

arts/entertainment

Two new films inspire hope for American cinema

By Pete Schmitz

Just as I was about to give up on the American cinema showing any signs of improvement, two remarkable films, *Gloria* (directed by John Cassavetes), and *It's My Turn* (directed by Claudia Weill) made their way to Lincoln for what appears to be a very brief visit. The reason these films are failing at the box office despite the good reviews they have received is that they break too many rules in current popular culture.

MOVIE review

In a time when movies are being made in a slick manner on multi-million-dollar budgets, Cassavetes and Weill maintain their creative integrity by working with relatively small budgets in order to present works of art marked by austerity and intelligence. Another thing the directors did wrong was to work with scripts that called for strong and independent women.

However, *It's My Turn* at least had the advantage of having Jill Clayburgh in the leading role. Since Clayburgh is young and attractive with two consecutive Oscar nominations behind her, she is considered, "semi-bankable" by the studios.

But Gena Rowlands, who plays Gloria

Swenson in *Gloria*, is middle-aged, non-prolific, and less than glamorous; for actresses that spells disaster. This is a shame because Rowlands has proven with this film, as with *A Woman Under the Influence*, that she is one of the best actresses in film today. Not even Jane Fonda, Sissy Spacek or Meryl Streep can match Rowlands' talents, which come with age, experience, and time away from Hollywood.

Mob associate

In *Gloria*, Rowlands plays a former mob associate who has settled down so that she can enjoy her money, apartment, friends and cat. But her life is disrupted by Phil, a six-year-old Puerto Rican whose family was killed by Gloria's friends after the youngster's father informs the law of the mob's activities. Just before Phil's family is killed, Gloria gives him protection out of love for the boy's mother, to whom she was close.

Throughout the film, we see Gloria using her wits as well as her gun in order to protect the boy and herself. But even though Gloria claims that she can shoot anyone's guts out as long as she knows the person, she uses her weapon discriminately. In one instance she puts her life in greater danger in order to spare the innocent lives of others whom she cornered into a bathroom with her enemies.

In the tradition of the gangster genre, this film has a violent and episodic plot

with a vibrant musical score to match. Fortunately, though, Cassavetes spares us the gory visual details that have made other violent movies so popular (another rule broken). More important is the fact that *Gloria* still has the Cassavetes touch: it is photographed with fast stock film, frames are dominated by close-ups of the performers' faces, and the story thematically is concerned with the joys and sorrows of relationships.

Indeed, Rowlands and Juan Adams (who plays Phil), are a touching duo. Although Cassavetes put too many adult phrases into Phil's mouth, we are convinced when Gloria says the boy is one of the nicest persons that she has ever slept with. And it must be stated that Adams is an amazing discovery.

Best movie

This young actor explodes like James Dean, broods like Montgomery Clift, and radiates like Paul Newman. This is no accident since Cassavetes has been fascinated with the "method acting" technique which influenced his acting career as well as the careers of others who started performing in the 50s.

Without a doubt, *Gloria* is the best American movie released so far this year. It probably will be a long time before we see any film with a hero or heroine as brave and sensitive as Gloria Swenson.

Jill Clayburgh's character, Kate Gunzinger, is very different from Gloria; she is a soft-spoken, middle-class professor of mathematics at the University of Chicago. But like Gloria, Kate has her orderly life disrupted by a male whom she meets one weekend in New York City.

Inner turmoil

Obviously, Kate is not representative of many young adults today, but the turmoil she feels is easy for many to identify with. In one weekend she discovers the distance people have been making between each other. Some of it, as in the case of her father and herself, is inevitable. But the emotional climax occurs when Kate realizes that she can have a satisfying relationship once she commits herself to working at it.

Like many of us, Kate was misled into thinking that once a relationship starts all efforts to perfect it can stop. While we're uncertain as to what job Kate finally will choose, the story ends on an affirmative note as we know that Kate will not settle for anything less in her relationships.

If you have been disgusted with the recent rash of bad movies, see *Gloria* and *It's My Turn*. Neither film is perfect, but they show a lot of hard work and sincerity on the part of those involved in their production.

Pre-Baroque group creates 'musical museum'

By Penelope M. Smith

This Friday at Kimball Recital Hall you can escape the popular music of your own time and discover what your peers of 400 to 800 years ago were listening and dancing to.

Calliope, a Renaissance band, is a quartet of reknowned soloists on modern instruments, who discovered a mutual interest in pre-Baroque music.

Ben Harms, the group's percussionist, who also plays for the Pennsylvania Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera, spoke of the group's formation and purpose.

Initially, Harms said, the group got together because of the possibilities for musicians in New York.

"Here in New York we have the phenomenon of freelance work, everything from work for the opera like I do, to jingles for Kentucky Fried Chicken," said Harms. "All of us are conservatory-trained on modern instruments but we're from a large pool of musicians who don't have to be regularly employed."

Harms said that through working at various jobs together, he and the other members of the band discovered a mutual interest in pre-Baroque music and started to perform.

Part-time work

Though Calliope is supposed to be part-time work for its members, they have performed in every major Renaissance festival and are constantly conducting seminars, lectures and workshops across the country.

In spite of the small amount of exposure of their audience to some of the more ancient and obscure music, Harms said audiences respond enthusiastically because of its attitude.

"Basically the music is straight forward, it's not frivolous but you don't have to work real hard to understand it," he said. "It's generally happy music, optimistic. There are also many sad pieces, but it's a pure emotion. 15th and 16th century music is less encumbered with dialectical determinism and existentialism. It doesn't beat around the bush."

One of the things Calliope enjoys most about the music is the amount of participation allowed the artist in the creative process.

"The music doesn't specify any particular orchestration, instruments, dynamics, tempo, or phrasing, we do it all our-

selves. In that way I suppose the closest things to it are chamber music and jazz," Harms said. "For example, Friday night we'll play *L'Homme Arme*, from a 15th century Burgundian manuscript. Only the melody survives but we've created seven or eight minutes of variations with accompaniment."

Musical museum

Harms said that though Calliope is in part a "musical museum" the music is being played with 20th century values by 20th century players.

"We can't play and the audience can't listen like people 500 years ago, this adds another element of creativity," he said.

One of the most unique things about Calliope is their use of old instruments that have been created by instrument makers based on pictorial sources. They have such names as tabor, a type of drum; the sackbut, a type of Renaissance trombone; and the vielle, a type of proto viola in the 40 instruments the group plays.

Symphony range

"The sounds we can create have the same range as a symphony," Harms explained. "The Renaissance was an age of experimentation, some of the instruments weren't successful and died out, some of them remained."

The instruments that died out often cause Harms recreative problems. Consequently some of the percussion instruments he makes himself for the group.

"I've been making some Renaissance tympany for a year or two. The problem is that there's only one maker of copper bowls in this country. He makes them for candied apples things like that, and he has a back order of six months. Only after I get those can I begin to work," said Harms.

People tend to underestimate the technique of pre-Baroque musicians when in fact, Harms said, some techniques are degenerated. Calliope is trying to discover and utilize what they discern to be these techniques and to use them in their recitals.

"The precision instruments of the Renaissance were a lot more interesting and the technique was a lot more developed than today," he said. "For example the tambourine technique. From paintings and woodcuts of the period we can conclude that they played it in the complicated way it's played in the Middle East today."

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