

Laughing at talkies

Hilarious odyssey at Firehall

By ROGER GREEN

No doubt riding the recent wave of nostalgia in the visual arts, the University Alumnae Dramatic Club is performing a resurrected Kaufman and Hart comedy from the 1930s.

Once In A Lifetime is the sometimes hilarious recounting of a former vaudeville trio's odyssey to the west coast, specifically Hollywood, to get in on the flurry of golden opportunities raised by the advent of the talking pictures.

The three principal characters, May, Jerry and George, ride across the country by train from New York, and while en route meet Helen Hobart, who happens to be an eminent film critic and old acquaintance of May.

May, the brains of the operation, sells Helen on the idea of setting up a

voice school in Hollywood for all the former silent stars with voices that would scratch glass. And before you can say 'she sells sea shells by the seashore', Jerry, George and May are safely ensconced at the vast studios of Herman Glogauer, teaching leading ladies how to breathe. (It's all done with the abdominal muscles, say the ersatz experts — stomach in and chest out).

Of course, when the breathy starlets are finished the course and still have voices that would do credit to a cat caught in a washing mangle, the dream dissolves, and the trio are introduced to the exit.

THE OLD SWITCHEROO

But not for long, you can bet.

Last Tango debases Milton, says historian

By VINCENT PAUL DORVAL

Film critic and historian Herman G. Weinberg isn't afraid to lash out against what he considers a wave of "merde" in contemporary films.

"There is no poetry anymore in the cinema," said Weinberg, who visited York last week to present the "complete" version of Erich von Stroheim's silent film Greed.

"Films currently are going to hell. Look at The Long Goodbye; Robert Altman threw in sex and violence which had nothing to do with the plot.

"What's missing these days is the sense of poetry that made films like Foolish Wives, A Woman of Paris and The Magnificent Ambersons the classics that they are."

A recent article which Weinberg wrote in Take One, remarking that Last Tango in Paris stands up poorly against Chaplin's A Woman of Paris, drew cries of "reactionary" and "over the hill" from readers.

"Pauline Kael (who thought Tango was a masterpiece) is an intelligent critic who should know better," he retorted. "The movie was made to shock people."

"I have no fetish about Marlon Brando. The language in Last Tango debased the language of Milton and Shakespeare."

Weinberg's involvement with film journalism started as an accident.

"I wanted to become a concert violinist," he said. "I was studying at the Institute of Musical Art when Richard Watts (drama critic of the New York Post) asked me if I wanted to do an article about the relationship of music to film."

The stint was successful, and the film art had him hooked. But sound came in, and Weinberg's job disappeared.

Another accident saved him. Good films were coming in from Europe, and there was nobody around to translate the films for audiences of different ethnic origins.

"I was 20 at the time," said Weinberg. "Thanks to the moviola and European films, subtitles had to be invented.

"I was the only one around, and I've been in the trade for decades."

In the mid-60s, many of his writings on film were published, including books like The Lubitsch Touch and The Complete Greed.

The film he presented last week was his own edit of the original 1924 Greed, compiled from surviving stills of the many sequences cut out of the film. Von Stroheim's original version, according to legend, filled 42 reels — running 10 hours.

George, up to now the absolute antithesis of the brains of the organization, manages to pull things out of the fire.

The play is well-supported by a competent cast, in which I particularly enjoyed Beverly Miller as the leading lady, because of her dry humour; Sol Mandlsohn as the big producer, because he was perfect at it; and especially Ian Orr, as a playwright shipped out to Hollywood and going crazy for want of something to do.

The play has some great laugh lines, and if I were to fault it I would do so for its length. All somebody has to do is cut out the stretches where nobody is laughing, and there would be an ideal production.

OFFBEAT HALL

The Firehall Theatre, at 70 Berkeley near Adelaide, is an old firehall which has been cleverly and tastefully renovated into a theatre, and decorated with objects and pictures suiting the original theme. The cupboards in which the firemen once stored their coats and boots have been refinished for the use of the theatre patrons, and pictures of the original fire engine company abound.

A nice place to spend a free evening between Tuesday and Saturday until Dec. 15. The regular prices are \$3, with \$2 student tickets from Tuesday to Thursday.



Menaka Thakkar danced in Burton as part of York's India Week celebration. Slides, photographs and dances were the highpoints of the energetic week.

Sticks and Stones explores heroic and tragic history

By MIRA FRIEDLANDER

Canadian content has been an issue for some time now, and as a result, to many people's surprise, Canadians are finding that we have much to learn about ourselves.

