

## The Berklee Silent Film Orchestra

The Berklee Silent Film Orchestra (BSFO) is dedicated to composing new, original scores for silent feature classics, and performing them live-to-picture. Based at Boston's Berklee College of Music, in the world's premier undergraduate degree program in film scoring, the all-student orchestra composes its new works, and performs as an ensemble, under the leadership of Professor of Film Scoring and three-time Emmy nominee Sheldon Mirowitz (*Outside Providence*, *Missing in America*).

Since forming in 2010, the BSFO has written and performed new scores to 13 silent features (*Sunrise, It, Battleship Potemkin, Piccadilly, Faust, Our Hospitality, Safety Last!, Phantom of the Opera, The Last Laugh, Varieté*, and *The Freshman*) each premiered and originally commissioned by the Coolidge Corner Theater in Brookline, Massachusetts, as part of their *Sounds of Silents®* program. The recipient of two Special Commendations from the Boston Society of Film Critics, the BSFO has also played Boston's historic Cutler Majestic Theatre, the Nantucket Film Festival, the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, in Washington, DC, among other notable venues.

In the fall of 2015 the BSFO premiered its first large-scale orchestral score, for F.W. Murnau's groundbreaking horror classic *Nosferatu*, to a sold-out house at Boston Symphony Hall, performed with the film by the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, under the baton of maestro Keith Lockhart. The project, particularly the sprawling score by Mirowitz and his eight young composers, was the subject of flattering press coverage, including stories in *The Boston Globe*, and on NPR affiliate WBUR.

In addition, two of the group's newest scores (for the new restorations of F.W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* and E.A. Dupont's *Variété*), each of which received west coast premiers at the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, have been licensed by KINO/Lorber Films as the official scores on their DVD/Bluray releases of these films, a first for the BSFO, and a significant, unique achievement for a student ensemble.

In another first, in the fall of 2017 the BSFO began work on its latest score, commissioned by Universal Pictures for the restoration of its silent classic *The Man Who Laughs*, for a premiere as the opening night film for the 2018 SFSFF, and which will receive a DVD/Bluray release from the studio in 2019.

The BSFO's scores have also been performed, live-to-picture, by other orchestras, in America and beyond, including performances by the Valencia Symphony (*Nosferatu* and *The Freshman*), the Waterbury Symphony (*The Freshman*) and in October 2018, the first international performance of a BSFO score, at the stunning Zorlu Center in Istanbul, Turkey, with a performance of *The Phantom of the Opera*.

The scores performed by the BSFO are the product of a special class taught by Professor Mirowitz in which a small, handpicked group of top Berklee Film Scoring

students compose a full score to a silent feature classic. Each student is given one reel of the movie to score and orchestrate, based on original themes and under the direction and guidance of Professor Mirowitz. These scores are then recorded and performed live to the picture by the small all-student orchestra, with each of the student composers conducting their own reels. The result is a thrilling and thoroughly unique experience, a luminous silent film married to an inventive new score conducted by the composers themselves, played by a group of top young musicians and set in the communal environment in which these films were meant to be seen – a packed movie theater.

For the student composers, writing for silent film presents an exceptionally rigorous challenge, and unique preparation for a career in the field. Students trained by Mirowitz through the BSFO have gone on to work as top assistants to preeminent film and television composers, and have seen their own film scores represented in major film festivals -- including Tribeca, Los Angeles, Boston, Palm Springs, Shanghai, to name just a few -- around the world.

The players chosen for the orchestra are the top young orchestral and ensemble musicians in New England. The task of performing live-to-picture, led by multiple conductors, while reading and playing at a virtuoso level, requires special individuals. The project, including the subsequent score recording sessions, provides remarkable training for these performers. Like its composers, the BSFO's players come to Berklee, and this remarkable project, from every corner of the world.

In the eight years of its existence, the Berklee Silent Film Orchestra has vaulted into the front rank of silent film music performance, just as the Scoring Silent Films course has proven itself a uniquely rigorous pathway to career preparation in field of film scoring. Prof. Mirowitz and the BSFO create a transcendent experience in every theatre they play. Critics have raved – BSFO performances have been lauded as “magnificent” and “nothing short of thrilling” by film übercritic Leonard Maltin, “highly accomplished” by *The Wall Street Journal*, and “amazing” by film industry bible *Indiewire*. As one teary-eyed audience member memorably told us after a performance of Harold Lloyd's *Safety Last!* at the Martha's Vineyard Film Center, “For 74 minutes, the world was wonderful.”

For booking and more information, contact:

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