

along that he was the Hero as Outsider (things just got worse as he got older). The Irish camaraderie, the drinking and roughhousing within the small, warm group, was forced—a mask. Ford's real idea of a good time was solitary reading, alone out on his boat. As usual, it is Gallagher who comes up with the crucial evidence, the testimony of Ford's longtime friend, the actor Frank Baker: "He was never relaxed, never mellow, never allowed you to relax either. He was always unhappy. He never had a day's happiness. Will he find peace? Lonely spirit! What was he looking for?"

Well, the whole world is full of neurotics. But few American artists have equaled John Ford's impact: With the help of his collaborators, he established America's vision of its own past, from *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) to *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964)—and not just a vision, but an emotion, a celebration of community and tradition. If the fiercely secretive Ford was also secretly a tormented man, he was not the first Irish poet, nor the last, to transmute inner torment into lasting artistic achievement.

*Arthur Eckstein is professor of history at the University of Maryland.*

## Pins in the Carpet

by Katherine Dalton

*Dancing in the Dark*; screenplay by Leon Marr from the novel by Joan Barfoot; directed by Leon Marr; New World Pictures.

The Stratford Festival Theatre in Ontario has been training and cultivating great actors for years now—William Hutt, Maggie Smith, Brian Bedford, Marti Maraden, Alan Scarfe, and Martha Henry have all done beautiful work—probably some of their best—there. However, with the slight exception of Smith, none have made the transition to film. So to find Martha Henry starring in a new Canadian movie was a great and pleasant surprise.

*Dancing in the Dark* is director Leon Marr's feature film debut and a variation on the theme of "diary of a mad housewife." In it Martha Henry

plays Edna, a woman who has devoted her life to her not unkind but somewhat boorish businessman of a husband. She is a woman of single purpose and few friends, spending her time cleaning house, cooking, and waiting for Harry to come home.

When the inevitable phone call comes relating Harry's equally inevitable adultery, Edna falls to pieces. The movie cuts between scenes of before and after, from Edna at home (dusting the very antennae on the television set and ironing even her underwear) to Edna in the hospital, where she has been placed by the court following her breakdown and her husband's death. The script is sometimes overblown but not without subtlety, and if the whole movie runs a little too closely along the lines of a feminist stereotype, it is everywhere redeemed by Henry's performance. After the call comes, the phone drops from her hand, and Henry as Edna sits motionless in her chair as the day turns to dusk and then darkness, tears streaming down an expressionless face. There is no onion held furtively just out of camera range here; 30 long years of training and technique are behind the performing of that scene. It is agonizing and beautiful to watch, and a scene that demonstrates so well that Henry has few equals.

"The alarming thing to me," says Henry, who is in New York just for the day, "was that playing Edna didn't touch me at all. She felt just exactly the way I didn't feel, and *that* was what was so scary." It is not so much that Edna has chosen to be a housewife, something Henry as an actress (hence working woman) and feminist finds hard to understand—what is terrifying about Edna is that she has nothing else. She has no resources; no child, no evident other family, no real friends, no outside interests of any kind, nothing so much as a goldfish that is separate and hers alone. Without Harry there is only a void. "I loved him for giving me a life," Edna says, and when he shatters her life, she takes his: four robotic stabs with a kitchen knife.

Love, or at least some kinds of love, are very greedy. Edna has given everything she can to a man who never asked for it all, perhaps, but who readily accepted it; the bargain was

struck, then, and in return he had to give her the requisite parts of himself—praise, solicitude, a little time chatting over dinner, fidelity. Edna doesn't need any more, but she can't survive with less, or so she has made herself believe. But Edna the meticulous balustrade cleaner is not the real woman. The real woman is the mad woman in the hospital, silent in her efforts to deal with a flood of thoughts that had been damned up in her head for years and years, filling notebooks with bitter observations in a perfect script.



Henry says what she sees when watching her performance reminds her of her mother, now in a hospital in Michigan. Henry's mother was not a housewife, but like Edna she spent her life making those around her happy and comfortable. "This was her job," Henry says. "What I see now is a woman who doesn't have to do that any more, because nobody cares whether she's charming or not. In fact, the less charming she is, the more likely she is to get somebody to help get her out of bed, or look after her. So I guess that's what I see. Somebody with it stripped off."

Thus peeled, Edna is more real than she has ever been and also unreal—there is always something unbelievable about a broken mind. But she isn't playacting; she is finally not playacting. She was always shattered. "There must have been pins in the carpet that I did not see. . . . I'm sure I could have been perfect," she continues, "with more effort." Henry flies north tonight to return home; Edna we have left back in the theater, finally acting out the one fantasy she seems to have ever had. In her hospital gown she is dancing around and around in the twilight—"trying," as Henry put it, "to become a human being, against impossible odds."

*Katherine Dalton writes from New York.*

## MUSIC

### Bach at the Barricades

by Dale Volberg Reed

**Reprise: The Extraordinary Revival of Early Music** by Joel Cohen and Herb Snitzer, Boston and New York: Little, Brown; \$25.00.

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as far as I can tell, people played only contemporary music. Since then, it seems, there has been a complete turnaround, and only contemporary music is *not* stylish. Beginning in the 18th century, interest in old music has developed gradually, erratically, but inexorably, despite some resistance from musicians and music-lovers.

Throughout the 19th century, the past was a source of inspiration in the arts, from Greek revival furniture and architecture, through Gothic revival, through the Anglo-Catholic revival in the Anglican church (which encouraged old church music as well as old liturgy, vestments, and architecture), to the Rococo revival, and even to revivals of revivals ("Centennial revival" furniture, a hopeless mixture of styles from the past). The works of the past were, however, viewed through a definitely contemporary lens.

In music, the text had never been the last word for performers. The Baroque composers simply wrote notes, and not even all of those. Training and good taste were supposed to guide performers in the elaboration of those texts. In the 19th century, composers' marks became more detailed but were still treated as guidelines. Editors freely added tempo marks, dynamics, and articulation without concern for identifying their additions as such. Performance traditions, usually transmitted from teacher to student rather than codified in textbooks, were equally susceptible to distortion. Within remarkably few generations, knowledge of earlier performance practices had faded.

Opposing forces were at work, however, particularly in Germany, where the discipline of musicology was burgeoning, producing, for example, ele-

gant, scholarly editions of Bach. University curricula began to include early music and to encourage student performances. A few concert artists began to be interested in how early music had originally been played and to perform it in public.

During the 20th century, both scholarship and performance of early music have gradually progressed. The 1950's saw a flood of important books and editions. For those of us who were not scholars, a shocking lag often separated the publication of these books and our discovery of them. The work of the musicologists took years to affect the commercial music publishing industry, and even longer to reach pedagogical literature. Even in the 1950's and early 1960's, when I was a student, we usually played from old edi-

tions in which editorial alterations were indistinguishable from the composer's marks. We rarely discussed editions, buying whatever was in stock. Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, and even Chopin were all published in heavily edited disguises. Now small-town piano teachers like me routinely buy urtexts when possible and worry about choosing the most scholarly editions for students. We ask questions about articulation and style that did not occur to us a few years ago. We are more likely to offer our students choices, or even dilemmas, than to say, "Play it this way." We are, to be honest, often uncomfortable with our ignorance and rarely confident of our solutions. I, for one, however, find the exhilaration of the process outweighs the discomfort of the uncertainty.

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