

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **A Very Wooden Christmas**

Wooden Cities performs live, quasi-improvisatory music to score classic (and not-so-classic) silent Christmas films

*A Christmas Carol (1910)* - Edison Manufacturing Company

*A Winter Straw Ride (1906)* - Edwin S. Porter

*A Trap for Santa (1909)* - D.W. Griffith

*The Night Before Christmas (1905)* - Edwin S. Porter

*A Holiday Pageant at Home (1901)* - [producer unknown]

*Santa Claus (1925)* - Frank Kleinschmidt

*Making Christmas Crackers (1910)* - Cricks and Martin

Pausa Art House

19 Wadsworth Street

Buffalo, NY 14201

Saturday, December 20, 2014

8:00pm

\$7, \$5 students

The Buffalo-based contemporary music ensemble, Wooden Cities, will head to Pausa Art House Saturday night to perform live scores to silent Christmas films. The seven shorts, all filmed between 1901-1925, map the full range of the silent film era, and include works by acclaimed directors Edwin S. Porter and D.W. Griffith, as well as lesser known artists like Frank Kleinschmidt. The films themselves range from simple, non-narrative moving portraits to works with complex plots and elaborate imagery, and feature many of the most charming aspects of silent film: the transparent special effects, melodramatic gestural acting, comically inexplicable edits, and, underneath it all, a warm, nostalgic poignancy.

Wooden Cities will perform live music to accompany these films, providing soundtracks that by turns augment, mimic, comment on, or undercut the action onscreen. The scores—each written by members of the ensemble—range from explicitly notated, leitmotif-dense compositions, to quasi-improvisatory free jazz outbursts. At times, the music directly mirrors the action on the screen, providing Carl Stalling-

esque sonic narrations; other times, the music subversively undermines the film, revealing darker, more uncanny aspects only hinted at onscreen. In every case, the ensemble provides a dynamic energy, adding new dimensions and contemporary perspectives to these century-old films.

A reprisal of a similar program the nine-piece classical ensemble performed at Pausa last year (and back by popular demand), the evening will also feature intermittent Christmas caroling, and just might conclude with an appearance by the North Pole's most famous citizen.

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The Wooden Cities ensemble seeks to increase the performance and awareness of contemporary classical music in Western New York through uniquely engaging presentations. The group first formed in July of 2011 to present John Zorn's game piece Cobra. Since that time, the group has rapidly expanded its repertoire to include traditionally-notated works, graphic scores, and improvisatory music. Wooden Cities remains committed to seeking new works by young composers while presenting essential, and in some cases underrepresented, composers of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Wooden Cities has presented events at many of Western New York's most important arts venues, including St. Joseph's University Parish, The Vault, Griffis Sculpture Park, Slee Hall, and the Burchfield Penney Art Center. This summer saw a successful tour through Cleveland, Lafayette, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Toledo. The ensemble has held residencies at the University at Buffalo for undergraduate composition seminars, and has recently become teaching artists with Young Audiences of Western New York. Specific educational performances include a lecture/performance to SUNY at Buffalo students in the fall of 2012 and an educational program on graphic notation at the Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence entitled "Sights as Sound: Making Meaning from Symbols" in the spring of 2013. The ensemble has been featured on 91.3 WBNY in August 2012, May 2013, and February 2014.

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For more information, or to schedule an interview with Brendan Fitzgerald or Ethan Hayden, please call (716) 222-2735 or email [info@woodencities.org](mailto:info@woodencities.org).