

Seryozha

(UK/US = "A Summer to Remember", "The Splendid Days")

U.S.S.R. : 1960 : dir. Igor Talankin & Georgy Daniela :

: 80 min

prod: : scr: Vera Panova, Igor Talankin & Georgy Daniela

: dir.ph.: A. Nitochkin & prof. L. Kosmatov

Borya Barkhatov

Irina Skobtseva; Sergei Bondarchuk

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	KBytes	Ω □ ≠ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

Films & Filming - August 1962 - review:

"This slight and very agreeable Russian film fondly recalls the halcyon days of childhood, and a few of the minor tragedies that set off their innocence¹. Blonde [sic] little Seryozha, solemn-faced and dignified at all of six years old, acquires a stepfather, Korostelyov, when his mother remarries, and makes friends with the new power in the family. Having heard alarming rumours from the old gossips, the

¹ pass the bucket somebody...

boy's first greeting is short and to the point. "Will you beat me?" he asks. "Why should I?" asks Korostelyov, "Two men like us can always come to terms."

There is the joyful acquisition of a new bicycle, and its prompt and tragic disintegration after some rough-riding. After a visit by a friend's seafaring uncle, there is an unfortunate experiment in tattooing. There is a first jealous encounter with mother's new baby. And when Korostelyov is posted to restore a rundown collective farm up in the North, it looks as if Seryozha will have to be left behind, alone. But just as the truck is moving off, his stepfather repents, and Seryozha rushes back into the house to fetch his luggage - his toy monkey.

Like many Russian films, once they have got propaganda off their backs, "THE SPLENDID DAYS" has a straightforward outlook on human nature which we are apt to find sentimental and faintly smug. (The Russians return the compliment by calling our films decadent and unhealthy.) Russian Communism seems to have achieved a kind of artistic Victorianism. Their films' human relationships are comparatively unsubtle (by our bourgeois standards)². Their affirmative warmth and grandeur leaves us dissatisfied, but nostalgic and admiring. One might say that whereas the West is *par excellence* the cinema of problems, of change, of social realism (about which Russian films are pretty dishonest), the Eastern cinema is essentially fundamentalist and conservative.

² He says, in a decidedly bourgeois tone



Borya Barkhatov – "More patient and submissive" than an English 6-year old (allegedly)
Source: *Films & Filming August 62*

"**THE SPLENDID DAYS**" is undoubtedly a stylised, idealised film – perhaps meant to be. Seryozha seems just a little too sweet and wise for six, although I must admit that it is probably unfair to judge the film by English standards. For all I know, Russian six-year olds are more patient and submissive than their English equivalents, just as English children behave differently from American. Mother has a stern streak, but stepfather is well nigh perfect. We are likely to feel more at home with the sloppier, less moral style of "**A KID FOR TWO FARTHING**"³, this film's nearest English equivalent.

For all that, "**THE SPLENDID DAYS**", within its limits, is an amusing and touching film, and shouldn't be missed if you're particularly sensitive to films about children. As Seryozha, Borya Barkhatov is charming in his stiff-upper-lip way. Many long-shots in Dovzhenko style, isolating the children against immensely long roads and horizons, are adroitly juxtaposed with intimate big-close-ups and with some delightful boy's-eye-views of the world (as when Seryozha charges through his nursery to find his toy monkey). The blend of fairplay and sensible authoritarianism in the relationship of Seryozha and his parents is very refreshing after so many American films about brash kids and nervy pops."

– Raymond Durnat

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Barkhatov:

"The tiny blond Barkhatov had a hit first time out, as the eponymous hero of "**SERYOZHA**", subtitled "a few stories from the life of a very small boy". (It won a Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary Festival, and was often shown in the West as "**A SUMMER TO REMEMBER**".

Seryozha had lost his father in the war, and now – in a sex-reversal of "**THE COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER**" – contemplates his mother's choice of a new one. It is a very lovable piece. Borya had a further leading role in "**BRATYA KOMAROV**".

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

³ Noted, of course, for its keen social realism...

No further information currently available. Not to be confused with the 1985 US TV movie "**A SUMMER TO REMEMBER**", concerning a deaf boy who communicates with an orang-utang. Ah, the sophistication of Western cinema.

The *Films & Filming* account does make it sound highly appealing, and contrary to that critic's Cold War verdict on Soviet cinema, my own experience of Russian films is that they tend to a dour, cheerless and stoical outlook on life, by contrast with which this one sounds refreshingly warm and life-affirming, very similar in tone to the more recent "**BURNT BY THE SUN**". Sadly, it's the fate of all but a small handful of art-house favourite foreign language titles to disappear from the film sources within a year or two of their release.

Little Borya Barkhatov went on to appear in "**BRATYA KOMAROV**" ("The Brothers Komarov", 61) and "**GRESHNI ANGEL**" ("Sinful Angel" 62). Nothing else is known of him.

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