

Nosferatu, Eine Symphonie des Grauens (1922)

Directed by F.W. Murnau Screenplay by Henrik Galeen, After the novel by Bram Stoker Costume Design by Albin Grau Produced by Enrico Dieckmann and Albin Grau Art Direction by Albin Grau

Plot Summary

In the 1830's, Hutter, the young clerk of a real estate agent, leaves his wife Nina in order to conduct the sale of some property with the mysterious Count Orlock (Nosferatu) in Transylvania. He falls into the clutches of the Count but manages to escape. Leaving his castle with a number of earth-filled coffins, the Count travels by ship to Bremen. The entire crew of the ship dies during the journey and when the ship arrives at port, a swarm of rats descends upon the city. Hutter has returned to Nina and tells her his tale of Count Orlock. She resolves to destroy the vampire by keeping him at her bedside until sunrise, when the sun's rays will destroy the monster's body.

Nosferatu, like *The Cabinet Of Dr. Caligari* and *Metropolis*, descended from the same artistic wave of German cinema in the 1920's, and is the definition itself of artistic film, where painting, architecture, literature, psychology, and politics meet in a work that gratifies both the eyes and the spirit. Thus the film develops over several dimensions, from its artistic claim of Romantic-Expressionism, the advent of Nazism, to homosexuality, globalization, desire, and a reflection on cinema itself.

Murnau draws from a history that links Vampires to unexplained deaths. The term, Nosferatu, is of modern origin and derives from the Slavic "nosufur-atu" which is a derivation of the Greek "nosophoros" or "plague carrier." The understanding that rat-borne illnesses were the cause of many plagues dominated scientific thinking in recent centuries. While in earlier times many unexplained deaths fueled a developing culture of Vampirism and the concept of the "un-dead" in Europe. While drawing on popular Vampire lore Murnau and Albin Grau also relied heavily and without permission on Stoker's novel. They apparently had no intention of paying any royalties for their use of the novel as the basis for their screenplay. They attempted to disguise the characters by changing their names and geographical setting. The film premiered in 1922 but eventually, Florence Stoker with the aid of the British Incorporated Society of Authors succeeded in destroying the original negatives and most of the prints of Nosferatu.

The Devil Music Ensemble, formed in 1999, is comprised of Brendon Wood on electric guitar, lapsteel guitar and synthesizer; Jonah Rapino on electric violin, vibraphone, and synthesizer; and Tim Nylander on drums, and percussion. In its short history the DME has been a rock trio, an European folk band, a 40 piece modern orchestral ensemble, a house band for live theater, a country music review, and a multi-member ensemble performing live soundtracks for silent films.

“Devil Music Ensemble has established itself as one of the primary American groups composing and performing scores for silent films, and can be spoken of in the same breath as groups like The Alloy Orchestra and the Tin Hat Trio.”

Dylan Skolnick Director of Programming
Cinema Arts Centre, Huntington NY

With remarkably flexible compositions that land somewhere between Glenn Branca and Can “with contrails of Sister Ray, Goran Bregovic, and Maurice Ravel streaming behind” (*Village Voice*), Devil Music Ensemble is presenting their new score to “Nosferatu, a symphony of horror” in movie theaters, museums, and colleges all over the country. The DME has enjoyed performing for audiences that span from teenagers to silver foxes all in one venue; and looks forward to seeing you at the the movies. To find out more about the DME go www.devilmusic.org