

ART AND ARCHIVES

ART READINGS 2025

ИЗКУСТВА И АРХИВИ

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The Archives in the Context of Film Acting. The Bulgarian Case (1920s–1940s)

Архивите в контекста на киноактьорската игра. Българският случай (1920–1940)

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Abstract: The proposed paper is in the frame of the project of the Institute of Art Studies – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences "Film Culture, Arts and National Images in Bulgaria" (KINO.BG), funded by the Bulgarian Science Fund. The research aims at studying the specifics and tendencies in acting in the first Bulgarian feature films between the two world wars. A key question pertains to the problem of the investigation of acting, especially in cinema, which was a worldwide issue during the first steps of this new art at the beginning of the 20th century. The presentation focuses on the sources for studying these problems abroad as well as in Bulgaria, which remains a poorly studied problem. The relevance of the research could be sought in the need to rethink the processes from a contemporary point of view. The aim is to analyse the ideas, stereotypes, and clichés accumulated over the years about the development of acting in Bulgaria.

Keywords: early Bulgarian cinema, archives, feature films history, documentary sources, film actors

Абстракт: Предложеният текст е в рамките на проекта на Института за изследване на изкуствата, Българска академия на науките „Филмова култура, изкуства и национални образи в България" (KINO.BG), финансиран от Фонд „Научни изследвания". Изследването има за цел да проучи спецификата и тенденциите в актьорската игра в първите български игрални филми между двете световни войни. Ключовият въпрос е свързан с проблема за изследване на актьорската игра особено в киното, което е световен проблем по време на първите стъпки на това ново изкуство в началото на XX век. Фокус на презентацията са източниците за изучаване на тези проблеми в чужбина, както и в България, което все още е слабо проучен въпрос. Актуалността на изследването може да се търси в необходимостта от преосмисляне на процесите от съвременна гледна точка. Целта е да се анализират натрупаните през годините представи, стереотипи, клишета за развитието на актьорското изкуство в България.

Ключови думи: ранно българско кино, филмови архиви, история на игралното кино, документални източници, киноактьори

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The study examines some aspects of broader research within the framework of the Institute of Art Studies' project "Film Culture, Arts and National Images in Bulgaria" (KINO.BG), funded by the Bulgarian Science Fund[2].

The research aims at finding out and analysing the specifics and tendencies in acting in the first Bulgarian feature films between the two world wars. A key question pertains to the problem of the investigation of acting, especially in cinema, which was a worldwide issue during the first steps of this new art at the beginning of the 20th century.

The presentation focuses on the sources for studying these problems abroad as well as in Bulgaria, which is still a poorly studied problem. These processes are interwoven with the attempts to professionalise and modernise the acting art in the field of cinema during the period.

The relevance of the research could be sought in the need to rethink the processes from a contemporary point of view. The aim is to analyse the ideas, stereotypes, and clichés accumulated over the years about the development of acting in Bulgaria. The research makes an attempt to expand the field of historical study of Bulgarian cinema, including acting, within the context of the formation of the social significance of film culture during the period between the two world wars.

The main problem discussed pertains to the role of archives in reconsidering film acting from the 1920s to the 1940s. In focus are the first Bulgarian films, starting with the first Bulgarian feature film, "Bulgaran is a Gallant" (1915) by Vassil Gendov.

A few words about the archives

What is an archive? This is a difficult question.

In dictionaries, the term is described as a collection of historical records:

An archive is an accumulation of historical records or materials, in any medium, or the physical facility in which they are located (Archives – Glossary of Library and Internet Terms; Archive – Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

In general, archives consist of records that have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation on the grounds of their enduring cultural, historical, or evidentiary value. (Archives – SAA Dictionary).

Archival records are normally unpublished and almost always unique, unlike books or magazines, of which many identical copies may exist. (archival records – Pearce-Moses). This means that archives are quite distinct from libraries with regard to their functions and organisation, although archival collections can often be

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found within library buildings.

