

Human Rights

Tomorrow marks the beginning of human rights week. It is a week that should not be celebrated.

It should not be celebrated because there should be no need to acquaint people with the concept of human rights, nor should there be a need to make them aware of the rights of other individuals and how these rights are being violated in the United States and throughout the world.

Yet, there is a reason for having a human rights week and its reason is that the people of America and the world have largely no conception of the rights they should have, and, in some cases, do have. There is less of a realization of rights of other people and how others should be treated.

There is no empirical justification for human rights. One cannot look at the specimen man and deduce from the specimen man that he should be accorded such and such rights. Indeed there are no absolutes operating in the human rights situation. One cannot concretely ascertain what rights man possesses by any absolute criterion.

One must derive his concept of individual rights from the individual's view on man, and one of the most unfortunate conceptions in the world is the all too prevalent one of man as an almost worthless commodity.

Until people begin to realize the potentiality for greatness that man possesses, and until they are aware that the climate to best cultivate this greatness is freedom, human rights can only be a live concept in a small segment of the world.

The pill that man has a great potentiality for good is a bitter one for many to swallow. It destroys their illusions, turns over lives built on the depravity of others, and makes people who are secure in their own goodness and the evilness of others feel insecure in their own value system, if they have one.

They do not seem to realize that the human rights upon themselves in order to be safe do not apply to others until the heretofore safe actions are no longer safe. And then it is too late.

There seems to be no responsibility on the part of the people, no concern, and the responsibility and concern needed extends beyond the home to all the people in the world, until this type of concern is accomplished hope of individual rights for all the people of the world is an impossibility.

Thus, a human rights week is necessary to acquaint man with man, and to make man realize his responsibility to man.

There must be an acquaintance with the idea that freedom offers more to individual development than slavery or servitude. There must be an acceptance of the basic equality of potential of all men and a construction of society with the realization of this manifested in its legal structure. There must above all be a tacit acceptance of the individual as good, so that in the tribunals whether congressional or judicial, the individual is granted respect and credence.

The concept of human dignity has been lost for too long in the pious, paternalistic outpourings from the mouths of those who profit by being father. It is time for the concept to be a reality.

Why

Why is it that in some fraternities and sororities it costs much more not to go to a party than it does to go to one?

Could there be an element of financial compulsion?

Election

The fact that there will be only three items on the ballot today should not completely prohibit students from voting. One important office — Woman's Honor Council — is to be voted upon. One lesser office — sophomore class president — and an amendment to the constitution taking head cheerleaders from the ranks of elected officials are also on the ballot.

The amendment is an unimportant one, it is still one that should be approved. Unless the cheerleader gives a cheer in each door, it is impossible to tell his competence. This is one office that would be better selected by a board of his peers.

The turnout is not expected to be large, but maybe, for once, the student body will surprise the predictors.

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'Look Homeward, Angel'

Anthony Wolff

"In the original 'Caesar and Cleopatra' I hadn't been able to change Shaw, but I certainly altered his intention by making the words fit what felt most comfortable to me. The second time, despite the agony, I dug inside of myself and rid myself of every personal reaction until I found exactly what that character felt. I discarded my intention for that of Shaw and worked to create his Cleopatra, not mine." In these words, from an article in the December 7, 1958 NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, Helen Hayes expresses her conception of the performing artist's responsibility to the work being performed; and this is a great actress writing honestly from fifty years of experience.

Miss Hayes' description of the primary requirement for artistic honesty is doubly applicable to the recent LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL: it applies to both play and production. Ketti Frings, the playwright, can be held to this honesty because her play makes no pretense to original vision. The play takes not only its inspiration, basic plot, setting and names from Thomas Wolfe's novel, but also most of its very language. Every major speech (with one or two exceptions problematically admitted due to hazy recollection and lack of research) is taken word-for-word from the original text, as is most of the relatively incidental dialogue.

