



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Orlando

Orlando

Director: Sally Potter; ©: Adventure Pictures (Orlando) Limited; **Production Companies:** Adventure Pictures, Lenfilm; Mikado Film Srl (Rome), Rio, Sigma Films; **With the participation of:** British Screen; **Made with the assistance of:** European Co-Production Fund (UK); **Developed with the support of:** European Script Fund; **Producer:** Christopher Sheppard; **Line Producer:** Laurie Borg; **Co-producers:** Roberto Cicutto, Jean Gontier, Matthijs van Heijningen, Luigi Musini, Vitaly Sobolev; **Associate Producers:** Lynn Hanke, Richard Salmon, Martine Kelly; **Production Executives:** Anna Vronskaya, Linda Bruce; **Holland Production Supervisor:** Guurtje Buddenberg; **Uzbekistan Head of Production:** Radjabov Muhamedjan; **Uzbekistan Deputy Head of Production:** Feodor Tumenev; **Production Accountant:** Richard Hyland; **St. Petersburg Accountant:** Ludmila Sadovskaya; **Uzbekistan Accountant:** Vera Kostovatova; **Production Co-ordinator:** Jonathan Finn; **Russia Production Co-ordinator:** Harriet Earle; **St. Petersburg Production Co-ordinator:** Natalia Tokarskikh; **St. Petersburg Production Manager:** Yuri Glotov; **Location Manager:** Tony Clarkson; **Uzbekistan Administrators:** Jskander Jsmatov, Asror Sharipov, Anna Masimova; **Producer's Assistant:** Roanne Moore; **1st Assistant Directors:** Michael Zimbrich, Chris Newman; **2nd Assistant Director:** Simon Moseley; **3rd Assistant Director:** Christian McWilliams; **St. Petersburg 1st Assistant Director:** Yuri Vertlib; **St. Petersburg 3rd Assistant Directors:** Sasha Yurchikov, Gabrielle Vorobiev; **Uzbekistan 1st Assistant Director:** Rikhsivoj Abduvakhidov; **Director's Assistant:** Renny Bartlett; **Script Supervisor:** Penny Eyles; **Casting:** Irene Lamb; **St. Petersburg Casting Director:** Liubov Vlasenko; **St. Petersburg Casting Assistant:** Nikita Mikhailov; **Story Editor:** Walter Donohue; **Screenplay:** Sally Potter; **Based on the book by:** Virginia Woolf; **Director of Photography:** Alexei Rodionov; **Focus Pullers:** Lucy Bristow, Boris Galper, Mike Robinson; **Clapper Loaders:** Anatoly Mannanikov, Grant Branton; **St. Petersburg Camera Department Supervisor:** Vadim Grammatikov; **Grip:** Richard Broome; **St. Petersburg Grips:** Andrei Zdorov, Vladimir Kudriatsev; **Uzbekistan Grips:** Abduvakhid Akhmedkhanov, Tolrukh Zijathanov; **Gaffer:** Ted Read; **St. Petersburg Gaffer:** Sergei Vinogradov; **Uzbekistan Gaffer:** Rikhsivoj Abduvakhidov; **[Gaffer] Best Boy:** Barry Read; **Uzbekistan [Gaffer] Best Boy:** Khasan Usmanov; **Electrician:** Steve Read; **Uzbekistan Electricians:** Aziz Dhakhgirov, Rihsivoj Parpier, Asror Umarov, Mikhail Junusov; **Generator Operator:** Bob Gomme; **Stills Photography:** Liam Longman; **Special Effects Technician:** Paul Corbould; **Special Effects:** Effects Associates; **St. Petersburg Special Effects Directors:** Yuri Borovkov, Viktor Okovitey; **St. Petersburg Pyrotechnics:** Sergei Maslikov; **Uzbekistan Pyrotechnics:** Nikolaj Borisov, Alexandr Pantushin; **Editor:** Hervé Schneid; **1st Assistant Editor:** Nick Moore; **2nd Assistant Editor:** Michael Trent; **Production Designers:** Ben van Os, Jan Roelfs; **Art Directors:** Mike Buchanan, Michael Howells; **St. Petersburg Art Director:** Stanislav Romanovsky; **Uzbekistan Art Director:** Igor Gulyenko; **Art Department Co-ordinators:** Eljo Embregts, Han Ing Lim; **Art Department Graphics:** Joshua Meath Baker; **Set Designer (Russia):** Christopher Hobbs; **Set Dressers:** Constance de Vos, Floris Vos; **Uzbekistan Set Dressers:** Rashid

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away the film's ending.

