

# 'Mao to Mozart': The eye of a bow

Mark Lewis

From *Mao to Mozart*, now playing at the Fine Arts, is on the surface a documentary about violinist Isaac Stern's goodwill tour of China. It is more about the effect of the Cultural Revolution's repression of Western culture, in this case classical music, on China's young musicians and their teachers. What makes the film an exhilarating experience is watching these young players rediscover musical expression under Stern's tutelage, and in Shanghai's reinstated Conservatory of Music. By movie's end we join in celebrating music and the new generation who play.

As a documentary of Stern's trip to China, we see the obligatory beautiful footage of scenery and cities and examples of Chinese culture: the Peking Opera practising, youths

engaged in ping-pong and gymnastics, a performance of China's version of vaudeville. We also see Stern's preparation for performance of a concert. But the focus of the film is on two events: Stern's trip to the Shanghai Conservatory, and an exhibition by graduating violin students in Peking for Stern and a large audience of music lovers.

It is at the Shanghai Conservatory that we meet its associate director, Tan Shuzhen, from whom we learn about the Cultural Revolution, the banning of Western music, and the treatment of him and other professors as animals and criminals. A time of both physical and spiritual anguish, the Cultural Revolution is shown to be the reason for the lack of emotional understanding of Western classical music Stern finds in the playing of the violin



Stompin' Isaac's Shanghai hoedown students in Peking.

Yet, if pointed in the right direction, as we see Stern do with a few students, they can put as much feeling and understanding into the music as Stern does himself. As for the eight to twelve-year olds we watch play at the Conservatory, untouched by the Revolution, they supply their own emotional interpretations, instilling the music with the fullness of expression their seniors lacked. It is the final victory of music and the emotions over politics, applied not only to the Cultural Revolution but to the differences between East and West that makes *From Mao to Mozart* a stimulating and satisfying film. □

Filling the void...

## Art of bureaucracy

Ed Nossoc

A silver-shaded bulb casts an uncertain glow over a waxed painting found at the end of a snooker-table-green walkway. Large, graphite masses shift and dislocate themselves, loom and penetrate spaces, to the accompaniment of construction sounds. This is the audio and visual stimulus offered to us by grad students Robert Youds and Svitlana Muchin at the I.D.A. Gallery (Fine Arts Building) until tomorrow.

Youds takes responsibility for the gallery's overpowering noise. The crash of hammers and the whine of electric saws loop themselves into a hypnotic continuance from beneath "Science denies feelings as evidence". These words lie stencilled on the slightly elevated 'end' of the walkway.

To reach this point we are enticed by the bare wooden 18-inch wide construction that creeps the gallery floor. All the action is hidden from initial view. By following the walkway we reach the point of confrontation: a cardboard-backed, wax-covered painting of York's crest and motto, "Tentanda Via" ... "The Way Must Be Tried".

Open to scrutiny lie the guts. Bombarded by sound we know that if science allows no feelings then art must fill the void. We must be willing to withstand the constant interference of bureaucracy to find the truth—sift through the chaos that mists our progress in learning—to tap the wealth that lies hidden

from casual view. We must face these underlying dilemmas and not simply walk blindly on.

Muchin offers us a more accessible vision of the same process. Bare architectural elements change position in relative spaces by means of graphite-filled line drawings on paper. Connections fall away from one another to be caught in distant repetitions. The individual angled sub-structures that make up the whole fight for their own definition—right to dominate—relaxing back into themselves. Bureaucracy surfaces but is satisfied.



Yound's sounds snugly hold each drawing's inner conflict at rest. Muchin's drawings hold the walkway at arm's length, connecting and separating the spiritual whole. It is this complementary aspect which makes the show more than the sum of its two parts.

## 'Shouting' delivers

Judith Popiel

In *Shouting For Joy*, one is immediately thrust into the boring routine of a postal worker and how he exists in his environment. The season opener for Toronto Workshop Productions, the play is about the 60's labour unrest in the post office. The play was directed by TWP's artistic director and founder George Luscombe, and written by Montreal-born Walter Brune, who describes himself as a member of the "anarcho-dadaist renewal."

