

Is There A Clear-Cut Case In Favor Of Art Museums?

WINSTON-SALEM — John Walker, director of the National Gallery in Washington, asked his "Culture Week" audience here, "Should art museums be abolished?"

He quickly answered, "We have no open and shut case" for or against abolition.

Artists resent curators, and public art galleries have met hostility from the public ever since their fairly recent inception, he said. Notwithstanding he quoted Joel Poinsett, "Patronage of the arts must originate from the seat of government."

"There is a basic contradiction woven into the framework of all museums," Walker said. "They preserve graven images, but they are basically iconoclastic. The museums haven't changed the basic function of art objects. Many of them were created for religious purposes, but the destruction or removal of art objects is considered a national, not a religious outrage."

Art conveys power, prestige and money, he said, "But art is not money. Money has only symbolic value, but art has intrinsic value."

Art World

By OWEN LEWIS

Walker said, "Artists think museum directors have too much power," and then presented a few examples to prove his point.

"The museum director loves abstract art." He takes the pure form and color of the abstractions as his medium, and then uses the walls as a canvas to create his own work of art," said Walker.

"The painter who works alone is a forgotten man." If he is not following the style that is in vogue, "the show-

are closed to him, but this does not destroy him," he said, pointing out that most of the important artists of recent history were rejected in their time.

"When it comes to abstract artists, the museum directors are always wrong. Anyone who goes against the established order gets rejected," he said. "I have assumed a desire for form, order and tradition. But the heroes of modern art are not like the artists of the past. They defy order."

If artists foretell the future, Walker said, "I'm afraid it's doom, but I think not."

"Museums are as important today as monasteries once were. Art tells you the essentials of a period," he said.

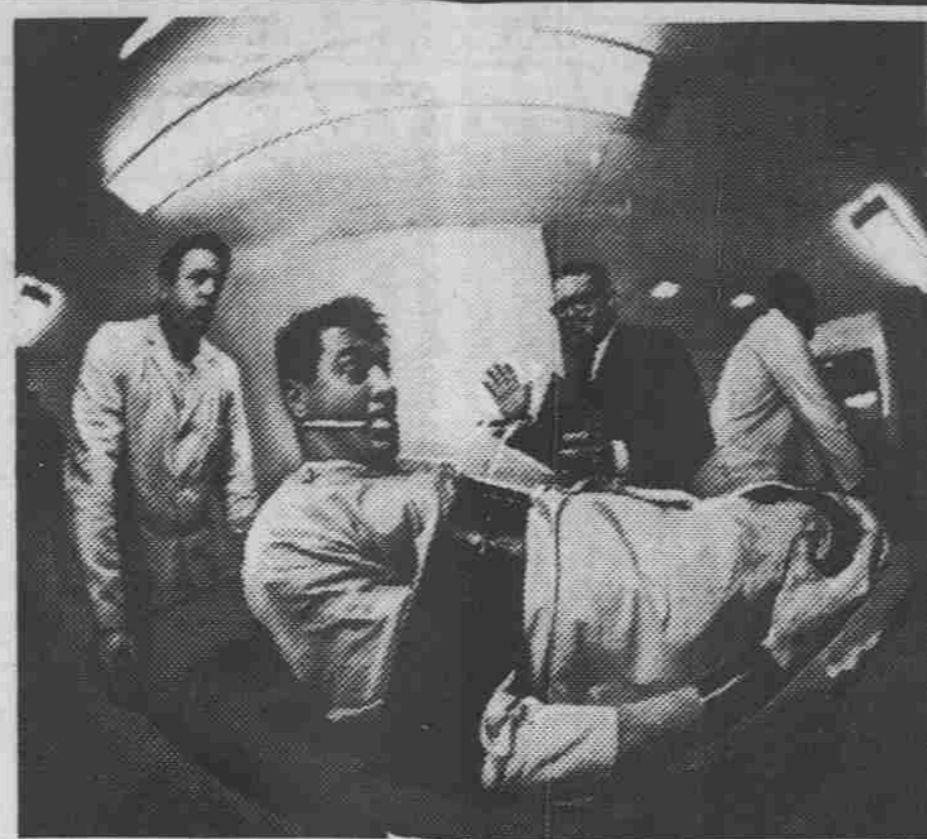
Walker said that when the N. C. legislature appropriated \$1 million in 1947 to purchase works of art he thought at the time they erred, and should have spent the money on a building instead, but that he now has changed his mind, and decided that it was far more important to acquire the works of art than to provide a building with the hope of filling it.