The Britannica Dictionary definition of archive is:

- A place in which public records or historical materials (such as documents) are kept;
- The material that is stored in an archive (Archive – Britannica Dictionary)

We can say that, in different socio-economic formations, as well as in various historical periods, the concept and social characteristics of the archive have diverse meanings. The understanding of the archive as a sociocultural phenomenon originated a long time ago, insofar as it is the subject of philosophical, scientific, historical, political, and everyday awareness. Archives were created to solve problems shaped by the attitudes and needs of society in a given period, and were subsequently transformed in accordance with new requirements.

Etymology of the word "archive"

The etymology of the word "archive" has an ancient Greek origin, ἀρχή and literally means "beginning, origin, first place". The concept was first used by Anaximander. The word is also associated with *arkhon*, which means "ruler, commander, chief, captain", *ta arkheia* – public records and *arkheion* – city hall, public building, i.e. the place where important documents were stored in ancient Athens. The word passed into Latin as *archivum*, meaning "a place for storing completed deeds, old documents and acts" (in a way, the first Britannica Dictionary meaning). The English word *archive* /ˈɑːrkaɪv/ is derived from the French *archives* (plural) and in turn from the Latin *archīum* or *archīvum*, the Romanised form of the Greek ἀρχεῖον (*arheion*). The Greek term originally referred to the home or residence of the archon, ruler or chief magistrate, in which important official state documents were kept and interpreted; from there, its meaning expanded to encompass concepts such as "town hall" and "public records". The root of the Greek word is ἀρχή (*arkhḗ*), meaning "magistracy, office, government" and is derived from the verb ἄρχω (*arkhō*) – "to begin, to govern" (also the root of English words such as "anarchy" and "monarchy"). The word *archive* is first attested in English in the early 17th century, and the word *archivist* in the mid-18th century. However, during these periods, both terms were usually found used only in relation to foreign institutions and personnel. It was not until the end of the 19th century that they began to be widely used in domestic settings (Lewis, Short 1889; Liddell, Scott 1940).

Regarding the etymology of the word archive, we can refer to Jacques Derrida, who, in the opening note of his lecture "Archive Fever. A Freudian Sensation", given on 2 June 1994 in London during the international conference entitled *Memory: the Question of Archives*. There, the French scholar discussed the meaning of the word by searching for its roots in the Greek word *arkhe* (*αρχή*):

Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive. But rather at the word "archive" – and with the archive of so familiar a word. Arkhḗ, we recall, names at once the commencement and the commandment. This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to

nature or history, there where things commence – physical, historical, or ontological principle – but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given – nomological principle…We have there two orders of order: sequential and jussive. From this point on, a series of cleavages will incessantly divide every atom of our lexicon. Already in the arkhè, of the commencement, I alluded to the commencement according to nature or according to history, introducing surreptitiously a chain of belated and problematic oppositions between physis and its others, thesis, tekhnè, nomos, etc., which are found to be at work in the other principle, the nomological principle of the arkhe, the principle of the commandment… The concept of the archive shelters in itself, of course, this memory of the name arkhè. But it also shelters itself from this memory, which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets it… In a way, the term indeed refers, as one would correctly believe, to the arkhè *in the physical, historical, or ontological sense, which is to say to the original, the first, the principial, the primitive, in short, to the commencement. But even more, and even earlier, "archive" refers to the arkhè in the nomological sense, to the arkhè of the commandment. As is the case for the Latin archivum or archium (a word that is used in the singular, as was the French archive, formerly employed as a masculine singular: un archive), the meaning of "archive", its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognised authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect speak the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this speaking the law they needed at once a guardian and a localisation. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could do neither without substrate nor without residence*. (Derrida 1996: 1-2)

The philosopher emphasises that this word has two meanings: beginning and order. One refers to the beginning, to the origin – on a physical, historical, or ontological principle, while the order is based on law. Another aspect on which the scholar focuses attention is the original connection of archives with the ruling elites, insofar as the word *archive* itself derives from the Greek *arkheion*, which refers to the building where the archons lived. Part of the political power of the archons was to issue orders and commands in their residences, in the *archaea*, where the documents were stored and arranged. The archons, above all, were those who had the power to dispose of the documents. They were also given the opportunity and had the necessary competence to interpret the archives. Entrusted to the archons, these documents practically recalled and imposed the law. The very physicality of the archive, the archive itself, comes from "I shelter" as well as "I hide". Derrida approaches the concept of archives from the perspective of their political dependence and deconstructs their central function of storing. We must pay attention to how archival practice can be further integrated into contemporary discourses of art history, theory, and practice.