By anchoring her play so deeply in the novel, Miss Frings commits herself to its vision. Her play must stand not simply by itself—although it must be able to do that, too—but it should also stand comparison with the novel. If, having taken so much from Wolfe, she refuses to accept the essence, Miss Frings is something of a plagiarist and worse, despite the approval of the Wolfe estate. And, if this be the case, then the Carolina Playmakers underwrote a moral hazard in producing the play, especially as a tribute to Thomas Wolfe on the anniversary of his death. If it should turn out, quite apart from this first consideration, that Miss Frings' play is inconsistent within itself, that its vision is unclear and/or untrue, then the hazard is compounded: the Playmakers then had the difficult task of making sense out of nonsense. And if, finally, the recent production fell short of the play, failed to realize whatever depth the script admits, then there is a third charge.

This is an inquiry, then, on three counts. The first question, although perhaps not the most important, is that of Miss Frings' felicity to the novel from which she so heavily borrows. Here, again, the question splits, and there are two considerations. First: in those instances in which she has used Thomas Wolfe's dialogue in the play, has she violated the sense or spirit of the original words in lifting them out of the source and placing them in new contexts and original juxtapositions? Second: does Miss Frings' wholly original contribution to the play complement the rest.

The answer to the first question is a qualified "yes," to the second "no." Certainly Miss Frings has been judicious in her selections from the novel, and in bending her carefully culled fragments to the uses of the play she has done most of them no noticable harm. In most cases the replaced fragment retains its original force and meaning, sometimes gaining potential in the new context. (At least one notable exception to this is Miss Frings' use of the final benediction after Ben's death, in the novel a part of Wolfe's interior monologue which is woven through the narration, and given in the play to the doctor, whom it ill befits.)

The playwright makes few significant additions to the play aside from the uninspired but structurally adequate variations on Wolfe's depiction of 'Gene and Laura. Miss Frings' creation of Ben's quasi-reconciliation with his mother in the moment before his death is, on the other hand, unjustified violation of the novel; likewise, the complete invention of 'Gene's reactions to Miss Brown's attempt at seduction and to his first meeting with Laura are seriously out of character with the 'Gene of the novel and the rest of the play.

The play as a work of art in its own right, is strongest when it sticks closest to the novel and disintegrates rapidly as its independence increases. That is, where Wolfe's words are used in their

"Is This An Early One, Or Is It Left Over From Last Summer?"



original sense and force, and in contexts which approximate the original, the play is most powerful; where Wolfe is adapted to uses which are more or less not his own, the play is weaker; and in the few instances where Miss Frings' is completely on her own the play is flimsy and shallow.

So much of the play falls in the first category and retains the quality of Thomas Wolfe's conception that the rest must follow Wolfe's intention or run the risk of mocking its own depth. As the characters identify themselves and their situation through Wolfe's words the play becomes Orwellian in its stature and implications. Her original contributions seem to indicate that Miss Frings is unwilling to allow the words which she so skillfully borrows to achieve such full significance through the play. Thus she requires 'Gene to be something of a buffoon in the two instances mentioned above, 'Goodyado' — good God! and Ben to die with a certain satisfaction after making a couple of wry jokes; and in the heavy moment of 'Gene's grief after he has lost Laura Miss Frings tosses in a standard television joke from Hugh, who has been sitting obtrusively on stage for the whole scene just to deliver that unfortunate bit of comic relief.

The playwright also creates a number of structural difficulties by including too much of Thomas Wolfe. The epilogue, whatever its value in the novel, certainly has no purpose in the play and it is a dramatic failure. Mr. Gant's two veiled references to the malignant cancer which is killing him are rather meaningless, when his only disease in the play is alcoholism. More serious in terms of the play's meaning is the liberal sprinkling of existential problems ("a Natan-son's dozen" is an irresistible temptation) which Miss Frings leaves posed and unexplored.

Certainly if she had remained true to Wolfe's vision instead of violating it, Miss Frings could have produced a play with something of the stature of LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT. As it is, it is considerably less, but the essential depth and power are still there, no matter how violated and dissipated they may be.

The end result is that no matter how LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL is played it will not be completely successful. There are, it would seem, two possibilities: to play it as lightly as possible in which case the depth of the play is skimmed over and subordinated to its superficial aspects with resulting meaninglessness or the

play is done with all the passion and intensity and transparent depth with which it has been endowed, in which case a few elements will be jarringly inconsistent with the bulk of the play but the rest of it may reach full significance.

