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Sergei Komarov

Sergei Komarov directed only two films, *The Kiss Of Mary Pickford* (1927) and *The Doll With Millions* (1928). He was mainly an actor, and an outstanding one, a film actor trained in the workshop of Lev Kuleshov. In the avant-garde style of the best Soviet stage and film actors of the twenties, his

characterizations were marked by precise and sharp external manifestations of gesture, physique, attitude (in contradistinction to the Stanislavsky method). As an actor, he appeared in leading roles in most of Kuleshov's major films—*The Extraordinary Adventures Of Mr. West*

In The Land Of The Bolsheviks (1923), *The Death Ray* (1925), *By The Law* (1926), *Two Build Two* (1930). He also appeared in two excellent Boris Barnet films, *The House On Trubnaya Square* (1928) and *Outskirts* (1933). (TL, YB)

The Kiss Of Mary Pickford

1927 70 min. Silent
B&W Rental: \$35.00

Directed by Sergei Komarov; screenplay by Komarov and V. Shershenvich; photography by E. Alexeyev. With Igor Ilinsky, A. Sudakevich, M. Rosenshtein, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. English titles.

This film is a delightful "cine-joke" exploiting the personalities of Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and the popular Russian stage-and-screen comic Igor Ilinsky. It is both a tribute to Mary and Doug, and a satire on the excessive adulation of American film stars by jazz age Muscovites. Despite their professionalism, Pickford and Fairbanks were not aware that they were "starring" in a film when they made their celebrated visit to Russia in 1926. In their ignorance of Lev Kuleshov's editing innovations "they innocently permitted" a "Kuleshov graduate, Komarov, to film them in enough random active to achieve a full-length comedy..." (Jay Leyda, *Kino*). The story concerns a pretty film-studio worker (A. Sudakevich) who dreams of movie stardom, and is infatuated with

film celebrities, and therefore rejects the love of a lowly ticket collector in a movie house (Ilinsky). She will marry him only if he, too, becomes a celebrity. By a series of very funny incidents, he receives a well-publicized *kiss* from the real Mary Pickford, making him an instant celebrity. He wins the girl's love, but both soon learn that fame has its drawbacks. *The Kiss Of Mary Pickford* is an excellent and entertaining illustration of Kuleshov's seminal theoretical observations on the construction of film reality through editing.

Mary Pickford, in her autobiographical *Sunshine And Shadow* (Doubleday, 1955, pp. 275-79) gives this unsuspecting account of her participation in *The Kiss Of Mary Pickford*:

"I shall never forget our visit to Russia in 1926...Invited by Sovkino, which represented the Russian film industry... we arrived at Minsk, Russia at 11 o'clock on a starless and moonless

night...private railroad coach...it had belonged to the Czar and Czarina...at daybreak we were awakened by a knock on the door. A cameraman was waiting for us at one of the small stations. I had no objection to being photographed, till I made a survey of myself in the Czar's mirror; then I almost screamed. It had been a sultry night and, after laying out my underwear and cosmetics on a table. I had foolishly opened the screenless windows...soot was everywhere...I could have appeared as Topsy without any further assistance from the make-up kit...wan and groggy from a sleepless night, no breakfast, hair stiff with soot and about to be photographed in a dimly lighted railroad coach. I pleaded to be spared this ordeal, but to no avail. I asked the cameraman not to put the camera too close, but again my plea fell on deaf ears...This went on for a good part of the morning. What he did with those thousands of feet of film is still a mystery to me..." (TL, YB)

Audio Brenda