

Commentary And Perspective



Photo by Barcelona

by mif

The recent events in the Drama Department (and the steps taken by the people involved do constitute a kind of revolutionary action) have pointed out some glaring weaknesses in the overall structure of this school. The students devised a document (or statement) which pertains to what they feel are deficiencies in the operation of their department and they offer suggestions which might remedy the situation. Basically, their agenda implies that what the school catalogue offers as course study and facilities simply does not exist. Wisely, they place no blame, but state, quite frankly, that they are not receiving the caliber of training they have paid for and were led to believe they would receive.

The document is well written and obviously well thought-out. It is not written in a derogatory manner, it does not demand, but suggests, points out, by its very nature, a serious work.

A proposal of significance, it calls for the virtual restructuring of the Drama Department. As such, it should have been given immediate consideration by the administration. The administration, however, has stalled the meeting with the students, has implied that the document refers to "luxuries and not necessities," and questioned the commitment of the entire department student body in relation to the proposals. (This precipitated a student "walk-in" last Wednesday, when the Drama

Department quietly filed en masse into the President's office to demonstrate their sincerity). But the fact that the administration did not respond with immediacy might well suggest that they are not taking the students - or their document - seriously.

And it raises some disturbing questions about this school and its administrators, their philosophies and vision. It becomes increasingly apparent that there are no solid, basic, workable concepts of what this school is, aside from the typically vague paragraphs which appear in the school's catalogue. There really is no sense of what this school intends to do or how it sees itself. And that is dangerous and shoddy planning.

It is time now that we all begin to inspect the motivations of this school and the people who control it. Are they interested in seeing that we receive a quality education in our chosen fields or are they merely taking our money and turning out half-baked products? But this is not only an administrative task. It is the task of everyone here.

This school started out something vital, something of importance and uniqueness. But it is sadly on the verge of becoming a second-class finishing school. Reevaluation is in order. We must provide a vision, a philosophy that will direct and guide us; we must stop this suicidal practice of running this insitution on a day-to-day basis.

by mif

I've always maintained that the real test of a rock and roll band is the live performance. Up there on stage, artists can't resort to tricks and gimmickry. What you see and hear is essence; what happens there stands.

Live concerts are weird events. The action happens quickly and it really makes sense only in retrospect. An LP can be listened to again and again. But a live concert is a product of the NOW. The strength of a group artist must come across quickly and forcefully. And to survive beyond the moment, it must have substance.

Ever since Woodstock, it seems that most groups feel it necessary to create something of monumental importance, something "HEAVY" (and as a result, usually pretentious). The orgiastic experience has been substituted for good music. Rock concerts in the past year have been about as exciting as rock albums. Alvine Lee & Ten Years After whip off loud guitar licks and grimaces as if they were the last act on earth; Led Zepelin scream and pound their way through a typical two-hour exercise in savage sexual gymnastic technique; C,S,N,&Y, really fine musicians, are trapped behind their own self-importance and manage to sterilize their audiences until they actually play "Woodstock," and by some kind of blind faith, people respond to this lame evocation as rock apocalypse.

But some groups come and give only their music.

Poco and The Byrds gave such a session two weeks ago at Duke. Poco is an offspring group of Buffalo Springfield. Richie Furay, co-founder of Buffalo, heads Poco and their tradition is rich with the memory of the Springfield. They play country rock (for lack of a better name), a mixture of citified rock and sweet country air. The sound is centered around Rusty Young's crisp steel guitar and Furay's fluid country guitar.

Poco had trouble at first. Their sound is a delicate and subtle combination of styles and if conditions aren't right, neither is the music. After a period of amp difficulty, they put it all together and played fresh, exciting music: vibrant songs, sparkling as good, clear wine. Pickin' Up The Pieces" was probably the highlight for me, a song from their first LP that typifies their brand of music. But they also did

"A Child's Claim To Fame" and "Kind Woman," two songs left over from Richie's Springfield days. And for a moment... just a dreamy instant, it almost seemed as if Steve and Neil were there with him. But the music was decidedly Poco's, however much it may recall the past.

They finished with "Nobody's Fools" "El Tonto De Nedie," a long instrumental that combines country and quick Latin rhythms from Young's steel guitar. An excellent set. You couldn't hope to find any better.

I was anxious about 'the Byrds. I'd seen them several times before and when they are good, they're beautiful; when they're bad... they're awful. And what with numerous personnel changes and an uneven last album, the possibilities were that the group might be losing its once golden touch.

But when they started playing with Clarence White's guitar ringing out "Lover Of The Bayou," it was perfect. The addition of an organist gave them the full, deep sound they once had. They sounded like every group of Byrds from the past (and there have been many); yet, they maintained a distinct and separate identity.

The set was the best I've ever seen them give. Soaring, lifting songs that carried you to a netherland of outer space and honeysuckle. Everything was beautiful: "My Back Pages," "Jesus Is Just All Right," "Truck Stop Girl," "Easy Rider," "It's All Right, Ma," a great new song, "It's Gonna Work Out Fine," "Take A Whiff (On me)," "This Wheel's On Fire," and a misty, idyllic acoustic version of "Tambourine Man," with just McGuinn and White, the finest version of that poem they've ever done.

