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Film screenings in the “Polish territories”¹ in 1896 and their international context

In 1995, the “Film History” journal published Deac Rossell’s chronicle of cinema, 1889–1896.² What matters is that his attention centered not only on the inventors and their patented innovations, but also on film exhibition practices. Consequently, Rossell brought back to life lost memories of dozens of pioneers and their achievements that influenced the emergence of the film industry, and provided us with a primer of early film screenings understood on a global scale. He also opened up new possibilities for discovering a number of new facts, context and involved characters. Even though Robert Paul, who delivered his theatrograph, can be found on a list of pioneers well known to cinema historians, it is Rossell who pointed out that Paul’s cinematograph had been used outside UK and France (in Spain, Portugal, Russia, Italy, Sweden, South Africa and Australia) earlier than Edison’s and Armat’s vitascope was used anywhere outside the USA. Meanwhile, Mme Olinka had been rescued from complete oblivion. Olinka, arguably the only European woman involved with travelling film screenings in 1896, was a Polish lady who organized shows in the Netherlands and Germany and in the “Polish territories” (in Poznań) using Hermann Foersterling’s cinematograph.

What attracted my attention in particular in Rossell’s account were the screenings in the “Polish territories”, especially when one notices the source he used, namely Małgorzata Hendrykowska’s research:³

- Warsaw: 18 of July, Unidentified apparatus;
- Łódź: 1 of August, Unidentified apparatus;
- Lvov: 13th of September, Unidentified apparatus;
- Łódź, 7th of November, Edison Vitascope;
- Kraków, 14th of November, Lumière Cinématograph;

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¹ Because these territories were divided between three different countries I will be using this term in quotation marks.

² See *A Chronology of Cinema 1889–1896*, ed. D. Rossell, “Film History. An International Journal” 1995, no. 2.

³ See M. Hendrykowska, *Śladami tamtych cieni. Film w kulturze polskiej przełomu stuleci 1895–1914*, Poznań 1993; eadem, *Film journeys of the Krzeminski brothers, 1900–1908*, “Film History. An International Journal” 1994, no. 2, p. 206–218.

- Przemysł: 22nd of November, Unidentified apparatus;
- Poznań: 23rd of November, Kinematograph or H. O. Foersterling & Co.⁴

As you can see, although Rossell used a Polish scholar's account to establish dates, he did only rewrite two names of the apparatus used (in the case of the second screening in Łódź and the first show in Kraków). Also let's not forget that traditional Polish historiography most often links Thomas Edison's apparatus with almost all the screenings in the "Polish territories" (Cracow figures as the only exception). Meanwhile, Rossell attributed Foersterling's apparatus to the show in Poznań and described the other ones using the term: "unidentified apparatus". There are two reasons for this kind of historical interpretation: certain advertisements in Poznań and the vitascope's limited distribution in Europe.

In Hendrykowska's book, *Śladami tamtych cieni*, one can find a reprinted advertisement informing us that "living photographs" were presented using "Ideal Edisona" ("Edison's Ideal").⁵ And this particular sentence explicitly clarifies that Foersterling's apparatus was here the case. In the latter half of 1896, Foersterling was among the most prominent figures in the Berlin cinematograph market. He effectively challenged figures like Oskar Messter. Foersterling's company Helios Berliner Industrie-Anstalt (Foersterling and & Co.) was engaged in the production and sale of phonographs and optical equipment and went into film business very early on. It was in August 1895 that Foersterling received an order from Ludwig Stollwerck (the very one who had imported Edison's kinoscope's and Lumière's cinematographs to Germany⁶) who commissioned recording kinoscope movies with Birt Acres camera. In May 1896, Foersterling sold the first cinematograph of his own production based on Acres Kineopticon and named Biomotograph. In June 1896, he introduced a new type of projector equipped with a five-armed Maltese cross copied from the Parisian version of Pierre-Victor Continsouza's cinematograph (one of the many French pieces of equipment that did not fall under German copyright law). In extensive advertising campaigns in the trade press, Foersterling called it "Edison Ideal" and counted on brand success fostered by the fame of Edison (a number of other European entrepreneurs used similar practices, which is the reason why one can find a multiplicity of advertisements using the famous inventor's name). Foersterling sold his projector for 1,200 Deutschmarks and this price was significantly lower than the price for Messter's Kinetograph (2,000 Deutschmarks). Dutch exhibitor, Christiaan Slieker had already bought it in June or July 1896 and had been using it for at least six years, which shows its high quality (today this particular copy is on display in a museum in Drachten).⁷ Rossell's chronicle implies that in 1896

⁴ See *A Chronology of Cinema...*, p. 158–160, 165, 172, 174.

⁵ M. Hendrykowska, *Śladami tamtych cieni...*, p. 22.

⁶ See M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade, Stollwerks Geschäfte mit lebenden Bildern*, Frankfurt am Main–Basel 1999.

⁷ See D. Rossell, *Jenseits von Messter – die ersten Berliner Kinematographen-Anbieter*, "KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films" 1997, no. 6, p. 172.

