

second runs

Louise Okrutsky

So romantic, the old movies

It's a simple premise that's inspired classic films, as well as pictures that simply are awful. The old plot — boy meets girl, they fall in love, are separated, then reunited in a big finish which leaves them marriage-bound — held its appeal for a long time. Like the Western, it's a genre which has declined in the last several decades.

Like the Western, it's a genre which has declined in the last several decades.

It's hard to find an unabashed love story which wouldn't be painfully bad to watch or equally as embarrassing for us to admit seeing. On the brink of Valentine's Day, an occasion largely for school children and greeting card companies, let's go back to a simpler time when people took these things seriously. All of the following old movies are available on cassette:

When "Ninotchka" was first released in 1939, the advertisements proclaimed "Garbo laughs." The beautiful stone face does indeed laugh heartily after Molwyn Douglas determinedly pulls out every joke he's heard in an attempt to get Garbo's very dour Russian comessair to smile. His jokes fail. It's the sight of Douglas' dapper character falling off a chair in a Parisian working-class restaurant that breaks Garbo's reserve.

SOME OF THE dialogue is dated but the movie, directed by Ernest Lubitsch, retains its charm. Douglas as the man about town convinces Garbo that life is more than workers' committee meetings and no reserve. Bela Lugosi, Sig Ruman and Felix Bressart play the three Russian dignitaries seduced by the pleasures of wine, women and song in capitalist's hedonistic capital. Their portions of the picture, as they trot around Paris in top hat and tails, is a funny but naive portrait of the Russians as hicks. Ina Claire plays a wonderfully snooty Russian countess yearning to resume her Tsarist glory days.

It remains Garbo's movie — romance without nausea. It was remade as a musical in 1957 and retitled "Silk Stockings." Fred Astaire plays the man about town who now has a perfectly 1950s-style glamour job, movie director.

Cyd Charisse assumes the role of the dowdy Russian comessair sent to discover what has befallen her country's wayward diplomats to France. There's great Cole Porter music. Fred and Cyd show off on the dance floor.

The romance between Astaire and Charisse lacks the spark of the Garbo-Douglas pairing. Although the romance in both versions is infused with overtones of the correct Western doctrine which over the mis-guided one, the original carries it off with style while the remake settles on being more strident.

It isn't surprising. In the late 1930s, Russia was on the verge of being our ally in another war against Germany. Twenty years later, Russia was our foe in the cold war.

IN 1952, John Ford received an Oscar for directing John Wayne in "The Quiet Man." Wayne plays an American boxer who killed a man in the ring. Although exonerated, the guilt-racked fighter flees to his native Ireland to forget and begin again. Maureen O'Hara, her red hair looking glorious in Technicolor, plays the stubborn Irish woman who marries him.

This is a period piece. In the finale, Wayne, fed up with O'Hara's scheming to regain her furniture from her equally stubborn family, literally drags her across the Irish landscape. It isn't a scene that's likely to be placed in the forefront of feminism. O'Hara's Colleen manages to be strong and womanly at the same time — not an easy accomplishment in a decade during which woman were usually portrayed as starchy-eyed gubbers.

Next to Sylvester Stallone's Rocky Balboa, Wayne's boxer comes off like a contender for the Alan Alda sensitivity award. In spite of its flaws, it's heartfelt without being mushy. Fine fare for those who yearn for an plain, old-fashioned story.

Czech orchestra fills gap nicely

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

death in 1959, especially in recent years.

This last week the Detroit Symphony departed on its tour to the East Coast. Some dedicated listeners followed, determined to attend the performance and reception in New York, but they were a small minority for obvious reasons. For those who stayed behind, there was a most respectable program to fill the gap, the Czech Philharmonic with its longtime conductor, Václav Neumann.

Both orchestra and conductor have a high international reputation and their visit here should have been a major attraction. However, the audience on Thursday turned out to be fairly small, due in part to the snowstorm that started shortly before performance time. But, I've seen better attendance under worse driving conditions.

The program consisted of two symphonies — the Fourth by the Czech composer, Bohuslav Martinu, and the First ("Titan") by Mahler. Martinu is one composer whose stature seems to be on the rise since his

HEARING HIS MUSIC performed by his own countrymen was a treat. This little known symphony is a work with an impressive structure. The melodic lyricism radiates through its contemporary shell. In addition to the authentic spirit, one could detect a polished quality in the string section. The overall sound produced deep and rich sonorities.

The more familiar passages of the Mahler symphony tended to betray some technical flaws, however. This is not to say that the performance itself was artistically deficient. One noticeable aspect was the appearance of a highly established, ingrained tradition.

It may be analogous to a visit to an ancient castle. The creaking of the old gates adds to the mysterious environment. Excessive repair with modern technology could result in a false, artificial appearance. But subjecting the visitor to too many creaking sounds would be stretching the point.

This performance of the Mahler



Avigdor Zaromp

work tended to be brassy at times. The fact that the brass section wasn't completely polished didn't prove too bothersome as long as it was within reasonable range. Certain wrinkles may be considered as aesthetic assets. But there were quite a few wrong and misplaced notes.

THE BALANCE suffered occasionally, most frequently at the expense of the winds. This was the case, for example, in the dance-like episode of the slow movement.

But even with these flaws, the dominant feeling was that of art in

its higher form. Musicians and conductor alike seemed to have deep involvement and understanding of the emotional content of this music. There was a sense of integration that evolved naturally and instinctively, unlike the more artificial unity obtained by following a metronomic beat.

The Czech Philharmonic and Václav Neumann are worthy, indeed, of their high reputation. However, they should distinguish more clearly between the more authentic wrinkles and the cobwebs, and attempt to remove the latter.

Classes continue at Miniature Makers

Miniature Makers' Workshop in Royal Oak is sponsoring a winter series of miniature crafts courses which will continue through April 30. Eight miniature artisans teach the on-going classes, workshops and seminars in making dollhouses, room settings, miniature stills, furnishings, food and collectibles. For registration, dates and fee information, call 549-0533.

Miniaturists are also invited to participate in a free Open Workshop each Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to work on personal projects in a congenial group setting at Miniature Makers' Workshop.

Included in the winter class schedule is instruction in electrical wiring,

a wing chair, Delores Coles doll and a bedroom setting by Beale Robinson, wicker rocker and table and room design by Marilyn Filter; Spring Tree and Fimo dolls, Pagliacci room and 1/4 inch Irish cottage by Iris Longo; Queen Anne serving table carving by Judy Shellhaas; dressing table and bench and canopy bed by Donna Dabrowski and Cooking with Karen by Karen Sudn.

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