"Eight Miles High" was a cosmic adventure. Pure space music, flowing and swift. White and McGuinn traded off guitar phrases rich with the textures of the song and then on into long episodic improvisations, while drummer Gene Parsons and bassist Skip Battin held the ship together.

They came back for two encores and did jarring, rousing versions of "Spaceman," the enigmatic "So You Want To Be A Rock n' Roll Star," and a charging "Chestnut Mare" that left me breathless and warmed to the marrow.

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by ed. schloss

According to Rex Reed the new musical, *The Rothschilds* should have been "Hermetically sealed" before it finally minted its way into Broadway's Lunt Fontanne Theatre on the eighteenth of October this fall; although it is true there is much that is wrong in this musical version of Frederic Morton's best selling novel drawn from the same title, there is so much that is right most of the time that one can almost dismiss the parts that don't quite work the way they were supposed to.

The play covers a period in history between 1772 and 1818, when revolution created a new world of social reform, when a family as poor as the Rothschilds through shrewd numismatic transactions could rise above their hapless life in the Frankfurt ghetto and create a revolution themselves throughout the banking capitals of Europe. Their struggle was Europe's struggle, to survive in a world that was steadily breaking away from under them. But the Rothschilds were able to combat their own fight for survival by maintaining patriarchal control in family decision making, while the empire builders could only turn to caddish officers to support their every move. The question to be asked here is how is this brought about in terms of what musical theatre can imbue it with as a generic art form. Unfortunately, the answer is that it is impossible to transform base metal into gold no matter how hard you try. In order to accept musical theatre, one must suspend ones disbelief (at least for two and a half hours) and listen to people sing about anything that is on their mind. Many times this works successfully in musicals when lyric lines develop organically from the situation and are not imposed self-consciously on the theatregoing public. A case in point is "The Rain In Spain" from *My Fair Lady*, where Eliza Doolittle learns how to speak English properly under the tutorage of Henry Higgins. Her success bursts into a song of jubilant elevation and we are rewarded by her success in musical terms. The transition from dialogue to lyric is an inherent element of the scene we have just witnessed. This is a rare moment of incandescence.

In *The Rothschilds*, we are faced with the literal transition of historical events, and song is all too often a gratuitous way to smother the moments of dramatic conflict. Luckily enough, Jerry Bock has written a delightful pastiche of melody and has filled the evening with a period gavotte, a hymn to the 'Bulwarks' of Albion, a Lehar waltz of his own making in "I'm In Love! I'm In Love!" and a rousing Marseillaise found in "Allons". The lyrics by Sheldon Harnick are serviceable and at least don't clutter up the music. He has always been successful at inner rhymes and as usual he has given us a beaut in: "May Boniparte be blown a part!"

The acting is impressive; if not particularly varied, at least Michael Kidd has staged the precedings with his customary skill for invention, although the choreography could have had more impact in its overall effect. The number "Stability" could have developed into a highly stylized pasquinade of courtly grace if he had enlarged the number considerably. Hal Linden gives a wonderful performance as Mayor Rothschilds. His combination of tender devotion and forceful conviction amazingly abets the book by Sherman Yellen, which varies

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Notice: The January 4th (or thereabouts) issue of *The N. C., Essay* will be a special literary edition. We're doing this partially because of the absence of the fall *Artful Dodger* and partially because it sounds like fun. We will accept any poetry, short stories, essays, etc. that are interesting, well written, and legible. Also, any artists who would be willing to submit sketches, cartoons, etc. are welcome to do so. In order to get all this together, we'll have to have the material by Dec. 18. So, all you aspiring poets and whatnots out there, let us have your stuff. Manuscripts may be left in the Essay office (in a specially marked box!), in faculty box No. 65, or given to me personally. We'll try and return everything, but for your own sake, make two copies. We'd like for this to be an annual edition (sort of post-holiday affair), so help us out and give some good things to print. Thank Y'all.

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by byron tidwell

"A mighty fortress is our God" proclaims the famous hymns. And there are several "fortresses" built in honor of God in downtown Winston-Salem.

In particular is Centenary United Methodist Church. The building was constructed at a cost of a million dollars during the Great Depression, but it is worth far more than that now. Its congregation is among the hundred richest in the United States. Sixty millionaires sit on the pews each Sunday while the morning worship service is broadcast at 11:00 over WSJS every Sunday morning as it has been for the past twenty-five years. Like the "Grand Ol' Opry," it has become an institution.

But what is Centenary doing to fulfill the commandment that challenges the church to go into the world and serve? First of all, Centenary operates two community centers, one in a black, poverty impacted area. It operates three day care centers for working mothers. The church has a ministry to the un-

derprivileged which not only supplies food and used clothing to those in need, but also awards several grants-in-aid to those people who want to attend college, but cannot due to expenses. Centenary operates a type of "Headstart program for children who would normally not do well in school due to environmental problems. Its week-day kindergarten is on a tuition basis, but in some cases the tuition is lowered or eliminated for those financially unable to handle it.

Centenary is even involved in a type of ministry that many churches shy away from. It is a co-sponsor of the Together House a counseling service for youth and, especially, drug users. Contact! Winston-Salem, a "hot line" telephone counseling service, is co-sponsored and particularly operated by Centenary. It was located in the church building for a time.

Centenary United Methodist Church: a church well on the way to fulfill its Christian commitment.