

arts & entertainment

Hill's 'Food from Trash' combines fact and fiction

Documentaries have the potential to be among the most powerful of cinematic vehicles. They show real people in real situations talking about their feelings. Gary Hill's *Food from Trash* is at once a fine example of this power but also a reminder of the inferiority of mediocre fiction.

J. Marc Mushkin
private
showings



Hill's film (and it is his—he wrote, directed, photographed, and edited it) is a knowing look into the business of hauling garbage. The first hour or so is great documentary film making. The photography and sound track are individually marvelous and superbly integrated. The still photographs that begin the show signal the care for composition and image that Hill exhibits.

The filming is all very personal—we are on the trucks, in the dump and in the lives of the men and their families. All the filming was done in Lincoln. However, the film's

most interesting element, the soundtrack, is simply terrific. The sounds and words of people who are not educated, and do not claim to be, are faithfully recorded in the film. For example, Leon B. Raney talks of being in the "refuse" business and of "monoPUListic" business practices. It is a talking sociology lesson.

Hill is very aggressive with his soundtrack, mixing, overlapping and weaving it with the film to present a rich sight and sound experience.

Personal perspectives

Another of Hill's achievements is that he allows the character of several of the important owners and garbage-men to emerge. Raney and his son, Leon Raney, Jr., are interviewed separately so each can tell of his personal perspective on life in the business.

Phil Knaub, another owner, describes the work as having less freedom than "some of the prisoners in the pen." The workers, however, describe him as a great man in almost saint-like terms because he gave them jobs.

This difference in viewpoints is the heart of the film's documentary portion; Hill shows that people in need will put up with anything—filth, long hours, low pay—for just a bit of security. They often are not even bitter about it. Hill turns around at this point and shifts the film's gears into a fictional view of one family played by Roger Johnson and Kathy Mickells.

Yet there are several problems here. One is that the

breakdown of the family is contrary in spirit to the documentary. If Hill had wanted to show the effects of this life on the family, he could have prepared us a little better, or he could have shown it in the documentary. Instead, the film clumsily moves into this melodramatic "Family Affair."

Hill's fusion of documentary and fiction simply does not succeed. I felt betrayed by this intrusion of unreal people into the comfortable reality of the documentary. It is hard to imagine even a tactfully done fictional episode fitting in well with straight documentary.

Competent work

However, the effects of the real part of the film are not eroded by the fiction. I left the preview screening knowing that I had seen the work of a competent filmmaker who had the guts to take some chances and try some new ideas. It was exciting and enjoyable to watch the film with Hill. He will also be attending the regular showings.

Food from Trash is a good film for an hour and an experiment for half an hour. That ratio beats out almost anything else I've seen lately.

Food from Trash will have its World Premiere Dec. 13 through 17 at Sheldon Film Theatre.

There is another interesting movie around town this weekend. Tonight's KFMQ/Stuart Theatre Midnight Movie is a notable relic of the sixties, *Easy Rider*, starring Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper and Jack Nicholson.



Mavra, one of the UNL operas, uses a different twist, the characters move like wind-up toys.

Photo by Ted Kirk

School of Music operas based on Pushkin stories

Two operas based on stories by the great Russian storyteller Pushkin will be presented tonight at 8 p.m. in Kimball Recital Hall. The two one-act productions are the second offering in the UNL School of Music Opera Theatre's season.

Edward Crafts, School of Music voice instructor and stage director for the operas, said the shows were a new challenge for the School of Music because of the time, money and schedule limitations. He said the operas were planned with the prerequisites of less time and money for preparation than is usually given to the major, three-act shows.

Crafts said the first opera, *Mozart and Salieri* by Rimsky-Korsakov, has music typical of the Romantic period but an "evolved, declamatory style" in the lyrics and pacing.

Crafts said the plot is based on an old legend that Salieri poisoned Mozart because of artistic rivalry and jealousy.

He said the characters never sing at the same time nor do they repeat any of the dialogue (conventions usually found in opera). Crafts said the opera was based almost verbatim on the original story.

The second production will be *Mavra* by Igor Stravinsky. Crafts said the music for this production is basically neo-classical (use of somewhat dissonant melodies, he said).

The plot is "tenuous," he said, because it concerns two young lovers (Vasili and Parasha) who long to spend time together. In order to be close to his lover, Vasili is disguised as a girl so that he can apply at Parasha's house as the new main maid. However, Parasha's mother discovers the "maid" shaving her beard and the secret is ruined.

Mavra has special production styles. Crafts said he directed the characters as wind-up toys so that it is a "very stylized, almost 'cartooned' production." Stravinsky combined several musical styles in the score including gypsy music, waltzes, tangos and traditional Russian folk melodies, he added.

