



## Publicity Release For Immediate Release

*Your Downriver Orchestra!*

### METROPOLIS

Film buffs in Metro Detroit, take note! On Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, the Southern Great Lakes Symphony will present a screening of Austrian-born film maker Fritz Lang's legendary silent-era masterpiece *Metropolis*, with the complete original musical score played by a live orchestra. This will be a rare opportunity to see this remarkable film, and is an event not to be missed.

Friederich Christian Anton "Fritz" Lang (1890-1976) was a film maker, screenwriter and an occasional film producer and actor who was one of the chief exponents of Germany's famous Expressionist school of film making, techniques from which he brought to many of the films he made in this country after he left Germany in the 1930s. In his early films one finds recurring themes of psychological conflict, paranoia, fate and moral ambiguity, all of which helped pave the way for the type of cinema known as *film noir*, a genre which came to full fruition here in the U.S. in the 1930s and 1940s, and to which Lang contributed some outstanding examples, including *Ministry of Fear*, *Scarlet Street*, *The Blue Gardenia*, *The Big Heat*, and *While the City Sleeps*. His first film for the Hollywood studio system---and one of his finest---was the 1936 crime drama *Fury*, starring Spencer Tracy as a man wrongly lynched by a hysterical mob for a crime he didn't commit. This film was an enormous critical and popular success, and let everyone know that this was a master film maker at work.

Although Lang tried to adapt to the Hollywood system and its production methods, he was constantly stifled and frustrated by that system, and, considering what a difficult person he was to work with, eventually came to dislike Hollywood as much as it disliked him. Moreover, he was blacklisted during the McCarthy era for his

collaborations with known communists, and eventually returned to Germany in 1956, disillusioned by the entire Hollywood scene. He made only two films there, both of which were dismal failures, and in 1962 he sadly returned to Hollywood. He remained there in poor health and reclusive retirement until his death from a massive stroke in 1976. Problematic, difficult and controversial though he was, he is still rightly regarded as one of the most accomplished and influential film directors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Metropolis*, completed and first shown in Berlin in 1927, is a quasi-science fiction film which would be the precursor to such later efforts as *The Bride of Frankenstein*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Blade Runner* and the *Star Wars* saga. Made at a time of serious hyperinflation in Germany, it proved to be the most expensive silent film ever made, and came perilously close to bankrupting the studio which had commissioned it. In modern dollars it would have been something like \$200 million---a small fortune at the time. Following lukewarm reviews and disappointing box office receipts, drastic cuts were made to the film, chopping about an hour off of its original running time of 2 hours and 33 minutes. This was done primarily because theatre managers in both the U.S. and Europe were unwilling to show any film---no matter how good it might be---which ran over 90 minutes. As a result of this butchering, virtually nobody outside of Berlin saw *Metropolis* as Lang had intended, and the version shown here and Europe in 1928 was disjointed, illogical and ultimately incoherent. That version was a critical and popular disaster, and as a result the original version simply disappeared and for over 50 years was believed to have been lost forever.

Over the years diligent film scholars and researchers managed to unearth bits and pieces of



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the original, and in 2001 a new 75<sup>th</sup>-anniversary restoration was shown at the Berlin International Film Festival. Using stills and inter-titles to cover missing footage, this version ran just a bit over two hours, and was thought to be as close to the original as was possible. It also restored the colorful and dramatic original full-orchestra score by the German composer Gottfried Huppertz. Then, something close to a miracle occurred. In 2008 a copy of what appeared to be the original version was discovered in the archives of the Museum of Cinema in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As if this was not enough, copies of the full original film were unearthed at about the same time in New Zealand and Australia! As a result of these discoveries a "final" version was shown in 2010 in Berlin, Europe and the U.S. Just a few scenes, totaling about 8 minutes, are not in this ultimate restoration because they were either still missing or

too badly damaged to be used. For fans and scholars of the silent-film era, this was akin to finding the cinematic equivalent of the Holy Grail, and at long last the virtually-complete version of this extraordinary masterpiece is available for all to see.

The live-orchestra accompaniment to the film will be played by members of the Southern Great Lakes Symphony conducted by Nick Hersh from Indiana University, who made the reduction for chamber orchestra of the original Gottfried Huppertz score. The one-time performance will take place on Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM in the Heinz Prechter Auditorium on the Downriver campus of Wayne County Community College. For tickets and more information, go the orchestra's website at [sgls.org](http://sgls.org), or call the orchestra office at 734-246-4700.