

CLASSIC SILENT HORROR FILM “THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI” SCREENED WITH NEW LIVE SCORE AT MAYO STREET ARTS ON FRIDAY

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Mark Tipton finds new music in old films. Very old films. Tipton, 34, has made a habit of writing new, contemporary-sounding musical scores for silent films that are nearly 100 years old. He didn't realize how much musical inspiration could be gleaned from silent films until he got a job a few years ago working with band leader and music historian Vince Giordano, leader of the Nighthawks.

“He has so many old scores. I was cataloging them for him, and it made me realize what a rich source this was,” said Tipton, a trumpet player and executive director of the Portland Conservatory of Music. “A lot of silent films have been forgotten today, so when you write a new score for them, it's really like you're presenting a new piece to the public.”

Tipton's latest “new piece” is a contemporary-feeling score for the German Expressionist silent film “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.” The score will be performed by the group, Les Sorciers Perdus, along with a screening of the 1919 film at Mayo Street Arts in Portland on Friday. Tipton plays trumpet in the group.

The six-piece group will be playing along to the film using instruments that were not around in 1919, including a synthesizer, electric guitar and amplified cello. The other instruments are trumpet, bass and drums.

The film is often called the first “true horror” movie and was one of the most influential films of the German Expressionist movement. Some film historians say it had one of the first twist endings in cinematic history.

The plot involves the director of an asylum and a hypnotized sleepwalker apparently being ordered by the director to carry out murders. The setting and scenery are unreal, full of jagged and tilted angles.

Tipton's new score for the film at times feels a little jazzy, a little soulful, but never old. There is no tinkling piano, as heard in some silent film scores. Tipton says he feels like the score draws upon progressive rock, as well as jazz. The film, and the score, is 74 minutes long, not counting the intermission.

Tipton says he's written “several dozen” scores for silent films, ranging from other horror films, like “Nosferatu” to silent comedies like Harold Lloyd's “Safety Last.” He and his group perform them at screenings for a wide range of folks, he says.

He decided to score “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” after seeing it a second time, on TV, and being inspired by it. “The first time I saw it, it didn't speak to me at all. Then I saw it again, and I started to hear what I might do with it,” Tipton said.

Tipton, a South Portland native, left Maine as a teenager to study music. He lived in New York for a time, playing trumpet in various jazz and classical groups. He's played with Quincy Jones, Tom Scott and Bobby McFerrin, among others. He's been back in Maine for about five years.

Tipton and his group performed the score to “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” at Space Gallery in Portland in August, and he was “pleasantly surprised” at the range of people

wanting to discover an old film with a new sound. “We had high school kids, college hipsters, people in their 30s and 40s,” said Tipton. “I think a lot of people are interested in discovering something new.”

**“THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI”; SCORE PERFORMED BY LES SORCIERS
PERDUS**

WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday **WHERE:** Mayo Street Arts, 10 Mayo St., Portland **HOW MUCH:** \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door **INFO:** mayostreetarts.org