

Then, suddenly conscious of the sun on the backs of our necks, we heard Father calling attention to the fact that the tide had turned and was now sending curling waves over our toes as we walked. Warily, we carried our buckets up the beach to the cool shadow of an overhanging dune where Mother sat with the picnic basket. It was a *Wind in the Willows* feast—cold grapes, cold plums, cold lemonades, sweet frosted rolls, hard-boiled eggs, lettuce and tomato sandwiches, brownies. . . . “Stop, stop!” cried Father, imitating the Mole, as we watched the good things being brought forth, our mouths watering.

The beach extended into a long finger of sand which would be completely covered at high tide. There was a sharp odor in our nostrils of the stiff, sour grass that clung so doggedly to the tops of the dunes. Gulls (gray-bodied on a dull day, creamy-white in the sun, pewter and silver in the rain) wheeled above our heads, screaming at each other in rage, perching impudently on the rims of our pails. The lobstermen, who had been up that morning long before we had stumbled out into the glistening dark, were returning from the daily job of emptying their traps and re-baiting them. The gulls gave us advance warning, and then we heard the faint put-put of the motorboats far out on the water.

Across the channel, we could see the shape of the yacht club, the bright-colored blobs of boats at anchor, the houses climbing the hills. It was funny to look at everything backwards. It didn't seem to be the same town at all. Dimly, we could make out the road that wound in front of our house. But it was a different road seen from here; a thin line in the side of the hill, leading to nothing. A lovely, imaginary town rose shimmering across the water. In the other direction, the satin sea stretched away toward the thin line of the horizon; blue and gold and topaz. Mother extended her arm.

“England is straight across that way.” I pictured Westminster Abbey as I had seen it in my geography book. It was too wonderful to think on.

Sand and sea, and the cry of the gulls hovering over the full clam pails. Drowsy warmth, the benediction of the sun and salt-sharp air; the *Annie G.* waiting to be pulled back into her domain and carry us home. Home to the cool, shadowy rooms, and the comfort of the big walnut beds. It was at least an eternity since we had been roused from those beds to go clamming in one of Mr. Hodgkins's boats.

“Earth might be fair, and all men glad and wise. . . .” All things were possible in those summertimes.

—MARY WALLACE.

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Purcell in Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo.

IN 1695, when Purcell died at the age of thirty-six, a London newspaper called him “one of the most celebrated Masters of the Science of Musick in the Kingdom and scarce inferior to any in Europe.” That his reputation has survived him was again proven in this unlikely locale in late May, when the city's Performing Arts Foundation celebrated the genius of Henry Purcell in a tripart program. First came a commissioned work by Virgil Thomson (which was “a tribute to an earlier England”), then a ballet to music from *The Faerie Queen* masque, and finally Purcell's miniature masterpiece and only opera *Dido and Aeneas*.

Kansas City's Performing Arts Foundation, though only a year old, attracted wide attention last spring with its initial production—Handel's *Julius Caesar*. It obviously has the funds, interest, and civic pride to think big and act on a grand scale. It also had the good judgment to engage as producer Lawrence Kelly, a man of vision and sensibility—who has brought the whole idea of the Foundation to rich fruition.

For *Dido*, Kelly chose Oliver Smith to create the classic, columned set; Peter Hall to design the graceful costumes; Jean Rosenthal to light the opera; and Ellis Rabb to direct it. With a strong cast at its disposal, the quartet provided a memorable moment of theater. It was memorable first and foremost because of the musicality and integration of each element of movement, design, and lighting. This added up to total theater, ensemble opera at its most admirable.

Perhaps the most impressive of the quartet was Mr. Rabb, for a stage director who thinks musically is always a rarity. He created imaginative groupings for the chorus, and his handling of the principals was particularly alive and flowing. To cite only one brilliant instance, Mr. Rabb staged Belinda's “Pursue thy conquest love” by having Belinda dart about the perplexed Dido, with her hands pushing outward as though by sorcery willing the Queen into the arms of Aeneas. Much was explained by evolving the character of Belinda as a busy-body matchmaker.

The only reservation I would choose to register about the production was the handling of the final scene after the lament. Even though the Dart score recapitulates the final chorus in orchestra alone, I am not sure that it is in the best

musical and dramatic interests of the opera to do so. It is only distracting to prolong the end while the chorus places small flickering candles about the corpse of the Queen.

Ruza Pospinova appeared as Dido, and her full, dark voice and noble bearing were deeply moving. There is a presence to this young singer that is as cherishable as it is rare. I could not imagine a more virile and handsome Aeneas than Robert Kerns or a more menacing witch than Betty Allen. Both sang superbly. The cast was completed by Patricia Brooks (Belinda), Norma Lynn, (Second Lady), Rosa Rimoch and Rita De Carlo (Witches) and Stanley Kolk (Sailor). The excellent choreography was by Rhoda Levine. Purcellian expert Thurston Dart provided the inventive continuo part, and conductor Nicola Rescigno provided as fine a musical realization as Mr. Rabb did dramatically.

