

The Gateway fine arts

mani: happy returns

"Mani Sulla Citta", shown Nov. 30 by the Edmonton Film Society, doesn't do any of the usual things.

It lacks heroes. It shuns High Action. It doesn't analyze character or psychologize.

Nor does it indulge in the detailed analysis of social wrongs and means by which they may be righted that would win for it justification as either a theoretical or a moral film.

Such deficiencies prompt the viewer to demand what the film does do.

The answer lies in noting two things: first, that director Rosi has deliberately shunned the standard cinematic term of the individual in favor of making the protagonists social classes per se (the main characters are only spokesmen—symbols of their respective classes, rich and poor); second, that Rosi is a documentary realist, more concerned with showing how things are than presenting philosophical analyses and solutions.

If you suffer from an innate insensitivity to social questions or a cultivated prejudice that films that deal with such problems verge on propaganda, "Mani Sulla Citta" probably left you wishing Rosi would spend his film, like

brother Antonioni, on beauties and beaches.

On the other hand, once the notion that economic classes per se can constitute valid subject-matter for a film is accepted, the film is certain to impress.

The reasons lie in direction, photography, and acting—in that order.

Acting, used with respect to "Mani Sulla Citta", might more aptly be termed "non-acting". Rosi uses few professional actors, preferring men-in-the-street. And those he does choose, notably Rod Steiger, perform without virtuosity.

The result is that the characters are more like figures in a news-report than individuals to worry about in their own right. Personal drama is not allowed to overshadow the social struggle which remains the film's main concern.

Photographer Venanzo shares credit for making classes valid protagonists and creating the mood of documentary realism.

Movies would seem more suited to portraying classes of people than any other medium, for the simple reason that, unlike the pen or the theatre, the camera at a glance encompasses groups en masse.

Venanzo exploits his advantage to the full, whether panning the vastness of the city or training from above on battling city fathers in the legislative chamber. Camera movements, light effects, composition of scenes and angle shots, point up details, underlining the basic class conflict.

But, to be properly appreciated, acting and photography must be considered as elements incorporated by director Rosi's characteristic hand.

In tone, his style is documentary realism reminiscent of Italian movies of the 40s. The predominance of grey-white photography, the mildness of the acting, and Rosi's refusal to editorialize by means of repeat shots and narration are the result.

Although it is noteworthy that in the film realism is occasionally alleviated by shots of city or penthouse almost surrealistic in effect, the dominant impression is that Rosi is reporting facts, not volunteering opinions.

It is Rosi's techniques of film montage, or composition, however, that make his style truly distinctive.

Instead of employing transitional devices, he almost invariably cuts abruptly to contrasting scenes. Sometimes the result is functionally dramatic, as where rapid flashes of crowds, speakers and falling ballots compress weeks of election confusion into a few seconds.

At other times, the contrast produces subtle irony; the camera cuts suddenly from dilapidated tenements to a corpulent builder exercising beside a mammoth pool, or follows up Nottola's offer to sacrifice his son to the greater good of votes for industrialists with his worship in the cathedral.

If Rosi fails to present individuals or expanded theories of social conflict in "Mani Sulla Citta", he is to be excused. He has achieved something equally significant in presenting the city's rich and poor simply as they are.

—Beverly Gietz



—Jim MacLaren photo

THE DOUANIER ROUSSEAU STRIKES AGAIN—A certain primitivism is evident in this work from Robert Sinclair's current show at the University Fine Arts Gallery. Mr. Sinclair is a new member of the Department of Fine Arts. His show is open from 7 to 9 p.m. Monday to Saturday; the Gallery's address is 9021 - 112 Street. Why don't you have a look? The show's well worth seeing.

players, while largely imported from Europe, have been able to combine their best to produce a Canadian entity. Also, strangely enough, this is one of the very few bands in Canada not afraid to play music written by Canadians.

As expected I was not disappointed Friday night at Con Hall when the PPCLI presented a programme along with the University Male Chorus. From the start of the "Thundercrest March" (Osterling) to the end of "Continental Christmas" (arr. Polyar), the melody, the rhythm, the sheer blast of harmony was a great delight.

Works by Shostakovich and Canadianians R. Campbell and Healy Willan highlighted the PPCLI contribution.

