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*Get to Know...*

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## SERGEI PARAJANOV

January 9, 1924 – July 21, 1990

Born Sarkis Parajanian on January 9, 1924 in Tbilis, Gorgia, to an Armenian family, Sergei Parajanov was one of the best known directors of Soviet films. His childhood was blessed with having access to art from an early age.

In 1945, Parajanov traveled to Moscow, enrolled in the directing department at the VGIK, one of the oldest and highly respected film schools of Europe.

In 1950 Parajanov married his first wife, Nigyar Kerimova in Moscow. She came from a Muslim Tatar family and converted to Eastern Orthodox Christianity to marry Parajanov, to terrible consequences: she was later murdered

by her relatives in retaliation for her conversion. As a result of this tragic event Parajanov left Russia for Kiev, Ukraine. There he produced a few documentaries and a handful of narrative films. He learned and became fluent in Ukrainian and remarried in 1956. His first son, Suren, was born in 1958. In 1964 he abandoned socialist [realism](#) and directed the poetic *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, his first film in which he had complete creative control and which won numerous international awards. Unlike the subsequent *The Color of Pomegranates*, it was relatively well-received by the Soviet authorities.

Parajanov departed Kiev shortly afterwards for his motherland of Armenia. In 1968, he embarked on *Sayat Nova*, a film which many consider to be his crowning achievement, though it was shot under relatively poor conditions and had a very small budget. Soviet censors intervened once again and immediately banned *Sayat Nova* for its allegedly inflammatory content. Parajanov re-edited his footage and renamed the film, *The Color of Pomegranates*. It remains his best-known and most emblematic film. There are few films where soul and high art blend together which such sublime magic as in *The Color of Pomegranates*. Parajanov gave the world a rare film representing a cinematic insight into the artistic mind, justifying critic Alexei Korotuyukov's remark: "*Paradjanov made films not about how things are, but how they would have been had he been God.*" He died of cancer in Yerevan, Armenia, on July 20, 1990, aged 66, leaving his final masterpiece, *The Confession* unfinished. It survives in its original negative as *Parajanov: The Last Spring*, assemble by his close friend Mikhail Vartanov in 1992. He left behind a book of memoirs, also titled "The Confession".

