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# **The Russian Eccentrics--Protazanov:**

## **Aelita and Interplanetary**

### **Revolution 9:15**

#### **Aelita**

"[The] Soviet film industry was prepared, in 1924, to undertake a production that would rival the foreign films that were arriving in Moscow in the '20s. The film artists collective, Russ, decided to film Tolstoy's story of three Russians—an engineer, a Red Army soldier, and a detective—who fly to Mars and become involved in a revolutionary uprising among the Martian people: while there, one of them—the engineer—has a love affair with Aelita, Queen of Mars. To direct this monumental story, Russ induced the most experienced director of the pre-Revolutionary period—Yakov Protazanov—to return from exile in Paris.... The people loved [the film], identifying strongly with the soldier Gussev, a man of the people, and with the amateur detective Kravtsov (wonderfully played by the comic actor Ilinsky)—rather than with the petty bourgeois engineer, whom the scenarists had designated the hero.... The art direction is the most famous attribute of Aelita: the sets and costumes reveal in the fantastic Martian landscape a cubist design that resulted from Protazanov's experience in the French art world as well as from the direct participation of artists from the Russian constructivist movement." -- Tom Luddy, Yvette Biro

• Directed by Yakov A. Protazanov. Written by Eleksei Faiko, Fedor Otsep from a story by Tolstoy. Photographed by Y. Zhelyabuzhsky, E. Suneman. Sets by V. Somov, S. Koslovski, Isaac Rabinovitch. Costumes by Mme. Alexandra Exter of the Moscow Kamerny Theatre. With Valentina Kuinzh, Nikolai Tseretelli, Konstantin Eggert, Igor Ilinsky. (1924, 104 mins, Silent with Russian intertitles and live English translation, 35mm, Print from PFA Collection)