



THE

Nick Zegarnac's

Hollywood

ART

ANASTASIA

**...the living mystery
of a dead dream**

ANASTASIA

the vanishing history of a fairytale princess

The legend of Anastasia has very little to do with her perishable truth, perhaps because historians remain divided as to what actually became of the grand duchess after the bloody assassination of the entire Russian Royal family one night in 1917. Since then, the rumor, the legend and the mystery surrounding Anastasia has been immortalized as a Broadway smash, an Oscar-winning film, and, a musical cartoon; all cardboard cut out variations on the fairytale princess model: an irony that has all but eclipsed the sad unromantic, and as yet, unsolved Imperial puzzle.

If any fabled correlation can be drawn from the story of Anastasia it is as the antithesis of the fairytale - the epitome of a tragic and brutal nightmare, so heinous and haunting that the immensity of its atrocity continues to stagger our hearts and confound the mind to this day.

In re-conceptualizing Anastasia's life as high art, director Anatole Litvak's 1956 melodrama eschewed fact in favor of total fabrication modeled on the Cinderella-like transformation of Anja from discarded waif to classy aristocrat. It is this rich tapestry cinematically woven by Litvak and spun from the romanticized yarns penned by playwright Arthur Laurents (on whose stage work the film is based) that continue to generate much of the grand duchess's timeless mythology.

In the film, Anastasia (1956) the princess, who may or may not have died along with the rest of her family during the slaughter of 1917 is no longer her own person. Rather, she has become a symbol; an icon for the fading Russian gentry who dream in vane for the return of an Imperial Russia in the graceless post revolutionary period of exile. Anja's story is transformed from tragedy to wish fulfillment; a tale that we would rather believe.

It was this fervent desire for daydream that was well in tune with Litvak's own Russian Jewish heritage. A man of impeccable manners, graciousness and meticulous attention to detail, Litvak had been a premiere director at Germany's UFA Studios prior to the rise of Adolph Hitler. His 1936 film, Mayerling (shot in France) brought him to the attention of Hollywood.

(Top, behind logo: the Russian Imperial crest of the Romanov family, a two headed eagle clutching the scepter of authority in its left talon and the ball with its Orthodox cross - symbolizing the church - affixed firmly in the other. Top right: the real Grand Duchess Anastasia was a precocious child, devilishly playful yet seemingly unspoiled by her pampered surroundings. Bottom right: Anna Anderson in a photo probably taken shortly after her release from the asylum in the early 1920s. For years nothing shook Anderson's claim that she was in fact Anastasia. Despite an innate knowledge of the inner workings of the Imperial Romanov house, DNA testing conducted after her death conclusively proved she was not the Grand Duchess.)





(Above: a colorized 1913 photograph taken of the royals at their summer retreat in Livadia by the Levitsky Company. Alexandra (center) is flanked by her daughters – from left: Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia. Right top: the inaugural portraits of Nicholas Romanov and (below) Alexandra painted by Valentin Serov. The Dowager Empress, Nicholas' mother did not approve of his choice of bride, a note of dissention she managed to disseminate amongst aristocratic circles in Imperial Russia. With Alexandra's increasing reliance on Grigory Rasputin in Nicholas' absence, Alexandra's general favor and popularity with the peasant class was eventually eroded as well.)

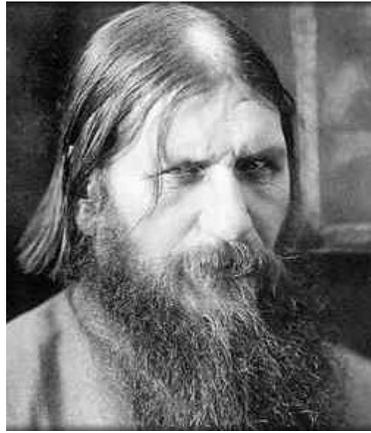
While in France, Litvak had been privy to that collective longing for a return of the Royal Family by some of the exiled Russian aristocrats living out their glorious golden days in remnant enclaves within Berlin and Paris. So desperate were these refugees for a return to their homeland – and reinstatement of their titles and lands that had been stripped after the rise of the Communist Party – that they eagerly embraced a litany of would-be princesses; pretenders to the throne masquerading for their own share of a whispered inheritance hidden in the Bank of England by the Dowager Empress during those formative years immediately following the revolution.

