

# Michael Dunn: Little Man Making a Big Name

Early in the film, "Ship of Fools," a passenger asks Michael Dunn if he is positive he is not related to a certain man. Dunn, a 3'10" dwarf, shakes his head and sighs: "That's the way it is; people are always mistaking me for someone else."

No longer. For his performance in the film Dunn has received an Academy Award nomination as best supporting actor. Whether or not he wins an Oscar April 14 his stature as a fine actor is growing.

It's the only stature that the 30-year-old dwarf really cares about.

"If somebody tried to insult me by saying 'you little midget' or something like that, it wouldn't bother me at all," Dunn said in an interview. "But if somebody called me a lousy actor, I'd be incensed."

He admits that his desire to be a highly competent performer is part of his method of coping with the fact that most of the people in the world are bigger than he is. While many people who share Dunn's physical handicap have chosen to either beg for pity or sell themselves as freaks, Dunn long ago chose to be a performer who would rely on talent for his applause and his livelihood.

As a child — he was born of normal-sized parents — Dunn hoped to become a concert pianist and in fact gave piano recitals while still in grade school. But soon, his congenital disease (chondrodystrophy, which affects the bones) hampered his arm movement and closed off that avenue.

"But I couldn't stop the music," Dunn recalls. "It had become too much a part of my life." He turned to singing, and long before his acting career blossomed, he had made a living as a nightclub singer.

During a recent six-month engagement in New York, the cabaret critic for The New York Times noted that soon after the dwarf comes on, "whatever attention might be focussed on Mr. Dunn's size is dispelled."

"He has such an attractive and winning personality and is so talented a singer and performer," the critic wrote, "that one quickly views him only in terms of these qualities."

That's all Dunn has ever asked, but until recently producers and directors were reluctant to take a chance on him as a bona fide performer. "I never had trouble with audiences," he said. "It's always been with the producers who don't know what to do."

For a little man, Dunn has done just about everything. In between his singing and acting, he has been a house detective, a teacher in a school for mentally retarded children, a tutor in English, a technical writer for science journals and rewrite man on the sports desk of the Miami Daily News. While a student at the University of Miami, he was editor of a college news magazine that was judged the best in the country.

And he was almost a Capuchin brother.

Not long after graduating from college in 1956 and starting his professional singing career, Dunn felt he had a calling to become a brother in a religious order. He applied to the Franciscans, Benedictines, the Society of St. Paul and the Capuchins, who accepted him for postulancy at St. Bonaventure's Monastery in Detroit (Dunn had grown up in nearby Dearborn).

"There was some talk that they might even get me dispensed from the canon law that prohibits men with violent physical differences from becoming priests," Dunn said. "That's because such a man celebrating Mass would draw attention to himself; it's called 'improper admiration.'"

Nevertheless, Dunn chose to leave when his postulancy ended, and returned to his singing career. In New York, he appeared in an off-Broadway musical, and from there moved into straight dramatic parts. In one off-Broadway show, "Here come the Clowns," he was seen by playwright Edward Albee, who had been commissioned to adapt Carson McCuller's "The Ballad of the Sad Cafe."

When that play opened on Broadway, Dunn was "Cousin Lyndon" and the recipient of excellent notices. Soon he was introduced to TV audiences on "The Jack Paar Show" and was featured in a six-page spread in Life magazine. Not much later he was cast in "Ship of Fools" as Glocken, who introduces the story, appears through-

out it and gives a closing commentary, about the foolish lives some people lead.

Now that things "are opening up" for him, Dunn doesn't mind saying that one of his strongest acting ambitions is to play the lead in a movie version of Par Lagerkvist's novel, "The Dwarf." — Catholic Press Features).

## Harper Does It Better -- than Humphrey Bogart?

One rainy night while queuing up outside the Regent Theatre we overheard the following conversation:

He: I don't know if I like the idea of bucking the trend.

She: Don't be silly. After all, didn't the ad say that Paul Newman is "Harper" and Harper does it better?

He: Yea. And that's what has me worried. What about Arthur Hill, Robert Wagner, Shelley Winters and Julie Harris. Do they do it better or don't they? And besides, better than who? The guy they originally selected for the part? James Bond? Flint? Me? Who? That's what I want to know.

She: My Gosh, you are illiterate. Humphrey Bogart, that's who.

He: Oh yea. Now I remember. The "Big Sleep" of the 60's. A return to realism. Honesty once again personified.

She: (in a whisper) I understand in this movie he drives an old rattletap sports car and

the only woman in his life is his wife.

He: Well, I don't know, "Thunderball" was pretty realistic to the State Department.

She: Ah. That's just like you. Always ready to knock anything that concerns real people and real emotions.

He: Look. It's not that at all. Can you imagine what would happen if this sort of thing caught on?

She: What do you mean?

He: Pretty soon we'll have stories about a happily married detective who occasionally takes a bribe and usually never takes any drastic action for fear of political reprisal. A lover of the status-quo who takes his kids to the park on Sunday and returns a stolen bike on Monday and who no doubt will die in his sleep at the ripe old age of 72.

