

Parsons to star in one-woman show

"Miss Margarida's Way" starring Estelle Parsons will be presented at the Birmingham Theatre Dec. 12-17. This award-winning one-woman play has been performed in 55 productions worldwide in addition to its highly successful run in New York. In the words of New York Times critic Clive Barnes, it was "a unique theatrical event. Gloriously daring and gorgeously rich. Not to be missed."

"Miss Margarida's Way" provides an electrifying evening in the theater. Miss Margarida is a perfectly respectable-looking teacher, but soon after she greets her eighth grade class the audience — she reveals herself as a woman of blistering paranoia and sexual frustration. She is a tyrant, flaunting her power

over her charges with the fanaticism of authority gone mad. In audacious tones (always in the third person) she alternately cajoles and berates her students.

ONE OF AMERICA'S finest actresses, Estelle Parsons has been appearing on stages across the country in classical as well as modern

plays since 1962, when she won a Theatre World Award for her first off-Broadway appearance in William Hanley's "Mrs. Dally Has a Lover."

"Miss Margarida's Way" will be presented Tuesday-Sunday at 8 p.m. & Wednesday matinee is at 1 p.m. For further ticket information call the box office at 644-3333.



Ballerina's story bubbles honestly despite soapy touch

Nothing could be easier than to tear apart "Slow Dancing in the Big City" (PG) for its outmoded conventions, outdated leading character and outrageously soapy ending.

Nothing would be easier, except that it would be dishonest to ignore the genuine emotional appeal of this film's soapy combination of documentary honesty and dramatic cliché.

"Slow Dancing" devotes large segments of its footage to the world of ballet. Its de-glamorized presentation of dancers committed to long hours of agonizing repetition and exhausting work is one of the major merits of this film.

Another is the choice of Anne Ditchburn, ballerina and choreographer with the National Ballet of Canada, to play Sarah, the principal dancer and leading female. She conveys the intensity, as well as the beauty and talent, that distinguishes the character.

SARAH IS REHEARSING with an independent ballet company preparing for its debut at Lincoln Center. She's young, svelte and very single-minded about her career.

She has just ended an affair with a wealthy and snobbish admirer when she meets Lou Friedlander (Paul Sorvino), who lives in an adjoining apartment.

Lou is a tough talking newsman with a heart of gold. He's an overweight, middle-aged slob more familiar with pasta than pas de deux. Everyone knows and loves Lou, who writes a regular column about the little people ("little" meaning lack of status, not stature).

He is not your "76 reporter" working at a video terminal or carrying a portable recorder to interviews. He's from a bygone era, but Sorvino brings warmth and charm to the role and makes you want to believe in him.

Somehow the unlikely twosome of Sarah and Lou become likely. In spite of severe pain from injured muscles (she needs an operation, naturally), Sarah's practicing night and day for the Lincoln Center performance. Lou respects her courage and dedication; she admires his compassion and concern. As she puts it, "I walk around New York and everything I see is yuck. You walk around and all you see are good stories."

JOHN AVILSEN, who directed "Rocky," directed "Slow Dancing." It displays some of the same feeling for gritty authenticity of sets and, more to the point, it shares the same kind of upbeat feeling and optimism.

The story isn't credible, the subplot is hokey, several characters are stereotyped and the ending is absurd. Against these sizable deficiencies, you have to weigh the engaging performance of Sorvino, the artistry of Ditchburn, some truly exciting dance sequences and the appeal of an old-fashioned love story: Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl—without the obligatory scene between the sheets.

Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

THE BIG FIX (PG). Another fetching performance by Richard Dreyfuss who plays a former college activist turned private eye.

BLOODBROTHERS (R). Hard look at lives of two blue-collar brothers whose macho values affect their families.

THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL (R). Some fine actors at their worst (except for Laurence Olivier) in loony film about fiendish Nazi plot.

A DREAM OF PASSION (R). Melina Mercouri and Ellen Burstyn star in modern story that strains in its parallels with Greek drama.

"Medea."

GIRL FRIENDS (PG). Melanie Mayron and Anita Skinner star in Claudia Weill's directorial debut that focuses on marriage versus career.

GOIN' SOUTH (PG). Fine character study by Jack Nicholson in adventure that proves there's still hope for the Western.

INTERIORS (PG). Woody Allen's serious film explores the tensions within a family where neuroses and artistic sensitivity dominate their lives.

LORD OF THE RINGS. Hobbits and the creatures of Middle Earth are energetically recreated in Ralph Bakshi's animated version of J. R. R. Tolkien's classic fantasy.

MAGIC (R). Anthony Hopkins is a psychotic ventriloquist with an x-rated dummy.

NATIONAL LAMPON'S ANIMAL HOUSE (R). Outrageous and raunchy comedy about life at Delta Fraternity House, the bottom-of-the-barrel fraternity on a small college campus in the early '60s.

PARADISE ALLEY (PG). Cornball sentimentality but also a lot of vitality in Sylvester Stallone's upbeat film about three brothers from tough neighborhood.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1955 (PG). Richard Thomas stars in wistful reminiscence of the '50s set at time of James Dean's death.

SLOW DANCING IN THE BIG CITY (PG). Sudy story but super dancing distinguishes this romantic film about a newspaper columnist in love with a ballerina.

UP IN SMOKE (R). Dope jokes from Cheech and Chong who celebrate the weed in their usual gross manner.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audiences admitted.
- PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
- R Restricted. Adults must accompany person under 18.
- X No one under 18 admitted.



Leo Canallito (right) as Victor Carboni is psychographed by his brother Lenny (Armand Assante) during a hand-wrestling contest with Frank the Thumper (Terry Funk) in "Paradise Alley."

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