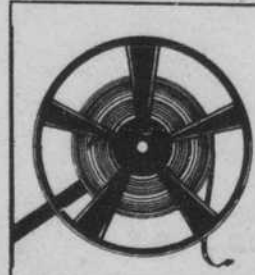


A Special Day

Fascist era setting spells doom

A *Special Day* is a film that is virtually defined by its flatness — of story, setting, direction, and even, occasionally, acting. Perhaps the film's director, Ettore Scola, was aware of this problem and stupidly tried to solve it by ir-

relevantly setting the action in the fascist Italy of the late 1930s. The fascist era has become such a fashionable setting for European films that it was almost inevitable that it would eventually be used, as it is here, for virtually no discernible reason, other than, perhaps, to evoke a kind of perverse nostalgia. Day's story would, at least, be less abstract and remote if it had a contemporary setting. But without its "historical" veneer, the film's lack of artistry might be more obvious.



By DAVID COURSEN

A *Special Day's* use of history gets it into trouble even before the story begins. A prologue features extensive newsreel coverage of Hitler's historic visit to Italy with, of course, ample attention to Italy's favorite son of the time, Benito Mussolini. As the newsreel ends, the narrator reminds all good Italians to attend the final ceremonies of the visit scheduled for the following day. The insertion of this comment betrays a lack of understanding of the difference between a newsreel and a daily news broadcast, by crudely and pointlessly violating the film's historical "authenticity," not even fascist efficiency could have gotten a newsreel into theaters the

same day as the events it records. The film is not often sloppy in quite this way, but it always feels stiff and wooden, as if it were choosing to focus on details at the expense of spontaneity. The movements of the crowds are somehow too patterned and orderly, star Sophia Loren's family too large, her apartment too messy (or else too well furnished), the "moustache" above a landlady's upper lip too symmetrical and too obvious. This kind of clutter does much to obscure or compromise whatever power the film's story might have contained.

Loren gives a competent enough performance as an ignorant housewife who has an affair with the homosexual in the apartment across the way (Marcello Mastroianni). Indeed, her presence in the role gives a kind of quiet, understated dignity to a part that is rather crudely conceived. For example, when she finds a picture of a nude woman in her son's bed, warns him of the dangers of going blind, and advises him to confess his sins to the priest, the film is obviously using her clichéd response to emphasize her ignorance.

When her son replies "You mean the priest who's half-blind?" the series of expressions that cross her face as she slowly gets the joke is delightful. Loren conveys a sense of inner dignity that

here, or, later, when she shows a neighbor her Mussolini scrapbook, almost completely transcends stereotyping.

A *Special Day*, produced by Carlo Ponti, Loren's husband, is very much a vehicle for its star. Hers is not, however, its only interesting performance. Mastroianni is equally competent as a radio announcer fired and then deported for homosexuality/subversion. (It's interesting, too, the way the film has its fascist state link the two, the better to narrow the definition of "normal" and expand the definition of "subversive.") Finally, the film makes interesting and effective use of its one American, character actor John Vernon.

Vernon has traditionally played leering, pompous rats, most often of the oily-double-crossing variety. But there is also in his insincerity an implicit lunkish insensitivity. His performance here as Loren's husband, by emphasizing those latent qualities gives credibility and resonance to his wife's customary expression of resignation to quiet suffering.

Just as garbled, unconvincing details do not always make a bad film, neither do competent acting performances make a good one. The overriding fact about *A Special Day* is that it has one flaw that is as irredeemable as it is indefinable: it is boring. Very little happens in the story, and Ettore Scola's direction is too detached to make it interesting, for example, by bringing out the tensions in the lovers' situations or the passions in their affair. Instead, *A Special Day* is flat and mechanical, consistently lacking in the power and excitement that comes from contact with genuine human emotions.



Rodrigo De Zayas and Anne Perret

Renaissance, baroque duo set to perform two concerts

Anne Perret and Rodrigo de Zayas will perform in Beall Hall Friday night at 8 p.m. as part of the Chamber Music Series. Because the concert is sold out, a second performance, sponsored by the Music Steering Committee, has been arranged for Saturday, also at 8 p.m. in Beall Hall.

Perret and de Zayas are renowned for their interpretation of Renaissance and Baroque music. The first portion of the program will be instrumental; de Zayas will demonstrate his skill on the alto lute, the tenor vihuela, theorbo, baroque lute and baroque guitar. He will accompany Perret in the second portion of the program, while she sings music written between 1200 and 1700.

Although Friday night's concert is sold out, some tickets may be returned shortly before the performance. Admission is \$4 for the general public and \$3 for students and senior citizens.

In addition to their two performances, Perret and de Zayas will give a workshop on their music at 10 a.m. Saturday.

Anti-nuke group says hello to festival

A two-day folk festival sponsored by the Trojan Decommissioning Alliance is scheduled at the WOW Hall this weekend.

The event, billed as the "So Long Trojan — Hello Sun Folk Festival," will run from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Saturday, and 1 p.m. to 5 a.m. Sunday. Admission will be \$2 a show, or \$3 for both.

Saturday night features Eric, an anti-nuke folk singer; Alfea, a rag-time pianist; British folk singers

Brian and John; and the bluegrass band Good and Country.

Performing on Sunday afternoon will be folk guitarist Sandra Bishop, country-rock musician Tommy Smith, old-time music band Timberbound, and flautist Joe Kasik.

Proceeds are for a bail fund, a

new TDA office, and a program to promote alternative energy sources in the Eugene community.

T-shirts and buttons will be available, and the TDA will provide child care.

Tickets can be purchased at the door or at the TDA office, 348 East 8th Street.



Kimball's House Of Strings

A FINE SELECTION OF NEW & RARE VINTAGE FRETTED INSTRUMENTS

MARTIN • VEGA • OVATION • TAKAMINE

SERVICE & REPAIR

537 WILLAMETTE
687-0814

COPIES

3¢

OVER NIGHT
NO MINIMUM
8am - 8pm

KINKO'S

344-7894
1128-B ALDER STREET
2nd floor Atrium
485-1063



Eric Gale



Bob James

COUPON

good thru
January

Snip this coupon and save \$1 off the regular price on these four new & exciting releases, compliments of the people saving you money on music —

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

RECORDS & TAPES



Eric Clapton



Pat Travers

Open 10-10 daily

1233 Alder
485-4515

FINAL WEEK

The Belle of Amherst

by WILLIAM LUCE

Starring Priscilla Lauris

"The Belle of Amherst is an excellent evening of theater. See it and be moved."

-Bob Webb, Oregon Daily Emerald
January 19, 1978



MAUDE KERNS ART CENTER
corner of E. 15th and Villard

Admission \$4.00 Curtain 8:30pm/6:30pm Sun.
TICKETS AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY AT
BACKSTAGE DANCEWEAR and THEATRICAL SUPPLY 686-2671
OR AT THE DOOR

**Tonight, Friday,
Saturday & Sunday**
(January 28 Sold Out)