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TWO FILMS FROM SOVIET GEORGIA

PIROSMANI 7:30

This exquisite Soviet Georgian feature has been shown here many times in the past three years. Finally, it has acquired an American distributor and had its first theatrical run a few weeks back in New York. Rather than reprint our past program notes, we quote below The New Yorker's response to the print shown in New York (which was dubbed in Russian with English titles, in contrast to our print, which is in Georgian with English titles):

"A splendid and innovative work of poetic biography about a Georgian primitive painter (1862-1918). The director is Georgi Shengelaya, who understands an unusual amount of the creative process, and who has managed to make a film about an unorthodox person in Russia in these orthodox days. The film looks like a series of photographic plates, because it holds so still on pictures of picnics, peasant women with hands folded on their laps, and so on. Pirosmani makes his living by staying at inns and taverns and selling his paintings. The earnings are eaten up by the sheer act of his way of life. He is eventually locked up at Easter by well-wishers to paint and paint. The results are extraordinary: 'Christ is risen! Christ is risen!' cry the Russians. This is one of the most truly Slav and tranquil pictures to have come out of Russia for many a year."

The New Yorker note makes an all-too-typical mistake in using the words "Slav," "Russia" and "Russians" to describe and praise aspects of PIROSMANI. The film was not made in Soviet Russia, there are no Russians in it, and there are no Slavs. Georgia is a Soviet Republic in the Caucasus, with an old history and culture, and a separate non-Slavic language: currently, the Georgian film studio in Tblissi is turning out the best films in the USSR, and among the best in the world.

Directed by Georgi Shengelaya. Screenplay by Shengelaya and Erlom Akhvlediani. Photographed by Konstantin Apryatin. With Avtandi Varazi, David Abashidze. (1971, 95 mins, color, In Georgian with English titles, Print from PFA Collection)

NEW SOVIET CINEMA

~~(The Slava Shengelaya) (in Person!)~~

PIROSMANI, 7:30

This film by Georgi Shengelaya deals with the life of the great Georgian Primitive artist Niko Pirosmanishvili, whose work was done before 1920. Shengelaya avoids the usual clichés of films about artists' lives, successfully experimenting with color control techniques based on the painter's style. Avtandi Varazi plays the gentle, uncompromising artist who sold his paintings to bars and restaurants for food and drink, and worked mostly in solitude. After our American Premiere showing in March 1974, and a repeat in October, this delicate and poetic film won Grand Prize at the Chicago Film Festival, and it has just been in the Los Angeles Filmex and the Museum of Modern Art's NEW DIRECTORS Festival in New York. Directed by Georgy Shengelaya. Screenplay by Erlom Akhvlediani, Georgy Shengelaya. With Avtandi Varazi, David Abashidze, Zurab Abashidze, Zurab Kapianidze. (Soviet Georgia, 1971, 85 mins, color, 35mm, English titles)