were not enough similarities between the narrator and Tarkovsky, then the film poster of *ANDREI RUBLEV* on the wall of the narrator's apartment would drive the point home. Yet this is not a simple autobiography. Names have been changed; the chronology is scrambled (and at the end collapses entirely). The relative paucity of hard information helps make *THE MIRROR* a difficult work, as do the frequent shifts between various periods in the past and the present along with the work's densely metaphorical quality. Tarkovsky's father, the well-known poet Arseny Tarkovsky, reads four of his own lyrics at key moments; each in some way comments on an aspect of the film.

The imagery that pervades *THE MIRROR* is difficult to miss and equally difficult to interpret. Tarkovsky avoids directly allegorical symbols; he wants the viewer to sense rather than work out a meaning. Water in various guises is the most frequent motif, but also important are fire and birds. Equally complex is the use of black and white passages along with color. At first black and white (actually sepia) is used for a dream and a scene from the past; later, black and white documentary film is incorporated. However, the distinction breaks down: a scene from the present may employ black and white, a dream may switch from black and white to color.

The documentary footage, interspersed through the middle portions of the film, gives fleeting glimpses of the major world events that have occurred during the narrator's lifetime. Also important are cultural influences, which are shown as they are passed on to the narrator's son Ignat. (We hear but never see the adult narrator's face in the present.) Thus the son looks at a book about Leonardo da Vinci; only later is it shown how it came into the narrator's possession during his own youth. In one strange scene a woman appears in the narrator's library and asks Ignat to read a passage that had once been underlined by the narrator: it is a letter from Russia's greatest poet, Pushkin, to the philosopher Chaadayev regarding the significance of Russia's place in world history. Ignat's influences mirror the narrator's; the wife mirrors the mother (and both are played by the same actress, Margarita Terekhova): a sense of repetition and at the same time wholeness arises as the narrator presents the swirl of experiences that taken together finally comprise his identity.





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November 6 at 7:30 p.m.  
**Stalker** (1979)

The Russian title of STALKER is STALKER – the English word transliterated into Russian. Thus the original title is strangely untranslatable; it bears a quality of alienation that it inevitably loses before an English-speaking audience. Even so Americans will find no lack of strange features in the film. The Stalker is a person who guides people into the ominous Zone, a relatively small area, formerly inhabited, and now possessed by unknown forces that are hostile to living creatures. Various hypotheses for the origin of the Zone are put forth; the book on which the film is based, *ROADSIDE PICNIC*, by the prominent Soviet science fiction writers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, takes its title from the theory that the Zone arose after a visit by extraterrestrial creatures who left behind various bits of debris – for them it was nothing more than a roadside picnic. The Zone is now closely guarded by the authorities; just to make an unauthorized entry requires both cunning and daring, while to survive the trip is impossible without the services of a Stalker, a person familiar with the dangers that await visitors. On this trip the Stalker has two clients, a scientist (“not a chemist, more of a physicist”) and a writer; like the Stalker, they are identified not by their name but by their profession. Their reason for the perilous trip is to get to a room within a deserted hut where supposedly any wish will be granted, and as they enter the Zone the film shifts from sepia to a brilliant color.

The novel on which the film is based covers eight years and contains many more (named) characters and other details. In STALKER things are reduced to their bare essentials; Tarkovsky employs a kind of minimalist science fiction. Special effects are almost nil. The dangers that are described graphically in the novel appear only in the words and reactions of the film’s characters. The painfully long, circuitous route to travel the short distance to the mysterious room seems hardly justified by any external threat. In a way, though, that is precisely Tarkovsky’s point: the film is less about alien forces than about man himself, his own limitations and quests.

To the Stalker the Zone represents a familiar world; he fears it, yet he feels more at home there than he does on the outside. Beyond the Zone he has been imprisoned for illegal trips, has caused anxiety for his wife, and feels responsibility for his crippled child. The major theme, though, is that of belief. It could be said that the Zone is so fearful because the men believe in its dangers; the room’s magical powers depend on the men’s belief in those powers. As the three of them pursue their agonizing trek to their goal they reminisce on their own lives and begin to look inward. Each of three turns out to be less than firm in his convictions. Thus when they finally approach the room each feels trepidation: the challenge of physical danger and hardship is one thing, but the challenge to one’s beliefs is the most awesome that a person can face.





