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Author(s)	Ian Christie
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## The Eccentrics-- Kozintzev and Trauberg:

### The Devil's Wheel (Chertovo koleso) 8:55

Shorin is a sailor from the *Aurora* who jumps ship to spend the night with Valya, a girl he has met in the Leningrad amusement park, and their clandestine affair is abetted by a sinister petty criminal who also performs at the park as a magician. If the storyline of Kozintzev and Trauberg's first full feature sounds more like a French New Wave film of forty years later than a venerable Soviet classic, this shouldn't surprise us. That it does—and that the work of the FEKS group and Leningrad filmmakers in general has been consistently undervalued alongside the Muscovites Eisenstein and Pudovkin—is a measure of how little early Soviet filmmaking has been viewed as *cinema*, rather than as propaganda or theory. "Better to be a young pup than an old bird of paradise" was the original FEKS slogan in 1922 (borrowed from Mark Twain), and they stood above all for a cinema attuned to the interests of young audiences rather than the straight-laced prescriptions of Moscow administrators. Their witty irreverence attracted a strong following, which soon included the leading critics Shklovsky and Tynianov, and provided a dynamic working model for a cinema that would be both contemporary and revolutionary. Shorin and Valya's adventures in the Leningrad underworld lead them to a new sense of responsibility, but the moral never swamps the message of cinematic discovery.

—Ian Christie

- Directed by Grigori Kozintzev and Leonid Trauberg. Based on *The End of the Khaza* by V. Kaverin. Photographed by Andrei Moskvina. With P. Sobolevski, L. Semyenova, Sergei Gerassimov. (1926, 52 mins, Silent with Russian intertitles and live English translation by Dena Schoen, 35mm, Print from PFA Collection.)