Set designer Nicholas Marton has created an ingenious way to allow the identification of boring postal routine to come through clearly to the audience. The stark drop-ceiling lamps, the bench and stool work areas, the large white pulley bags that hold the sorted mail and the encasing of the stage in metal fencing all offer views of how very little of the human soul can emerge in such an atmosphere. As the play builds, one feels the emotional struggle of the workers. Dai Richards (Michael Marshall), a frustrated actor, enters and sets the scene for blackmail. Louise Matthews (Sandra Ross) is the target. She is a single mother struggling to raise her son on her salary—a do-gooder, a reformer, with her eye on a promotion. There is Bernie (Dan Macdonald), a chronic alcoholic. His one asset is his memory. The play is worth seeing for him alone: His acting is undeniably

embedded with years of experience. The blackmail plot will determine Bernie's future.

*Shouting For Joy* explores the nature of postal work. Its and downs, why it is so tedious and why it tends to breed unrest amongst its workers. We find a plot within the interaction of the characters and what happens to them as they complete their monotonous day-to-day duties. Although sometimes not clear in its motivations it does hold your interest most of the time. It may be of particular interest to CUEW workers at York.

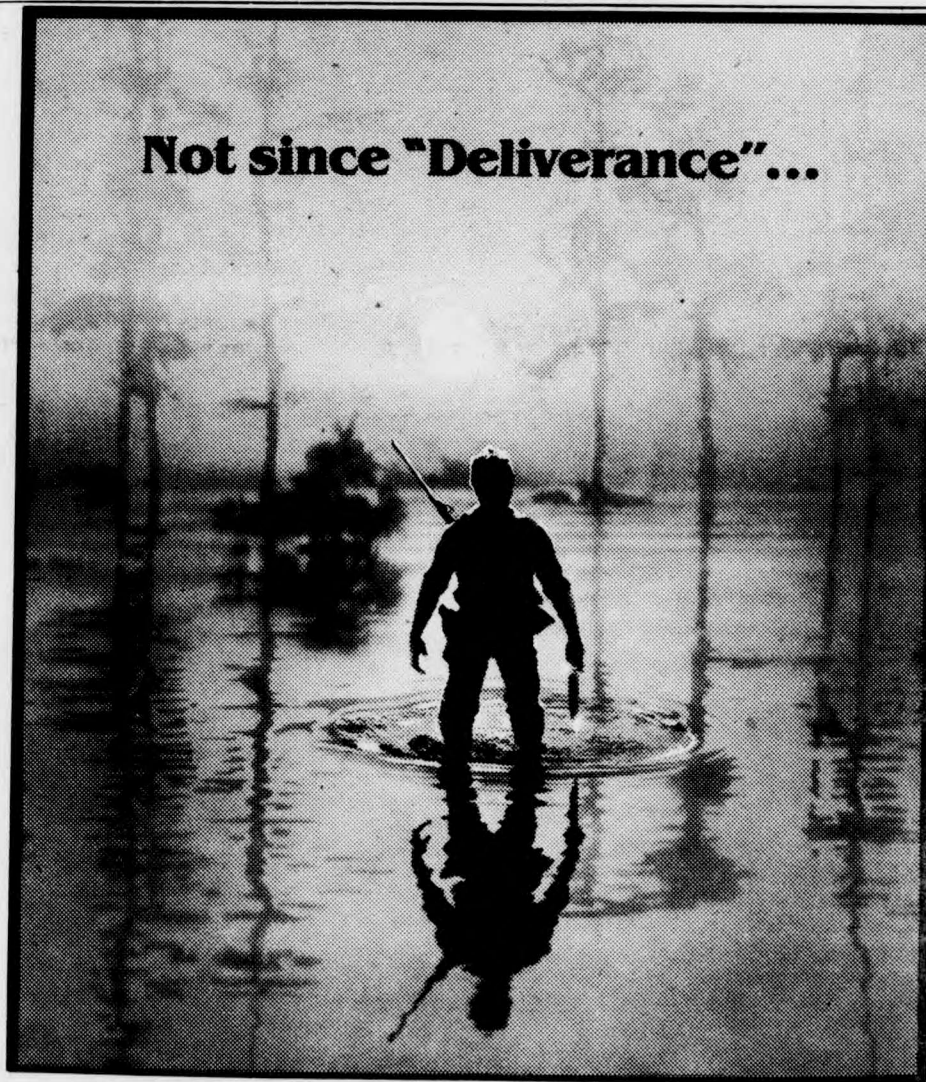
(*Shouting For Joy* runs through November 8th at TWP on Alexander St. Bring a friend and some junk mail and get in for half-price.) □

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