

Entertainment

Editor: Agnes Kruchio

Film abdicates potential

Simplistic Christina bungles her love life

By AGNES KRUCHIO

The royal personality who resigns power to pursue more romantic interests such as love, or simply self-fulfillment, has always been the focal point of popular fascination. In *The Abdication*, now at the Towne Cinema the topic gets a less than adequate treatment by the man who brought you *The Lion in Winter*, Anthony Harvey.

A self-proclaimed love story, *The Abdication* revolves around the characters of Queen Christina of Sweden, portrayed by Liv Ullmann, and Cardinal Azzolino (Peter Finch), pope-elect and the person most likely to succeed the dying pontiff.

Making characters larger than life is the usual technique of love stories, and its inevitable problem is that the characters either are larger than life, exaggerated beyond credibility, or alternately fall pitifully short of the mildest expectations. *The Abdication* at various time tumbles into both of these pitfalls.

The plot is very simple — as simple as it can get with a royal personality in its midst and with all the attendant history, plotting and intrigue. In fact, historical side-trips are only taken in extreme cases,

which tends to create a somewhat blurred sense of the era.

Queen Christina, having resigned her throne, has been making her leisurely way to Rome, taking a year and enjoying life in the process. Arriving in the dead of night, a week premature, dishevelled, in man's garb, she is shocked not to be welcomed in the manner accustomed to in her queen's days. The circle of cardinals around the pope want proof of the sincerity of her conversion before they will allow her to see the pope. That is when she comes up against Azzolino, who becomes her father confessor and Grand Inquisitor.

In the test that follows, her life unfolds in a series of flashbacks: her childhood as a six-year old queen, a mother who hated her, the few friends she was allowed. The picture that emerges is that of a frustrated woman who occupied an "unnatural" position as a governor of men, a dominant woman who, as queen, was not allowed to be touched by anyone.

The overriding emotional impression left, and contradicted by the facts, is that she resigned because as a dominant, strong queen she could



Liv Ullman as Queen Christina and Peter Finch as Cardinal Azzolino in Anthony Harvey's sensual film *The Abdication* — "not one of the great love stories of all time".

not possibly be fulfilled as a woman — a poor and simplistic interpretation of a complex character indeed.

Liv Ullmann, although a sensitive and intelligent actress, does not build up the queen's strength until the very end. Much of the fault lies with the direction and a poor script; she is given a series of hysterical, emotional scenes, and very few which reveal her day-to-day personality. As a result her portrayal of a queen does not become quite believable until she intensifies her wooing of the cardinal.

Little escapes Peter Finch which lets us believe that the cardinal is going along with any of this — until, in a burst that can certainly not be attributed to what the movie claims it to be — true love — he reveals that in spite of his efforts, he is still human, and heir to the failings of the flesh.

The visual effects of the film are an essential part of the romantic theme. Sensual rich colour photography underscores scenes shot in Rome and the Italian Royal Palace; fountains, gilded interiors

and sunshine contrast sharply with shots of nordic gloom, snow and hunting in the forest, interspersed with some lovely shots of wild game.

The potential of the film is great enough for the viewer to leave vaguely dissatisfied with a love story that wasn't quite that.

Of course, if you are a Peter Finch or Liv Ullmann fan, little will keep you away, as the film is a great showcase for both — she especially is in fine form — but the film is certainly not one of the great love stories of all time.

Le Roi se Meurt réussit grâce au Tréteau célèbre

Par IAN BALFOUR

On a eu l'occasion lundi soir de voir une célèbre troupe française à Burton Auditorium, *Le Tréteau de Paris*. Elle a choisi comme pièce *Le Roi se Meurt* d'Eugène Ionesco, pièce moins absurde et peut-être plus didactique que ses premières oeuvres comme *La Cantatrice Chauve* ou *La Leçon*.

Le Roi se Meurt est une analyse psychologique des derniers heures d'un roi qui ne veut pas et ne sait pas mourir. Il trouve à sa surprise que son pouvoir comme roi n'a aucun effet sur la mort. Il tente de donner des ordres à ses sujets et même à la nature, mais ni l'un ni l'autre n'obéit.

Le roi est victime de sa propre naïveté en ce qui concerne la mort et son vrai pouvoir. A la fin du spectacle, il se trouve abandonné par ses sujets — même par Marie, sa deuxième reine — et il faut qu'il affronte la mort tout seul.

L'action se déroule dans un endroit et à un temps qui sont tous les deux non spécifiés. Mais il est évident l'intention d'Ionesco qu'une telle action pourrait se passer n'importe où et n'importe quand. Cette universalité est claire dans l'emploi des costumes qui datent du Moyen Age, et de la musique du 18ème siècle et, linguistiquement, dans l'emploi des termes qui ne peuvent être utilisés que de nos jours.

En général, la représentation était

assez agréable mais avec rien d'extraordinaire comme on pouvait l'attendre d'une telle troupe. Les acteurs ont bien travaillé comme ensemble et il n'y avait point d'erreurs de leur part dans ce domaine.

Quant à leurs rôles individuels, la plupart ont réussi dans leurs caractérisations des personnages. Hélène Duc, en jouant le rôle de la reine Marie, était très mélodramatique comme la seconde épouse du roi qui ne peut que "rire ou pleurer". Claude Dereppe était amusant comme le garde qui est stupide mais loyal à son maître.

