

Arts & Entertainment

Music and illusions combine in Polish movie

By Eric Peterson

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the thing you listen for in "The Orchestra Conductor," a Polish film by Andrzej Wajda. The characters live in it or they use it — this familiar composition proves to be a harrowing thing.

There are two orchestra conductors in the film. John Gielgud plays a great old man. Jan Lasocki, who comes back to his native Poland to explain himself

to get Lasocki's attention by her refusal to intrude; he sees her framed by the agitated crowd, looking at him very calmly a little further down the hall.

It's clear that the conductor hates all the notoriety, the pushy concert groupies; he seems physically sick of it all. The impression gets stronger with seeing an advertising lightboard on which a figure of the silent film actor Charlie Chaplin capers, jerking back and forth like a puppet.

Marta can't stay in New York to meet with Lasocki again, but flies back to Poland to a warm family scene which quickly becomes quite tense. In spite of her assurances that she feels good to be back in Poland, her husband Adam won't be convinced, asking her in the middle of the night, "Do you love me? Do you love me?"

Gielgud's contempt is very nice — he has the air of a reserved and courtly British gentleman who has rudeness forced on him by predatory photographers, who hang around literally waiting for his death. To escape them, he has decided to take a trip somewhere, his destination secret; he chuckles richly . . . and we next see him in Poland, where he has come to his native city, returned to conduct a concert which he fled from doing years ago. Adam's orchestra is working on — of course — Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and everyone seems ecstatic to have a great conductor to work with.

We see shot after shot of Adam working with the orchestra — if it could be described that way — he seems more to be working against them, raging and sweating

as if he were working over a wild horse. Lasocki on the other hand seems almost beatific as he conducts the orchestra. There is an exalted half-smile on his lips.

Marta puts the difference before Adam plainly when she says of Lasocki, "When he conducts, it's a dialogue." Playing under Adam (she herself is second violin, significantly), the orchestra musicians only listen and take orders.

There is a very good scene in which the couple undress as they argue about Lasocki and his merits — for Adam's jealousy is opening out — it seems to be kind of a habit for them, bed at this time of the day, after a rehearsal; both try to politely restrain their bad feeling as Adam says Lasocki ran away from Poland and pushed his way to the top; they stop; they are dressing again, coldly.

There is another kind of marriage pictured in the next scene, in which Lasocki calls his wife, talks to her tenderly, asks her to listen for his pulse and heart as he puts the receiver over his wrist and chest.

"The gallant shock troopers," as Adam calls the state bureaucrats, step in to bring out the contrast between the two orchestra conductors in sharper tone; they have decided that Lasocki's concert has to take place in a newly built factory as an "acoustic experiment," and broadcast worldwide; and since it's going to be an international event, the present musicians will have to be pushed back for better ones from Warsaw. At first, Adam protests strongly at all this, but caves in, especially when he finds out it is going to be a big career step up

for him. Lasocki's reaction is simple — he refuses to conduct under the shoddy arrangement, and leaves.

Adam becomes extremely jealous of his wife and Lasocki — who finds that Marta looks exactly like her mother Anna. He tells of a moment of despair: "I was helpless, hanging there in space, unable to move . . ." when the sound of her mother's voice had revived him.

At a restaurant table lit with candles, Lasocki takes off her glasses and speaks to her as Anna, her mother, talks of his regret at not returning sooner. She protests that she is not her mother, and Lasocki gently says, "I know," then goes back to speaking to her in the same reminiscent voice.

It becomes clear that this trip is simply a fulfillment of memory for Lasocki; when Marta comes to his hotel room and begins to cry and cry, he orders breakfast for them, obviously discomfited, and doesn't offer any other help. She leaves with her face looking ghastly and gray, while he goes to stand austere against the white windows. He has come to Poland to die, and nothing will be allowed to intrude on his wrapping up of things.

By the end, Adam has lost his orchestra, lost his wife's respect and love — but it's not clear that she will leave him. Like her mother, she will choose the man who needs her over the man who is stronger. She fixes Adam's attention, and rips away all his illusions; he wasn't jealous of Lasocki because of her, or because of the orchestra. He was jealous because Lasocki loved music, while for Adam Beethoven was a job.