Foersterling’s apparatus had been used in Leeuwarden (15.07: Slieker), Hamburg (27.09: Olinka), Kiel (2.10), Munich (3.10: Jean Dienstknecht), Görlitz (4.10: Olinka), Zagreb (8.10: Samuel Hoffmann), Litomice (9.10: Oeser brothers; in the first days of November they organised shows in Brno, then in Olomouc, Šternberk, Jihlava and Svitavy), Essen (17.10), Basel (22.10: Bartling), Amsterdam (25.10: Olinka), Bremen (27.10: Dienstknecht), Prague (3.11), Hague (14.11: Olinka), Rotterdam (16.11: Olinka), Poznań (23.11), Utrecht (29.11: Slieker) and in Oldenburg (8.12: Friedrich Gröning).⁸ This list covers only identified screenings. The real number is presumably higher.

Vitascope was severely limited in Europe. The first screening advertised as “Programma Edison” and treated by Rossell as a “probable” use of this particular apparatus took place on the 24 of October in Udine. Subsequent shows were organised in Bologna (8.11, “probably” vitascope) and in Pilzno (27.11: Josef Hoffmann; 1.12: Georg Kemp).⁹ In this context, it seems clear why Rossell noted the screening in Łódź (1.08) as being an “unidentified apparatus” but in the case of the second show (7.11) he agreed that it could have been a vitascope. Although in August the availability of this equipment was limited, in November there was such a possibility. Nevertheless, one has to remember that because the very practice of impersonation was popular, the presence of Edison’s name in Łódź advertisements does not prove that vitascope was actually in use.

It is worth indicating to what extent was cinematography recognized in 1896. Obviously, it’s impossible to recount here the whole richness of Rossell’s account. Therefore, I will only show Warsaw screenings and their international context covering the three days before and after 18 July (the dates below concern opening screenings; within these dates other screenings also took place, the ones that did begin before 15th – the account below does not cover these).

1. Leeuwarden: 15.07, *Kinematograph of H. O. Foersterling & Co*;
2. Bourg-en-Bresse: 15.07, *Lumière Cinématographe*;
3. Karlowe Wary: 15.07, *Lumière Cinématographe*;
4. Vienna: 15.07, “*Kinematographe*”, *Unidentified apparatus*;
5. Porto: 17.07, *Theatograph of R. W. Paul*;
6. Nantes: 17.07, “*Cinéphotographe*”, *Unidentified apparatus*;
7. Mariańskie Łaźnie: 18.07, *Unidentified apparatus*;
8. Saint-Etienne: 18.07, *Cinographoscope of A. and J. Pípon*;
9. Warsaw: 18.07, “*Kinematograf Edisona*”, *Unidentified apparatus*;
10. Middlesbrough: 19.07, *Theatograph of R. W. Paul*;
11. Newport: 20.07, *Lumière Cinématographe*;
12. Ottawa: 21.07, *Edison Vitascope*;
13. Stockholm: 21.07, “*Paris Cinématographe*”, *Unidentified apparatus*¹⁰.

What is worth taking into consideration is not only the frequency of the screenings but also the diversity of the equipment used. As regards the

⁸ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

⁹ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

¹⁰ See *A Chronology of Cinema...*, p. 157–159.

quantitative approach, we know that the 300 Continsous'a apparatus, 200 Paul's, 63 Messter's (42 in Germany) was sold in Europe until the end of 1896.¹¹ Apart from that, one should acknowledge the quantity of other cinematographs sold in Paris, London or Berlin that it is impossible to estimate.¹²

What seems interesting against such a backdrop is the Lumière's situation, since their business strategy was to sell licenses, and in 1896 their cinematographs and movies were unavailable for regular free trade. Moreover, the Lumière's movies were on a 35 mm filmstock. However, because of the patent law their perforation differed from the one used by Edison. Naturally, there were a number of film formats available in those days, but it was Edison's that proved to be the most popular and the one used by a majority of projectors. The reason for this was simple: large quantity of movies for kinetoscope appeared when kinetoscopes were leaving the market. In the latter half of 1896, Lumière's license system began to crash because a number of less expensive apparatus had emerged. In January 1897, Lumière's cinematographs acquired by Ludwig Stollwerck were put on sale in Germany for 4,000 Deutschmarks and this happened just a few months before Société Lumière sold its patents to Pathé Frères in May.¹³ From that moment on, Lumière movies were sold with Edison's perforations, which may be an interesting thread for a discussion on the development of cinematography. Pradoxically, Lumière brothers did not beat their competitors because of the improved equipment. On the contrary, they were under pressure from their rivals having no being unable to adjust to the changes in the dynamically emerging cinema market. In Rossell's opinion, they "didn't manage to capitalize on the fame of their own apparatus".¹⁴

When I began writing this essay, I was asking myself the question as to whether it is possible to identify the actual projection apparatus that had been in use in 1896 in the "Polish territories", but elsewhere than in Kraków or Poznań? And what can we say about the quality of these apparatus on the basis of press accounts? The latter questions seemed especially intriguing to me, since one can trace a kind of "Lumière-centrism" in Polish film studies.

¹¹ See M. Loiperdinger, "Viel Geld zu verdienen". *Ein internationales Angebot von Kinematographen und "Films"*, [in:] *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland, Band 1: Kaiserreich 1895–1918*, ed. U. Jung, M. Loiperdinger, Stuttgart 2005, p. 64.