The real Anastasia Nikolayevna was born to a life of wealth and privilege on June 18th, 1901. She was the youngest daughter of the first (and last) 20th century King of Russia; Czar Nicholas Romanov II and his wife Czarina Alexandra Feodorovna. A bit of a tomboy and something of a prankster, Anastasia's sublime youth was spent being educated in languages and the arts, and, indulging in lavish vacations at home and abroad. It was a fragile existence that was not to last.

Despite being a formidable intellectual with an extensive military background, Anastasia's father, the Czar was both something of a recluse and an autocrat. This distancing from his people – who regarded their Czar as a ruler ordained by God - helped to perpetuate the mystique of the monarchy that, at the start of Nicholas's reign, had enjoyed unprecedented popularity.

Indeed, the Romanovs were celebrating 300 years of their family bloodline on the throne. However, at a time when other countries (most notable, Britain) were adopting





(Above left and middle: two opposing images of Grigori Rasputin capturing two extremely different variations on 'who' and 'what' the man represented. Left: a rather holy stance and stare captured by an unidentified portraiture. Middle: caught with a surly and accusatory glare at whoever is holding the camera. Two attempts were made on Rasputin's life; the first, by Khionia Guseva, a prostitute who stabbed Rasputin in the abdomen until his entrails emerged, loudly declaring "I have killed the antichrist." An operation saved the monk.

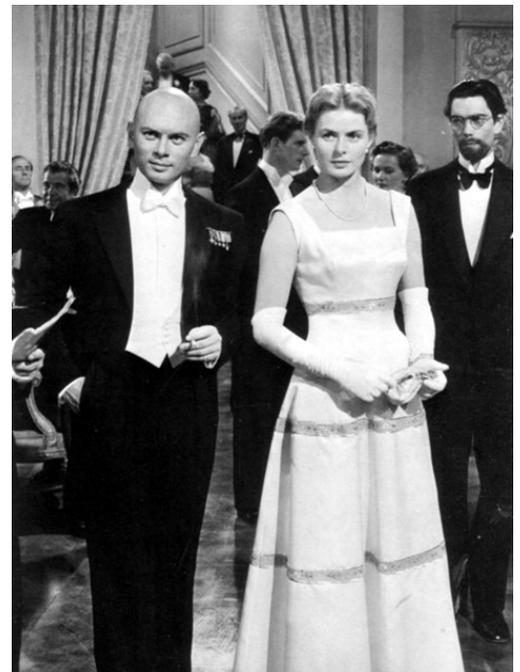
On Dec. 16, 1916 loyalists to the throne fronted by Prince Felix Yusupov invited Rasputin to dine with them, feeding him large quantities of cyanide concealed in cakes and wine. The poison had no effect. Yusupov then fired a single bullet through Rasputin's back. The monk fell and the conspirators left the house to wait for him to expire. Several hours later, however, Rasputin was still alive. Yusupov fired three more rounds into the monk who, after still attempting to get up, was further clubbed into submission by the conspirators, bound and tossed into a nearby icy river. When the body was eventually discovered during the thaw, the cause of death was determined to be hypothermia even though an autopsy revealed that Rasputin had consumed enough cyanide to kill at least 5 men.

Middle: Olga and Maria pose in their Grand Duchess finery. This traditional costume would later be recycled to the last detail for both the stage and screen versions of Anastasia.

Far right: the last known photograph of the Czar in the forest not far from the 'House of Special Purpose' – still wearing his military uniform with communist guards in the background guarding against his escape.

Right above: The House of Special Purpose. The Czar and his family remained under house arrest here. The windows were painted out so that they could not look outside. The family was put on soldier's rations for the duration of their stay and were eventually shot to death in its basement cellar on July 17 in the wee hours of the morning.

Right: a wily Gen. Bounine (Yul Brynner) and his protégé, Anja (Ingrid Bergman attempt to con Prince Paul into believing that she is actually the real Anastasia in the 1956 film adaptation. For the most part, audiences were expected to have a smattering of Russian history in their own back pockets prior to seeing the movie which concentrated primarily on the enduring question of "Is she...or isn't she?")



constitutional monarchies, the Czar continued to rule Russia with an iron fist and, some would argue, obliviousness to the suffrage and growing poverty of more than eighty percent of that populace over which he held dominion.