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to his love, as he puts it — or really, to explain his love to himself, because the woman he once loved has died. And there is the Polish conductor Adam, whose jealousy of the great conductor causes the disintegration of his illusions about his life and music.

The figure of desire here is a blonde Polish actress who played a documentary in "Man of Marble" — Marta has many of the same qualities in her: unswerving honesty, a willfulness that seems almost overdone and capricious.

We hear Beethoven's Fifth playing as she rushes through New York, over the Brooklyn Bridge, standing up through the sunroof of a car to take it all in. Seeing a poster for a Lasocki concert, she determines to see it for a very personal reason: the great conductor was once in love with her mother. In spite of obnoxious and intrusive cameramen and a crowd that mobs him after the concert, Marta manages

Pete's Chicken 'N a Skillet 'nothing fancy, just good'

By Ward W. Triplett III

Harry W. Peterson has done a lot for the city of Lincoln, ranging from his 11 years as a policeman to tutoring senior citizens on passing the driver's test, to serving on the Lincoln City Council.

He also was a division manager with King's Food Hosts for 17 years and spent four years as the state's director of motor vehicles.

"But with a new governor, you have changes," Peterson said. "I suddenly found out that a man who is over 60 years old does not have a high hireability, despite his experience and background."

Peterson, who insists on being called just "Pete," is now in yet another form of business. Pete's Chicken 'N a Skillet opened three weeks ago last Thursday at 14th and O Streets.

Chick 'N a Skillet denies the Kentucky Fried Chicken motto of doing one thing right. Pete's offers chicken by the piece and chicken dinner combinations, as well as hamburgers, spaghetti, hot dogs, chef's salads, three soups and a King's carryover, the cheese frenchee.

Chick 'N a Skillet also serves breakfast, which includes pancakes and muffins made from a mix prepared by Royal American Foods, for whom Peterson works as a distributor.

"Our motto here is nothing fancy, just good," Peterson said. "We don't plan to have any salad bars and so on."

Chicken had been the one food item that was not readily available in the downtown area. While there are four shops that cater to sandwich lovers, three fast-food hamburger joints and three taco places, Pete's is the first chicken speciality shop to open downtown.

"We are the closest chicken place to the campus," Peterson said. "Popeye's is a little more than three miles away on West O, and you have to go way out to find a KFC. As far as downtown is concerned, we are the only



Staff photo by Dave Bentz

"Pete" Peterson, owner of Chicken 'N a Skillet place where you can get chicken like this. Other people serve it, but not in this setting."

Pete's chicken is somewhere between what Popeye's and Kentucky Fried offer. Peterson said he and son Jerry toyed around with the chicken for some time, trying to get consistent color and taste.

"We are not a franchise," Peterson said. "I've had people tell me they thought I had bought into a franchise. But we don't have professional cooks. My son is our chicken man."

Since opening, Peterson has served mainly businessmen and women from downtown, he said. Ironically, students don't seem to be aware of the business yet.

"I was a policeman for 11 years in this town, and a lot of my customers are the teen-agers of that era," Peterson said. "They're all over 40 to 45 years old now, and they remember me. I've had people I've given tickets to or arrested come in."

"I've been involved in a lot of things in this town, and I've worked with thousands, not hundreds."

Peterson said the business was doing better than he had anticipated. The revenue generated from three weeks of business was equal to his projected revenue for the month.

"It is really nice when people tell you they appreciate your business and your service," Peterson said. "We treat every customer like he is the boss, because we want them to come back."

Peterson added that his restaurant stands a better chance of sticking around downtown because of its unique business.

"I think a lot of the food businesses in downtown have gone under because they had a lot of the same business," Peterson said. "Two businesses in this very spot have gone under in the past year or so with the same food service and video games. With our style of business, we won't run into that same problem."

"I have never put the word failure in my vocabulary," he said. "If you fail, you have just a setback."

Ant concert canceled; refunds available now

The Adam Ant concert, originally scheduled for March 13 but later postponed until May 5, has been canceled completely, officials at Pershing Auditorium have announced.

The singer injured his ankle during a performance, which caused the delay of a major portion of the tour. There was no reason given for the cancellation.

Refunds are available immediately at outlets where tickets were purchased.

Refunds will be issued for a two-week period beginning last Thursday.

FRED GOES to COLLEGE



By Tim Norland

