



**DETSTVO BAMBI (BAMBI'S CHILDHOOD)** is a July, 2014 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that dvd film.

**14 of a possible 20 points**

**\*\*\* of a possible \*\*\*\*\***

**Russia 1985 color 76 minutes pixilation feature musical fantasy drama in Russian with English subtitles Maxim Gorky Film Studio / Ruscico**

**Key: \*indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance**

**(j) designates juvenile performer**

**Points:**

- 1 Direction: Natalya Bondarchuk**
- 1 Editing: G. Sadovnikova**
- 2 Cinematography: Aleksandr Filatov**
- 1 Lighting**
- 1 Screenplay: Yuri Nagibin, Natalya Bondarchuk, after the first part of Felix Salten's novel**
- Poems: Nikolai Burlyayev**
- 2 Music: Boris Petrov\***
- 1 Production Designer: Tatyana Filatova**
- 2 Sound: Vladimir Kaplan\***
- Narrator: Sergey Bondarchuk**
- 1 Acting**
- 2 Creativity**

**14 total points**

**Cast: Vanya Burlyayev (j)\* (Bambi as a kid), Nikolai Burlyayev (Bambi as a youth), Natalya Bondarchuk (Bambi's mother), Maris Liepa (Bambi's father), Katya Lychova (Falina as an adolescent), Galina Belyayeva (j) (Falina as a young girl), Maksim Shalney (j)**

**(Gobo, Falina's brother), Lev Durov (Uncle Owl), Aivars Leimanis (Carus, rival courter of Falina), Inna Makarova (Netla), Galina Artyomova (Enna), Ilze Liepa (Swan mother), Gedimas Taranda (Swan Father), David Yulis (Little Hare), Elizaveta Kirelyova (Little Squirrel)**

**With so many competing family films on the market, why seek out this Russian one? First, because of its unique blending of ballet, nature cinematography and dramatic acting. Second, music of Boris Petrov is majestically fascinating in and of itself. Third, it offers superior sound recording supervised by Vladimir Kaplan. Fourth, young Vanya Burlyayev, presumably son of Nikolai and Natalya from their previous marriage, is a marvel, especially in a series of scenes starting with the death of Bambi's mother. Fifth, there is some wonderful nature photography on display.**

**Structurally this film follows the cycle of seasons, ending in spring. Life and death are presented philosophically, each integrated into the film's narrative plot. Though inserted poems by Nikolai Burlyayev lack the profundity of a Pushkin or Yevtushenko, they do communicate effectively the notion of man's transient existence amid a natural world and order he neither created nor controls. Death can be hastened by man. But that killing instinct, unneeded for survival today, is randomly and excessively indulged by hunters who do not even always bother to skin and eat their prey. Blood shed merely for sport is perceived by these filmmakers as a criminal affront to natural order.**

**As in the preceding adaptation of Salten's work by Walt Disney, an innocent deer is sacrificed to appease human insistence on mastery of all other species. Bambi's mother is killed in both American animation and this Russian variant, a scene harrowing to watch in each case. Daringly, Russian screenwriters suggest there's a universal guiding spirit ruling nature. It is not Man the Shooter. A second victim, in this film, is the mother swan. Falene's weaker brother Gobo also perishes during the course of the film, a victim of starvation and hypersensitivity to changing temperatures. Neither harmlessness nor beauty can save these creatures.**

**It might appear violence trumps all, but Russians and Americans both end their films on a hopeful note of future creation.**

**Budgetary limitations must have impelled Gorky Studio producers to employ rudimentary costume designs and minimal props.**

**Resorting generally to dancers and acrobats rather than actors leads to a passel of inept, unconvincing performances. Natalya Bondarchuk and her son supply felicitous exceptions.**

**Lighting is problematic in gauzy opening scenes overrun by salmon and saffron hues, resembling mysterious twilight. Did the Russians simply want to use up decaying Agfafilm stock? Color contrast throughout the film is limited, markedly inferior to Hollywood productions from the same period. This diffused light showpiece closely resembles American family films shot during the 1970s before widespread distribution of higher resolution film to independent filmmakers.**

**A screenplay keeping fairly close to the original novel narrative is occasionally sabotaged by crude slangy intrusions. These damage the film's atmosphere, raising an issue of age appropriateness for juvenile audiences.**

**Choreography oscillates between delicate sensitivity and muscular acrobatics, resulting in a hybrid 7 BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS Meets SWAN LAKE. This mix is arresting, though not necessarily a universal endearment.**

**Certainly DETSTVO BAMBI is a film which, despite unevenness of dialogue quality and awkward scene timings, manifests considerable originality. Recommended for teens and adults. It's too abstruse at times for younger spectators, containing frequent slow-paced didactic passages they would find tediously annoying.**

**Special features on this dvd release include subtitles; an eight-minute interview with Ivan Burlyayev, juvenile star of the film; a thirteen-minute featurette focused on Natalya Bondarchuk's Children's Theater production of "Bambi"; and a ten-minute featurette concerning "Bambi's Happy and Troubled Childhood" which contains profane and obscene language making it unsuitable for preteens.**

**Kino Ken is highly grateful to Jim O'Connor of Ligonier, Pa. for his excellent translation of Russian cover material on DETSTVO BAMBI's dvd case. That translation is now included for borrower enlightenment with the dvd itself.**