

As I See It

## Reasoner Top Flight

By Pat Costa



As this is being written Harry Reasoner has not yet started his duties as co-anchor-man of ABC-TV news but by the time it appears in print he should have a couple of days in that position under his belt.

The hope here is that nothing will be done to cramp his style by a network which does not seem to know what it wants.

In my own personal estimation of national newscasters Reasoner happens to be Number One.

His attractiveness encompasses any number of virtues including intelligence, humor, a deft and concise style, dry but not too dry delivery and at least as much authority as Walter Cronkite. Add to that a pleasing countenance and a manner which seems to say that if even some of the news is tough, he does not take himself too seriously.

Some of the most enjoyable moments ever to emanate from television were the joint efforts of Reasoner and Andrew Rooney in a series of "essays."

Two that spring to mind and still evoke fond memories are those entitled "Doors" and "Bridges."

To a viewer who thought that ABC had done right well for itself in selecting Frank Reynolds to team up with Howard K. Smith for their nightly newscast, it is only a little sad to see Reynolds get the ax to make room for Reasoner.

For the latter, if allowed to perform precisely as he has been doing for years and years in the second spot at CBS, will do much to enliven ABC newscasts to say nothing of bringing a great deal of prestige to the network.

Speaking of prestige, it was handed a bad blow during John Wayne's \$2 million television spectacular.

There were famous entertainers by the score hopelessly foundering in lines and situations that were neither funny, pertinent or even historical.

"Swing Out, Sweet Land" starring such notables as Red Skelton, Lucille Ball, Bing Crosby, Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Johnny Cash, Glen Campbell and Leslie Uggams is a prime example of TV's being able to utilize important industry names and an obscene amount of money and produce nothing of even slight importance.

## Russian Cellist Raises Interesting Question

By FRANK CROCIATA

Five years ago, Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich made his American debut with the New York Philharmonic under George Szell. The performance confirmed him a giant in a world teeming with fine cellists. Since that time his contributions to the worldwide musical community have been many. His collaborations with Szell in America, Britten in England, and von Karajan in Germany are testaments to his talent.

On Oct. 31 of this year he jeopardized his artistic and personal freedom, and perhaps his life by writing an open letter to Soviet newspapers defending his friend, Nobel-Prize winning Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. In this letter, which was not printed in Russia, he posed a question which might be asked even in the West: "I do not speak about political or economic questions in our country. There are people who understand them better than I. But explain to me, please, why people absolutely incompetent in literature and the arts often have the final word in that field?"

The control of which Mr. Rostropovich is speaking might be spoken of as a yoke. Russian artists have faced blacklisting, exile and imprisonment, yet Russian art somehow survives and thrives. We might ponder the state of American arts, particularly music. What is the yoke of control which has stifled American composition? Why do incompetents often control the arts.

Examples of this yoke are painfully plentiful in American music. In 1910 the women's board of the New York Philhar-

monic literally hounded its conductor-composer, the giant symphonist Gustav Mahler, to an early death.

Leo Sowerby, the outstanding voice of American symphonic music, died in 1968 never having heard his Fifth Symphony, because he refused to compromise his artistry to the whims of orchestral bureaucrats.

In 1925 New York Times critic Olin Downes wrote that what American music needs, even more than another 12 dozen super-performers, is a dozen trained and knowledgeable musicologists to serve as critics and administrators, serving music constructively. We are still waiting for them.

Meanwhile one courageous cellist (reminding me of another heroic cellist named Pablo Casals) in a country still capable of purges and overt suppression, dares raise a question that we are too fearful or apathetic to raise for ourselves.

CODA: Tomorrow evening (Thursday, Dec. 10) Dr. Samuel Jones will conduct the 5th Philharmonic program. Pianist Lorin Hollander will be soloist in the first Bach keyboard concerto, and the Richard Strauss "Burlesque", 8:15 at the Eastman Theatre.

On Friday evening the Eastman Wind Ensemble, under Donald Hunsberger, will play a concert in Kilbourn Hall. The concert is at 8:15 and is free.

Sunday afternoon at 4 the Eastman Polyphonic Choir, M. Alfred Birchell, director, will give a free concert at the Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word, East Avenue at Goodman Street.



Torolv Maurstad, Florence Henderson and Frank Porretta in scene from the film "Song of Norway".

## Gala Premiere to Benefit Community

"Song of Norway," a motion picture musical based on the life and music of composer Edvard Grieg, will benefit the John Marshall Community Association's Scholarship Fund at its gala Rochester premiere, slated for Tuesday evening, Dec. 22, at the Riviera Theater.

