

Childlike wonderment focus of Italian film at Sheldon

Review by Eric Peterson

The wonder-filled separation of a child's perspective gives *The Night of the Shooting Stars*, a film directed by Paolo Vittorio Taviani, its special magic. *The Night of the Shooting Stars* showed Sunday and Monday at the Sheldon Film Theater as part of the UPC Foreign Film Series.

The film contains some of the same stirring appeal for family and national loyalties, and to a loyalty to humanity in general, that many post-war Italian films have had — but a careful eye to the potential of childlike wonderment becomes a curiously moving and delightful focus of the film. The narrator — at least the narrator of a frame surrounding the main part of the film — is a woman relating the events of the Night of San Lorenzo, 1945, to her small son.

Shifts in place and time within the film are crisply made through the use of a wipe of the screen from the right; and scenes which actually occur are intercut with fantasy scenes which have an odd psychological power. When a fascist blackshirt stands before Cecilia in the middle of a skirmish in a wheatfield, the six-year-old girl who grows into the narrator shuts her eyes, repeats a childhood rhyme of adult resonance, and what she desperately wants to see appears on the screen: the black-shirted savage pierced through with the many spears of Trojan warriors from Honer's epic, who spring up magically from the soil. At another point in the film, a Sicilian woman runs away from her fugitive band, is shot by soldiers, and in a dreamlike sequence sees them turn into American G.I.'s, Sicilians from Brooklyn, who show her a snowstorm paperweight with the Statue of Liberty in it... one of them agrees to take her to America, and they turn into German soldiers as she sinks into death.

The coming liberation of Italy by American forces is just such a fantasy, anticipated several times before it happens at the end, and much too late for many characters. The chill of death hangs over all actions in the film, especially the most humane

and fulfilling; a risky marriage is performed for two young lovers near the start as the little girl watches, "as much fascinated as afraid;" the wife indeed dies when the cathedral in which she takes shelter is bombed vindictively by the German authorities. The tension of death is shockingly expressed when shortly after an air attack, a square of cloth settles completely over the head of a man — who is also later killed — and he runs supported by his family through the streets, crying like a baby.

The scene of the destruction of the cathedral of San Martino is ghastly and powerful. Inside, families who have taken refuge there share their bread in a communal mass; outside, blackshirts are shown fastening the doors shut on the unsuspecting people. Several tense seconds pass as the cathedral is shown in a frontal view, its bells clanging; these sounds become chaotic as the bells crash from their height into the cathedral, screams are heard, and the doors burst out with clouds of debris and dust. Survivors of the bombing struggle out into the horribly peaceful sun.

The rebirth of Italian society is pictured even in the midst of the severe shocks dealt it by the fascists.

One strange and troubling sequence deals with a crazed man who says he's out for himself and refuses to share a basket of eggs with the refugees he runs into; suddenly sane for a moment, he seems to realize the need for cooperation and offers to stay with the little band; but rushes off again and strangely dies a little way further on the road. A woman makes short little screams of fright and shock at the death, but nevertheless takes the eggs so necessary for survival in the dangerous countryside.

The political and emotional implications of her country's pain cannot be understood at the time by the small girl Cecilia, who sits on most of the precious eggs, impishly crushes the ones left intact, and runs joyously with a balloon which a soldier made for her from a prophylactic.

Predictions . . .

Tom: And why not? It would possess all the same magical qualities because of being filmed in Lincoln: Bob Kerrey, Lincoln General Hospital and Troy Bishop.

Glenn: And they could also drink lots of cheap, government-subsidized Falstaff beer. Boy, I can hardly wait . . .

Tom: I predict that they also will release the long-awaited sequel to *The Great Gatsby*.

Glenn: I predict that I will win the *Readers Digest* Million-Dollar Giveaway, and will never have to work another day in my life.

Tom: I predict that you will lose the *Readers Digest* Giveaway, and you still

may never work a day in your life.

Glenn: Some guys have all the luck. I predict that Walter Cronkite will accidentally be exposed to high levels of gamma radiation and become a large green monster like the cartoon character The Hulk.

Tom: That's another stupid prediction. I predict that I will last another four months, and then, and then . . .

Glenn: The crystal ball has darkened. It is now time to return to our tents and to our dreams. I'm not actually typing this line — Tom is. Tom says that he is dissatisfied. Me, I'm just dreaming of what could be.

OK, Lincoln this is your chance: You can dance just like Annie

Now, Lincolniters have a chance to learn to dance as well as Annie can.

Gretta Assaly, a visiting choreographer from Wisconsin, is in town arranging the choreography for the Lincoln Community Playhouse production of the Broadway hit *Annie*. While she is in town, Assaly is offering two special dance classes.

Assaly will be teaching dance associated with jazz and musical comedy. Two levels — beginning and intermediate — will be offered. The beginners class will be held at 1 p.m. on Saturday. The intermediate instruction begins at 2:30 p.m. Saturday. Instruction will take place at the Playhouse, 2500 S. 56th St.

Assaly teaches dance at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, as well as The Theatre School in Milwaukee. Assaly, a

Canadian, has also performed at the Wimbledon Theatre in London, and in Paris with Ronnie Field, of *Cabaret* and *Applause* fame.

The classes are \$5 for one, or \$7 for both. Advance registration is not necessary. For more information, call the Playhouse at 489-9608.

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HOTSPOTS

Television

• *All Night Long*, starring Barbra Streisand and Gene Hackman, makes its network debut tonight at 8 p.m. on channels 6 and 10. The 1981 comedy, which deals with Hackman's reaction to being demoted, was directed by Jean-Claude Tramont.

At the Sheldon

• The Tokyo String Quartet will perform in the Art Gallery Auditorium.

Tickets are sold out; however, there is a stand-by list available. The concert begins at 8 p.m.

Around Town

• The Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St., has been the site for an eclectic range of entertainment, but tonight's spelling bee may be a first. The cover charge is \$2, and proceeds go to the Lincoln City Library Foundation.

Poetry...

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Tohe believes there are differences in Native American and Anglo American poetry.

"Native American uses a more narrative method, which has a lot to do with our culture," she said. "I grew up with stories, whether the creation story or gossip — we were surrounded by stories. Even now, when I visit my grandmother, we all sit down and shake hands, then she takes me aside and tells stories. There were always stories all over the place, and I never realized these were stories until I started writing myself."

Another difference between Native American and Anglo American poetry is the themes they concern.

"Themes of Native American poetry are similar and recurrent themes such as alienation, assimilation, and social problems," Tohe said. Survival is a big theme in Native American poetry.

"It's a fight to keep your culture going," Tohe said. "A lot of kids grow up not knowing the language and not being able to speak to their grandparents, and the grandparents are there

to teach stories. They have an important role in the culture."

Sometimes the differences make people think what they're getting is not poetry, simply because it may not be in a style that they are used to, she said.

"I use narrative techniques from the Navajo culture and I feel sometimes people don't understand what I'm saying. Poetry doesn't have to be confined to what appears in *The New Yorker* or what appears in the Midwest or Southwest. Poetry is open and depends on your style — what you say and how you say it.

"I think poetry should bother you. It should bite at your conscience or it should make you stop and look at something. It can also be something that can heal you mentally or emotionally — possibly even physically. In the Navajo culture, the medicine men are the poets," she said.

"It's something I know I will always do, something that's always going to be part of me, and I want it to mean something to people. I want it to gnaw at people and make them realize something that they didn't know before."

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