



The Wedding Wesele

Director: Andrzej Wajda

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Presented by: Zespol Filmowy 'X'

Production Manager: Barbara Pec-Slesicka

2nd Unit Production Manager: Tadeusz Drewno

Assistant Production Managers: Henryk Kulkowski, Katarzyna Zapasiewicz, Janusz Szela

Production Secretary: Magda Stelmaszczuk

2nd Unit Director: Andrzej Kotkowski

Assistant Directors: Krzysztof Bukowski, Witold Holtz

Screenplay: Andrzej Kijowski

From the play by: Stanislaw Wyspianski

Script Adviser: Ryszard Kosinski

Director of Photography: Witold Sobocinski

Camera Operators: Slawomir Idziak, Jan Mogilnicki

Camera Assistant: Piotr Jaszczyk

Gaffer: Aleksy Krywsa

Still Photographer: Renata Pajchel

Editor: Halina Prugar

Assistant Editor: Maria Szymanska

Art Director: Tadeusz Wybut

Assistant Art Directors: Felicja Blaszynska, Piotr Dudzinski

Set Decorator: Maciej Putowski

Assistant Set Decorators: Wojciech Filipowicz, Stefan Witkowski

Construction Managers: R. Ambroziak, J. Pokrywiecki

Costume Designer: Krystyna Zachwatowicz

Assistant Costume Designers: Alina Sienkiwicz, Marek Wolski

Make-up: Halina Ber, Irena Czerwinska

Assistant Make-up: Maria Dziewulska

Laboratory:

Wydawnictwo Filmów Dokumentalnych w Warszawie

Music: Stanislaw Radwan

Assistant (Studio Eksperimentale PR): Eugeniusz Rudnik

Sound: Wieslawa Dembinska

Sound Assistants: Małgorzata Jaworska, Anna Grabowska, Kazimierz Kucharski

Consultant (Muzeum Etno Graficzne Krakow): Zdzislaw Szewczyk

Studio:

Wydawnictwo Filmów Dokumentalnych w Warszawie

Cast:

Marek Walczewski (host)

Iza Olszewska (hostess)

Ewa Zietek (bride)

Daniel Olbrychski (bridegroom)

Emilia Krakowska (Marysia)

Mieczyslaw Stoor (Wojtek)

Kazimierz Opalinski (father)

Henryk Borowski (old man)

Marek Perepeczko (Jasiek)

Janusz Bukowski (Kasper)

Andrzej Lapicki (poet)

Wojciech Pszoniak (journalist)

Andrzej Szczepkowski (Nos)

Mieczyslaw Czechowicz (priest)

Barbara Wrzesinska (Maryna)

Gabriela Kwasz (Zosia)

Małgorzata Lorentowicz (councillor's wife)

Maria Konwicka (Hanczka)

Franciszek Pieczka (Czepiec)

Hanna Skarzanka (Klimina)

Bozena Dykiel (Kasia)

Leszek Piskorz (Staszek)

Ania Goralska (Izia)

Mieczyslaw Voit (Jew)

Maja Komorowska-Tyszkiewicz (Rachel)

Andrzej Wajda: Portraits of History and Humanity

The Wedding Wesele

A contemporary review

In Poland the play by Stanislaw Wyspianski is familiar territory. *The Wedding* reconstructs a marriage which actually took place in 1900 at the village of Bronowice on Poland's borders with Russia and Austria. It was evidently a well-documented affair. The bridegroom was a popular poet, Lucjan Rydel, whose selection of a simple country girl to be his bride was recognised by the Polish aristocracy as a fashionable gesture rather than an affair of the heart. A precedent had been set, a year or so earlier, by the rustic marriage of the leading Polish painter Wladyslaw Tetmajer, to whose small country manor were invited an array of artists and journalists to celebrate this new union between peasant and noble stock. Among the guests was Wyspianski himself, and soon he too was marrying a country girl and settling in the same village. It was a place of uncanny significance to both the past and the future of Europe; situated not far from the fortress town of Cracow, a university surrounded by military training grounds, it was a symbol of national tradition at a time when Russia and Austria were measuring up to each other and the Poles were trying to avoid taking sides. And although Wyspianski did not live long enough to see it, Bronowice was the place where the opening shots of the First World War were fired.

While audiences outside Poland are unlikely to be aware of the historical echoes that resound through Andrzej Wajda's film of *The Wedding*, and will certainly miss a fair number of its jokes and references, Wajda's achievement is to make the original event, extraordinary and uneasy as it must have seemed at the time, not only accessible but also hauntingly significant to the present. His film shudders with menace and regret, a lament for the Polish predicament both as it was in 1900 after yet another century of being used as Europe's doormat, and as it is now, its independence as elusive as ever. And setting aside nationalism entirely, *The Wedding* turns out to have its global metaphors as well, defined by the contrasts between the obsessive, raucous celebrations and the forces slowly gathering in the surrounding gloom.