¹² Rossell lists companies in London W.C. Hughes, Prestwich Manufacturing Company, J.W. Rowe, Haydon & Urry, R.R. Beard that were competing with Paul and Acres; Parisian enterprises owned by Continsousa, François Parnaland, George W. de Bedts, Henry Joly, Clement & Gilmer that competed with Charles Pathé; Berlinian companies Philipp Wolff, Arnold Hesekei, Romain Talbot, Oskar Ney competing with Foersterling and Messter. Meanwhile in Berlin one could easily buy French cinematographs: Hesekei was selling de Bedts' apparatus, Talbot offered vitagraphs by Clement & Gilmer and Wolff opened his shops in Paris and London and in January 1897 advertised in Berlin "the biggest store with film stock to every projection apparatus" (see D. Rossell, *Jenseits von Messter...*, p. 167–184).

¹³ See M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade...*, p. 178.

¹⁴ D. Rossell, *Die soziale Konstruktion früher technischer Systeme der Filmprojektion*, "KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films" 1999, no. 8, p. 72.

Congress Poland

The very first advertisement for “Edison’s kinematograph” (“today and everyday”) appeared in “Kurier Warszawski” on the 17 of July 1896 and was reprinted one more time on the following day.¹⁵ Subsequent announcements were not published and it is difficult to estimate how many days screenings were run for (they were introduced as a “short run”). On the 19 of July, a short article on how the cinematograph worked had been published. The article also informed readers that: “Despite the fact that the thing itself is quite extraordinary, very interesting and worth admiration, the apparatus used by Warsaw entrepreneur is not functioning well”.¹⁶ It also said that the cinematograph is a “combination of color photography and electricity”, which suggests that coloured movies might have been a part of the programme. We cannot say much about the screenings themselves apart from the fact that they depicted “wagon and pedestrian street traffic; a scene of fire brigade rescuing people from a conflagration; people dancing; a duel; cats playing etc.” Nonetheless, one should remember that although this was the very first screening in Warsaw, people were very familiar with the movies they already knew from everyday kinoscope projections. Kinetoscopes were available for a short time in the premise near Niecała street 1/33 (January)¹⁷ and for much longer in the Mach brothers’ Panopticum near Krakowskie Przedmieście (opened 15 of March, closed 30 of June and opened again 20th of September). In the Panopticum, apart from the seasonal phenomena (“33 Dahomeyan Princesses”, “Three tiger girls” and the Andersen sisters) one could see a permanent exhibition of wax figures, panorama, stereoscopes, 30 microscopes, kinoscopes, phonographs, automatic musical instruments, comic mirrors, rogue gallery and other automata.¹⁸ In the end of April, when “Kurier Warszawski” announced The Great Industrial Exhibition in Berlin, it emphasized that in Berlin one can see a cinematograph¹⁹ that “uses a complicated combination of mirrors and lenses to display full scale moving images and replay them *en miniature* kinoscope that you know from Warsaw shows”.²⁰

Meanwhile, the apparatus used from 8 of December by Ciniselli Circus from Petersburg (conducted by Aleksander Ciniselli) seem to be easily identifiable.

¹⁵ See advertisements in “Kurier Warszawski”, 17.07.1896, 18.07.1896.

¹⁶ *Cynematograf*, “Kurier Warszawski”, 19.07.1896.

¹⁷ See announcements in “Kurier Poranny”, 23.01.1896, 25.01.1896.

¹⁸ See announcements in “Kurier Poranny”, 15.03.1896, 11.04.1896, 11.06.1896, 28.06.1896, 20.09.1896.

¹⁹ This apparatus was Isolatograph bought in Paris from Isola brothers, in fact George Méliès and Lucien Reulos cinematograph imported to Berlin by Deutsche Kinematographische Gesellschaft representatives. From 25th of April this company organised film screenings near Unter den Linden 21 – see J. Goergen, *Der Kinematograph Unter den Linden 21. Das erste Berliner “Kino” 1896/97*, “KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films” 1997, no. 6, p 143–152.

²⁰ *Wiadomości zagraniczne (Wystawa – Kinematograf)*, “Kurier Warszawski”, 30.04.1896 (no. 119), p. 3.

Ciniselli Circus came to Warsaw every winter and was very popular among patrons. Its advertisements were promoting the Chronophotograph²¹ – a 58 mm projector that Léon Gaumont acquired from George Demeny.²² Rossell's chronicle indicates that in 1896, the Chronophotograph had been used in Munich (11.06), Milan (26.07), Vienna (3.09), Amiens (4.10), Sydney (7.11), Havre (14.11) and in London (9.12).²³ "Kurier Warszawski" (10.12) published reports explaining how the chronophotograph worked, as well as some impressions from the screening: "However, Chronophotograph from Ciniselli Circus still needs some improvement because of the flickering light (which for sure can be easily fixed by improving the mechanism that shifts the images), it gives us a complete overview of this wonderful turn of the century invention. The photographs are projected on a large screen, taken from the camera with the help of an electric light. We can see here: a train arriving at a station; it stops, the conductor jumps off and opens the carriage doors; passengers leave; then the doors close and the train moves on. Also delightful is the image of shoreline with breaking waves and bathing children. Next is the duel scene, horse rides, military maneuvers, automobiles cavalcade (automatic vehicles) and cyclists and lastly, Loie Fuller dance (colored photography). "Living photography" is worth seeing".²⁴ One should also notice that the movies made with filmstock wider than 35mm looked better in large projection rooms (i.e. circus) and that was the reason for the later popularity of the 68 mm Biograph system in Europe.

