

The Colorado College Summer Music Festival
presents an *On the Fringe* Event

Jazz and the Silent Age

The Suspenseful, the Surreal, and the Silly

Stephen Prutsman, composer

June 17, 2018

5:00 p.m.

Packard Hall

SUSPENSE – 1913

Director, screenwriter and actress of “Suspense”, Lois Weber is considered to be the most important female filmmaker the industry has ever known. The film features the earliest example of split screen, anxiety-inducing shots through key holes and mirrors, and a cliff-hanger chase. Although un-credited, horror film actor Lon Chaney makes his film debut as the hobo with evil intent.

THE CAMERAMAN’S REVENGE – 1912

Polish filmmaker Ladislaw Starewicz introduced his now classic “The Cameraman’s Revenge” as the first puppet-animated film of its kind. He often used actual dead insects for this purpose, although understudies were needed in plentiful supplies. No doubt wings and legs would fall off and replacements were to be had. “Cameraman’s Revenge” tells the bizarre yet captivatingly funny story of insect infidelity and jealousy.

MIGHTY LIKE A MOOSE – 1926

A comedy-classic by any stretch, Leo McCarey’s “Mighty Like a Moose” tells the hysterically funny story of an unsightly couple who unbeknownst to their mates undergo plastic surgery and begin an lurid affair with each other. It stars Vivian Oakland and Charlie Chase as the wife and husband.

This remarkable trio of classic shorts each belongs to contrasting genres in filmmaking which in keeping with the silent film tradition of alliteration marketing I like to label “The Suspenseful, the Surreal and the Silly”. Within these contrasting genres, love is prominent, whether it be bug-love in “The Cameraman’s Revenge”, impending danger to loved ones in “Suspense” or in “Mighty Like a Moose” marital-love revamped, revived and renewed. (More alliteration, sorry...) When writing for silent film, I like to borrow musical languages of the time. In “Suspense” you’ll hear noir-like harmonies, somewhat discordant yet always with a foreboding, doom like, pedal point constant pitch which ones hopes will resolve with relief. In “The Cameraman’s Revenge” sardonic, Soviet-style rhythms and harmonies sandwich sneaky hints of “La Vie en Rose” when Mrs. Beetle rendezvous with her suave French painter-lover. And of course, in the American comedy “Mighty Like a Moose” swing and Charleston (the musical style not the town) predominate. I do like to sneak in tunes of the time so if you think you hear a snippet of “Oh, You Beautiful Doll” or “Solitude” you may be on to something...

Stephen Prutsman’s original scores performed by

Steven Copes, *violin*
Mark Fewer, *violin*
Toby Appel, *viola*
Bion Tsang, *cello*
Stephen Prutsman, *piano*