

FIRST LOOK



View of Sergei Tcherepnin's exhibition "Pied Piper Part 1," 2012. Courtesy Audio Visual Arts, New York.

Sergei Tcherepnin

by Kayla Guthrie

IN THE FABLE of the Pied Piper, the protagonist lures the children of the German town of Hamelin away with the sound of his flute into a cave, where they disappear, never to be seen again. Performances by artist and composer Sergei Tcherepnin often follow a similar choreography, although with less nefarious results.

A Brooklyn resident born in 1981 in Watertown, Mass., and representing a line of composers dating back to his great-grandfather, Nikolai Tcherepnin, the artist often invites his audience along in a loose circumnavigation of the performance space, as he did last year in an untitled, one-night-only work at Brooklyn's Issue Project Room with Brooklyn-based artist Woody Sullender. For about 20 minutes, the artists walked about, courteously positioning and rearranging large sheets of cardboard configured with electronics that transformed those sheets into sound-generating, mobile stage elements.

Amplified throughout the high-ceilinged venue, the objects' reverberation created a dissonant atmosphere with long, deep drones alternating with melodic bleeps. The air was filled with footsteps, as some audience members tried to keep up, some stood back to get a view of the structures taking shape, and others crowded into makeshift rooms the artists formed with the cardboard.

Tcherepnin has performed internationally in contexts ranging from experimental music venues like the Stone, in New York, to museums such as the ICA London and New York's Guggenheim, and has had his compositions realized by the American Symphony Orchestra and St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble (both in New York), among others. Since 2010 he has exhibited sculptures and multimedia wall pieces. These incorporate the unconventional techniques of electronic composition, particularly the production of "difference tones": the term for a ghostly third "tone" that is heard when two pure tones are played together and the ear "fills in" a tone between them.

In a 2010 exhibition at Audio Visual Arts in New York, Tcherepnin retrofitted everyday objects to produce difference tones (to name a few works: *Difference Tone Clamp Light*, *Difference Tone Trash Can* and *Difference Tone Air Conditioner*, all 2010). In another show at the same location last spring, he paired a new series of sound-objects with photographs of himself costumed as the Pied Piper. Tcherepnin's artworks hint at the ineffability and sorcery of hearing, and in an art context could be taken as the revenge of sound on the subordinating reign of vision. ○

CURRENTLY ON VIEW Solo exhibition at Murray Guy, New York, through Apr. 20.

KAYLA GUTHRIE is a musician, artist and writer living in New York.