

Artie Shaw an artful orator of personal trivia in new Canadian film biography

By HUMBERTO DA SILVA

Brigitte Berman's new film, *Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've Got*, is sadly an inferior effort when compared to its 1982 predecessor, *Bix: Ain't None of Them Play Like Him Yet*.

Actually, inferior may be too strong a word to use in this instance. *Artie Shaw* is simply a less interesting film than Berman's previous jazz documentary. In revealing the life and career of the big band clarinetist, the film is too long and too dry. Perhaps Artie Shaw's life is simply less dramatic than Bix Beiderbecke's or perhaps Shaw's being alive has curtailed the artistic license that Berman needs to make an involving documentary.

Whatever the case, this film celebrates Shaw's life while documenting only its surface. We are deluged with mundane praise for the jazz man when a little insight would have done just fine. You begin to wonder if anybody on the planet has an unkind word to say about Artie Shaw, or if it is necessary to spend five minutes watching Artie Shaw

listening to a record he made 40 years earlier and still likes. I personally did not care an awful lot that Artie Shaw's house in Spain has seven fireplaces instead of the customary two. The film is six minutes short of two hours, so it isn't a lack of material that forces Berman to include such trivia.

Aside from being too long and too often pointless, Berman's film defers to Shaw on every matter regarding his life. This is a serious mistake for a documentary to make in regard to its subject. Shaw is not the ultimate authority on everything that has occurred during his lifetime, nor is he very critical of his own career. We are endlessly reminded that Artie Shaw was a Big Phenomenon, that Artie Shaw was an Intellectual Musician unlike his peers, and that he walked away from his career twice when it was at its peak. Who reminds us of these telling facts? Why, Artie Shaw, of course. He is practically the narrator. Brigitte Berman gets the actual credit for the narration but five will get you 10 that Artie Shaw helped her write it.



WAILIN' ARTIE: In *Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've Got*, Shaw shows 'em he's got rhythm, too. Band members in swing struggle not to fall off their chairs. Music is hell.

And, incidentally, she sounds like Mrs. Elmer Fudd.

If you're a fan of the man then go see *Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've*

Got. You will enjoy the film as the exhaustively illustrated bit of idolatry that it is. It is comprehensive if not penetrating. But if you don't got

the time to watch a celluloid autobiography ghost-directed by a talented but uncritical Canadian documentarist, then don't.

English students play at theatre

Essential of drama learned with Conflict

By J. MARK SPROUL

A class of theatre students can work up a play in six weeks. They're trained to do it. How does an English class of mixed disciplines and little combined theatre expertise hope to accomplish such a feat?

Glendon's EN2530 class was told that they were to find a play, choose a cast and crew, find the rehearsal time, build the set and get the costumes and props prepared all by November sixth. Besides the time limit, they had a low budget, poor rehearsal space and minimum teacher involvement. Perhaps even less of an incentive was the fact they wouldn't even be graded on their production.

Some were not 100 percent enthusiastic.

Luckily, one member of the class knew a playwright who had a play to produce. Norma Harris' play, *Essential Conflict*, was chosen as it fit all the requirements. It is a contemporary, two-act play which takes place in one setting and has a wide audience appeal.

Even so, "It's a lot to ask," said one student. "We've been rehearsing from four to eight PM for weeks and

then staying up to two or three AM to study for our regular classes," says Lisa Teskey.

Professor Bob Wallace's reason for having the students produce the play is that "the text of a play is not just the words on the page. The text is the performance as well. How can a student really appreciate it without a complete study in context? Even a minor must participate."

And is it a worthwhile effort? As Teskey says, "After this, I could write a book . . . I've learned constructive criticism. Instead of just saying, 'I liked it,' I will say, 'I liked this play because of the lighting or costumes or sets.' I'll have sympathetic expectations."

Essential Conflict explores the values we associate with a man and wife in the family environment. There is a twist. Joan has a high-profile public career, while the husband Hubert is a stay-at-home writer. This already humorous situation is complicated further when Joan's cousin Melaney arrives. Melaney is a globe-trotting seductress who preys on men. Her anti-feminist, amoral behavior escalates tensions and contrasts our ideas of men and women in a funny, but thought-provoking way.

