

Pax Finds Christopher Fry "Radiant And Rare Pleasure"

By Pax Davis

THE LADY'S NOT FOR BURNING, by Christopher Fry. The Oxford University Press. 95 pp.

If you are the lucky possessor of good hearing and a willing heart, nothing will quite so amply repay your time these gloomy days as a moment's attention in the direction of the barren North. However incongruous it may seem, an acquiescent ear in that direction will discover the sound of song and mirth, and should you become curious enough to investigate those out-laws' origins, you would find them arising from nothing more fatal than a play entitled "The Lady's not for Burning." Were your investigations more exhaustive, you might have the enviable joy of discovering that its author is one of the few men in the world today who seems to know a way of making tunes and titillation respectable.

His name, to draw a circle on nonsense, is Christopher Fry, and if your sleep this fall has been so sound that the din caused by his great and grand success has escaped your ears, you can only attempt compensation for your misfortune by hastily gandering what can still be said about the brightest new star in England's theatrical firmament.

"The Lady's not for Burning," you see, has caused an almost schizophrenic babble since it opened in New York last month. Its soaring verse received the wild applause of most of the circle of Tired Critics, and even the most lukewarm of them, Brooks Atkinson of the Times, had to admit that its author "may be a little deficient in talent, but he has a touch of genius." Time grew lyric, Life raved in a fine ecstasy and the town, drunken without so much as a drop of spirits for excuse, took Fry to its weary but still hospitable bosom.

We, poor spirits that we are, will be somewhat less blessed than the denizens of Manhattan who've had a chance at John Gielgud's reputedly fine production; but, however hapless, we still have the incredible joy—thanks to Oxford University Press—of at least reading Fry's fine frenzy.

And it will be, again and again, a pleasure at once radiant and rare. Hardly since Jonson—if ugly anthologies are evidence—has dramatic verse so acidly pointed out the foibles of man. Hardly since Shakespeare has sheer verbal song so made that recognition a delight. And hardly since either, lest we draw back from the final taunt, has poetry of the stage so rhapsodically taken its listeners into so completely satisfying an other-existence.

It is his genius, you see, that Fry can never quite make himself say anything simply. The hero of "The Lady's not for Burning" says early in the game "What a wonderful thing is metaphor," and we who listen can only nod assent. A young girl describes an unsuitable suitor as "a winter in my head"; a round of doubletalk becomes, under the Fry magic, "the same April fit of exasperating nonsense"; shadows are "raven-quills"; and "The night's a pale pastureland of peace."

Unlike that sober judge, T. S. Eliot, or that reluctant crooner, Maxwell Anderson, Fry must sing as he works, and he is like nothing so much as a mad arsonist whom we unexpectedly come upon running wildly, torch in hand, through a field of freshly-stacked hay. Though much of what he does is admittedly excessive, we can but marvel at the brilliance of the flames.

It is, Heaven knows, little more than a haystack to which he sets his torch. The principal dramatic thread of "The Lady's not for Burning" is a transparent anecdote about a misanthropic young soldier who wants to be hanged, a lovely, innocent girl who's to be burned as a witch, and the manner in which their inevitable love laughs at faggots and the world's stupidities alike. There's nothing more.

Nothing? Only verse that soars above the clouds as few poets have dared let it. Only a heroine who for sheer delight has gone unequalled since Rosalind. Only a hero whose melancholy knows only Hamlet for peer. Nothing? Then let young Will Shakespeare take "The Comedy of Errors" back for revision. Let him rework "A Midsummer nights Dream" so that it becomes more dramatically plausible. Let him withdraw "Twelfth Night" until its improbabilities have been made subject to the gray hand of reason. Christopher Fry may make no universal commitment, but his perceptions are acute and immutable, and if he babbles a little drunkenly while he's about his task—well, have not alcoholism wards their geniuses?

For its genius, you see, that is Fry's, and to say anything reasonable about either it or him is, as Fry himself might put it, like trying to extinguish the sun with a water-pistol. You may chastise him for breaking the rules and spank him for his disregard of order and reason, but when you are through, you find that you have only limned order's depotism and heightened reason's limitations.

Fry is so romantically rich and rewarding, in fact, that to find his equal, one can only call to mind another Christopher who drove a similar chariot. Like Fry, he called himself "Kit," and like the author of "The Lady's not for Burning," he had an early triumph over rule and reason in the articulation of melodious dramatic verse. We can only hope that his namesake continues to emulate his example, for literature tells us that before meeting his death at 29 in a messy bar-room brawl, he did well. His surname, you will of course have guessed, was Marlowe.

The Big Chef

By Peggie Johnson

About one Sunday every month, Daddy drapes a dishtowel across his stomach and retires to the kitchen to display his culinary skill. This is apt to be a leisurely process for him, but it is rather tedious for the rest of us who are doomed to fast while he prepares his concoctions. Some brave soul, hoping to speed up the operation, may offer his assistance, but he soon discovers that his presence is neither wanted nor appreciated in this inner sanctum.

Daddy's Sunday sojourns in the kitchen require a great deal of preliminary ceremony. First, a large collection of piano jazz records must be played as loud as the machine can possibly go. Our neighbors frequently tell us that they have little use for a radio or victrola because they can listen to ours so easily. Next, several large ash trays must be placed at strategic spots around the kitchen. Last, but by no means least, there must be an ample supply of liquid refreshment, better known in our house as "cough medicine", to serve as inspiration in case Daddy's natural zest for his task fails him, as it frequently does!

The tools of Daddy's trade are many and varied and must always be within easy reach of his hand. Daddy himself is no small man, and when he and every pot, pan, and bowl he can find are spread around the kitchen, there is little space left. Some cooks follow recipes from cookbooks; some file their recipes in their heads, but Daddy creates his own as he goes. These inventions may be only a small variation from the usual procedure, but they necessitate huge quantities of spices, sauces, and herbs which are set at random about the kitchen. These also serve as an obstacle course for any

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"Cacky" Pearson To Marry Dan Moser In December

Miss Mary Catherine Pearson's engagement to Mr. Daniel Boone Moser, both of Gastonia, was recently announced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Plato P. Pearson. The wedding will take place December 26.

Cacky is a member of the senior class and house president of Biting Dormitory. She also is a member of the Scorpions and vice-president of the A. A.

Cacky is a primary education major at Duke. He is a member

of the Kappa Alpha Fraternity.

Cacky and Dan will graduate from their respective schools next spring. They plan to set up house keeping in Durham on the weekend, but during the week Cacky will continue to live on campus in Biting.

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