

# Symphony strikes out a second time

Edmonton Symphony Orchestra  
Jubilee Auditorium  
January 14, 1982

review by Beth Jacob

It was Old Home week at the Jubilee last Thursday night, when the ESO opened its 30th anniversary festival series. Guest conductor was Peter McCoppin, former resident conductor of the symphony and guest soloist was James Keene, the orchestra's present concert master.

The concert opened with Charbrier's "España, Rhapsody for Orchestra." This was a nice piece of fluff, with jaunty Spanish dances and lots of brass. It sounded exactly like the overture to a 30's MGM musical, and I kept waiting for someone to dance out onstage.

Instead soloist James Keene arrived onstage to perform three movements from Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole for Violin and Orchestra*. This was the first time I'd ever heard Mr. Keene in a solo capacity and I was very disappointed. His tone throughout left much to be desired: no warmth or resonance, an inclination to

sound pinched and harsh at times and even occasionally to sound under pitch. The scant orchestral backing in this work leaves the solo line very exposed and Mr. Keene simply could not carry it off, especially in the Andante movement where a sweet singing tone was called for. In the final movement the orchestra sounded ragged and unsure. The final impression was one of lack of adequate rehearsal.

The orchestra gave a stronger performance after the intermission playing two popular 19th century works: Smetena's "The Moldau", and Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet: Fantasy - Overture". The risk in playing such well known pieces is that unfavorable comparisons will be made to standard recordings. Both works suffered in this respect.

The Smetena, though a little fast for my taste, was the better of the two, with some sense of purpose, direction and fairly solid playing. The Tchaikovsky was also affected by excessive speed, particularly the opening section. The work itself is very sectional, and though McCoppin gave us credible sections, there was no sense of



continuity between them, no sense of direction towards the thematic highpoints. There were also frequent problems with balance. I recall in particular near the

end of the piece, where the violins triumphantly return with the "young lovers" theme, they were drowned out for a few measures by the french horns playing some trivial accompaniment figure. Bad! However, hometown audiences are forgiving as McCoppin received two (undeserved) curtain calls and even played an (uncalled for) encore.

A surprisingly weak performance, considering the familiar nature of the material. Coupled with last week's so-so concert, I begin to wonder if the symphony's ambitious plans (four series concerts and two others this month alone), are not too much for them. This concert, at least, would have greatly benefited from energetic playing and a little more rehearsal.

Only time will tell whether the remaining concerts will be better.

# Such are the dreams of everyday lowlifes

Atlantic City  
Capital Square

review by Geoffrey Jackson

*Atlantic City*, now re-released in this city, is a film I recommend highly. I saw it for the second time last Saturday night and reinforced my first impression of its quality. The director, Louis Malle, has crafted a lovely fairytale of hopes and dreams set in the nostalgic rubble of Atlantic City.

There are two central characters. Sally, played by Susan Saradon, works at an oyster bar in one of Atlantic City's new casinos. She dreams of being a professional dealer and working the elegant casinos of Europe. Lou, played by Burt Lancaster, is her next-door neighbor in their rundown apartment building. He used to be a small-time gangster during the thirties, when Atlantic City thrived as a resort. He now runs numbers for nickels and dimes to pay for his cigarettes.

These are two proud people. When Sally's no-good husband appears, she treats him with all the disdain of a woman humiliated once too often. Lou, though poor, maintains his appearance fastidiously. One of our first glimpses of Lou shows him meticulously ironing his tie.

Sally's no-good husband has come to Atlantic City to sell eight thousand dollars worth of cocaine he has stolen from the Mob. He plays upon Lou's vanity to coerce

the old man into selling the coke for him. For Lou, it's a chance to be a big time crook again. But while Lou is performing the deal the no-good husband is killed, leaving Lou with a lot of money and cocaine. The Mob soon tumbles to Lou and Sally's existence and they come looking for them.

Such a brief synopsis creates the impression of a hard-boiled thriller, which is hardly what *Atlantic City* is. This film is far more interested in the dreams and fantasies of its characters than any conventional spills and chills. Lou is dreaming of his past and of becoming a big time gangster. Sally dreams of Europe's elegant casinos. Louis Malle treats these dreams gently. Everything is set in a golden light and the characters are portrayed with love.

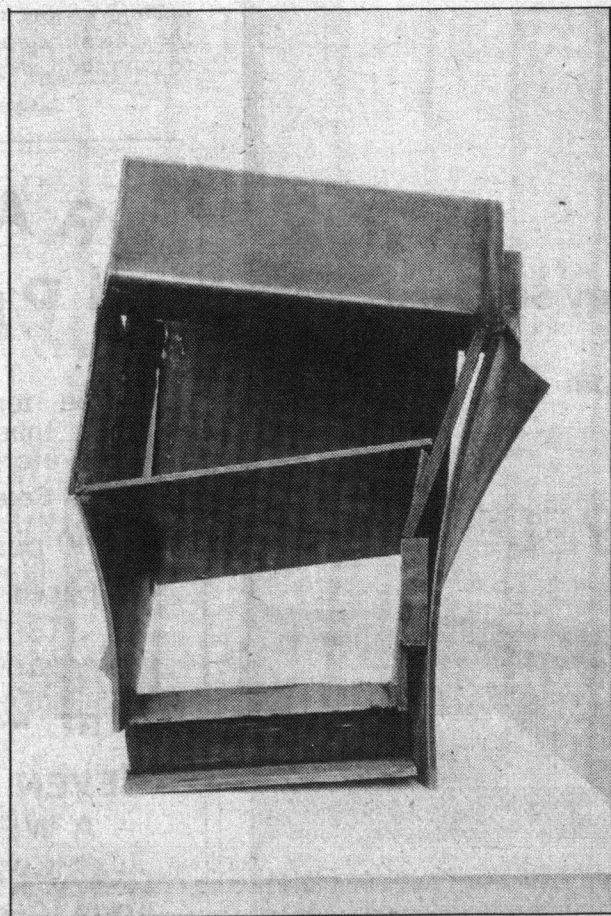
At times the effect is almost one of black comedy, as when Lou revels in his crooked success like a bad kid bragging to his pals. Yet the effect never grows depressing or cruel, as black comedy so often does. The film has a strange fairy tale ending that gives it the quality of fantasy.

The acting is superb. I have never seen Burt Lancaster do anything so well. He captures all that is funny, noble, or sad in this aging two-bit gangster. Susan Saradon's innocent beauty is perfect for the role of this naive girl with grand dreams. The rest of the cast, all Canadian, are also very fine, especially Kate Reid who plays Lou's old girlfriend.

Louis Malle has a magical touch with

light, something he showed us in *Pretty Baby*. He uses this touch to great effect here. Warm and loving light fills this film, gently illuminating these people's dreams.

This is a very unusual and exceptional film. If you didn't see it the first time it came to Edmonton, do try to catch it now.



A bookcase with its ass kicked in? No, just another piece of fraudern art. Ho hum..

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