

the nest of the yardbird

I grow more and more convinced that the Yardbird Suite has discovered the right approach for presenting minority entertainment to Edmonton audiences.

One makes one's way along Whyte Avenue, crosses the railroad tracks, turns south on 102nd St. and proceeds down a dimly-lit block. On the south-east corner of the intersection one notices an unspectacular building with colored windows. Nervously one enters.

It's just as dark inside, and a sepulchral-looking person (everyone looks sepulchral in that light) smiles evilly and takes one's \$1.50. Almost dead with fright, one totters into a corridor leading to the stage.

Unless one is familiar with the Walterdale Playhouse (another atmosphere-laden microcosm, this year unfortunately presenting rather a dull season) one may be unprepared for the smallness of the Yardbird's stage. But the lighting is healthier here, and one looks around at the other members of the audience.

It was a mixed audience last weekend, rather older than one might have suspected, refreshingly bourgeois.

One chooses a seat, sits down and waits for the program to begin. It is apt to begin a bit late. Just before one starts becoming a bit restive, up to the stage strides D'Amur, or Bob Rhodes (as last weekend), to introduce the performers and tell a few jokes. And finally the performance starts.

Appreciation, not judgment, is the primary aesthetic act. And it is appreciation rather than judgment that the Suite's apparently rather shabby design craftily encourages.

Last weekend, for instance, Mr. Carl Lotsberg played his guitar both solo and in accompaniment to Harlan Green, Edmonton's foremost flautist.

Now Mr. Lotsberg was not at his ease, made rather a mess of his first two numbers, and tended to do strange things throughout the evening. How we would have winced had he been in Con Hall!

But it is hard to hold a grudge against a performer when one is breathing down his neck. The intimacy of the situation makes brutality almost unthinkable.

So one makes allowances, sits back, and enjoys.

Not that we might not have been more annoyed had the program not offered us other, less flawed performances. But there was Harlan Green, delightfully; and there was Henry Kreisel.

Dr. Kreisel read Oscar Wilde's

"Ballard of Reading Gaol" and his own story "The Travelling Nude".

"The Travelling Nude" is an extremely amusing story, which Dr. Kreisel milks for all it is worth.

But I found most interesting its author's feeling for the atmosphere of small-town Alberta. Incredibly, he gets it right. No-one but W. O. Mitchell has to my knowledge managed to do so before.

Dr. Kreisel wrote the story while convalescing. Literarily-minded motorists could do Canadian literature a considerable service by knocking Dr. Kreisel down, preferably in such a manner as to render him unpaired and productive.

—J. O. Thompson

sixteenth century goes underground

The Jeunesses Musicales du Canada have again the Edmonton cultural turret with a shaft of light, this time in the form of a boys' choir, Less Petis Chanteurs de Montreal.

I have very cleverly mislaid by program, and have even more cleverly forgotten the names of the director of the choir, and the names of most of the works on the program.

I must therefore content myself (and you) with saying that the program was made up entirely of sacred and secular works of the 16th century. The list of the composers sung was impressive: Palestrina, Victoria, Orlando di Lasso, Morley and Wilbye; and all of their music was on a consistently high plane.

The chorus sang their repertoire with a great deal of spirit, and, for the most part, with adequate technical efficiency.

Any exhaustive examination of the merits of the performance would be both bootless and boring, so I will press on to more important issues (and ones which require less detailed information): to wit—has music of this kind a definite "popular" appeal; if not, why not; and what can be done to remedy the evils of the situation (if any)?

To begin with, it is quite obvious that 16th-century music has not the same sort of appeal as, says, Tchaikovsky; it is a much more controlled form of music: beautifully integrated, polished, almost mathematical in its precision.

But this is not to say that there is any restriction on the range of feeling expressed.

The contrast between a Palestrina mass and a Morley madrigal could hardly be more pronounced.

Yet one does not find recordings of Renaissance vocal music selling in vast quantities (alas!) nor does one find Victoria's music arranged for 101 strings (a sure sign of popularity, and

usually of utter mediocrity as well).

I suspect that this music's lack of popularity is due, not to anything inherent in the music, but to the general public's ignorance of its existence, or at the very least of its nature.

Surely something can easily be done about this lamentable situation. HERE is the place for the Underground to step in, to organize a cult. (Jazz, folk music, and overworked, superpopular "classical" music are all right, but they hardly constitute areas of music languishing in obscurity.)

It will even suggest a swinging motto for the projected movement: "A madrigal a day keeps CJCA away." Any organization of this sort has a more than decent chance of success; were Morley's "Now Is The Month of Maying" to reach the Hit Parade, I would be edified, but not greatly surprised.