In 1914, Nicholas declared war on Germany – a move that proved his undoing. For although the Czar placed his country's pride and welfare at the forefront of foreign affairs, he was ill equipped as either a visionary military strategist or international diplomatist to see his plans through to fruition. Assuming command of the armed forces, Nicholas and his army endured one defeat upon the next against the German military machine.

At home, the Czarina's growing dependency on a monk of spurious reputation, Grigory Rasputin had also begun to erode the Royal Family's popularity with the masses. In truth, Alexandra's Germanic heritage had always been something of a sticking point with the people; quietly tolerated though more than slightly resented at the start of the



Above left: Anna Anderson's chosen profession in between institutionalizations was as a not terribly successful actress. Despite the fact that she was a just another pretender to the throne, Anderson possessed a rather stunning knowledge of palace life and intrigues that managed to convince many during her life time that she was, in fact, the Grand Duchess. Today, there is some speculation that perhaps Anderson may have been a child of one of the ladies in waiting.

Middle: the real Anastasia was precocious and talented, excelling at the arts and sharing in her mother's love of knitting.

Right: Anastasia (in back) and her sister Maria enjoy a pampered pull around the park by one of the Royal guardsman.

Right: Director Anatole Litvak, an early portrait of a rising star. Born Mikhail Anatole Livak in the Ukraine, his early career included such notable hits as *Tovarich* (1937), *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) and *All This And Heaven Too* (1940) – the latter nominated for Best Picture.

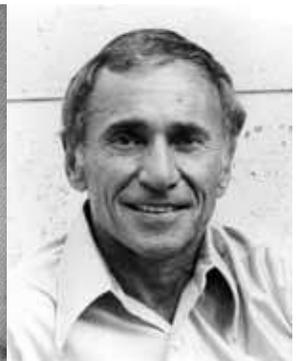
Right: Brooklyn born, gifted screenwriter, novelist and playwright Arthur Laurents whose credits included *West Side Story* (1960) and *Gypsy* created a lush melodramatic tapestry for *Anastasia* (1956).

Bottom: Litvak (left) reads an apparently humorous telegram as independent producer, David O. Selznick looks on.)

war. Despite his status as a man of God, Rasputin proved to be a self-indulgent womanizer and a drunk. However, he also seemed to be in possession of a strange mystical power that quelled the hemophilia plaguing the future heir to the throne, Alexei Nikolaievich.

Little is known about the grand duchess Anastasia during this time, except that at the age of twelve she had already become something of a gifted photographer, indulging her craft in family snapshots. At the outbreak of war, she and her sisters became dutiful war nurses who tended to the wounded at the Army Hospital.

It was roughly at this juncture that the Bolshevik party headed by Vladimir Lenin seized power of the Duma – Russia's electorate body - and demanded the abdication of the Czar. Exiled to the remote Siberian village of Ekaterinburg and "*the house of special purpose*" (a euphemism for a place of execution), the Czar and ten others were exterminated in a hailstorm of gunfire on the 16th of July 1918. To discourage any royalists from recovering their remains as religious artifacts the bodies were bayoneted, stripped naked, doused in petrol and sulfuric acid and lit afire before being buried in unmarked graves somewhere deep within the forest just beyond the "*house of special purpose.*"





But were they really dead? Newspaper reports of the day ran the gamut in wild speculations from everyone surviving and being exiled in the Far East to total annihilation. In retrospect, it seems that neither journalistic claim was true. For although an extensive excavation recovered the Czar's bones from the earth in 1991, the dig only served to highlight a mystery which had been ongoing almost from the moment of assassination: that Anastasia had maybe survived.

Indeed, while forensic experts were able to piece together nine bodies neither Anastasia nor Alexei were among these remains. It seems highly unlikely that in the moments of haste immediately following the family's execution that any special attention would have been placed on relocating the two youngest victims to an alternative burial site. Hence, the speculation and the hope of all royalists from 1918 onward has long since been that both children had escaped their preordained fates.

As early as 1920, pretenders to the throne had begun popping up all over Europe. Of the many imposters, one struck an indelible impression: Anna Anderson. Tuberculosis stricken, Anderson's checkered past included several suicide attempts and frequent institutionalization for various mental disorders. It was during her stay at one of these asylums in France that Anna confided to a fellow patient that she was the daughter of Czar Nicholas II.

