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THE NEW BABYLON (Novii Vavilon)

SF Film Fest 84

USSR, 1929. Directed and written by Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg. Cinematography: Andrei Mosvin, Yevgeny Mikhailov. Music: Dimitri Shostakovich. Principal cast: Elena Kuzmina, Piotr Sobolevski, David Gutman, Sophie Magarill. 85 min. Silent with English intertitles.

Festival: New York 1983.

San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, Omri Hidari, conductor.

Rare performances of the 1929 silent film classic, accompanied by a newly discovered Shostakovich masterpiece. The score, written for the film by Dmitri Shostakovich in 1928-29 and lost until shortly after his death in 1975, will be performed by a live orchestra conducted by Omri Hidari.

Hailed by the Cinémathèque Française as one of the few authentic epics of cinema, THE NEW BABYLON represents the first collaboration of Shostakovich and the directorial team of Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. The avant-garde pair, founders of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor (FEKS) and leading Soviet film and theatre experimenters of the 20's, approached the iconoclastic young composer to write his first film score largely on the strength of his experimental Gogol opera, "The Nose". THE NEW BABYLON is the composer's only silent film score, but he continued his collaboration with Kozintsev and Trauberg in the 30's, notably on their MAXIM trilogy, and contributed memorably to Kozintsev's great Shakespeare adaptations, HAMLET (1964) and KING LEAR (1972).

The drama is set in the 1871 Paris Commune and centers around a post department store. The film's historical backdrop is the Franco-Prussian War, the siege of Paris and the Commune; therefore the title THE NEW BABYLON refers both to a department store and also to Paris and to France. With its cacophonous cancons, languorous waltzes and liberal quotations from well-known French music, Shostakovich's score provides the already exciting film with a further sparkling dimension.

Festival playdate: SATURDAY 4/14 - 7:00pm & 9:30pm - CASTRO

Press screening: _____