Hanna Krajewska suggests that the cinematograph used in Resursa Obywatelska in Warsaw could have been relocated later to the luxury Helenów in Łódź where film screenings were organized from the 1st of August.²⁵ German-language journals in Łódź were announcing the "Edison's full-scale living photographs".²⁶ Among the "huge" pictures that one could see on a screen were: "Turkish harem women dancing, the dances of wild tribes, scenes from famous operas and operettas, adventures with wild animals, big city streets and squares with their colorful crowds etc."²⁷ Initially, screenings took place in the Helenów's lower room but on the 19th of August they were moved to the equally prestigious Zgromadzenie Majstrów Tkackich (Spinning Foreman Assembly). The press informed readers that especially the latter shows were "frequently visited by audience".²⁸ An advertisement from 20 of August announced a few titles: *Fabriksbrand in Chicago! Die Feuerwehr rettet zwei Menschenleben aus den Flammen, Szene bei einem Friseur in New-York!, Orientalischer Harems-Tanz!, Kriegstanz der Sioux-Indianer in Nord-Amerika!*²⁹

²¹ See announcement in "Kurier Warszawski", 8.12.1896 (no. 340), p. 1.

²² See M. Loiperdinger, "Viel Geld zu verdienen"..., p. 66.

²³ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

²⁴ *Chronofotograf*, "Kurier Warszawski", 10.12.1896, p. 5.

²⁵ See H. Krajewska, *Życie filmowe w Łodzi w latach 1896–1939*, Warszawa–Łódź 1992, p. 18.

²⁶ See announcements from the 1st of August in "Lodzzer Zeitung" i "Lodzzer Tageblatt".

I thank Łukasz Biskupski for making the copies of them available for me.

²⁷ *In Helenhof*, "Lodzzer Tageblatt", 1.08.1896, p. 3.

²⁸ *Der Kinematograph*, "Lodzzer Tageblatt", 19.08.1896, p. 3.

²⁹ *Kinematograph* (advert), "Lodzzer Tageblatt", 20.08.1896, p. 6.

The juxtaposition of the coverage of the Łódź and Warsaw shows that in both cities we could see scenes from the streets, dances and animals (information not clear enough to make any assumption) but also – presumably the only movie that indicates the link between the projections – a movie about a rescue by fire-brigade. Knowing that in Warsaw this cinematograph was only for a short period, fosters the probability of the following hypothesis: entrepreneurs stopped by in Warsaw on a way to some other city, perhaps to Łódź. The titles from Łódź suggest that the films were Edison productions: *Fire Rescue Scene* (1894), *The Barbershop* (1894), *Turkish Harem Scene* (1896), *Oriental Dance* (1894), *Sioux Ghost Dance* (1894) or *Buffalo Dance* (1894).

It is impossible to determine what kind of equipment had been used in Warsaw and Łódź. Film titles, Edison’s name and the information that “full scale” images were projected is insufficient to formulate any hypothesis. However, if I could nonetheless try to do so, I would use the knowledge about the “large” images presented. Although “full-scale” is widely adopted as a slogan in trade commercials, fostering this quality with additional catchwords was a rather uncommon practice. While doing research in Wrocław, I encountered only one announcement underlining the large size of the image in press from the period 1896–1897. In the beginning of April 1897, in the Harmonie theatre programme, one could see Robert Paul’s “giant animatograph”, the one that was described as the cinematograph with “the best quality achievable nowadays”, which was highly recognized by audiences (i.e. school and families screenings were organized).³⁰ Early in 1894, Paul familiarized himself with Edison’s kinoscope which he used as a basis for his own apparatus. Inspired by the Lumière cinematograph, he also worked on a projector. The first screening with his own (not patented) teatrograph took place on the 20 of February 1896 in London. On the 2 of March, he patented an improved version with seven-armed Maltese cross. From March on, these apparatus were used for movies projections, although sometimes the name “animatograph” was also used (for the first time on the 22nd of March during the show at the London Alhambra theatre). But let’s enumerate the examples of using Paul’s equipment outside the UK: Paris (4.04: Méliès), Madrid (7.04), Johannesburg (9.05), Moskow (26.05), Lisbon (18.06), Porto (17.07), Stockholm (1.08), Milan (2.08), Espinho (12.08), Figueira da Foz (15.08), Melbourne (17.08), Sydney (17.09), Montreal (30.09), Toronto (8.12), Hobart (12.12).³¹

Kinoscope movies and “giant” screenings as well as the very use of teatrograph in mid- 1896 in Europe and various regions around the world make its presence probable also in the “Polish territories”. This assumption is hypothetical and highly speculative. Nonetheless, it is still more plausible than the presence of Edison/Armat’s vitascope in Łódź and Warsaw. Certainly, the

³⁰ See *Riesen Animatograph* (announcement), “Schlesische Zeitung”, 1.04.1897; *Theater Harmonie*, “Breslauer Zeitung”, 8.04.1897. “Giantness” refers here to the images projected on the screen – presumably of bigger size than in case of other apparatus that supported 35 mm movies.

