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## SCIENTIFIC AND MEDIAPEDAGOGIC ACTIVITY OF GEORGII AVENARIUS IN RUSSIA

This article investigates the scientific and cinemapedagogical activity in Russia of prominent figure in the field of motion picture arts, one of the first Ukrainian screen arts educators with PhD degree in Art History Georgii (Yuriy) Oleksandrovich Avenarius, which parallell with work on creation and development of main depository of films of Soviet to Union, is the 'Bili stovpy' USSR State Film Fund ('DerzhFilmFund') Film Archive, taught in the All-Union (Higher) State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK, now known as All-Russian State University of Cinematography named after S.A. Gerasimov), the Acting School under the auspices of 'MosFilm' Film Studio.

**Keywords:** Avenarius, 'Bili stovpy', All-Union (Higher) State Institute of Cinematography, Acting School under the auspices of 'MosFilm' Film Studio.

Scientific and mediapedagogic activity of the prominent figure in the field of motion picture arts, one of the first Ukrainian screen arts educators with PhD degree in Art History, as well as a founder and a selfless developer of the major 'Bili stovpy' USSR State Film Fund ('DerzhFilmFund') Film Archive Georgii (Yuriy) Oleksandrovich Avenarius (30.11.1903 – 18.07.1958) had such teachers as O. Mousienko<sup>1</sup>, I. Zubavina<sup>2</sup>, O. Bezruchko<sup>3</sup> et al. However, one may identify the gap seen by the Ukrainian film experts within the studies of George (Yuriy) Oleksandrovich Avenarius's Russian period of life and research & academic career in the field of cinematography.

Following the closure of Feature Film Faculty at Kyiv State Institute of Cinematography (KSIC), as well as enforcing the final regulations, prohibiting the opening of the Highest Film Director's Courses (HFDCs) within the KSIC Feature Film Faculty with G. Avenarius at the helm as a dean; as well as suspension of a head of Acting Studio and Film Directors' Laboratory at Kyiv 'UkraineFilm' Film Factory, G. Avenarius submitted a request on his job transfer to the Higher State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), so did some of the leading KSIC educators, namely I. Bokhonov, V. Yunakivsky and others.

Avenarius moved to Moscow early 1936 and was appointed *ad interim* Associate Professor of the Film History Department (generally-tailored, Western and American cinematography) at the Higher State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK, now known as All-Russian State University of Cinematography named after S.A. Gerasimov). In May 1937 Georgii Avenarius became a board member of the Admissions Committee to take charge of enrollment procedure for applicants to Director of Photography Faculty at the Higher State Institute of Cinematography, Academy for Film Directors, Screen Writers Academy under VGIK's auspices, as well as at VGIC's post-graduate department for 1937/1938 academic year.

Apart from the above, G.O. Avenarius has fairly succeeded in his activities at senior posts in VGIK, as from August 5, 1936 having headed Post-graduate Department on an *ad interim* basis; after M.O. Lebedev, being one of the founders of the Academy under VGIK's auspices, has been unfairly dismissed, G. Avenarius was appointed *ad interim* Head of the Film Study Department as from January 9, 1937 with further re-appointment to *ad interim* dean's post of Film Directing Faculty at VGIK in office from November 14, 1937 to October 1938, when the re-structuring of Film Directing and Screen Writing Academy within the Higher State Institute of Cinematography into All-Union State Institute of Cinematography led to Avenarius's appointment as editor-in-chief at the Screen Writing Committee on Cinematography under the auspices of USSR RadNarCom (Council of People's Commissars), incorporating Kyiv, Odessa and Minsk Film Studios.

<sup>1</sup> Мусієнко, О.С. (2009). *Українське кіно: тексти і контекст*. Вінниця: Глобус-Прес, 432.

<sup>2</sup> Зубавіна, І. (2008). Мистецтво любити кіно. *Кіно-театр*, вип. 3, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Безручко, О. (2014). Кінопедагогічна і наукова діяльність Г.О. Авенаріуса в Одесі та Києві. *Науковий вісник Київського національного університету театру, кіно і телебачення імені І. К. Карпенка-Карого: зб. наук. пр.*, вип. 15, 106–111.