As was already said, archives differ from libraries in the way they are arranged and classified, and very often something is called an archive when, in fact, it is a collection of materials. Archives are a set of information about traces, actions, and records about events and people. They may be related to drawing, writing, and remaining as evidence of their interaction with society on both personal and formal levels. In an archive, there may be a larger number of documents, including correspondence, diaries, and photographs – all of which can shed light on each other (Spassova-Dikova 2015: 21-39).

Another prominent philosopher Michel Foucault, who said already in 1969 in an interview that: *the "archive" is the set of discourses actually pronounced; and this set of discourses is envisaged not only as a set of events which would have taken place once and for all and which would remain in abeyance, in the limbo or purgatory of history, but also as a set that continues to function, to be transformed through history, and to provide the possibility of appearing in other discourses* (Foucault 1969). He affirms that archives are discourses, documents and not monuments.

Many scholars after him claim that no archival document has a fixed and precise meaning: we may know what the act itself was that left its mark, but we cannot determine its current or future meaning. It is important to trace the process by which a document was created, rather than focusing on the final result. Every archive is a product of the social processes and systems of its time, and reflects the position and exclusion of different groups or individuals within these systems. It is this hidden ambiguity that draws us all to archives, which we can view as layers of meaning, narratives, and acts beyond the immediate informational content (Breakell 2008).

Film Archives

As far as we shall discuss film archive, it is usually defined as "a collection of films". In this respect, a comprehensive look at the history of film preservation and the institutions and organisations that developed various practices is Penelope Houston's *Keepers of the Frame* from 1994. In her annotation, she says: *Since the 1930s, film archives around the world have been struggling to preserve our cinematic heritage through preservation, restoration and the search for lost films: many films no longer exist and those that are left will deteriorate rapidly unless kept in optimum conditions. This book examines how the archive movement came into being and describes preservation policies and technical developments* (Houston Penelope 1994).

However, in this presentation, by "film archive" not a collection of films will be understood, but rather different archives – written, iconographical, audio, video, digital, etc., which preserve evidence about film acting.

Types of film archives in the context of film acting

As previously discussed, there are different types of film archives that can be considered as evidence for historiographical film research.

Although the division is quite relative, they could be grouped into three main kinds of evidence, according to the type of medium: written – on paper;

iconographic on paper, canvas, etc. – products of fine arts; audio – recorded on tapes, audio-visual – recorded on reels, strips, etc, broadcast, digital records, internet.

I am not going to provide any media classification, but I shall just make an attempt to indicate the main sources while studying film acting.

Not pretending to be exhaustive, these are:

1. Written evidence:

- Scenarios
- Reviews of films;
- Textual portraits of filmmakers – actors, directors, cameramen, etc.;
- Interviews;
- Theoretical articles;
- Memoirs;
- Biographies;
- Diaries;
- Official documents – orders for dismissals, appointments, awards, etc.

In respect of film acting, which is one of the focuses of my study, I would like to point out that most specialised books dealing with acting are biographies or memoirs of actors. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, but ultimately, these monographs are becoming an acclamation of the respective genius and talent, creating legends about great star actors, or telling nice, often spicy, sensational, and thrilling stories. Such sources might be useful, but only read through the filter of corrections and considering the desired self-assertion, self-affirmation, subjectivity of the opinions, etc. Thus, many conditions and other factors, such as general attitudes, political situation, the role of art in society during the period, the official discourse, the most common discursive practices, the idiolect characteristics of the script writer, the actor, the director, the cameraman, the critic, etc., must necessarily be taken into account and filtered.

