

As I See It

Shakespeare Comes Alive

By Pat Costa



I have not seen enough Shakespeare productions to give you a comparative analysis between the recent Hallmark Hall of Fame's "Hamlet" and other stage efforts of the bard's work.

There is good reason. I don't usually attend such productions, claiming laziness as my main excuse.

Unless the play happens to be one that I had hammered into me line by line in school ("Macbeth" or "Merchant of Venice") or one that I just took to naturally ("Taming of the Shrew") then I have trouble comprehending what the author is saying. And footnotes never were my bag and my theater partner never has been much on my interrupting him during a play to ask for an explanation.

But, now after seeing Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliet" which played movie screens a couple of years ago and Hallmark's "Hamlet" I am beginning to see at least half of the problem was the lackluster productions.

Shakespeare in brilliant costume and stunning settings pleases immensely. Let the purists carp. The movie "Romeo and Juliet" was a visual feast.

"Hamlet" in Georgian dress nearly so.

Watching the latter play recently on television, one could envy today's students. Hopefully they will never form the opinion that "Shakespeare is stuffy."

In the first place they have a former TV idol tackling a role portrayed by nearly all the greats in the acting business at one time or another and succeeding admirably.

If the final test of an actor is to watch him and forget that he is anyone other than the character he is playing at the moment then Richard Chamberlain succeeded, at least now and then.

Second, any student is as close to great Shakespeare as his nearest television set. With such luminaries as Sir Michael Redgrave, Sir John Gielgud, and Margaret Leighton to interpret the master playwright, it would take an uninspiring English teacher indeed to turn the kids off when it comes to Shakespeare.

Ciaran Madden as Ophelia was nothing short of enchanting and Sir Michael's stage death left an obvious void, so magnificent a Polonius he.

Russian Artists Triumph In Eastman Concert

By FRANK CROCIATA

Early in this century, before every performing soloist experienced a desire to be "lionized", it was common for musicians to assemble for an evening of solo and chamber music. Last Wednesday evening three young Russian musicians assembled at the Eastman Theatre for one of these solo-chamber programs. The program was much longer than usual but so competent were these young artists that one barely noticed the passing of three hours. Perhaps a more intimate hall would have been desirable, but in every case their sound filled the space.

Celloist Tamara Gabaraschvili opened the program with a passionate reading of the Brahms Second Cello Sonata. This performance alone would have made the evening worthwhile. The Brahms Sonata is so intimate a work that one might have felt that Brahms wrote exclusively for the cello. Miss Gabaraschvili then played an equally intimate Nocturne of Tchaikovsky and a trite empty transcription by Rodion Shchedrin, supposedly the brightest young star of Russian composition. (Shchedrin has been commissioned by the Eastman School to write a piece for its forthcoming 50th anniversary.) I would have more than gladly forsaken the Shchedrin piece to have heard Miss Gabaraschvili in one of the classics.

Violinist Oleg Krysa played compositions of Bach, Tchaikovsky, and Paganini. He played an amazingly controlled and accurate performance of the Bach "Chaconne" from the second partita for unaccompanied violin. A fourth performer, Tatiana Tchekina, accompanied Krysha in the Tchaikovsky and Paganini.

The high point of the evening was Marina Mdivani's piano performance of a sonata by Igor Kephallidis. The sonata is his opus three, so I presume that Kephallidis is quite young. The sonata showed strong influences of Samuel Barber and Prokofiev. It is a fiendishly difficult piece and Miss Mdivani seemed to have "swallowed it whole." She also played the first Brahms "Ballade" and departed from the program to play the Chopin "B-minor Scherzo". Her performance of the scherzo was phenomenal.

The artists assembled to play the last two movements of the Shostakovich "Trio, Opus 87". They played the piece accurately and enthusiastically, but nothing could rescue the piece from itself. It is a windy, boring dated diatribe full of his usual vulgar mannerisms. I wonder if they must play his music because of some contractual agreement? Again there are a huge number of classic and modern works that I would rather have heard, particularly from such dedicated musicians.

Wonderful things have been emanating from the Philharmonic recently. David Zinman is the gifted young man who has brought it to life in music from Mozart to Bartok. Two weeks ago he conducted the huge Mahler "Titan" Symphony. A week ago he was joined by violinist Itzhak Perlman in an excellent performance of the Prokofiev Second Violin Concerto. Mr. Zinman will make one more appearance with the orchestra on Jan. 24. I will review his stay here extensively at that time but I will say now that Zinman would be an excellent candidate for the presently vacant position of music director.



