

massive musical onslaught

Well, here it is late September, and a new musical season looms terrifyingly on the horizon. There will be nine Edmonton Symphony concerts, two Edmonton Professional Opera productions, and a host of Chamber Music, Celebrity, Women's Music Club, Jeunesses Musicales, Little Symphony, and uncountable miscellaneous concerts. The mind, in sooth, boggles.

First of all, the goodies of the Edmonton Symphony. The ESO concerts promise to be the Nine Wonders of Edmonton: Ruggiero Ricci, Smash Hit Success of last season; Rostropovich, the world's greatest cellist after Pablo Casals;

John Williams, World-Famed guitarist; Arthur Fiedler, Boston Pop; Maureen Forrester, Leading Contralto; Marek Jablonski, Local Boy and outstanding pianist; and finally the Verdi Requiem, with R. S. Eaton and a cast of thousands, perhaps millions. And that is only a partial list.

It is indeed impressive. And Brian Priestman will be back to direct five of the nine concerts, no doubt with his usual sangfroid.

The season's program is without a doubt the best the Symphony has ever offered. Highlights will be the aforementioned Verdi Requiem, the Shosakovitch Tenth Symphony, a couple of works of Elgar, and a proliferation of Mozart, Debussy, Moussorgsky, Beethoven and Brahms. There will also be miscellaneous delectables by Monteverdi, Respighi, and Vivaldi.

Of the Little Symphony, no more need be said than that its chief attraction this year will be Purcell's great opera, *Dido and Aeneas*.

The Edmonton Opera's productions for the year will be

THE STOCKS BOX

Here come the Monkees . . . Well the Monkees came at 7 o'clock Sunday night and went off again at 7:30. However, not with a bang, but with a prolonged whimper did these five tedious excuses for Beatles manage to penetrate my tube. Even blatant thieving of Richard Lester's magnificent gags and visual effects (the TV commercial genre: maximum visual effect, hit and run) couldn't save this frantic bastardization of *A Hard Day's Night*. In short, the Monkees was heavy-handed to death.

Oh where, oh when in this gooey-bland porridge of Telly-land will there appear a genuinely fresh and spontaneous character? The Monkees are just another of what one telly-reviewer called "television's monotonous parade of handsome youth, faultlessly regular, splendidly null, and practically anonymous."

No attempt is made to differentiate them. They are cool youth only. No more. Where the Beatles are certainly the most brilliant and sophisticated spokesmen for Our (the under-25's) Age, the Monkees are just another Animal, scrubbed clean for Telly-land Valley Zoo.

Lester's telly-commercial technique offers such a great possibility for slapstick satire. But, the Monkees is an artless, almost pointless, hodge-podge of the forced gaiety of Mickey Finn's and the uncomfortable fury of Help! I suppose the director of this third-rate imitation believes in keeping the "happy" citizens of Telly-land undisturbed at all costs.

I can just hear him planning last Sunday's show . . .

Director: Flunky, what will we satirize on this week's show?

Flunky: How about the Absurdities and Pomposities of the Adult World, as Conceived by our Five Schizophrenic Sages?

Director: Dood!!!! (Archaic for done.) Let me see, what are the most overworked and unimportant incongruities we can satirize? Ah!! The Detective Story. Everyone is doing that now. We can use Sherlock Holmes and James Bond!!! Then there is the Gothic Romance. That has Social Importance. Oh yes, we can make fun of Spiritualism and Travel Books, that would have been original about 35 years ago.

Flunky: We can throw in a bit of Dickens for the intellectuals.

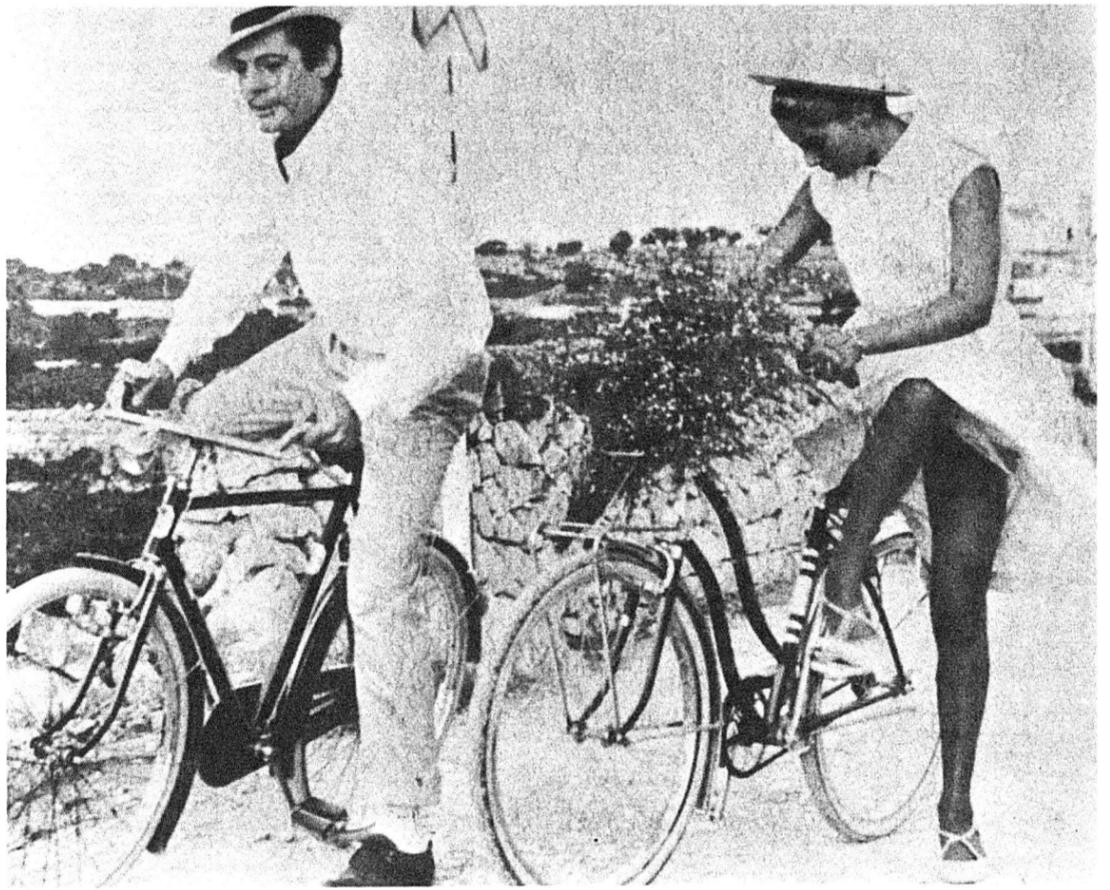
Director: Simply marvelous. For our gags we use Poorly-Time Double-Takes, Joe Miller's Joke Book, and Orben's Encyclopedia of Patter. What a bomb!!!

