

Sergei Parajanov

Born Sarkis Yossifovich Paradjanian of Armenian parents on 9 January 1924 in Tbilisi, Georgia, Sergei Parajanov transferred from the Tbilisi Institute for Railway Engineering (1942) to the Tbilisi Conservatory of Music (1943-45) to study song and violin before gaining admission in 1946 to VGIK, the Soviet All-Union State School for Film Art and Cinematography (aka Moscow Film School). He graduated as a film director in 1951 under the tutelage of Ukrainian masters Igor Savchenko and Alexander Dovzhenko and found employment at the Kiev Film Studios (later renamed the Alexander Dovzhenko Studios).

Parajanov began his career by making the same film twice. Shortly after completing his diploma film, A Moldavian Fairy Tale (1951), shot in the Ukraine, he assisted his mentor Igor Savchenko on Taras Shevchenko (1951) and then remade with Yakov Brazelian his graduation short as a feature-length children's film titled Andriesh (1954). A Moldavian Fairy Tale appears to be lost, although Parajanov claimed to have kept a copy at his home in Tbilisi. Three documentary films followed: Dumka (1959), about a choral group and made for the anniversary of the 1917 Revolution; Natalya Ushviy (1960), a portrait of a prominent Ukrainian stage and screen actress, and Golden Hands (1960), about folk art and co-directed Oleksiy Pankratov and Alexandr Nikolayenko. All three documentaries can be found in the Kiev film archive. His next three feature films at the Dovzhenko Studios -The First Lad (1959), Ukrainian Rhapsody (1961), and The Flower on the Stone (1962) - generally followed the prescribed principles of Socialist Realism, yet each did contain scenes that went against the grain.

Parajanov's ninth film in Kiev, Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors (1964), caused an uproar by smashing to bits the principles of Socialist Realism in Soviet cinema. Although awarded at several international film festivals, it was given only limited release in the Soviet Union. In trouble with the authorities for also protesting the arrest of Ukrainian poets and intellectuals, Parajanov accepted an offer from Yerevan to make a documentary on Hakop Hovnatanian (1965), an Armenian portrait painter who had lived and worked in Tbilisi. Portraits by Ovnatanian were later incorporated into scenes in Kiev Frescoes (1966), a production interrupted at the Dovzhenko Studios after a few weeks of shooting. Only fragments of Akop Ovnatanian and Kiev Frescoes remain today. The same fate befell Sayat Nova (1966), shot under primitive conditions in Armenia. When the director's cut was confiscated, Sergei Yutkevich cut 20 minutes out of the original in an effort to save the film and re-edited the

remainder into The Color of the Pomegranate (1969) for limited Moscow release. “My masterpiece no longer exists,” lamented Parajanov shortly before his death - although an attempt has recently been made in Armenia to reconstruct the original version.

All further attempts to make a film proved in vain. After years of intrigue and suspicion, Parajanov was arrested in Kiev on 17 December 1973 and, after a court hearing, sentenced on 25 April 1974 to five years imprisonment at the Dniepropetrovsk camp for hardened criminals. The charges were given as: “business with art objects,” “leaning towards homosexuality,” “incitement to suicide,” and “blackmarketing.” In 1978, as the result of world-wide protests and petitions made by friends and artists, he was released and allowed to return to his family home in Tbilisi, but not permitted to find work in a film studio. On 11 February 1982, he was arrested again by the KGB, “for bribing a public official” to help a nephew gain entrance to the university, and detained in the Voroshilovgrad prison until November 1982.

After 15 years on a blacklist, Parajanov received the support of Eduard Shevardnadze, First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, to make the feature The Legend of Suram Fortress (1985), co-directed by actor Dodo Abakhidze, and the documentary Arabesques on the Theme Pirosmani (1986) at the Gruziafilm Studio in Tbilisi. His last film, Ashik Kerib (1988), a Georgian-Armenian-Azerbaijan co-production, has received limited release in these countries. On 4 June 1989, he began shooting the first scenes from his autobiographical film, Confession, at his family home in Tbilisi. Three days later, he was taken to a hospital with respiratory problems. An operation for lung cancer in Moscow followed, then radiation treatments in Paris. Sergei Parajanov died on 20 July 1990 at the age of 66 in Yerevan, where he is buried.

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Sergei Parajanov - Sergo Paradjanov - Sarkis Paradjanian

1924-1990

Films:

1951 A Moldavian Fairy Tale (short), student diploma film (lost)

1954 Andriesh (feature), codirected by Yakov Brazelian

1958 The First Lad (feature)

1959 Dumka, or The “Dumka” State Academic Chorus (documentary)

1960 Natalya Uzhviy (documentary)

1960 Golden Hands (documentary), codirected by Oleksiy Pankratov and Alexandr Nikolayenko

1961 Ukrainian Rhapsody (feature)

1962 The Flower on the Stone (feature)

1964 Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors (feature)(1965/86, banned)

1966 Kiev Frescoes (feature, uncompleted, fragment)

1968 Akop Ovnatanian (documentary)

1969 Sayat Nova The Color of the Pomegranate (feature) (1969/86, banned)

1971 The Color of the Pomegranate (feature), (1971/86, banned) reedited version of Sayat Nova by Sergei Yutkevich under new title

1984 The Legend of Suram Fortress (feature)

1985 Arabesques on the Theme of Pirosmani (documentary)

1988 Ashik Kerib (feature)

1989 Confession (feature, uncompleted, original camera negative)
only survives in the documentary film "Parajanov: The Last Spring" (1992)

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Cordially,

Lusie and www.Parajanov.com staff,

Parajanov.com - Maestro Sergei Parajanov Website - was established on 9 January 2001 for the occasion of the 77th birthday of the genius filmmaker.
Parajanov.com unites Maestro's friends, family, fans and colleagues around the world in preservation of the name and art of Sergei Parajanov. Our profound gratitude goes to everyone who during the past years cooperated with us on correcting and/or removing the huge amount of mistakes and endless misspellings throughout the Internet, media and other sources all over the world. Parajanov.com cordially requests and kindly reminds that anything associated with the name of Sergei Iosifovich Parajanov must be presented only in the most highly appropriate and respectful manner.
Parajanov.com continually perfects its content and proudly features unique and accurate

information to educate the cinema and art students and fans worldwide about the extraordinary life and work of a legendary Sergei Iosifovich Parajanov.