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EARTH

USSR 1929/1930. Written and directed by Alexander Dovzhenko, assisted by his wife Julia Solitseva, and L. Bodyk. Photography by Danylo Demutzky. With Semyon Svashenko, Stepan Shkurat, Nikolai Nademsky. The story is so slight as to be almost plotless; the young peasants of a Ukrainian village want to buy a tractor to bring the future a little faster to their village but the kulaks of the community fear this strengthened unity and one of them kills the young village chairman. Yet this summary scarcely hints of all the qualities and passages that have made **Earth** one of the acknowledged classics of the Soviet and world cinema. The lyricism of the whole, sustained by Dovzhenko's philosophical sense of 'the earth', of life and death, is what remains in the memory – the prologue where the peacefully dying old man bites joyfully into an apple, the funeral procession with the branches of the apple-tree sweeping over the dead face, Vasili's dance of happiness through the summer's dust of the moonlit village (a dance that ends with a bullet), or the murderer's mad dance among the unhearing graves.

At the same time as Dovzhenko was making **Earth**, Eisenstein, on the other side of the planet, was making **Que Viva Mexico**. Both artists were concerned with the theme of death as part of life, and both had resolved the conflicts between beauty and content, each with a noticeable reduction of action. Yet in neither case did his resolution affect the course of the Soviet film – for the American backers never permitted Eisenstein to finish his film, and Dovzhenko's film caused such an outcry as to frighten away any eager followers in his own generation. Nevertheless, the unique beauty of **Earth**, Dovzhenko's best and last silent film, brought him international fame.

35/16 6 St 88 mins AB

EARTH (Extract)

The decision about appropriate funeral arrangements for a victim of upheavals following the arrival of a tractor at the village.

16 1 St 13 mins AB