



# Lights, Camera, Action!

By DAN MERKUR

I suppose I am wasting my time by urging everyone to see Bunuel's latest film, *Tristana*, which stars Catherine Deneuve. Everyone who sees it, sees it without my having to urge, and my recommendation is unlikely to send anyone else to the International Cinema. Yet I must applaud the film, if for no other reason, because it is simply the most visually beautiful colour film I have ever seen.

As usual Bunuel's film subject deals with morbid and perverse sex, innocence and lechery, all heavily overshadowed with a good dose of catholicism and atheism; and several very interesting philosophies and world schemes. Thematically it is very close to his *Viridiana* (1961). As usual for Bunuel's work *Tristana* is a little bit on the enigmatic side and is a little hard to figure. But there is certainly nothing to touch it playing in town this week.

I wonder how often one can write, "You must see this because it is brilliant," without getting rather inane. The truth is that one gets to see so damn much crud (much of which does not even merit mention in print) that when a bit of genius comes along it is worth all the superlatives.

What hurts most, of course, is the simple fact that no one ever does go to see the materpieces, and that John Ford's old maxim, "When in doubt, make a western" always holds true. Jim Brown and Raquel Welch are more important to more film-goers than Ingmar Bergman, Francois Truffaut, Luis Bunuel, Frederico Fellini and Akira Kurosawa put together. And they are more important to more theatre owners, which is the crux of the matter.

Therefore much praise and many thanks are due Bob Huber who runs CinemaLumiere (290 College Street at Spadina, 920-9817), which is about the best theatre in town. CinemaLumiere is not a first-run theatre, it doesn't play the big films, at least not when they open. It is an old run down house that couldn't even make enough money as a skin flick theatre, so it got rented out to Bob.

Bob ran the Electra Repertory theatre several years ago, until he went broke at it. His philosophy as a showman is auteur criticism on a repertory basis. He plays the same films (about 200, I would guess) and brings them back half a year later for another look. His material is mostly from the 50s and 60s, and is mostly foreign but contains a good deal of odd Hollywood material (though he doesn't like Howard Hawks). Usually the films are pretty damn good.

His ticket price is \$1.50, less if you're a student and you come to the early show (7:00 and 9:30 daily, as well as 4:30 Sunday afternoon), and less if you buy a book of ten. You could do worse. Kaneto Shindo's *Onibaba* plays tonight and tomorrow. Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968) plays November 14 - 18. November 19 - 21 is *The Night of the Living Dead*. November 22 - 26 is Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, and from the 27 through December 2 is Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*.



H.B. Warner, Isabel Jewell, Edward Horton, Ronald Colman and Thomas Mitchell in Frank Capra's classic adaption of *Lost Horizon* (1937).

Of the films, *Wild Strawberries* and *Seven Samurai* are indisputably acclaimed masterpieces, and pretty fine entertainment if you aren't concerned with critical academia. *The Night of the Living Dead* is an unbelievably gruesome little horror item that goes farther than you would believe anybody would want to carry a morbid line of thought. *Teorema* is well on its way to becoming critically important, but I'm afraid I don't know it or *Onibaba*, and can only say that from what I've heard they are probably worth a look-see.

CinemaLumiere has a mailing list that you can get on by signing a list in the theatre which I strongly advise. If you get into the habit of going there, you may well find that you will need to schedule your evenings around the playdates of films like Bunuel's *Diary of a Chambermaid* (upcoming) or Philippe de Broca's *King of Hearts*.

Bob Huber's CinemaLumiere is one of the few cinemas around that isn't financially exorbitant, where your suggestions for films to be shown are more than appreciated, where the proprietor will be glad to sit and talk with you, and about the only place I know where you can get a free cup of coffee while waiting for the film to start.

The Ontario Film Theatre (at the Science Centre, Tuesdays at 8:30) is screening V.I. Pudovkin's *Mother* (USSR, 1925) next week. This classic adaptation of Maxim Gorki's novel of the 1905 revolution will be accompanied on the piano by Horace Lapp.

The following Tuesday Vittorio de Sica's *Umberto D* (Italy, 1952) will be playing.

Cinematheque (at the Music Library, 559 Avenue Road at St. Clair, Fridays at 7:15 and 9:30) will be playing Marlene Dietrich in Josef von Sternberg's *Dishonored* (1931) tomorrow night. The programme through Christmas is: Joseph Cotten in Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) on November 20; Gene Kelly and Judy Garland in *The Pirate* (1950) on November 27; Ronald Colman and Sam Jaffe in Frank Capra's *Lost Horizon* (1937) on December 4; Greta Garbo in *Camille* (1936) on December 11; Leslie Howard, Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart in *The Petrified Forest* (1936) on December 18. While all the films are first rate, I particularly cite *Dishonored*, *Lost Horizon*, *Camille*, and of course, *The Petrified Forest*.

## A theatrical experience

# Dionysus lives with audience participation

The first thing you do is to take off your shoes and find yourself a spot to sit on until one of the cast members coaxes you out of it and into a dance. From there you proceed to participate in the drama, to take a role in the game of theatre, or to sit back and miss out on the whole point of the evening.