³¹ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

limited information available does not allow us to suppose which apparatus was in use in Łódź on the 7 of November when near Piotrkowska street 17, “Edison’s greatest and latest invention” was announced.³²

Galicia

Concerning Galicia, even establishing the date of the first screening appears to be difficult. The first announcement in the daily press we know was published on the 13 of September (it was reprinted several times in different newspapers over the following month). However, we also know that screenings began before that date. The standard form informed us that every day in the Hausman passage 8 in Lvov a “Polish company” presents the “Edison’s wonderful living images”. In addition to providing the screening hours and the price, the announcements also reveal that the shows were enriched with music played by a “graphophone”.³³ As early as on the 15 of August the bi-weekly “Dźwignia” published an article on how a cinematograph worked.³⁴ Then on the 29 of August, two other newspapers (“Kurier Lwowski” and “Dziennik Polski”) reprinted vast parts of it.³⁵ All these newspapers emphasized that the apparatus had been imported by “a company of Poles” and not by “some foreign intruders” who usually come to town only to “make pockets full of money and leave”. “Dźwignia” and “Kurier Polski” wished these Poles “good luck with these useful and educational cinematographic shows that are soon going to take place in Lvov”.

An advertisement of the screenings that used “Edison’s Ideal” (which in fact indicates Foersterling’s apparatus) appeared in “Dźwignia” on the 1st of September. The announcement said that “living images” that are “very popular in London, Paris, Napoli and Vienna” are to be shown each day in the Hausmann passage on the first floor. The list of titles included: *Okręt na morzu*, *Prześladowania Chińczyka*, *Pociąg kolejowy*, *U dentysty*, *Taniec dzikich*, *Park dziecięcy w Paryżu* as well as “pictures of incredibly fast movements: *Taniec szkocki*, *Taniec serpentynowy*, *Akrobatka* and other, even more astonishing images of natural size and colours”.³⁶ These movies were beefed up with

³² *Kinematograph*, “Lodzer Zeitung”, 7.11.1896, p. 5.

³³ See announcements in “Dziennik Polski”, 13.09.1896, 16.09.1896, 18.09.1896, 20.09.1896, 22.09.1896, 24.09.1896, 9.10.1896, 11.10.1896; “Kurier Lwowski”, 13.09.1896, 14.09.1896, 17.09.1896, 19.09.1896, 22.09.1896, 25.09.1896; “Gazeta Narodowa”, 17.09.1896, 18.09.1896, 19.09.1896, 20.09.1896, 22.09.1896, 25.09.1896, 29.09.1896, 3.10.1896, 4.10.1896, 9.10.1896, 10.10.1896; “Gazeta Lwowska” didn’t announce any screenings and these dates concern all press advertisements announcing film shows that I found in four above enlisted newspapers from September to October 1896.

³⁴ See *Kinematograf – fotografie ruchu i życia*, “Dźwignia Przemysłowo-Handlowa Ilustrowana”, 15.08.1896, p. 113–114. I would like to thank Jurij Romaniszynow for making the scans of “Dźwignia” from Biblioteka im. Stefanyka in Lvov available for me.

³⁵ See *Kinematograf*, “Kurier Lwowski”, 29.08.1896, p. 5; *Kinematograf*, “Dziennik Polski”, 29.08.1896, p. 3.

³⁶ *Ideal Edisona!* (advert), “Dźwignia Przemysłowo-Handlowa Ilustrowana”, 1.09.1896, p. 124.

graphophone music (turned on during the intervals). “Dźwignia” was a newspaper established by a part of Towarzystwo Kupców i Przemysłowców (Society of Merchants and Industrialists) and Towarzystwo Kupców i Młodzieży Handlowej (Society of Merchants and Mercantile Youth) in Lvov. These associations probably shared the belief that through these kinds of announcements they could strengthen their own business profile. This hypothesis can be reinforced when we consider the actual location of the screenings: near the aforementioned passage one could find “trendy shops, attorneys offices, tailors, shops with cloths and furs, two ‘European’ laundries, a photographic shop ‘Rembrandt’, famous library ‘Vita’ and J. Friedmann’s printery etc.”³⁷ Among the newspaper’s readers one could also find potential contractors from Galicia (possibly interested in hosting the company representatives and their apparatus). Since the bi-weekly “Dźwignia” usually came out on the 1 and 15 day of each month, the day the announcement appeared does not state clearly that the actual day the screening took place was also the 1st of September. Nonetheless, we can easily imagine that since no other date has been published, any possible time lapse would have had a negative influence on the company image (the first patron would probably leave in disappointment). After a dozen or so days of screenings, the organizers decided to publish announcements in daily newspapers to attract audiences from “behind passage socialite” groups and those patrons not among “Dźwignia” readers.

