**Diagonalsymphonien [*Diagonal Symphony*] (1924)**

*Diagonalsymphonien* (*Diagonal Symphony*), a black-and-white abstract animated short film made in Germany by Swedish painter Viking Eggeling, assisted by Bauhaus student Erna Niemeyer, is a seminal work of avant-garde cinema. It arose from Eggeling’s experiments trying to create a universal language of abstract symbols in which he sequential images on painted long scrolls. Though silent, the film explores the concept of visual music, the artificial creation of visual rhythms analogous to music. Eggeling made his images with paper and tin foil cut-outs affixed to black sheets of paper filmed one frame at a time. The abstract shapes, constantly growing and disappearing along diagonal axes, often suggest musical instruments such as panpipes, grand pianos, zithers, and drums. Eggeling premiered his film to friends in 1924. Its first public screening was in Berlin at the 3 May 1925 First International Avant-Garde Film Exhibition, titled ‘*Der absolute Film*’, along with Rene Clair’s *Entr’acte* (1924), Fernand Leger’s *Ballet mecanique* (1924)*,* andexamples ofWalther Ruttmann’s *Lichtspiele Opus* works (1921-25) and Hans Richter’s *Rhythmus* films (1921-25)*.* Eggeling’s film received critical praise for its exploration of time and the non-literary potential of film. He, however, was too ill to attend the public screening and died sixteen days later.  *Diagonal Symphony* is his only surviving film.

**References and further reading**

Bendazzi, G. (1994) *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Russett, R. and C. Starr. (1988) *Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art*.  New York: Da Capo Press.

**Paratextual**

*Symphonie diagonale* can be viewed online on the Internet Archive site at

<http://archive.org/details/symphonie_diagonale>

**Richard J. Leskosky**

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**