Virginia Woolf added, and then subtracted, one final line at the end of the manuscript of *Orlando* (1928), her centuries-spanning fictional biography of the artist as an eternally young androgyne: 'The secret of life is...' In Sally Potter's 1992 film adaptation, it is exactly the secret of life that Orlando (Tilda Swinton) possesses as they gaze wordlessly at the camera, and at us. The 30-second shot finally cuts to black as the Angel (Jimmy Somerville), singing in the branches of the oak tree, ascends to a high note. A few minutes earlier, when the tune began, Orlando instructed, 'Look. Look up there,' as the Angel sang that he was 'coming across the divide to you'. The intertwined power of looking and of coming across divides is the secret that Orlando, and *Orlando*, divulges.

Potter's second feature film comes across many divides, not only between binary genders, as Orlando transforms from male to female halfway through, but also World War II, which moves Potter to include a vision of the pregnant Orlando running through bombed trenches, just prior to her arrival in our, rather than Woolf's, present. Pre-production bracketed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the film – one of the first British-European co-productions – appeared to indicate a transformative era in both geo- and gender politics.

Shooting in 1992, partially in Saint Petersburg and Uzbekistan, *Orlando* had a multilingual, transnational crew. Its effervescent sophistication and mordant wit is underscored by Orlando's frequent gazes to camera, ridiculing rigid notions of gender, class and nation. And yet the final, silent gaze bears, and bears witness to, the pain of history: even as the Angel voices an ecstatic shattering of boundaries, Orlando conveys to the viewer all they have seen of war, colonialism and separation.

Courageously declaring the hero of a canonical novel 'neither a woman nor a man', the closing song 'Coming', written by Potter, explicitly contests Section 28 of the UK's Local Government Act 1988, which forbade the 'promotion of homosexuality' in schools. Like Derek Jarman's adaptations of William Shakespeare (*The Tempest*, 1979), Christopher Marlowe (*Edward II*, 1991) and Wilfred Owen (*War Requiem*, 1989), Potter's film joyously placed queerness at the heart of Britishness. By the time the film was released, the dominant note in British politics was John Major's 'back to basics' campaign, predicated not least on a moral panic about single motherhood.

Unlike Woolf's Orlando, Potter's ends up a single mother, and a dispossessed one at that. Woolf's Orlando, a successful poet, marries sea captain Shelmerdine Bonthrop and they have a son, enabling her to circumvent sexist inheritance laws and retain possession of her Great House (wish-fulfilment for Woolf's lover Vita Sackville-West, who lost her own family home to an uncle). Potter's Orlando sends away Bonthrop, signs away her house, has a daughter, and may or may not sell her manuscript to a publisher who wants her to burnish the love story. Rather than a 'room of one's own' she has a motorbike with a sidecar, and her daughter has a video camera, its grainy footage intercut with Alexei Rodionov's shimmering 35mm photography.

Running through golden, dry grass, the daughter finally brings her lens close to Orlando's face, cuing a series of close-ups of her mother framed by the oak tree where the film began, 400 years or 90 minutes ago. The final close-up starts as the Angel sings, 'We are joined, we are one with a human face', implying that we see the Angel in Orlando, but also all parts of Orlando's self, and even ourselves as viewers, carried in the untapped, extraordinary power of the non-binary gaze. For Laura Mulvey, in her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), the close-up disrupts Hollywood film's insistence on linear narrative and coherent spaces, infusing it with a 'different mode of eroticism', an interruption smoothed over by classical editing; *Orlando* enhances and is enhanced by this 'different mode', embracing the disruption.

