

Arts & Entertainment

Nicaraguan problems documented in series

By Tom Mockler
Staff Reporter

This weekend the Sheldon Film Theater features a series of six documentaries about the problems in Central America.

I had the privilege of seeing three of the films, and I have to say there is much variety in the offerings.

Movie Review

"Nicaragua: No Pasaran" is a good documentary that traces the problems of the present Nicaraguan state. Australian director David Bradburg apparently had a detached enough perspective to treat the subject with surprising even-handedness and insight. We see old black-and-white footage of U.S. representatives mingling with Somoza while "Managua, Nicaragua" plays in the background. We see women in the marketplace debating the source of shortages.

The film leaves one clear message: The Nicaraguan people seem intent on preserving their independence and will not go down without a fight.

However, "Nicaragua: Report from the Front" falls into the trap of being "politically correct" and quite dull. Supposedly an examination of the Sandinista-Contra rebel battle from both sides, it clearly is biased toward the Sandinistas. Although it has a few bright moments, I was glad it lasted only 30 minutes.

"In the Name of the People" is somewhat better, but lasts 75 minutes. This U.S. film, narrated by Martin Sheen, tells the story of a group of rebels in El Salvador. Its premise is the argument that the civilian junta led by Jose Napoleon Duarte is impotent and that the real government is in the hands of the army and free-roaming "death squads."

The interesting element in this film is that it follows individuals around for about 18 months. However, the film

shows that even the life of a rebel can appear dull.

While I admire the crew members who obviously risked their lives filming the last two documentaries, I can see why Dan Rather chooses to run only a few minutes of such material at a time. I guess I have a hard time understanding why people would go to such lengths to dramatize something when few people are going to want to watch it.

"Nicaragua Was Our Home" is an hour-long film that reports on the plight of the Miskito Indians and builds a case against Sandinista policy toward them. Miskito villages have been razed, and they have suffered terrible human loss as a result of "mistakes" now admitted in Managua.

"The Good Fight," which is 98 minutes long, actually has nothing to do with Central America. It documents the story of 3,200 Americans who fought on the side of Loyalist Spain in the Spanish Civil War.

"Witness to War," which is 30 minutes long, takes place behind rebel lines in El Salvador and follows Dr. Charlie Clements' journey of conscience from being a soldier in Vietnam to being a doctor in El Salvador.

The documentary schedule:

● **Today:** 3 p.m. — "Nicaragua: No Pasaran" and "Nicaragua: Report from the Front"; 7 p.m. — "In the Name of the People" and "Witness to War"; 9 p.m. — "The Good Fight."

● **Saturday:** 1 p.m. — "The Good Fight"; 3 p.m. — "In the Name of the People" and "Witness to War"; 6:30 p.m. — "Nicaragua Was Our Home" (Director Lee Shapiro will be present for a discussion after the film); 9:30 p.m. — "Nicaragua: No Pasaran" and "Nicaragua: Report from the Front."

● **Sunday:** 3 p.m. — "In the Name of the People" and "Witness to War"; 5 p.m. — "Nicaragua: No Pasaran" and "Witness to War"; 7:15 p.m. — "The Good Fight"; 9 p.m. — "Nicaragua: No Pasaran" and "Nicaragua: Report from the Front."

Chinese pianist Heng Li follows in father's footsteps

By Kris Leach
Staff Reporter

Heng Li, a Chinese graduate student studying piano at UNL, is continuing a family tradition of education at UNL.

His father, Laurence Chai-Lu Li, studied piano here from 1948 to 1950.

Li began to pursue his dream of being a fine pianist when he was 6, he said. At that time, he was taught by students of his father, who was chairman of the piano department at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

However, the Cultural Revolution that began in 1966 put a stop to his piano playing. All Western instruments and music were banned unless the music was used for political purposes.

Li said that for four years the two family pianos were sealed up and no one was allowed to play them.

In 1970, the laws became more lenient and Li began to study the piano again this time under his father's tutelage, he said.

It was shortly after this that Li entered a piano contest completely unprepared and won first prize. Li said this contest opened up many doors for him, such as the opportunity to play for an orchestra in Peking for eight years.