She: Gee. That would be a bore. (Harper carries an A-3 rating).

## FILMS ABOUT TOWN

A MENTION OF MOTION PICTURES OF MORE THAN ROUTINE INTEREST

**A Patch of Blue** — "What gives this film its special magic, however, is the slow unfolding of the (blind) girl's personality and intelligence in response to the first warmth she has ever known. For once, it is not the Negro who is deprived, he is the giver — first food, then books, music, the beginnings of a formal education, but most of all sympathy and understanding. Blindness, the film seems to say, can be a blessing if it helps one to cross the color line and respond to selflessness with love." — Arthur Knight. (Cinema Theatre—Clinton Ave. S. at Goodman—weekdays 7:20, 9:25, Sat. and Sun., 1:45, 3:40, 5:35, 7:40, 9:50.)

**Bambi** — Based on the now classic Felix Salten novel, this life story of a deer and his many forest friends is considered by many Disney's greatest achievement in the cartoon medium.

Its technical perfection is matched only by its emotional content and the life cycle of every being — birth, growth, romance, anguish, triumph — are all reflected through the endearing Disney forest creatures as they live out one of the great love stories of all time. (Lyell Theatre, Lyell at Mt. Read Blvd., Waring Theatre, Waring Rd. Plaza. Mon.-Fri. 7, 9, Sat. and Sun. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.)

**The Greatest Story Ever Told** — Bosley Crowther, N.Y. Times, has said: "There are things of supreme and solemn beauty in this almost four-hour-long color film. There are scenes in which the grandeur of nature is brilliant — used to suggest — the surge of the human spirit in waves of exaltation and awe. (Towne Theatre at Jefferson Rd. opposite Southtown Plaza. Matinees Wed. Sat. and Sun. at 2 p.m. Evenings at 8:15 except Sunday, 7:45.)

**Harper** — As a private eye on a kidnaping case, Paul Newman bites off a chunk of the grand old Bogart tradition and spits it out in slick '60s style. Lauren Bacall, Arthur Hill and Julie Harris help to complicate the plot. — Fine Magazine. (Regent Theatre, 63 East Ave. Mon.-Thurs. 12:30, 2:40, 4:50, 7:00, 9:15, Fri.-Sat., Sun. 12:40, 3:00, 5:00, 7:30, 9:45.)

**The Trouble with Angels** — The film based on the book, "Life With Mother Superior," by Jane Trahey. It stars Rosalind Russell as the superior of a Catholic girls' academy who carries on a battle of wits with two rebellious teen-agers enrolled in the school. With Haley Mills. (Paramount Theatre, 33 Clinton Ave. N. Mon.-Thurs. 12:40, 2:50, 5:00, 7:20, 9:30; Fri., Sat. and Sun., 12:10, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00.)

—Hogie Jameson



Michael Dunn and George Segal in a scene from "Ship of Fools," now playing at Rochester's Fine Arts Theatre.

## Theater News

### It's Superman!

by EUPHEMIA WYATT

IT'S A BIRD — IT'S A PLANE — IT'S SUPERMAN — Born of the Comic Strip, Harold Prince, producer and director, has ingeniously left it to Superman to satirize himself. Our Hero looks on his career of doing good with conscientious simplicity.

He well knows his own super strength and virtue and can understand why bad men hate him but is cut to the quick when the newspapers begin to make fun of him and he demonstrates how "The Strongest Man in the World can Cry" when his dripping tears crack the coffee table and a nervous hand twists his standing lamp in a loop like a flamingo's neck.

But Lois, who is the replica of the original Lois, fastens her faith on him and apologizes to the lonely Superman his dark blue tights and red mantle in his dark blue and red, spandex-like, making him resemble her so often.

"I'll be more careful," she says and then in the very next scene finds herself bound to a chair in the power of that vindictive scientist, Dr. Abner Sedgwick who is brimming with hate because he hasn't been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

For once Superman has slipped up when to show off his brawn he lifts up the platform on which the Mayor is standing just at the moment that Lois is being abducted but, of course, he wings his way to the rescue just in the nick of time.

It's grand to see him tossing Dr. Sedgwick's cohorts around the stage. They come back at him like rubber balls because they are very bouncy Chinese tumblers. Also lined up against Superman is the sky columnist, Max Mencken, but neither brains nor science can overpower Goodness. Superman continues his winged watch over the city.

The musical score by Charles Strouse with lyrics by Lee

Adams is animated and melodic; the decor of Robert Randolph has the right touch of humor; the youthful Superman fans have as much zip as their red, white and blue costumes.

Bob Holiday is a statuesque and honest Superman; Michael O'Sullivan a pertinacious villain in a bright red wig as Dr. Sedgwick and Jack Cassidy is full of agile and sophisticated comedy as Max who resents so zealously Lois' hero worship. Lois is Patricia Marand.

The novelty of a noble hero is good fun.

**THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE** — It is pleasant to report that this fourth production of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Centre is by far their best. The play, directed by Jules Irving, was written by Brecht in 1945, and has never before been seen in New York. This English version by Eric Bentley employs a cast of forty-nine playing one hundred and forty-six characters.

The prologue, set in 1945, shows two sets of peasants returning after the war to rebuild their home. Both claim the river valley until a peasant philosopher invoking the power of Reason suggests that the river bottom will best serve the farmers for their livestock, while the hills will be fine for the fruit growers and wine makers.

Merry-making takes the place of quarrelling and the Story Teller recounts an ancient Chinese fable of the Caucasus in 1200 A.D. of a kitchenmaid, Grusha who finds herself holding the Governor's baby when his mother, intent on saving herself and her wardrobe, leaves the infant behind her.

Not having the heart to desert the unfortunate princeling, Grusha starts out on an extraordinary series of adventures, including flight over a rotting bridge. At last she arrived at

her inhospitable brother's home in the north to await the return of her soldier-lover.

But the Governor's widow tracks her down eventually and demands the little boy. Here Grusha's story is halted so that Brecht may concentrate on his burlesque of justice and courts.

The Judge, a combination of Falstaff and Justice Shallow, has won his robes through a luke. He is a well meaning fellow but a drunkard. With a touch of Solomon's wisdom he has a circle drawn on the floor and the child is placed in its center. Then both women are told to pull him out.

The Governor's widow seizes him. Grusha explains that for fear of hurting the boy, she hasn't touched him whereupon the judge decides that she should be considered the real mother. "The moral" cries the Story Teller to the peasants, "is that riches are for those who can make the best use of them."

The Caucasus provides rich background for the pagentry of the thirteenth century with all the nobles concealed behind masques in their gorgeous costumes. Grusha, played by Elizabeth Huddle is straightforward and courageous.

Robert Symonds puts tireless vitality into Azdak, the Judge. James Hart Stearns has used his imagination in the sets and decor and the company has learned to project their voices so that now their lines can be heard and understood. It's a vigorous exciting fairy tale.

**Blackfriars Slate Show**  
Blackfriars will present George Bernard Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra" in Nazareth College auditorium on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, April 29 and 30, May 1. Curtain is set for 8 p.m.

**DEADLINE FOR NEWS**  
MONDAY NOON  
FRIDAY DELIVERY

COURIER-JOURNAL  
Friday, April 15, 1966

## Churchmen On 'Today'

New York — (RNS) — Five Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious leaders will discuss the responsibility of clergy participation in domestic and international issues on a four-day series over the NBC "Today" morning program, April 18-21.

5 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS  
BEST ACTRESS  
ELIZABETH HARTMAN  
SOME FATHER  
SHELLEY WINTERS  
**A Patch of Blue**  
"THE DOT AND THE LINE"  
7:20 & 9:25

ROBERT RUSSELL  
Haley Mills  
the TRUCULENT ANGELS  
Columbia

MARTINA  
PARAMOUNT  
220 WILSON AVE. — 231-8800

SHIP OF FOOLS

FINE ARTS  
South Ave. at Gregory RR 1-5800  
7:20 - 9:40

Walt Disney's  
**Bambi**  
TECHNICOLOR  
AT 2 THEATERS TO TAKE CARE OF CROWDS!  
BOTH WARING & L'YELL

family funland!  
**ROSELAND PARK**  
on canandaigua lake  
**OPENS Sat. Apr. 16!**  
Rides will operate weekends until May 30 when the park goes on a 7-day basis. Restaurants and some attractions will remain open 7 days a week thru mid-September.

Your Favorite Places for DINING

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<p><b>EGGLESTON RESTAURANT</b> 35 CHESTNUT ST. Around the corner from the Regent Theatre Good eating served in an Early American atmosphere. 454-6726</p>	<p><b>THE Spring House</b> "Monroe County's Oldest Family Restaurant" SINCE 1822 3001 MONROE AVE.</p>	<p><b>SOUTH PACIFIC</b> PITTSFORD PLAZA MONROE AVE. Featuring Polynesian Food and tropical drinks. Also tasty sandwiches. DU 1-2576</p>
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<p><b>Rund's</b> "House of Good Food" DANCING 7 NITES A WEEK 2851 W. HENRIETTA RD. GR 3-3191</p>	<p><b>Jack Bayliss' THE VIKING</b> 2486 MT. READ BLVD. MA 1-2120 FEATURING PRIME RIBS, SURF-A-TURF, LOBSTER TAILS, EVERY DAY</p>	



## 'Brigadoon' Ready at Kearney High

BRIGADOON will be given at Bishop Kearney High School, Thursday, Friday, Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon (April 21-24) with a double cast of leads and over 120 students in supporting roles and as singers and dancers. Above: Marie Claceta (Meg) and Mary DeiCorvo (Piona) welcome Ray Jeslen (Jeff) and Norb Szymula (Tommy) to Brigadoon.

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