

# REEL REVIEWS

By WILLIAM CLAIRE

Yentl is the daughter of a rabbi in turn of the century Eastern Europe. She has a yen to study the Talmud and wants to become a rabbi. Women are forbidden to study the Talmud, so Yentl disguises herself as a man in order to fulfill her desire for an education.

Sound familiar? Call it Tootsie and Victor/Victoria educate Rita. Barbara Streisand's latest, despite the fact that she has wanted to make a movie for more than 10 years, fairly screams of similarities to previous role reversal situation comedies, but lacks the laughs.

Streisand directed, co-produced, co-authored the screenplay and starred in Yentl. She deserves full marks for her effort to attempt a serious treatment of a woman's difficulties when dealing with aspirations normally perceived to be the sole territory of men.

Unfortunately, Streisand has nowhere near the acting talent of Dustin Hoffman. It is very difficult to believe her disguise can consistently fool so many people when these people are supposed to be perceptive, intelligent individuals.

Mercifully, unlike Victor/Victoria, she doesn't walk around in outfits that display her cleavage and still try to make us believe that every is fooled by her impersonation.

Her co-stars were well chosen, too well chosen. Streisand is eclipsed by the talents of Mandy Patinkin as Avigdor, her scholarly friend and study partner,

and Amy Irving as Avigdor's true love Hadass.

Patinkin won a Tony for his portrayal of Che in Broadway's Evita. A handsome man, he conveys moral integrity with an intense look and piercing brown eyes. Irving is a study in seductive innocence: the young girl who, as was the custom (and still is in some quarters), has spent her life preparing for marriage.

Despite the movie's many absurdities -- Avigdor not figuring out Yentl's secret and the marriage of a woman to a woman, to name two -- it is these very situations that are most effective. They work because Streisand seems more interested in addressing the issue of personal relationships and not in using these relationships as springboards to comedy.

But it's not enough. Streisand's greatest strength is Yentl's greatest weakness -- the songs. Mushily lush music by Michel Legrand and the sentimental, grab-at-the-heartstrings lyrics of Alan and Marilyn Bergman are repetitive in sound and theme. (Oh, father -- he's dead -- can you hear me; I need your wisdom. Oh, I love Avigdor, but I can never really love him).

Streisand has said she originally had never intended to incorporate songs into the movie. It's too bad she changed her mind. Leaving them out would have cut the movie to reasonable length.

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## Yentl: marks for effort, if not acting



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