



Улични божества (реж. Васил Гендов) ©Българска национална филмотека

## *Program*

# THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL FILM CULTURE IN THE BALKANS AND EAST CENTRAL EUROPE BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

Event dates: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Venue: Institute of Art Studies – Administrative Building, 1. Floor, 21 Krakra Str., 1504 Sofia

Organizers: Institute of Art Studies – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, supported by the National Research Fund – Bulgaria



## Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023

Venue: Ceremonial hall (Aula), NATFA

**18:00** | Keynote speech

Dina Iordanova (University of St Andrews, Scotland; University of Hong Kong)  
*Cinema Interbellum: Expanding the Peripheral Vision*

19:30 | Break

**19:45** | Screening with the co-operation of Bulgarian National Film Archive

After the Fire Over Russia (1929, directed by Boris Grezhov)  
*Silent movie with live musical accompaniment by Martin Lubenov (accordion) & friends*

## Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023

**9:30 – 9:45** | Institutional welcoming

**9:45 – 11:15** | Panel 1

Two presentations + Discussion

Moderator: Dina Iordanova (University of St Andrews, Scotland; University of Hong Kong)

Radomír D. Kokeš (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

*The Transformative Year 1925 in Czech Cinema from the Perspective of (Writing) Historical Poetics*

Ana Grgić (Babes-Bolyai University, Romania; Monash University, Malaysia)

*Who is Singing over There? Early Sound Film in Yugoslavia: Between National and Transnational Cinema*

11:15 – 11:45 | Coffee break

**11:45– 13:15 | Panel 2**

Two presentations + Discussion

Moderator: Andronika Martonova (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)

Mélanie Leventopoulos (University of Paris 8, France)

*Cinema Under Greek Flag. The Imperfect Hellenization of Distribution, Exhibition and Cinemagoing Activities in Thessaloniki and Its Cultural Contradictions During the Interwar Years*

Savaş Arslan (Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Turkey)

*Early Cinema in Turkey - Based on a "True" Story!*

13:15 – 14:30 | Lunch break

**14:30 – 16:30 | Panel 3**

Three presentations + Discussion

Moderator: Alexander Donev (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)

Andronika Martonova (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)

*The Cinema and the Debate about "Native – Foreign" in the Bulgarian Cultural Field (the 20s of the 20th Century)*

Boyan Tzenev (Bulgarian National Film Archive, Bulgaria)

*Tracing cultural codes. Influences of German Expressionist films on Bulgarian Culture in the 1920s*

Petar Kardjilov (Associate member of the Screen Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)

*When the Screen Sang and Spoke in Bulgarian*

16:30 – 17:00 | Coffee break

**18:00 | Screening with the co-operation of Czech Center in Sofia**

Venue: Czech Center

Ducháček to zařídí (Duchacek Will Fix It, 1938, directed by Karel Lamač)

*Czech comedy film, starring Vlasta Burian; running time: 87 min.*

## Thursday, 4th May 2023

### 9:30 – 11:00 | Panel 4

Two presentations + Discussion

Moderator: Ana Grgić (Babes-Bolyai University, Romania; Monash University, Malaysia)

Joana Spasova-Dikova (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)

*Acting Schools and Methods in the Early Cinema*

Irina Kitova (South-West University, Bulgaria)

*In Search of the Historical Roots of Interactive Education in Bulgaria*

11:00 – 11:30 | Coffee break

### 11:30 – 13:00 | Panel 5

Two presentations + Discussion

Moderator: Mélisande Leventopoulos (University of Paris 8, France)

Atanas Chuposki (Cinematheque of North Macedonia, North Macedonia)

*Film Culture in Macedonia Between the Two World Wars*

Mariyana Piskova (South-West University, Bulgaria)

*About the French Film by the Armenian Emigrant Arshavir Chakatouny, Shot in Bulgaria in 1928*

13:00 – 14:30 | Lunch break

### 14:30 – 16:30 | Panel 6

Three presentations + Discussion

Moderator: Joana Spasova-Dikova (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)

Aleksandar Erdeljanović (Archive of the Yugoslav Cinematheque, Serbia)

*Specificities of Film Art and All Its Characteristics in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia with an Emphasis on the Serbian Parts of the Kingdom, 1918-1941*

Rosen Spasov (Bulgarian National Film Archive, Bulgaria)  
*Profiles of First Bulgarian Film Critics (1920-1940)*

Alexander Donev (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)  
*Film distribution and exhibition in Bulgaria 1920-1940 – approaching the topic*