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November 13 at 7:30 p.m.  
**Nostalghia** (1983)

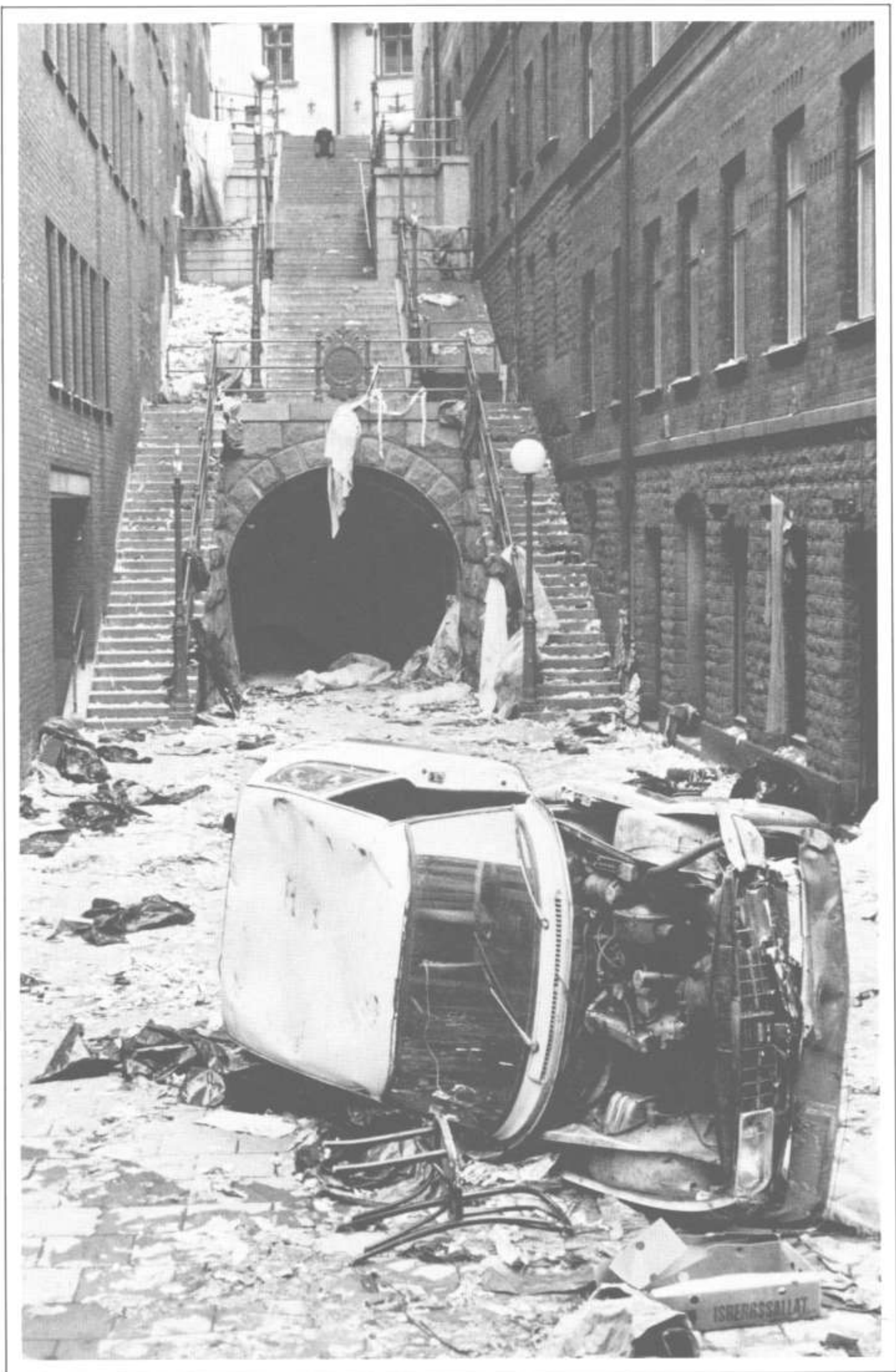
NOSTALGHIA, while not so autobiographical as *THE MIRROR*, nonetheless incorporates many details of the director's own life into its highly poetic, oftentimes obscure narrative. Even more than previously, Tarkovsky relies largely on the juxtaposition and accumulation of images, particularly fire and water, to hint at his meaning. For long stretches there is relatively little dialogue; its place is taken by gestures, by silences, by the prominence of objects. In short, this is not an easy film.

The protagonist, Andrei Gorchakov (his first name, of course, points to the director) has come to Italy to do research on an eighteenth-century Russian composer who had visited the country as well and then returned home only to commit suicide. A strained emotional involvement arises between Andrei and his Italian guide, Eugenia, but also of significance to him are his frequent flashbacks (to his present wife and children? to his childhood? — both the time and place remain obscure) and his encounters with Domenico, a madman who lives alone in a ruined house where he had kept his family imprisoned for seven years.

With this film Tarkovsky's use of color takes another step forward. As before, sepia is used for what appear to be dreams, visions, or flashbacks. However, at times Tarkovsky seems to blur the distinction between black and white and color. For instance, when Andrei and Eugenia arrive at a church near the beginning of the film she gets out of the car and immediately blends into the landscape, which is distinguished only by various tones. At first her figure provides a spot of color, but as she walks away the entire scene becomes monochromatic.

