



# THE MUSICIAN'S GAZETTE



No. 5

WALKING BOXES PRODUCTIONS

## THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

Considered by many to be a benchmark in the history of cinema, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is an undisputed classic. Learn some interesting facts about the film on Page 3...

## LIVE ACTORS WITH SILENT FILMS, A JAPANESE ART FORM?

Perhaps this will be the first time you've ever seen a silent film with live actors, but it was something that would have been less strange to those living in the silent film era. In Japan it became a revered art form. Learn more on Page 4...

## WALKING BOXES PLAYERS

*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is Walking Boxes' latest production. The cast features some new suspects and some familiar ones. For cast and production notes, please turn to Page 2...

## DONOVAN'S BRAIN ON DISPLAY AT THE SIBLEY HOUSE

Walking Boxes Productions will be presenting their adaptation of the 1944 Radio Drama classic *Donovan's Brain* this fall at Minnesota Historical Society's Sibley House Site. A five course high tea will be served as the radio play is performed. For more information go to: [www.mnhs.org/places/sites/shs/](http://www.mnhs.org/places/sites/shs/) or call: 651-452-1596.

## HALLOWEEN PARTY AT FORT SNELLING

Walking Boxes will be presenting *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* as part of a Halloween Party taking place at Historic Fort Snelling's Visitor Center on Saturday, October 29th. Come dressed as your favorite character from history, enjoy refreshments, and delve into the enigmatic intrigue of this classic film once again. For more information about the event and other happenings of Walking Boxes Productions, log on to [www.walkingboxes.com](http://www.walkingboxes.com)

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## THE CAST OF CALIGARI

Jeffrey Willis.....	Francis
Jeffrey Nordin.....	Dr. Caligari Guard
Christine Nordin.....	Jane Landlady Narrator
John Knauss.....	Alan Young Doctor Guard
David Simanek.....	Head Clerk Murder Suspect Dr. Olsen
J Roth.....	Monty Cesare piano
Paul Cameron.....	theremin & sound effects

Original script and score by J Roth

## ABOUT THE THEREMIN

The theremin was invented in 1919 by Lev Sergeivitch Termen. Termen was in the midst of researching proximity sensors; his research was sponsored by the Russian government. When he demonstrated his invention to Vladimir Lenin, Lenin is said to have been so impressed that he began taking lessons upon it. Lenin sent Termen on a trip around the world to demonstrate this latest Soviet technology and the invention of electronic music. In the late 1920s, Termen emigrated to the US, but was later kidnapped by Soviet agents and forced to return to the USSR. He was put to work in a labor camp and designed the first 'bug'(covert listening device.)

The theremin can be heard in many old sci-fi productions for film and radio. Playing the theremin requires no physical contact with the instrument to produce music. Pitch and volume are controlled by theremin players simply by moving their hands through the air. The theremin used in Walking Boxes' production of Caligari to enhance the eeriness of the scenes featuring Cesare, is a simpler version of Terman's original, which had two antennae.

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## THE HORROR...THE HORROR...

Walking Boxes Productions' main man, Flyhard Jenkins, had an informal interview with the Caligari players. Amongst other things he wanted to know was: "Who or what from television or the movies scared the bejeezus out of you when you were a child?"

Paul Cameron: The witch from The Wizard of Oz. I saw that movie when I was four and had to leave the room.

John Knauss: For me it was that witch too.

Jeff Nordin: For me it was a song. The image I had when I realized what the song Strange Fruit was about really haunted me.

Jeff Willis: The scene with the boat in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory disturbed me for some reason. And I remember being really disturbed by Tales of Body Snatchers. The idea that the evil is among us, undetected, was one of my greatest fears.

Chris Nordin: In The Son of Frankenstein there was a hand severed from its body that was crawling around. That's what got me.

J Roth: Ventriloquist dolls that came to life. I was taken to see a 'G' film about foxes and there was a preview for the film Magic (which has a psycho dummy in it). And around that same time, I saw another evil dummy in an episode of Fantasy Island. I locked my dummy in the closet, even though I was sure that would fuel any desire he might have to kill me.

Dave Simanek: I had a fearless and happy childhood, but I guess if I was forced to name one thing it would be Children of the Corn.



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## HISTORICAL NOTES ABOUT THE FILM

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari was made in 1919. That was the year that the infamous Treaty of Versailles was signed, officially ending World War I. The film didn't premier in New York until April of 1921. There it met with critical acclaim. To the intelligentsia, Caligari was seen as a great achievement in the growth of cinema. (Some might liken its impact to that which Star Wars had in 1977 upon its release; nothing like it had been seen before and it inspired the rise of its genre.) Caligari received quite a different reception in its Los Angeles debut. There the film was advertised as a European film, since anti-German feelings were still strong after the war. The film's nation of origin was soon discovered though and many Los Angeles newspapers determined the film to be a threat to the American film industry. They dismissed it as a waste of moviegoers' money in support of a country that had just wrecked the world with war. The Los Angeles Examiner (owned by William Randolph Hearst) called for a ban on all German movies. A mob of two thousand people, the core of which was formed by the Hollywood chapter of the American Legion, marched on Miller's Theatre in Los Angeles when Caligari premiered there. The film was quickly removed from the theater.

