



THE TRIANGLE

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The Enzian Theatre- Still Liberal, After All These Years

By Steve Meunier

In 1985, I was convalescing with a cast on my leg. Eager to get out of the house, I studied the newspaper for any activity a handicapped person could handle. Voila! There was a new theater in town called The Enzian. They were screening "Stella Dallas", King Vidor's 1937 classic retelling of a mother's unselfish love for her child, starring Barbara Stanwyck. I called The Enzian to inquire if the establishment was accessible on crutches, both outside and within. The friendly voice on the other end of the phone line assured me that I would be pleased with the layout.

That friendly voice turned out to be Tina Tiedtke, the visionary founder of The Enzian Theater. Tina not only delayed rolling the film, awaiting my hobbling arrival, she also met me at the front door, and escorted me to a convenient table. I enjoyed a St. Pauli Girl, (you know I mean the beer), and relaxed in comfort. Actually, I revelled in delight. Watching a classic black and white film on a large screen, the way it was intended to be viewed, is both rare and gratifying these days.

The point here is twofold. Firstly, the Orlando area finally had a beautiful theater in which first-rate and sometimes controversial films are shown on a full-time basis. Secondly, I felt at home at the Enzian. Okay, a waitress there once spilled a whole pitcher of ice water down my back. But, several dry towels and a complimentary piece of chocolate mousse cake later, I was still happy to be seeing "Babette's Feast".

The Enzian Theater name is derived from a flower which grows in the Austrian Alps. Seemingly frail, yet strong, the small blue enzian flower epitomizes the essence of film itself:

fragile and difficult to work with, a roll of film can last indefinitely, dependent and at the mercy of its trustee.

Like the enzian flower, the family responsible for opening and operating Enzian Theater has its "roots" in Austria. Tina Tiedtke established this showplace on land

belonging to her father, the venerable John Tiedtke.

Today, The Enzian, located in Maitland at 1300 N. Orlando Ave. (17-92), is a nonprofit organization. They are dedicated to providing films which represent the genre as an art form. Under the guidance of Sigrid Tiedtke, the theater's executive director since 1990, The Enzian remains the only place in Central Florida to show only the most creative, experimental, and sometimes lewd films from here and abroad.

Celebrating its' tenth anniversary in February 1995, Sigrid Tiedtke had this to say in reflection of Enzian's first decade; "We have enjoyed, and it's amazing, ten years of being able to program the finest quality works that we can get our hands on. [Films that are] not content driven, but quality driven." Indeed, this writer would find it difficult to try to name his favorite, or ten favorite, Enzian screenings.

The refreshments are another solid plus to The Enzian's offerings. In today's rush-rush world, it's great to be able to view a film, and eat something that doesn't taste like the foil wrapper it was shipped in. Enzian's chicken ceasar salad, pizzas, and cinematically sinful desserts have never let me down. Is there anyone out there who hasn't been late for a show because of a prolonged restaurant visit beforehand? Imported beer, hot herbal teas and delicious (never stale) coffee are all commendable. Even their wine offer-

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"To Live" Oscar Nominated Film

Reviewed by Steve Meunier

As our crazy world seems to be spinning faster and faster, perhaps life would be more enjoyable if we appreciated the basics. Could you turn off your modem for a day, as well as the television, without getting spastic? If so, you may be enthralled by "To Live", an epic film directed by Zhang Yimou.

Yimou, an accomplished Chinese film director, has received Oscar nominations for Best Foreign Language Film with "Ju Dou" (1990), "Raise The Red Lantern" (1991), and "Farewell, My Concubine" (1993). Also, his film "Red Sorghum" (1988) won the Berlin Festivals Golden Bear Award.

With "To Live", Yimou has already received the Cannes Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for 1994, as well as the Best Actor Award in the same Festival. Banned in China for its political content, "To Live" is being distributed illegally, that is, against Chinese sanctions. For this

insurrection, Yimou is not permitted to create another film in China for the next two years.

The irony of this ban is that "To Live" is not a political film. Though the film's story covers a multigenerational time span, including the 1940's Civil War, The Great Leap Forward, and The 1960's Cultural Revolution, the focus is on a simple family, not the changing of governments.

In Yimou's own words, "I am trying to show the grass-roots lives of Chinese people from the point of view of an ordinary person..[this is] the key to understanding the times we live in."

"My focus is entirely on what happens within the family," continues Yimou. Yet, upon completing a viewing of "To Live", this



writer finds great contradiction between the Communist ideals of correct political thinking, and the human bondage and suffering which ensues. Literally, the Chinese are entrapped, slaves to the government that only survives due to the manipulation of the population.

Irony abounds in this film, as in real life. The main character's son is taught not to gamble, yet every day in the life of these poor people is a gamble to survive. The accidental manner in which this child perishes is ironic, too. Paradoxical.

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