

FARRAGO



Les Monstres Sacrees

I went along to *Les Monstres Sacrees* with preconceptions of what an avant-garde Jean Cocteau play should be. There was no exploration of the subconscious as in Brecht or Brechtian nor any profound rendering of an absurd world as with Beckett. My first reaction was that this was a purely naturalistic drama emphasising the psychological analysis of character and motivation. It was just this tendency that surrealists and absurdists were reacting against in the 50's.

Yet Cocteau does to some extent move away from this tradition. His "monstres sacrees" are the divine monsters of the theatre for whom life is merely an extension of their bright lights world. Their disregard for the consequences of their acts is perhaps engendered by their stage experience where malice and guilt can be erased once the curtain falls. Maybe this contributes to the establishment of a menage a trois chez Esther (Reine Lavoie) - actress/manageress of a theatre troupe, wife of Florent (Graham Stanley) - actor/administrator at the Comedie Francaise.

The game continues, Esther agonises about a knife that is inextricably lodged in her heart which gives her a certain maso-

chistic "douleur". Liane (Karina Lavoiepierre) - ambitious debutante at the Comedie Francaise revels in empassioned melodramatic confessions, demand and accusations.

There are direct suggestions of a dream-like unreality with comments like Florent's "je reve" (I dream). More subtle hints included the dimming and then brightening of the lights to show the farcical situation in sharper relief and the use of radio in one scene where Esther listens to the tender, but disembodied and hence artificial, love exchanges of Florent and Liane.

Performances by all of the cast were strong. However the impeccable accent of the women sadly highlighted Graham Stanley's imperfect mastery of the language. The 50's era was evoked by sumptuous costume and creative set design. But, altogether the production was rather flat - the most significant assertion being the value and enduring quality of love.

With the fact that the play was sponsored among others, by BP, I couldn't help being reminded of the commercial boulevard theatres of Paris of the 30's which were considered as anathema to the avant-garde. □

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