

WAGENSTEIN100screen | stream
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October 11 - November 1, 2022

The retrospective *Wagenstein100* marks the 100th birthday of Bulgarian-Jewish screenwriter, novelist and lifelong revolutionary Angel Wagenstein, who wrote over fifty film scripts for Bulgarian, Czech and East German film studios and directed almost 30 historical documentaries for Bulgarian television. Our selection of films explores the work of an unusually complex film artist, steeped in the overlapping cultures of his Sephardic childhood, his wartime activities as commander of a Jewish partisan brigade and the massive ideological debates of postwar Eastern Europe. With our retrospective we would like to honor an intellectual giant and film artist of great refinement, who made a crucial and powerful contribution to East German, Eastern European and world cinema. Happy birthday, Angel Wagenstein!

AMHERST CINEMA | Oct. 11 - Nov. 1

Tuesday, Oct. 11, 7pm

**ANGEL WAGENSTEIN: ART IS A WEAPON** (USA, 2017, dir. Andrea Simon, 84 min., b&w/color, doc.)

This provocative portrait of the Bulgarian-Jewish artist Angel Wagenstein offers a fresh perspective on the past century, taking us down unfamiliar historical and ideological paths, and inviting us to revisit the revolutions of 1989 with a critical eye. Director Andrea Simon introduces viewers to a brilliant and charismatic storyteller, for whom art became a form of resistance against a series of oppressive and corrupt regimes. Interviews with Wagenstein himself reveal his remarkable wit and intellect even today. Simon's film is a must-see chronicle of a complicated history through the eyes of an artist who spoke truth to power throughout his storied career. The documentary, which includes clips from many of Wagenstein's films, was an official selection of Jewish Film Festivals around the world, including New York and Washington.

Followed by Q&A with director Andrea Simon.

Wednesday, Oct. 19, 7pm

**GOYA** (GDR/USSR, 1971, dir. Konrad Wolf, 136 min., color, English subtitles)

This dazzling co-production is adapted from Lion Feuchtwanger's eponymous novel, which in Wagenstein's hands became a searing critique of communist cultural politics and an exploration of the role of an artist in society. The film is a sprawling epic dedicated to the life and work of the legendary Spanish painter Francisco de Goya, played by Donatas Banionis (1972, *Solaris*, Andrei Tarkovsky). Goya's struggle to reconcile the wealth and prestige he earned painting in the King's court with his enlightened artistic ideals and his love for the common people is stirring portrayed to highlight the relevance of this dilemma today. The film, originally shot in 70mm with a multi-national film crew from eight Eastern European countries, shows the influence of great filmmakers from Jean Renoir, Luis Buñuel and Carlos Saura to Sergei Eisenstein.

Followed by Q&A with Luke P. Parker, Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian at Amherst College.

Tuesday, Nov. 1, 7pm

**AFTER THE END OF THE WOLRD** (Bulgaria, 1999, dir. Ivan Nichev, 109 min., color, English subtitles)

It comes as no surprise that this collaboration of two of the greatest Bulgarian filmmakers is a moving triumph. True to its title, this film follows the decades of reconstruction after WWII and the pitfalls of the new communist government in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The film tracks the relationship between two childhood best friends across time interweaving two timelines and showing two phases in the lives of Albert, who is Jewish, and Araxi, who is Armenian. The two were inseparable throughout their youth in a diverse community in Plovdiv, but religious persecution tore the community—and the children—apart. Intercut with the story of their childhood is Albert's return to Plovdiv and reunion with Araxi after forty years of absence. Their enduring love toward each other is a strong emotional core to a gorgeous meditation on loss and hope.

Followed by Q&A with Mariana Ivanova, Academic Director, DEFA Film Library at UMass Amherst.

We would like to thank director Ivan Nichev for making his film available for this retrospective.

DEFA'S VIMEO | Oct. 17 - Nov. 1Stream **STARS** for free (donations are welcome) here:
Link: <https://vimeo.com/748034843> | Password: **WAGENSTEIN100****STARS** (GDR/Bulgaria, 1959, dir. Konrad Wolf, 88 min., b&w, English subtitles)

In conceiving the script for *Stars*, Angel Wagenstein drew upon his own experiences as an antifascist resistance fighter in Bulgaria during the 1930s and 1940s when Bulgaria supported Nazi Germany. He teamed up with Konrad Wolf to turn this script into an achingly intelligent film that reflects the often untold experiences of Greek and Macedonian Sephardic Jews. The emotional depth and honesty in its portrayals of Jewish suffering and resistance during the Holocaust has earned recognition of *Stars* as one of the most necessary and powerful Holocaust films ever made. Although *Stars* was awarded the Special Grand Jury Prize at the 1959 Cannes Film Festival—a remarkable achievement for a film from Eastern Europe—it was banned by Bulgarian officials because of its critical comment on a very painful period in the country's history.

KANOPY.COM | Oct. 11 - Nov. 1Stream **ELOLOMEA**, **GOYA** and **STARS** with your UMass, college, or public library card.
For more information on **GOYA** and **STARS**, see above.**ELOLOMEA** (GDR, 1972, dir. Herrmann Zschoche, 79 min., color, English subtitles)

The film deals with far-flung space travel possible only in the realm of imagination, but the psychedelic colors and sounds set it firmly in the 1970s. The story, too—a mystery mired in suspicious colleagues and secretive, abandoned projects—is certainly familiar to many earthbound viewers. Maria, a capable scientist in charge of space travel, must find out the fate of eight disappeared spaceships. This story of intrigue against a splashy sci-fi setting led by a powerful female protagonist explores the possibility of individual freedom in a restrictive society in times of technological innovations and space race. *Eolomea*, one of seven DEFA 70mm feature films, premiered 50 years ago. *Alphaville* recently wrote: "Watching this sample of East German genre filmmaking [...] was a unique experience of 'the future in the past.'"



For more information on the retrospective, please scan, or visit umass.edu/defa

New US editions of Angel Wagenstein's novels *Farewell*, *Shanghai* and *Isaac's Torah* can be ordered from otherpress.com

