

Get Classical

paul campbell

I recently heard of a poll in one of our better known media magazines (Rolling Stones, I think it was, but I'm not sure) which declared that "Amadeus" was the best movie of the 80's. For those of you who have seen it, I'm sure that you can agree that at least on a certain level. You may have your own choice like "Rocky Horror Picture Show", but you have to admit that "Amadeus" was not only an entertaining, but powerful movie. A good deal of the power came from the sound track which very effectively used Mozart's own music to emotionally underline and describe what was going on on the screen. Exactly what Mozart himself did in his operas, where the emotional action takes place in the music, and the people you see serve as a vehicle for this action, and contribute a plot to the story line. If you haven't seen "Amadeus", I suggest you do, as you can, or next time you rent a movie. In ways it is not only a movie, but a fine introduction to Mozart.

The question in the minds of almost everybody who has seen "Amadeus" is: how accurate is it? Was it really possible for someone with such a laugh, who chased after women with abandon, and who seemed so crude, to write such glorious and sophisticated music? Certainly that question was bothering me when I heard of the stage play which preceded the movie. So I did some research. I knew that from his early childhood Mozart had a breathless music. He had probably the best developed musical memory of all time. When he was fourteen he heard the "Miserere" by Allegri which was the property of the Sistine Chapel, and for which no one else had the music. He wrote his own complex and startlingly beautiful composition down, and gave the copy of the Pope, for which the Pope bestowed on him a doctorate later in his life. From the age of eight he had been talented and exhibited by his father as a musical prodigy, a life he enjoyed, he liked to sit on the laps of princesses and queens, but which must have denied him the normal sort of socialization you and I have had.

What I found was that indeed, "Amadeus" may be very close to the truth. He had a wild and dirty, but sophisticated, sense of humor; he was not poor, as is often stated, but he was often short of money; and he was prone to fall head over heels in love. In fact current scholarly "best guess" to account for his death points the finger not at Salieri (his rival in the movie, and to a certain extent in real life), but at the jealous aristocratic husband of one of his piano pupils. He was likeable, attractive, passionate, and maybe the most naturally musical person the world has seen, it was perhaps inevitable that his music should embody these same qualities. What is difficult to reconcile is the simple elegance of his music with the buffoon quality he is given in the movie. I would suggest that the movie overdramatizes the point. But the effect of doing this is good: it brings home very firmly the message that Mozart was just as human as you and I. But he had a gift that transcends imagination, and almost comprehension.

I write about this because next Wednesday, on the Wednesday Noon Recital Series the Saint John String Quartet will join me to play one of the greatest of his chamber works, the G minor Quintet. To the usual two violins, viola and cello of the string quartet is added another viola. Mozart loved and played the viola himself, and it seems that the dark sounds generated by two violas inspired him to write some of his best chamber music. I think this piece is one of the best of those best. The SJSQ will also play some Schubert, it promises to be a treat. Wednesday March 21, 12:30 at Mem. Hall.

Today, (March 16), if you are quick enough to catch it, you can hear Joseph Pach play two standards of the violin concerto repertoire, with piano accompaniment. The A minor concerto of Bach is one of the great examples of the early concerto form, and a most satisfying piece of music. And the Mendelssohn E minor concerto is perhaps the most popular (and deservedly so) concerto ever written for the violin. You will love it. Next Friday Ariana Pach will go light, and discuss and play developments in rap music. Saint John. Tap your way down to Mem. Hall.

TNB presents thriller "LOOT"

Loot will shock and entertain with its contrast between prim and proper dialogue and scandalous action. There is an element of fun and games in this play; Orton at his outrageous best. Authority figures are his villains, upper class values his targets, and business as usual is his scene. Orton's unique blend of the ridiculous and macabre earned him a notorious reputation. He was a moralist of the amoral, which is clearly evident in LOOT, where death is consistently mocked. The play still manages to be funny wanton and lacerating at the same time.

This fierce and marvellous farce follows the antics of a houseful of characters with questionable morals attending the wake of the recently dearly departed Mrs. McLeavy. Hal, her son, had just robbed a bank with his friend Dennis, the undertaker. When Detective Truscott, masquerading as an official of the metropolitan water board, suspiciously stops by, they have to stash the LOOT and suddenly no place is sacred! Meanwhile, a mourning widower is consoled by Nurse Fay, perhaps moreso than is called for, as she seeks a husband for the eighth time!

Loot first opened in Cambridge, England in February 1965, and was scheduled for a short provincial tour and a West End run. However, due to what Orton attributed to poor directing and casting, these plans were short-lived. In addition, the combination of frivolity and ferociousness that defined Orton's comic milieu was new and unfamiliar to the English stage. The play eventually received the attention and praise it deserved, however, on September 27, 1966, when it reopened at the Jeanette Cochrane Theatre to rave reviews. Orton is now a widely accepted playwright, respected for his bizarre comedy, and known for the development of "Ortonesque" humour.

Loot will play at Saint John High March 22 - 24, St. Stephen High School March 26, Sussex Regional High School March 27, Riverview High School in Moncton from March 28 to 31, Bathurst High School April 2, Theatre Restigouche in Campbellton April 3, On the Miramichi at James M. Hill Memorial High School in Chatham April 4, and at the Playhouse in Fredericton From April 6 to 14.

Vid Flicks

After a two week sabbatical I return not so fresh and not so rested but ready nonetheless to bring you news of the wonderful world of borrowing movies for money.