The first coverage from the film show appeared as early as on the 3rd of September in “Gazeta Lwowska”: “A company owned by our country’s citizens, Poles, is going to promote the newest inventions here and in the province, among various audiences. At the moment, they are screening in Lvov – in the Hausman passage – cinematograph, which is an apparatus used to picture live scenes from nature in movement, i.e., chase scenes, rough sea etc.”³⁸ This very reference seems to prove that by that day the screenings were running.³⁹ Further coverage appeared on the 11 of September revealing that the cinematograph “is already in Lvov and its respective productions began in the ‘Workers house’ near the Hausman passage”.⁴⁰ The author of that coverage had managed to see the show and listed eight film titles: *Szermierze, Na bulwarach, Taniec szkocki, Taniec węzowy, Bokserzy, Okręt na morzu, Scena w domu obłąkanych, Zabawa dzieci w Tuillerjach*. He also claimed that in the next article he would not only think about the cinematograph but also about “the social phenomenon of Edison’s fame” and the respective exaggerated “aureole of adverts”.

³⁷ B. Gierszewska, *Kino i film we Lwowie do 1939 roku*, Kielce 2006, p. 80.

³⁸ *Spółka*, “Gazeta Lwowska”, 3.09.1896, p. 3.

³⁹ Małgorzata ska claims that the first screening in Lvov took place on the 3rd of September (see M. Hendrykowska, *Kronika kinematografii polskiej 1895–2011*, Poznań 2012, p. 12). Meanwhile Andrzej Urbańczyk writes in conformity with mentioned coverage that on that day “film shows in Lvov were already on”, although he do not pinpoint the very date of the first screening (see A. Urbańczyk, *Kinematograf na scenie. Pierwsze pokazy filmowe w Krakowie XI–XII 1896*, Kraków 1986, p. 30).

⁴⁰ *Kinematograf edisonowski*, “Kurier Lwowski”, 11.09.1896 (no. 253), p. 4.

It is this particular context, in which we should interpret the widely known and cited fragment of the article “*Cud XIX wieku*” (19 Century Miracle) and its author’s words on the audience that took boxers for fencers, a sea ship for a boulevard and a scene from a psychiatric hospital for a Scottish dance. It was not by accident that the author put his title in quotation marks – that way he marked it with a hint of exaggeration and a lot of sarcasm. He mocked the fact that everyone knew Edison’s name (“No doubt Edison is the most famous name on Earth”), although only a few knew who had invented the telephone or the sewing machine. In his opinion, one should acknowledge two reasons for Edison’s fame: Edison entertains his audience and the audience “praises those who entertain rather than those who make their life easier”; Edison has “enough money and cleverness to enroll any serious scholars to write peans in praise of himself”.⁴¹ He treated the cinematograph and the phonograph (“this time named ‘graphophone’”) as “toys” and he did not ascribe to them any kind of usefulness.⁴² What may seem a bit startling is that this very article written by a journalist from Lvov began to function as historical proof of the Lumières’ apparatus’ advantage over Edison’s equipment.⁴³ On the contrary, it seems unreasonable to seriously treat the author who claims that the better way to evoke graphophone sounds (“hau! hau! ohuaj! ohuj! juoj! juoj! juoj! hau!”) is to step on a dog’s tail!⁴⁴

The methodology of historical research suggests that one should confront different sources. Luckily, the afore-mentioned author was not the only one who shared his impressions with readers of that time. On the 23 of September, more coverage appeared, this time published in “*Gazeta Narodowa*”. The author of that article praised the combination of “perfect graphophone” and cinematograph that had not only triggered “unusual attention among visitors who came to see that invention” but had also impressed the journalists.⁴⁵ Movies like *Na bulwarach*, *Zabawa dzieci w Tuillerjach* and *Taniec węzowy* were described as “simply excellent” and that was why journalists encouraged their readers to pay a visit to the “educative and amusing” cinematograph. One day later, similar coverage appeared in “*Gazeta Lwowska*”, in which the movies were recognized as being “excellent”.⁴⁶ On the 15 of October, the same newspaper published another article which informed readers that the cinematograph is to be displayed in Lvov only or a few days and then it would move to the provinces. It stressed that “an army of viewers attends each screening and tiny room appears to be too small for them”. Beside a remark on “the early stadium of apparatus development” and an observation that “with time and after some improvements it will recreate through

⁴¹ See “*Cud XIX wieku*”, “*Kurier Lwowski*”, 15.09.1896, p. 2.

⁴² What may seem interesting the article’s author at the same time praised Bell’s telephone and mocked graphophone invented by Bell himself (since graphophone was created in Volt’s laboratory founded by Bell, and then commercialized by American Graphophone Company).

⁴³ See T. Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*, Katowice 2009, p. 20–21.

⁴⁴ See “*Cud XIX wieku*”..., p. 3.

⁴⁵ *Kinematograf*, “*Gazeta Narodowa*”, 23.09.1896, p. 3.