16:30 – 17:00 | Coffee break

**18:00** | Screening + Q&A

Venue: Ceremonial hall (Aula), NATFA

Bir Sigmund Weinberg Belge-meseli (A Sigmund Weinberg Docu-commentary,  
directed by Savaş Arslan, 2020)

*The story of Sigmund Weinberg, one of the cinema pioneers in Turkey; running time: 88 min.*

*Friday, 5th May 2023*

**10:00 – 11:30** | Closing Remarks + Discussion

Moderators: Dina Iordanova (Emeritus Professor, University of St Andrews; University of Hong Kong) and Alexander Donev (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria)

## THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL FILM CULTURE IN THE BALKANS AND EAST CENTRAL EUROPE BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

At the centre of the forum will be topics concerning the interpretation of cultural and artistic processes in the interwar period, contributing to the imposition of the social and public prestige of cinema in a national context. From the early 1920s, the cinema in most countries of the region was no longer an occasional activity but became a mass cultural practice. It developed into a widely popular form of entertainment, a medium, shaping attitudes and disseminating socially significant ideas, providing the basis for the formation of national film industries. What are the main factors for these processes, what are their most striking manifestations, what are their consequences in social, cultural and aesthetic terms?

The study of cultural and artistic processes in the period between the two world wars, refracted through the topic of the establishment of the social and public prestige of cinema, can create significant new knowledge. It contributes to a better understanding of both the examined period and the present day. The war, which began at the end of February 2022, shows how many direct parallels can be drawn between the two decades after the end of the First World War and the time of transition in Eastern Europe after 1989. A series of references, analogies and direct correspondences emerge - mostly in social-psychological terms; in terms of the experience of an oppressive and traumatic past and the impossibility of overcoming it positively without resulting in a new catastrophe. Alongside all this, however, is the characteristic for both epochs feverish opening to the outside world and the intensive exchange with it, the easy acceptance of the achievements of technical progress and their rapid application in practice. To a large extent, cinema then, and modern audiovisual media today, are synonymous with these processes.

At the same time, both periods are characterized by the intensive introduction of new practices of artistic production and the institutionalization of cultural life. Similar to the rapid emergence of NGOs in the two decades since the early 1990s the first professional and civic organizations in cinema emerged in the same pattern a hundred years ago. A significant movement to promote cinema in society emerged, giving birth to the amateur film movement. A significant movement to promote cinema in society emerged, launching the amateur film clubs and associations. Committed public initiatives in this new sector and its rapid development have triggered intensive lawmaking by the state, which, albeit clumsily, is trying to regulate this new industry.

Along with the cultural and political aspects, the aesthetic and cultural issues are no less significant. Cinema is a new art language, a new form of aesthetic experience and at the same time an opportunity for creative synthesis of the achievements and practices of all arts. This is what put it at the centre of public attention in the two decades after the First World War - a social

and cultural phenomenon that has not yet been thoroughly explored in relation to the Balkans and East Central Europe. A significant part of this public interest of people from different social and intellectual strata is realized in the sphere of everyday culture, which makes processes and phenomena more difficult to identify and interpret.

Papers presented at the forum are encompassing (but not limited to) following topics:

- Implementing new models of creativity and artistic production in the area of film;
- Cinema and the other arts;
- Establishment and development of economically and creatively active film production structures;
- Expansion of cinema exhibition and distribution networks that acquire a well-branched national reach; industry practices in cinema exhibition and distribution;
- Building transnational connections in film production, distribution and exhibition;
- Technological developments (colour, sound etc.)
- Significant film events and processes, causing tumultuous social developments;
- State policy on cinema;
- Building of professional associations, defending specific industry interests
- The emergence of specific film audiences;
- Developing a film criticism and film press that appeals to broad sections of society;
- Emergence of amateur film organizations and amateur film practices.

The aim of the scholarly forum is to create a platform for meeting and exchanging ideas on the above-mentioned issues among researchers studying the history of cinema in the Balkans and East Central Europe. What is of interest are both the similarities and the differences. Papers and presentations can focus on comparisons and contrasts, but they can also present a specific national "case study" whose broader relevance is revealed in the course of the discussions.

The papers presentations and screenings during the forum will be accessible without an entrance fee upon pre-registration for film scholars, historians, archivists, critics, academics, PhD students, students.

Future publication: the organizers have planned the publication of a collective edited volume. All papers will go through a double-blind peer review process.

**Given the exceptional circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, the organizers wish to express that we will follow the situation closely even though this conference is planned as a face-to-face conference.**