Upon editorial advisement I recently rented a new release titled *Parents*. Now before I go any further I should say that this is not the Ron Howard film, *Parenthood*, which stars Steve Martin. If you want to rent that one go ahead, I won't try to stop you. This movie is a strange little horror/(black) comedy mixture about a (hopefully) non-typical American family. Mom, dad and less-than-perky young son move into a new town as the film opens. It's immediately obvious that somethings not quite right about this subnuclear family unit. The son is afraid of the dark and won't eat well-rounded meals. This seems normal enough (except that he likes the *vegetables* and not the *meat* yeah!) Dad is a pseudoscientific type who works at a company called Toxic, specializing in chemical defoliants. Y'know how some people steal office supplies such as paper clips, elastic bands and the like? Well dad here swipes stuff from the human research center that explains his young nippers lack of appetite. I'll say no more except that the film stars Randy Quaid and Mary Beth Hurt.

Another individual with trouble with traditional social integration is the title character from the George Romero film, *Martin*. The story concerns a mildly mentally handicapped young man who passes into the guardianship of his crotchety old uncle, Cuda. A strongly religious man, Cuda is convinced that Martin is the latest in the family line to be affected by a heredity curse of vampirism. Apparently from repeated pronouncements of this type Martin himself has also become convicted of the fact that he is a vampire. His shyness conflicting with a strong sexual drive is probably at the root of his problem, but one is never quite sure. Martin meticulously plans assaults on women, wherein he drugs them, has intercourse with them, slits their wrists making their deaths appear as suicides and ritually drinks the blood from their wounds. This is an updating and twisting of the sexual component which is seemingly inherent in most vampire tales. Director Romero is best known for his trilogy of zombie films, (*Night Dawn and Day of the Living Dead*), but this is one of his most compelling early efforts.

Well, 'til next time Keep calm and be nice to your neighbours, you never know what they might be up to.

eric hill



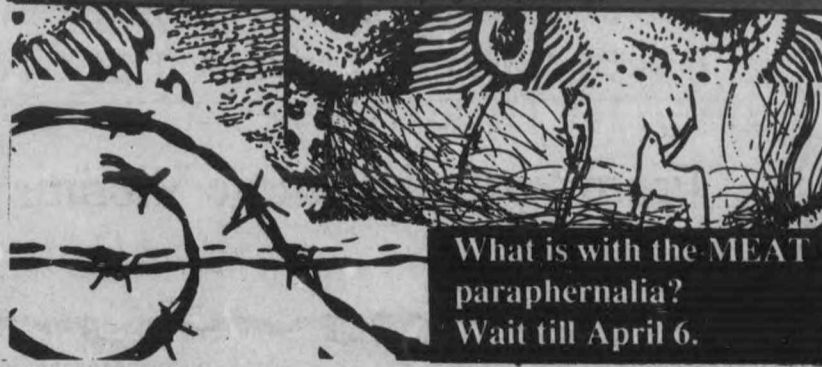
Macbeth

This week the UNB Film Society will show Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* (1971) at 8:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday evening.

Polanski's *Macbeth* is, on the surface, a relatively straightforward translation of Shakespeare's tragedy into the images of twentieth-century cinematic realism. Many directors, even those who have left the fictional settings unmolested, have felt compelled to bring about a radical shift in the ideological framework of Shakespearean plays: the atmosphere of Peter Brook's *Lear*, for example, owes more to Jan Kott than to Shakespeare. In the reaction against Romantic interpretation, which led to the substitution of alienation for empathy, the idea of tragic stature was abandoned, and evil became merely banal. Unfortunately, a banal tragic hero (even one played by Paul Scofield) is rather tedious. Polanski, displaying a keen awareness of the workings of Shakespearean tragedy, allowed his characters to develop the necessary magnificence, and as a result his *Macbeth* is one of the most successful modern film adaptations of Shakespearean drama.

Macbeth is, of course, a violent film, but the violence is judicious, consisting of no more than the presentation in film images of the action and descriptive language of the play. Occasionally Polanski lets himself go, and veers toward a visual style which is extravagantly opulent, erotic, or silly: *Macbeth's* second visit to the witches (who multiply inexplicably) is all three. For the most part his direction shows a surprising — and necessary — degree of control. His use of lighting and colour is effective, even when he succumbs to the temptations of excessive manipulation: for example, he arranges for the shadow of Duncan's crown to fall across Lady Macbeth's face just as she counsels her husband to murder the king. All of the supernatural elements, including the witches, *Macbeth's* "air-drawn dagger," and the ghost of Banquo, are satisfyingly concrete and realistic, and yet mysterious and menacing. Jon Finch and Francesca Annis offer a more youthful and vital pair of *Macbeths* than one usually encounters, and they are well supported by a suitably compelling cast. It has been suggested that Polanski errs in making the world of *Macbeth* so remorselessly evil, inhabited only by tyrants, potential tyrants, and their victims; certainly this approach makes it difficult for him to rise to a satisfactory climax. He is equal to the challenge, however, and his treatment of the final assault on *Macbeth's* seat at Dunsinane is probably the most powerful cinematic treatment the scene has ever received.

Polanski is not conspicuously successful at portraying the warmer side of *Macbeth*; in his early days, convincingly presents him as a man, a man assured from humanity, gleefully calm, and



What is with the MEAT paraphernalia? Wait till April 6.