(Flunky is seen rolling on floor in Expectation of Pay Cheque.)

If only the producers of the Monkees had seen the short, *The Pretty Things*, recently shown on Cine-Club. This was a magnificent satire (even though the host of Cine-Club didn't realize it.)

Next week: a chest-thumping review of *Tarzan*.

—Bill Stocks



—Courtesy Garneau Theatre

Tosca and *Faust*. I suppose it was inevitable, really, that the EPOA, after more than passable productions of *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*, should revert to the mediocre standard repertoire (as opposed to the good standard repertoire). *Tosca* is by Puccini, a composer grossly underrated by the musicologists and grossly overrated by the public, and it is not particularly good Puccini at that. *Faust* is by Gounod, and we all know how many times Goethe has turned in his grave about that.

Brian Priestman is superb as a conductor of 18th-century music; Mozart is an 18th-century composer; Mozart has written probably the best operas in the world; the EPOA has never done Mozart; *Tosca* and *Faust* are done to death in innumerable hackneyed productions. And what conclusion does the EPOA draw from all of these facts? That is would be a very good idea to do *Tosca* and *Faust*.

Of course, there will be fair-to-middling-name artists imported at staggering expense from Europe; and there will be low-camp publicity blurbs pasted on every blank wall in Edmonton cunningly implying in a tone of hushed elegance that *Tosca* and *Faust* are not only fresh as paint, but that they are the two unsurpassed masterpieces of the operatic repertoire.

—Bill Beard

the case for a short short short

How long is a movie?

How long should a movie be?

There is an automatic assumption that a two hour package with "assorted short subjects and a feature" is about the limit of ordinary endurance.

But in these days of super-spectaculars—Cleopatra, Ben Hur, Ten Commandments, Doctor Zhiv-a-go-go—there are certainly new tests which may be applied.

The makers of "Lawrence" (who are also the makers of "How to Cross Russia in Forty Steps") realized that after the parching portions a break in the oasis was

DUBBED FOR YOUR PLEASURE—and dubbed for your fun, on two bicycles and one built who would look swell on a bicycle built for two, shoobedoo. Marcello Mastroianni and Virna Lisi set out in a scene which skeptics say was not in the film which it was supposed to have come from—*Casanova 70*.

necessary. So did a lot of others.

But, to the best of my knowledge, no one has ever attempted to define the upper and lower limits.

"One walks out of "Zhivago" feeling that it is definitely "too long" and out of "The Sound of Music" without waiting to see but assuming that too much has gone on already. But, friend, have you ever walked out of a film thinking that it was too short?

Probably not. Unless you're the sort who goes for a good cry and wants to see the whole bawful spectacle again. (And how many times has the mythical missus of Manchester seen "The Sound of Music" by now? 700 times?

Now, what's happening? It seems to me that movie-makers should not be ashamed of turning out a twenty minute film. Those who saw "Le Contrebass" at Filmsoc last year will realize the beauties of the short fictional film. But why not more frequently? Like the short story, the short film seems as likely to get a powerful effect from its possibility of precision.

Now, let's go to the lower limits. Those who have appreciated television commercials (much the finest work on television, in my opinion, technically inventive and frequently innovative) know what can be done in the space of a minute. There's more art in the ninety seconds of the assembling Chevrolet than in the three hours and forty-four minutes of Cleopatra.

Consider the fifteen second film. Time for two images and no more. The essence of mintage. No possibility of intellection or analysis. No time for mucking around with sentiment, but adequate time for the exploration of one ideogram. Zen movies.

Andy Warhol has had his day. No one is ever going to see an eight hour film about a guy sleeping again. Television is already becoming rather backgroundish. But Mr. Warhol who seems intent on proving the obvious (one skirmish in the battle against scientism, I suppose) is merely doing work that has been explored by Mankiewicz and David Lean.

The macrofilm's day is done, but the minifilm remains to be explored. Norman McLaren, the genius of Canada and our best novelist, has done more to approach the finie strength and length factor than any other "maker". "Trio" with its musical undercurrent and structure is the only just right film I've had the pleasure to see, and while I and others may want to see it over again it cannot be faulted for going too far or not far enough.

Film has to this point not really developed forms that can be distinguished, probably because not enough exploration has been done in what amounts to the laboratory of the arts—the short form. After such practice we can expect film makers with a greater sense of form and not be subjected to such aimless meanderings as Joseph Losey puts out or such formless foundering as those of the French cinemaniacs.

—Jon Whyte

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