

Dracula scrapbook furthers cult without elucidating

A Night In Transylvania; The Dracula Scrapbook
Kurt Brokaw
Gorsset & Dunlap, 1976, \$5.95

In 1972, Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu published "In Search of Dracula," an authoritative book tracing their research into the real Dracula (immortalized, in more ways than one, by Bram Stoker in his 1897 novel). The book was an instant best seller, and was followed in 1973 by "Dracula: A Biography of Vlad the Impaler" (this time reversing the authors' names; it is listed as by Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally). These two books had a far-ranging effect. The so-called "Dracula Craze" has already begun in the United States, but Florescu and McNally make it an international affair, complete with organized tours to remote Romania to view the actual sites of Vlad Dracul's life and death.

Since that time, there have been a good many books dealing with Dracula, both fact and fiction. Most of them are pulp fiction or cheap re-hashes of material already covered by the two experts. "A Night In Transylvania" boasts

an introduction by the two Romanian scholars (Florescu is, as a matter of fact, an indirect descendent of the original Dracula), but beyond that it offers nothing new in the field, though it is one of the more attractively packaged volumes available on the subject...on the popular level.

Both of McNally's and Florescu's earlier books were semi-scholarly in tone. Brokaw's book is definitely for the popular market. It is a large paperback (known as a "trade book") with simple text, profusely illustrated and well presented. Among the illustrations are several new photographs of the Dracula sites, showing the restoration which was sparked by the Dracula renaissance, and a number of film stills which have not had wide circulation. Also included are vast numbers of illustrations from the pulp press and comic books, and a few original drawings which show little skill or talent.

Both text and graphics carry on the popular idea that no one captured Dracula on film better than Bela Lugosi. This is a debatable point, and the book does give credit to Christopher Lee, who made

the most successful Dracula films in history.

The text is a bit too elementary to add anything new to the field. In one sense, this is a "coffee table" volume for a select audience, and is designed for younger readers. It is not, however, for children. The vocabulary and style, while elementary, are sophisticated enough to appeal to adult readers, albeit primarily those who see Dracula as a cult figure. Central-European scholars might find some of the folklore and illustrations interesting, though hardly elucidating.

The book includes incomplete book and film lists which, while including some lesser-known works which do not generally appear on such lists, somehow manage to leave out some of the better-known efforts which are generally considered standard fare. Just how this happened is not clear.



Photo courtesy of Little Flags Theatre

"Tania", a political play about Che Guevara will be staged at 7:30 Friday night at Lincoln Community School for \$3. It is produced by Little Flags Theatre, who is also sponsoring "Fanshen" in the EMU Ballroom at the same time and cost.

Auditions held for VLT

Actors are needed for the closing show of the season at the Very Little Theatre, "Arsenic and Old Lace."

Fourteen people are sought, ranging in age from 20 up to 60 or 70; mostly males are desired but women may be substituted.

Auditions are scheduled for Sunday at 2 p.m., Monday and Tuesday at 8 p.m. at the VLT, 2350 Hilyard St.

Just show up whether interested in acting or in production as no prior experience is necessary and all try-outs are open to the public.

"Arsenic and Old Lace" was written by Joseph Kesselring and is to be directed by the talented and versatile, Bill Burger. It's about two well meaning elderly sisters who have hit upon the charity of bringing peace and tranquility to elderly and familyless old men by the sipping of arsenic-laced,

home-made elderberry wine.

The play opens with another customer awaiting burial in the window-seat-box and one of the sisters' chatting to the vicar. Before long we have the sisters' well-meaning intentions discovered by their nephew, the drama critic.

Things get very muddled when the intrusion of Jonathan, another nephew who is a criminal and looked like Boris Karloff, really sets things rolling.

A third nephew thinks himself Teddy Roosevelt and aids the ladies in removing the yellow fever victims to the Panama Canal which he digs at intervals in the cellar.

The setting is 1941 and the entire action takes place in the living room of the Brewster home in Brooklyn.

The play opens May 19, 20, 21 and continues May 25, 26, 27, 28.

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