

Mystical, Italian fable...

Political posturing delightfully absent

Night of the Shooting Stars
Princess Theatre, Jan. 28-30

review by Zane Harker

I expected to be beaten about the head and shoulders with socialist realism in Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Night of the Shooting Stars*, but thankfully this wasn't the case. Instead of heavy handed politics, the film concentrated on the plight and heroics of a small band of Italian peasants during WW II with no other cause than to find safety. After their village is destroyed and some of the population massacred while at church, the survivors head out to seek liberation from the Americans.

While the Americans are certainly the good guys in this film, they are never really seen; rather, it is the heroics of the peasants suddenly faced with violent death that is focused on. Led by old Galvano - played marvellously by Omero Antonutti - the journey is told through the eyes of a six year old girl.

While the horror of death is never belittled, the one "battle-scene" of the film is quite humorous. In one tragi-comic scene, the peasant rebels and the fascists rush to the same spot to aid fallen com-

rades, and almost help each other when they suddenly realize that they are enemies: they lunge for their weapons and gun each other down.

The self-mocking irony of fellow countrymen slaughtering each other is the only political aspect of the film that the Taviani brothers even touch upon - this is really a kind of folk tale.

The Taviani's stress that the events of the story really happened, and they personally witness some of them, but they are depicted with all the exaggerations and fantastic twist that come with a tale that has been passed on for forty years.

Although the brothers take turns in directing the scenes *Night of the Shooting Stars* shows no signs of discontinuity. The editing and musical score underlined the sparkling, mystical quality of the film. Room is left for the audience to find a more personal meaning and understanding for the characters and their situation.

In all, everything is done just right in this film, and it's no wonder that it has made so many best ten lists. *Night of the Shooting Stars* plays this Saturday, Sunday, and Monday at the Princess Theatre. Catch it while you can.



A young Italian villager is reunited with his pregnant wife.

Upcoming New Play Festival promises drama galore

The New Play Festival ushers in 1984 with the culmination of two years of intensive interaction between the Alberta Playwriting Centre and emerging Alberta playwrights.

Presented by the Alberta Playwriting Centre and the University of Alberta Department of Drama, workshops and rehearsals will continue throughout January utilizing the talents of writers, professional actors, directors, and the 4th year B.F.A. acting students. From February 1 to 5, the public has a chance to view the results as the plays-in-progress take to the stage at Studio Theatre.

A seminar by leading theatre professionals on the state of new plays and playwriting in Canada will begin the final five days. February 2 to 5 brings the presentation of the new plays using only the bare essentials of costumes, lighting and sets.

Ranging from script-in-hand readings to productions lacking only in design, the plays in various stages of development offer audiences the unique opportunity to find out what's happening with playwriting in Alberta and to participate in post performance discussions.

At the finale, the announcement will

be made of the winner of the Alberta Culture Playwriting Competition and the first public reading will take place.

The Alberta Playwriting Centre, a joint project of Northern Light Theatre and Alberta Theatre Projects (Calgary), funded by the Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts through Western Canada Lottery, was established in early 1981. Alberta Playwrights were contacted and invited to become involved. The plays began to pour in and Dramaturgs Frank Moher (NLT) and Martin Fishman (ATP) went to work reading and evaluating the submissions. Plays were selected to be workshopped and seed money was awarded to various writers.

So the Centre grew. And where there's growth, there's change. In Calgary, Martin Fishman was replaced by Jeff Goffin as dramaturg, a position now held by Duncan

McLaren. Jace van der Veen, former Associate Director of Vancouver's New Play Centre, joined NLT as Artistic Director. His extensive background and expertise in the direction of new plays made him a valuable asset to both the theatre and the APC.

During the same period the Centre saw the departure of one of its key organizers, as Frank Moher left to pursue his own writing career. Frank's replacement, Brian Deedrick, became NLT's dramaturg and Associate Director. Brian turned his energy and talent to both tasks and the process continued.

The University represented by David Barnet became involved one year ago, utilizing the Centre as an opportunity for workshop training for B.F.A. acting students and offering an attractive venue for the New Play Festival.

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Complex film delights

I Married a Shadow
Cine-Plex Nine

Review by Gilbert Bouchard

"The post-Christmas movie blahhs squeezed movie fans hearts like slimy tentacles," metaphored the critic.

"Yes indeedy, absolutely nothing worthwhile opened last weekend in River City. And everybody and my dog Spot have already seen the big X-mas releases," thought the reviewer dejectedly.

"Oh well," he chirped "I'll take in a sleazy foreign film at the Cine-Plex."

Which is just what the critic did, and his little movie-addicted soul was pleased.

The movie in question is a nifty little thriller by the name of *I Married a Shadow*.

The story goes like this: a young pregnant woman by the name of Hellen Georges, abandoned by her unemployed lover decides to take off for sunnier climes. She's befriended on the train by another pregnant woman, Patricia Meyrand and her husband Bertrant.

Hellen's dress is accidentally drenched with coffee in the dining car, so Patricia lends Hellen one of her dresses while she washes out the soiled garment. Just then, bang, bang, boom, the train crashes and both Patricia and her hubby die. Hospital officials assume that Hellen, who was found in the Meyrand's car wearing Pat's dress and wedding ring, is Patricia Meyrand. And Hellen, upon awakening, can't convince hospital staff of the truth. Her protests are explained away as stress of post-natal confusion.

Bertrant Meyrand's wealthy, wine-baron parents, having never the real

Patricia (who died on her way to visit her in-laws) take in Hellen and her new-born baby, "little Bertrant."

Hellen, in response to their massive wealth and Bertrant's handsome brother Pierre, suppresses her better judgement and continues her deception not telling them that she's not Patricia.

Then the movie gets really hairy, plowing along, building suspense, flip-flopping expectations, and generally mystifying the audience. The film manages to be complex without being contorted, and well-developed without any superfluous scenes, acting or dialogue.

I'd like to praise the individual actors, but I couldn't get ahold of a press kit for this film, and the credits don't list which actor played which character (plus, who can write down fifteen actor's names in the twenty or so seconds that it takes for the credits to zip by?) But that doesn't really matter that much since not many people know any of these actors from a hole in the ground anyway.

Nevertheless, the actors playing Helen and Pierre give one heck of a performance, and had quite the steamy romance going by the end of the film. Mind you, their romance developed a tad too fast for my taste, but that's a pretty minor point.

In fact, the actress who played Hellen is quite the actress, with loads of charm, stage presence, and she's awfully attractive, too.

There ain't much else you can say about the film. It's a real gas to watch. Mind you it ain't very deep, but it's a good bunch of actors giving enjoyable performances in a technically enviable film.