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Pacific Film Archive
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WINGS (U.S.S.R., 1966)

will be shown at 7:30 pm on

Wednesday, July 24th at the
Pacific Film Archive,
2625 Durant Avenue in Berkeley

as part of a tribute -- on July 17, 24, and 31 -- to director Larissa Shepitko (1939-1979)

Directed by Larissa Shepitko

Written by Valentin Yezhov, Natalia Ryantseva

Camera: Igor Slbnevich

Sets: Ivan Plastinkin

Music: Roman Ledenov

A Mosfilm Production, Moscow. Running time: 90 minutes

Featuring: Maya Bulgakova (as Nadezhda Petrovna)

Zhanna Bulatova, Panteleimon Krymov, Leonid Djaztshkov, Sergei Nikolnenko,
Nikolai Grabbe.

Ron Holloway, writing in Variety, July 5, 1973

"WINGS offers a human portrait of a once-famous fighter-pilot in the Second World War, aviatrix Nadezhda Petrovna (modelled after a real person from an actual wartime women's fighter squadron. She now finds it difficult to fit into the routine of a commonplace job in the postwar years; she's 42, unmarried (her one great love died in the war), and the director of a secondary school in the provinces. Unable to find herself emotionally and returning often in thoughts to the heroic fighting days when she had a surer identity, she covers her misgivings with an authoritative manner and loses contact with the school's students and her own adopted daughter. The students, in fact, despise her.

"A conflict inevitably arises between the older and younger generation, complicated all the more by the admiration and respect the citizens of the town and the members of the schoolboard hold for her. Somewhat like Monica Vitti in 'Eclipse', she wanders from place to place recalling the past while searching for some answers to what has gone wrong in the present.

"Shepitko's strength lies in the power of her images and the total commitment to a central theme -- in this case, an affirmation-of-life without resolving the immediate problem of identity. Many scenes stick to the memory: the heroine with a friend in a cafe which normally serves only men customers; the casual loops of a plane in mid-air that trigger a remembrance of helplessness as, in the war, she followed her wounded lover's plane to a fatal crash; the awkward meeting with the daughter's choice of husband after she has left home for good; and the final scene at the airport as she jokingly enters a cockpit once more to unexpectedly take off into the freedom of the skies.

(over)

Ron Holloway, cont'd:

"Maya Bulgakova is outstanding as the disoriented aviatrix (playing the role of an older woman with finesse and nuance). Pic has interweaving touches of humor and sombreness: one in particular matches the school directress's inability to make peace with a rebellious youth, and a girl who defends him, together with a children's play, in which she must carry a prop of a wooden doll(a Russian souvenir-figure) comically across a stage surrounded by a bunch of marching little dolls. Shepitko is a master of rhythmic blending of reality and fantasy.

" 'Wings' is a milestone in the development of New Soviet Cinema. A must for fest retros and film weeks, as well as art houses."

LARISSA (1982)

directed by Elem Klimov. Running time: 20 minutes

LARISSA begins PFA's tribute to Larissa Shepitko, and will be shown at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, July 17th, with HEAT (1963), Shepitko's first feature film.