⁴⁶ *Kinematograf*, “*Gazeta Lwowska*”, 24.09.1896, p. 3.

photography the full scale of life and movement”, the Berlin scene *Unter den Linden* had been described as “marvelous” and the graphophone was recognized as a “very good way to reproduce arias and scenes from operas sung in Paris, Milan etc.”⁴⁷ Andrzej Urbańczyk assumes that the Lvov screenings lasted until the 20 of October (which is probable if we take into account the information published in “Gazeta Lwowska” on the 15th of October). Then these shows were available to audiences for more than six weeks.⁴⁸ Barbara Gierszewska correctly points out that in Lvov the cinematograph “quickly became an irresistible attraction”.⁴⁹

What is worth noticing are the titles of the movies mentioned in Lvov newspapers. *Taniec węzowy* is most probably a version of the very popular *Serpentine Dance*. The first movie from this genre was shot by Edison in 1894. Until 1896, similar scenes were a part of repertoire offered by Jenkins and Armat, Skladanowski brothers, Isolta brothers, Demeny and Gaumont, Paul, Messter or Lumière brothers. The connection with the movies of the latter can be traced together with titles like *Zabawa dzieci w Tuillerjach* or *Unter den Linden*. The former title may refer to *Bassin des Tuileries* (1896), the latter one connotes *Sous les tilleuls* (1896) shot by Charles Moisson at the turn of April and May.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, one should remember that since the Lumière brothers’ movies were unavailable on the open market, the Lvov audience could see their illegal copies provided with Edison’s perforations (or simply remakes shot by some other directors, since remaking of popular titles was a widespread practice).

During an archival research, my attention was attracted by one more fact: that a graphophone was in use during the musical or vocal parts of the show. Meanwhile, apart from a number of electrical devices, Foersterling announced his “phonographs and graphophones” in the trade press in 1896. In November, he also advertised in the Berlin journal “Tägliche Rundschau”: “the newest cinematographical-graphophone show”.⁵¹ This strongly reinforces the hypothesis that Polish entrepreneurs imported their cinematic and musical equipment from Berlin, where they bought it from Foersterling.

Entrepreneurs from Lvov names are unknown apart from Mme Olinka – one of the first businessmen that got involved with the travelling film industry in 1896, which is much earlier than the famous Krzemiński brothers. Their path is not known – its reconstruction demands a very precise archival analysis of a number of local journals. What we can assume, though, is that they did also organize screenings in the city of Przemyśl. On the 15 of November, an

⁴⁷ *Produkcje kinematografu*, “Gazeta Lwowska”, 15.10.1896, p. 3.

⁴⁸ See A. Urbańczyk, *Kinematograf na scenie...*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ B. Gierszewska, *Kino i film we Lwowie...*, p. 83. Gierszewska – presumably inspired by announcements in the daily press – suggests that shows in Lvov ran from 13th of September to 10th of October (ibidem, p. 79).

⁵⁰ M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade...*, p. 218.

⁵¹ J. Goergen, “Sensationellste Schaunummer der Gegenwart!”. *Zeitungsinserate des Berliner Filmpioniers H. O. Foersterling von 1896*, “KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films” 2000, no. 9, p. 111, 114.

advert appeared in “Kurier Przemyski”, informing readers that “next week” in the smaller room at the Sokół, a cinematographic show is going to be organized “by a Polish company from Lvov”.⁵² On the 22 of November, a playbill was published which contained the programme of “graphophone” and “pictures”. Among the latter one could find titles like: *Paryż na bulwarze*, *Akrobatka z kryształowego pałacu w Londynie*, *Prześladowany lichwiarz*, *Scena w domu obłąkanych*, *Bokserzy*, *Spotkanie Napoleona z Józefiną* and *Taniec serpentynowy* (in 24 colours) – frequent program changes were also announced.⁵³ The coverage from this show appeared on the 26 of November. Its author wrote that the cinematograph “deserves all round approval” because it “recreates scenes from life and not only amuses, but also educates”. On the other hand, the author indicates that “the enterprise is not very popular” perhaps because of the company’s name: “I assume the problem is that ‘kinematograf’ (cinematograph) is owned by a ‘Polish company’! Then we may expect a number of visits from school youth or soldiers”.⁵⁴ And that was the last information on the cinematograph.

Screenings in the “Polish territories”

Now, let us go back to the chronicle of screenings in the “Polish territories” in 1896 and fill it in with the information from my research:

- Warsaw: 17 lipca, *aparat niezidentyfikowany* (teatrograf Paula?);
- Łódź: 1 sierpnia, *aparat niezidentyfikowany* (teatrograf Paula?);
- Lvov: 1 września, kinematograf Foersterlinga;
- Łódź: 7 listopada, *aparat niezidentyfikowany*;
- Kraków: 14 listopada, kinematograf Lumière;
- Przemyśl: 22 listopada, kinematograf Foersterlinga;
- Poznań: 23 listopada, kinematograf Foersterlinga;
- Warsaw: 8 grudnia, chronofotograf Gaumonta / Demenÿgo.

Two things ought to be said here.

Firstly, from the audience perspective, movies projected on a big screen in 1896 were nothing new. Viewers identified it as another piece of equipment used to produce the optical illusion of movement. In Warsaw, where movies were literally linked with kinetoscopes, people had been watching had movies in the Mach brothers Panopticum continuously for almost 15 weeks (15.03–29.06). But kinetoscopes were not the only connotation. In the coverage from screenings in Resursa, the author underlined that the image movement happens “with a little help from a sort of a magic lantern”.⁵⁵ In the article on

⁵² *Kinematograf w Sokole*, “Kurier Przemyski”, 15.11.1896, p. 2.

⁵³ *Kinematograf* (advert), “Kurier Przemyski”, 22.11.1896, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Kinematograf*, “Kurier Przemyski”, 26.11.1896, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Cynematograf...*, p. 4.

