



Meeting Andrei Tarkovsky

Directed by: **Dmitry Trakovsky**
Editing Consultation by: **Michal Leszczykowski**
NTSC DVD Region, duration: 0, 94 Minutes
Expected date of Completion: October 2008
English Subtitles on Track 1

Dmitry Trakovsky, born February 1985 in Moscow, grew up in suburban Los Angeles. In high school, he spent a year in Heidelberg studying German and classical music. While pursuing a Biology degree at the University of California Santa Cruz, he made his first film for a course on a Buddhist text, the *Lotus Sutra*. This short compelled his professor to encourage him to pursue filmmaking and eventually led to this documentary about Andrei Tarkovsky. During junior year of college, Dmitry studied abroad in Italy where he continued work on this project. Recently, he graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a degree in the History of Art and Visual Culture, and founded a small production company, Trakovsky Film LLC.

Michal Leszczykowski, a Polish-born film editor who is currently a professor at the Dramatiska institutet in Stockholm, launched his career editing *The Sacrifice* (1986) with Andrei Tarkovsky. He has since worked on many acclaimed films such as Lukas Moodysson's *Lilya 4-ever* (2002), *Together* (2000), and *Fucking Amal* (1998). Beyond his work as an editor, he is also the director of the film *Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky* (1988) as well as the writer of a documentary on Sven Nykvist. In regards to *Meeting Andrei Tarkovsky*, he has contributed as both an interviewee and editing consultant.



Meeting Andrei Tarkovsky

Credits and Cast

Director, Producer, Editor, Writer: **Dmitry Trakovsky**
Editing Consultant: **Michal Leszczylowski**

Andrei Andreevich TARKOVSKY, Himself
Krzysztof ZANUSSI, Himself
Erland JOSEPHSON, Himself
Domiziana GIORDANO, Herself
Michal LESZCZYLOWSKI, Himself
Ilya KHRZHANOVSKY, Himself
Donatella BAGLIVO, Herself
Franco TERILLI, Himself
Vyacheslav IVANOV, Himself
Fabrizio BORIN, Himself
Gregory POMERANTS, Himself
Manuele CECCONELLO, Himself
Paola VOLKOVA, Herself
Angelo PERLA, Himself
Brother **Michael McCORMICK**, Himself

Meeting Andrei Tarkovsky: Film Summary and Project Notes

Before embarking on the production of *Meeting Andrei Tarkovsky*, I was a pre-med student who occasionally experimented with digital filmmaking. As my life-long fascination with the work of world-renowned Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky deepened, I conceptualized making a documentary about him, and applied for funding to help me pursue this research project. Fortunately, my university was supportive, awarding me with a generous grant, and thus making this documentary possible.

Today, the film is 94-minutes long and nearing completion. Most phases of post-production, such as color correction, voiceover, sound, and title design, will be implemented during the first weeks of September at Zoetrope Aubry Productions in San Francisco. Nevertheless, the movie is edited and available for screening in rough-cut form.

This documentary is an account of my exploration of one of Tarkovsky's most enigmatic declarations—that death doesn't exist. In addressing this issue, I depart from a central concern: what did the maestro mean when, through his films, interviews and writings, he continuously affirmed this belief? As my film progresses, I seek to understand whether it is possible to personally prove this assertion through a cinematic treatment of the director's own legacy. While my investigation encompasses multiple areas of discourse, I always return to this principle inquiry.

Structurally, this film narrates through a series of interviews that gradually take me to various geographic locations, from Los Angeles to Yurevets, Tarkovsky's hometown. In California, for instance, I speak with Professor V. Ivanov, who lays the philosophical groundwork for the interviews to follow by recalling his conversations with Tarkovsky in Moscow. At a monastery deep in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, I discover a monk who found his faith through Tarkovsky's films. In Rome, I interview actress Domiziana Giordano about her role in the director's only Italian film, *Nostalghia* (1983), as well as on how this experience reverberated in her life thereafter. Also in the eternal city, Polish director Krzysztof Zanussi ruminates about his close friend's relationship with Christianity. In Florence, Andrei Andreevich Tarkovsky shares candid memories of his father. In Stockholm, I speak with Erland Josephson, one of Sweden's most renowned actors, who reminisces about the director and the making of his only Scandinavian film, *The Sacrifice* (1986). Other interviews offer a plethora of perspectives on the director and his continuing presence today.