- Filters of correction:
- General attitudes,
- Political situation,
- The role that cinema plays in society during the period,
- Official discourse,
- The most common discursive practices,
- Ideolect characteristics of the script writer, the actor, the director, the cameraman, the critic, etc.

2. Iconographic evidence

- Paintings;
- Portraits;
- Cartoons;
- Photos.

Very often, the definition of acting art is almost entirely limited to the system codes used by the actor. According to the definition of acting art in Encyclopaedia Britannica, it is "performance art, in which the actor by means of movement, gesture and intonation is trying to realise the fictional character for the stage, for motion pictures, or for television" (Acting – The Britannica Dictionary).

Analysing the possibilities of iconography as a method to study the art of acting, it should be emphasised that it is necessary for iconographic evidence to be studied in parallel with all other documents – written texts, but also with:

3. Audio testified as audio recordings, voice timbre and intonation.

Useful information could be extracted from:

4. Audio-visual evidence such as films, television, and video recordings, which can also be viewed both as iconographic documents and a document giving an idea for non-trivial and hard-recoverable sound aspects of the art of acting, related to linguistic, rhetorical, and paralinguistic codes and, in particular, voice and timbre characteristics, diction, intonation, melody of speech, etc.

It is important that preserved films (if any from the Early period of cinema) are an invaluable source for the research of acting. They are both objects for study and evidence for the study of acting in its living, natural form. A lot of them could not be found, but there are some parts collected mainly from the Bulgarian National Film Archives. The total number of feature films from the 1920s – 1940s, according to the researchers, is 40 (Kardjilov 1987: 8-9).

All these evidences have equal rights in a different sense, highlighting various aspects of the films, especially the human presence, which can also be viewed as both iconographic documents and documents that convey an idea about the visual and sound aspects of the piece of art and acting.

The role of archives of the Bulgarian feature films (1920s-1940s) for studying acting

As Petar Kardjilov, an outstanding film historiographer, affirms: *In the 1920s and 1930s, quite a few sources had already been accumulated* (Kardjilov 2023). He affirms that the film historiographer might not complain about a lack of evidence.

In a lecture, Kardjilov put the main accent on periodicals as the main source for studying Bulgarian feature films, I should add and acting in particular, between the wars.

Periodicals could be:

- specialised;
- daily;
- magazines, journals.

Newspapers are the richest source, because most cinemas announce their program in them. That is, there we can find information about the repertoire. There, although less often, producers advertise the films they are currently filming.

Newspaper issues from this period in Bulgaria are available in:

- the Bulgarian National Library,
- in the library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,

- Sofia Library (the selection there is limited).

Several large regional libraries also offer digital collections of local periodicals:

- The digital collection of the National Library in Plovdiv;
- Varna Library;
- Veliko Tarnovo Library;
- Shumen Library;
- Ruse Library.

Interesting are the newspapers that publish plenty of advertisements. Especially those for music halls, hotels, pubs, where there are songs and dances, visiting troupes, playing phonographs, gramophones, or orchestras... The travelling cinema owner most often sneaks into such entertainment establishments! The layout of the newspaper is known as the "geography of the newspaper" – at the beginning is usually the introductory article, followed by articles on topics, news, usually external and internal. Usually, at the end of the internal news, also called the Chronicle or Internal Chronicle, cultural news is placed – about theatre performances, music concerts, opera performances, new books, tours by foreign performers... There is also information about the cinema. Usually, each cinema announces its program or the title of the film for the evening. Often, this information is presented in the form of advertising slots, separated by a thin frame from the main text. Information about films that are currently being shot is presented as news.

In the 1920s and 1930s, film production in our country was already on the rise, and reports from filming locations, interviews with authors and actors, illustrated with photographs taken on site or (less often) with cartoons and caricatures, began to appear in the press more frequently... At that time, at least a dozen Bulgarian actors appeared in foreign film productions, and information about their activities often found its way onto the pages of the press, because it was of interest to the general audience. Of course, there are also announcements about the activities of film organisations – professional or amateur, financial reports of branch joint-stock companies and cooperatives, and curious facts from film life abroad.