Many critics have noted that the final close-up reconfigures that of Rouben Mamoulian's *Queen Cristina* (1933). Roland Barthes writes in 'The Face of Garbo' (1957), that Garbo's stillness marks the transition from classical cinema's mask to

Sharutdinov, Feodor Shoakhmedov, R. Majsuyutov; *Scenic Artist*: Todd van Hulzen; *Production Buyer*: Totty Whately; *Prop Makers*: Linda Termars, Helen Huisman; *St. Petersburg Props*: Dmitri Masloboyev; *Uzbekhistan Props*: Otkham Mizzaev, Bahodiz Atbasarov; *Construction Manager*: Wilbert van Dorp; *Costume Designer*: Sandy Powell; *Additional Costume Design*: Dien van Straalen; *Costume Supervisor*: Paul Minter; *Uzbekhistan Costume Supervisor*: Zibo Nassirova; *Wardrobe Supervisor*: Clare Spragge; *St. Petersburg Wardrobe Mistress*: Ludmila Romanovskaya; *Jewellery*: Simon Costin; *Make-up Supervisor*: Morag Ross; *Make-up Assistant*: Miri Ben Shlomo; *St. Petersburg Make-up Artist*: Tamara Fried; *St. Petersburg Make-up Assistants*: Natalia Gorina, Marina Lebedeva, Irina Bratinova; *Hairdressing Supervisor*: Jan Archibald; *Titles*: Frameline; *Music*: David Motion, Sally Potter; *Additional [Music] Materials*: Fred Frith, David Bedford; *Contra-bass Clarinet*: Richard Addison; *Violin/Viola*: Alexander Balanescu; *Violin*: Clare Connors; *Bassoon*: Lindsay Cooper; *Clarinets/Saxophone*: Andy Findon; *Guitars*: Fred Frith; *Double Bass*: Christopher Laurence; *Keyboards*: David Motion; *Trumpets/Flugel Horn*: Guy Nockles; *Voices*: Sally Potter, Jimmy Somerville; *Music Supervisor*: Bob Last; *[Music] Produced by*: Bob Last, David Motion; *Choreography*: Jacky Lansley; *Sound Recording*: Jean-Louis Ducarmé; *Boom Operator*: Samuel Cohen; *Re-recording Mixer*: Robin O'Donoghue; *Supervising Sound Editor*: Kant Pan; *Dialogue Editor*: Martin Evans; *Assistant Sound Editor*: Victoria Boydell; *Foley*: Martyn Robinson; *Foley Artists*: Dianne Greaves, Jack Stew, Pauline Bennion; *Stunt Co-ordinator*: Steve Dent; *St. Petersburg Stunt Co-ordinator*: Oleg Vasilug

Cast:
 Tilda Swinton (*Orlando*), Billy Zane (*Shelmerdine*), Lothaire Bluteau (*The Khan*), John Wood (*Archduke Harry*), Charlotte Valandrey (*Sasha*), Heathcote Williams (*Nick Greene/publisher*), Quentin Crisp (*Queen Elizabeth I*), Peter Eyre (*Mr Pope*), Thom Hoffman (*King William of Orange*), Kathryn Hunter (*countess*), Ned Sherrin (*Mr Addison*), Jimmy Somerville (*singer/angel*), Dudley Sutton (*King James I*), John Bott (*Orlando's father*), Elaine Banham (*Orlando's mother*), Anna Farnworth (*Clorinda*), Sara Mair-Thomas (*Favilla*), Anna Healy (*Euphrosyne*), Simon Russell Beale (*Earl of Moray*), Matthew Sim (*Lord Francis Vere*), Jerome Willis (*translator*), Victor Stepanov (*Russian ambassador*), Mary MacLeod (*first woman*), Barbara Hicks (*second woman*), Alexander Medvedev (*Russian sailor*), Toby Stephens (*Othello*), Oleg Pogodin (*Desdemona*), George Yiasoumi (*first valet*), Toby Jones (*second valet*), Robert Demeger (*third valet*), Lol Coxhill (*butler*), Thom Osborn (*doctor*), Giles Taylor (*singing valet*), Sarah Crowden (*Queen Mary*), Hugh Munro (*second butler*), Peter Hayward (*harpsichordist*), Andrew Watts (*counter tenor*), Roger Hammond (*Mr Swift*), Cyril Lecomte (*young man*), Olivia Lancelot (*young woman*), John Grillo (*first official*), Martin Wimbush (*second official*), Terence Soall (*third butler*), Jessica Swinton (*Orlando's daughter*), John Byrne (*courtier – uncredited*)
 UK/Russia/Italy/France/ Netherlands
 1992©
 93 mins
 Digital 4K

