

# Swept Away by opposing tides

by J.L. Round

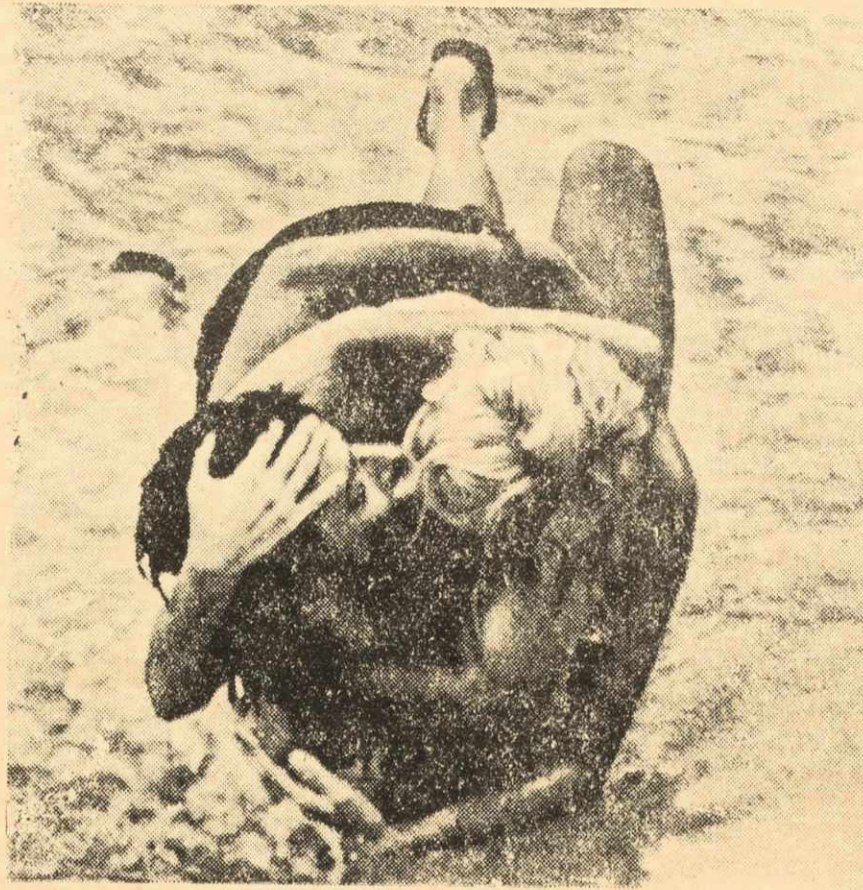
**Swept Away**...by an unusual destiny in the blue sea of August is a well-balanced study of passion and politics by writer-director, Lina Wertmuller. On the surface, the film is a herculean battle of the sexes, while underneath all, it is an ingeniously-wrought statement of social class.

**Swept Away** examines the meeting of two forces, Raffaella and Gennarino, well-portrayed by actors Mariangela Melato and Giancarlo Giannini. Raffaella, a rich, pampered aristocrat from north Italy described aptly as "the biggest bitch on the Mediterranean," meets Gennarino, a poor, communist party leader from the south of Italy. Gennarino is a deck hand on a yacht rented by Raffaella. Under her employment, Raffaella subjects him to her constant contempt and criticism which Gennarino puts up with, barely, in the name of duty. Somewhere along the way the two get stranded on a desert island. The forces converge.

Here, on the island, Gennarino is master. Raffaella learns that what she was in the outside world is of little consequence here. But she learns the hard way. Like Kate, in **The Taming Of The Shrew**, she must be broken, trained and taught to obey. Raffaella learns that "woman was made to serve man," as Gennarino beats, coerces, and generally abuses her, calling down his vengence upon her until she eventually comes to love each other.

Wertmuller's scenario is at once charming, impetuous, and filled with a caustic humour that pervades all. She has created some stunning visual poetry. In Giannini and Melato she has two excellent performers. The result of this is a bold, fresh piece of art.

While Wertmuller openly defines her characters' roles as dependent female and supportive male, she does not submit to the theory of male-supremacy. Rather, with these two characters, a vacuous,



spoiled child who wants discipline, and a downtrodden male who feels a need to exert his authority, Wertmuller has taken the concept beyond the realm of sexuality and has created a cutting satire on social class and power, while at the same time producing a clever indictment of the rich. Raffaella, at the beginning of their idyll on the island, demands of Gennarino that he sell the lobster he has caught. He refuses. Her money is no longer good here, he tells her. She says she will have him arrested, that there must be some law about refusing aid. He says there is no such law. If there were, he assures her, it would be the rich who are put in jail instead of the poor.

In **Swept Away**, as in **The Taming Of The Shrew**, one is never quite sure which of the two gets the better deal. Perhaps it is this uncertainty that makes Gennarino tempt fate in order to be certain of their mutual devotion. For whatever reason, they return to the outside world to find out if their relationship can survive away from isolation. Once back, they long to return to the island.

Within their unique relationship the characters in **Swept Away** seem to have found ideal matches in each other. Whether or not they return to the island and to each other is not of prime importance to the film. What matters though is that they truly deserve each other.

by Peter Schwenger

Lena Wertmuller's latest film invites us to be **Swept Away**. But instead of a grand passion it offers us a confused fantasy that is infantile, morbid, and in the last analysis, insulting to its audience.