Ciniselli Circus, its author outlined that the chronophotograph (“also known as cynetograph or cynetoscope”) is in fact an amplification of the well known ‘magic wheel’ or ‘stroboscope’ described by physicists”.⁵⁶ On the other hand, journalists in Łódź emphasized that the images in movement shown “on a rolling glass or on a strip that rolls quickly are perhaps well known to our readers”, nevertheless, in the cinematograph, the rule of the movement had been “improved in the best way possible”.⁵⁷ Commentaries published in “Kurier Lwowski” were quite similar: “the very idea is not very new. Everyone of us can remember toys like ‘praxinoscopes’, ‘zooscopes’ and the cheerful laughter caused by a horse jumping over an obstacle or the old lady beating a child with the rod”.⁵⁸ Małgorzata Hendrykowska points out that “on the roads of all annexed Polish territories one could meet a dozen or so entrepreneurs presenting images and the like from a magic lantern, which at that time could perfectly imitate movement”.⁵⁹ A very interesting analysis of the visual “culture of attractions” in Łódź is also made by Łukasz Biskupski.⁶⁰ This proves movies did not appear on the big screen out of the blue box. On the contrary – the audience interpreted them in the context of its own rich visual experience.

Secondly, a few words ought to be said about the Lumière brothers and their initiatives. When on the 26 of March, Stollwerck signed a license agreement with Lumière’s representatives, Weill-Martignan and Silvain, the financial conditions were as follows: 60% of gross went to the Lumières, 10% to their agents and from the remaining 30% Stollwreck must have covered all necessary expenses (that is room rental, employees, adverts, electricity etc.). In return, he did not have to pay for either the cinematographs, nor for the movies. Thus, his business depended only on the number of viewers. But from October to November, new conditions had been introduced due to the changing situation on the market: when their equipment lost its prestige and Lumière demanded 3,600 Deutschmarks monthly in order to be independent from the audience choices. Stollwreck decided to withdraw. He bought licensed cinematographs only to sell them in January (this is how he anticipated the upcoming events: from the 1 of May 1897 the apparatus and the movies made by a French company were available on the free market).⁶¹ Screenings in Kraków took place when the golden age of Société Lumière entered its final phase. Nevertheless, the brand was still well recognized. Urbańczyk puts it in these words: “In Autumn 1896, the Lumière’s agent was looking for new outlets and he met a man who badly needed an attraction that would be able to draw attention away from his theatre problems”.⁶² It appeared that Eugène Dupont’s

⁵⁶ *Chronofotograf...*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ *Kinematograph*, “Lodzzer Zeitung”, 2.08.1896, p. 4.

⁵⁸ “*Cud XIX. wieku*”..., p. 2.

⁵⁹ M. Hendrykowska, *Początki kinematografii polskiej. Pierwsze dwie dekady*, [in:] *Kino okresu wielkiego niemow. Część pierwsza: początki*, ed. G. Grabowska, Warszawa 2008, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Ł. Biskupski, *Miasto atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2013.

⁶¹ See M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade...*, p. 109, 133, 175–180.

⁶² A. Urbańczyk, *Jak Kraków i Lwów kinematograf witały*, “*Życie Literackie*”, 9.11.1986, p. 3.

and Tadeusz Pawlikowski's business matters intertwined and owing to that, the audience of Teatr Miejski in Kraków could see the "images projected on the screen installed on a curtain", usually shown at the end of plays.⁶³

Traditional Polish film historiography often links the first screenings in the "Polish territories" with the date: 14 of November 1896 and a certain informal agreement. That date marks the beginning of the Polish film industry. This interpretation is sometimes enforced with the assumption about the presumably excellent quality of Lumière's equipment (in comparison with other "primitive" apparatus). On the basis of the data I have provided, one should acknowledge that this hypothesis is not sufficiently proven. A sort of assessment of Lumière's apparatus had been made by Antoni Krzemiński who bought an American projector in 1901 and highlighted its advantages compared to the Lumière's one: "projected images were very bright and sharp, and there was no flickering; but most importantly, the film perforations did not break; shifting filmstock through the frame happens with the help of the reel, not with pins".⁶⁴ Also it is worth pointing out that audiences in Lvov, Przemyśl and Warsaw could have seen colored movies (technologically more advanced than those shown to the viewers in Kraków). But something else is even more important: the rich economical, sociological and cultural context connected with the global emergence and spread of cinematography, which means also in the "Polish territories".⁶⁵

Trans. Michał Pabiś-Orzeszyna

⁶³ *Kinematograf*, "Czas" (Dodatek poranny), 17.11.1896 (no. 265), p. 1.

⁶⁴ A. Krzemiński, *Jak powstało pierwsze kino w Polsce. Jego dalszy rozwój w Polsce jak i w Rosji Carskiej*, [in:] *Kino okresu wielkiego niemowy...*, p. 94.

⁶⁵ The extended version of this article appeared in Polish as *Międzynarodowy kontekst projekcji filmowych w 1896 roku na dawnych „ziemiach polskich” i współczesnych ziemiach Polski*, [in:] *KINtop. Antologia wczesnego kina, cz. II*, ed. A. Dębski, M. Loiperdinger, Wrocław 2016, p. 289–339.