Introduced by writer, curator and researcher
 Jenny Chamarette (Wed 29 Nov)

post-war film's individualistic face. Garbo's, he says, is marked by 'a kind of voluntary and therefore human relation between the curve of the nostrils and the arch of the eyebrow'. What for Mamoulian is hieratic, for Potter is dramatic: the 'human relation' between the mobile bows of Swinton's eyebrows and lips, their curvature echoed by the fine lines that radiate laughter from the corner of her lips and beneath the eyes that turn to us one last time, carrying the riches and tragedies of a cosmopolitan, queer history across the divide.

Sophie Mayer, *Sight and Sound*, June 2016

A contemporary review

Sally Potter's long awaited adaptation – or, more appropriately, interpretation – of Virginia Woolf's celebrated novel (which was written as a love poem to the flamboyant Vita Sackville-West) charts a journey from one Elizabethan age to another. The mythical Orlando shakes off the fetters of biological and cultural destiny to become – as angelic songster Jimmy Somerville, complete with laurels, wigs and lyre, pipes in the finale – a reinvented being that is 'one with the human race'. Woolf's creation cannot be easily classified. S/he is not so much an androgyne, rather a person who passes from male status to female over the course of 400 years, finding a first love in the exotic, foreign Sasha which is subsequently reflected and consummated in the adventurer Shelmerdine (Billy Zane may not be able to act but he has a smile at least as bewitching as Charlotte Valandrey's Sasha).

Sexual ambiguity no longer causes the frisson it did when Woolf was writing, so Potter has made the question of status the central point of the film – Orlando learns how a change in gender is equivalent to excommunication. Lady Orlando is faced with two lawsuits, one which pronounces her legally dead and therefore unable to own property, while the other informs her that she is female – 'which amounts to the same thing.' But this death to the world is a rebirth for Orlando, who surveys her naked female form in the mirror in an echo of Botticelli's Birth of Venus. Orlando is never seen naked in his male incarnation – he is never authenticated as a man, rather he remains effeminately boyish. But with Tilda Swinton – in playful mode with frequent nods and winks to the camera – in the title role, the audience knows that there is a woman underneath those clothes. As a privileged child of the aristocracy, Orlando is in any case feminised by the gorgeous finery of his age. Clothes maketh the society man and woman and Orlando seems as uncomfortable in the frock-coats and wigs, the doublet and hose of male attire, as in the cumbersome crinolines that hamper her progress through the Great Hall. Only in Eastern robes does Orlando appear to be free – as much from the constraints of Englishness as of gender.

Indeed, Orlando is full of jokes about the English, whether it be the custom of talking loudly to foreigners (with knowing wit, this particular exchange is in French) or the imperialist habit of collecting countries. The film is also a romp through English history, which it presents as richly textured spectacle. Potter creates an embroidered style similar to that of Peter Greenaway (whose production designers Ben Van Os and Jan Roelfs she has borrowed) which, together with the Nymanesque score; confirms her place in a particular tradition of British European-influenced art cinema. She also flirts with the attractions of pomp and circumstance. The pageant for Queen Elizabeth I is a visual feast of autumnal russet, red and gold, while the eighteenth-century salon's pastel palette could have been devised by Wedgwood. Details such as the tea-cup shaped topiaries – perfect emblems of the clipped Victorian era – are a delight. A frozen tableau of a woman with flowers and fruit trapped under the ice of the River Thames has a cold beauty – until we realise what is entailed in the creation of that image.

While there are many ironic touches – such as the casting of Quentin Crisp as the Virgin Queen and the twentieth-century salonier Ned Sherrin as Addison – the overlaid visual style perversely turns the film into a celebration of the cultural heritage that Orlando in her liberated female state must reject. In the closing scenes, Orlando, in gentry jodhpurs and jacket, joins the tourists and takes her cherubic daughter around the home that once was hers, but which now they can only look at with wonder. In many ways, this epitomises the experience of viewing *Orlando* itself.

Lizzie Francke, *Sight and Sound*, October 1993