On the sidelines of his tutorial and administrative functions Avenarius put a strong focus on scientific researches in the field of motion picture arts. Thus, back in 1938, a book by George Avenarius dedicated to Jean Renoir<sup>1</sup> was published in one of the central editorial houses in Moscow.

The following characteristics to G.O. Avenarius's scientific and research professional attainments was given by M.I. Romm: 'Comrade Avenarius is a man of merit in his literary activities. The systematic approach to material exposition and factual accuracy of material compilation are the main features of his articles on cinematographic issues and monographs (40 articles and separate works were published from 1930 till 1941 both in Russian and Ukrainian)<sup>2</sup>.

When in the USSR the World War II had started with Western Ukraine and Belarus involvement, and many foreign films had been captured, Georgii Avenarius was forced to be transferred to another job on sorting out and systematizing the fund of foreign captured motion pictures, following the execution of directive by the Head of the Committee on Cinematography. With no restricted access to motion pictures fund with 'banned' status in the Soviet Union, for one year and a half (From 1939 till 1941) Avenarius conducted the workshops on modern foreign motion pictures for artists in the cinematographic field at the Committee on Cinematography under the USSR Council of People's Commissars at Houses of Cinema both in Moscow and Leningrad, as well as at 'MosFilm' Film Studio in Moscow.

While taking his job on sorting out the fund of captured motion pictures, G. Avenarius tried to transfer his knowledge not only to professionals in the field of cinematography but also to the students. With that in mind, in the course of 1938–1940 he had been lecturing the history course on foreign cinematography at the Acting School under the auspices of 'MosFilm' Film Studio in Moscow.

At this time G.O. Avenarius presented his PhD thesis for defense for the first time with PhD degree being just approved in the Soviet Union. USSR Supreme Certifying Commission acknowledged the PhD degree in Arts to S.M. Eisenstein due to his achievements and overall contribution to the Soviet screen arts, so had awarded PhD in Arts to L.V. Kuleshov, while other applicants should have applied for degree defense within the general application procedure.

At the end of 1940 G.O. Avenarius submitted his 'Avant-garde' PhD thesis (on 'Avant-garde' French Artists Society) to VGIK Academic Board for defense to be awarded a scientific PhD degree in Arts with simultaneous request to release him from PhD candidacy examinations. The Academic Board satisfied his request, and following the Feinstein's statement, ex-director of Kyiv Film Institute, who headed VGIK straight after re-locating Director of Photography Faculty to Moscow, the decision was based upon 'highly impressive field knowledge and expertise (history of cinematography), fluency and principal foreign language competence, profound training in dialect and historical materialism, set out in the PhD thesis'<sup>3</sup>.

Despite positive feedback and reviews given by leading Soviet cinematographic community, namely S.M. Eisenstein, O.Y. Kapler and M.I. Romm, certain formalities, i.e. the lack of academic activities as an educator, did not allow Georgii Avenarius to defend his PhD thesis. The above wording was considered a sort of a twisted one, taking into account the aforementioned fact of G. Avenarius having led a history course on foreign cinematography at the Acting School within 'MosFilm' Film Studio in Moscow during 1938–1940.

VGIK's senior management took an interest in his PhD defense, and thus G.O. Avenarius was granted a teaching load just in the middle of an academic year, and as from March 31, 1941 he started to conduct a tailored workshop on modern foreign cinematography at Screen Writing, Film Directing, Acting and DOP Faculties at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK, now referred to as All-Russian State University of Cinematography named after S.A. Gerasimov). However, it took less than three months for German-Soviet War to break out, and the submission of his PhD thesis for defense was postponed by the times of victory in the war.

From 1943 till 1946 Georgii Avenarius had worked as a deputy head of public relations department in RadKinoExport. After the war as from May 1945 till February 1946 he was commissioned to Germany (Babelsberg, Berlin, Werder, Glindow, Potsdam) by command of a tactical formation at the German front with a mission to have all captured motion pictures selected and systematized, having had an officer

<sup>1</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1938). *Жан Ренуар: очерк из истории кино во Франции*. Москва: Госкиноиздат, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Особова справа Г. Авенариуса. *Архів Всеросійського державного університету кінематографії ім. С.А. Герасимова*, Ф. 1, Оп. 24, Спр. 4, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Особова справа Г. Авенариуса. *Архів Всеросійського державного університету кінематографії ім. С.А. Герасимова*, Ф. 1, Оп. 24, Спр. 4, 83 зв.

military ranking (Mayor or Colonel), even though his personal record stated his factual 'private soldier' status.

