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At PFA:

Solaris 7:30 (Friday),

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Andrei Tarkovsky (USSR, 1972)

Tarkovsky was the mentor of Alexander Sokurov, and his masterpiece *Solaris* exemplifies the strain in Russian filmmaking that finds, in art, a kind of secular metaphysics. The story follows psychologist Chris Kelvin on a voyage to the planet Solaris, where, scientists believe, the ocean's surface has an intelligence that can absorb human memory and materialize the objects of our thoughts. When Kelvin joins the Solaris project's veteran cosmonauts he finds them maddened from years of literally cohabitating with their unconscious desires. Kelvin himself becomes host to the presence of his dead wife and seems doomed to relive both the passion and the loss associated with her memory. "Outer space" plays almost no part in Tarkovsky's science fiction, which relies on widescreen composition to paint a landscape of the mind. The film's opening shots, built of static images that seem to reverberate with their stillness, depict a timeless, lush land that could be Heaven but is meant to be the country home of Kelvin's youth. Slowly, as figures from the present time begin to fill the screen, Tarkovsky initiates us into the secret of *Solaris*: that, like the oceans of the distant planet, the cinema serves up the most poetic longings of the human imagination.

- Written by Tarkovsky, Friedrich Gorenstein, based on the novel by Stanislaw Lem.

Photographed by Vadim Yusov. With Donatas Banionis, Natalya Bondarchuk, Yuri Jarvet, Anatoli Solonitsin. (165 mins, In Russian with English subtitles, Color, 35mm, 'Scope, Print from PFA Collection, permission of Kino International)