

## Barbara Willis Sweete's Music In the Midnight Sun

In the fall of 1987, *The Toronto Symphony* embarked on its most ambitious tour to date. Over one hundred musicians travelled to the Canadian Arctic – further north than any major orchestra had ever been before. (Opening titles to the film)

These simple sentences are a prelude to a stunningly photographed and intelligently organized record of a unique undertaking by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO), all enhanced by simply beautiful sound and a generous helping of wit and humour.

Under the opening credits we see the Inuit people in traditional performance, singing and drumming. On the radio in Inuvik, William Tagoona sings his own country-style song, "Our Land", in Inuit, and the announcer reminds everyone that the Toronto Symphony will be in town next week.

In Toronto the TSO rehearses at Roy Thomson Hall; members of the orchestra look forward to the first trip to the North; the tour manager worries if sleeping bags are required; and the stage manager starts loading the aircraft with, among other things, hockey bags and sticks for an important game. As the non-musical stuff and opinions are batted around, the excitement builds and the music comes to the fore.

Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" in rehearsal is melded with the tour aircraft being readied, the cargo being stowed, and hand signals from airport workers synchronise with the music. The plane lifts into the air as a map appears and the line of flight creeps across Canada to Edmonton, then north to Yellowknife and on to Inuvik. The orchestra is greeted on arrival by local dignitaries. The Valkyries continue to ride on, and the musicians are now playing a first concert, transformed from rehearsal to formal clothes, and music director Andrew Davis is giving his all before an entranced audience.

After this invigorating sequence, the film continues skillfully to interweave the musicians with the Inuit performers and artists, with the children and with the natural outdoor life, inducing an ebb and flow that is quite hypnotic. A number of glimpses of orchestra members provide interesting little "off-stage" anecdotes. In Fort MacPherson, near Inuvik, oboeist Frank Morphy is somewhat apprehensive during an interview on the CBC morning show by Neil Collin, a great forthright character who doesn't hesitate to ask plain up-front questions, but lets his attention wander somewhat when Frank talks about classical music. Neil also removes his headphones smartly at the loud bits of brass in a TSO recording, and returns quickly to his own



Music in the Midnight Sun

style with "Wednesday Waltz". Willie Gordon, Mackenzie Delta Fiddle Champion, teams up with violinist Andrea Hansen; double bassist Ruth Budd stays with another woman, Cece McCouley, chief of the Dene Nation; Andrew Davis chats up a woman preparing fish for the smokehouse; a special fashion show is staged for men and women – and so the exchanges go on.

Oh yes, the hockey match comes off – not on ice, but tarmac – and the Symphony struggles gamely against the Inuvik All-Stars, losing 5-0. "It's agonizing," says a TSO player, "to lose again. If we'd been on ice we'd have beaten them..."

The swelling strains of Mussorgsky start at the hockey match and the film draws to a close with "The Great Gate of Kiev" from "Pictures At An Exhibition" and, again, the orchestra is in concert, the audience rapt with some slight swaying and toe-tapping. The images of the North (which must be ingrained in the minds of orchestra members) slide by as in a dream. A flock of white birds seen from the air, land and water merge into a dazzling abstract painting, and one comes down to earth as the concert ends and Andrew Davis bows and blows kisses, and the orchestra beams at the applause.

The charm of this film is endless, the images pass ceaselessly, yet with real feeling and emotion, before the eyes, not prettified, not neatened or scrubbed in any way, and the glorious music made by the Toronto Symphony matches the mood and atmosphere of the North. The children, the dogs everywhere, the spirit of people who live in a hard land, are all captured. And it was no easy task.

At a preview screening during the summer for the TSO and the film crew at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, director Barbara Willis Sweete said that a skeleton crew was in the North for 10 days, but the TSO footage was shot in two-and-a-half days. The camera crew went through a lot of stock...