Playwright Harris, also a novelist, journalist and radio announcer, has consented to sit in on a rehearsal. *Essential Conflict* is "her baby" and has been workshopped and produced before. Harris is used to hearing actors say, "It just doesn't work," and has changed some scenes before. Her additional guidance will be a useful bonus to the class.

Balancing the characters against

each other in the ensuing triangles of the play is a difficult task for student director Anastasia Kaundon. Having the playwright available to strengthen and clarify important points should prove to be very rewarding.

As opening night at Theatre Glendon looms on November 7, confidence is high. "We don't feel as if it's coming down around us," says Teskey. "It's gonna work, everybody's up for it."

Another break comes for the cast and crew with Glendon's reading week, October 28 to November 1. They plan to make full use of the

extra time available to build the set and polish their performances.

The class has had to take the long road around the obstacles and the result was a lot of extra work. However, they are not discouraged. Teskey says, "Sure, a pro would have been able to show us a lot of shortcuts, but we've learned by going through the muck . . . Next time it will be easier."

It's no wonder that this course is not open to first-year students. We all have enough to do preparing essays and studying for tests. How many of us would choose to be in their shoes?

York dancers synchronize skill and creativity in frantic performance

By NICOLE DESJARDINS

Professionalism has paid off for three York dance students. October 24, 25 and 26 saw a power-filled performance of the *Northern Lights Dance Theatre* at U of T's Hart House Theatre with Berkley Laurin, Dawn Morrison and Rose Williams as part of the company.

The three dance students overcame the challenge presented to them in maintaining both academic obligations and the daily rehearsals necessary for the performance. Their

commitment was clear in the success of their work. Much is due to the dedication of *Northern Lights Dance Theatre's* artistic director and choreographer Paula Thomson, a faculty member of York's physical education department. "We must take on the responsibility of the young, and therefore we invite the young artists to work with senior dancers for a learning process that we encourage to benefit all," said Thomson.

The three dancers synchronized themselves with the two other senior dancers in the fast-paced movement combinations of *Start*, the opening piece choreographed by Jane Kosminsky. Wearing colourful leotards ranging from orange to bright green, the five dancers ran, jumped, twirled, leapt, fell on the floor and jumped back to their feet in frantic, constant motion.

In *Only the Drowning* the pace changed to a continuous and floating mood, the dancers being waves and swimmers at the same time. The rhythms and patterns gave a lyrical

sense of energy of the water as the dancers reached out with curved arms, gathering and moving space.

The highlight of the performance was *Melodies* which was performed to the exceptional singing voice of Patricia Kern who sang Eight French Art songs. Roxanna Newberry, a senior dancer, offered visual dimension in portraying a woman confronted with death. Paula Thomson cleverly choreographed the work, yet only a Francophone could fully understand the context of the music.

As for *Ariadne*, choreographed by Paula Thomson, it seems that the mixture of modern and ballet steps did not clearly suit the purpose of the piece. Maybe Andre Corvino's pointe work could have been left aside, giving a stronger impact in soft shoes. This piece did not greatly detract from the professionalism of the *Northern Lights Dance Company*. Thomson managed not only to offer a "learning process" for the dancers, but an inspiring evening for their audience as well.

TRAVEL CUTS Christmas Charters

TORONTO

Vancouver	\$399
Saskatoon	\$309
Winnipeg	\$199
Halifax	\$199
Edmonton/Calgary	\$339

The travel company of CFS
TRAVEL CUTS TORONTO

Going
Your Way!

TRAVEL
CUTS

U of T, 44 St. George St.
416 979-2406



MICHAEL TAIT

Spontaneous Combustion, 1984

RE:UNION

Selected York MFA Alumni 1976-1985

Art Gallery of York University (Ross N145)
Founder College Gallery (Room 206)
IDA Gallery of F.A.B. (Room 102)
Norman Bethune College Gallery (Room 320)
Samuel J. Zacks Gallery of Stong College
(Room 109)

Winters College Gallery (Room 123)

HOURS: Mon & Fri 10-5

Tues/Wed/Thurs 10-7

Sunday 12-5

667-3427