

By Barbara Bladen
Times Drama Critic



Susan Sontag, novelist and literary, stage and film critic, gave an impromptu talk on the avant garde film movement last week during a visit with her parents in San Mateo.

The New York writer, a frequent contributor to Partisan Review, and Evergreen Review, whose articles appear in Esquire, Time, New York Review of Books and Examiner Book Week, has been teaching philosophy at Columbia University. She is currently concentrating on a book of essays to be published in the fall. Her contribution to the "Deputy" dispute appears in the Bentley collection of essays on the controversial Hochhuth play.

Susan's comments in San Francisco before an audience of 300 film enthusiasts (and many who have heard of her reputation as a critic) was in appreciation for what is being done in America by experimental film makers. Although she commends them for the effort, she concedes that much of their work is inept. Their technical knowledge is often limited and interesting effects they achieve in the use of shadows, blurs, light contrasts and imagery is possibly poor camera work. But as they produce, so will they improve.

She pointed out that the avant garde and experimental film work done by Europeans in the twenties and thirties was a forerunner of such highly acclaimed contemporary creators as Fellini, Bergman and Truffaut. The German experimentalists, who shocked the film-going public with "Cabaret of Dr. Caligari" and "Passion of Joan of Arc" (Carl Dreyer) were a direct influence on Cocteau, Renoir and his contemporaries. "Blood of the Poet," "Orpheus" and "Beauty and the Beast" had elements of surrealism which later were seen in commercial French films.

Regrettably, none of the avant garde film movement in this country has had any influence on the commercial Hollywood product. The experimentalists go one way and the mass media goes another. Each treats the other like a separate field with no respect for each others' achievements.

The vogue nowadays is to screen movies of the thirties for an appreciation of hidden virtues. Busby Berkeley's films, Greta Garbo, and Eric von Stroheim will attract audiences who find it fashionable to know names of hit players, titles of background music or location settings.

These same audiences have no appreciation for development of technique, little for the directorial artistry or finesse of acting style. The fad warrants their reissue.

Susan acknowledges that the most consequential achievement in the arts during the past two decades has been in film-making. They have chronicled the times and reflected the contemporary scene better than literature, painting or music in the years since the war. More that is "new" is being done on film than in any other medium.

She cites "The Manchurian Candidate" as the only American film which piqued one's sensibilities in the same way the European art films do. While crediting this film for reaching beyond the flat surface of sight and sound, she also compliments the novel "Lolita" as its counterpart for higher level interest.

The European trend has been to do greater justice to a good book by translating it onto film. In America, more often than not, a good book is ruined by Hollywood interpretation. "Lolita" is a prime example of a complete loss of poetry and beauty in the metamorphosis, she stated.

Susan's plea toward understanding the "new movements" in art is to devote time to them. She rightfully contends that no one can judge or even give honest evaluation to a medium or subject without preparation. Going regularly to museums, art film theatres, and concerts, sharpens a sense of awareness that builds upon experience for critical judgment. A factor in heightening one's sensibilities is to "live" with these creative processes, not sit and stare at them. The idea of allowing one's subconscious to react without the direct concentration of long period observation is the secret of discerning what has a lasting effect on an individual's taste.

Unfortunately there is little opportunity to see many of the avant garde films on the West Coast. There is still something of the "underground" about it. Mainly for lack of outlet, not interest.



Julie Andrews is a lovely bride in Rodgers & Hammerstein's "The Sound of Music," which begins a roadshow engagement at the United Artists Theatre in San Francisco on Wednesday evening, March 17. The screen version of the Broadway musical hit was produced and directed by Robert Wise in Todd-A-O and De Luxe Color. Tickets for the 26th Century-Fox attraction are being sold on a reserved-seat basis.

- Bay Area Radio Stations
TONIGHT
KPRC - News, Music
KCBS - Lowell Thomas: 10-Sports
KGO - News: 10-Stock Market
KPRC - News, Music
KNBR - News: 10-Music
KCBS - News: 10-Music
KGO - News, Special
KPRC - News, Music
KNBR - News, Music
KCBS - News, Music
KGO - News, At Douglas
KPRC - News, Music
KNBR - News, Music
KCBS - News, Music
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Times Theatre Page

'Sound of Music' Opens March 17

"The Sound of Music," the film version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's successful stage Northern California road show engagement at the United Artists Theatre in San Francisco on Wednesday evening, March 17.

Robert Wise produced and directed the production which musical, will begin its exclusive stars Julie Andrews as Maria and Christopher Plummer in the role of Captain Von Trapp.

Filming of the story of the Von Trapp family singers was done in Salzburg, Austria, in many of the city's landmarks such as Mirabell Garden's Nonnberg Abbey, Winkler's Terrace and the Mozart footbridge.

Richard Rodgers wrote music and lyrics for two new songs for the film production which has a screenplay by Ernest Lehman and is in Todd-A-O and De Luxe color.

