

# Poirot on the trail of clever murderer

By CAROL HASKIN

It is 1935. An overbearing baby food mogul is found stabbed to death in his sleeping berth on a luxury locomotive. By a singular stroke of luck, (as luck often strikes in 1935 movies,) who should be on the train but Agatha Christie's world-famous sleuth Hercule Poirot, who is ready, willing and more than able to solve the sinister "Murder on the Orient Express."

"Has it occurred to you," Poirot asks friend and train-owner Martin Balsam as they survey the site of Richard Widmark's murder, "that there are too many clues in this room?" If there is a plethora of clues, there is no want of suspects either.

Director Sidney Lumet has packed the train with shifty eyes and brows that perspire profusely when their owners are undergoing interrogation.

If the killer did it, then John Gielgud is the culprit. But a loquacious

Lauren Bacall has the convenience of an adjoining compartment. Missionary Ingrid Bergman's story about brown babies in Africa contains a highly suspicious number of falsehoods. Porter Jean Pierre Cassel has a pass key to Widmark's room.

Sean Connery and Vanessa Redgrave are overheard having an incriminating conversation and, what's more, Connery's pipe cleaner is found near the body. Hungarian diplomat Michael York's wife, Jacqueline Bisset, has an irregular passport.

Russian princess Wendy Hiller keeps a straight thickly-powdered face as she lies through her false teeth, but her companion, Rachel Roberts, lets slip too much. And ever since "Psycho," everyone knows that Anthony Perkins, here Widmark's secretary, can't be trusted.

Albert Finney, as the stoop-shouldered, vase-painted Poirot is as fast with a clue as his predecessor Sherlock Holmes and his successor Lea

Archer. He is also equally and charmingly eccentric with hair net and moustache press.

But mystery is his game, not to mention his fame. Who else on the basis of eight letters on a burnt scrap of paper could link the present crime with one that occurred five years previously, and then from this link deter-



mine the true identity of both the murderer and the murderer.

"Murder on the Orient Express" is a highly polished period piece that is strictly for fun. Symbolism is limited to the title parallels common in movies of the 30s—the train's passage is blocked by a snowdrift until Poirot solves the mystery and the train breaks through.

The theme is, evil will out until the end when the murderer comes to a wholly unpredictable finish. But the film is a cinematographic triumph. It's precisely orchestrated interplay of present and flashback uses stills, replays, music and tints to maximum effect.

"Murder on the Orient Express" is a high-class bit of fluff that is made to be settled down with on a drizzly afternoon. It is to Christie's and Lumet's credit that it adapts itself just as elegantly to the screen.

## Ceccato adds post

Detroit Symphony Orchestra Music Director, Aldo Ceccato, has been appointed General Music Director of the Hamburg Philharmonic effective with the 1975-76 concert season.

Ceccato's acceptance of this additional conducting post makes him one of a group of today's leading conductors who hold dual music directorships. He has been Music Director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra since May of 1974.

In his new role Ceccato will conduct eight weeks of the 12-week Hamburg Philharmonic symphonic concert season during 1975-76. His responsibilities in Detroit will include conducting sixteen weeks of subscription and four concerts during the regular season.

Announcement of the Italian-born conductor's new European post came as the maestro and his family were spending the holiday season in Milan, Italy. Ceccato returned to the Detroit Symphony Thursday (Jan. 23) for a pair of subscription concerts in Ford Auditorium, with Lorin Hollander as guest pianist.

## Free recital stars winner

Joseph Palazzo, 1974 winner of the \$500 Sally Borus Piano Award at Oakland University, will perform a "Winner's Recital" Saturday at 4 p.m. in Varner Recital Hall. The public is invited at no charge.

Featured will be works by Bartok, Chopin, Fauré, Handel, and Weber. Palazzo is a significant music major from Mt. Clemens. He is studying at O.U. under the tutelage of internationally known concert pianist Flavio Vanzo.

His recital follows a day of competition in which pianists will compete for the 1975 Sally Borus Piano Award. The Sally Borus Award is made possible through private contributions from friends of the university.

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## Raven to feature new singer

In an effort to foster new talent from this area, the Raven Gallery, Southfield, will feature singer-guitarist Elaine Phipps through Feb. 9. Appearing with her will be Detroit's Buffo, the

clown. Show times at the gallery located at 29101 Greenfield are 9:30 p.m. Tuesday, Wed. Thursday and Sunday and 9:30 and 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

## Area artists share show

The works of four women artists will be presented at a special show-

ing at Objects and Images Gallery in Rochester through Feb. 1. Jocelyn Fanning of Detroit will exhibit her finely controlled pottery. The other three artists are from Rochester. The etchings and paintings of Caren Huizenga will share wall space with the weavings of Carole Donaldson. Katherine Cullen will show her recent blown glass.

Objects & Images is at 202 East Fourth St. Gallery hours are from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. from Monday through Saturday. For information, call 652-1770.

## Dining And Entertainment Guide

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