This work attached a great value to further development of motion picture arts, and on March 21, 1946 G.O. Avenarius was awarded a medal 'For Valiant and Selfless Labour in the Great Patriotic War' by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Court<sup>1</sup>.

In post-war years Avenarius got back to his tutorial history courses 'On Western-European Cinematography', 'On American Cinematography', to workshop 'On Foreign Motion Pictures' and 'Historical Drama Course' at VGIK. An extract from his lecture within the course 'On Filmography' was first published at 'Kinovedcheskiye zapiski'<sup>2</sup> journal, outlining the fundamentals of filmography composition to his students.

In 1946 G.O. Avenarius was finally given a free hand to defend his PhD thesis on 'Avant-garde' to be granted a Doctor in Arts title<sup>3</sup>.

However, Georgii Oleksandrovich Avenarius is best known for his heart and soul devotion to further developing 'Bili Stovpy' USSR State Film Fund. Since 1948 he was the one at the helm of Foreign Film Department at the Film Vault.

At a later stage TV broadcasts of 'Foreign cinematography in historical terms' program package were scheduled in Moscow and then in Kyiv. The featured content was a popular-science lecture format about foreign cinematography with G.O. Avenarius as a TV-presenter, telling about prominent figures in motion pictures art, displaying scenes from films by them and providing commentary on broadcasted material.

M.I. Romm in a character reference referred to Avenarius as follows: 'In the course of his repeated performances as a speaker while watching greatest films of Western cinematography and entering into a discourse on them before different and mainly highly professional audience (involving writing community, film makers, experts in arts and editors etc) comrade Avenarius has proved himself as a vastly experienced lecturer. It is recognized that comrade Avenarius had proved to be a gifted speaker, making the perception of seriously complex material, he popularized, very easily understandable in the course of his lectures before highly professional audience<sup>4</sup>.

Georgii Oleksandrovych Avenarius delivered a considerable number of lectures and hold meetings with professionals in the field of cinematography and people interested in motion pictures arts in many cities throughout the Soviet Union. Obviously, Avenarius could not fail to pay a visit to Kyiv, where many of his friends lived.

Professor Oxana Stanislavivna Musienko, being an outstanding Ukrainian film expert, PhD in Arts, an Honored Artist of Ukraine, as well as an Associate Member of the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine and UkrSSR Association of Cinematographers awardee (National Association of Cinematographers of Ukraine) considers G.O. Avenarius to be one of her tutors in cinematography.

G.O. Avenarius always brought foreign motion films to Kyiv despite the fact, that those films were impossible to watch wherever, – as O.S. Musienko shared with Doctor in Motion Picture Arts I.B. Zubavina, having said the following: 'Avenarius gave me a very strong compulsory training in 1950s. He was brilliant in film presentations and was telling us a lot about actors and filmmakers. I do remember his brilliant lectures about comedian Frank Capra and Billy Wilder as well. Avenarius even showed us D.W. Griffith's 'The Birth of a Nation', which was an astonishing experience at that time, so was American Film Classics from 1930s, i.e. by Howard Hawks, William Wyler and John Ford. I was a frequent visitor to these films exhibitions at the Association of Cinematographers. Early 1960s we were watching films by Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol... Films were also exhibited in the chamber hall at the October Palace'<sup>5</sup>.

O.S. Musienko's father, Stanislav Viktorovich Vyshynsky, and Georgii Oleksandrovich Avenarius were bound by long friendship. Their meetings were not limited only to formal occasions, but also to meetings in a cosy S.V. Vyshynsky's flat at Pushkinska Street, where his personal home library was,

<sup>1</sup> Особова справа Г. Авенаріуса. *Архів Всеросійського державного університету кінематографії ім. С.А. Герасимова*, Ф. 1, Оп. 24, Спр. 4, 6 зв.

<sup>2</sup> Авенариус, Г. (2008). Курс фильмографии. *Киноведческие записки*, вып. 86, 59–63.