So compelling was Anderson's ability to recall specifics (that arguably no one other than the real Anastasia could have possibly known) that many in the Russian émigré communities peppered throughout the rest of Europe believed Anna's story and began launching law suits on her behalf to reclaim her title as Grand Duchess.

It was Anderson's life thus far that became the fodder for skilled Parisian playwright, Marcelle Maurette's intercontinental smash play, eventually transcribed for Broadway by scenarist Guy Bolton. Since no one knew the whereabouts of the real Grand Duchess it became quite feasible to assume that Anderson was the real McCoy. However, in translating the play into a film, screen writer Arthur Laurents made several key changes to the narrative that – although entirely void of historical fact – generated greater melodrama on the big screen.

These changes included a pivotal confrontation and reconciliation between Anna and her grandmother, the Dowager Empress Marie. In reality, although the real Anastasia's aunt Olga did travel to France to visit Anna Anderson while she recovered from tuberculosis, no such public approval or acceptance of Anna – either by Olga or the Dowager Empress ever transpired. In fact, the Empress and Anna never met in real life.





ANASTASIA (1956)

History for Art's Sake

Blacklisted by HUAC during the Red Scare in Hollywood, Arthur Laurents and Anastasia's director, Anatole Litvak had collaborated on **The Snake Pit** in 1948; a film whose premise was psychiatry. So Laurents came to **Anastasia's** pedigree well versed in mental disease. However, after an initial meeting with Litvak in Paris, Laurents concurred that the story would function best cinematically as a fairytale.

To some extent, Laurents' claim that all of history is merely an opinion written from a skewed perspective holds validity. **"I did no (historical) research"** Laurents would later confess, **"...and never felt I was betraying history."** Hence, the screen's **Anastasia** would not be quite as haunted or disturbed as her 'real life' incarnation.

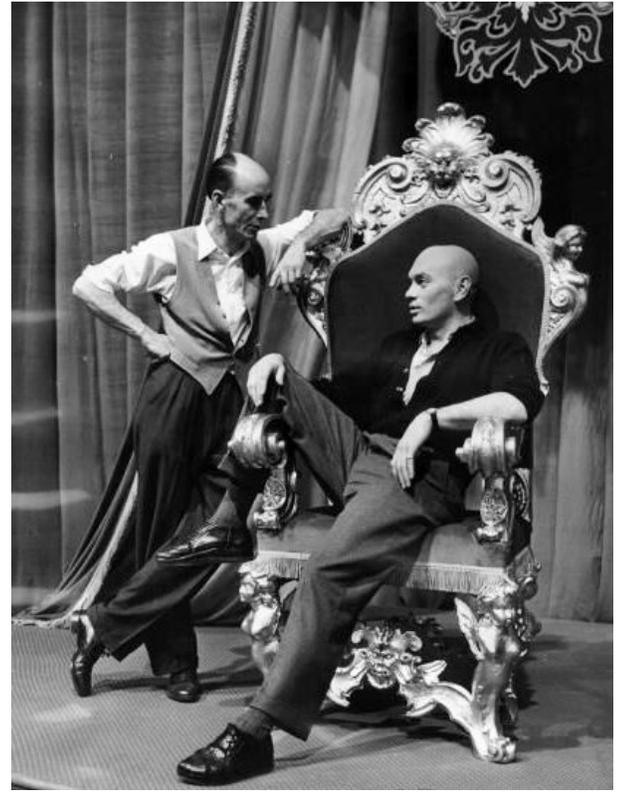
(Previous page: the film version of **Anastasia** benefited immensely from a strong cast that included 'first lady of the American theater, Helen Hayes (top) and the comeback of one of film's all time greats – Ingrid Bergman (bottom, seen in a Warner publicity still). One of the most luminous stars of early 1940s, Bergman's career was sidetracked by her blacklisting for having left her husband and daughter for an affair with Italian director Roberto Rossellini.

This page, top: the Dowager Empress (Hayes) encourages her granddaughter (Bergman) to follow her heart. Right: a studio portrait of Bergman in the gown and cape she first wears to meet Prince Paul.

Bottom: Yul Brynner and Bergman on the Russian Orthodox church set built at England's Elstree Studios for the dramatic opening of the film. After Bounine confronts the mystery woman with no past, she attempts to run away and commit suicide. By all accounts Brynner and Bergman got on famously throughout the shoot after an initial rocky start in which Brynner attempted a flirtation that turned sour.

