

# THE LEARNING TREE

A REVIEW  
BY  
TOM CAVANO

When I read that Gordon Parks was writing and directing a movie, I was excited. Though I had never read his autobiographical novel, *The Learning Tree*, from which the scenario for the movie of the same name was written, I had read a volume of his color photography and poems called *A Poet and his Camera*. The book would have been amazing had it contained either just the photographs or the poems, but by putting them together Parks created a harmony comparable to that of great choreography with great music. The poetry spoke of irony and the death of innocence while the photography attested to Parks' reverence and great love for the physical beauty of life. I expected the movie to be a cinematic enlargement of this theme.

What I was not expecting was the frankness with which Parks drove his story home. He reminds us that the beauty a film finds in a red poppy against a glowing blue sky is the same beauty as a sudden red splash soaking through the back of a dead man's shirt. With absolute taste approaching, but never reaching cliché, we see a town in Oklahoma during the 20's and its most prominent characters: the bigoted small town cop, the wise and open minded judge (and his dispicable son),

## CONVOCATION REVISED...

cont. from page 1.

Austin (Music), Ron Dortch (Drama), Janet Hamerly (Dance), Ric Graham (Design-Production), and Mrs. Wanda Crouse (Writing Program).

The Committee will sponsor two types of programs. The first of these will consist of outside speakers representing industry, the community, politics and the performing arts. These will be limited in number to two or three each semester. The second type of program to be offered will be programs drawn from faculty and students within the School and these programs will constitute the major proportion of the convocations. More and more it is hoped that these programs will afford the students an opportunity to be involved artistically with students and faculty in their own areas of specialty and with students and faculty from other areas of specialty within the School.

Beginning with the new semester this year (Spring 1970), attendance at the convocation programs will no longer be required. For programs of special interest to a particular arts area, students may be asked to attend these by their major dean or teacher. Everyone in the School community is urged to support the convocations as much as possible so that we can be assured of having an adequate audience especially for the programs involving visitors from the outside.

the pretty new girl, etc. *The Learning Tree* is filled with scenes we have all seen before, but somehow comes off as the original from which all of the stereotypes were made.

The script is not the kind that depends on great actors to make it work. The plot is solid, well written, and well executed. This is fortunate because much of the acting smacked of inexperience.

It was refreshing, though, to sit through the entire show and never see a movie star. Perhaps the lesson is that if a movie has a decent script and an apt director, it doesn't need mighty performing to make it a worthwhile picture. The actors were not hinderances, though. As a whole the roles were done with the simplicity and strength that comes from playing on your own home ground.

The story is a new one to American cinema. It is about a Negro boy growing up in a technicolored world. It contains the best and the worst of that world, though unbalanced towards tragedy. It out *Hamlet's Hamlet* in its tendency to leave a scene littered with bodies. The language of the black-white confrontation is the language of the time, so it is necessarily passé and, in places, trite. The situation is new and interesting. Parks creates no stereotypes, but sees everything within a scene, and shows it and makes it live.

*The Learning Tree* is a life experience. I wouldn't want anyone I cared for to miss it. It carries you far beyond the limits of the situation it depicts. My feelings were hurt by this movie. And I learned something. *The Learning Tree*.

Some of the forthcoming programs for the new semester have already been set. Here is a partial schedule:

February 4	Music program-- students of Mr. Matthews
February 18	Music program-- students in Music.
February 25	Music program-- students of Mr. Klein
March 4	Mr. Robert Schneider, Xerox Corp.
March 11	Music/Dance/Drama: Stravinsky's <i>L'histoire du soldat</i> .
March 18	A program on Baroque Music
April 8	Prof. Oubre on the Negro in Music and Art
April 15	Dance program-- students of Mr. Sanders

Any further suggestions will be welcomed. Please contact the Committee through your departmental representative.

## MUSIC

(Cont. from page 2)

shuck by Jagger, played for uncool suckers. In any case, someone laid \$500 worth of beer and a lot of sunshine acid on them for their "services".

(David Crosby brought up a good point when he said that the Stones' feeling that they needed this type of security proved that they were living back in 1965, completely out of touch with the scene in this country; he also said that Jagger had an "Easy Rider" image of the Hell's Angels).

But what of the Stones, particularly Jagger? Many say that the affair turned into a massive, grotesque ego-trip for Mick. It is felt that he overplayed his image to the ludicrous point. But what's puzzlin' me is the nature of your game.

Fights were happening all day at Altamont. Early in the afternoon, a fat man named "Oscar" was bloodied because his appearance was thought "obscene" by someone (presumably an Angel). During Jefferson Airplane's set, a fight broke out near the stage. Lead singer Marty Balin left into the melee in an effort to stop it and was laid unconscious as the group finished "Somebody To Love." (Interesting, that of all the people near the stage, only Balin had the guts to intervene).

When the Stones came on, confusion was at a peak (as I suspect the acid was). During "Sympathy For The Devil", a young Black man was killed by a group of Angels. Three versions are offered: the man had aimed a gun at Jagger; he had "messed up" an Angel's bike; and he tried to mount the stage, the area the Angels were assigned to "protect". Jagger, aware that something was wrong in the crowd, tried to cool them. But he lost his effect and couldn't control anything. All he had was his music and that wasn't working.

The image of it all is macabre. Jagger, dressed in his demonic, Prince of Darkness garb, singing his homage to Lucifer, while twenty feet away a man is beaten to death. A horrible,

(Cont. on page 7)

## MITCHELL

(Cont. from page 1)

Under the sponsorship of the Cultural Presentations Program of the U.S. State Department, she toured in Yugoslavia, Rumania, Greece, Turkey, the Near East, Finland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, South America and Mexico.

She studied for four years at the Juilliard Graduate School under fellowships and taught piano there. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1956.

Her program Friday will include: *Toccata con Fuga in F Sharp Minor* by Bach, *Etudes d'Execution Transcendante* by Liszt, *Eight Preludes for the Piano (1948)* by Frank Martin, *Sonata in B Flat, K. 333* by Mozart, and *Poissons d'or, Masques, and L'isle joyeuse* by Debussy.