

The Gateway fine arts

dark world in a cold grey light

Fortunately films, unlike newspapers, do not stop for pre-Christmas and post-Christmas exams. Showings of the Edmonton Film Society during the past six weeks merit note, however brief and belated.

Ingmar Bergman's "Winter Light", shown Dec. 13, marks an advance from the point of view of both concept and style on Bergman's previous discussions of the God-man relationship.

Conceptually, "Winter Light" presents new angles on two problems—why man needs God and how he can find Him. To the question of why man needs God, Bergman replied in "The Seventh Seal" with the squire's scepticism and in "Through a Glass Darkly" with David's need for love.

"Winter Light" adds a third reason through the figure of the fisherman haunted by a hatred-filled world threatened by the bomb. To the problem of what God is, which is bound up with whether man can find Him or not, the film admits with a new frankness that He may be evil or best indifferent. As substitutes—or perhaps solutions—Bergman presents two alternatives present in earlier films: communication and suffering in search of God.

The manner in which the philosophic question is broached in "Winter Light" is the second respect in which the film marks a new point in Bergman's development. Although abstract concepts are as usual presented through an examination of the relationships between people, the film differs in that the cumbersome symbolism of "The Seventh Seal" and the dramatically sensual scenes of "Through a Glass Darkly" are absent.

The film is frankly contemplative. The result is a purity of tone which more than makes up for the lack of action that filmmakers seem traditionally to have thought necessary to maintaining screen interest. Emphasizing this simplicity is the austere setting of winter fields and empty cathedrals, the grey photographic style, and the acting, particularly the lonely prosaicism of Ingrid Thulin.

At first glance, Alain Jessua's "La Vie A L'Envers" of Jan. 10 is the polar opposite of "Winter Light". The latter is made by an established director, the former by an unknown. Bergman's style is dominated by North European agnost and undisguised seriousness; Jessua's manner is light, elegant, and witty.

Yet "Vie A L'Envers" makes its point about the bleakness of modern life just as surely as does "Winter Light". The hero tries ordinary life, only to find that elements are incompatible. The way out of bewilderment is mentally to order your own world—ignore what doesn't fit. If you're lucky they'll put you in a mental hospital where all is perfectly ordered. Who's upside down—you or the world?

Finally, a word about the Classics Series of the Edmonton

Film Society. Films haven't always been "good", but then, degree of excellence is the wrong criterion upon which to judge a classic series, whose films should be significant for showing the development, rather than the perfection, of techniques.

This year's selection comes closer to this ideal than ever before. "The Magnificent Ambersons", for example, although marred by a banal story, is worth seeing both for technique and as a successor (somewhat unworthy) to "Citizen Kane".

"Metropolis", a German film of 1926, scored a double success by demonstrating brilliant set design and camera work while incidentally regaling the audience with naive plot and uninhibited sentimentality.

"Il Gribo" is perhaps the most important film shown to date; not only does it mark a significant stage in Antonioni's development—the bleak settings and arrangements of figures that characterize his style appear here—but is valid in its own right as a sometime effective, sometimes unconvincing, portrayal of man in a valueless world.

—Beverly Gietz

please don't eat the objets d'art

A recent student comment to The Gateway lamented the lack of art on this campus.

Investigation revealed that there was a reason for this; namely, that in 1939, someone defaced a drawing of a male nude on display in one of the campus buildings.

Undoubtedly, twenty-seven years is a long time to deprive a student body of artistic stimulation on the basis of some indiscriminated fig-leaf-drawing, but the tendency to immolate has not been assuaged, even with the passing of time.

The answer to my query; "Why are there no original works on display somewhere on campus?"—was pretty direct; "We can't hang paintings, prints or drawings because the risk of damage or theft is too great."

This is a legitimate consideration. There are people or groups of people around here who do not even respect a public bus shelter (noticeably the shelter in front of SUB—the shelter has been extensively damaged by vandals) let alone respect or appreciate a decent piece of art.

They tell me this is an apathetic campus. I don't believe it. I do believe, however, that it is a highly adolescent campus.

This theory, I hope, will undergo some pretty stringent testing within the next few months, because, U of A, we are getting a permanent collection of Canadian art.

Whether or not we are ready remains to be seen, for Edmonton and district seems to have a very low tolerance to mature expression in any form.

For instance, the Dennis Burton mural at the Edmonton International Airport is slowly, literally, being torn to shreds, and one

of Lynne Connell's Eros drawings was defaced with oil (of all things!) at the Edmonton Gallery's "Art Mart".

Isn't it about time that this place become less bacteria and more culture-conscious?

There is hope. For there are people in this bureaucratic think-pot who firmly believe that U of A and Edmonton are ready for and deserving of a permanent collection.

It's taken quite a while, three years to be exact, to ram the project through the Administration and Council, but it has been done and tonight, somewhere, a committee is meeting to decide the purchasing policy and constitution of the U of A Fine Arts Committee.