The film begins with a torrent of jubilation and tumbling images before which the spirits shrink; the undisciplined racket and ill-aimed camera seem ugly and inept, an implausible attempt to simulate enthusiasm. But this proves to be exactly Wajda's intention. As the credits appear, the cavalcade of wedding guests leaves the town and passes through fields dotted with troops who stare grimly at the ludicrous cartload going by. Army manoeuvres can be seen on distant hills, heavy weapons are on the move, the air is thick with military purpose. It is a perspective of extraordinary power, and it explains immediately the hysterical fervour of the partygoers. For one night at least, they plan to shut out the world and concentrate on simpler pleasures, if only the world will let them.

Townsfolk resorting to country ways as if to a guaranteed rejuvenation, they plunge into the glowing manor house that awaits them and rouse it to a frenzy of music and colour, an uninterrupted background to nearly two-thirds of the film. From time to time, individual faces emerge from the tarantella – the bridegroom urging on his guests to even wilder enjoyment, the drunken farmer pursuing a journalist with his opinion of the situation in China, the bridesmaids with their sights set on the best man, the bourgeois and the peasant folk

Czesław Niemen (*Chochol*)
Olgierd Lukaszewicz (*ghost*)
Wojciech Pszoniak (*Stanczyk*)
Czesław Wollejko (*commander*)
Wirygiliusz Gryn (*ghost*)
Artur Młodnicki (*Wernyhora*)
Cepelia (*vocal group*)
Poland 1972©
103 mins
Digital (restoration)

Restored by The Chimney Pot

The screening on Wed 11 Feb will be introduced by Professor Ewa Mazierska, University of Lancashire

With thanks to

Marlena Łukasiak, Michał Oleszczyk,
Jędrzej Sabliński

Presented with the ICA and Ciné Lumière, who will also be hosting screenings of Wajda's works in February and March

attempting amiably to come to terms through battered fragments of conversation. But for a while, the bedlam is overwhelming in a manner that feels characteristic of East European cinema, typified perhaps by the shots in which bride and groom spin round with the camera in the centre of the floor like characters from, say, Kalatozov or Jakubisko.

Wajda changes the mood by two methods, the soundtrack and a succession of superb exterior shots. As strange discords creep into the music, the characters peer one by one at the mist that has covered the gaunt fields around the house. Occasional figures drift by in its depths as if preparing for attack, horsemen with rifles at the ready, a line of soldiers which the fog transforms back into a row of trees. Struggling out of the night, like despatch bearers from a desperate battle front, come late arrivals to the feast – a Jew and his distracted daughter whose mutterings in French, imprecise warnings, and attempts to join the dance bring it for the first time to a temporary standstill. Finally the girl runs off again across the fields, flapping erratically into the darkness, and her place is taken by other, stranger visitors, conjured from the preoccupations of the wedding guests. The journalist faces himself in the wisecracking form of a clown from Polish legend, the poet is haunted by a medieval hero, and the host, roused from sleep, is visited by an old soldier who hands him the golden horn that will summon the Polish army and bring freedom to them all.

The final sections of *The Wedding*, in which the dawn light finds the house in a trance-like exhaustion, are the Wajda we know well from *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Lotna* (we even witness, once again, the death of the white horse). On the point of marching into battle with their forest of scythes, the peasants abandon the cause and shuffle into another, infinitely weary dance. The golden horn has been lost, only its cord remaining, and a song on the soundtrack points the message before being swamped by harsh electronic rhythms. The promises, the glory, the frantic bursts of patriotic energy have again been defeated, and the marriage of intellect and emotion has failed to bring forth salvation. On the frontier, close by, armies watch each other. At any moment the future will collapse upon us like an avalanche.

'I don't care what happens now, so long as the musicians play!' The cry of the Bridegroom summarises Wajda's mournful indulgence towards his characters. And as with *Everything for Sale*, two actors, Daniel Olbrychski and Andrzej Lapicki, represent both sides of the director's own attitude – Olbrychski (the Cybulski figure) the urgent sensualist, all flashing teeth and insane glasses, while Lapicki (who impersonated Wajda in *Everything for Sale*) sourly contemplates a life turned stale. 'Life has been too intricate,' they both agree. 'One should fly from it to dreams.' And *The Wedding* is a fascinating array of sudden nightmares – the gigantic warrior with a face like blistered mud, the straw men who struggle to accept the invitation to join the party, and the appalling room where severed heads gather in a pile while the murderers are paid by the army with bloodstained coins. Wajda's most disturbing image, however, is that of the house itself, a tiny outpost of warmth in a landscape of freezing terror. It is much the same contrast as between rubbish-dump and ballroom in *Ashes and Diamonds*, and one could argue that Wajda hasn't added to it appreciably except to employ Witold Sobociński's camera in patterns worthy of Jancsó. But then the situation doesn't seem to have changed much either, since 1900.

Philip Strick, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1973

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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