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# Two From '64 Film Festival

## RUSSIAN 'HAMLET' AT PLAZA

*The Russian "Hamlet," which arrived yesterday at the Plaza Theater, opened the second New York Film Festival. In a review published Sept. 15, 1964, Herald Tribune film critic Judith Crist wrote:*

"Certainly this two-and-a-half-hour film carries the top Soviet cachet. Its director, Grigori Kozintsev, whose work includes *The Youth of Maxim* and *Don Quixote*, wrote his screenplay from a Boris Pasternak translation of the tragedy. Dmitri Shostakovich has provided a score—and it has subtitles by W. Shakespeare.

"But it is a strangely old-fashioned and unexciting 'Hamlet' that we encounter, despite Mr. Kozintsev's infatuation with a rolling surf, an imposing castle, shadowy corridors and a bleak and barren countryside. . . . [While there are some omissions of scenes and lines], much of the text has been dramatized and enlarged and the atmosphere of the surrounding

territory provided. But as the director enlarges the stage, he fails to narrow attention upon the characters and they remain traditional and unilluminating figures. For speech is the clue to their character—and to the non-Russian-speaking viewer, they are speechless.

"Aye, there's the rub. W. Shakespeare did not write subtitles. And this film presents the American audience with the almost impossible task of watching a film in which speech is the essence while listening to Russian dialogue and reading the excerpted, broken-phrased and frequently elliptic but always concentration-demanding Shakespearean text. . . . Panoramic action, sharp and even subtle vignettes are no substitute for the essence of 'Hamlet' . . . . "Without words we are left with a costume melodrama, with high histrionics the order of the performances that cannot transcend the language bar-



Anastasia Vertinskaya as Ophelia in "Hamlet."

rier. There is a monotony to this blond Hamlet of uncertain age; he reveals no trace of the wit and intellect inherent in the character. . . . Ophelia, exquisite indeed, is a frozen figure. . . . The Queen seems at best housewifely, the King a stereotyped smiling villain. . . .

"This is undoubtedly a 'prestige' picture for the Russians—Shostakovich's traditional Shakespearean-tragedy-type score serves as underlining—but it is a pedestrian film, lacking dramatic or cinematic excitement, smacking of the symbolism and techniques of 30 years ago. . . .