It's the classic comic situation: being stranded on a desert island with an attractive member of the opposite sex. She is the Rich Bitch who chartered a yacht. He is the proletarian sailor. Both have gotten separated from a ship of fools who natter and bicker incessantly about the complexities of Italian politics.

We too are invited to escape the din of ideas, the complexities of our own time.

The castaways, who can't stand each other at first, begin to change quickly. He now domineers brutally over her—his revenge for her corresponding behavior on the boat. Gradually, she discovers that she loves this and, therefore, him.

The film now becomes a prolonged exploration of rapist fantasies—complete with rape. We wait vainly, in this supposed comedy, for some kind of pratfall that will deflate the man's ego as he heaves and strains over the woman's body, muttering that she will now what a "real man" is like. Instead, incredibly, the woman's anguished writhings begin to modulate into the perfect expression of the theory that all rape victims really want it at heart.

At exactly this point the man thunders NO! and leaves her: she must love him first. She does. She kisses his feet; she kisses the hand that slaps her to the ground, as it continues to do throughout the time they are lovers. Yet, in an embarrassingly breathy and prolonged scene, she informs him "You are Man" and only regrets that he wasn't "the first". The lesson is inescapable: Every woman wants to be raped—over and over—for in the rapist she recognizes the Real Man. It is an appalling statement (particularly for a female director) but, within a film which claims to be serious, is made in all apparent seriousness.

Wertmuller says she's a feminist. But it is easier to make that claim than to live it out. The recurrent motif, in Wertmuller's work, of repulsively fat, quivering mounds of women being climbed over by perky little Italian machos suggests a deep-seated revulsion for her own sex.

Wertmuller also says she's a Marxist. Thus the sailor's blatant oppression of his lover is apparently all right because he's so proletarian; and the woman, as Wertmuller has helpfully explained, is really a man because she represents the bourgeois class.

Wertmuller seems unaware that the woman and man here are not just a political Punch and Judy show, but also two human beings. There may certainly be an element of violence between a man and a woman; there is also a complex negotiation between individual souls that one is never allowed to feel here. Wertmuller strives only for the big effect: the laugh, the leer, the "right on"! political fist. This movie, if you aren't outraged by it, will numb your nerves—will sweep you away, right back to that simple old world we are working so hard to grow out of.

from memory.

On the whole though, I enjoyed the concert and felt it to have been an evening well spent. I am certainly glad that I was able to take advantage of seeing Brico and Marshall at the same time.

## Antonia Brico and Lois Marshall

by Julia Landry

The March 2nd, concert of the Atlantic Symphony in Rebecca Cohn Auditorium constituted a most enjoyable evening. The guest performers, Dr. Antonia Brico, conductor, and Lois Marshall, soloist, can be classed among the leaders of their respective fields.

The rich soprano tones of Lois Marshall are not unfamiliar to Halifax audiences. Familiar to the course of her career, the Toronto born Ms. Marshall has achieved world acclaim. She studied music at the Royal Conservatory and shortly after graduation won the Naumberg Award. This triumph proved to be just the beginning of a series of many. She was later to work with such musical greats as Toscanini and Sir Thomas Beecham. With the latter, she made several recordings and he presented her to his English audiences. Tours of Europe, the Soviet Union and Australia followed her British successes and her talents are in great demand by opera companies and concert audiences both in North America and abroad.

Her concerts with the Atlantic Symphony marked Dr. Antonia Brico's first appearance in this part of the world. As a woman in a predominantly male field, she has shown phenomenal strength and determination in achieving her goal. She has the distinction of being the first American to be accepted into

the Berlin Master School of Conducting and also the first woman to conduct her own woman's symphony. Her debut was made with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1930 and she proceeded to conduct before packed houses in Europe and America. From there she went on to study with the master-composer Jean Sibelius, eventually conducting his new compositions. Immortalized by the film **Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman** she has risen to the upper ranks of the world's musical conductors.

The concert opened with Beethoven's Overture, **Leonore No. 3**. The symphony's performance of this particular piece was not very impressive. It seemed to lack cohesive strength, and, while not being exactly bad, it had little to recommend it. The next item, Debussy's **Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune** was a totally different matter. The selection began with an extremely beautiful flute solo and was, from then on, a complete contrast to the work preceding it. As the concert progressed I was continually impressed by the sweetness of the flute.

It was with yet another composition by Beethoven that Miss Marshall made her first appearance. Her performance of the concert aria **Ah perfido** was an excellent introduction to her resonant soprano voice. I was very pleased to note the

manner in which Dr. Brico kept the orchestra in perfect balance with the singer. They functioned together harmoniously rather than giving one the allusion of a competition.

The second half of the concert consisted of Mahler's **Symphony No. 4 in G major**. The four movements of this work were extremely diverse, yet at the same time, very similar. While the overall sensations were soft and sweet each section had characteristics particularly their own. In the second movement, the concert master used a second violin which was tuned a whole tone above the rest. As Dr. Brico explained, the use of this instrument for the solo violin sections gave them a more strident tone.

The last movement, which again featured Lois Marshall was rather disappointing as opposed to her previous performance. She was using music, which surprised me, and instead of her hands. This meant she held it in her hands. This meant that every once in awhile she would sing into the music instead of over it to the audience, and certain portions were consequently difficult to hear. Some of her notes in the higher register also appeared to lack the usual Marshall vitality. This, however, may simply be attributed to the fact that she was using music rather than singing