Unfortunately, the Playmakers chose the former alternative. The whole first act was played as though the real play underlying the words was an embarrassing scandal which had to be hidden by a light touch and some broad slapstick comedy. Ben's violent outbursts seemed more melodramatic than true, and W. O. Gant was just a paranoid drunkard who makes his wife suffer terribly. It was almost that bad.

But almost from the beginning of the second act the truth became impossible to hide. The open enmity between Mr. and Mrs. Gant, Ben's death, and Laura's defection could not be treated lightly although they were never given their due weight. The Madame Elizabeth scene was the final abortive attempt at comedy. By that time, however, it was too late to undo the damage; instead of unfolding as a coherent structure, the play was one of moments. If the play has any central theme, it is the unfolding of 'Gene's consciousness to the point where he

realizes that he is alone in the world and that he must in some sense create himself and his world if there is to be any order in chaos. This is at least one coherent structure in the play, and certainly the most obvious one; but it was not expressed in the Playmaker production. The moments were there, but they existed as distinct moments rather than as crucial points in a continuous line.

Ironically enough, on this rather weak conception of the play were lavished three magnificent performances; in them at least it was obvious that the play could have been done in full strength. The reference is to Foster and Marion Fitz-Simons (Mr. and Mrs. Gant) and Tommy Rezzuto (Ben). These three provided the moments of full and transparent depth which gave the play what little grandeur it achieved. All three had the means of communication, the skill, in such seemingly unlimited abundance (particularly Mr. and Mrs. Fitz-Simons) that almost anything seemed possible, and the inadequacy of the interpretation (or lack of interpretation) becomes all the more lamentable.

It is doubtful that Bob Ketter was capable of playing Eugene with equal fullness his skill, although considerable, seemed less than that of the other three leading players; but he proved without a doubt in the last scenes that he was capable of better, more honest stuff than the idiotic clowning with which he was occupied for much of the play and the dull, halting speech which rendered him unable to read his own poetry with more than fourth-grade fluency.

Unfortunately, there was not a single performance of similar excellence in a minor role. Betty Green's characterization of Laura was perfectly adequate until she sobbed her way through her big scene in which she was supposed to achieve honesty and strength. Miss Green in no sense, however, deserved such an exit line as "Goodbye, little room. I've been happy here."

Patricia Liston, as "Fatty," and Ellen Dennis, as Helen, were quite adequate; particularly Miss Dennis, who at moments gave promise of a richness of characterization which was never realized.

Carolyn Marsh was capable, if uninspired, as Madame Elizabeth. From all appearances, she was unsure of her function—whether she was comic relief or genuine grief. She may well have been up against an irresolvable dilemma.

Douglas McDermott's unbearably lachrymose Dr. Maguire was quite unbelievable; even when there was genuine concern as to whether the drunken Gant was ill or just unconscious, the good doctor was impossibly slow in attending to him; likewise when Ben died. Whatever tension there was could not but collapse with this attitude.

Tarkington, played by Gene Parsons, provided good comic relief when it belonged. If Herbert Drimmer's Will had been more alive than dead, and the odd assortment of boarders has been somewhat more active, the comic relief might have been provided by them instead of the main characters.

Arthur McDonald was perfectly undistinguished but adequate as the undistinguished but adequate Hugh; Mr. McDonald cannot be held responsible for Miss Frings' misplaced joke.

Charles Nisbet's portrayal of Luke was wide of the mark. Luke may well be good-natured and lovable, but he is also a Gant, and something more than one-dimensional exuberance.

Tommy Rezzuto's sets were excellent, particularly the "Dixieland" set. (Perhaps the backdrop in the mable yard scene could have had a touch of realism to be more in keeping with the rest of the play.) The angel looked like genuine Carrara marble, weighing at least a ton. The costumes by Irene Smart Rains and Jim Armacost's lighting were both fine.

All in all, the Playmaker performance was at best one of infelicity but unrealized promise; and at worst a sharp disappointment. Director Harry Davis might have better used his four leading performers and moulded the rest into a good supporting cast. The talent was there; direction would have helped immensely.

That was a pretty sad memorial to our famous alumnus, Thomas Wolfe, on this the twentieth anniversary of his death.

