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(Castro)

USSR



The New Babylon

Novii Vavilon

1929. Black & White. 1.33 format. 85 min. Silent with English intertitles

San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, Omri Hadari, Conductor

Director-Screenwriters: Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg/Cinematographers: Andrei Moskvina, E. Mikhailov/Editor: Kozintsev/Music: Dmitri Shostakovich/
Principal Cast: Elena Kuzmina, Piotr Sobolevski, David Gutman, Sophie Magarill/Production Company: FEKS Group for Sovkino/Print Source: Corinth
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The New Babylon, hailed by the Cinémathèque Française as one of the few authentic epics of the cinema, represents the first collaboration of Shostakovich and the Soviet directorial team of Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. The film's remarkable score, composed in 1928-29, was lost from that time until it was discovered after Shostakovich's death in 1975.

Directors Kozintsev and Trauberg, who were in the forefront of the Soviet film and theatre avant-garde in the 20's, approached the iconoclastic young composer to write the film score for *The New Babylon*, largely on the strength of his experimental Gogol opera, "The Nose." *The New Babylon* is the composer's only silent film score, but he continued his collaboration with Kozintsev and Trauberg in the 30's, notably on their "Maxim" trilogy. He also contributed memorably to Kozintsev's great Shakespeare adaptations: *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

The drama of *The New Babylon* is set in the 1871 Paris Commune and centers around a posh department store modeled after Émile Zola's novel, "Au Bonheur des Dames," which he modeled on a real Paris emporium, Le Bon Marché. The historical backdrop of the film is the Franco-Prussian War, the siege of Paris and the Commune of 1871; therefore, the title, *New Babylon*, refers both to a department store and also to Paris and France.

Shostakovich's score, with its cacophonous cancons, languorous waltzes and liberal quotations from well-known French music, including Offenbach's "La Belle Hélène" and "Orpheus," as well as "La Marseillaise," provides the already exciting film with a further sparkling dimension.

The British Film Institute, which in recent years has been instrumental in the restoration of silent film classics with live orchestra accompaniment, including Abel Gance's *Napoleon*, has previously mounted three performances of *The New Babylon* in London, several in Holland and the U.S. premiere at the 1983 New York Film Festival. All of these were under the baton of Omri Hadari, Principal Conductor and Musical Director of the London Lyric Orchestra, who is responsible for reconstructing the complete Shostakovich score from a painstaking study of the parts discovered in Moscow archives. At its Castro Theatre presentations, the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra performs the score under Hadari's direction. Our thanks to Boosey and Hawkes Publishers Ltd. (U.K.) and G. Schirmer Inc., agents for VAAP.

In conjunction with this special event, the Pacific Film Archive is presenting three additional films of Kozintsev and Trauberg on Wednesday, April 11. *The Youth of Maxim* (1935) is the first part of a classic trilogy about a true popular hero; the film has a score by Shostakovich. *The Devil's Wheel* (1926) and *S.V.D. (The Club of the Big Deed)* (1927) are two of the most notable silent films produced by the pair in collaboration with the FEKS group — the Factory of the Eccentric Actor — which began as a futurist theatre group that believed in total experimentation, excess and rebellion.