D'autre part, le rôle du médecin, représentant du monde scientifique, était mal conçu; il n'a pas assez souligné l'aspect ridicule de la science qui est un thème important de la pièce.

Celui qui approchait son rôle avec le plus de force et de subtilité était Olivier Hussonot comme Bérenger le Premier, le Roi. Il est obligé de s'adapter considérablement pendant les deux heures de la pièce et il n'est pas facile de le faire d'une façon croyable. Hussonot a bien mis en relief les nuances du caractère du roi. Il était peureux et pompeux à la fois. Sa modulation de la voix et des gestes était tellement variée qu'il pouvait toujours attirer l'attention des spectateurs.

C'était dans le domaine de la mise en scène que la représentation a manqué d'une certaine force. Jacques Maclair a fidèlement suivi le texte d'Ionesco, mais il n'a ajouté que très peu.

Sa façon de grouper les acteurs me semblait stylisée et peu innovatrice. Et en se limitant presque exclusivement au fond de la scène, il a établi une distance entre les acteurs et les spectateurs où on aurait préféré un meilleur rapport. De plus, l'aspect métathéâtral, thème important de la pièce, a reçu très peu d'attention dans la représentation.

Malgré ses fautes, la pièce a quand-même réussi à travers les bons efforts de la plupart des acteurs.

Nicol Citizens populate Burton

You are all invited to participate in the creation of a brand new Canadian comedy, written by Eric Nicol, humorist extraordinaire and syndicated columnist for the Vancouver Province. *The Citizens of Calais*, directed by Malcolm Black, will be performed by the members of the third year performance group of the theatre department. Discussion with the playwright will follow each performance in Burton tonight at 7:30 p.m. and tomorrow at 4 and 8:30 p.m. Admission is absolutely free.

Emotion explodes in Polish play

By PAUL KELLOGG

We were really quite fortunate, those of us who saw it. Straggling into Burton auditorium on the afternoon of November 22, few knew what to expect, except that a play was showing called *To the Rhythm of the Sun*. Leaving the theatre about an hour later, we were no longer sure even of that, seeing that the title had received at least two different spellings in the various handouts. We were sure, however, that something special had happened.

The play is performed by the Kalambur student theatre from Poland. Based on the poetry of Urszula Kozioł, it is spoken in the original Polish and is naturally incomprehensible to a Canadian audience.

However, the rhythm and flow of the slavic syllables has an appeal that is beyond simple verbal understanding. When the script is put to song as it often is throughout the performance, and because of the company's effective body and facial expressions, the language of presentation becomes immaterial. Unable to communicate with words, the Poles

Cabaret plums

More love from Cabaret this week when they take *Lovers* and other Strangers to heart; in the second half it's a fumbling team of doctors as Marcus Melo, M.D. takes the knife into his own hands. A plum of a performer also gets to top the show in the person of Claude Fortin. All this tonight and tomorrow night at 9 and 10:30 p.m. in the Open End Coffee Shop in Vanier College; it's all licensed and free.

sing, dance, and hurl their way into the audience's understanding.

From a quiet beginning with only two actors on the stage, the play explodes in continual waves of energy and emotion, moving the audience "to the rhythm of the sun". In six episodes, the company at various times "gives birth" to a man and sees him destroyed; they experience a heaven and a hell; they dance and sing joyously and grub about pathetically on the stage for scraps and rubbish; they experience the freedom of uncompromising rebellion and the tyranny of compromise and acceptance of authority. It ends quietly asking about tomorrow. The answer they offer is a "bell: a call for action."

Describing their show in the introduction, "Kalambur" says, "Our show has originated from a moral absolutism brought to a pitch of cry. It is difficult to remain silent when one witnesses a struggle: between maximalism and conformity, between a world of values and a world of objects, between truth and its similitude, between hunger and desire and satiety, between the spirit of ideals and the body of compromises."

Waiting for Fidel

Documentary film director Michael Rubbo of the National Film Board presents and discusses two of his documentary films, *Sad Song of Yellow Skin*, a film about the people of Vietnam (1970) and *Waiting for Fidel*, a story of Joey Smallwood's trip to Cuba in 1973, next Wednesday at 7 p.m. in CLH I, without a penny charge.

The experience was powerful and valuable. Yet it is difficult to pin a label of either good or bad on it. It springs from traditions very alien to a Canadian audience.

Visible in the play is the long, weary struggle the Polish people have experienced for centuries. Visible are the 25 years of Polish communism. Visible is the strong pervasive folk-mythology and culture of the people.

These are all, in various ways, fields unexplored by the Canadian mentality. Yet, the difficulty experienced in judging the play is, in this case, a positive characteristic. It is from the collision and consequent interaction of two cultures that much of learning and growth comes. This is where *Rhythm* gains its power and value; powerful because it expresses ideas and feelings common to us all in a clear and, for Canadians, original way; valuable because it exposed those who saw it to new possibilities for choosing a perspective on experience.

To the *Rhythm of the Sun* is a performance, from the theatre of poetry, about Revolution. Whether in politics, in morals, or in philosophy, it discusses the dedicated struggle to create and maintain a progressive revolution, one that will prevent stagnation of understanding and will enrich experience.

In the play, the sound of a bell is a call to action. "The ringing of a bell has always sounded nonconforming. Conformity, indifference and plaintive dejection annoy us most. To the *Rhythm of the Sun*, to the rhythms of life and time, we ring the bells." The message might be useful to us all.