

long, adulatory articles to the Russian dancers. At the Coronation Gala on 26 June 1911, a third of the seats were taken for the king's guests, and Covent Garden was a sea of roses and orchids. The stalls and the tiers glittered with diamond tiaras and jewels. The men wore their sparkling decorations and medals on splendid dress uniforms. It was a great honour for the Russian dancers to be invited to perform at this event. They danced part of *Pavillon d'Armide* in the presence of the new king and queen.

Diaghilev's choreographers were Mikhail Fokine, briefly followed by Vaslav Nijinsky, then Leonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska and George Balanchine. His designers before the First World War were Russian: Leon Bakst, Alexandre Benois, Ivan Bilibin, Aleksander Golovine, Nikolai Roerich, Sergey Sudeikin, *inter alia*. During the War and later he commissioned designs from the Russian modernists Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov, followed by many non-Russians: Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Georges Braque, André Derain and Henri Matisse. It is thanks to the Ballets Russes that new art forms such as Cubism were rapidly known internationally. (Picasso is on record as saying that Diaghilev did more to disseminate his fame internationally than his dealer Rosenberg's Paris shows.) Last but not least, Diaghilev commissioned music from Claude Debussy, Sergey Prokofiev and Maurice Ravel as well as discovering Igor Stravinsky. Their collaboration was to make a lasting mark on the sound and rhythm of music. Scheijen gives us a detailed account of the genesis and first performances of all the ballets, particularly the *Sacre du Printemps*, that most cataclysmic piece of twentieth-century music.

Diaghilev achieved all this with no stable financial backing, no permanent base for the company, no handy infrastructure: rehearsal rooms, costume studios and stage-building workshops. All had to be found and rented, repeatedly, in different countries. Furthermore, he had to deal with the disruption caused by a world war and the Russian Revolution. He was often desperate and on the verge of ruin, yet he would always appear imperturbable and impeccably dressed, and was feted by kings and emperors and the leaders of Society in all the capitals of Europe.

There are a few mistakes in the illustrations. On page 104 the sketch of Diaghilev's nurse is attributed to Serov whereas it is signed 'L. Bakst'. Also, one of the full-page colour illustrations after page 280 is described as Ida Rubinstein in *Scheherazade*, whereas it represents Gertrude Hoffmann and it advertises her USA tour of the pirated version of the Ballets Russes.

Scheijen is excellent in describing the complex and frequently antagonistic web of artists, choreographers, musicians, designers and dancers surrounding Diaghilev. The triumph of this book lies in the degree to which the biographer has achieved something like a group biography, analysing Diaghilev and all the stars of the Ballets Russes in a rich and exhilarating story.

Андрей Тарковский: СобираТЕЛЬ Снов

by Layla Alexander-Garrett

(Астрель, Москва 2009)

Reviewed by Vera Liber

When you write about me... you will, you'll see... don't paint me a tyrannical director... but don't be neutral... write what you felt... Layla Alexander-Garrett remembers the words of a dying man. Nearly a quarter of a century later here is the book he foresaw she would write. In a sense his gift to her was permission to write about his 'other' life, saying, 'когда я умру, ты будешь очень жалеть, что не была со мной...'. At the epicentre of the events of the last years of his life, before 'fate like a madman with a razor' cut him down – from her first brave approach in Moscow, to working as interpreter on the Swedish set of his last film, *Sacrifice*, to the months leading up to his death – Layla Alexander-Garrett presents an in-depth view of, and a loving testimony to, a troubled man searching for answers to life's purpose.

A parallel camera to his, her notebooks record Tarkovsky's instructions on set, his random thoughts, witty asides, his alterations and additions, recent dreams inserted into the scenario, as she trails him, his 'blonde shadow'. *Mise-en-scène*, production design issues, tricks of the trade, his idiosyncratic long takes, different angle repeat shots, his liking for a 'dark light', a sense of filming rhythm, outtakes and retakes, and perpetual worry about the title which needs to encapsulate the film... *Witch*, *Forest Witch*, *The Collector* (but a film of that title exists already so that's out – Terence Stamp, not Alan Bates, by the way, is the lead), *Martyrology*, *Stigmata*, *Thou shalt Dream*, *Love*, *Gift*, *Offering*, *Sacrifice*, *Eternal Return*...

And, a wordy treatment for a film about unrequited love – Tarkovsky considered unrequited love the highest manifestation of pure love. His wife Larisa sensed this too: it is more dangerous than a passing affair. Tarkovsky suffered because of Layla, and for Layla: 'ты и представляешь себе не можешь, что я из-за тебя несчастлив'. She misses their mutual rapport, as she resurrects Tarkovsky with a book from the heart. She finished his sentences, she anticipated his needs, he needed people around him who intuited his needs, but she used the polite form of address almost until the end. She fills out (and overlaps with) his sketchy fragmented Diaries with her own episodic recollections. One senses one has read some of this before – mirrors and echoes... In any case, his Diaries are only the partial truth: there was self-censorship, as Larisa read and doctored them (there are witnesses)... His wife gets short shrift, her caprices exposed... She was his cross to bear for the sake of his son... It would make a marvellous film... except he would most likely have told her to cut and cut again...

