

# ARTS

## Opera shows promise

Turandot  
Jubilee Auditorium  
Oct 1, 3, 5

review by Peter West

The Edmonton Opera Season is about to begin. The first presentation, on October 1, 3 and 5, is Puccini's *Turandot*, followed by Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* on November 26, 28 and 30. *Carmen* will be presented in late March, followed by Verdi's *A Masked Ball* in May. All in all, this is a varied and substantial program for a city of this size.

Readers may not be familiar with *Turandot*, first produced in Milan in 1926. Its story deals with a cold-hearted Chinese princess who puts three riddles to the princes who wish to marry her; if they fail, they are executed. The music is typical Puccini, building up constantly to an emotional climax which strives to seize the emotions of the audience. This aspect of the music, which is similar to that of *Madam Butterfly*, is rich and melodious, though unfortunately Puccini felt obliged to add an array of cymbals, gongs and glockenspiels to make suitably 'Chinese' effects. I was interested to see how the Edmonton Opera could execute such a piece.

The result was something of a surprise. *Turandot* will delight audiences in Edmonton. The sets are impressive, the

costumes stunning, and production is smooth. The singing was uneven when I attended the dress rehearsal, but Ermanno Mauro has a voice that packs a tremendous impact: to my mind he was the star of the show. Some of the others may have been saving their voices for the first night; even so, some, like David Astor as the Emperor, failed to project their voices at all. In her role as Turandot, Galina Savova performed well despite a costume that could only be described as claustrophobic. But as the performance is in Italian, the comic antics of Pin, Pan and Pong meant very little to the audience. I was also most unimpressed with Claude Corbeil as the King of Tartary, who had a role which seemed to require him to stand around and look pained most of the time, as if suffering from gas.

Thus there were uneven patches in what I saw, with the biggest problem being an unsureness about whether to make the production melodramatic — evidenced by the wooden antics of the sword-sharpeners and of the stumbling King of Tartary. At its best, in the interaction between Ermanno Mauro, Maria Pellegrini as Liu, and, towards the end, between Mauro and Savova, this production reached great heights. If you enjoy opera, it's ten to one you'll enjoy it, and if some of the dress-rehearsal problems can be ironed out, it should be a production to remember.

Bertolucci's film

## The Conformist

(continued from Tuesday)

Pictorial composition in the film distinguishes itself in its innovation. In one love scene on a train Bertolucci points the camera at the rectangular window of the coach. We hear the sounds of passion but nothing is seen until — a woman's foot floats into the corner of the frame and struggles to kick loose a high-heeled shoe. Several scenes in the film suggest more than they reveal, but by moans of composition are similarly charged with erotic tension. In *The Conformist* one also finds people trapped, captured by geometric frames within the composition. Alienation, too, is conveyed, not only in ways already mentioned, but by habitually placing objects — a windshield wiper, a shoe, a face — in painfully extreme foreground of the frame. The montage in *The Conformist* is also quite unorthodox. There are certain exceptional scenes that are edited with a staccato rhythm, others that are splendidly poetic; the general rule, however, is disconnection, and on at least one occasion Bertolucci compresses to the point of distortion of the conventional conceptions of cinematic time.

*The Conformist*, then, is a truly post-modern work of art. It intermittently reminds us that it is a work of art, an illusion rather than a reality. In the course of the film, Bertolucci's alienation-inducing techniques and his repeated allusions to voyeurism serve to make clear to the viewer that he is observer, not participant. Many of Bertolucci's stylistic innovations apparently are employed to challenge, even destroy the smug inert preconceptions with which we arrive at the cinema, and so we see *The Conformist* afresh.

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But *The Conformist* is not a profound work of art. Certain of the film's avant-garde techniques, e.g., the dissociative nature of the montage militate against an altogether desirable coherence. Bertolucci also gets himself caught on the horns of a dilemma: may one detail alienation and not alienate the viewer? (the answer is yes; but it is Peter Watkins' *Edvard Munch*, and not *The Conformist*, that provides the necessary evidence.) The screenplay, and to a lesser extent the direction, suffers from a cheap tendency to draw caricatures, and

then mock their inherent distortion; as stated earlier, Bertolucci is at his worst when he give full rein to his social conscience. Still, Bertolucci's *Conformist* deserves more renown than its habitually overpraised thematic relative, Fassbinder's *Marriage of Maria Braun*. After seeing *The Conformist* it did not surprise this critic to discover that Bertolucci is the son of a poet. The fact that his vision is neurotic and pessimistic takes nothing away from the genius of his visual sensibility. One leaves *The Conformist* impressed not by the film as a whole, but in awe of several scenes — here, a bittersweet, acutely observed vignette of bourgeois life, there, a kinetic staccato burst of editing. *The Conformist*, despite its flaws pushes cinematic language to new limits; Bertolucci the innovator demands to be seen.

Peter Melnychuk writes on Soviet and East European film for Student, Canada's student newspaper for Ukrainians.



photo Con Boland

Prima donna Galina Savova in regal oriental splendour

BO-BO-BE-DO!

## Real swell movies

Some Like It Hot  
Edmonton Film Society  
Classic Film Series  
Sept. 28 Tory Lecture Theater

Review by someone who left no name

Well, they don't make 'em like that any more. If you missed Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot*, Monday night, you missed some great entertainment. This was just the first film in what promises to be a terrific series.

Enough has been said about this 1959 classic film, but to relive the delight one feels while being swept along with this light-hearted comedy, was refreshing (sic!). Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis, and of course, Marilyn Monroe captivate you and

never let go. It was one of Marilyn's last and best pictures. BO-BO-BE-DO!

My advice is to run out and buy the classic series ticket. See the way movies used to be made, the fine ones that have influenced cinema since. There's still ten shows left for only \$20 and considering our modern quantity over quality market, probably the most quality for your money you'll see this year.

P.S. While you're at it buy the international series pass (if there's any left) and expand your horizons. Don't believe the politically-oriented review (*Gateway* Sept. 24) of that series' first show. *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears* was a good, entertaining movie. See them for yourself.



## Show us your stuff

The Arts desk is still looking for literature for a literary supplement. Essays, short stories, palpitating love poems, dirty limericks, and even unclassifiable avant-garde stuff are being accepted. So are graphics and photos. Put it all in a shoebox and bring it to RM 282 SUB any time after 11:00 am. Deadline is the end of October or whenever the copy reaches the eyeballs on a 6' 2" editor, (which ever comes soonest.