Those decrying the film because it was made by the "German enemy", need not have been so up in arms. The film was anything but a showing of German nationalistic pride. Screenwriters Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz (the later, a war veteran reputedly tortured by a military psychologist) were angry that the common people of their country had been dragged into a horrific war by their leaders and wrote the script as such (Caligari, representing the leaders, Cesare as the "sleep-walking" populace.) In the writers' view, post-war Germany was being destroyed by authoritarianism and they intended their film to be a warning. This theme was lost to most though, even by many of its avid admirers, who instead marveled at the brilliantly-conceived sets.

Of the 525 films released in the year 1921, only fifty still exist today, one of those being The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.



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## EXPRESSIONISM GERMAN STYLE

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari is often referred to as one of the great German Expressionistic films (another famous one being Nosferatu.) But what exactly is meant by this term Expressionism?

Though difficult to describe, one might begin by saying Expressionism is centered upon the artist's vision rather than on the viewer's impression. Instead of creating an objective or realistic image, the idea is that the artist seeks to reflect an emotional or psychological state, or perhaps to provoke such a state through distortion and exaggeration of the image. It's less about what those viewing actually see and more about what they feel.

German Expressionism is filled with dark images, sharp contrasting figures, jagged geometry, and chiaroscuro. In Caligari, these artistic devices are thought to express the despair felt in Germany after the First World War. An interesting note about the expressionistic sets used in Caligari is that, because of the limited funds available to the filmmakers, they simply used flat cardboard cut-outs to simulate sets and cityscapes. Due more to post-war electricity use limitation than to artistic vision, shadows were painted onto many of the sets to avoid using extensive lighting.

It should also be noted that acting can be considered expressionistic. Werner Krauss (as Caligari) and Conrad Veidt (as Cesare) conform to the Expressionist conception by reducing their gestures to those almost exclusively linear (as opposed to sweeping or curving motions.) Thus their actions are largely congruent with the broken angles of the sets.

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## LIVE ACTORS WITH SILENT FILMS

During the early decades of motion pictures, film exhibitors experimented with having entertainers sit next to the screen to provide commentary and dialog. These narrators would travel around with the film and usually give a lecture about the film and describe the incidents contained there in. In the West, these narrators were eventually replaced by title cards (and lack of interest), but in Japan (and Korea, Taiwan and Thailand to a lesser extent) the narrators became an integral part of the film-viewing experience. Many of the films first shown in Japan were from Europe and America, so a narrator was necessary to translate the title cards and make sense of the stories which were culturally opaque. These narrators were called benshi. A number of the most famous were heavy drinkers, woman chasers and notorious libertines. They often wore colorful clothes, commanded attention and were frequently billed in larger type than the film itself. Sometimes these benshi ventriloquized the characters in the movie, sometimes they just narrated the action, sometimes they recited poetry based upon the scenery. Often musical accompaniment would be present as well. The benshi became such an integral part of the film-watching process in Japan, that it was a good ten years or more after the rise of talkies in the West, that sound pictures rose in popularity in Japan. As late as 1942, 14% of the films exhibited in Japan were still silents.

Probably the greatest reason for the benshi's success in Japan is that the silver screen was viewed as an offshoot of the dramatic stage. Traditional Japanese theater is rarely without a mediating voice, from the chorus in a noh play, to the joruri narrator in a puppet doll drama, to the gidayu narrator in kabuki.

It is said, a great benshi performer never takes away from whatever the big screen offers, they enhance the viewing of the film and fill it with textures and layers of interpretation. Walking Boxes Productions hopes to hold this same kind of integrity with their presentation of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

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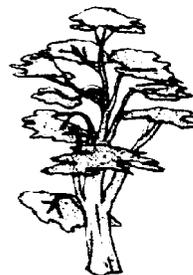
The art of adding sound effects to film began back in the late 1920s when "the talkies" were born. Microphones at that time were only strong enough to pick up the dialog of the actors. Filmmakers felt the final soundtrack was too sterile, so sound effects were added. It was Jack Foley (who would end up working at Universal Studios for thirty-three years) who pioneered the art of sound effects for film. It was his idea to project the finished scenes of a film in a studio while simultaneously recording the corresponding sound effects. Jack felt that every actor had his or her own way of walking. He tried to capture the nuances of each actor's individual manner of walking as his own footsteps were recorded in the studio. Some actors, hearing and seeing the difference between Jack's steps done for them and another sound man's efforts, began to demand that only Jack do their walk. Jack was the first to bring in produce and other oddities to create certain effects. For example, a blow to the head being reproduced by smacking a watermelon; or a set of keys and their rattle becoming the chainmail of marching Romans. Jack Foley was never once listed in a film's credits, but the art form which he helped to pioneer now bears his name.



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