"Museums can be dangerous," he said. "They can be abstracted to another sphere, and breathe the air of another time."

Then Walker took off on another tack, the preservation of natural beauty, urging leadership by museums in "the responsibility for our environment."

"Museums should teach you an appalling heresy. They should drive away smog," he said, regaling the audience with delightful tales of his Aunt Lizzy's violent, vindictive physical attack on billboards, Walker said, "You must be anarchists for beauty. Build a new museum building in Raleigh. Make this state and its countryside a model for the country."

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A LIVING NIGHTMARE confronts Tony Wilson (Rock Hudson) as Karl Swenson, portraying Dr. Morris, performs the last rites over the horrified man in "Seconds." The bizarre story is told strictly within the realm of reality as it unfolds mankind's idealistic dream of the second life. The Paramount film is now playing at the Rialto Theater in Durham.

Show At Duke Proves Puppets Not For Kids

DURHAM — Everybody knows puppet shows are for kids.

But the Stockholm Marionette Theater, which plays this week at Duke University is an exception. With its giant puppets and imaginative repertoire, the Marionette Theater of Fantasy has been a favorite with adult audiences in both Europe and America.

The troupe will give two performances Wednesday in Page Auditorium. A children's matinee of "The Wizard of Oz" is scheduled for 4 p.m., and the Brecht - Weill hit musical "Three Penny Opera" will be staged at 8:15 p.m. Both will be presented in English.

The 1939 movie version of "Wizard of Oz" starred Judy Garland as "Dorothy" and boosted the young actress to film fame.

Puppet Dorothy is about three feet high in the Meschke version of "Wizard." The young man known for rapid-fire bursts of directions to his actor-technician assistants as a show progresses.

We aren't interested in traditional ideas of reproducing human beings on stage with dolls," he said firmly. "A human being is much more interesting as himself. Our animated figures are not in competition with human beings as actors. They merely begin where the human being ends."

Meschke feels that more abstract and unusual things can be accomplished in his type of marionette theater.

"It's a completely different art," he says. "And we are just at the beginning in a field which has limitless possibilities."

In "Three Penny Opera," with roots going back to John Gay's 18th century "Beggars Opera," Jonathan Jerimiah Peachum is an 8-foot, 3-

dimensional papier-mache puppet.

He is joined on stage by Mrs. Peachum — a 5-foot, cone-shaped marionette.

You may have to look twice to decide if Mack the Knife is a cut-out figure or a live performer in another of the show's fantastic costumes.

The driving genius behind the company of Swedish players is Michael Meschke. The 32-year-old Meschke has made the Marionette Theatre a rousing success in its first tour of the U. S. and Canada.

Part of his secret is that he does not just jerk strings to make painted dolls dance on miniature stages. He also deals in "layers of meaning," with even the most comic interlude having a lot more to it than generally meets the eye.

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Barn's 'Irma La Douce': Naughty Show, But Nice

By KERRY SIPE
DTH Staff Writer

There was a game crowd of viewers at Tuesday's opening night performance of the Raleigh-Durham Barn Dinner Theater's "Irma La Douce." They stood by the performers through a few minor technical difficulties and, as a result, were rewarded with a grand evening's entertainment.

It was said when Producer Howard D. Wolfe introduced the "Magic Stage" which rises to and descends from the ceilings of his Barn theaters, that he would have his ups and downs. Tuesday night was definitely one of the ups.

Lack of adequate rehearsals with the local technical directors resulted in the Magic Stage stubbornly staying down when it should have moved up and aggravatingly rising during the middle of one scene, when it should have stayed down.

The actors remained calm, however, and the audience remained patient. They made a joke of it. Once, after about the third technical miscue, one of the actors ad libbed down from the attic of the building, "Hey, take me back down, I forgot something!"

The most pleasant feature of Barn entertainment is this easy-going intimacy which is built up between the actors and the spectators, during the pre-show buffet.

"Irma La Douce" is the story of a sweet Parisian streetwalker who meets and falls in love with a noble, but naive young law student, Nestor Le Fripe. Tortured by his role as Irma's meek, or pimp, and insanely jealous of her business associates, Nestor disguises himself as a wealthy client who corners Irma's market for 10,000 francs a day.

Working by day and loving by night becomes too much for the lad, so he is forced to kill the second half of his split personality. The police inspector and Irma's ex-mec conspire to frame Nestor for his own murder and the poor boy is sentenced to life on Devil's Island. Meanwhile Irma is with child. The play, of course, deserves a happy ending, and gets one when Nestor escapes just in time to receive the blessings of fatherhood and to clear his name with the police. Dis done.