When Andrei Tarkovsky died aged only fifty-four (alone

Layla writes, on 29 December 1986), his film fans were grateful for the few books by and about him that appeared soon after – his own *Sculpting In Time: Reflections On The Cinema* in 1986, his *Time Within Time The Diaries 1970-1986* in 1991, Mark Le Fanu's *The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky* in 1987, and Maya Turovskaya's *Tarkovsky, Cinema as Poetry* in 1989... as well as film diaries and tributes by Alexander Sokurov in 1987, Chris Marker in 1999, and his own *Tempo di Viaggio* with Tonino Guerra in 1983. We know his views on cinema, which he saw as on equal footing with great art, literature, and music, and his anxieties for the world, and, of course, he saw no differentiation between his own life and the life in his films: 'no чудесны, все мои фильмы обо мне'. They were all about him, about Russia, and primarily for a Russian audience. He spelled out in interviews and diaries major influences from philosophy, music, literature, art and films. So, there is no mystery as to what his films are meant to signify, though he did like to be enigmatic – 'the less accessible a work to the intellect, the greater it is'. But, to have his миропознание, his *Weltanschauung*, reiterated and embellished in an intimate account of the years when he was fighting on so many fronts, political, emotional, creative, financial, and unknowingly with the cancer that was to kill him, leaving many unrealized projects – is most welcome.

Demystifying the man and his *œuvre*, Layla Alexander-Garrett brings to life the artist and the man, who left an indelible imprint on her. In a collage of poetic snippets and jump cuts, reminiscences and reflections, refracted through 'dreams', reality and dreams intermingling in a mosaic of repetitions and digressions within digressions – time within time – she gives us the man and the cinema genius aware of his own worth. Like Norstein's Hedgehog (prickly Tarkovsky with his summer 'Toshiro Mifune' brush haircut) he appears out of the mists of time. Tarkovsky liked mists... A partial biography, but by no means a hagiography, and a pedantic sixty-day film diary of schedules: the unglamorous daily tedium of filming, the attention to detail, the waiting for the right weather conditions, the disasters when pyrotechnics go wrong and the camera jams. The frictions, tensions and dramas on set ('в спор рождается истина'), his selection process of actors for the film, his fuss over costumes, his choice of music, his likes and dislikes, his preference for actors not to act... His state of mind during the making of the film and after... And there are thumbnail sketches of his colleagues on the film, Sven Nykvist, Erland Josephson, Susan Fleetwood, producers, designers, a fifty-strong film crew. It was not smooth sailing, money a constant issue... The Swedes nicknamed the film *Tarkovsky's Nightmare*... After this book film buffs will see the film, which he considered the most important one he made, with fresh eyes... He believed like Pushkin, that every poet, every true artist, is a prophet, like it or not.



In awe of his talent, but not the man, Layla fashions, frame by frame, a fascinating image of a complex man. She does not conceal his dark side, his petulant irritation with 'slow-witted Swedes', his casual on-set affair, his indecisiveness, and his perfectionism. He knew exactly what he wanted, but only when he saw it. An egoist (his mother said he was, so he must be), a *monstre sacré*, highly-strung, moody, dissatisfied with himself, but with guileless child-like redeeming qualities, Tarkovsky could be an intellectual snob, outwardly cold and defensive, but inside beat a tender heart. Layla was more than his interpreter, she was his PA and his go-between – she escorted him home, dealt with people (he hated confrontations), and got his mistress Berit (who will give birth to his son Alexander in September 1986 the year Tarkovsky dies of cancer and TB) out of his flat before his wife was due to arrive. She held his hand metaphorically in difficult times and literally during a hospital biopsy. She was there for the diagnosis, too.

Kindred spirits, Tarkovsky and Layla, both interested in religion and Eastern philosophy, both believers in dreams and coincidences, in God's providence. He in parapsychology, telepathy, and séances (in Moscow when Pasternak appeared and told him he'd make seven films, he believed it – 'you don't believe in séances, do you? I believe in Pasternak...'), she in astrology, numerology, and Tarot cards. Tarkovsky is envious of her meeting with Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell, who later founded the Institute of 'Noetic' Investigation. She takes him to a lecture on happiness by her Tibetan lama guru, who says one has to sacrifice oneself for the salvation of others – exactly the theme of *Sacrifice*. All comes together in the spiritual, but don't meddle with the dark side, he says. Is she with this book – raising the dead? 'Токоватеамншта' he called her, and his guardian angel. He also named her *la strega*, the witch, a recurring figure motif in his films. She was his mouthpiece, his double, his daemon, she was the angel reflected in the mirror in his film... she reminded him of his mother. He was convinced his mother had sent her to him.

Look to his women and you'll understand his films... He was a male chauvinist who idolized women, he patronized her, was possessive, demanding, but she stood her ground with wit and occasional sharp tongue, citing Akhmatova and the wives of the Decembrist. He promised her a diamond ring and dedicated his father's poem, a declaration of love, to her. She dedicates her book to the next generation, his son Alexander and her daughter Lena, to continue the conversation perhaps... Tarkovsky's films were a continuous dialogue with himself. Elucidation in any form will more than satisfy his many admirers... An index would be useful, too. 'Write what I meant to you'... this Layla Alexander-Garrett has done to the best of her ability, Margarita to his Master...