This superior offering was seen on CBC-TV as

part of *Adrienne Clarkson's Summer Festival* in August.  
Pat Thompson ♦

**MUSIC IN THE MIDNIGHT SUN** p. Niv Fichman, Barbara Willis Sweete d. Barbara Willis Sweete assoc. d. David Morton ed. Sam Chu, Bruce Lange d. o. p. Len Gilday stereo sound Brian Avery p. man. Renee Gluck loc. man. David York 2nd unit d. Stephen Roscoe cam. Tobias Schliessler, Joan Hutton additional cam. Tony Sloan, Jon Joffin, Robert MacDonald, Gordon Langevin, Robert Brooks additional ed. Christopher Reilly, Steve Weslak cam. assts. Lynnie Johnston, Jon Joffin, Chris Higginson, Lori Longstaff, Colleen Norcross, Ernest Spiten, Steven Tushima additional sound John Martin, David Springbett sound assistant Sandy Twose sound ed. Barry Gilmore asst. sound ed. Tony Gronick gaffer Robert Spears lighting Peter McAdam, Tom McMongle graphic animation Warren Collins animation photo. Robert Mustysyn stills John Bassett asst. ed. Robert St. Hilaire sync. David Ostry, Stephen Roscoe p. coord. (CBC) Paul De Hueck unit man. (CBC) Gail Cochran assoc. p. (Rhombus) Larry Weinstein music rights (Rhombus) Mary Nikles business affairs (Rhombus) Brian Katz, Paul Brown marketing (Rhombus) Sheena MacDonald sound re-rec. Paul Massey neg. cutter Sharon Street p. cons. Julia Sereny translations Renie Arey, Leonard Harry, Tommy Ross produced by Rhombus Media in association with the CBC, TVOntario, and the Toronto Symphony; with the participation of Telefilm Canada and the Ontario Film Development Corp.

## Tom Berry's Something About Love

Thematically, *Something About Love* is a typical '80s film, like *Moonstruck* and *Crossing Delancey* and scores of others. The Me generation of the '70s is reverting to type as they come home to the tribe, turning into the We generation of our era.

Those we had once watched *Goin' Down the Road* to get away from the straight and narrow and the parochial are coming home in droves.

Their homeward journey is within the new conservative mainstream, signalling a turning-away from experimentation and risk-taking and a return to traditional values. The film *Something About Love* is very much in that mainstream too.

As the film opens Wally Olynyk (Stefan Wodolawsky), son of a Ukrainian mortician in Cape Breton, is editing video footage in a Los Angeles studio. Now what can be more down-home Canadian than that? In one fell swoop we get the perfect socio-economic and ethnographic snapshot of the multi-cultural media Canadian with carefully cultivated eccentricities. Alas, even if the inspiration is genuinely autobiographical, the totality smacks of construct.

As the film progresses Wally is called home to deal with his aging, estranged father (Jan Rubes), an opera-loving patriarch who begins to display symptoms of what is ultimately diagnosed as Alzheimer's disease. Wally, at first ill at ease with his family, old friends and the love of his youth (Jennifer Dale), gradually becomes heavily involved with his roots, duties and relationships. The story culminates during Easter with the arrival from L. A. of Wally's pregnant girlfriend, his reconciliation with his father and his father's ultimate act of generosity: he commits suicide by driving his hearse off the cliffs into the sea.

Here we have a story based on common (albeit quirky) humanity which, through the use of a set of easily accessible metaphors for death and rebirth centred around Easter, attempts to ascend to the mythical. One of the central anecdotes in the film concerns memories of a childhood baseball game in which the young Wally is characterized as a great player who saves his team – even though another kid becomes the hero of the game.

This feeling of watching a fielder's choice or a sacrifice fly characterizes the way this film affects the viewer – there is balance everywhere: In the script. In the careful direction. In the tasteful blending of realism, sentiment, low comedy and high intensity. In the two outstanding performances of the film, the very fine acting duet of Jan Rubes and Stefan Wodolawsky.

There is balance too in the way the next echelon of players – the Olynyk family, Ron James and Lenore Zann – provide accomplished accompaniment and the way the rest of the competent cast provide background with nary a shrill note. Even the soundtrack strives for balance; for once, the dialogue is up-front and easy to catch.

In fact, all is exemplary in Tom Berry's and Stefan Wodolawsky's screenplay. It has textbook structure, proportion and development. Perhaps the baseball metaphor, opportune as it may have been, is less fitting than a musical one. This is a carefully orchestrated, operatically composed work. So with all these ingredients and with so many





Don Lake and Stephan Wodolawsky share some of that masculine mystique in *Something About Love*

qualities invested, why doesn't this film soar?

The answer is in the very balance that keeps the enterprise afloat. The film lacks tension. The relationships may teeter but never capsize into passion. Everything is clear, accessible, up-front, middle-of-the-road.

The good news is that *Something About Love* is not a loser. But it ain't a winner, either. It's another tie. I suspect it's a tie because the filmmakers are not playing the right game.

