

**Director**

Andrei Tarkovsky

**Cast**

Margarita Terekhova

Filipp Yankovsky

Ignat Daniltsev

Larisa Tarkovskaya

Oleg Yankovsky

**Screenplay**

Andrei Tarkovsky, Aleksandr Misharin

**Photography**

Gregory Rerberg

**Art Director**

Nikolai Dvgubsky

**Editor**

Ludmila Feganova

**Music**

Eduard Artemyev, Bach, Purcell,

Pergolesi

**Executive Producer**

E. Waisberg

A Mosfilm Production

Run time: 107 minutes

Certificate: U

Russian with English subtitles

USSR 1974

Colour &amp; Black and White

Aspect Ratio: 1.37:1

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# MIRROR

Screening as part of Sculpting Time: Andrei Tarkovsky Nationwide Touring Programme



In *Mirror*, Andrei Tarkovsky's legacy for unforgettable imagery finds its purest form. This intensely autobiographical work, which channels the filmmaker's childhood memories as well as his father's own memoirs, is structured as a dreamlike mood poem, progressing by means of associative leaps rather than a strict cause and effect logic. It helps to unshackle the images, affording them a freedom to work as standalone compositions.

For Tarkovsky, these images held deeply personal meanings, rooted to his family history as well as culturally specific notions of Russian identity. But in their startling simplicity, such images have repeatedly proven to be profoundly relatable and endlessly moving for a broad range of filmmakers and cinephiles. In Sight & Sound's most recent 'best ever films' poll, *Mirror* was voted 19th by critics and ninth by other directors.

The painterly compositions presented in Tarkovsky's most challenging and rewarding film may defy explanation in narrative terms: a burning barn watched on from a family home, a woman levitating from her bed as she sleeps, a fingerprint shrinking from a tabletop. Though powerful and absorbing in themselves, such moments are only enriched by their juxtaposition. Tarkovsky weaves through this fabric in such a way that opposites don't so much collide as merge: peacetime and war, the domestic and the social, the past and the far past.

Otherwise ordinary scenes, such as a wind gliding through trees, become strangely haunting, as if the elements are being controlled. Tarkovsky knew that the magic of memories was that they're always half-fabricated, distorted, allowed to blur into one another like a thick soup. We are guided through this by a masterfully imaginative, rhythmically precise soundscape, in which voiceover utterances of "Papa" and "Mama" act like punctuation marks that glue the emotional meaning of the work together. Likewise, we must adjust to the inexplicable switches between sepia and colour – as if this too is part of the magic.

Tarkovsky's longstanding reputation for slow, single-take sequences is both deserved and reductive. While it's certainly true that the Russian director has inspired whole waves of filmmakers with scenes of notable duration, he also understood as well as anyone how to mix things up. *Mirror*, which came at the midpoint of his career, might be approached today as the summation of two conflicting styles that run through the master's work: complex, drawn-out long takes on the one hand, and exhilarating montage on the other.

Indeed, some of the images in *Mirror* are all the more beautiful for being so fleeting. And while many of them unfold in slow motion, the film itself never feels slow. Though he helped legitimise a form of filmmaking that was free from the pressure to constantly advance story, Tarkovsky grasped that brevity was the true soul of poetry. Maximising their visceral impact, he cuts his slow-motion scenes short at the very moment they jerk to dramatic life. As when a bird crashes through a window, for instance, or when another takes flight from the hand of a dying man.

By Michael Pattison, critic