

Entertainment

Editor: Warren Clements

Surface study

Serpico remains a mystery

By ED PIWOWARCZYK

Sidney (The Anderson Tapes) Lumet's *Serpico* is a well-made, well-paced film, but one which ultimately fails to completely satisfy the viewer.

Adapted by Waldo (Midnight Cowboy) Salt and Norman Wexler from Peter (The Valachi Papers) Maas' bestseller, the movie documents policeman Frank Serpico's real life five-year struggle to expose wide-spread graft in the New York City police department.

When Serpico took his story to the New York Times in 1970, the affair became a cause celebre. There were a number of resignations, including that of the police commissioner; the Knapp Commission was set up to investigate corruption in the justice system; and a special state prosecutor was eventually appointed to deal with corruption at all levels of the judiciary system.

The film, told via flashback, focuses on Serpico's frustrating efforts to expose the payola he encounters at all levels of the precincts he is assigned to.

Al Pacino of *Godfather* fame portrays Serpico as he gradually transforms from the good-natured misfit into the sullen messiah bent on exposing and cleaning up the graft at all costs.

Serpico's exposure to graft parallels his growing estrangement from the people around him. His relations with

his fellow policemen become more strained as he first refuses to take his share of the payola, and then tries to arrange an intra-departmental cleanup.

He ultimately becomes a pariah and target of hatred when he turns informer by taking his case outside the department.

At the same time, his frustration puts an abrasive strain on his relations with his live-in girlfriend, who is unable to cope emotionally with the metamorphosis Serpico has undergone.

The problem with the film is that it deals with the story only on a surface level. One never gets to know what makes the man tick, what drives and feeds his obsession.

The film makes a big point of Serpico's non-conformist nature. After all, how many long-haired cops are there living with a girl in an apartment in

Greenwich Village?

But when his girlfriend asks him why he chose to become a policeman, he simply relates a childhood incident during which he was awed by the key to knowledge which the police had at their disposal.

The other unanswered question concerns the motive behind Serpico's obsession about police corruption and integrity. The only clue here is an early scene showing Serpico as the graduating cadet listening attentively to a speech about police duty and integrity.

If the film had more carefully explored such a fascinating individual, it would have emerged as something more than an interesting, well-crafted antidote to the glut of routine crime dramas currently making the theatrical rounds.

Jumping frogs in Falco

By AGNES KRUCHIO

In his native New York City, Louis Falco has a fairly extensive following; but his Béjart-style choreography was unknown in Toronto until his debut last Tuesday night at Burton as part of the Performing Arts Series.

The main theme of the evening was the exploration of the individual

through the medium of dance, in which the performer achieved a sort of self-revelation hand in hand with a playful testing of his capacities as a dancer.

Although this theme, which we can only recognize in retrospect, worked fairly well most of the time, many of the pieces tended to be too extended and self-involved. Somehow the idea, once developed, hit a plateau and hung suspended in mid-air, often to the point of becoming almost boring.

The three dances are stock pieces in the company's repertoire. Nostalgia, choreographed by Jennifer Muller in 1971, is reminiscent of the dance marathons of the 20s. Three ladies in blue and purple gauze, suitably bedecked in purple platforms (the most excruciating things anyone ever had to dance in), perform for some unseen dance-hall audience.

Posturing in the worst Hollywood tradition, their nerves and muscles wearing visibly thinner as the evening progresses, the women become more competitive and desperate. Two of the participants finally give up and concede the floor to the third, who makes tentative efforts to keep up her act, but finally succumbs to her fatigue and desperation. Unable to escape, she begins to tear away the façade of the vampish clothes.

The Sleepers, created by Falco in 1971, is an improvisational, goodnatured and insightful exploration of sexual hang-ups. Four people-children sleep together in a pile, amid mounds of white feathers. But someone, tossing and turning in his sleep, leans too heavily on someone else, and the war is on.

Through loud taunts uttered in battle, the personalities and (very human) neuroses of the characters are outlined.

The manner of expression of the sexual relations between the two couples is fresh and ingenious, clear yet never graphic; Falco's choreography in this instance is sublimated and poetic.

And yes, the dance has a happy ending: all survive the push-me pull-me vagaries of love and grow out of their childish hangups.

Caviar, also choreographed by Falco, explores again the theme of the dancer as person. Six of the company's seven dancers play, pair off, jump about in foam rubber clogs, bounce around on the floor like frogs, and "swim" with bouncy life-size foam rubber sharks, without the slightest regard for the man-eaters' ferocity.

The piece is vital, joyous, capricious, dizzying, and altogether too shallow and too long: an extravagant visual "trip", but without meaning or substance.

Falco has been artist-in-residence at many colleges and universities, and would be a welcome choreographer at York's dance department as well.



The Louis Falco dance company presented some ingenious, if at times tiring, dances last week at Burton. Here, Falco stands with Georgiana Holmes in *Twopenny Portrait*, a recent work.

Sight and Sound

Pete meets Tillie through Winters

Carol Burnett and Walter Matthau spit at each other in this week's *Winters* presentation, *Pete 'n' Tillie*, a film which jumps between comedy and melodrama. The film is playing Friday and Sunday night at 8 p.m. in Curtis LH-1, for \$1.25 general and \$1 for Winters students. Directed by Martin Ritt, who later did *Souther*. Next week: *The Poseidon Adventure*.

