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The Devil's Wheel

1926 60 min. Silent
B&W Rental: \$35.00

Directed by Grigori Kozintzev and Leonid Trauberg; produced by Leningradkino. With P. Sobolevski, L. Semyenova, S. Gerassimov. English subtitles.

Please Note: Reels 3 and 6 are missing in this and all other existing prints.

A drama of the gangster bands that preyed upon St. Petersburg during the Civil War period, *The Devil's Wheel* was based on a novel by Kaverin and was the first FEKS film to achieve a degree of popularity. Today, the film is extremely interesting for its descriptions of the colorful underworld milieu which existed (apparently) well into the twenties. "Amidst roller-coasters giant swings, a devil's wheel

and a thousand crowding pleasure seekers, the ringing of hammers and gongs, flaring fireworks, moved the lyrical theme of love and chance encounter... The clash between the realistic material and the eccentric treatment by the FEKS seems to have increased the force of the film. All disparate elements were pulled together by the dramatic, expressive, Germanic photography of the cameraman Moskvin." (Jay Leyda). The film is reminiscent of *The Adventures Of Mr. West In The Land Of The Bolsheviks* by Lev Kuleshov, whose theories influenced profoundly the practices of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor. In the FEKS workshop, performers

practiced physical education, acrobatics, mime, comportment in front of the camera—without any deference to psychologisms. In *The Devil's Wheel*, the eccentric tendency found an ideal outlet in the bizarre characters and decadent environment called for by the subject. (TL, YB)