Co-chairmen for the "red-carpet" event are Mrs. Peg Hardesty and Mrs. Marion Cunningham. Funds raised at the premiere will be given to John Marshall High School students for higher learning.

According to Mrs. Rita Fennessey, the association's general chairman, the group is compos-

ed of parents of Marshall students and interested persons in the area.

The association's general goal is neighborhood improvement. Mrs. Fennessey indicated that the group also works with programs suggested by the faculty of the high school and is presently encouraging the school's anti-drug efforts.

"Song of Norway," starring Torolv Maurstad, Florence Henderson and Frank Porretta, is based on the musical play of the '50s of the same name. It was filmed entirely on location under the direction of Andrew L. Stone, who also wrote the

screenplay.

The film is rated by the Motion Picture Association as suitable for all ages and by the National Catholic Office as morally unobjectionable for general patronage.

Tickets may be obtained at the theater or through Mrs. Hardesty, 536 Augustine St., or Mrs. Cunningham, 3½ Marigold St.

The film was praised by the National Catholic Office as a "stunning musical postcard" and said of it "No one can deny its great value as wholesome family entertainment."

## At Home with the Movies

**CHUKA (1967)**  
Thursday, Dec. 10 (CBS)

Another film that sets out to de-glorify the "Old West," this one details the events leading to the destruction of an Army fort and massacre of the inhabitants by Arapahoe Indians in the 1870s.

Rod Taylor plays the title character, a gunfighter who tries in vain to show the fort commander (John Mills) how he might save his fort and his men. But alcoholism, vanity and other character defects lead to a tragic end. There are good action sequences, and interesting performances by James Whitmore, Ernest Borgnine, Louis Hayward and Luciana Paluzzi.

The Catholic film office classified it A-3, unobjectionable for adults.

**EASY COME, EASY GO (1967)**  
Friday, Dec. 11 (CBS)

Variety, the show-business Bible, predicted that in a generation from now the films of Elvis Presley will be quite popular at film festivals, in the same way that the films of Busby Berkeley and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers are.

Anyway, here's one now, with Elvis playing a Navy frogman who spots what he believes to be an enormous sunken treasure off the California coast and spends most of the picture trying to retrieve it, despite the urging of semi-hippie friends that he return to singing at the Easy Go-Go discotheque. Presley fans will be disappointed that he sings only three songs, one of them with Elsa Lanchester.

NCOMP rated it A-2, unobjectionable for adults and adolescents.

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.

**PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE**  
Saturday, Dec. 12 (NBC)

A Thanksgiving leftover, this stars Spencer Tracy as captain of the Mayflower and Van Johnson as John Alden. The love interest, however, is between Tracy and Gene Tierney, who plays the wife of William Bradford.

According to this version, based on a novel by Ernest Gebler, Tracy stayed on Cape Cod and kept the colonists alive that first Winter mainly because of his love for Bradford's wife.

**WAY . . . WAY OUT (1966)**  
Sunday, Dec. 13 (ABC)

A Jerry Lewis comedy set in 1994, this film is about a "space race" between American and Russian astronauts — in male-female pairs — to determine who will be the first to conceive a child on the moon.

It was widely attacked by critics as tasteless, vulgar and, as one critic put it, "strictly for idiots." Lewis and Connie Stevens are one couple, who hurriedly marry each other out of patriotism rather than love,

and Anita Ekberg plays a Russian sex bomb about which many off-color cracks are made.

NCOMP rated this B, objectionable in part for all, commenting: "Pre-occupied with sex, this film is suggestive in dialogue, costuming and situations; moreover, there is a strong undertone which tends to downgrade marriage values."

**THE PSYCHIATRIST**  
Monday, Dec. 14 (NBC)

A new made-for-TV film, this is actually the "pilot" film for a new mini-series, which, like the recent McCloud, is designed to have only a short run. It has not yet been seen.

**TOM JONES (1963)**  
Tuesday, Dec. 15 (ABC)

Albert Finney brings to lusty, bawdy, ribald life the hero of the Henry Fielding novel satirizing 18th Century English mores and manners. Hypocritical social and sexual morality is skewered in a swiftly-paced romp that only the commercial breaks will slow down.

A good comparison could be made between this film and Jerry Lewis' Way . . . Way Out (see listing for Sunday, Dec. 13) on how sexual satire should, and shouldn't, be handled in films. But Tom Jones is not for kids.

NCOMP rated it A-4, unobjectionable for adults, with reservations, with the comment: "Although the film may appear frequently coarse, it is saved from being offensive by reason of its fast-paced and exceptional comic treatment and its honest portrayal of the period."