Notes In Review

Arthur Lessing

A frequently interesting and frequently boring evening of modern compositions featured the work of Thomas N. Rice and Peter Ford, both students in the department of music, and provided the audience with a mixture of emotions, ideas, sounds, simple noises, laughs that made for confused opinions, impressions, and conclusions.

The concert began fifteen minutes late, with all the lights turned out in the hall forcing members of the audience to light matches in order to read their programs. The visual effect was interesting, and the whole thing perhaps symbolic of the musical content of the concert.

Mr. Rice's accomplishment in composition was immediately evident in the first work of the evening, the "Bachanaal" and scene at the Medusa Rock; from the opera "Whatever Passes Along The Paths of The Sea". He has a solid sense of development which makes the composition distinctly controlled and musically justified in its progress. Both its beginning and end were certain, holding between them music of defined intent and shape. If this composition is his latest work (the entire opera is promised to be performed in April, 1959), it indicates a developing talent, for the rest of his work seemed to me inferior. The song cycle of "Love Lyrics" that followed lacked musical substance in general and, although again Mr. Rice's talent for development showed itself, there did not seem to be enough musical material to work with. The performance, incidentally, was excellent by Raymond McGuire, tenor, and Michael Cordovana, piano.

I personally was bored throughout the "Suite Antique pour la guitare". Again there seemed to be little real musical material to work with. The performance, furthermore, was so lackadaisical that if the music contained any spirit at all it was lost. The Pavane movement has some moving music in the outer parts, but the middle section seemed muddled and out of place within the movement.

The "Nocturne" and "Petit Suite for Flute and Strings" were, from a point of view of musical craft, most accomplished. Mr. Rice has a nice sense of orchestration, seems inventive in the art of counterpoint, and is frequently able to work with his instrumental voices so that they take on freshness and delight. In the Nocturne movement of the Suite, for example, I was struck with the beautiful setting of mood that opens the movement, but disappointed again with a lack of musical ideas in the solo flute to fulfill the promise of the setting. The March has an interesting development but no melodic content worth speaking of. I also failed to understand the closing section of this movement which is completely out of step with the overall character of the movement. The Dance movement reminds me of Copeland's music for "Billy the Kid," but fails to sustain its mood, again, I think, for lack of musical material which the composer can work with. The closing movement was a clever satire on the popular "Ach, du Lieber Augustien."

To sum up my impression of this more than generous amount of Mr. Rice's music is a bit difficult. He is, as I said earlier, thoroughly accomplished in his craft. What is needed now is more imaginative musical material to provide his composition with a thematic solidity that was lacking throughout most of the work played. What is most praiseworthy in his work is a real feeling of musical motion, the result of a careful concern with development composition-wise. Without musical "stuff", however, this sense of development can easily become tedious and boring.

Peter Ford's art of composition is dedicated to the task of "transmuting" other music, poetry (and I suppose, eventually painting) into his own kind of music. As such, one does not "compose" but "translate" music. Mr. Ford's music, however, does not seem to achieve what it sets out to do. Employing percussion instruments of all kinds in addition to such interesting objects as bow-and-arrow, garbage pail, water pistol, and an upside down bicycle, he creates sounds which repeat and swell in volume and end at their height. Infrequently, one was able to enjoy the contrast of sounds or the interplay of different sounds, but, for me, music never came into existence by this method of transmutation.

This is not the place to become involved in obviously different conceptions of what music is and should be, but it would seem that if art is symbolic (as Mr. Ford might seem to have perhaps said in his delightfully clever talk "The New Esthetic") it does not follow that, therefore, one art form can be "translated" into another. It may well be that uniqueness of music is exactly the symbolization of feelings that cannot be expressed in any other medium or any other way. If not music, Mr. Ford at least demonstrated with considerable success that there is pleasure in listening consciously to just sound. And in this direction I wish him all the success in the world, whether it is art or not.

Gems Of Thought

Honestly, isn't the whitest white lie a nice dinky?

Oh, dear, is it going to be another of those winters?

Wonder if folks who plant bombs in schools laugh over news like that of the holocaust in Chicago.

'Bout ready to face another turkey on Christmas Day?

Trance-lation: Esse quam videri — Yes, the widow is calm.

"I've really put my foot in it!" said the rat in the trap.