

Arts Calendar

A spate of musicals, a classical guitarist

The gods having decreed that all this season's light musical entertainment should fall in the space of a single week. Lovers of musical comedy will have their work cut out for them as they scurry between three separate offerings.

Tonight or tomorrow night they can catch Light Opera of Edmonton's production of *Paint Your Wagon*, the old Lerner and Loewe classic in which the superb song "They Call the Wind Maria" is embedded.

I'd go to see it if only to find out why anyone would even think of calling the wind Maria. Sam, maybe, or Gladys, but . . .

Anyway, performances start at 8:30 p.m. in the Jubilee.

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The next two musicals overlap. *Jackpot* runs at the Centennial Library Theatre next Monday through Saturday, while the stage

of the new SUB theatre is graced next Tuesday through Saturday by Civic Musical Theatre's production of *Funny Girl*.

Jackpot, presented by Walterdale Theatre Associates, is an oddity—a 1954 musical about a Leduc farm family striking oil. It's been put on just about everywhere except in Alberta; it was even produced on British commercial television.

The music and lyrics were written by Chet Lambertson, who is guilty of having created the U of A Song (you know, "Ring out a cheer for old Al-ber-ta") in his youth. But presumably he has since paid his debt to society, since he's now a member of the University of Victoria's English Department.

As for *Funny Girl*, the Merrill-and-Styne hit in which Susan Woywitka will appear in Barbra Streisand's old role, what need one

say, save that it deals with the life of Fanny Brice and tickets are on sale at the Bay?

* * *

Looking ahead: The week after next sees the Edmonton Opera Association's presentation of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

Be aware that a Special Student Performance, with tickets at a mere \$1, will be held on Wednesday, November 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Jubilee.

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Tonight you get to make a really excruciating existential choice between Les Chansonniers and the Western Board of Music.

Les Chansonniers are yet another Festival Canada presentation to cheer us up about Quebec. They'll sing to us in the new SUB theatre.

But meanwhile there'll be a sleeper in progress in Con Hall—none other than the annual Western Board Recital and Presentation of Awards.

Our best younger performers will be on view here, admission is free, and on the basis of previous years I recommend it as an extremely enjoyable occasion.

* * *

Last but not most, Carlos Montoya will be appearing next Wednesday at the Jubilee Auditorium.

Montoya is perhaps as responsible as any single man for the tremendous surge of interest in Flamenco and classical guitar over the last two decades, and he shouldn't be missed. Tickets are available at Mike's; the performance starts at 8:30 p.m.

—John Thompson

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films

Blow-up (at the Garneau) has been labelled "Best Picture of the Year" by the National Society of Film Critics.

Amen.

But I feel inclined to add a few obsequious words in the form of a footnote suggesting that critics (basically a dull lot) frequently become so intensely interested in analyzing how a director is expressing a story that they forget to comment on whether the story is worth expressing. It would be unfair to attack the movie for not being what it isn't intended to be, but I shall risk ignominy, reveal my old-fashioned, ingenuous and dilletante soul, and make a purely esthetic declaration—one criterion of a "good" movie is that it be entertaining. *Blow-up* is a terrific creation if all you wish to do is analyze—entertaining it is not.

It was written and directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, who gained considerable notoriety for *La Dolce Vita*. The story, if we may loosely refer to it as such for a moment, objectively examines the subjective feelings of an artistic photographer (David Hemmings) who is, at the moment, completing a commercial photograph album, and for this purpose takes some pictures of a couple making out in a park. Vanessa Redgrave, the female component, comes rushing over demanding the pictures and "peace." Hemming replies it isn't his fault there's no peace, like a child who has just let the fox into the henhouse. In these photos he discovers a murder which has taken place right in front of him without his knowledge.

Of course, this isn't the real substance of the film, but it is a material fact to which we can cling while grasping for understanding.

The movie isn't burdened with the antiquated tradition of plot, and the action to which we are exposed is the unmotivated manipulation of a number of nameless characters around the periphery of the crime, and the periphery of Life. It is a lineal development with no story, no vitality, and no climax—but it wasn't intended to have these. The one time Antonioni does begin to develop interest (which he does exceedingly well) he slices into it with a little degrading sex, then destroys it completely. Part of his artistic style of expression is elimination of interest.

The reference point on the vicious circle is a jeep load of fools who appear with white faces and bizarre costumes at the beginning fortitiously running through the city streets, and at the end playing a game of tennis without balls or racquets, representing their own comic purposelessness, and symbolically, that of the other characters and us.

The sex in the movie is wonderfully degrading. Vanessa Redgrave gallantly strips off her shirt and offers the officious photog the bod in order to recover that series of photographs. Two inane little girls who want to undergo the transformation from the dull life to exciting modeldom prostitute themselves. The moral disgust of it all!

Hemming is surrounded by passive people who give a sigh of resignation and flaccidly accept the desolation. One of his friends would rather stay at the pot party with his rich but enervated compatriots than see the corpse which is lying in the park. David wants a picture of the corpse (which doesn't require a writer's assistance) but he acquiesces and remains at the party, and by morning the corpse is gone.

All the characters are dull, drifting, dead people, resigned to the boredom of life. We don't care what happens to them because they don't care. The hero is left alone and desolate, but he didn't fight the banality either. Are we to feel something for him?

It is this feeling of boredom which gets through to the audience, but it is boredom with the picture, not life. We can step onto the street and see the same thing: the lack of communication, the loneliness, the degradation—the movie only structures it better.

Like a black canvas, it is an artistic void—you can take anything and everything from it. It is a brilliant expression of nothing.

But can't you hear Antonioni whispering, "Ah, bravissimo, this is the whole point—nothing!"

And might we not whisper back, "Ah well in that case then, thanks a hell of a lot for nothing."

—Gordon Auck