For *The Faerie Queen* ballet, Mr. Rescigno drew an overture, the chorus “Hail, Great Parent,” parts of the sinfonia in act four, and the “Nightingale” interlude in act two from Purcell's masque. A note by choreographer Marina Svetlova insisted that the work was *not* a ballet about Elizabeth I and Essex, while designer Peter Hall's magnificent costumes and set insisted that it was. If we are to believe Mr. Hall, then the ballet existed in too short a time span to fulfil the dramatic idea. If we are to believe Miss Svetlova, then we had an overproduced but lyrical *pas de deux*,
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Dame Margot Fonteyn and Attilio Labis in *The Faerie Queen*.



Good Intentions

NO DOUBT Mark Robson, who is a very serious film-maker, undertook *Lost Command* with the best intentions. Working from Jean Lartéguy's novel, *The Centurions*, he had opportunities to comment not only upon the French in Indochina and Algeria, and the nature of the nationalistic drives for independence in those countries, but even more important, to search out the psychologies of individual soldiers caught up in a fight that few of them could feel was really their own.

Unfortunately, Nelson Gidding's sprawling screenplay seems constantly to be thrashing in half a dozen directions, with the result that the film's sympathies are as confused as its politics. One gathers that its intentions are, vaguely, to say something about the futility of war: In the final shot, one of the protagonists, Alain Delon, resigned from the service, flashes a wry smile as Algerian youths letter "Independence" upon the barracks walls where, inside, his battalion is being decorated for valorous action against the enemy. But it is difficult to make an anti-war film whose heroes are all combat officers.

No matter what the issues, no matter how idealistic or morally reprehensible the cause for which they fight, the mere act of standing up to an enemy requires a kind of courage that one can only admire. When, as in *Lost Command*, Anthony Quinn provides his men with resourceful and inspiring leadership, he automatically becomes an estimable figure. He does not question the principles he is fighting for, and, the film implies, neither should we. He is just a simple peasant making good in an army whose officers, hitherto, had all been aristocrats—so bully for him. If some of the men in his command commit atrocities in Algeria, it is merely their natural reaction to the slaughter of their comrades, not official policy. And if Delon beats Claudia Cardinale, his pride demands it.

On the other hand, for reasons neatly skirted by the script, George Segal, after valorously serving with Quinn in Indochina, deserts to become a leader of the Algerian rebels and is soon every bit as ruthless as his former commander. Perhaps, ultimately, what Robson hoped to demonstrate was the corruptive, dehumanizing nature of warfare in general.

Certainly, his film abounds with cold-blooded shootings, knifings, and bombings on both sides. If such was his intent, however, it was altogether blunted by his absorption with the heroics of his grizzled central character, Anthony Quinn. And if it was not, one wonders why this fuzzy and diffuse picture was produced in the first place.

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FANS OF *The Carpetbaggers*, if such there be, may be elated to hear that yet another film—*Nevada Smith*—has derived from the book. But they will be disappointed to learn that, apart from being based upon one of the characters who appeared originally in Harold Robbins's overpopulated garbage heap, *Nevada Smith* has nothing in common with the earlier film save a few name similarities. Indeed, screenwriter John Michael Hayes, drawing on some background material from the book, has fashioned what is substantially an original and absorbing Western based on the classic theme of pursuit and revenge.

As a young man, Smith discovers that his parents have been tortured to death by three gold-hungry gunslingers, whereupon he vows to track them down. In the process, of course, the boy must learn to become a gunfighter himself, and to endure Homeric discomforts on the long trail that leads through squalid frontier towns, a Louisiana chain gang, and rugged mountain passes. Revenge is sweet, but also bloody; and eventually even Smith tires of the game, plugging his ultimate victim in both legs instead of dispatching him altogether.

Steve McQueen, as Smith, manages not only to make convincing this belated conversion to a better way of life, but to lend color and credibility—even likeability—to what is essentially a one-dimensional character. Karl Malden, Arthur Kennedy, and Martin Landau make a trio of killers who all too clearly deserve their untimely ends. And if Janet Margolin and Suzanne Pleshette seem wasted in their tiny roles as romantic interludes along Smith's single-purpose way, it is because director Henry Hathaway has rightly chosen to accentuate his story rather than the virility of his star.

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PRESUMABLY, when Paramount signed the TV comedy team of Marty Allen and Steve Rossi to a well-publicized seven-year contract, there was some thought that they might replace the departed Jerry Lewis. *The Last of the Secret Agents?* reveals Rossi as a hard-pushing, heavy-handed, roly-poly comic, unerringly vulgar in a script that demands a certain deftness of playing; while Allen is merely a stiff, good-looking foil who sings occasionally. Either they, or Paramount, will have to do better.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.



"Are you sure? I thought you were supposed to come before Anne of Cleves."