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PIKOVAYA DAMA  
THE QUEEN OF SPADES

Пиковая дама

Drama. 6 reels; 2300 m; production: I. Ermol'ev; release: 19.4.16; director/script: Yakov Protazanov; assistant director: Georgii Azagarov, cameraman: Evgenii Slavinskii; art directors: Vladimir Ballyuzek, S. Lilienberg & W. Przybytniewski. Cast: Ivan Mosjoukine (German), Vera Orlova (Liza), Elizaveta Shebueva (the Countess as an old woman), T. Duvan (the Countess as a young woman), Polikarp Pavlov (her husband), Nikolai Panov (Count Saint-Germain). Screen version of the story by Aleksandr Pushkin.

The music is an excellent complement to the picture. This may be because the work has become intimately associated in our minds with Tchaikovsky's heartfelt music. Unfortunately, in provincial theatres it will hardly prove possible to accompany the picture with such a fine orchestral performance as in the major theatres, inclu-



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ding those in Rostov. Nonetheless, we strongly recommend provincial cinemas to pay particular attention to the musical aspect when showing *The Queen of Spades*. A lot of atmosphere can be created by a good pianist playing the relevant sections of Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. (ZhE, 1916, No. 13-14, 33)

V. Orlova. I was excited beyond all measure when preparing to play Liza in *The Queen of Spades*. It really was a major task. And although, admittedly, the scenario cut the role down a great deal, I still acted it with trepidation. Liza's romantic fate captivated my imagination. And the work I.I. Mosjoukine put into his German! He was infinitely creative, totally involved, a tireless zealot, thinking out every gesture, every turn of the head, every movement of the body – there was nothing superfluous or accidental! He set an example for the entire group. (4)

V. Ballyuzek. I wanted to film the entire scene in which Liza writes a letter giving a detailed description of the lay-out of the countess's house differently from the way it is done in the theatre. I thought it would be more interesting from the cinema point of view to show the hero passing through the endless enfilades of that musty mansion. Particularly since such buildings still remain standing in some parts of Moscow. I recall how long I had to argue in favour of this idea, which horrified some of those involved in the production. I was helped out by Mosjoukine, who agreed to walk through an enfilade of unfamiliar rooms as Liza writes about them, with his back to the camera and the audiences. To film this episode I made a special device out of two bicycles. The camera followed closely behind German's (Mosjoukine's), unfolding before the viewer a panorama of endless drawing-rooms in the old mansion. The moving camera allowed the viewer to share Hermann's feelings on surveying those unfamiliar surroundings for the first time. To convey the atmosphere of life in the capital city I wanted to use the Bolshoy Theatre's "winter canal" sets, which were so popular in operas. But it somehow turned out that I had to limit my choice of subjects, and so the entire "winter scene" had to be shot in sets representing the embankment of the Fontanka River near the Summer Garden. That shot was an unusual one in those days – it was the first time that an outdoor scene – set on a city street – had been filmed in a studio. In the past, all episodes in which the action occurred in the streets of a city or a village, in other words "outside", were filmed only out of doors. If, for instance, night had to be shown on the screen, the cameramen filmed outside during the day against the sun (contre-jour) and then after developing the film tinted it with a blue (cold) colour. But we filmed all the winter scenes in the studio, and as far as visual representation was concerned, they were amongst the best in the film. The "Winter scene" was not the only difficult one. In a number of others too we had to make complicated arrangements in order for the shots to be particularly expressive. There was one scene entitled "The Countess in Her Youth" which was not used in the film: the action was supposed to take place on the terrace in front of Versailles Palace. To produce on the screen a complete illusion of the real palace complex, we filmed a set re-

presenting a palace door and window in conjunction with a small-scale model of a pond, and set off fireworks against a backdrop of black velvet conveying the depth of night. This was stunningly effective. Unfortunately, while we were filming the fireworks set the velvet alight, and we had to abandon the scene. The “burned-out” scene was replaced in the film by an intimate acted scene in a boudoir. I copied the boudoir set almost entirely from one of the rooms in the princely Yusupov residence in Petrograd... It was easy and interesting to work with Protazanov. As the director, he did not restrict the artist’s imagination and encouraged initiative from the other members of the team. At the same time, in an imperceptible and very delicate though persistent way, he demanded unity between my visual and artistic design work and the film’s overall conception. Another valuable aspect was that Yakov Aleksandrovich did not only want the artist to produce effectively painted sets, but directed his attention towards revealing the characters’ psychological essence by visual means. (1968, 102-103)