Li said he returned to Shanghai in 1978 as the cultural revolution ended and the university system was reinstated. He began school again and earned his bachelor's degree in music. He was awarded a graduate honor for being the outstanding student in 1980, 1981 and 1982. Upon earning his degree, Li was appointed as an instructor of music at the Shanghai Conservatory.

In 1982, Li applied to study abroad. A year later, Li came to UNL, sponsored by his father's 1950 UNL classmate, James Bastian.



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Li plans to complete his master's degree in May 1986, then go to Boston with his wife Man-Hua, ctiao an accomplished singer, until she finishes her studies.

They plan to return to China, where Li said he wants to teach and perform piano.

New hit song released

Allen finds inspiration in braces and beer

After my seventh or eighth beer, I can't remember which, I decided I could write a song better than the one on the radio. Its lyrics said something to the effect of "bang your head," "whip it good," "stub your toe" or "barf on me," but I'm not quite sure. It was, after all, after my ninth beer.



Bill Allen

Of course, I needed someone to write my song about. Acting on sudden inspiration, I called Cristina Sherman, UPC Foreign Films Committee chairwoman, and asked her if I could write a song about her.

She said that if I did, she would sue me for everything I own. I told her that would be like suing Howard Cosell for his hair.

She laughed then, and said it was OK to write a song about her, as long as I didn't use her name in it. So I didn't.

We did a profile on Cristina and the foreign films awhile back, in case you're wondering why I chose her to immortalize. We took a picture of her then. I have it hanging on the wall of my office, and I tell everybody that she is my girlfriend.

And Cristina is a good sport about it, especially since I've never told her I do this.

No, really, after drinking a 12-pack you can see from the picture that Cristina is perfect to write a hit song about. She has sensuous brown eyes, long beautiful hair, a gorgeous smile and perhaps most important... she wears braces.

Since I want this to be a hit song, I obviously have to gear it toward 13-year-olds, like the Thompson Twins do.

Besides, braces are as American as General Motors. Braces seem to be saying, "We are an orthodontist's way of taking over where nature screwed up." With philosophical lyrics like that, my hit songs could hail me as the next Bob Dylan.

After 14 beers, I sat down and started on the lyrics. I decided that since this was my first effort, I had better use words that people expect to hear in hit songs. You know them: Blue, Tears, Crying, Fool, Hurting, Broken, Missing, Pain, Heartache, Gut-wrenching and Gonorrhoea.

Songwriting is so uplifting. I started tapping my fingers against my 15th beer and the words started a comin'...

You stand smiling in the sun/Sunlight reflecting from your/Braces/And making me sweat/Like a pig.

Catchy, I thought, but just not sad enough. I want to melt hearts like Air Supply does. I decided to use some of my key words:

I'm a lonely lover/Crying like a blue fool/Cause I miss your kiss/And cutting my tongue on your/Braces/I love girls with/

Braces.

I was almost in tears after that verse, as you can imagine. The word "braces" would be drawn out and mournful each time, with just a hint of a tear rolling from the singer's eyes in the hit video I'm sure they will make from the song.

I drank a toast to my imminent success, finishing my 17th and 19th beers.

I had to add a personal touch:

The way you smile/Makes me glad to see/Bits of food dangling from your/Braces/When you smile with those/Braces.

Then, of course, another beer and a bit about losing someone you love:

When you took off your braces/I hurt real-real-real bad/Like a construction worker/Who fell from the ninth floor/onto hot concrete/and lived.

I could feel that line and sang it to myself while finishing the case.

Then I wrote the big finish, a la Lionel Richie:

You make me want braces, too/So we could lock ourselves/In a lifelong kiss/Just you and me/Simple and free/With our/Braces/Lock me up, baby, in our/Braces.

I rushed the lyrics off to a record company this morning. Stay tuned to MTV to see it played. I hope that cute Martha Quinn announces the video premiere. I'll remember you all when I'm rich and famous.

And thank you, Cristina. I'll bet you don't smile all day.

I was so happy with my impending success that I decided to get drunk.



Dan Dulaney/Daily Nebraskan

Sherman braces herself for a hit song.