



The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari

(Germany 1919, Directed by Robert Wiene)

Live Soundtrack Composed and Performed by Geoff Smith on prototype hammered dulcimers.

There is a history of cinema before 'Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari', and a new one after it. Reactions to the film were extreme and still are. The debate continues. There is also a history of the dulcimer and a history of the live film soundtrack before and after Geoff Smith's score for 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari'.

The Arts Council of England funded Geoff's widely acclaimed sell out UK tours of his solo live soundtrack to screenings of 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari'. It proved to be the most successful live cinema event since the end of the 'silent' era. The tour attracted immense media coverage in the national and regional press as well as on television and radio.

The highly successful second leg Spring 2004 UK tour of 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' included a sell out performance at the London Barbican. On August 21st 2004 Geoff performed his score to 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' to an outdoor screening at the National Theatre in London. The film was projected on to the National Theatre building itself and also a second giant screen between the National Theatre and the Thames. An audience of thousands enjoyed the occasion.

In July 2005 Geoff performed 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' at 'Rhythm Sticks', the international percussion festival, which takes place each year at the South Bank Centre London. This was the first time that the festival has featured the hammered dulcimer as a main percussion instrument as well as a full length feature film with a percussion only soundtrack.

'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' score is the first ever feature film soundtrack that has been designed, composed and performed on specially designed hammered dulcimers. Composer, performer, orchestrator, designer, vocalist, songwriter and percussionist Geoff Smith is acknowledged both as a world-leading virtuoso and a unique innovator in composition, technique and performance on the hammered dulcimer. He is also a pioneer in Dulcimer design.

For the performance of the score for 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' Geoff uses three different prototype

dulcimers two of which are historic innovations in instrument design: one being the first UK fixed position chromatic dulcimer, the other being the first microtonal dulcimer incorporating his revolutionary 'Microtonal Fluid Tuning Mechanism' patent. It would have been impossible to compose and perform 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' soundtrack without the groundbreaking 'Microtonal Fluid Tuning Mechanism'. For further information regarding this invention, its wider applications and some of its historic implications please refer to a Guardian newspaper article from 01/02/2003, '[Composer Reinvents the Piano](#)'.

The hammered dulcimer is an ancient percussion instrument struck by small wooden hammers, sticks or mallets. The largest dulcimers have well over 100 strings. Each country has its own indigenous dulcimer which peculiarly reflects its respective culture - England, Scotland, Hungary, Greece, Italy, Iran, Iraq, India, Germany, Egypt, Tibet, China, Korea, Mexico and so on.

'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' soundtrack was composed to the original tinted print with German expressionist captions. Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles and Fritz Lang (who was originally approached to direct 'Caligari') were greatly influenced by the film's combination of psychology, fairground, fantasy, expressionism, delusion, murder and somnambulism.

This tale of hypnosis, powerlessness, murder and insanity can be seen as a metaphor for a new cinema itself: The spectator's helpless horror in the face of unfolding narrative and the revelation of their own deep buried desires. It is the first work of the Cinema of the Subconscious. After 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' modern cinema could begin.

Geoff Smith's score for 'Caligari' is a revelation, and breaks new ground in the composition and performance of live music for film. For the first time 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari', a widely recognised classic of world cinema, has a musical soundtrack worthy of its place in the history of film. His immensely dynamic score intimately relates to the emotional and psychological depth and intensity of the film's narrative and plot.



"It's a tribute to Smith that his music was able to bring this wonderful movie to life."
The Financial Times

"The musical equivalent of splitting the atom."
The Guardian

"This isn't just an innovative soundtrack, as its echoes positively enhance the melancholic and menacing moods of this intense, psychological masterpiece."
BBC Radio Times

"A fascinating combination of disturbing images and otherworldly sounds which yanks the tradition of silent movie accompaniment spectacularly back to the future. Smith is a virtuoso percussionist who has revolutionized a forgotten instrument."
The Sunday Times

"The Hammered dulcimer has been waiting for someone like Geoff Smith to come along."
Fiona Talkington, BBC Radio 3.

"Like the famous Roy Budd theme for 'Get Carter', or the zither music from 'The Third Man' but stripped down and fed through a haunted house, the music draws out the peculiar textures and angularities of the story with real precision."
The Big Issue

Critic's Choice
Time Out

*"A wildly atmospheric soundtrack..." ******
The Scotsman

"Caligari's protagonists convey a barely suppressed horror, which Smith's eerie and exotic score perfectly complements."
The Wire