It is not often that a gentleman can call a lady a perfect tart and get away with it. But Miss Lynn Martin carries the show in her role as Irma. She has a blazing head of red hair, fiery eyes, a shape that fits very well into her mini-skirt costume and a squeal in her voice that betrays the oomph that both she

and Irma put into their work.

Tel Bowlin in the role of Nestor at first seemed cold and stilted in his performance, but he warmed up with the show. He is a better actor than a singer, and he gave his best performances during the non-musical scenes. His comedy timing was exceptional in one scene in which he appeared in Irma's presence a half dozen times alternately as Nestor and as the bearded customer.

The unity of the play was aided greatly by the performance of Earle Edgerton as Bob, the barkeep. He assumed the relaxed demeanor of a court-jester telling a story, and his well-timed, wry humor filled in the open spaces between the acts.

Bill Tarman, Tony Jester, Gavid de Rhys and Joel Ulan, surrendered adequate back-drop performances for the main character in the scene. Joel Ulan's half-a-sneeze. Bill Tarman's card trick, and Gavid de Rhys' "brown bagging"

crack were memorable.

George Vaughn Lowther deserves commendation for his performance as police inspector in the scene in which Nestor tries to convince him he is not dead. "The records disagree," is the Inspector's line.

The entire production was naughty, but nice. Parts of the audience reacted with restrained disfavor during the few places in which the actors were in danger of stepping too far over the bounds of good taste. Nestor's pantomime as a barber in the mortuary seemed out of place to those who understood what he was trying to portray. Bill Tarman's drunken scene on Devil's Island might have been a bit overdone for an audience that had just eaten its fill of chicken fricasse.

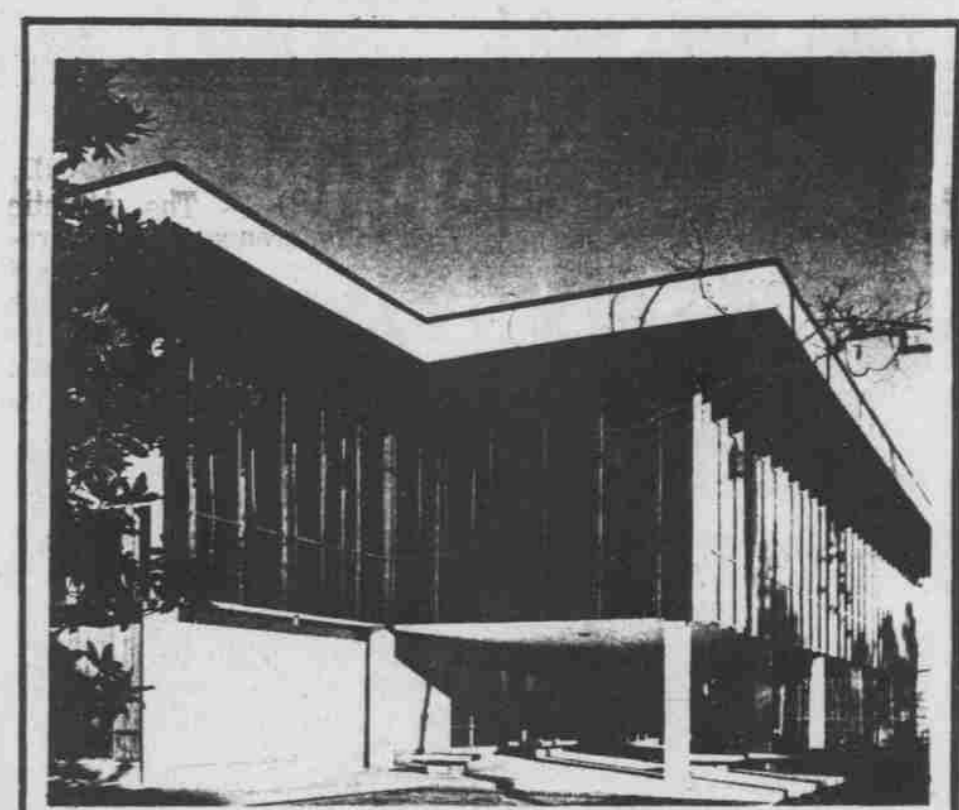
The production was the best to appear at the Barn in recent months, and one that is sure to please a student audience.

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