

## MOVIES

## 'Persuasion' brings Austen's final novel to the screen

## TICKETS PLEASE



JOHN MONAGHAN

Good company, according to the strong-willed heroine of "Persuasion," unless "clever, well-informed people who can converse with wit, intelligence, and liberality of ideas."

By that definition, there is little better company at the movies this year than the new screen adaptation of Jane Austen's final novel.

Penned in 1814 while the writer was dying of Addison's disease, "Persuasion" is the story of a young woman, Anne (Amanda Root), who meets again with the

man she once loved and let slip away. This second chance, however, is wrought with the kind of heartache and repression that you come to expect from an Austen novel.

Her widowed father has squandered away his estate, leaving only the family title. Everyone assumes that she will marry the suave and sophisticated Mr. Elliot, not the stoic Captain Wentworth, a noble man in uniform but far from the aristocrat Anne's father expects her to marry.

Like Austen's other stories ("Pride and Prejudice," "Sense and Sensibility"), this one is a check full of characters all set up in complex, often confusing, relation to one another. This British-made film version isn't helped by

the muddled voices, reportedly inaudible during the Echo Theatre premiere at the Detroit Film Theatre and still a strain during an exclusive run at Royal Oak's Main Art Theatre.

Part of a new breed of period movies, "Persuasion" foregoes the often forced sumptuousness of the Merchant-Ivory productions. The buildings and clothing look worn and lived in to the point where a walk in the woods will leave muddy stains on the bottom of a gentleman's long white coat. The faces have a natural shine and, for Anne at least, little makeup.

Root's Anne makes the perfect Austen heroine. Though perhaps not as pretty as some of the women around her, she has an insight

and strength of character that sets her apart.

In contrast, her sister Mary is a silly woman, a hypochondriac and fustibudget despised by her in-laws. They would have preferred Anne in the family, and tell her so during countless confessions. A montage of these ends with Mary's husband and an exasperating "Oh, Anne," which, like many things in the film, speaks volumes while saying little.

There are no big-name actors in the "Persuasion" cast, though a few familiar faces appear from other period films.

Aside from a complex shot in which the camera views Anne from outside a cafe window and then careens inside and around

the group of women she sits with, Roger Michell offers little showiness in his direction. He employs some effective zooms to show the devastating effect a chance meeting with Wentworth can have on Anne, though he lets Root's expressive face do most of the work.

He keeps the story moving at a steady clip, without long interludes of music and beautiful scenery that usually distinguish big-screen period films. The makers of "Persuasion" understand correctly that the true beauty of the story lies in Austen's timeless characters, dialogue, and conflicts, which they condense to well under two hours.

The joy of the movie might be summed up in a simple scene where Anne, walking with a

friend, recognizes the Admiral and his wife, a couple she truly admires. Surrounded by fops and phonies (that always outnumber and try to undermine the good guys in an Austen novel), we share Anne's joy as she runs between them hand outstretched.

It takes us little more than a few scenes with such people to greet them the same way. We know, once again, that we're in good company.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 853-2047, mailbox number 1868, on a touch-tone phone, fax him a note at 691-7279, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48160.

## SCREEN SCENE

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

**DETROIT FILM THEATRE**  
Detroit Institute of Arts, 6200 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 833-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students)

"Wild Reeds" (France — 1994). 7, 9:30 p.m. Nov. 10-11; 4, 7 p.m. Nov. 12. A new kid arrives in a French high school, circa 1962, changing the lives of his fellow students forever. Directed by Andre Techine.

"The Jar" (Iran — 1992). 7 p.m. Nov. 13. Panic erupts in a tiny Iranian school when the jar that holds communal drinking water for the children grows a crack.

The supposedly simple solution to the problem is followed by a series of social roadblocks that are both maddening and funny.

**KINOTEX**  
Windsor Film Theatre, 2135 Wyandotte St. West, Windsor, Canada. Call (810) 254-FILM for more information. (\$4.50 Canadian; \$4 US)

"From the Life of Marionettes" (West Germany — 1979). 9 p.m. Nov. 13-14. Ingmar Bergman's second-to-last film is also one of his bleakest, made up of a series of vignettes best described as a study in depravity. He follows the garish colors of a porno palace murder with black-and-white sequences taking place both before and after the crime.

**MAGIC BAG THEATRE**  
22918 Woodward, Ferndale. Call (810) 844-3030 for information. (\$4)

"Kids" (USA - 1995). 7:30 p.m. Nov. 9. Larry Clark's unflinching portrait of New York City teens is every parent's nightmare. These kids engage in petty theft, random violence, drug use, and unsafe sex. A question remains about the director's intentions: is he presenting a modern cautionary tale or glorifying on their self-destructive lifestyle?

"Reservoir Dogs" (USA - 1993). 8 p.m. Nov. 14 and 16. Quentin Tarantino's amazing first feature, the story of a bank heist gone wrong. Harvey Keitel, Steve Buscemi, and Michael Madsen highlight a perfect cast.

**MAIN ART THEATRE**, 118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least

Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 642-0180 for information and showtimes. (\$6.50; \$4 students and matinee; \$3 twilight)

"Mighty Aphrodite" (USA - 1995). Woody Allen writes, directs and stars in this story of a father obsessed with discovering the identity of his adopted son's mother. The typically eclectic cast includes Helena Bonham Carter, F. Murray Abraham, Peter Weller, and Claire Bloom.

"Persuasion" (USA - 1995). This acclaimed screen adaptation of Jane Austen's final novel finds a woman given a second chance at the love of her life. Unlike most other period films, this one has a realism and strength of purpose not unlike its memorable heroine.

"A Month by the Lake" (Britain — 1995). A romantic comedy set on the shores of Italy's Lake

Como shortly before the outbreak of World War II. Directed by John Irvin and starring Vanessa Redgrave, Edward Fox, and Uma Thurman.

**MAPLE THEATRE**  
4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 855-9000 for information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight)

"Home for the Holidays" (USA - 1995). Jodie Foster's timely comedy stars Holly Hunter as a single mother who returns home to spend Thanksgiving with her eccentric family. The witty, wicked surprises she encounters make this the holiday season's first must-see comedy, thanks to a supporting cast including Rob-

ert Downey Jr., Charles Durning, and Anne Bancroft.

"Mighty Aphrodite" (USA - 1995). See Main Art Theatre listing above.

**MADONNA UNIVERSITY**  
36000 Schoolcraft, Livonia. Call (313) 432-5543 for information.

"My Left Foot" 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 14 in the executive classroom, room 2213. Stars Daniel Day-Lewis and Brenda Frick-

**TALK CINEMA**  
Livonia Civic Center Auditorium, 32777 Five Mile Road, Livonia. Admission with Friends of the Livonia Library card, \$5.

"Murder on the Orient Express" 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 15.

**WILLIAM BOLDWIN**  
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STAR JOHN R AT 14 MILE STAR LINCOLN PARK 8 STAR ROCHESTER HILLS  
STAR TAYLOR 11/11 FAIRLANE 11/11 LAKESIDE  
UNITED ARTISTS 12 OAKS 11/11 WEST RIVER 11/11 FORD WYOMING 11/11

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SHOWCASE 11/11 STAR GRATIOT AT 15 MILE STAR JOHN R AT 14 MILE  
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