

'Sheer Madness': Soap opera disguising itself as art

By Charles Lieurance
Senior Reporter

Foreign films have never been judged by the same standards as American films.

Despite its flippant title, Margarethe von Trotta's "Sheer Madness," which shows at the Sheldon Film Theatre tonight is a melodrama. But it's not a better melodrama than, say, "Ordinary People" or "Agnes of God" just because it was made in Germany.

Movie Review

Hannah Schygulla plays a monotonal feminist college professor with a relatively unexplained interest in obscure German women's literature. Schygulla befriends Ruth, a mentally unstable artist who has fallen under the domination of a hypocritical college professor/activist.

This film seems to say that despite all the men in the world who are trying to change from their atavistic and anachronistic view of women, sexism is somehow engrained and unavoidable.

The men in this film who are supposedly trying to understand women, wind up denying them all the facility of free thought. The women, meanwhile, are mired in the links between insanity and art, death and sex.

"Sheer Madness" is flawed by its nihilistic didacticism, its refusal to give sexism any cause other than instinct and the monotony of voice and acting that seem to be a German (since Fassbinder) film trademark.

The acting here is not subtle. It is dull. The destructive impulses of its male characters is one-dimensional and if the fight for male/female equality is reconcilable, this film is certainly not a key to that goal.

One major strong point of the film:

Angela Winkler as Ruth. Her presence is devastating. She is the perfect blend of sex symbol, artist, feminist, madness, compassion and understatement. If anything sums up the point of this listless display of self-indulgence and hopelessness, it is her thinly gaunt, troubled and beautiful face. She is the only medium of communication in the film.

As a film, "Sheer Madness" is immaculate and full of energy, most of it morbid. The sudden shifts to Ruth's black and white world of delusions, dreams and suicides is impeccably done, but overtly oblique.

All this aside, there isn't much excuse for this kind of somnambulist pessimism and for a melodrama/soap opera disguising itself as art.

Just because this is a foreign film being shown in an art theatre is no reason to go through its maze of hopelessness, inverted cliches and inefficient Fassbinder-ish wastefulness. We know how people stand around saying nothing. I wonder how it is they speak and interact.

If this were an American melodrama, it would be nearly perfect. As art, it lacks direction and purpose.



Courtesy of R5/58 Presentation

Schygulla (left) and Winkler in 'Sheer Madness.'

Entertainment Digest

University Symphony Orchestra to perform

The University Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Robert Emile, will present a free all-orchestral concert Sunday at 3 p.m. in Kimball Hall.

The orchestra will perform "Tocata" by Frescobaldi-Kindler, "Elegy" by Randall Snyder, UNL professor of composition, and "Symphony No. 2 in D minor" by Dvorak.

UNL students from all disciplines selected by audition play in the orchestra. Emile has served as concert mas-

ter, conductor and music director of major ensembles in San Diego and founded the San Diego Symphony Chorale.

North Wynd concert Sunday

The Lincoln Association for Traditional Arts will sponsor a reunion concert of the Irish Band North Wynd at 7 p.m. Sunday at the Zoo Bar.

Tickets are available at both Dirt Cheap Record stores, London's Stringed

Instruments, the Zoo Bar and LAFTA board members.

Tickets are \$4 in advance, \$5 day of show.

For more information call 488-4532 or 474-2275.

Gallery premiers film club

Peter Tooth of the Eleventh Street Art Gallery, 905 O St., said the gallery will premier "The Alternative View" film club this weekend.

Admission to the films usually is \$2 for members, but everyone will be admitted for that price this weekend.

The admission price includes free coffee, popcorn and pop.

Films showing this weekend will be "The Fly" starring Vincent Price at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. today, and Saturday at midnight.

Alfred Hitchcock's "Notorious" will show Saturday at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. and Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

Tooth said that this weekend \$1 of each admission price also will buy a membership. But after Sunday they must be bought for \$1. The membership guarantees a \$2 admission price to every film shown by the club, he said.

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Recruiting officers will be at two locations in Lincoln, Nebraska on March 17. University of Nebraska students should contact Ms. Isley, University's Career Planning and Placement Office for more information. Non-students should contact the Lincoln Hilton Hotel and ask for Mr. Jim Weaver. If interested, but unable to contact Mr. Weaver, contact the Overland Park Police Department, 913-381-5252. Ext. 340, between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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