Three interlocking concerns run through the film. One of course is nostalgia, the impossibility of leaving behind one's home: the foreign country will always be just that, alien and apart. The most pervasive theme, though, is the search for, the fear of, and the challenges to faith. Eugenia, told by the church sexton to kneel and pray, finds that she cannot do so. Andrei's discussions with the mad Domenico touch on ideals and the extent to which a person will act on them. In Domenico's dilapidated house, where the rain drips in (rain coming through ceilings is a recurrent motif in Tarkovsky's films)  $1 + 1 = 1$  is scrawled on a wall. Domenico possesses a unity, a sense of conviction, for which Andrei is groping — one is the man of perhaps ridiculous action, the other the man of thought. The third concern has to do with boundaries: is it possible for individuals of different cultures to get to know each other, can people of one culture ever understand the great artists of another? Near the beginning Eugenia says she is reading Arseny Tarkovsky's poems in Italian translation. Towards the end, in an enigmatic yet crucial scene, Andrei wades through a flooded church and speaks in Russian to a small Italian child watching him. Early in the scene a poem by Arseny Tarkovsky is read in Russian; later another poem by him is read in Italian and a book of his poetry burns. Cultural borders prove formidable, not just for Eugenia and Andrei, but for poetry as well.





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November 20 at 7:30 p.m.

**The Sacrifice (1986)**

THE SACRIFICE is a variant of the Faust legend, but this is a Faust who offers himself to God rather than to the devil. Once again Tarkovsky is concerned with the nature of faith in the modern world – just how strongly does a man believe in his ideals, is he willing to act on them? Alexander, the man who will eventually be called upon to offer the sacrifice, notes that all of man's progress, all his advances, have brought with them violence and terror. People have achieved physical comfort, but they have lost their spirituality, their ability to believe.

If THE SACRIFICE seems reminiscent of a Bergman film more than the Scandinavian setting is involved. Sven Nykvist is responsible for the photography; Erland Josephson (who plays Domenico in NOSTALGHIA) has the lead role of Alexander; and Allan Edwall, another of Bergman's actors, plays the postman Otto. A more fundamental debt can be seen in the psychological probing, which is deeper and more intense than in Tarkovsky's previous films. Yet THE SACRIFICE still bears the strong and original imprint of Tarkovsky. The film is shot in color with several sequences either in or passing into sepia, much like the technique that Tarkovsky had worked out by the time of NOSTALGHIA. References abound to Tarkovsky's favorite artists: Leonardo, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky. Old themes reappear: the concern with home, the child as both seer and victim.

At the center of all this stands Alexander, whose conversations and comments delineate his inner struggle. Thus the postman Otto quotes Nietzsche and talks of life as eternal repetition – an outlook that Alexander does not share. Alexander himself later quotes from HAMLET – "Words, words, words" – he is fed up with just words, he feels the necessity to do something. He talks of playing both Richard III and Prince Myshkin (the hero of Dostoevsky's THE IDIOT), but he no longer likes performing: the actor must dissolve his identity into his role, and he senses in this something "sinful, feminine, weak." He looks at a reproduction of Leonardo's "Adoration of the Magi" (a fragment of which serves as the backdrop for the opening credits) and tells us that he is terrified of Leonardo – awed, it would appear, by Leonardo's own faith and spirituality. Alexander is no longer young, a bit of an eccentric, a person who wants to take some action but does not quite seem to know what to do. Then comes the horror of war, not seen but overheard via announcements and the sound of planes or rockets overhead. All dissolve into helplessness; Alexander recites the Lord's Prayer and then prays that those whom he knows and loves not be allowed to die. He would sacrifice everything – his home, all that he has, even speech – if only things could return to where they were that morning. It is then that he gets the opportunity to act, to advance from word to deed. If Tarkovsky dedicated NOSTALGHIA, with its agony and its searching, to the memory of his mother, it is perhaps equally fitting that he dedicate this film, in which a thermonuclear war challenges the strength of a man's faith, to his own son, Andriusha, "with hope and confidence."



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## Afterword

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(27pgs)

If ever there was a film director whose work cries out to be viewed, studied and understood by the modern university, it is Andrei Tarkovsky. This greatest of Russian filmmakers has produced a small but dense body of work which expresses a complex visual world unlike any other film artist's. Ingmar Bergman's comment, "I found myself standing at the door of a room the keys of which had, until then, never been given to me," is testimony enough that Tarkovsky has developed a new vocabulary in this medium much as James Joyce, Igor Stravinsky and Martha Graham did in their disciplines early in this century.

The 20th century has bathed all of us in a flood of pictures from billboards, displays, magazines, television and movies. We all carry a storehouse of unconscious images from this pictorial world in our mind's eye which we continually mirror against our real experience. The quality or insight of these pictures is critical, and our understanding of their power is imperative. The German film director, Werner Herzog, judges the quality of this storehouse of impressions to be so bad as to be a threat to civilization.

The joy of Tarkovsky's films is the quality of his visual and moral sensibility and his ability to depict what it means to be alive, to be a sentient being – and all in the 20th century language of moving pictures. The joy for the modern university is to explore and understand these "artifacts" of our time in order to reflect on our own short lives.

It is, therefore, with special appreciation that we want to thank all those organizations and individuals who have made this first complete retrospective of the films of Andrei Tarkovsky possible – most especially the Montgomery Fellowship.

Shelton g. Stanfill  
Director, Hopkins Center

Bill Pence  
Director, Hopkins Center Film

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Cover photo from "THE SACRIFICE"

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