Bogey plays Spade and Marlowe :

Here's lookin' at you, kid. Bethune brings *Bogey* to their junior common room tomorrow night at 8 p.m. for a double-feature. Bogart plays private eye Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* and Philip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*, with everyone from Lauren Bacall to Peter Lorre in on the action. The whole bill is free, so get there early. As a special bonus, they'll show 25 minutes of cartoons and "Marijuana Madness".

Paper Moon hangs over Bethune

If you hated Shirley Temple, you may find yourself warming up to Tatum O'Neal in Peter Bogdanovich's *Paper Moon*. Her father, Ryan O'Neal, plays a Southern con man who goes around selling Bibles to widows, with Tatum in tow. Lightweight stuff, but amusing. In Curtis LH-L Saturday and Sunday at 8:30 p.m., for \$1.25 general, \$1 for Winters students.

Les Treteaux de Paris font appel

Les Treteaux de Paris, un groupe théâtral française de Toronto fondé en 1953, auront 20 ans le 13 mars, et ils veulent agrandir la troupe. Ils font appel à tous ceux, jeunes ou moins jeunes, que le théâtre intéresse, devant ou derrière le rideau. Ils se réunissent le dimanche après-midi à 2:30 p.m., 15 Lynwood Avenue. Cet appel doit leur fournir le supplément d'éléments qui leur permettra la mise en chantier de la pièce de leur anniversaire. Téléphone 921-2561, ou La Maison Française, centre d'information des activités francophones, 922-8915.

Waffle offers Salt of the Earth

The York Waffle shows the drama *Salt of the Earth* at noon today in S166 Ross. The film, a true story concerning the organizing of Mexican workers in Arizona, is relevant in light of the recent Artistic Woodwork strike.

Charles loses head in Cromwell

Historical drama leaps onto the Curtis LH-I screen tonight as Richard Harris and Alec Guinness star in *Cromwell*. See the roundheads rise to power under Oliver Cromwell's leadership. Lose your head at King Charles' beheading scene. Admission is \$1. Presented by the Environmental Studies film society.

Fascinating El Topo premieres

A fascinating, hallucinatory picture, *El Topo* (The Mole), comes to Curtis LH-L tonight at 7:30 p.m., in a 35 mm. print. Filmed in Mexico by Alexander Jodorowsky, the film is an allegory of psycho-sexual states, with remarkable and disturbing imagery. Imagine, for instance, a huge underground cavern inhabited by dwarfs and monsters, who break out and attack a town. Following the screening, sponsored by the film department, director Jodorowsky, will discuss the film and invite questions. (His latest film, *The Holy Mountain*, based on Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, has not yet been released in North America). The film opens Friday at Cinécity. The screening of the hip *Hamlet*, mentioned last week, has been temporarily postponed.

Macabre shenanigans in Truck's Arsenic

By BOB McBRYDE

Joseph Kesserling's *Arsenic and Old Lace* has enjoyed enormous success on Broadway, and in a film by Frank Capra. The Toronto Truck Theatre company is currently reviving the 1940s comedy-satire in their newest production at the Colonnade Theatre.

The play's plot is as unlikely as it is funny. It seems that two old spinsters, Martha and Abby Brewster, have for years been doing good turns for humanity by putting a series of prospective lodgers out of their misery. A dose of poison in the elderberry wine, and the lonely old men are at peace for eternity.

Such macabre shenanigans continue unknown to anyone, including the dense Brooklyn police force, until a dead body is discovered accidentally by the drama-critic nephew, Mortimer.

Mortimer is the only member of the Brewster family who is reasonably secure in his senses. His brothers, Teddy and Jonathan, are respectively a madman who thinks he is Teddy Roosevelt, and a pathological killer. In fact, Jonathan, aided by his accomplice, the mad doctor Einstein, has run up a string of murders equalling the record of his sweet old aunts.

The wild events of the play revolve around Mortimer's attempts to explain away the 12 bodies buried in the cellar, to rid the family of the Frankenstein-like Jonathan, and to come to terms with his impending madness (the family curse) which is preventing him from marrying Elaine Harper, a preacher's daughter.

The staging of the play is not without its faults. The scene changes are clumsily done, hampered by the limitations of the small Colonnade stage. And the occasional character delivers

his or her lines unclearly, revealing a lack of confidence which is readily transmitted to the audience.

But on the whole the play succeeds through the force of a number of energetic, and hilarious, performances.

Alan Stratton is an excellent Mortimer. He realizes the element of farce in the play by exaggerating his facial and body language to a degree which emphasizes that the play is something of a put-on. He paces, gesticulates and sputters profusely with a constant look of pained amazement upon his brow.

Stephan Geras' Dr. Einstein, the prototypic mad scientist, almost steals the show with his cowering and twitching and his Transylvanian accent, delivering hilarious lines at moments of crisis.

And watch for the tramp, one of the old aunts' near-victims. Stephen Purdy, in a cameo appearance, shambles in, crab-like, wearing a suit which is 10 sizes too large, and affects a bum's accent which sounds like a man speaking through a gold fish bowl.

Sound bizarre? It is this very element of absurdity which saves the play from becoming merely another situation comedy.

The play was originally conceived by its author, Joseph Kesserling, as a satire of parlour comedy and murder mystery. In some ways it resembles such plays as Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

It was written during the Second World War in order to divert people from the horrors of the real world, a function which it still serves well.

The Colonnade Theatre is at 131 Bloor West, and student rates are \$2.50, \$3 on Saturday. Phone 925-4573. The play runs indefinitely.