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TIME OUT 1/29/93

Classic Eisenstein-Prokofiev propaganda film screened

By Paul Freeman
Correspondent

The Northern California premiere revival of the classic 1938 Russian film "Alexander Nevsky" will provide a rare treat for both the eye and ear.

Wednesday through Feb. 7, a newly struck 35mm print of the Sergei Eisenstein film will be screened in San Francisco. David Zinman will

conduct the San Francisco Symphony in a live performance of Sergei Prokofiev's score. The San Francisco Symphony Chorus will also perform, directed by Vance George and



Goberman

featuring mezzo-soprano Christine Cairns. The film project was initiated by the Soviet government in the '30s in an attempt to prepare its people for the impending war with Hitler's Germany. They selected Eisenstein, who had dazzled audiences with the silent classics "Potemkin" and "Ten Days That Shook The World," to head the ambitious project. The film depicts Alexander Nevsky, a 13th-century Russian prince, and his victories over that era's Teutonic knights.

The film made a huge impression on producer John Goberman, who has won numerous awards for the

Preview

What: "Alexander Nevsky"

Where: Davies Symphony Hall, Van Ness and Grove, S.F.

When: 8 p.m. Wednesday

How much: \$21 to \$60

Call: 1-415-431-5400

"Live from Lincoln Center" public television series. He took on the arduous task of mounting this presentation, which he has shown all over the world.

"Eisenstein is so major in the classic film world," says Goberman, reached at his New York office. "I'd like to think that audiences who might not otherwise see his work will be exposed to it through this presentation. Music audiences are going because they love Prokofiev's 'Alexander Nevsky' cantata and they want to see the inspiration for the music, which is the film."

Film buffs might awaken to the pleasures of the composer's work. "This is almost a lesson in the importance of music to film. The mu-

sic is an inherent, organic part of the film. There are sound effects and dialogue, but there are great stretches without them, just film and music. This is not background music. It's foreground music. It's been called the first music video."

The pristine new print enhances the viewer's enjoyment. "It took about a year to get the print. The Russians wanted to cooperate. It just took them a long time.

Audiences have responded enthusiastically. "It's a crowd pleaser, a real winner. It was written to be exciting. Some people assume that, because an orchestra is going to perform with it, it's going to be an esoteric experience. But really, 'Alexander Nevsky' is a cowboys-and-Indians movie... only it's Russians and Germans.

Prokofiev and Eisenstein worked very closely on the project. "There are stories that, not only did Prokofiev write the music when he saw the pictures that Eisenstein made, but that Eisenstein actually created some of the pictures to fit the music," says Goberman.



ALEXANDER NEVSKY, (Nikolai Cherkassov), marshals the troops in Sergei Eisenstein's 1938 classic.