

## **German professor goes where Hollywood wouldn't**

by **Kat Pecora - Friday, December 10, 2010**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/7568/german-professor-goes-where-hollywood-wouldnt/>

After being heavily edited before its release in 1953, the archival soundtrack of Dr. Seuss' only live action film, "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T," has been restored with help from Alan Lareau, German professor at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Lareau heard about the film while writing his dissertation on Frederick Hollander's work in Germany. A friend of Lareau's then suggested he research Hollander's work in the U.S.

Hollander, an internationally recognized German composer, fled Hitler and came to Hollywood in 1933. "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T" was one of his last and most ambitious American film scores.

In the film Dr. Terwilliker holds 500 young boys captive and forces them to practice every day in preparation for their performance on his invention, an enormous piano.

Theodor Seuss Geisel, also known as the infamous Dr. Seuss, worked with Hollander throughout the film. Hollander wrote the musical score and composed two ballets for the film, while Geisel wrote the story, lyrics and script.

Visually and verbally, the film was typical Seuss. When all was said and done, producers cut the film from two hours and 30 minutes to only 89 minutes with six songs.

"I think they feared it was too weird," said Lareau, who wrote the booklet essay and track notes for the soundtrack.

Lareau was contacted by singer Michael Feinstein, who co-produced the project, and worked with a team from Film Score Monthly to find the lost music. Together they found rare original acetate sound recordings in private collections and the Library of Congress.

Made out of a very thin plastic, the acetate recordings were meant to be used once and then thrown away. None of the original cut footage from the film remains.

The team sifted through more than 400 recordings, many of which never have been heard before, and pieced them together to reconstruct the soundtrack using computer software.

"It was like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle," Lareau said. "The acetate recordings sounded terrible, but now they are beautiful."

The finished three-CD archival soundtrack includes 99 musical pieces as well as alternate tracks and original recordings of Hollander trying out ideas for the music in the film on the piano.

Although the film was intended for children, it was judged as being too scary at the time of its release and was more suited for adults. Lareau said the film was revolutionary, but the directors didn't have the courage to release it in its original form.

"Dr. Seuss was so disappointed with what happened," Lareau said. "He was someone who wanted to play, invent and take the audience on a journey. Hollywood just didn't have the courage."

The film became one of the biggest commercial disasters of the 1950s, but has since become a cult classic.

Lareau said he learned a lot from the restoration process and the soundtrack will be an example of the process for future film historians.

**Watch footage of Hollander's work featured in the film by visiting:**

- ["5,000 Fingers of Dr. T" trailer](#)
- ["Dressing Song"](#)
- ["Elevator Dungeon"](#)
- ["Because We're Kids"](#)