Hats, off, and God bless us, every one.

Isabelle Foord

production mccreathed in splendor

Jack McCreath's production of "A Man For All Seasons" is, alas, no longer with us.

Would that it had been possible for the production to have been performed somewhere else than in the Jubilee Auditorium (I'm told an attempt was made to get the Citadel) so that it could have remained here longer.

"Man" was the first good piece of theatre Edmonton has seen since "Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", a play done with an all-star cast and fuddy-duddy local promotion, and I suppose we shall have to wait another two or three months for another top-notch play.

And yet, with the mediocre audience support that exists in the Snow Capital of Canada, only two or three good plays a year are justified.

"A Man For All Seasons" has proved that the best Edmonton talent can work well together and enjoy it. The petty enmities of theatre people which have done so much damage over the past several years seem to have been buried and replaced by mature artistry.

Edmonton is one of the three or four major theatre centres in Canada, and with a play like this it has proven that it can be the best theatre city in our country if it wants to be.

Two requisites for this will be an audience shamed out of the ruts they have worn in front of their idiot-boxes and a more enlightened choice of plays (for heavens sakes I hope we can bury Tennessee Williams!)

All this palaver is warranted by the fact that "A Man For All Seasons" was a production of superlatives.

Control, almost perfect control, was in evidence at all times. Control not only of the relationships between actors but of those among sets, lights, costumes and actors showed the touch of McCreath's art. Here is a director that does not fool around.

He deserved to have the top calibre material he had to work with because he used it so well.

Phil Silvers' sets and costumes were an important factor in the over-all effect, not just because they were so "nice" to look at but because they made both actors and audience settle so comfortably into the experience of the play.

Walter Kaasa was another very important factor.

He needs no praise for his acting; everyone knows only the best is to be expected from him. What



—E. Borsky photo

MORE WELL-KAASTED—Sir Thomas More (Walter Kaasa) turns to the audience and away from Sir Richard Rich (Bob Chaput) in Jack McCreath's production of Robert Bolt's "A Man for All Seasons" at the Jubilee Auditorium last week. This entertaining and moving study of the seamier side of the birth of the Church of England was sponsored by the All Saints' Friendship Guild (Anglican).

few people realize is the respect that he commands from his fellow actors and the confidence he instils in them. Why do we not see Walter on the stage more often?

Wes Stefan is another kettle of fish. He invariably gives a rare performance, but seldom receives the recognition for it he deserves. Controlled comedy is a precious commodity and Wes knows how to deal with it. He is a perfect foil for Kaasa, and this play proved it.

Two other actors who gave enjoyable performances were John Madill and Wally McSween. Madill was just so perfect for the role of Cardinal Wolsey, and McSween proved once more that he is not a type-cast actor; would that more Edmonton actors had Walley's voice control and projection.

In some cases a lack of sureness on the odd occasion was a sign of inexperience, not of bad acting. I was pleased that McCreath's acting and directing did not interfere with each other as so easily they could have done.

Sue Smith, playing Margaret More, proved she can go a long way in Edmonton theatre if she wants to; any casting director would be a fool to ignore her.

There were, of course, things wrong (though far outweighed by things right). On one occasion, early in the play, the blocking got a little congested, resulting in artificial attempts by the actors to avoid masking each other.

The window set in the Cardinal Wolsey scene didn't seem to fit in, perhaps a fault in lighting. Bob Chaput tended to move about too much in his early scene with More. The sound cues in the trial scene at the end were slightly sloppy.

There is, perhaps, no excuse for these and other little blunders; but there is a reason.

These people all have other jobs. They have to get used to the Auditorium in too short a

time. They are unable to rehearse all day as the Citadel is said to be doing.

I do not doubt, though, that were it financially possible most of the cast and crew would spend all their time in drama.

Let us hope, if such is their desire, that a sound professional theatre will develop in Edmonton. (You don't do that by firing the coach because someone else called the wrong plays, though why a coach should take such a job in the first place I'll never know.)

I'd also like to mention that the play was a good choice.

"A Man For All Seasons" is a good blend of such notables as Shakespeare, Ibsen, Eliot and Brecht. It is an interesting study in contrast between what the existentialists might call two authentic men.

It could use a little more of More's penetrating wit, and a little better development of some of the minor characters.

It certainly is not "the most honored play of our time". Robert Bolt is not a great playwright, only a very good one. The play was a good choice because it suited the actors and they suited it.

But where will the Friendship Guild go from there?

Must Edmonton always be sucking the cultural breast of London, New York and Hollywood?

There are several good playwrights in Edmonton. If they had the opportunity they could accomplish much more than they have so far, though the work of the Yardbird Suite seems to have been a step in the right direction.

It is about time for Edmonton to take seriously the task of building its own culture from the roots up if it is to play any important part in the development of North American culture.

—Peter Montgomery