

opinion/editorial

Excellent films, high operating costs highlight Sheldon

Dan Ladely and the Sheldon Film Theater face a familiar problem this semester. The theater's operating costs are projected to run at a deficit for the sixth consecutive year.

But the theater director must be commended for the excellent program of films he schedules and for his efforts as a director to try to overcome financial difficulty.

Ladely, like many other administrators, is confronted with the age-old problem of operating costs running higher than profits.

No one can fault Ladely with the deficit. Film rentals, freight costs, advertising and projectionists' fees take quite a chunk out of Sheldon's budget. He also said he will keep advertising at a minimum by using inexpensive flyers to promote the films.

Ladely's idea of transferring theater employees' salaries to NU's budget may be a good way of easing some of the financial problems.

One can only hope Ladely's search for other grants is successful, because the theater is one of the finest in the

Midwest.

Sheldon already receives \$10,000 annually from the National Endowment for the Arts and \$4,000 from the Nebraska Arts Council.

Yet a grant from Toyota to sponsor a Japanese film series would only add to the quality of the theater.

And a U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's museum grant may also rid Sheldon of some of its financial burdens.

Ladely's idea to organize a Sheldon Film Society may prove beneficial in the future. The theater

needs a concerned group of citizens that will inform the public about its fine programs.

Audience attendance is not to be counted as one of the theater's problems. According to Ladely, a good-sized hard-core audience comes to everything.

The problem that Sheldon Film Theater is faced with is getting more money. We can only hope that Ladely will be successful in his fight to overcome Sheldon's financial problems.

Vague familiarity lingers in first week class rigamarole

There's a fresh, crisp tingle in the early morning air. The weather seems to have cooled quickly from the oppressive summer heat, but it seems appropriate.

The slap of cool air wakes me as I peddle furiously to class and it assures me that I will be alert enough to avoid being flattened by the other late students driving furiously to that 8:30 a.m. class.

Aah! Returning to fall classes, there's nothing quite like it, even if its only been a week since summer school ended.

The norms quickly reassert themselves.

But first, there's the mandatory, predictably tedious rigamarole of the instructor's first introductory lecture. At this lecture the instructors lay down the ground rules of their class.

a few weeks before the new tunes on the juke box grow old with repetition and the rise in food and drink costs is appreciated fully (about the same time that tuition statements come out and a multitude of parents suddenly hear from their offspring).

Coffee, soft drinks, and, I assume, tea have gone up three cents. But there's no help from student fees. Well, maybe, if caffeine consumption has decreased in controversy . . . Maybe we could get a representative from Maxwell House to come and speak . . .

Oh well. There is to be expected a certain amount of disillusionment from the cynical senior. After four years a bit of the campus superficiality is bound to affect the psyche.

It's bound to affect something. Actions, I suppose, would be the most productive. Maybe it's time to learn something besides how to read the buying guide in Vogue.

The university life is a great shield from reality. It's supposed to be the place to set goals and realize ideals. But the Real World isn't painted with Estee Lauder eye colors nor carpeted with the Adidas color-coordinated \$125 jogging ensembles.

Wouldn't it be great to look in the mirror and see something beyond the stylish body in the Pierre Cardin suit? Wouldn't it be frightening?

God, I wish I had a dime for every time I heard, "Hey, are you ready for the test?" "Man, are you kidding? I just read the assignments last night!"

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There is, of course, the customary groans and disconcerted eye-rolling when the testing structure and paper schedule is announced. The instructors' feed upon this response and I have yet to see a class disappoint them.

After that, students are threatened with the punishment for missing an exam without presenting a valid note authorized by a valid medical authority. Punishment ranges from zero to thirty lashes and revoking of the season football ticket.

The only reprieve from this doldrum is that the instructors usually let us out after 10 minutes and we have 40 minutes to wander about the Union and look fashionable.