At these budgets they should be making alternative films: single-minded originals that do not strive for balance but excess; risk-taking films that turn out to be either surprise successes or ambitious failures. They should be making anything but balanced, controlled mainstream product that makes no waves because it just doesn't have enough current going for it.

There is one sequence in *Something About Love* that shows the potential of glorious excess. Father and son are taken through a therapy centre for Alzheimer victims. A documentary camera explores the faces of old people singing *Tipperary* and the track continues under Wally and his father's journey home on the ferryboat. It is a transcendent moment, more Canadian and more powerful than 10 times 90 minutes of our mainstream feature films. The team that made *Something About Love* is more than capable of creating a winner. If they could only lose their sense of balance....

Paul Gottlieb •

**SOMETHING ABOUT LOVE** p. Tom Berry, Franco Battista, Stefan Wodolawsky d. Tom Berry line p. Franco Battista sc. Tom Berry, Stefan Wodolawsky d.o.p. Rodney Gibbons art d. Guy Lalonde ed. Franco Battista casting Anne Tait additional casting Elite Productions assoc. p. Eric Rose

asst. d. Pierre Houle 2nd a. d. Carole Dubuc 3rd a. d. Sylvain Arseneault p. man. Michel Martin p. co-man. Chentale de Montigny loc. man. Donald Brown p. sec. Josée Lachance NFB studio admin. Marie Tonto-Donati studio clerks Ida Di Fruscia, Jacqueline Libouran legal counsel Tony Duarte cam. op. Kent Nason asst. cam. René Daigle clapper loader Doris Pilote 2nd unit cam. Georges Archambault loc. sound Jacques Drouin boom Hubert Mace de Gastines cont. Marie La Haye loc. research Ken Korrall, Victoria Frodsham gaffer Guy Remillard best boy Christopher Reusing elec. Mike Slobodzin key grip Walter Klyrkiw best boy grip Jean-François Bourassa asst. grip David Setter set dec. Richard Tasse art dept. assts. George Henderson, Denis Lemire art dept. trainees David Lamey, John Weatherbee props. Daniel Huysmans asst. props Anne Grandbois wardrobe des. Nicole Pelletier asst. wardrobe des. Sophie Beasse wardrobe Tamara Devereill asst. wardrobe Barbara Mortell makeup Coleen Quinton hair André Morneau additional makeup Djina Caron scenic painter Greg Bishop painters John Young, Mark Butts, Robert Beck carpenter Lee MacKenzie asst. pic. ed. Kevin Smith ed. on location Les Halman asst. ed. on location Angela Baker titles Val Teodori unit pub. Karen Lajoie craft services Louise Pearce, Ana Casagran Montreal coord. Stephen Reizes on location books Diane Williamson on location sec. Kimberly Hillier asst. unit man. Real Chabot p. assts. Marc Beaulieu, Bruce Piercy, Kathy MacGuire, Elaine Moir stunt coord. Jerome Tibergien stunts Marc Desourdy, Stephane Lefebvre, Jerome Tibergien post-prod. coord. Grace Avrith post-prod. accountant Nicola Minotti sound eds. André Galbrand, Wojtek Klis dialogue ed. Danuta Klis asst. sound ed. Pierre Beland Foley Andy Malcolm Foley asst. James A. Gore Foley rec. Louis Hone music eng. Murray McFadden computer & keyboard tech. Ron Cunningham ADR eng. Chris Cooke sound re-rec. Hans Peter Strobl re-rec. asst. Natalie Fleurant neg. cutting Pierre Comte, Robert-André Juteau colour timing Colin Sancerster neg. & rushes inspection Susan Trow, David de Volpi video mastering Philippe Vandette l. p. Stefan Wodolawsky, Jan Rubes, Jennifer Dale, Lenore Zann, Diana Reis, Ron James, Gordon Masten, Susan Rubes, Rob Roy, Frank Macleod, Don Lake, Wayne Robson, Jillian MacKenzie, Robert Bednarski, Daniel Nolback, Ida Donovan, Trinna Hennick, Pat Steele, Kelly Edwards, Simone MacKinnon, Kathy MacGuire, Nick Sobol, Janet Arseneault, Ralph Cameron produced by Allegro Films in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada.

### SPRING SKY MURAL

The Council Chamber of Mississauga's City Hall boasts a distinctive mural depicting The Great Bear and the Seven Hunters—a tale of long ago told by Indians along the banks of the Mississauga. Optically lit, it is exactly the view of the spring sky during June. Sharon McCann, the creator of this mural, talks clearly and forcibly about her inspiration for this ambitious project and how it was realized.