I will even go so far as to say that 16th-century music could become popular with kiddies, crack-erbarrell grandparents, and folk nuts; and any movement with this kind of popularity would inevitably reach the hi-fi sets of the most hard-bitten middle-brows.

If you all want to do your bit (and I am sure you all do), just rush down to the record-store of your choice and pick up some Elizabethan madrigals, some Victoria religious works, and some di Lasso musical jokes, and play them for yourself over and over again.

Then play them for your friends. Wear them right out, in fact.

Somebody is bound to learn something in the process.

—Bill Beard

a legend trapped in time

"Sansho Dayu", shown Jan. 24 by the Edmonton Film Society, is the filmatic interpretation of a medieval Japanese legend, director Mizoguchi announces at the outset. The film is beautiful. It is historically convincing. But it fails unfortunately to cast the epic "timeless" mood essential to the legend.

The story is of a mother and two children who journey to rejoin their father, a nobleman who has been exiled years before because of his aid to the peasants.

On the way they are separated and sold into slavery; the mother becomes a courtesan, the children are taken to work for the cruel bailiff Shanchu.

After long years they escape. The daughter commits suicide, and the son finds his way to the position of governor of the state, whereupon he frees all slaves. Finally, he seeks and finds his aged mother.

This string of events achieves moral significance since each—exile, journey, escape, governorship and ultimate reunion—is in-

stigated by some form of mercy.

But if these events are to be more than a series of gloomy episodes strung together by a cliched moral, Mizoguchi must create the mood of the legend.

Black-and-white moralizing, annoying in realism, is often the point of legend. The same holds for epic events and vast time span; tastelessly "de trop" when overburdening an account with pretensions to realism, they can be apt in the context of a legend.

Memorable scenes go far to achieving this end; mother and children travelling on foot through deep grass... mother by the sea calling for her children... Anjo wading into the sea... son searching wide beaches... The distanced mood characteristic of the legend is reinforced by the serene figure of the mother and long-shot photographic techniques.

But the atmosphere thus established is all too often marred.

It often happens when the camera closes in for a minute description of a gory scene, when unfettered emotional displays beg for audience involvement, or when the already obvious is reiterated. These are characteristics not of legend, but of historical account.

The fault of "Sansho Dayu" is the unresolved see-sawing between realism and the timeless, universalized legend.

Despite this, much remains to commend the film.

Most effective are the scenes in which Mizoguchi relates man to his natural surroundings. Careful composition and lighting make the shots of people among trees, in fields, by the sea ineffably beautiful.

The same scenes serve two other purposes. As has been mentioned, they help create the necessary legendary tone. Moreover, they express symbolically the theme of the film—the opposition of man with worthy convictions to an alien, at best indifferent, world.

The dramatic performances of the mother—the epitome of matriarchal serenity and fidelity—and the bailiff—the entirely convincing and not entirely unlikeable bad-man—are praiseworthy. Kyoko Kagawa as Anjo is not only sweet, as Japanese girls are traditionally expected to be, but sensible. Zuchio's role, however, was played with unnecessary theatricality, in keeping with the film's characteristic tendency to overstate.

—Beverley Gietz

please don't yahoo at the artist

Much has been said in these columns about Art, about art-collections, about objets d'art, about art exhibits, but too little has been said about artists.

What is an artist? One is immediately reminded of all the painterly catch-phrases—the "frustrated" artist, the "misunderstood" artist, and not infrequently the "mad" artist. The last is probably the most viable; at least it is the most interesting.

For the artist is in a sense a madman, by virtue of what may be termed a shifting perspective.

By this is meant simply that the artist is able to identify, and involve himself totally, in any environment. Keats said it: the true poet (artist) really has no identity. He is an elaborate and delicate composite of all environmental influences.

"Gulliver's Travels", I think, is probably the most astute description of the artistic sensibility. For, like Gulliver, the artist is very much a mariner—alternately tormented and tranquilized on seas of consciousness, often tossed up on foreign shores where he finds himself at odds with his own immensity or with his own minuteness.

And how does the artists react? Like Gulliver, of course, he tries to break the chains that Lilliputian minds impose on him, and sees himself as a veritable colossus in relation to them; or struggles in the grip of Brobdingnagian grossness, which is more than his tiny frame can handle.

One could elaborate upon Gulliver-artist encountering the Yahoos, the Houyhnhnms and the Laputians until the pattern emerges. The artist adapts, yields, explores, integrates, but ultimately turns away, retreats to the stable—venerable birthing place—to commune with his horses, his energies.

And there, in a Swiftshell, is a portrait of the artist.

—Isabelle Foord

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