Shostakovich's "Festive Overture" was played for the first time in Alberta—which is strange, for it is a harmonious work with none of Shostakovich's "way out" characteristics. As conductor Lt. G. C. Naylor noted, it is a work that the people can enjoy; and we did.

Campbell's "Capital City Suite" is an interpretation through music of Ottawa. Parliament Hill, Confederation Square, and the Rideau Canal are there, presented in movements of grandeur, confusion and serenity respectively.

While I feel that Ottawa was never thus, the composition contains so many elements of good band music that one wonders why it is so seldom presented, especially since one need not even be particularly partisan (as with so much Canadian "art") to enjoy it.

Healy Willan's "Royce Hall Rondo" illustrated the band's great rhythmic talents. Its players are capable of a subtle yet toe-tapping swing style that is a pleasant change from the heavy jazz beat or the metronomic rigidity of the symphony.

They played many other delightful pieces—to name a few, "Li'l Abner Overture", "Clari-

net Capers" and "Quebec Folk Fantasy"—none of which could be heavily criticised.

The only fault they were guilty of, in fact, was the too, too much of the percussion, which at times left a slight imbalance and, yes, a ringing in the ears.

By contrast, the Male Chorus was not really up to par. It contains the voices for a potentially excellent group; but somewhere along the line the balance of voices so necessary in choral work and the finishing polish just weren't there.

The voices tend rather to project as single entities rather than to blend. In was aware mostly of some marvellous first tenors; I had not expected a choral concerto.

The finishing, while often not bad in the soft bits, was harsh and anything but lovely in the loud passages.

In choral work, the margin between the good and the mediocre is a hairbreadth one. In this case, lack of practice and/or experience marred their performance.

The highlights of the choral segment of the programme were the works prepared by assistant director Garth Worthington. The chorus seemed to come to life during the more humorous works.

Also Mr. Worthington displayed a very fine voice in his solo "Shenandoah", and here the chorus did have proper balance in their accompaniment.

Speaking of accompaniment, it is a pity that the music department can't come up with a pianist to aid this chorus. The one they now have, while worthy as a pianist, is incapable of choral accompaniment, which is, after all, something of an art in itself.

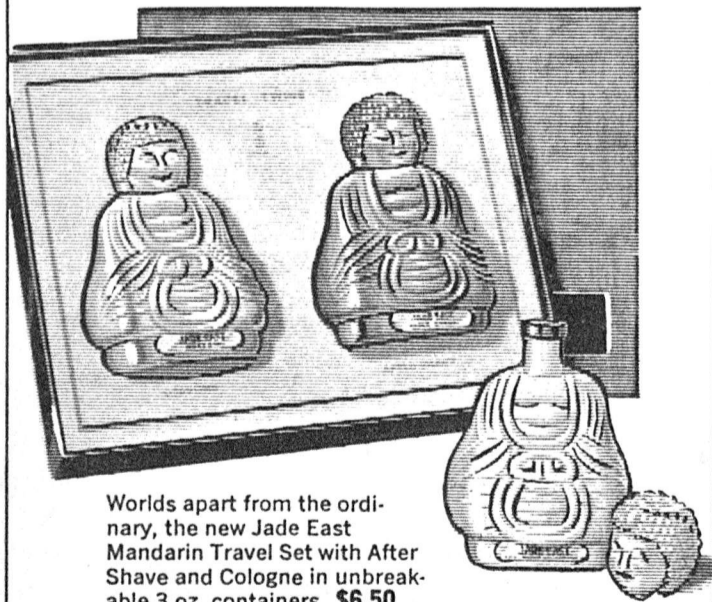
But all in all it was a fun evening, enjoyable for all, except perhaps for the English Horn player, who kept looking at his watch. Waiting for his night out with the boys, perhaps?

—N. Riebeck

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ppcli vs vocal virility

Those of us who occasionally comment on the "artsy" events about town do at times have moral trepidations about what we say, for the distinction between bad art and good art is very elusive.

So often the noticeable difference between good, mediocre and bad presents itself as a feeling that "something" (who knows what?) just wasn't there, that the "it" which artists are always referring to wasn't present.

Thus generally we are forced into having to base an opinion on comparison. Compared to such-and-such of known excellence a programme becomes defined; there is no empirical art scale.

Therefore it is always with anticipation for the best that I look forward to a concert by the PPCLI band, for this is one group that I can talk of confidently regardless of the basis for comparison.

It is an interesting band; the