Ever the professional, Bergman did not hold the incident against Brynner and the two developed a platonic mutual respect for one another's craft and work ethic.)





(Top left: Litvak, in foreground, rehearses Bergman through a waltz on the lavish hotel ballroom set built at Elstree Studios and that serves as the dramatic setting for the film's climax. Bergman dances with a plain clothes Yul Brynner in this rehearsal, who is taking the place of actor Ivan Desny, cast as Prince Paul von Haraldberg. In the finished film, Bounine and Anastasia never share a dance. Top right: a comfortable Brynner casually reclines on the throne while talking to cinematographer Jack Hildyard on the set. Anastasia's production was, by all accounts, a smooth and pleasurable undertaking in which everyone got along and no mishaps occurred.)

As originally scripted by Laurents, the film was to have opened with the Grand Duchess wandering alone at night along the banks of the Seine river. In a state of depression, the woman who thinks she is Anastasia suddenly believes she hears the tinkering of a piano playing a tune from her youth.

She is overcome with emotion and falls into the river, only to be rescued by passer's by. Litvak, however, had another idea. He wanted to open the film during Russian Easter at the Orthodox Church in Paris. Unfortunately, the church would not give its permission to film there, forcing Litvak to actually build a mock up of the church on the back lot at Britain's Pinewood Studios to film his grand introduction.

Casting the film version of **Anastasia** proved an interesting initial setback, since both Litvak and Laurents wanted Ingrid Bergman for the lead. In Hollywood, and indeed America, Bergman had been persona non grata for over a decade, following her very public split from husband Peter Lindstrom and daughter Pia.

Despite the fact that Bergman did not abandon her daughter (as has long since been rumored) the actress, who only a decade earlier had been hailed as one of the greatest of her generation, had since been exiled from her adopted country after her affair with Italian director Roberto Rossellini. Pilloried from the pulpit and denounced in the tabloids as unfit, the United States Senate took the cause for morality to new heights by banning Bergman from returning to America as they had previously done with Charlie Chaplin. (*Chaplin's exile was perpetrated on the grounds that he was a communist.)

At 20th Century Fox, then President Spyros P. Skouras urged Litvak to reconsider Bergman as his star. Barring acceptance of anyone else in the role, Skouras next suggested to Bergman that she return on a goodwill tour of the United States by visiting women's clubs to test her in the court of popular opinion. To her credit, Bergman refused to be publicly paraded as a wanton outcast, saying, ***"I'm an actress...as for coming to the United States...I will come when I want to and not to be tested."***

To help bolster Bergman's reputation, at least in the minds of Fox executives, Litvak cast First Lady of the American Theater, Helen Hayes, in the pivotal role of the Dowager Empress. Hayes had been a respected actress on Broadway



(Moments of truth in world of affection and performance. Top row: Anastasia meets exiled members of the Russian court she supposedly grew up in. Unable to gain their favor, a breakthrough occurs when one of the former ladies in waiting to Alexandra, Irina Lissemkaia (Natalie Schafer) comes forward. "What did my mother call you?" Anastasia rhetorically asks before blurting out the name 'Nini' – a nickname not taught to Anna by Bounine but one she seems to genuinely recognize just the same. Top right: "Your highness!" Nini declares in utter amazement and disbelief.

Center row, left: attempting to bait Prince Paul (Ivan Desny, far left), Bounine (Yul Brynner) introduces him to the Grand Duchess as co-conspirator, Boris Chernov (Akim Tamaroff, far right) looks on with his own skeptic curiosity. Center right: to convince himself of Anna's legitimacy, Paul makes her acquaintance through a series of dates. Here, the two get properly drunk at Copenhagen's famed Tivoli Gardens – actually, another set at Elstree).

Bottom row, left: Anna begs the indulgence of her Grand mama, Maria (Helen Hayes) by reciting places and things taught to her by Bounine. "Imposter!" Maria declares, all the years having to contend with various fakes and frauds having made her openly bitter and hostile. Bottom right: however, when Anna suddenly develops a nervous cough, Maria asks if she is ill. Anna replies that when she is upset she coughs, leading Maria to recall that when Anastasia was frightened as a child she used to cough in the same manner. The revelation opens Maria's heart to the possibility that Anna may indeed be her granddaughter. "Oh, but if it is not you," she tells Anna through tears of joy, "Don't ever tell me.")