*Dionysus in 70* is, above all else, a theatrical experience. The play itself is simple, obvious, bordering on trite, and mostly unimportant. It serves only as a vehicle to polarize the audience/players

around the emotional reality that is the play's concern. To intellectualize is to negate that reality, which is properly theatre's essential concern, according to the performers.

The play's director, Ernest J. Schwartz believes (as many do) that the primary impetus of the theatre is playing, in the sense of little kid role — and game-playing. The theatre serves as an outlet for this sort of playing; and the sophistication of the conventional pretense of being adult; for Bac-

theatre has set a barrier (of footlights) that prevents the audience from playing along with the actors. *Dionysus in 70* allows for everyone to become a player.

Yet it seems to me that this sort of theatre ("living" theatre) is a half-way gap, a reaction to the regimentation of the traditional stage; and that in reacting to regimentation, it has lost the most worthwhile value of "conventional" theatre, which is the validity of the play. Game-playing has a reason to it: for kids it is the chants it had religious and

hedonistic values; for the conventional stage it served as a medium for dramatic statement; for street theatre, as a medium of social protest; but for *Dionysus in 70*, it is for its own sake, which is not in keeping either with the values of the play as performed or with the professed intentions of the performers.

Schwartz emphasized that *Dionysus in 70*, in refusing the restrictions of the conventional theatre, poses the problems of refining the essential ritual of game-playing to a recognizable level through specialization (as distinguished, I suppose, from the actor's need to liberalize and universalize a clearly refined ritual, like that of Hamlet.) Consequently for *Dionysus in 70*, a clearly recognizable ritual is in and of itself the object of the performers.

Which is the failing of the production, in that it is striving only for a new (or fairly new) mode of theatrical expression, i.e. audience participation, without then trying to say something meaningful in that newish methodology.

There are too many contemporary parallels set up with the original Greek tragedy for the analogy to be denied. The theology of hedonism in conflict with a law-and-order establishment dedicated to self-perpetuation strikes too many responsive chords for denial. But *Dionysus in 70* does no more than set the audience to thinking in those terms at the outset and then drop the subject. The resolution of the play works only on the

Dionysian level: it is inapplicable as an allegory. Consequently, the experience is meaningful only as an experience in audience involvement, and not as a dramatic statement. It is also a nice example of classic Greek drama served up as absurdist theatre, yet it lacks the (non)sense even of Marxian absurdity (Groucho, Chico and Harpo).

I suppose I can be attacked as overly intellectualizing about the experience, which is ultimately an emotional one. The essential nature of absurdist theatre is to strike accurately on an emotional level of truth which is entirely illogical to the intellect, one might argue. I think not. I believe that even theatre of the absurd, even at its anarchic, dadaistic, illogical ultimate, when internalized emotionally yields a truth that is intellectually recognizable.

But it is an awful lot of fun, and I highly recommend it as an experience, because there is very little of this sort of theatre available. Even when it is poor, it is well worth experiencing. It serves as a worthwhile and engaging introduction into the area of participation in theatre, and it has validity in this city at this time for that reason. I would guess it will be remembered years from now rather fondly as a very rudimentary early step in participational theatre in Toronto, and it is not something to be missed.

It is playing at Studio Lab Theatre, 53 Queen Street East, on Thursday through Sunday evenings at 8:30, until November 29. See it, you won't regret the \$2.50.

## Beckett's Endgame wins game

By PHILIP BARKER

"Endgame", a play in one act by Samuel Beckett, is now playing at Hart House Theatre. It is in the middle of a successful two week run until Saturday, November 14.

Beckett is one of the best and most inventive dramatists writing in the Theatre of the Absurd style. But, in thinking of Beckett, we must regard him most definitely as a poet. The perfection of his art in terms of aesthetics is more important to him than the succinctness of what his art says.

The director of this Hart House production, Desmond Scott, approaches the play with his own interpretation. As stated in the programme notes, Scott attempts in this final or last game of the characters "to capture that impossible moment when the self is reunited with the Self." In clarifying this theme we

remember several lines from Clov, the gimp-legged servant of Hamm, who partly explains the following game: Take a heap of grains and divide them into two halves. Now take the second heap; divide it in two and add half to the first heap. Continue dividing the second heap and adding to the first until finally, at some point in infinity, the two piles are once more united into a single heap. This is the important game.

Written three years after the now classic "Waiting for Godot", Beckett, with "Endgame", continues to explore the elusive metaphysical world. In "Endgame", the action is confined to a single room. Only Clov is given free movement within the room, and this is just because he cannot sit down. Hamm, on the other hand, cannot stand up. "To each his own speciality", he says.

As in "No Exit" by Jean-Paul Sartre, relationships between the characters are important, since they literally destroy the people. Roland Hewgill brings life to an immobile Hamm and appears to be quite an excellent actor. Ted Follows plays a promising supporting lead in Clov, while Eric Clovering and Kenneth Wichens as the contented comics Nagg and Nell are more than adequate. However, despair other than that intended by Samuel Beckett, does set in just before the end of the play. The soliloquys are not quite as polished as the rest of the play, and the otherwise well-knit relationships between characters begins to be a little shaky. But, with the curtain, we are more than willing to applaud the production, knowing full well that just as Beckett intended, that was not the end of the game.