

Music Box plays echoes of the Holocaust

by Gurn Blansten

How does one come to terms with the tragedy of the Holocaust?

As North Americans we rarely have to ask ourselves this question. After all, it happened over there in Europe over forty years ago. However, for many Eastern Europeans, the atrocities that were committed are still very much an issue. This skeleton in their closet is a continuing source of shame and embarrassment for the succeeding generations. The disturbing part is that the perpetrators themselves still deny their involvement in these heinous crimes, and as a result, the Holocaust is ignored and the truth is not fully known.

It is this denial that is the target of screenwriter Joe Eszterhas in his new film *Music Box*.

Eszterhas, Hungarian by birth,

feels the truth must be told about this bloody part of Hungarian and Eastern European history. The shame can only disappear when the whole story of the Holocaust is revealed. He was quoted recently as saying:

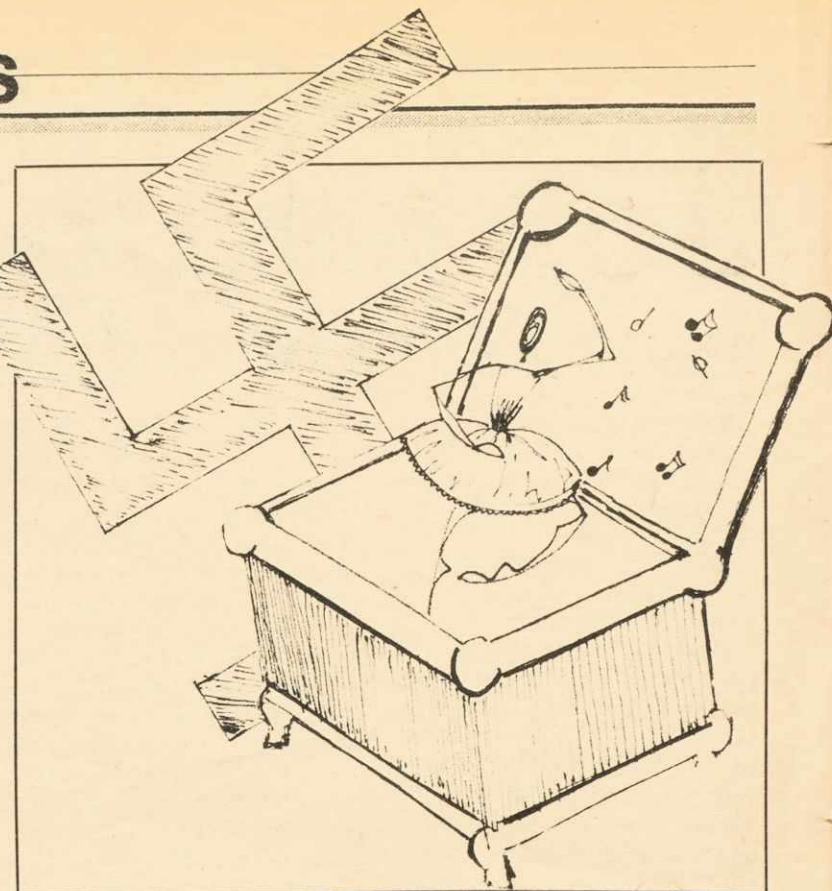
"You have no idea how terrible it is to discover that your own people did these horrendous things, to learn that even after the war is over, the Hungarians were still taking their Jews and dumping them in the Danube. For my generation of Hungarian kids, the question 'What did you do in the war, daddy?' had potentially nightmarish implications."

These are the issues that Eszterhas brings to the fore in *Music Box* and, with the help of director Costa Gavras, turns the film into a noble crusade for the buried truth. It is, however, Costa Gavras (*Betrayed*, *Missing*) that elevates the movie to truly

remarkable proportions, giving it the thriller quality that is needed to keep the audience both educated and entertained.

Although it is essentially a courtroom drama that tells the story of a Hungarian immigrant accused of war crimes, the courtroom atmosphere never manages to trivialize the tragedy of the Holocaust. Rather, the witnesses who testify are so convincingly acted that the powerful images one extracts from their testimony are sufficient enough to maintain the gripping suspense of these scenes, and therefore the director is free from resorting to flashbacks and visual aids. I couldn't help but recall the great film *Shoah*, which told the history of the Holocaust through the on-camera recollections of the survivors, without showing any newsreel footage. The testimony in *Music Box* is just as riveting.

The acting in the film is all first-rate, especially Jessica



Lange, who stars as the lawyer-daughter who defends her father accused of the crimes. It is without a doubt her best performance. Special mention should also be given to actor Frederic Forrest, who plays the prosecuting attorney. He is one of the most underrated actors in Hollywood and

does a superb job here, playing the villain with shades of grey.

Obviously Eszterhas' goal is simple: to remember the truth, and perhaps by remembering, heal old wounds. It may be a painful but to Eszterhas, it is an important cathartic experience and one that is long overdue.

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Music extravaganza

by Sean MacLean

Once again, the Dalhousie Society of Music Students is sponsoring a presentation of the musical activities going on in the Dal Music Department, in the McInnes Room, Dal Student

Union Building, at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 6th.

"The idea of our yearly extravaganza is to let the larger university community — students, staff, and faculty — see what is happening in the music department, and one that is long overdue. To realize actually exists," said Society president Alan MacDonald.

"The music department is not large, and the students have a heavy academic load. Consequently, in the process of keeping up with practicing and their ensemble work, the students of the department have a low profile in the Dalhousie community.

"This is a shame, because the department itself operates as a

matrix from which the faculty and students make a large contribution to the city's musical life. The department has staged operas and oratorios, and runs such ensembles as Dalhousie Chorale and Dal Community Concert Band. These are just a few of the musical projects piloted from the music department."

Students in the music department have also formed "extra-curricular" groups to entertain at parties. "We figured that these bands could afford to come out into the spotlight, to represent the other side of what the students do."

The recital half of the program starts at 8. Dance music starts at 10. Admission is \$2.

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