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Saturday April 18

**The Movie Palace Experience—
At the Castro Theater, S.F.:**

***Aelita* 8:00**

**Musical Score Performed by
The Theremin Trio**

**Admission \$10. For program notes, see
sidebar, this page.**

Yakov A. Protazanov (USSR, 1924). Written by
Fyodor Otsep, Alexei Faiko, based on a novel by
Alexei Tolstoi. Photographed by Yuri
Zhelyabuzhsky, E. Schoneman. Design by Sergei
Kozlovsky, Aleksandra Ekster, Isaac Rabinovich,
Victor Simov. With Valentia Kuinzhi, Nikolai
Tseretelli, Konstantin Eggert, Julia Solntseva,
Igor Illinsky. (90 mins, Silent with Russian
intertitles and English subtitles, Live musical
accompaniment, B&W, 35mm, Print from
Walker Art Center courtesy Gosfilmofund, thanks
to Bruce Jenkins)

The Movie Palace Experience

AELITA

Friday and Saturday, April 17 and 18, 8 p.m., at
the Castro Theater, S.F. Admission: \$10.

The Castro Theater is the perfect setting for a
reprise of last year's unique and wonderful *Aelita*
event. This famed 1924 Soviet science-fiction film
is shown in a beautiful new print with a musical
score showcasing the lyrical and eerie tonalities of
the Theremin. Dennis James will perform on the
Theremin and the Wurlitzer organ; he will be
accompanied by (trom-bown): Miles Anderson
(baritone horn, voice and electronics) and Erica
Sharp (5-string electric violin and electronics). The
score is composed by Dennis James with original
music for the Martian scenes composed by Miles
Anderson.

The Theremin, which is played by passing the
hands over the instrument without touching it, was
an invention of the Russian Constructivist period; it
was the first electronic synthesizer and a model for
the Soviet (and Constructivist) aspiration to marry
art with technology. Designed and initially used in
concert performances, it made its way into
Hollywood film scores such as those for *Spellbound*
(1945) and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951).

Aelita, loosely based on a story by Alexei Tolstoi,
tells of three Russians—an engineer, a soldier, and
a detective—who fly to Mars and become involved
in a revolutionary uprising among the Martian
people. While there, the engineer has a love affair
with Aelita, Queen of Mars. The lavish art direction
is the most famous attribute of *Aelita*—costumes
and sets of the fantastic Martian landscape reveal a
Cubist design influence, resulting from director
Yakov Protazanov's experience in the French art
world, as well as the collaboration of artists from
the Russian Constructivist movement. (The film
was a featured subject in the recent exhibition,
Theatre in Revolution, at the Palace of the Legion of
Honor.) But Protazanov was one of the leading
exponents of psychological realism in the pre-
revolutionary era, and *Aelita* is equally fascinating,
though rarely cited, for its detailed look at life in
the USSR: housing shortages and residual class
conflicts are revealed to play havoc on personal
lives. It is this that our satirically neurotic heroes
attempt to escape. But, on Mars, technology itself
has become the instrument for disenfranchizing a
whole group of people.

The beautiful *Aelita* is played by Julia Solntseva,
a film director in her own right and wife and
collaborator of Dovzhenko. She will be the subject
of a PFA tribute later this year.

Our presentation of *Aelita* is funded in part by
the California Arts Council, a State agency.