All seats will be reserved for the nightly 8:30 showings and those at two on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Information concerning discounts for theatre parties and student groups may be obtained by writing or telephoning the United Artists Theatre in San Francisco.

Gary Lewis Ready for Circle Star

Comedian Jerry Lewis' eldest son, 19-year-old Gary, heads the lineup of young rock 'n' rollers in the latest "Shindig '65" show Monday, February 22 at 8 p.m.

Gary appears with his own musical combo, The Playboys. His fellow performers include Doble Gray, Sue Thompson, Ginger Blake, Judd Hamilton, The Velvets, The Shindig '65 Dancers and the Shindig '65 Band.

Gary, a third generation entertainer (his grandfather was a vaudeville headliner), organized his group at first for kicks and to play at fraternity parties.

Next came a spot in a Universal film, followed by a hit record, "The Diamond Ring," appearances on network TV shows, and now Gary seems well on his way to a big career in the entertainment field.

Tickets for "Shindig '65" are now available at the Circle Star Theater and all agencies.

Walt Disney's Greatest Achievement: Mary Poppins

Walt Disney (UPI) - Walt Disney dreamed up the title "The Tooted Police Horse" for his latest movie release.

3 DAYS ONLY
FRI., FEB. 19 - 8:00 p.m.
SAT., FEB. 20 - 6 and 9 p.m.
SUN., FEB. 21 - 3:00 p.m.

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Rock Hudson, Gina Lollobrigida, Gig Young and Edward Judd are the stars of "Strange Bedfellows," new Panama and Frank feature comedy from Universal Pictures in color, which begins an engagement on Wednesday at the Manor Theatre.

'Greatest Story' Opens Road Show on Tuesday

Tickets will go on sale and mail orders will be received starting February 21, for the Northern California premiere of George Stevens' "The Greatest Story Ever Told," which will be presented in Cinema and Technicolor at the Cinerama Orpheum Theater on Tuesday, March 23.

The premiere performance will be sponsored by the United Nations Association, and the public showings will start on Wednesday, March 24.

Led by the compelling Swedish actor Max von Sydow as Jesus, the distinguished cast includes Dorothy McGuire as Mary, Charlton Heston as John the Baptist, with Michael Anderson Jr., Robert Blake, John Considine, David McCallum, Roddy McDowall and Gary Raymond among the disciples.

The screenplay, based on Fulton Oursler's book by the same name, was produced in creative association with Carl Sandburg. Music is by Alfred Newman.

The Cinerama presentation of "Circus World" will close on Sunday, March 21.

Washington Services Set

Brig. Gen. Walter R. Shoaff, Hillsborough, general chairman for the 19th annual massing of the colors and George Washington Memorial Service has named committees for this event.

Among those named are Colonel William Hinkley, San Mateo, and Colonel Charles C. Budd, Sunnyvale, flag marshals; Mr. Melville Sweet, Millbrae, music co-ordinator and Vice Admiral Theodore D. Raddock, San Mateo, special guests.

Also serving on committees are Mrs. Ray T. Marsh, San Carlos, regent California chapter, DAR and Mrs. Herbert W. Hopkins, Daly City, regent Presidio chapter, DAR.

This service will be held at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, Sunday, February 21 at 3:40 p.m.

S.F. State Choir in Concert

With Millbrae resident John Carl Tegnell directing, the San Francisco State College a cappella choir will be heard in concert at the College tonight, following a successful winter tour throughout California.

Dr. Tegnell, his wife Beth, and two daughters live in 23 Bayview Court, Millbrae. The Tegnell girls attend Millbrae schools - Carol, 13, at Taylor Intermediate; Ann, 10, at Highlands Elementary.

Dr. Tegnell, 46, a native of Colorado, graduated from Northwestern University where he received his Master's and Ph.D. in music. Before coming to San Francisco State, he taught at Adams State College, Northwestern University, Colorado State College, and Illinois Wesleyan University.

Dr. Tegnell has been active as an adjudicator, lecturer, director and soloist throughout the U. S. He is an officer in the national organizations of the American Choral Directors' Association and the National Association of Teachers of Singing.

Co-ordinator of Vocal Music at San Francisco State since 1952; he has prepared choruses for the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra under such conductors as Bruno Walter, William Steinberg, Igor Markevitch, Enrique Jordá, and Josef Krips. His a cappella choir at San Francisco State recently recorded with Music Library Records in compositions by Millhaud and Kodaly and San Francisco State faculty members Roger Nixon, Peter Sacco and William Ward. Dr. Tegnell is also music director of the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco.

In addition to the a cappella ensemble, the Collegium Musicum, with Walter Haderer conducting, will perform the Vivaldi "Concerto Gross in F Major" in Tuesday's concert. The combined choir and Collegium Musicum will present the "Exit Dominus" by George Frederic Handel. Dr. Tegnell will lead

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the a cappella choir in four Lieber for mixed voices by Johannes Brahms, and a number of English rounds and catches including works of Thomas Warren, Henry Harrington, Orlando Gibbons and Henry Purcell.

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