

Films

The Night They Raided Minsky's (at the Rialto) contrives in a thoroughly unpretentious way, to raise all the old paradoxical questions about movies celebrating the forms of entertainment they did more than anything else to kill.

Despite its good humor (because of it?), this is a Death-of-Vaudeville film. The tone is established as elegiac-nostalgic by bits of '20s film footage, real and simulated, the simulations worked into the body of the film by shifts from black-and-white to color à la *Boston Strangler*.

Burlesque is established as maniacally flourishing on the eve of its being wiped out. The danger here is simply a matter of young Minskys father's not being prepared to renew the theatre lease on grounds of decorum and family honor; but subtler decays thematically hover.

Bert Lahr, in his last role before his death, plays the decayed comic reduced to shuffling around as a janitor—bemused, gentle, hopeless.

Norman Wisdom is good as the Sad Clown, decay here being the decay of any power to act—the good man as ineffectual.

His obverse is Jason Robards as Clown Sinister, the happy mask behind which everything has decayed but the mechanical will. Robards does a brilliantly chilly job here, his face chalky, even his final repentance disastrous.

Of course the ambivalent energy of the performances of these cripples has to be conveyed too. Here the intelligence behind the film really emerges.

I wasn't surprised that Wisdom and Robards, old pros both, caught the bitter-sweet attractiveness of the old jokes, the old routines. But the handling of the chorus-girls was something else.

The usual approach to '20s chorus-girls is to tart them up in very contemporary fashion, completely ignoring the shift in modes of beauty that has taken place between then and now; there is also a flourishing minority approach which involves emphasizing the ugliness of the fat, vulgar women who turned on our disgusting forebears.

But in *The Night They Raided Minsky's* a much more complicated and human stance comes across; the girls are rendered at once erotic and alien, decayed and vital, sexual dinosaurs of great power and good nature.

So much for the background of the film; across which, in contrary motion to which, we watch the trajectory traced by the stunning Britt Eklund from little-girl-in-the-big-city to stripper.

As much at the end of the film as at the beginning she is the Innocent, the 19th-century pure girl who derives only positive energy from the equivocal liberation represented by burlesque and uses that energy to move into a 1969 dream of freedom, the sweetness and light I assume Nude Theatre is a slightly grubby attempt at.

Her strip itself is like Bardot's discovery of the strip in that even more mysteriously powerful fairy-tale of the Revolution, Louis Malle's *Viva Maria* (though, alas, at the crucial moment the editing of *Minsky's* is badly bungled); in both cases the shabby symbiosis of bored exploited performers and brutal pathetic audience is shattered, to be replaced by a moment of joyful community, a visitation of Eros.

It is all very curious, since it is hard to see just what has been won.

An Eden, I suppose; and, of course, the thoroughly democratic faith in the potential of any audience to attain the Edenic, to be purified by the dream made flesh.

But be reassured: my train of thought here is even more remote than usual from the surface substance of the film, which is mainly a splendid romp with lots of good jokes and the exquisite Miss Eklund in camera range a good deal of the time.

A brief reminder that SUB Theatre Cinema is showing an exciting collection of avant-garde films from the Bell and Howell collection this and succeeding Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in SUB theatre. Be there.

—John Thompson

Mixed Chorus means variety — everything from poetry to Bach

Today through Saturday the University of Alberta Mixed Chorus celebrates its Silver Anniversary with a program ranging from 17th century German choral music to English, French and German folk songs.

For this 25th annual concert, conductor James Whittle has selected choral music of widely varying moods and periods. The program will begin with Psalm settings for double choir by the early German composers, Johann Pachelbel and Heinrich Schutz.

Bach is represented by "Praise the Lord, all ye nations". The folk music includes three English songs (arranged by Vaughn Williams), three German (arranged by Brahms) and three French-Canadian songs first performed at the 1956 annual concert.

Mixed Chorus will perform settings of Elizabethan poetry by contemporary English composers, and four of the Choral Dances from the opera *Gloriana*, written by Benjamin Britten for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The

concert will conclude with two movements of William Byrd's *Mass for Four Voices*, and three liturgical motets by the late dean of Canadian composers, Healey Willan.

Mixed Chorus includes students from most of the faculties and organizations on campus. The prime requisites of membership are good vocal sound, reasonable reading ability, and a great desire to sing.

The Chorus was first organized in the fall of 1944. Three years later, Professor R. S. Eaton joined the Department of Music and agreed to become Conductor, a post he held until 1967. Under his guidance, it matured in proficiency and attained its present size. Concert tours were initiated which took Mixed Chorus to communities throughout Alberta and into British Columbia, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories.

Tickets for the 1969 concert are \$1.50, and are available at the Allied Box Office, at SUB Ticket Booth, or from Chorus members.

Shaw woos a dark lady in new plays at Citadel

Citadel Theatre follows its outstanding production of Michael Dyne's *The Right Honorable Gentleman* with a playbill of two shorter works by George Bernard Shaw. *Village Wooing* and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* will run from February 19 until March 15.

