

At Home with the Movies

As I See It

'Churchills' Good Theater

By Pat Costa



'THE FIRST CHURCHILLS'

John Neville as John and Susan Hampshire as Sarah.

How can you tell when you are watching good theater? If all other instincts fail to communicate the message with any certainty, perhaps you can be convinced if you find yourself hoping that the end won't come too soon.

This pleasant experience was ours as we were watching the opening episode of "The First Churchills," a couple of Sundays ago.

Based on Sir Winston Churchill's biography of England's first Duke of Marlborough, "The First Churchills" will last for 12 programs to be followed by dramatizations of other great literary and historical works.

The entire series is titled "Masterpiece Theater" and can be seen at 8:30 Sunday nights on Channel 21. It will continue for 39 weeks, made possible by a grant from Mobil Oil.

"The Churchills" deals with a fascinating couple — John Churchill, one of the most brilliant generals of the period, and his bride, Sarah Jennings. The period—17th and 18th Century England—is in the reigns of Charles Second and Queen Anne.

And it is here that the Churchills show their fortes. John does his maneuvering on the battle field, Susan hers at Court.

Charles' Court, particularly, was as immoral as one could find, and the play is true to its material, proffering a bawdy humor that is all too welcome for those weary of the plasticity of commercial television's morals.

National Theatre Company Performs at St. Agnes

The poignant drama of one man's struggle against the "system" will be portrayed when the National Theater Company presents "Death of a Salesman" at Saint Agnes High School Feb. 3.

Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama will be presented as part of Saint Agnes High School's assembly program. The program, a regular part of the schedule, was incorporated for the purpose of giving the stu-

Magnificent settings, costumes, colors and some splendid acting complete the experience.

Susan Hampshire, whom American audiences will remember as Fleur in "The Forsyte Saga," and John Neville play the title roles. They are enticing, to say the least.

James Villiers is a properly witty and immoral Charles and John Westbrook, his narrow-minded brother James, Duke of York.

By the time this appears in print, two episodes will have been shown. Even if you have missed them, tune in for number three. It's really grand entertainment.

What do you say about a situation comedy in which there are references to "Hebes," "Polack," "black beauties" to name just a few?

If the show in question happens to be titled, "All in the Family," I say watch it.

The premiere show introduced bigoted Archie Bunker (Carroll O'Connor) who not only has something to say about the three groups as he deprecatingly refers to them above but takes on preachers, gift-giving, anniversaries and a host of other institutions.

Since Archie comes off looking like the boor that he is, the audience, no matter how mixed it is, can breathe easily.

It's seen Tuesdays at 9:30 on Channel 10.

dents the opportunity of seeing cultural offerings as part of their scholastic preparation, according to Sister Carol Cimino, of the school.

The play is generally regarded as a classic piece of modern American theater.

This is the first year that the author has permitted the play to be given to student groups by a professional theater company.

FIRST TO FIGHT (1967)

Thursday, Jan. 21 (CBS)
Chad Everett (now co-star of TV's Medical Center) plays a World War II Marine in this adventure film whose theme is fear. A Medal of Honor winner for bravery on Guadalcanal, the hero later has a case of jitters prior to another battle, partly because he has in the meantime become a husband with responsibilities.

Except for two well-staged battle sequences, the film was written off by the critics, one of them claiming it had "every war cliché except the soldier comic from Brooklyn." The national Catholic film office rated this A-2, unobjectionable for adults and adolescents.

THE POWER (1968)

Friday, Jan. 22 (CBS)
The power of the title is a super-intelligent brain force that has the ability to control other peoples' minds, even to the point of making them want to kill themselves. The power is on its way to controlling the world for "good" until it runs into the brain of hero George Hamilton.

A conglomeration of science fiction, horror and violence, the film was dismissed as containing too much fiction and very little science, even though produced by George (War of the Worlds) Pal and having a top-name cast that includes Michael Rennie (keep a close eye on him), Yvonne De Carlo, Nehemiah Persoff and Arthur O'Connell.

NCOMP rated this A-3, unobjectionable for adults.

HELLFIGHTERS (1969)

Saturday, Jan. 23 (NBC)
This is a film about men who travel the globe fighting oil-well fires, and about the women who worry.

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.

John Wayne is the chief hell-fighter, Jim Hutton is his son-in-law and Katharine Ross is Wayne's daughter—all of whom wind up in Venezuela fighting a fire started by guerrillas. NCOMP rated this A-2, unobjectionable for adults and adolescents.

IN HARM'S WAY (1965)

Sunday, Jan. 24 (ABC)
John Wayne again, this time as a rough and tough Naval commander in the Pacific right after Pearl Harbor. Otto Preminger directed this tale about a commander who convinces the brass that he's the man to lead the U.S. fleet in the first big sea battle with the Japanese.

The plot is larded with sex, with Kirk Douglas playing an unbalanced commander who is so perturbed over his wife's unfaithfulness that he rapes the girlfriend of Wayne's son, who by the way, thinks his dad is a slacker until he finds out otherwise.

NCOMP rated this B, objectionable in part, because the audience is expected to accept an extra-marital liaison between the hero and the heroine (Patricia Neal) as a part of the pattern of their otherwise faultless behavior.

IN HARM'S WAY, Part 2

Monday, Jan. 25 (ABC)
(See preview for Sunday, Jan. 24.)

HOUR OF THE GUN (1967)

Tuesday, Jan. 26 (NBC)
A sequel to Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, this film stars James Garner as Wyatt Earp and Jason Robards Jr. as Doc Holliday; and its theme is the way desire for vengeance can corrupt people.

Earp is so intent on gunning down the last member of the Ike Clanton gang, he becomes a cold-blooded killer even though he wears the badge of U.S. Marshal. Holliday deteriorates from his drinking and commits himself to a sanatorium, where Earp finally promises to hang up his guns.

Critics found it an overly talky film, but one with a message if you have patience. NCOMP rated it A-2, unobjectionable for adults and adolescents.

Kiwanians Sponsor 'Showtime' Opener

A seasoned theatrical troupe in the Bishop Kearney High School Parents' Club will unveil Showtime '71 on Thursday, Feb. 4.

The Irondequoit Kiwanis Club will sponsor the opening performance.

Actors and technicians are all veterans of earlier Kearney Showtimes. The club project began five years ago, and is a money raiser for a special scholarship fund that helps students who lose supporting parents.

The show consists of parts of Fiddler on the Roof, Hello Dolly, Bells Are Ringing and New Moon. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m.; Thursday, Friday and Saturday; 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

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