before coming to Hollywood in the 1930s and winning an Oscar for her performance in **The Sin of Madelon Claudet** (1931). However, shortly thereafter Hayes' film career hit a snag with Louis B. Mayer, the undisputed monarch of MGM. Hayes and her husband, Charles McArthur had been close personal friends of actress Norma Shearer and her husband, MGM's VP in Charge of Production, Irving Thalberg. Presumably, it is this friendship that worked against Hayes with Mayer after Thalberg's untimely death. For her part, Hayes would continue to hold Mayer personally responsible for Thalberg's death, saying of Mayer in an interview, "**He wasn't anything negative on the surface**



(Top row, left: Anna and Bounine meet the press for a congenial Q&A that goes hopelessly awry after a man named Mikhail Vlodos (Karel Stepanek) confronts them with the knowledge that he first met Anna inside a mental asylum in Prague. Top right: a pensive Bounine studies the ballroom and observes the courtship between Anna and Paul taking center stage on the dance floor. By now, the question of 'is she or isn't she' is moot to the General who has fallen hopelessly in love with his protégé.

Center row left: Anna asks Paul if he would still want to marry her if she were not the Grand Duchess. He refuses to answer her, leaving Anna to speculate, *"The poor have only one advantage. They know that they are loved for themselves."* Right: Maria embraces Anna for the last time, telling her that she must make her way as she sees fit, knowing in her own heart that Anna has already chosen to steal off with Bounine rather than marry Prince Paul. Helen Hayes performance as Maria is multi-layered and intriguing. Does she in fact know she has been taken in by another imposter, but cannot bring herself to hate the girl, or is she genuinely saddened by the fact that in order to love her granddaughter she must give her back to the mysterious haunted autonomy of the world?

Bottom left: Baroness Elena Von Livenbaum (Martita Hunt) is instructed by Chernov on how to proceed with the ceremony about to take place in the ballroom. Earlier, Elena's playful attraction to Bounine is utterly frowned upon by Maria. "Livenbaum," she tells her lady in waiting, "At your age sex should mean nothing but gender!" Bottom right: having informed Prince Paul of Anna's abandonment, the astonished Paul declares Anna a fraud, inquiring to Maria, "But what will you say?" "I will tell them, 'the play is over...go home!'" Maria replies coolly. Screenwriter Arthur Laurents had wanted director Litvak to shoot this last line with Maria staring directly into the movie audience, thus signaling the end in a sly direct address. Litvak instead chose the 'safe' ending. The line is said by Maria to Prince Paul as they make their way into the grand ballroom.)

...but he was evil." Whatever the reasons, Hayes film career was rather short lived and she returned to the stage that had always been her first love anyway.



(Above: the grand ballroom set in all its finery and fanfare at the start of a perfect evening. Anna dances with Prince Paul as a select group of invited guests look on.

Helen Hayes had long admired Ingrid Bergman as an actress that she had first befriended in 1949. The moniker, ‘first lady of the American Theater’ had been bestowed upon Hayes in 1955 during a Broadway tribute. Reportedly, the modest actress was quite embarrassed to be thought of in such high esteem (especially since she considered her contemporary Katharine Cornell to be her superior). Nevertheless, Hayes graciously accepted the honor, never believing that the title would endure. Ironically, it has.

Accolades aside, Helen Hayes had almost become a recluse by 1956. The tragedy of her only daughter’s death the previous year, coupled with the sudden loss of her husband had left her emotionally drained at the time Litvak proposed her triumphant return to motion pictures. Despite her personal apprehensions in accepting the part, Hayes was welcomed into the fold on the set. She would later recall that the professional courtesies and personal acquaintances developed while working on **Anastasia** made for one of the most satisfying movie experiences she had ever had as a film actress.

The final bit of unresolved casting for the film also proved to be the least difficult to decide upon. Everyone wanted Yul Brynner. The exotic leading man, famed for his bald pate, was in the middle of a stellar year of personal artistic triumphs when Litvak contacted him for **Anastasia**. 1956 would prove to be Brynner’s seminal year as an actor. He was cast in three of the filmdom’s most spectacular and showy productions; as the Pharaoh Ramsey in Cecil B. DeMille’s **The Ten Commandments**; a film reprise of his most celebrated Broadway triumph – as the king of Siam in **The King and I**, and as General Sergei Pavlovich Bounine in **Anastasia**. Though he was Oscar nominated for his role in **Anastasia**, Brynner lost to himself – taking home the Best Actor statuette for **The King and I** instead.

