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SOVIET SALUTE

Celebrating Grigori Kozintsev
At the Walter Reade Theater
Through October 6

This rewarding series bears a misleading title. From 1924 until 1945, Kozintsev made films in tandem with Leonid Trauberg. Of the nine pictures in the show, six were codirected by Trauberg. The three solo Kozintsev works on view, *Don Quixote* (1957), *Hamlet* (1964), and *King Lear* (1971), are visually stunning, but mostly devoid of the inventiveness of the earlier collaborations.

Kozintsev, born in Kiev in 1905, was directing agit-plays at 14. At 16, with Trauberg in Leningrad, he founded the FEX, the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, staging experi- ➤➤

mental productions imbued with the founders' passion for the circus, Picasso, Mayakovsky, Dada, and American movie comedies.

The team's seventh film, their silent masterpiece *The New Babylon* (1929), isn't made up of conventional scenes, but of a long series of short tableaux, a steaming hot pot of startling images. The heroine, employed in a luxury department store, is the link between the two warring classes: the bourgeoisie for whom she works, the poor with whom she lives. Some scenes recall Manet; there are soft-focus shots that have the look of early Steichen. The lustrous cinematography is by Andrei Moskvín, who shot all of the team's films and Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*.

The pair's finest sound film was *The Youth of Maxim* (1935). At a time when most Soviet films were corseted in the clichés of Stalinist socialist realism, they produced the most cheerful, witty, and downright likable of all revolutionary pictures.

Kozintsev died in 1973. I've never seen a Trauberg obit. If still around, he's pushing 93. Is he aware that he's being honored, albeit surreptitiously, at Lincoln Center?—ELLIOTT STEIN