

My Termen

By Eliot Fintushel

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"In Russia, one of his close assistants, a woman, died early in the 1920s, and it was a terrible shock to everybody, because she was a member of the group, and also, they worked together in various electrical inventions. Theremin said, 'We must not cry over the dead body of our close assistant. We must immediately take steps to create an instrument that would revivify a dead body, and not consider "dead" as an end.'"

—*Nicolas Slonimsky, interviewed in Theremin, An Electronic Odyssey (1993) directed by S. Martin*

Is outside my coldwater flats a car alarm singing. I will throw open the window. Comes another and another, all over dark city. How it fills my heart with joy.

I shall have the girl bring tea, and we shall listen.

Let us share our views. For me, how to say, soon shall sing the fat lady. Door is shut. Sun is black. Only I think of my Termen. Since many years my Termen is dead. I made acquaintance of Lev Sergeivich Termen in 1938, in Gulag, following his repatriation from New York City, courtesy NKVD. My assignment at such time shall be to befriend my Termen for purpose of informing agency concerning thoughts and activities of same.

Already was my Termen famous in even capitalist countries for one's musical inventions. He was not depressed at such time, in Gulag, even though it was not permitted he should have any longer communication with American wife in New York. He wished to be of assistance in war effort vs. Nazis, isn't it? With end of war, however, is my Termen eschew such continuing military efforts. For was he not, in his heart, an artist?

"Mikhail,"—his very first words to me—"you are too young that you shall be so always sad. Make once in a while, perhaps, a joke, a witticism, yes, can you? Come, we shall discover new things together."

My own self, I am orphan since many years, thank you to falling of heavy torch cylinder while my father shall work on Trans-Siberian Railway in Baikal; at such time I am smaller than wink of humming bird. Result: I had never a father but my Termen. Constantly I shall hiding my eyes to weep, not for sadness, but by reason he has made me so happy, my Termen.

An artist he was. I think of bastard Nuzhin at Moscow Conservatory maybe '66, maybe '67, tell my dearly beloved, my Lev Sergeivich, saying: "Electricity not for music, Comrade Termen. Electricity for kill our enemies." Total typical. Nuzhin is small man in it looks like opera jacket. So tight and starched it is, this jacket crackles when Nuzhin shall even breathe. Moustaches has this Nuzhin and perfect small hands like a rubber baby doll his hands. My Termen, my eagle, tall and square his jaw, and eyes him blue like ocean; beside my eagle, Nuzhin is ill chicken. This eagle, my Termen, even was darling of V.I. Lenin. I have seen the documentation. But, now days, the ill chicken has behind it, what, claws and teeth of Russian bear.

Nuzhin shall snap fingers, and four laboratory assistants are removing to junk pile all what my Termen has wrought. Even also prototype Terpistone machine, which it shall squeal and twerp as Nuzhin goons shall near it. Such comedy it was. Similar sound it shall be from one's Viper car alarm come many years hence. And my Termen whispered to me (and that evening I shall secretly report same to my superiors at