A delightfully rakish raconteur, Brynner shrouded much of his personal life in closely guarded mystery and myth. In truth he was born in Vladivostok on 7 July 1915, and named Yul after his grandfather. Abandoned by his own father, Brynner was a dropout at the age of 19. He became a Paris musician among the Russian gypsies, apprenticed for Jean Cocteau at the Theatre des Mathurins and doubled as a trapeze artist with Cirque d’Hiver.

All of this background would serve him well as an aspiring actor during the next few years. In 1941, Brynner studied with Chekhov in the U.S. and debuted on Broadway as a Chinese peasant opposite Mary Martin in **Lute Song**. It was Martin who recommended Brynner to scenarists Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. The rest...as they say, is history.

The primary appeal of **Anastasia**, at least for screen writer Arthur Laurents, had always been its Pygmalion aspect – the hewing of a diamond in the rough that proves herself to be a more genuine gem than even her Svengali had initially hoped for. To be sure, the chemistry between Yul Brynner and Ingrid Bergman was instantly palpable. In fact, during rehearsals, Brynner had developed a flirtatious crush on his Swedish costar; an assignation quickly dismantled when Bergman turned to Arthur Laurents during their run-through of the script and coolly inquired, **“He’s supposed to be royalty?”** Possibly Bergman’s rebuke of Brynner’s advances had more to do with the actress taking no chances that her return to American movies would solicit even more rumors of salacious romantic intrigues in the tabloids. Whatever the reason, and despite this initial rebuke, the two costars got on famously throughout the shoot.

To add an air of authenticity to the production, a second film unit was sent to Copenhagen, London and Paris to photograph establishing shots that would be inserted into the final film. For all intensive purposes, however, principle cast and crew never left the sound stages, though at one point both Brynner and Berman were featured sitting inside an authentic 1920s railway car in Britain (with rear projection substituting as a moving backdrop) to depict Anastasia’s journey from France to Denmark.

For the final moment in the film, the Dowager prods the woman she believes to be her granddaughter into following her own heart right into the arms of Gen. Bounine. Arthur Laurents had wanted Helen Hayes (when asked what she shall say to the crowd of spectators awaiting confirmation of Anastasia’s royal acceptance) to look directly into the camera and address the audience with, **“I will say, the play is over. Go home.”**

(Right: in 1997 Don Bluth and 20th Century-Fox premiered a lavishly appointed animated musical version of *Anastasia* that took even more artistic liberties with the story, while retaining all of the magical fairytale qualities of the original film. Top: the Catherine the Great ballroom as drawn for the 300 year celebration of the Romanov reign.

Middle: Anja (voiced by Meg Ryan) begins a journey to her past with the aid of a playful mutt named Pooka.

Middle: Vlad (Kelsey Grammer) looks on as Dimitri (John Cusack) and Anja begin to fall in love.

Second from bottom: Cousin Sophie (Bernadette Peters) convinces the whole of Paris to come out and celebrate in one of the film’s lavishly staged production numbers.

Bottom: “You have to talk to her!” a stubborn Dimitri tells the equally stubborn Dowager Empress (Angela Lansbury).





