

films

The War Game (at the Roxy) is a semi-documentary film prepared by the BBC, and is another film which can't be considered entertainment in the usual sense.

It examines a propitiously fictitious nuclear attack on Britain, but utilizes information from the bombing of Hiroshima and Dresden and the American tests in Nevada in 1954 as factual background.

The result is brutal. It looks like some black imagining of hell derived from a psychotic mind, completely divorced from any reality; and yet the narrative drones out an unemotional stream of facts to support the horrific dramatization of the screen. It is this contrast between what appears as an unbelievable fiction, and the constant reminder of the factual basis which denies its acceptance as a complete fabrication and makes the film so disturbing.

The film begins with emergency civil defence measures developed in Britain, touches on Berlin as a microcosm of the potential conflict between East and West, then hits on the effect of an all-out nuclear attack on Britain. Many of the events are fictitious but they graphically represent the effect of the bomb blast, fall-out, and the disintegration of authority resulting in chaos and anarchy.

It is remarkably controlled and factual and makes few direct moral judgements, but this gives greater weight to its criticisms.

There is an abstruse prod at the British government. A few years ago in Britain there was a government announcement that information on the effects of nuclear war would be increased over the next few years. This professed information has dwindled in inverse proportion to the stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

The inference is that the whole thing is a game between the governments of the "Big Powers" of the world, but the British government hasn't yet let the voting public in on the rules. In an on the street interview with the masses no one knows what Carbon 14 or Strontium 90 was, and the general public feeling was that the game is one of "You bomb us and we'll bomb you."

The film is loaded with grim, sardonic humor but it gets lost in the barbarism. During the "build your own fall-out shelter" craze, the prices of specific building materials mysteriously rose leaving most people unable to afford a shelter.

One man proudly displays his defences which are hopelessly inadequate, then brandishes a shotgun and bravely announces "I'm not scared to use it either." And what are the three things every family should take into the shelter: marriage certificate, savings book, and national health plan book. They might be useful for proving innocence in an accusation of fornication, vagrancy or high treason.

But will it really do a person any good to know that at a certain distance from the blast center his eyeballs are going to melt, or that certain amounts of radiation will cause hemorrhaging around the gums, followed by scurvy, and a bleeding into the joints of the body, and ultimately death.

The film winds up with a beautiful explanation of the understatement—all previous description of the destructive power was derived from information on the power used on Hiroshima and any used today would be at least ten times as powerful. At it was the destruction shown was beyond comprehension, and anyone attempting to multiply the devastation by ten would arrive at a total void (which may be closer to the truth than any imaginative multiplication.)

If there is going to be no winner, it is a pretty stupid game, and the film attempts to arouse an awareness of the potential danger so that it can be prevented. But just as the war in Viet Nam is too far away to have much consideration in reality, so *The War Game* considers results which are too unbelievable to concern very many people.

It may be encouraging to note that the film does not deal with much of the modern political concern with test ban treaties. It may also be encouraging to note that with the terrific power available, if the event ever does occur it will be game over anyway.

—Gordon Auck

Hedda Gabler artistic success

With the current production of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, the Citadel may put aside any suggestions that it is only a commercial theater. This presentation is a sensitive, incisive work of art.

The story, briefly, concerns Hedda Gabler's search for some purpose in life. Bored to madness by her new husband, unable to accept the fact of her pregnancy, her ego stricken by the success of another woman where she had failed, she finds meaning in her final act—suicide.

A large part of the credit for this success must go to the Artistic Director, Mr. Robert Glenn. Mr. Glenn has taken a probing psychological drama and freed it from the story line form. The play has been reshaped to represent Hedda's thoughts in the split second before she kills herself.

As a result, what we see is

completely subjective; the chronology is lost, some incidents are distorted, some overlap, while others are left out entirely.

The effect is a penetrating character analysis of Hedda and the effect of her society upon her. Unfortunately, the broken story line makes it very difficult to maintain a mounting tension. Although our interest is sustained, we never reach a true climax.

The success of the piece must also be attributed to the work of Production Designer Phillip Silver. His use of the stage turntables made scene changes unobtrusive and greatly aided the flow of the play.

Even more important is Mr. Silver's lighting. Under his masterly hand, the lighting moves the play smoothly between Hedda's conscious and subconscious memories. He does this, praise God, with no hint of slickness. It is evident that Mr. Silver considers

his lighting to be one element in a work of art, and not a show piece in itself.

It is difficult to evaluate the acting in this play, for it all seems to attain a uniform standard of excellence. Special credit must go to Leslie Carlson for giving such plausibility to the character of George Tesman. Patricia Hamilton, as Hedda, was certainly adequate, although there were times when she was evidently labouring under the difficulty of her role. Ruth Gregory, as Miss Juliana Tesman, must also be commended. I think that she best caught the subjective mood Mr. Glenn intended.

Finally, notice must also be given to Brian Preistman and Gil Evans for the music and the sound effects respectively. Both were well executed and subtly improved the mood of the play.

I must congratulate the Citadel and strongly recommend this play. It combines the perception and imagination of experiment with the precision and talent of commercial theatre.

As an afterthought, I must also compliment the Citadel for its taste in paintings. The canvases they are showing just about take up the fifteen minute intermission.

—Bill Pasnak

Arts Calendar

Symphony strings up Brahms

It's Symphony weekend once again. Tomorrow at 8:30 p.m. and on Sunday at 3:00 p.m. the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra hosts cellist Aldo Parisot and violinist Joseph Fuchs. These gentlemen will team up on Brahms' "Concerto for Violin and Cello". Also on the program are Stolzel's "Concerto for 6 Trumpets", Mussorgsky's "Night on the Bald Mountain", and Mendelssohn's "Symphony No. 4 in A (Italian)".

The Women's Musical Club is presenting two local pianists, Robert Strangeland and Edward Lincoln, tonight at the Centennial Library Theatre. Both of these pianists are on the staff of the University Music Department.

Tickets are available at the door; the performance starts at 8:30 p.m.

Hedda Gabler continues at the Citadel (it's reviewed above). *Funny Girl*, the musical comedy, is at our own SUB theatre tonight and tomorrow. And the original Canadian musical *Jackpot* continues at the Library Theatre until tomorrow. (You figure out whether or not this conflicts with the Women's Musical Club tonight.)

Cellist Barbara Frazer is performing at the Department of Music free concert in Con Hall this Sunday at 8:30 p.m. Also in

Con Hall, a recital of the works of Harrison Kerr will be held on Thursday, the 23rd, at 8:30 p.m. Mr. Kerr will lecture there on the following evening.

Above all, don't forget the Edmonton Opera production of *The Barber of Seville* next Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. Students (and students only) will be admitted on Wednesday for one dollar.

—T.D.

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