The conductor for *Mozart and Salieri* is Richard Grace (a UNL School of Music instructor). The cast includes Vaughn Fritts as Salieri, Richard Weigel as Mozart and Mike Tiner as the violinist.

Harold Evans, another voice instructor at UNL, is conductor of *Mavra* and his cast includes Carrie Solomon as Parasha, Richard Drews as the hussar, Jo Fankhauser as the mother and Teresa Lesiak as the neighbor.

Accompaniment for the performances will be played by Mary Indermuehle and Linda Laessle on piano. Tickets are \$2.50 for general admission and \$1.50 for students.

'The Hot L Baltimore;' life in a condemned hotel

The Hot L Baltimore, winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Obie Award and the Outer Critics Circle Award, opens tonight in the UNL Howell Theatre. The Lanford Wilson play begins at 8 p.m.

Hal Floyd, UNL theatre instructor, directs the show he described as a "comedy with a very realistic overtones." The plot concerns the residents of the Hotel Baltimore, a formerly elegant place that now suffers from decay. Floyd said it centers around the characters' relationships and the way their lives are affected when they hear the hotel will be demolished.

Although the characters seem seedy and questionable (for example there are pimps and prostitutes in the play), Floyd said, the action the hotel lobby represents happens to everyone in real life.

"Lanford Wilson is making a statement about a broader section of life, about the deterioration of values in life—architecture, and things that seem permanent but pass away like life-styles," Floyd said. "It's a disorientation and disruption that occurs as a natural part of life."

Floyd said the characters use language that shows social status. The language should not offend any adults but is not suitable for children.

"The language is being used by people of a certain background. Language that is much more prevalent now. It's language that you'd never hear on TV but is frequently heard in movies," he said.

"Some of the characters are prostitutes and pimps who use language that's appropriate and realistic for them. They don't discuss things in 'Sunday school' terms," Floyd said. "The language may seem coarse but it is not for shock value. It is there because that's the way people

speak."

Floyd said he never saw the short-lived *Hot L Baltimore* television series but he said the show probably had to be emasculated for the screen. He said that probably ended up ruining the characters and their reality.

Floyd said people who liked his last comedy at UNL, Kurt Vonnegut's *Happy Birthday Wanda June*, probably would like *The Hot L Baltimore* because both are well-written comedies with the humor and seriousness underscoring them. But, Floyd said, *The Hot L Baltimore* is constructed better.

The cast for the play includes Eric Sorensen as Bill Lewis, Judith Radcliff as The Girl; Susan Wurtz as Millie;

Stephanie Kallos as Mrs. Bellotti; Loreda Shuster as April Green; George Loudon as Mr. Morse; Marla Harper as Jackie; Jack Honor as Jamie; Myron Papich as Mr. Katz; Nan Burling as Suzy; Cliff Radcliff as Suzy's customer; Joe McNeely as Paul Granger; Debra Miller as Mrs. Oxenham; Paul Hefelfinger as the cab driver; and John Sublette as the delivery boy.

Set design is by Paul Whaley; costume design is by Pat Dennis, and lighting design is by Michael Bautista. The play will run Dec. 9 and 10 and 13 through 17 with nightly performances at 8 p.m. Tickets are available from the theatre box office, 108 Temple bldg., or by calling 472-2072.

Concerts at UNL this weekend

The UNL School of Music is sponsoring two public concerts with no admission charges this weekend.

The School of Music's Symphonic Wind Ensemble will perform Saturday, at 8 p.m. in Kimball Recital Hall. The ensemble will be conducted by Jack Snider, director of bands at UNL. The program will include "The Earl of Oxford's March" by Gordon Jacob, "Tuba Concerto" by Ralph Vaughn Williams and "First Suite in E-flat" by Gustav Holst.

Tuba virtuoso Floyd Cooley, a musician with the San Francisco Symphony, will be the featured performer at the concert. Cooley will be in Lincoln to participate in the School of Music's First Annual Festival for Winds and Percussion to be held Saturday.

The annual performance of Handel's "Messiah" will take place on Sunday, at 3 p.m. in the UNL Coliseum. It will be the 87th performance by the School of Music, a tradition that is nearly as old as UNL itself, which will be the last presentation of the work in the Coliseum (plans for a new location are not yet complete).

The concert will combine the talents of the University Symphony Orchestra (under the direction of music instructor Robert Emile), the University Oratorio Choir (directed by instructor Earl Jenkins) and four soloists. The four vocal solos will be sung by soprano Colleen Schlake, mezzo-soprano Teresa Berry, tenor Mark Johnson and baritone Scott Root.