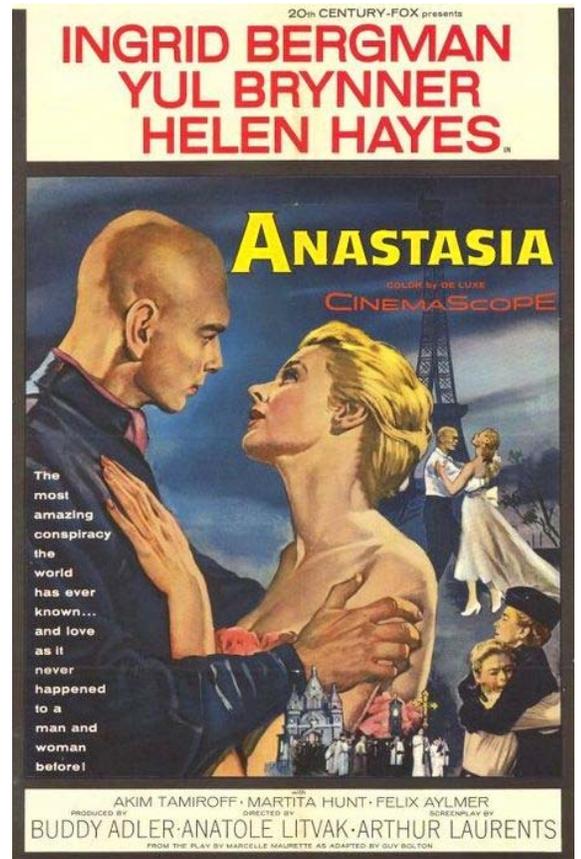
(Top row, left: Grand Duchesses don't marry kitchen boys, so says Dimitri to Vlad. Unlike *Bouquine* in the 1956 film, Dimitri knows that Anna is actually the Grand Duchess without a memory of her past, but is still resigned to restore her to her rightful place despite his love for her. Top row, right: one of the more fanciful elements of the 1997 revision included the resurrection of Rasputin (voiced by Christopher Lloyd) from purgatory, restored to his former self through a magical reliquary and hell bent on destroying the last of the Romanovs. Bottom left: The Dowager Empress and Sophie cry over a farewell letter Anja has left behind, declaring her love for Dimitri while making a promise to return to visit her grandmother somewhere in the future. "It's a perfect ending," says Sophie. "No," Maria admits, "It's a perfect beginning!" Bottom right: another fanciful inclusion, Bartok the Bat (Hank Azaria); Rasputin's one time sidekick who abandons his master's plans to murder Anja in Paris in favor of l'amour with a female bat from the city of light. Below: original poster art for the 1956 film.)

Though the line is retained in the film's final cut, Litvak chose instead to have Hayes speak it to her escort, Prince Paul. The conventional finale disappointed Laurents, who thought that his version more fittingly capped off his concept of the film; as a story not to be taken seriously as fact.

Upon its premiere, *Anastasia* (1956) was an immediate blockbuster. It marked the celebrated return of Ingrid Bergman to the big screen and earned the actress her second Academy Award. The film also cemented Yul Brynner's popularity at the box office. Though members of the Russian aristocracy were befuddled (and in some cases, outraged) by the artistic liberties taken, most concurred with the assessment that, as a work of pure fiction, the film held up remarkably well under narrative scrutiny.

If the film had any negative publicity, it derived from a sudden resurgence in the public's interest for Anna Anderson – the woman who had retreated from public life to a cottage deep in Germany's Black Forest. Endlessly besought by reporters hungry for a sound bite, Anna eventually fled her home to the United States in 1968. It was her second trip abroad.

In the late 1920s, Anderson had been the guest of Princess Xenia in Manhattan – a short lived association that ended when Anna stripped naked and danced about the roof top of Xenia's fashionable penthouse



apartment. Institutionalized once more and shipped back to Germany in 1940, Anderson had been content to live her life in private until her return visit to the U.S.

In 1968, Anderson met and married a Charlottesville Virginia university professor. But her personal demons refused to perish. Living in squalor and plagued by chronic bouts of depression, Anderson was eventually institutionalized once more in 1983. She died on February 12 1984.

Through advanced DNA sampling, taken before her death and matched with a sample from England's Prince Philip, scientists conclusively determined that the woman who had so cleverly defied any finite labeling of her own identity while she lived was actually NOT the Grand Duchess Anastasia.

And so at the end of a journey that began with one of the most tragic disappearing acts in all 20th century history, the whereabouts of the real Anastasia (and that of her brother) are still unknown. Henceforth, and with film fantasies cast aside, as time wears on **Anastasia** remains an enigma for the ages. Did she survive? Well, it's the rumor...the legend...and the mystery.

(No happy endings. Right top: the real Anna Anderson's life immediately following the debut of the 1956 film became a nightmare of prying eyes and press coverage that sent the already fragile and unstable woman into seclusion.

Right: the Czar poses proudly with his children and wife two years before his entire world was to crumble. Bottom right: the would-be heir to the Russian throne, Alexei. Born with hemophilia, the fragile child's bones were also not among those exhumed in 1991. While history has been kind in probing the whereabouts of his sister Anastasia, it has all but forgotten about the boy who ought to have been the next Imperial ruler of the largest country on earth. Below: the Czar and his family in Livedia the summer before the start of the war. While neither the 1956 nor 1997 films delve into the underlying arch of history, these images remind us of how much was lost on that fateful night in 1917.)