The final section of the film depicts my voyage to Russia. There, I meet young and controversial director Ilya Khrzsanovsky, who contends that Tarkovsky is vanishing from contemporary Russian culture. My travels come to an end in the forgotten city of Yurevets, where Andrei spent parts of his childhood, such as the years during WWII. As I wander the empty streets of this distant town, the mystery which this film attempts to unravel yields a final epiphany...

In terms of the experience of making this film, let me note that, throughout my journey, I was struck by the profound sincerity with which each person talked of the maestro. In essence, everybody that I approached showed a deep desire to speak about him. Off camera, I encountered this eagerness to participate as well. For example, after I interviewed Michal Leszczylowski about his work on *The Sacrifice*, the renowned editor offered his help with various creative and technical aspects of production.

Meeting Andrei Tarkovsky: Short Synopsis

In honor of the twentieth anniversary of Andrei Tarkovsky's death, student filmmaker Dmitry Trakovsky sets out in search of his favorite director's legacy. His journey leads him to fifteen moving interviews in California, Italy, Sweden, and finally, Russia as he attempts to come closer to the meaning of one of Tarkovsky's most enigmatic beliefs... that death doesn't exist.

Meeting Andrei Tarkovsky: Artistic Statement

Beginning with the first preparations for this documentary, I knew that I would approach filming and editing with heightened awareness and caution. I attempted to resist simply assembling the common ingredients typical of the genre, instead aiming to absorb the cinematic principles that Andrei Tarkovsky had mapped out in *Sculpting in Time*. Of course, because Tarkovsky seldom ventured into non-fiction, and since I grew up in a drastically different environment as compared to his (1990's Los Angeles as opposed to Soviet Russia), I understood that I would only be able to follow his tenets loosely.

Before shooting began, I sought to understand the underpinnings of Tarkovsky's theoretical pillars. Once the project started to materialize, I persistently focused on certain precepts that he adhered to, namely: 1.) that editing should not make a movie, but rather should connect sequences already instilled with their own 'time pressures' 2.) that viewers should not be spoon-fed with narrative or symbolic meaning, but should experience cinema viscerally, as one listens to music, and 3.) that film possesses its own, unique means of expression derived from the seventh art's singular capacity to crystallize time.

Although these teachings are ideals, and can thus provide only a trajectory for the director rather than a precise formula, such concepts guided me at every step in the production of this documentary. As I shot, for example, I would seek to capture the unique flow of time within my subject, instead of simply recording something for its representational significance alone. In this regard, luckily, I was assisted by each of my fifteen interviewees, all of whom spoke of Tarkovsky with unfeigned depth, sincerity, and emotion. Consequently, there are no talking heads in this movie, and meaning is just as often found in between words as through them.

The principles described above have also become the instruments with which I attempt to address the central concern of this work: investigating Tarkovsky's proposition that death doesn't exist through an exploration of his own posthumous presence. Again, it must be underscored that any findings that I would make in this regard could not be conceptually expressed, but would rather have to be distilled cinematically.

Once I had finished gathering testimonies, I was exceptionally fortunate that one of the interviewees, Michal Leszczykowski, co-editor of *The Sacrifice*, offered to supervise my work at the editing table. There, he taught me to listen to the inner dynamics of footage and to allow the material to assemble itself.

In summary, I hope that the philosophical convictions that I have absorbed while working on this film have enabled me to create a breathing artistic entity that will spur interest in Tarkovsky not by presenting an assembly of ideas—as many documentaries do—but rather by respecting the very principles that the maestro had perfected. This is, I believe, the best way to remember and honor Andrei Tarkovsky in observance of the twentieth anniversary of his death.