

'Camelot' strictly dinner-show fare

By Bill Doll

Let us be clear about what we speak. "Camelot" at the Carousel Dinner Theater is meant to be just that, a dinner-theater musical.

It intends to be no more than pleasant, an easily digestible blandishment after the main course. Muzak on the stage.

Such is this theater-in-the-round version of the Lerner and Loewe musical. At best, one leaves cooing. At worst, it's innocuously rickety.

Surprisingly, this pageant of that fairy-tale land of medieval England, where magic and music abound, lends itself quite well to the intimate confines of a dinner theater.

The intimacy, however, presents a dramaturgical dilemma to a dinner theater director. Such post-repast fare wants to be no more unsettling than mashed potatoes.

But what we have here is a desperately tragic triangle, with implications and consequences not merely for the three lovers, but for the conquest of order over chaos in the land.

"Camelot" has much that is most suitable for a light-hearted romp: King Arthur's initial hiding from his betrothed, Guenevere's frolics at the May festival, the impossible narcissism of Lancelot.

And goodness knows Lerner and Loewe have come up with melodies like "How to Handle a Woman," "If Ever I Should Leave You" and "The Lusty Month of May," which would never impede anyone's digestive processes.

Lancelot comes to Camelot to

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turn swords into plowshares, but, according to script and legend, must fall in love with Arthur's queen, Guenevere. Very messy.

The impossible dream becomes an impossible dilemma.

Is this what you want to digest your dinner to?

Director Charles Abbott wiggles out of the problem, not with great theatrical consequence, but in keeping with the dinner-theater mode.

All the tragedies are there, but no one really pays attention to them. Events flow along, Lancelot rescues Guenevere and wars with Arthur. But events are lead-ins for songs, and the audience "oohs" appropriately at each familiar number. Lancelot embraces Guenevere, sealing the tragedy, and the patrons titter and applaud.

David Canary, as Arthur, is kingly in a pleasant sort of way. Linda Byrne, as Guenevere, and Martin Vidnovik, as Lancelot, likewise convey the sense of the queen and the fervent knight, but keep the modulations in feeling minimal.

Peter Blaxil, as a fuddy-duddy old knight, provides a comic touch, and Robert Browning almost upsets the mood by being an exceptional glint of evil as Mordred.

Like the smorgasbord it intends to be, Carousel's "Camelot" gives a taste, but not the spice of the musical.

Entertainment

Use caution with 'Barry'

By Emerson Batdorff
Plain Dealer Entertainment Editor

"Barry Lyndon" is a fine, sprawling romance, but it must be approached with caution.

Although it contains one of the punchiest action scenes in years (a duel), the picture is essentially addressed to the contemplative audience; the audience that likes to mull things over and reflect, the audience that is interested either in the period or in the art of the cinema.

"Barry Lyndon" is told entirely in cinematic terms. It has words, including an off-screen

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narrator, but the pictures tell the story. The words merely point them up.

Stanley Kubrick, whose movie this is, seemingly had Gainsborough or Hogarth as his cameraman, but the work is credited to John Alcott.

The story at first appears to be made up entirely of cliches. The people are cliches, the events are cliches. But the cliches are so well

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"Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford" opened last night at the Play House. It will be reviewed in The Home section of The Sunday Plain Dealer by Bill Doll.

The Cleveland Institute of Music's operas "Dido and Aeneas" and "Escorial" will be reviewed in that section by Robert Finn.



Ryan O'Neal, left, as Barry Lyndon, duels Steven Berkoff.

done that the audience, having invested \$3.50 a head, sticks around and is caught up in the sweep of the massed cliches.

But when the novel on which the movie was based was written by William Makepeace Thackeray in 1844, were these cliches? No, then they were fresh and new.

Kubrick has approached this story of a crass but not flashy opportunist of the 18th century with a point of view different from any previous presentation.

Usually a movie will try to make its characters live in a real world. Kubrick makes his characters live in a Victorian novel. They are not to be confused with flesh and blood.

How else do we explain the men who gamble a lot wearing lipstick and rouge? How else do we explain those monumental hairdos of Marissa Barenson? How else do we explain the dying child asking so bravely for his mother's hand, then for his father's?

Barry Lyndon is an early anti-hero, a

scoundrel-gentleman who operated in Ireland, England and the continent in the years just before and during the American Revolution. It's a moral story. His success is unaccompanied by happiness.

I could have wished for someone less plodding than Ryan O'Neal in the title role; he sometimes carries woodenness to a classic extreme. On the whole, he was wise in which extreme to take, for he is even less convincing as a volatile con man.

Miss Barenson does a gorgeous job as a lady much beset by a bad husband who bears up bravely and takes poison only once.

The rest of the cast is sturdy English or Continental stock and can't be faulted. Kubrick was looking for grotesques, and he found them: Patrick Magee with a villainous patch on an eye and a clever tongue in his mouth. Hardy Kruger as a perceptive Prussian. And Murray Melvin as the Rev. Mr. Runt, the ardent self-seeker.

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Mineo was prophetic

By Peter Bellamy

Art often imitates life, but seldom has life imitated art as much as in the violent death of actor-singer Sal Mineo.

Mineo, 37, in an Associated Press interview out of Hollywood 10 years ago, verged on the prophetic in regard to his eventual fate as he summed up his career to date.

The actor, who at the time was about to simulate the involuntary act of being hanged in the film "The Dangerous Days of Kiowa Jones," said:

"Being hanged in the movies is really scary. There's still that slight pressure of the rope around your neck. I've been shot, stabbed, beaten to death and gored by a bull, but not yet electrocuted."

In 1974 at the Royal Alexandra Theater in Toronto, in one of his last stage appearances, Mineo appeared in a Manson-type family melodrama which audiences found so distasteful that they booed and hissed it and walked out in droves.

The Toronto Sun described Mineo's role as that of a "greasy, sanctimonious, reptilian master of a hippie community so jaded by promiscuity that he begins to seek kicks in the arms of 14-year-olds and eventually killing his sexual partners with the knife."

Cleveland Clerk of Municipal Courts Dennis Kucinich, who saw this show, which had the deceiving title of "Sugar and Spice," was revolted by it.

"It was so brutal and degrading that the booing, hissing and walk-outs were continuous," he said. "In it Mineo's stage girl mistress and he murdered both her parents. The end implied that he shot himself and her."

Mineo appeared in his first film with a knife and in others was graduated from knives to pistols, switchblade knives and brass knuckles.

It is ironic that Mineo, who went so far on the screen with the tools of murderous violence, should finally die by one of them.

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