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This might be a good time to mention my theremin, the 1921 electronic musical instrument invented by the Russian physicist Leo Termin. Originally conceived as a new instrument for serious music it was an instant when introduced to Europe in the mid-1920's. Following Paris riots at its Opera House introduction, Termin brought the instrument to America where he developed it for mass production in New York City. Only 200 were sold of the initial 500 made by RCA and I've been able to locate an intact one. Its restoration is nearly complete resulting in an appearance as though it is fresh off the assembly line. The last issue of M.I.T.'s "Computer Music" journal has a cover article about the theremin (with an attached sound-sheet record demo), and the journal would probably be readily available in one of the Berkeley libraries.

The instrument's connection with film began in Hollywood in the 1940's with its use in the SPELLBOUND score (and, if I'm not mistaken, REBECCA too). It was featured in a number a science fiction films including the chilling thematic sound for the robot in THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. I am quite keen about using my instrument and I have been talking with Bruce Jenkins at the Walker Center about developing some new silent film scores featuring it for the 1920's Russian avant-garde films he may be including in his program next year in Seattle/Minneapolis.

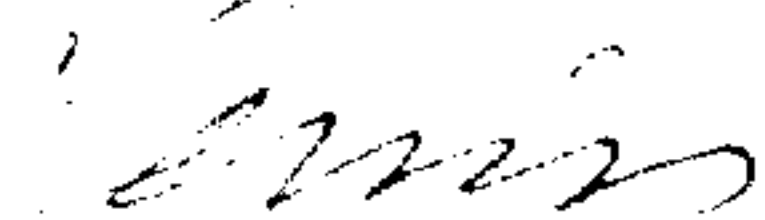
This all came about because Enno mentioned to us both during the March DIE NIBELUNGEN tour several suitable films for theremin scoring including a short called SHAKHMATNAYA GORYATCHKA (CHESS FEVER), 1925 by Wsewolod Podovkin. This is apparently a quite clever and funny 30 minute film in the Mack Sennett tradition about a chess addict about to be married and who, because of his obsession, sees checkerboard patterns and chess related items wherever he looks. Enno thinks the theremin would be ideal for the chess images and the rest of the score could be played on piano and/or small ensemble.

Another interesting prospect is a feature science fiction story entitled AELITA, 1924 by Yakov Protazanov along with MEZHPLANETNAYA REVOLUTSIYA (INTERPLANETARY REVOLUTION), 1924. The second is a sort of short parody of the feature and Enno feels the two together would make a nice program for theremin accompaniment. He also mentioned some early color German animated films by Walther Ruttmann, the artist responsible for the animated sequences in DIE NIBELUNGEN. There are 4 films in the series OPUS I-IV and the first has an original score by Max Butting which Enno is sending along. Apparently there is also a score for OPUS III by Hanns Eisler which Enno is trying to locate for me. He is convinced these would also be ideal for rescoring involving the theremin.

If this all evolves I could work on these projects in the Bay Area with some local musicians and present them say at the PFA by way of preparation for screenings in Seattle and Minneapolis. I feel certain there would also be interest in screening them at the Cleveland Cinematheque, Columbus Art Museum and, perhaps, the Eastman House as well.

Thank you for your interest in my activities and I do look forward to working with you on many interesting programs in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Dennis James