

The Idiot

by Marion Frazer

A film version of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* was presented Thursday, October 29 in the Killam by Dal's Russian Department. The "movie" emphasized the more melodramatic aspects of the novel. The film conveyed something of the passion and irony of Dostoevsky's novel but without the modifying influence, the perspective of the observer accompanied by Dostoevsky's omniscient presence as his own narrator. Thus it was, perhaps, that the audience was moved to laughter by certain intense scenes which were obviously never intended to be funny, on paper or on film.

It's possible that our Canadian audience, innured to overacting through horror movies and late night specials, offered up their laughter as a semi-automatic response. Visualize the scene: Prince Myshkin ("the idiot") has been robbed of a prospective bride. Desperate to stop her from "making a serious mistake", he flings himself on the nearest sleigh and gives chase, cloak swirling around him in the wind and snow. Shades of Count Dracula! The audience is lost in convulsive laughter.

Now contrast the "actual" story: the Prince is a saint, a Christ figure. His attraction to the woman, Natasya Filipovna, springs from a desire to save her from her own self-hatred. It is Filipovna's masochism which has induced her to turn from him, a truly good man, to Rogozhin, Myshkin's diabolic counterpart. For Myshkin, the race into the night amounts almost to a chase after three souls' salvation: Natasya's-for she threat-

ens to destroy herself; Rogozhin's-Natasya "brings out the worst" of his traits; and his own between them, Natasya and Rogozhin will destroy the Prince with themselves, for Myshkin's life is bound to theirs by the power of his goodness.

To give the audience its due, it was expecting the kind of portrayal it could take seriously. Its reaction was due paradoxically to a combination of over-simplification and exaggeration.

Despite this defect, *The Idiot* had decided virtues, many inherent in its casting. The faces of the cast, even in repose communicated with the audience. "Myshkin's" face was exceptionally fine. His elegant features, the dark shadows under his eyes conjoined with a certain luminous quality of his skin were reminiscent of a Christ in a Medieval painting. Again, the film was guilty of over-dramatization of effects. The actor's face in itself was sufficient for us to draw the religious parallel. The film made sure we couldn't possibly miss this by the use of such devices as light shining behind the Prince to create a halo...Dr. Glazov of the Russian Department rationalized such heightening or religious effects with the explanation that the Russian popular of the fifties (the period he suggested as a probable date of the filming) had not been raised within a Christian ethic. Thus, dramatization which we might find crude, they would find necessary.

Not merely the physical, but the emotional reservoirs of the actors were well-taxed in *The Idiot*. All actors were remarkable. Some glimpses particularly come to mind:

that of Filipovna in a situation apparently embarrassing to every one but her, she throws her head back and laughs in an utterly humorless way; another image is of Myshkin's expression of compassion after receiving a blow of a friend. Flaws in the film would seem to be the fault rather of the director and producer than of the cast. It is a shame that this film did, if not approach the subtle intensity of the novel, at least realize its own

potential. Its high points were very high.

Dr. Glazov has suggested that a similar program of films and discussions might again be on the agenda next year in conjunction with the Department's courses in Russian Literature. If this is a possibility, it is one to be eagerly awaited, for even the worst films cannot fail to catch a portion of the nobility of their subjects. At their best, they could be magnificent.



Minglewood band

by Pearl Catero

Something strange happened at the SUB last Friday night. People were dancing in the McInnes Room and it was only 9:30! The Matt Minglewood Band, a very talented group of musicians from Cape Breton had the crowd on its feet from beginning to end of the dance. The raunchy bluesy beat was a refreshing change from the usual Disco tunes and was evidently much appreciated.

Matt, the master showman himself, has been in the business for about ten years. He really knows how to get the crowd into it. All members of the group are very professional and have no problem at all making rendition of "The Patriot Game" was particularly popular and roused a thunderous ovation.

Luckily for the under 19 population, the Matt Minglewood dance was a double-stamp event due to the Hoktoberfest celebrations. Otherwise they would have missed a really good night at the SUB. There was an excellent turn out at

the event despite the fact that Ray Charles was at the Cohn. Mat is a Cape Breton legend and I and the people who I talked to certainly hope to see more entertainment of this calibre at Dal.

Look forward to the Matt Minglewood Band album soon to be released.

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