



Amy Irving co-stars with Richard Dreyfuss in "The Competition."



the movies  
**Louise Snider**

## Piano soloists show their stuff in 'Competition'

For a few years we have had a run of sports-oriented movies, movies in which the leading characters battle for first place. Now we have a welcome and classy addition to those ranks, "The Competition" (PG).

It's not about football players or hockey players or basketball players. It's about piano players.

Richard Dreyfuss and Amy Irving are two pianists who fall in love while vying with four other finalists for top honors in a prestigious competition.

The group of finalists must have been cast by the same person who casts all those cross-section-of-the-population squads we see in war movies.

BESIDES THE WEALTHY, well-bred Ms. Irving and the frenetic Dreyfuss, whose parents have struggled to pay for his music lessons, there is a cold, withdrawn-artist type, Adam Stern; a flashy, aggressive pianist from an Italian family, Joseph Cali; a cool, laid-back black virtuoso, Ty Henderson; and a competent but colorless Russian, Vicki Krieger.

In contrast to the use of this old movie cliché, the representative group, director and writer Joel Oliansky has treated the music competition in a fresh and discerning manner.

He has caught the tenseness of the participants and the backstage drama as they deal with troublesome pianos, argue with the conductor about orchestral interpretations and anguish over their own musical selections, wondering if they made the best choice.

"The Competition" also conveys a greater sense of authenticity than that found in other movies about classical musicians. The correlations between the motions of the actors and the musical sounds of the pianos, particularly when Irving is playing, is very convincing.

(We should note that Daniel Pollack is the concert pianist who plays the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3 for Irving, and Chester B. Swiatowski plays the Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 5, the Emperor, for Dreyfuss.)

THE LOVE STORY fares less well than the story of the contest, but it is tolerable. Dreyfuss' abrupt changes in mood and emotion might be expected to try a woman's patience, but they don't faze Ms. Irving, who is willing to accept his boorishness.

This makes it more of a truly old-fashioned love story, though the end does hold some promise.

Oliansky, however, must have thought audiences couldn't handle a heavy dose of classical music, even spiced up with romance, because he tacked on a silly subplot involving a Russian defector. Ignore this and enjoy the music and whatever you can of the Irving-Dreyfuss affair. It does have some redeeming features.

In one scene, after the couple check into a motel, Dreyfuss tells Ms. Irving he doesn't want to make love, he just wants to be near her. "Does that infuriate you?" he asks. "No," she replies, "it comes as a great relief."

Adding to the overall entertainment is the crisp performance by Lee Remick as Irving's worldly and demanding teacher and an amusing performance by Sam Waterston as a suave, smug symphony conductor who could double, at least in appearance, for Leonard Bernstein.



Richard Dreyfuss falls in love with his rival (Amy Irving) during a classical piano competition.

# Songs stand out in 'Coffee' show

By BARBARA MICHALS

## review

Delicious food, delightful ambience, and pleasant music make it a worthwhile outing to "Black Coffee, White Coffee," the cabaret entertainment currently playing in the new After Nine Room at Cooper's Arms restaurant in Rochester.

Performances of "Coffee" are Friday-Saturday evenings through mid-March. Dinner is served from 9 p.m., with the show starting at 10. Diners order from the restaurant's regular menu, with the entire package priced accordingly.

Introduced to the audience as "bit-ter-sweet coffeehouse songs of the '60s," the cabaret features four talented young singers, John Beem, Sue Chekaway, Eric Jones and Gail Perenchio. Frederick Bickel provides able piano accompaniment for the 23 songs, including several by Jacques Brel, Joni Mitchell, John Lennon-Paul McCartney, and Paul Simon.

The songs, divided into two acts, are very loosely tied together by snatches of poetry and random chatter. Often slides are projected behind the singers to enrich a song's atmosphere or impact.

WHILE THE players kid around a lot about the show lacking an ending, "Coffee" also lacks cohesiveness. The songs might better be allowed to stand by themselves as a pleasantly mixed bag, and the connecting chitchat could

be dropped without being missed.

Some of the most agreeable numbers are Jacques Brel's upbeat "Madeleine" and satiric "The Middle Class," Lennon and McCartney's "Michelle" and "When I'm Sixty-Four," and Paul Simon's "Scarborough Fair." "Little Boxes," a Melvina Reynolds song about conformity, is also satirically effective.

Sue Chekaway's Marilyn Monroe imitation is a stand-out as she sings "Dream a Little Dream of Me" in front of a large picture of President Kennedy. "Republican humor" groused one cabaret guest.

The one truly strident note of the evening is "Requiem for the Masses," a Terry Kirkman song accompanied by scenes of Vietnam battlefields.

"Black Coffee, White Coffee" was conceived and directed by Walter Kozicki for the Metropolitan Repertory

Company, a group in residence at Cooper's Arms.

The menu at Cooper's Arms features a wide variety of entrees, leaning slightly towards fish and seafood. Prices range from \$7.95 for fish and chips to \$16 for lobster, and there are several chef's specials each evening. Portions are generous and all dinners include a salad bar, an individual lot of freshly baked bread, and choice of potato or vegetable.

Cocktails plus many tempting appetizers and desserts also are available. Service on a recent Saturday night was impeccable; waiter Melvin was friendly, helpful and efficient.

The After Nine Room maintains the restaurant's atmosphere of a cozy English inn. Seating is on two levels, with the elevated stage halfway between to provide a good view for everyone.

## what's at the movies

### NEW RELEASES

ALTERED STATES (R). Ken Russell's sci-fi film about a man's exploration of altered states of consciousness. From a novel by Paddy Chayefsky.

CHARLIE CHAN AND THE CURSE OF THE DRAGON QUEEN (PG). Mystery-satire with Peter Ustinov as the inscrutable detective, Richard Hatch as the bumbling grandson and Angie Dickinson as the Dragon Queen.

THE DEVIL AND MAX DEVLIN (PG). Elliott Gould is the manager of a rundown apartment building who bargains with Satan's assistant (Bill Cosby) for a peculiar exchange of souls.

DOGS OF WAR (R). Movie based on Frederick Forsythe's best seller about mercenary soldiers in West Africa stars Christopher Walken. THE ELEPHANT MAN (PG). Largely true story of grossly deformed man rescued from sordid life by compassionate doctor. Fine acting by John Hurt. Anthony Hopkins and John Gielgud balances out directorial shortcomings.

FORT APACHE, THE BRONX (R). Paul Newman and Edward Asner in powerful drama about embattled police precinct in New York's violent and devastated South Bronx.

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