Though terrified of heights, McCann found that the challenge of getting the mural on the curved ceiling was so absorbing that she forgot her fear.

The design was finalized in a year and then took four weeks to install. A number of artists were each allotted a block of the mural, and chalked in the outlines from gridded drawings which were then painted. Not as easy as it sounds, up on a scaffolding, arms raised and sometimes with one artist holding a template and another tracing from it!

This pleasurable little film weaves together some interesting facts from the mural's creator with glimpses of the artists at work, creating a beautiful blue ceiling with drawings in gold, and clouds and twinkling stars, and the vision accompanied by some apposite choral and string music. As well as being a useful record of an artistic endeavour, it's also intriguing and easy to watch.

p. co. Fine Cuts Productions. p./d. Maurizio Belli. cam. Stephen Smith. 17 mins. 16mm/3/4"/VHS. With assistance from the Ontario Arts Council. Distributor: Marlin Motion Pictures Ltd., 211 Watline Ave., Ste. 200, Toronto, Ontario, Ont. LAZ 1P3 (416) 890-1500

The Bloor Cinema in Toronto continues to support *LIFT* (Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto) and showed a second program of films by five of its members this summer.

### THE INSIDE FILE

David Watson, host of a TV news program *The Inside File*, features the mysterious disappearance of Karen Kotterdam, a popular newswoman. Intrigued by the rumour that she had a personal conversation with Jesus Christ, Watson zeroes in on a quiet, ordinary suburban house. With his cameraman hovering, he buttonholes a young woman getting out of a car in the driveway—she denies being the missing Karen. Watson then tracks down a Marxist aunt who, in an interview, denounces right-wing yuppies and airs a number of other strong opinions, but gives no clue as to her niece's whereabouts.

This little fiction is competently turned out but, ultimately, the storyline is flaccid and unengaging. One cares little about the fate of Karen Kotterdam, which is left up in the air. A film by Richard Mackenzie. 21 mins. 16mm

### TREE TALE

A girl climbs into her favourite tree to escape from it all. But her refuge is far from quiet, and various disturbances include a wandering bag lady and a rolling ball of knitting wool. A slightly fey, but pleasant black-and-white fable.

A film by Amy Bodman. 12 mins. b&w. 16mm.

### WHAT'S IT TAKE

A look at a young black boxer who turned professional a year ago and is now aiming for a shot at the Canadian Lightweight Championship. Although not too articulate, he knows that in spite of being seen all over Ontario, he needs more experience and says flatly, "I don't want to be a coloured person, I want to be a somebody." His trainer cannot make a living from boxing alone and has tried many businesses, but says "the antique business suits my personality."

The edgy relationship between the two comes across well. The trainer is a disciplinarian and wants his word to be law; the boxer says he knows what is best as he drives off to Atlantic City to look up a girlfriend. A fight at Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre leads to the pair parting with some recriminations. The boxer feels he has been financially ripped off, and that his trainer doesn't understand his "style" of fighting. The trainer is resigned—he's seen all these young fighters and their problems before...

Not a new documentary subject, to be sure, and the protagonists are far from dynamic, but the film does succeed in capturing this seedy and sad underworld in a realistic manner.

A film by Peter Vinet. 34 mins. 16mm. These three films available from Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, 67-A Portland St., Toronto M5Y 2M9 (416) 593-1808

### FAT MAN/THIN MAN

Oh, a lot of empathizing goes on while watching this small epic! The Fat Man loves the vast amounts of food he stores in his pride and joy—a spiffy 1950s refrigerator. Amid gargantuan feasts his alter ego, The Thin Man, gives endless trouble, and is everywhere, nagging and hounding him. The Thin Man ultimately desires The Fat Man's prized possession, and goes to great lengths to try and succeed in his ambition.

A funny moral tale, not side-splitting, but well done, with lots of thought and food. And who could not love a film in which the inimitable (and thin) Gerry Quigley appears?

A film by Derek Rogers. 21 mins. 16mm. l.p. Walter Villa (The Fat Man), Gerry Quigley (The Thin Man) Availability: Derek Rogers (416) 979-9381

### HEART OF THE FOREST

The fifth film in the program, by Linda Outcalt and Adrienne Mitchell, has already been favourably reviewed in *Cinema Canada* #150.