In newspapers, one can find very interesting, often spicy information about actors.

For example, it was written that the actress of the National theatre Zorka Yordanova, who in 1931 starred as Liliana in the only film in which she played "Unmarked Graves", directed by Boris Grezhov, in 1927, was nominated as one of the eight women in the Competition for the most beautiful woman or film star in Vienna. It was announced in the Austrian newspapers about the remarkable reception of the contenders at the East Station on the 3rd of February: *[...] There, in addition to the representatives of the press, of "Fanamet" and delegations of the participating countries, a crowd of about 400 people gathered to welcome them...* (Nasheto kino 1927: No.82, 3-4; Nasheto kino 1927: No. 83, 4-5). The final competition, in which the eight chosen ones paraded, including Yordanova, took place on February 5, 1927. The next day, film photos of the contenders were organised, which were again sent to Berlin, and from there, they finally chose Štefitsa Vidacić, *a Yugoslavian, a temperamental minion with piquant features and fluttering dark curls* as the winner (Yanakiev 2003: 77-78; Jecheva 2022).

Other important evidences are the memoirs. For example, one invaluable source for studying the processes of film elaboration in the era of Early cinema is the book with the memoirs of Vassil Gendov and Janna Gendova (Gendov 2016; Gendova 2016).

In the 1920s and 1930s, Bulgarian intellectuals – writers, theatregoers, critics, journalists – increasingly began to speak out on issues of cinema… So, one should also keep an eye on literary magazines. Recently, "The Power of Cinema. An Anthology of Bulgarian Film Thought between the Two World Wars" was published. The book contains 120 articles, a representative part of the publications on cinema in specialised publications and the mass press. Among the authors are editors of film magazines and journals, prominent film professionals such as Vassil Gendov, and many outstanding intellectuals from the period: Nikolay Raynov, Geo Milev, Elisaveta Bagryana, Dora Gabe, Alexander Balabanov, Dobri Nemirov, Angel Karaliychev, Fani Popova-Mutafova, Kiril Krastev, Chavdar Mutafov, Petar Uvaliev, D. B. Mitov, Dimitar Nenov (Spassov Comp., Donev Ed. 2024).

I would like to outline that, reading the reviews, the contemporary intellectuals really could go much deeper into the pulse and spirit of times, the creative ideas, the forms of art expression, the reception, the impact of the film work on society, and the characteristic manner of acting in particular.

Critics often comment that the new art needs new cinematographic expressions and language. Not the theatrical exaggerated one.

The general impact of the new film art and its social significance, not only on the national level, where it sometimes expresses admiration for our pioneers, but also in the international context, regarding the rapid development of film art worldwide, was broadly discussed.

In these archival remnants, human thoughts, dreams, and public attitudes about the emerging new art and its creators are hidden. As Kiril Krastev said: "Despite its many shortcomings, cinema corresponds to the theory of a new psyche that psychoanalysts see humanity entering: freed from childish positivism (the old art) – positive and scientific." (Krastev 1925) Again, Petko Naumov stated about this power of cinema: *If there is any art in the world, however relative, that can conquer the broad masses everywhere, it is the art of film. It imposes itself without reservation with its numerous means: top directing, the most talented artists, magnificent staging, affordable prices, good music: orchestral, choral, solo singing numbers* (Naumov 1929).

The enthusiasm was enormous, and the public discussion on various aspects of film art and its creation and acting in particular was permanent during the early period of cinema.