"Carmen" Scheduled

A number of parishioners throughout the diocese are active either on-stage or backstage in the upcoming production of Bizet's colorful opera "Carmen", slated for Wednesday, Dec. 2, at 8:15 p.m. in the Eastman Theatre. The performance, in English, will be fully staged and costumed, with singers from Opera Theatre of Rochester and the Rochester Philharmonic in the pit. Among those in the cast are, from left, Richard Scriver, a member of Holy Family parish; Steve Skura, (Holy Redeemer); Janina Lipinski, Brockport (Holy Name); Joseph Barone, (Good Shepherd); Kay Lauricella, (St. Philip); and George Scheck, (St. John the Evangelist). Conducting the group is Dr. Gordon Gibson of SUNY, Brockport, who is musical director.

At Home with the Movies

OKLAHOMA! (1955)
Thursday, Nov. 26 (CBS)

Although it's 15 years old, this will be the first television showing of the Fred Zinnemann-directed film of Rodgers and Hammerstein's classic.

It got rave reviews, despite some criticism of visual distortion created by the then-new Todd-AO film process, but the flaws probably won't show on TV. Gordon MacRae is curly Shirley Jones is Laurey and Rod Steiger is an "explicitly unhealthy evil" in his characterization of Jud, Laurey's jilted suitor.

There's excellent scenery (shot in Arizona, ironically) and the R&H score: People Will Say We're in Love, Oh What a Beautiful Morning, Surrey with the Fringe on Top, the title tune.

The national Catholic film office rated it B, objectionable in part for all because of "suggestive song, dialogue and situations," but that was 1955. It would probably be approved for adults today.

THE LAST CHALLENGE
(1967)
Friday, Nov. 27 (CBS)

Glenn Ford stars as a quick-on-the-draw marshal who finds himself the target of a young gunman (Chad Everett) who is out to get him, although it's never made clear why.

As a routine Western, it didn't do too badly with the critics, who were impressed by above-average dialogue for this kind of film.

It got a rating of B, objectionable in part for all, from NCOMP because of "low moral tone," largely due to the presence of Angie Dickinson as the marshal's saloon-keeper mistress.

OPERATION CROSSBOW
(1965)
Saturday, Nov. 28

"Operation Crossbow" was the real-life code name for an allied intelligence plan to knock out the German V-1 and V-2 rockets at the end of World War II. George Peppard and a cast of big-name performers (Sophia Loren and others in brief appearances) show how it was done.

This is a summary and evaluation of prime-time films offered by the network to its affiliate stations. Check your local listings to ascertain if your channel is scheduling the network offering.

audience will be delighted that it couldn't have been dished out by a nicer fella." That was Time magazine's representative wrap-up.

NCOMP rated it B, objectionable in part for all.

ANGEL IN MY POCKET (1969)
Monday, Nov. 30 (NBC)

Andy Griffith stars as a rural minister whose first pastorate is in a town where the congregation has been split by a long-time feud between two prominent families. Despite near catastrophe and much broad humor (parishioners suspect the worst when they see him entering a burlesque house — where he wants to buy the organ to replace the beat-up one in his church), he brings everyone together again at fadeout.

Critics found the film too corny for their tastes despite admitting that it was clean entertainment and would appeal to middle America.

NCOMP rated it A-1, unobjectionable for all, and hated it: "The comedy is broad and mindless, the characters stereotypes, the sugary situations and over-all treatment enough to give the whole family diabetes."

RUN, SIMON, RUN
Tuesday, Dec. 1 (ABC)

A made-for-TV movie, this stars Burt Reynolds as an Indian who was framed by a White man for murder and now, after 10 years in prison, returns to his tribe and plans revenge. Inger Stevens is an Indian-agent. The film has not yet been seen.

(Catholic Press Features)

Lecture Series On Woman

The first in a series of ten lectures was given Monday evening in the new Aquinas Auditorium on "What a Woman means to a Man".

The lecture was presented by Walter Foertsch, president of Foertsch-Ready, Inc., and formerly coordinator of Industrial Relations at Eastman Kodak Company. He also is involved with many civic groups.

Foertsch referred to woman as, "The man's organizer, compensator, multiplier of his potentials. She can add a spirit of happiness, joy, and fun to

any environment with her smile, a gay remark, or with an optimistic attitude." In a word, "The measure of a man is in the eyes of a woman," he said.

On the next four Monday evenings at the Aquinas Auditorium, Foertsch will address himself to the "Woman in the Modern Working World"; "50+ Opportunities for Women"; "Ways a Woman is Superior"; and "Woman, the World about Her."

For further information call Aquinas Institute, 254-2020.