<sup>3</sup> Особова справа Г. Авенаріуса. *Архів Всеросійського державного університету кінематографії ім. С.А. Герасимова*, Ф. 1, Оп. 24, Спр. 4, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Особова справа Г. Авенаріуса. *Архів Всеросійського державного університету кінематографії ім. С.А. Герасимова*, Ф. 1, Оп. 24, Спр. 4, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Мусієнко О.С. (2009). *Українське кіно: тексти і контекст*. Вінниця: Глобус-Прес, 47.

containing many books by outstanding theorists and practitioners in the field of cinematography, namely by Marcel Martin, Viktor Shklovsky, Georges Sadoul, Ivan Kornienko and, surely, Georgii Avenarius.

After G. Avenarius had moved to Moscow, he had a lot of his works published in 'Isskusstvo Kino' journal with 'Theory of Film Editing by S.M. Eisenstein'<sup>1</sup> and 'Propaganda of Espionage and Sabotage in Bourgeois Cinematography'<sup>2</sup>; also in 'Sovetskiy Ekran' journal with his 'Freedom of Arts in Foreign Motion Picture'<sup>3</sup> and 'Musical Films at the West'<sup>4</sup>, 'American Comedy'<sup>5</sup>; as well as his articles 'French Revolution in Foreign Motion Pictures'<sup>6</sup> and 'Social Film in America'<sup>7</sup> appeared in 'International Literature' journal in French. Many of his articles, i.e. 'A Note on Genre'<sup>8</sup>, 'La Marseillaise and its composer'<sup>9</sup>, 'A Great Waltz'<sup>10</sup> etc. were published in 'Kino' central cinematographic paper.

In view of increased tensions between the USSR and the USA, escalating into the Cold War after the World War II, the vast majority of Soviet artists were forced to appear at the forefront of the aforementioned struggle. Herewith it is worth to recount the disastrous epic production of O.P. Dovzhenko's 'Farewell, America!' feature film, who was urged to take charge of this obviously propaganda film production, underestimating his filmmaking capacities, following the Stalin's onslaught after Dovzhenko's 'Ukraine in Flames' film release. G.O. Avenarius suffered the same fate. After his work 'Avant-garde' met quite a tough critical response, Avenarius published his book entitled 'American motion pictures at service response', featuring a collection of articles, i.e. 'A School of Violence and Murders', 'Aesthetics of Hollywood', 'Latin American Cinematography in struggle against Hollywood' 'Hollywood's Philosophy', which appeared in 'Iskusstvo Kino' journal and 'Sovetskaya kultura' newspaper.

At the same time the majority of his publications were dedicated to foremost figures in the field of world cinematography. Avenarius published a collection of articles and books, retracing life and career of French film director Jean Renoir entitled 'From Avant-garde to People's Front. Renoir's career'<sup>11 12</sup>, 'Jean Renoir'<sup>13</sup>; as well as William Dieterle, an American film director of German origin, published at 'Iskusstvo kino' journal<sup>14</sup> and 'Kino' paper<sup>15</sup>; David York Griffith, an American film director, screenwriter, producer and actor appeared as 'History Essays on Foreign Cinematography' (Griffith, Chaplin)<sup>16</sup>; Erich Stroheim, an American film director, screenwriter, actor and artist – 'Erich Stroheim'<sup>17</sup>, 'History Essays on Foreign Cinematography'; T. Ince and his School, Erich Stroheim<sup>18</sup>; Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin, an American actor, film director, screenwriter, producer and composer – 'History Essays on Foreign Cinematography' (Griffith, Chaplin)<sup>19</sup>, 'Charlie Chaplin's early films in the Soviet film distribution network'<sup>20</sup>, 'A Great Master' (Chaplin's Jubilee)<sup>21</sup>, 'Charles Spencer Chaplin' (1959)<sup>22</sup>; Walt Disney

<sup>1</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1937). Теория монтажа С.М. Эйзенштейна. *Искусство кино*, вып. 7, 40–47.

<sup>2</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1937). Пропаганда шпионажа и диверсии на буржуазном экране. *Искусство кино*, вып. 11, 44–47.

<sup>3</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1940). Свобода творчества в зарубежном кино. *Советский киноэкран*, вып. 1–2, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1940). Музыкальные фильмы на западе. *Советский киноэкран*, вып. 15, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1940). Американская кинокомедия. *Советский киноэкран*, вып. 18, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Французская революция на зарубежном экране. *Интернациональная литература*, вып. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1940). Социальный фильм в Америке. *Интернациональная литература*, вып. 7–8, 310–314.

