

# BRITISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY

## Events 2011



### December:

'My Grandmother (Chemi Bebia)' directed by Kote Mikaberidze 65 minutes 1929. Banned by the Soviet authorities from 1929 - 1976, the film is a scathing satire of Soviet bureaucracy noted for its visual style including stop-motion, puppetry, exaggerated camera angles, animation and constructivist sets. A Georgian paper pusher, modelled after American silent comic Harold Lloyd, loses his job as many foibles and follies unspool. Based on the screenplay of Siko Dolidze, a member of the Transcaucasian LEF, the Left Front of Arts group that claimed that art should be agitating and pragmatic. It is influenced by the aesthetics of FEKS, the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, founded in Petrograd in 1922 by a group of young Jewish artists from the provinces, who championed blending Russian revolutionary culture with the Jazz Age. This screening has the recent score composed specially for the film by American jazz musician Beth Custer, a quick-paced pastiche of jazz, folk, blues and contemporary classical.



### November:

Magdana's Donkey (Magdana's Lujra) directed by Tengiz Abuladze and Rezo Chkheidze 50 minutes 1955. Georgian with subtitles. Black and White. Winner of the Palme d'Or for best short feature at Cannes 1956. Based on the novel by Ekaterine Gabashvili (1851-1938), one of Georgia's first feminists and women's rights activists. The film, typically for director Abuladze, is very evocative of Georgian village life at the beginning of the 20th century. A sad tale of poverty and struggle is told in melodramatic fashion slightly reminiscent of the great Danish-German director Douglas Sirk, working in Hollywood at the same time. It is also the first film of the famous Georgian stage and screen actor Karlo Sakandelidze, who died on October 29th 2010 at the age of 82.

The British Georgian Society Annual General Meeting was held at the Georgian Embassy Short talks were given by Vivien Ashton, Donald Rayfield, Stephen Nash and Peter Nasmyth. These were followed by the AGM at which the Annual Report & Accounts were accepted. The meeting voted to elect to the board Peter Dodge, Roberto Pirani, Tony Anderson, Tamara Lordkipanidze, David Gigauri and Keti Japaridze (previously co-opted) and received the resignations of Stephen Nash, Mark Mullen, Simon Surguladze and Tsira Kemularia. At the subsequent board meeting Jason Osborn was elected chairman for the next twelve months and Robert Scallon company secretary.



### **October:**

Georgian wall paintings - a rich manifestation of Georgian art, especially during the 11-14th centuries. Professor David Park gave an illustrated lecture, entitled "Georgia's Wall Painting Heritage: Significance and Preservation", at the Courtauld Institute of Art in Somerset House, The Strand, London WC2R 0RN. This was a joint British Georgian Society/ Friends of Academic Research in Georgia (FaRiG) event. Both bodies are currently funding a Georgian student, at the Courtauld, - Mariam Kalkhitashvili, who is doing a three-year Master's course in Wall Painting Conservation, and who will be present at this event.



### **September:**

Life Through Cinema: 2nd British Georgian Society Film Festival: The 2nd British Georgian Society film festival will showcase some of the best old and new films from Georgia at London's Riverside Studios. Our collaborators the Georgian National Film Centre will be bringing newly restored prints of such classics as My Grandmother (1929), Pirosmiani (1969) and the original 1912 documentary Journey of a Georgian Poet Akaki Tsereteli in Racha-Lechkhumi. The festival has 3 UK premieres of recent films by a new generation of Georgian directors, all of which have done well on the international festival circuit. Life Through Cinema will also feature more established directors now working abroad, who will be at Riverside Studios to present their films. Nino Kirtadze, who won the best director of a documentary prize at Sundance 2008, will bring Something About Georgia (2009) and Dito Tsintsadze who works in Germany will bring Gun-shy (2003). The great Georgian director Otar Iosseliani will be interviewed by Maryam d'Abo about his life and work before a screening of one of his films.



### **July**

"Durakovo: Village of Fools" won Georgian director Nino Kirtadze the Best Director of a Documentary prize at the Sundance International Film Festival, 2008. Shot in modern-day Russia, in a village near Moscow, it is a true story about a gated community where people enter and submit themselves completely to the absolute power of autocratic leader, patriot and good Christian Mikhail Morozov, toiling day and night for his benefit under total indoctrination. The film becomes a metaphor for where Russia is possibly heading today. The screening is at the Georgian Embassy (4 Russell Gardens, London W14 8EZ) and those wishing to attend please email here We need full names of all attendees in advance.



### **June:**

A day of Georgian archaeology in Oxford . This event will focus on the current involvement of British archaeologists in Georgia. During the morning there will be two illustrated talks at the Ashmolean Museum, looking at the Colchian site at Pichvnari, on the Black Sea coast, and at "Roman Georgia". This will be followed by a tour of the Georgian collection at the Ashmolean. After lunch, there will be two further illustrated talks at Jesus College, one devoted to Nokalakevi, the site in western Georgia to which the Jason and the Argonauts legend is linked.



### May

“Abkhazia and South Ossetia “. David Wood and Paul Murphy will give presentations and lead a discussion on this topic. Both work with the London-based NGO, Saferworld, which is involved in conflict resolution work in the Caucasus region. Venue to be announced. Please respond by email to [britishgeorgiansociety@yahoo.com](mailto:britishgeorgiansociety@yahoo.com) if you wish to attend.



### April:

The next in the British Georgian Society’s series of screenings of Georgian films will take place at the Georgian Embassy (4 Russell Gardens , London W14 8EZ). Those wishing to attend, please notify us at this e-mail address. We need the full names of all attendees We will be showing “The Legacy”, which is Gela Babluani’s most recent film. Gela directed the critically acclaimed film “Tzameti”(13), made in 2005. In “The Legacy”, three French tourists and their interpreter travel through rural Georgia to claim a remote, ruined castle which one of them has inherited. En route, they encounter an old man and his grandchild who are on a journey to carry out a mysterious ritual designed to end a conflict between warring clans. We have entered the dark world which Gela Babluani is a master in creating.



### March:

at King’s College, London Strand campus. Talk by Hugh Lunghi, a veteran British interpreter, who worked in the Moscow Embassy in the 1940s, who will be sharing anecdotes including impressions of Stalin gained at the Tehran and Yalta summits. Please respond to this e-mail address if you wish to attend.



### February:

An evening devoted to the Georgian photographer, Yuri Mechitov, at which Yuri presented his latest book of photos, many of them inspired by his long association with the great film director, Sergei Paradjanov. This was a joint British Georgian Society/Pushkin House event, and was held at Pushkin House. Paradjanov (1924-1990) was one of the greatest film directors to emerge in the Soviet Union. Born in Tbilisi of Armenian parents, he was victimised by the Soviet regime and spent 5 years in prison camps during the 1970s. The French avant garde film director Jean-Luc Godard said of him: “In the temple of cinema, there are images, light and reality. Sergei Paradjanov was the master of that temple.” Despite his great reputation among film connoisseurs, his work remains almost unknown to British audiences, and this Festival is the first comprehensive showing of his films in this country.



### January:

Film showing at the Georgian Embassy of Otar Iosseliani’s “The Brigands: Chapter vii”. Made in France in 1996 this is a surrealistic film reflecting Iosseliani’s inimitable, sophisticated style. The Brigands Chapter VII.