One of the main topics was the actor's performance in feature films. Most of the actors in feature films were starring in the National Theatre or on some other theatrical stages. Among them were: Elena Snejina, Teodorina Stoycheva, Ruja Delcheva, Irina Tasseva, Ivan Popov, Stoyan Bachvarov, Asparuh Temelkov, Krastjo Sarafov, Bogomil Andreev, Vladimir Trandafilov, Konstantin Kisimov, Boris Borozanov, Ivan Dimov and others. The comments about them varied from positive to exclusively negative. For example, Dobri Nemirov analyses Kissimov's acting in

"After the Fire over Russia", director Boris Grejov, from 1929: *The director had grateful material in the face of the actors. In the first place, the role of the warden, played by the well-known artist at the National Theatre, Kisimov. He has a suitable face for the screen, wonderful mimics and the ability to handle the film apparatus well. The other artist who also wins on the screen is Karpov*[3] *in the role of the orderly. He has a natural acting, naivety, which makes him sympathetic to the viewer, and a rich feeling for the film trick* (Nemirov 1929). Another role of Kisimov was marked as successful by the outstanding literary and theatre critic Dimitar Mitov, who comments: *K. Kisimov performs the central role of Tseko Chorbadzhi with great mastery and variety. We must especially emphasise his expression, with which he fully conveyed the character of the Bulgarian chorbadjia, a servile servant of the Turks and a fierce enemy of his Bulgarian brothers. St. Savov draws with great love the sympathetic and warm-hearted Bulgarian young man Kamen. A sincerity bordering on almost childish naivety is the characteristic mark of this artist. N. Milosheva gives the heartwarming devotion of Cena. Her final silent scene with the plough is filled with truly idyllic charm. Tsekovitsa – Mrs. E. Snezina – also performs her small role excellently* (Mitov 1935).

In focus were the actors playing in "Cairn" (1935), directed by Alexander Vasov, which was considered to be one of the successful sound film productions of the 1930s, with good acting. Alexander Balabanov shares: *The actors Savov, Nikola Balabanov, Hranov, Kamburov, Peychev and Nevena Milosheva did their job with heartfelt devotion and taste and dexterity, and most importantly – with talent. I was amazed by their preparedness for any situation, their routine, I would say, in the best sense of the word. If national actors need to be trained for film artists, here they are – they are already ready for the film. They played so freely and beautifully* (Balabanov 1935).

Although rather critical of the film "Strahil Voivode" (1937), cameramen Josip Novak and Fritz Koh, in general, Petar Uvaliev was quite kind to the actors: *Because there is no director, there is no minutely calculated development of the intrigue and the images: and it is precisely this development that gives the dynamism in the film. Because dynamism means nothing else except the dominance of the performance over the narrative. Fortunately, it exists in the play of the performers: Ivan Dimov, Bogomil Andreev and Ruzha Delcheva. And it still seems to me that the film would have won if it had been seen more romantically, and not so narrowly domestically* (Uvaliev 1938).

Not always did the critic commend the actors: *Due to the bad direction, the acting of the actors is almost bad. Only one figure stands out among the whole boring cast. This is B. Andreev in the role of Buzouneka. All the others play very badly. A good figure is Ms. Stoycheva, who plays her role well, but an even more brightly emphasised rural spirit in her mimicry is needed… from where can we expect dramatic triumph in this even, inviolable psychological and stage poverty!* (Nemirov 1930).

In periodicals, the critical notions about one of the creators of the Bulgarian feature films, Vassil Gendov, were rather contradictory. For example, some of the reviewers of "In a Blind Alley" (1928), director and leading actor as usual in the role of Mihail – Vassil Gendov were moderately positive: *Even the most sceptical viewer, who came with the intention of looking only for flaws, had to admit after the first scenes that both*

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[3] The actor Vladimir Karpov played the orderly Stepan of the Russian white guard officer Aleksei Arseniev (Tacho Kolarov).

technically and artistically, Gendov's new film far exceeds what was achieved in "The Man Who Forsook God" – his film of the previous year (Karasimeonov 1928: 3). There were comments on the acting of Gendov's family: *The acting of Mrs. Zhana Gendova and Mr. Vasil Gendov, measured even by European standards, is excellent* (Kondov 1928: 14). On the other hand, some of the critics stressed on the foibles of Gendov's films in general, who might be better actor if he had collaborated his work with other and better directors than he was: *Gendov himself would be a good actor if he had a good director as his guide. He is very exaggerated in his acting, which irritates the spectator a lot* (Ivanov 1928: 5).