You've bought your textbooks but do not have a vest or a blouson shirt in your entire wardrobe? For shame! The first two weeks of class just wouldn't be worth it without the women who wiggle about on spikes from class to class (their endurance across campus can not be underestimated!) and the men who trot about in hooded windbreakers. But Vogue and GQ have let them down. Jeans and painter's pants are still the thing to wear on campus.

The Union is crowded with a gregarious lot. It is still



Best interests of child difficult to judge in adoption case

Washington--So what would you do about Barbara Bernhardt and three-year-old Deborah Annette?

It is beyond dispute that Bernhardt lied to the adoption agency in order to improve her chances of getting a new baby daughter. (She already had two sons, one natural, the other adopted.)

She told the agency that she hadn't been married before, although she had been twice divorced. She told a muddled story about her financial resources. And she neglected to tell agency representatives that she and her husband were having marital difficulties and were in fact separated at the time Deborah was placed with her. (They since have divorced.)

Not to put too fine a point on it, Barbara Bernhardt got Deborah under false pretenses.

That's one side. The other is this:

Loving mother

Testimony in the Maryland Court of Special Appeals portrays Bernhardt as a loving, even doting, mother, and her children--all three of them--as happy and well-adjusted. There were even hints that the reason her three marriages had gone bad was that she devoted too much of her attention to the children.

Deborah, in the two and a half years she has been in the Bernhardt home, has been

one of the family. She seems to love her family, and to be loved in return.

The court, looking at all the facts--including some that have been sealed--ordered Barbara Bernhardt to return Deborah to the adoption agency. And what would you have done?

Look only at Bernhardt, and you may see a conniving, cheating and lying--if loving--woman determined to have her way at any price. If she had undertaken the same

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misrepresentations in order to gain trusteeship of an institution, or a fund, or a piece of property, you'd have no problem. You'd get yourself another trustee.

Feelings involved

But institutions and funds and property don't have feelings. They don't form attachments. Deborah, by all accounts, has formed an attachment to Bernhardt that is hardly different from that of any bright-eyed toddler for the only mother she's known.

So even if you say Bernhardt deserves to lose the child she lied to obtain in the first

place, wherein lie the best interests of the child?

As one of Bernhardt's supporters demanded the other day, what is the point of breaking up this family? Can it be right to "take (Deborah) and give her to strangers" just because the agency is sore with Bernhardt?

The head of the agency, the Rev. Raymond Hartzell of Lutheran School Services here, says being sore has nothing to do with it. Nor, he insists, is his agency's move to delay Bernhardt's petition to adopt motivated by any desire to punish.

Misrepresentation worries

But there are other considerations. For one thing, the Chicano who is Deborah's natural mother (the father is black) had specified when she put the child up for adoption that she should go to a two-parent family. For another, Hartzell has problems with Bernhardt's persistent misrepresentation, fearing that it suggest a pattern of behavior that could prove damaging to the child.

That last is a tricky, almost specious, argument, and the hard question remains: Why try to move the child from a loving home to a situation that is uncertain at best--especially after two and a half years? Isn't that a failure to temper justice with humanity and common sense?

Hartzell, clearly troubled by the question, answers with an analogy. Suppose someone kidnapped your infant child and raised her as his own, giving her as much love and security as any parent could. What should happen when the kidnapper is caught? If she and the kidnapper have a warm, loving relationship, would you merely shrug and walk away?

Delay mother's fault

He knows your answer to that one. As to the breakup of a family after two and a half years, he lays that one at the feet of Bernhardt herself. The agency moved to block the adoption and regain custody of Deborah less than six months after the child was in the Bernhardt home. The balance of the time is a direct result of litigation initiated by Bernhardt herself.

Hartzell makes one final point. Children are removed from their families--even natural families--all the time. Social work professionals are trained to minimize the trauma these removals might engender. It all makes sense--certainly from a legal point of view and probably from a moral one as well. But if Deborah's well-being is supposed to be everybody's chief concern, is this the best way to achieve it?

What would you do?
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