<sup>8</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Заметка о жанре. *Кино*, 11 февраля, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). «Марсельеза» и её автор. *Кино*, 11 мая, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1940). Большой вальс. *Кино*, 23 июня, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1938). От авангарда до Народного фронта. Творческий путь Жана Ренуара. *Искусство кино*, вып. 7, 59–61.

<sup>12</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1938). От авангарда до Народного фронта. Творческий путь Жана Ренуара. *Искусство кино*, вып. 8, 60–63.

<sup>13</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Жан Ренуар. *Советский экран*, вып. 4, 6–7.

<sup>14</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Уильям Дитерле. *Искусство кино*, вып. 10, 56–61.

<sup>15</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Уильям Дитерле. *Кино*, 29 июня, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Очерки из истории зарубежного кино (Гриффит, Чаплин). *Искусство кино*, вып. 5, 52–59.

<sup>17</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1937). Эрих Штрогейм. *Искусство кино*, вып. 1, 58–61.

<sup>18</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Очерки из истории зарубежного кино. Т. Инс и его школа, Эрик Штрогейм. *Искусство кино*, вып. 6, 54–58.

<sup>19</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Очерки из истории зарубежного кино (Гриффит, Чаплин). *Искусство кино*, вып. 5, 52–59.

<sup>20</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Ранние фильмы Чаплина в советском прокате. *Искусство кино*, вып. 5, 60.

<sup>21</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Выдающийся мастер (Юбилей Чаплина). *Кино*, 17 апреля, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Авенариус, Г.А. (1960). *Чарльз Спенсер Чаплин: очерк раннего периода творчества*. Москва: Изд-во Акад. наук СССР, 264.

(Disney with Walter Elias being an original name), an American film director, artist and producer: ‘Walt Disney Animation’<sup>1</sup>, ‘Walt Disney and Feature Film Cinematography’, ‘Walt Disney Filmography’; French Film Director Rene Clair (Chomette as original surname): ‘Rene Claire’<sup>2</sup>; Thomas Ince, an American film director, screenwriter, producer and actor, i.e. ‘History Essays on Foreign Cinematography’, ‘T. Ince and his School, Erich Stroheim’<sup>3</sup>, ‘List of Thomas Ince Feature Films within Soviet film distribution network’<sup>4</sup>.

Also G.O. Avenarius published a number of interesting works, highlighting the lives and careers of prominent Soviet artists in broad lines, with ‘Gogol’s screen adaptations’ (1952), ‘L.M. Tolstoy screen adaptations in foreign cinematography’ (1953), ‘Fedir Chaliapin in front of a film camera» (1955), ‘Bernard Shaw and cinema» (1956) in particular.

In fact, in the course of his entire life G. Avenarius had been working on ‘History of World Cinematography’, which regrettably he did not manage to finish in his lifetime.

One of the streets in the town, where ‘Bili Stovpy’ State Film Fund of the Russian Federation (former USSR) is located, is named in honour G.O. Avenarius, as he had contributed much of his efforts to its establishment and further development.

Even posthumously, the research and academic legacy of a genius Ukrainian and Soviet film expert and educator G.O. Avenarius is still being found and published by national experts in motion picture arts. For example, in 1988 a number of expert’s works appeared in one of the leading Russian periodicals, i.e. ‘Kinovedcheskiye zapiski’ with particular publications of his review on ‘History of World Cinematography’ by Jorge Sadul, ‘At a New Stage’<sup>5</sup> article dedicated to USSR State Film Fund entry to the International Federation of Film Achieves (FIAPF) back in 1957, as well as an extract from the lecture etc.

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3. Avenarius, G.A. (1939). Vydayshiysya master (Ybiley Chaplina) [A Great Master (Chaplin’s Jubilee)] *Kino* [Cinema], *17 April*, 2. [in Russian].
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<sup>1</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1941). Мультипликация Уолта Диснея. *Советский экран*, вып. 3, 12–13.

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<sup>4</sup> Авенариус, Г. (1939). Фильмография картин Томаса Г. Инса, находившихся в советском прокате. *Искусство кино*, вып. 6, 60–61.

<sup>5</sup> Авенариус, Г. (2008). На новом этапе. *Кинovedческие записки*, вып. 86, 64–68.

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