Blaming his qualities as director and his typical "actor's directing" of overexposing the means of expression, the whole acting in his films of the other performers was criticised:

Regarding the performance, it was impressive that the entire artistic ensemble was under the influence of that, unfortunately, characteristic of Mr. Gendov, dramatism, which often goes to caricature. Mr. Gendov, both in his acting and in his directing, must emancipate himself with the thought that the only and most powerful means of the film artist, in contrast to the stage artist, is mimicry and smooth gesture. The same should be recommended to Mr. Trendafilov. Even more: let the excellent Marquis Poza not descend from the pedestal on which his great talent as a dramatic artist has placed him. (Marinovich 1928)

It should be emphasised that archives, in their broader sense, are the ones that make it possible to restore national memory, preserve our cultural identity, and help us bring forgotten events to the historical stage, thereby filling in the "white fields" in history. For film acting, all audio and video recordings, texts, notes, photos, articles, critical essays, and related publications are important. Through all of them, we can gain a deeper understanding of the acting styles, popular expressive modes, and acting tendencies of the period.

In light of the above, we can expect that the field of archives can be perceived as a struggle for power over history, for memory restoration both locally and internationally (where and how this history could be "placed" in an international context).





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Zorka Yordanova. Österreichische Illustrierte Zeitung. No. 7. 13/02/1927/

2. Васил Гендов (Михаил). „Пътят на безпътните“, реж. Васил Гендов, 1928 г./
Vassil Gendov (Mihail). “In a Blind Alley”, dir. Vassil Gendov, 1928





3. Жана Гендова (Лена). „Пътят на безпътните““, реж. Васил Гендов, 1928 г.
Zhana Gendova (Lena). “In a Blind Alley”, dir. Vassil Gendov, 1928

4. Константин Кисимов (Гърбицата), Тачо Коларов (Алексей). „След пожара над Русия“, реж. Борис Грежов, 1929 г.
Konstantin Kisimov (Garbicata), Tacho Kolarov (Alexei). “After the Fire over Russia”, dir. Boris Grejov, 1929





5. Петър Стойчев (Иван), Цвета Стойчева (Нина). „Земя“, реж. Петър Стойчев, 1930 г.

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Summary

The main problem discussed in the text pertains to the role of archives in reconsidering film production and, particularly, acting from the 1920s – 1940s. In focus are the first Bulgarian feature films. According to the researchers, there are 40 in number. Not all of them are preserved. Often, only parts survived over time. The etymology, general meaning, and importance of archives for culture are analysed. It is outlined that, in different socio-economic formations and various historical periods, the concept and social characteristics of the archive have diverse meanings. The understanding of the archive as a socio-cultural phenomenon dates back a long time, as it is the subject of philosophical, scientific, historical, political, and everyday awareness. Archives were created to solve problems that were determined by the attitudes and needs of society in a given period, and were subsequently transformed in accordance with new requirements. Special attention is paid to the film archives.

In focus are some different types of film archives in the context of film acting. The author argues that all available evidence has equal rights in a different sense, highlighting various aspects of the films, especially the human presence, which can also be viewed as both iconographic documents and documents giving an idea about the visual and sound aspects of the piece of art and acting. The role of archives of Bulgarian feature films (1920s – 1940s) in studying acting is a key problem analysed. The research makes an attempt to expand the field of historical study of Bulgarian cinema, including acting, within the context of the formation of the social significance of film culture in the period between the two world wars. It is emphasised that archives, in their broader sense, are the ones that make it possible to restore national memory, preserve our cultural identity, and help us bring forgotten events to the historical stage, thereby filling in the "white fields" in history. For film acting, all audio and video recordings, texts, notes, photos, articles, critical essays, and related publications are important. Through all of them, we can gain a deeper understanding of the acting styles, popular expressive modes, and acting tendencies of the period.