James Reaney, a playwright largely ignored until now, is being given the opportunity to dig into our heritage to discover stories that have been buried for generations.

In the Tarragon Theatre's second production of the season, Sticks And Stones, Reaney has uncovered the history of the Donnellys, a Catholic family who left Ireland and came to settle in Southern Ontario, in Bidulph Township. Forced out of Ireland because of their dealings with the Protestants, and their refusal to join a secret Catholic society called the Whitefeet, they hope to find a new life in Canada.

PREJUDICE IN CANADA

However, even here the same prejudices exist, and the plot begins when the son Will comes home to tell his mother he has just been called "Blackfoot". Mrs. Donnelly relates the family's history to Will, and through this method we are exposed to their heroic and tragic fight to maintain their pride and land.

The story is a powerful one and Reaney's genius in telling it is shown primarily through his use of choral work (an almost lost art in theatre), his interchangeable characters, and his ability to make any inanimate object on stage serve a distinct purpose.

Ladders become roads, a metal bathtub becomes a bar, the stones become the Donnellys, and the sticks their enemies.

LACK OF DISCIPLINE

But in Keith Turnbull's production, the eight young actors, though solid in their individual performances, as a group tend to lack a necessary discipline.

As a result, several times the impact of a scene is marred by the shuffling of an actor not in the scene, by the noise of props being moved or dropped, and by actors not in the spotlight losing

their characters and becoming themselves.

When, in Acts II and III, the company tightens up considerably, the difference is notable. Suddenly there is an excitement that becomes part of the play, rather than just the actor's enthusiasm for his work. From that point on Sticks and Stones becomes a production of interest, intrigue and kick.

With Reaney comes a total involvement, unbridled joy in creativity, and a keen understanding of a country young enough to make history, and old enough to have one.

The Tarragon is at 30 Bridgman Ave., and the shows are Tuesday through Sunday at 8:30 p.m., with a pay-what-you-can Sunday matinee at 2:30 p.m. Student rates are \$2.50, except for Friday and Saturday.

Sight and Sound

Ryan's Daughter spreads into Winters

David Lean, of Lawrence of Arabia and Doctor Zhivago fame, moved his crew to Ireland for two years to film Ryan's Daughter, a love story set against war and revolution. Sarah Miles plays Rosy Ryan, a bored and disillusioned wife who carries on with a dashing English army officer. Robert Mitchum, Christopher Jones, Trevor Howard and John Mills round out the cast. Wanda Hale of the Daily News praised "the gentle, stirring, awesome beauty of nature on Ireland's rugged, rocky west coast." Winters shows the tale at 8 p.m. Friday and Sunday nights in Curtis LH-1, for \$1.25 general, \$1 for Winters students.

Science meets art in Stong gallery

An exhibition of visual design experiments by science and engineering students from Boston's MIT will run until Sunday in the Samuel J. Zacks gallery in Stong, beside the junior common room. The gallery is open daily from noon to 6 p.m.

Yevtushenko reads at Burton tonight

Yevgeny Yevtushenko, possibly the most significant Russian poet in the post-Stalin era, will read selections from his poetry tonight at Burton auditorium at 8:30 p.m. Although he will be in Canada for another 18 days as guest of the Canadian external affairs department, this will be his only Toronto appearance. Tickets for his reading are \$1 for students, and \$2 for the public, and the audience may meet Yevtushenko at a reception following the reading. For further information, call 667-2370.

Gimme Shelter tops Monterey Pop

Bethune closes its first season of movies with one of the finest musical double bills to date. Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, the Who, Ravi Shankar and Otis Redding hold the stage in Monterey Pop, the first (1967) rock festival. The Rolling Stones, Jefferson Airplane and Ike and Tina Turner wail in Gimme Shelter, a chronicle of the Stones' U.S. tour and the Altamont festival of rock 'n' roll and death. The show starts at 8:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, in 35 mm, with cartoons. Admission is \$1.25 general, \$1 for Bethune, in Curtis LH-L.

Double horror eats screen in Calumet

Two vintage shockers crawl from their crypts to entertain horror fans on Sunday at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in the Calumet common room. Atkinson presents Night of the Living Dead and Murders in the Rue Morgue for the blood-curdling price of 69 cents.



Herman Weinberg feels Chaplin's Paris beats Bertolucci's.

Peter Hsu, photo