Shaw wrote *The Dark Lady* in 1910 at the request of a group of theatre artists who wished to promote the idea of a British National Theatre. The play succeeded, but its *raison d'être* was never realized: the BNT is still no more than a cornerstone laid in 1958.

Citadel director Sean Mulcahy will both direct and star in *Dark Lady*, which brings together Elizabeth I (Sheila Haney), the young actor and playwright William Shakespeare (Mulcahy), and a gregarious Warder who throws out

lines that Will later uses in his plays. On a terrace of the palace the two main characters discuss the state of theatre in Britain, and Will soon finds that "great Elizabeth is more than a bit touchy about her virginity".

Village Wooing was written in a single day while Shaw was recuperating from illness on a Caribbean cruise in 1934. It was written to alleviate boredom, and its happy, relaxed atmosphere shows it. Mulcahy has called it "a sex comedy written by an old man. Shaw mightn't have liked that—he was a mere seventy-seven when he wrote it to wile away the time on a world cruise. It is really *Man and Superman* all over again, but without the diamond-hardness". Denise Fergusson and Kenneth Dight are featured.

leftovers

Students elections are coming up fast, and it is time to drag out all those incredible kicklines again. Why is it, dear hearts, that every thin-voiced, gangly-legged, flat-chested, small-hipped, tone-deaf girl on campus wants to display her dubious resources for the ridicule of thousands? Any candidate who must depend on these knock-kneed, hackneyed chorus lines to win a seat on Council does not deserve our votes.

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GOD IS LOVE
LOVE IS BLUE
GOD IS BLUE
● ● ●

An unusual amount of experimental drama has been produced on campus this month. First there was Studio Theatre's strangely perverse production of *What You Will*, and now we have *Election Rally*, scripted and staged by the SDU.

Election Rally, like its precursor, deliberately presents a curious admixture of theatrical periods: theatre of the absurd, total environment, guerrilla theatre, even kabuki. The play opens at a massive rally preceding the election of a great leader for some undisclosed institution. Candidates for the position take the lectern.

Then the Clowns enter in harlequin costumes and white facial makeup reminiscent of Cocteau and theatre of the absurd. They throng the speaker, swaying rhythmically and chanting "Women are an oppressed minority" and "We want communication". The effect is overpowering: an existential chorus of Greek women mouthing quotations from Chairman Mao.

A solitary figure enters wearing the makeup of the traditional Japanese Kabuki theatre. Carrying a sparkler, he mimes the

classical dance of the Monkey King, which to our knowledge has never before been successfully adapted to the Western Theatre. At last overcome, the spectators converge onstage and engulf the players.

As an extended allegory, *Election Rally* succeeds where many didactic plays have failed, partly because of this mixing of periods and traditions. It is obvious that the "demonstrators"—figures of the guerrilla theatre—while masquerading as radicals, are actually in the extreme right wing of ultra-conservatism. By masking as radicals, committing various insidious acts and then nominating a large number of puppet candidates, they can depend on the conservative backlash to ensure the election of their true candidate in the reactionary right.

The SDU are to be congratulated for a fine production.

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Teaching Positions 1969-70

Campus Interviews with a representative of the Board continue to be available for Education students interested in teacher employment starting September 2, 1969.

For interview appointment, application forms and information contact:

Canada Manpower
Student Placement Office
4th Floor, Students' Union Building
Telephone 432-4291.

What's new

A Shaw Festival at Citadel Theatre presents two often-neglected works, *Village Wooing* and *Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. 8:30 p.m.

Feb. 20: Four Canadian poets, including Dorothy Livesay, will read their works. TLB-2, 8 p.m.

Feb. 20 to 22: U of A Mixed Chorus, under the direction of James Whittle, perform songs ranging through folk music, psalms, choral dances and sacred music. 8:30 p.m. Admission \$1.50.

Feb. 22 to 23: The last two days of Victoria Composite High School's production of William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker*. 8:15 p.m. Student tickets \$1.75 at Allied Box Office.

Feb. 22 to 23: The Edmonton Symphony performs Moussorgsky-Ravel's *Pictures from an Exhibition*, Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto*, and Beethoven's *Symphony V in C minor*.

Feb. 22 to Mar. 15: SUB Art Gallery displays prints produced by the members of the Montreal Graphic Guild.

Feb. 23: Sub Theatre's 8-part Sunday film series presents *Animation and Abstraction*. The program includes 11 films by McLaren, Baille, Mogubgub and Weiner. Tickets \$1. 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 24: Edmonton Film Society screens Czechoslovakia's *Bells Ring For the Barefoot*. 8:15 p.m. at Jubilee Auditorium.

Feb. 25: The Department of Music sponsors Robert Dodson, visiting Professor from The University of Lethbridge, in a violoncello recital. 8:30 p.m. at Con Hall.