

Clairseach brings mystical music from Ireland

It was his first time in Ireland, and he wrote of what impressed him the most during his visit: "It not a little exhilarates dejected minds; it clears the clouded countenance, and removes superciliousness and austerity."

A cross-roads dance? Guinness Stout? A day at the races? Good guesses, but what Geraldus Cambresus was referring to on his 12th century visit to Ireland was the clairseach.

Claireach (pronounced klarshuk) is the Irish word for the ancient wire-strung harp that was eminent in Ireland from pre-medieval times to the 18th century.

Early harps were said to possess the ability to make the listener laugh, cry, or sleep in accordance with the will of the harper. From

the earliest times, harpers enjoyed great privilege and position in a society that awarded and respected all highly trained, skilled professionals. And harpers were plentiful, being found in every major clan.

Songs, poetry, literature, art, coins, state seals, flags, and emblems have throughout the years upheld in symbol the harp's lofty position in Irish society.

But the ambitions of English colonialism brought about the demise of the harp and its music in the 17th and 18th centuries. The metal strings and long crooked fingernails that produced the fascinating bell-like voice of older days gave way to the tastes of a new ruling class who were determined to 'civilize' the country, and by the beginning of the 19th



Ann Heymann and Husband Charlie.

century the old Irish harp was dead.

Gone for almost two centuries now, the metal-strung Irish harp

can be heard again! Ann Heymann, champion Irish harper, will resurrect its magical voice on March 21 in the Reed lecture hall at 8:00 p.m. In both 1981 and

1982 Ann won 1st prize at the All-Ireland harp competition in Granard, Co. Longford, Ireland, and she is unquestionably the greatest living performer on the instrument.

Together with her husband Charlie, they call themselves "Clairseach" (after the old harp, of course) and regularly tour the United States and Europe. This is a rare opportunity to hear this famous instrument played as it was before the last great harper died. Add button-accordion, wooden flute, cittern, harmonium, concertina, bodhran (Irish drum), bones, and their two strong voices deliver ballads and humorous tales, and you have one of the most entertaining and cultural experiences anywhere. Don't miss it!

Screen Talk:

"Kiss of the Spider Woman" is first-rate drama while "House" is built on familiar foundation

by Matthew Sullivan
Collegian Staff Writer

As Academy Award time draws near, Erie film goers have been presented with a rare viewing opportunity. It is not often that a low budget, independently produced film finds its way into the theaters of northwest Pennsylvania, but "Kiss of the Spider Woman" has done just that.

Now before you start to laugh, let me explain that the title is very deceiving. This is not a 'big bug' movie. In fact, there is nary a arachnid to be found.

What the film does have is an excellent cast, taut direction and an intelligent, crisply written script. The story concerns two inmates at a South American prison, one a battered, socially outraged political activist, the other a misunderstood, socially outcast homosexual. Most of the film takes place in their shared

prison cell and it is here that the director explores the nearly polar differences that are possible between members of the same race.

As the homosexual convicted of corrupting a minor, William Hurt delivers his best performance to date. His past roles (which include Nick, the drug-dealing Vietnam Vet in "The Big Chill" and the enigmatic, psycho-scientifically obsessed protagonist of "Altered States") have been expertly crafted to be sure, but Hurt literally becomes his part in "Kiss of the Spider Woman". His voice, his movement, the way he puffs on a cigarette-all of these lend complete believability to his character's statement, "I am a woman." Consider Hurt my choice for Best Actor at the award ceremony.

On the other side of the prison cell and the other end of the personality spectrum, Raul Julia por-

trays the macho, unflinching, political activist. His hardheaded pursuit of social freedom has cost him everything-including the woman he loves, but his belief cannot be shaken. Julia's interpretation of the role is superb and I look forward to seeing more of his work.

Together the two actors give us an intricate sense of their relationship as the move from begrudging cellmates to caring friends.

The script is cleverly written and allows the film to avoid the potentially boring lack of location change by having Hurt's character periodically recount scenes from an old movie. We get to watch this movie as Hurt narrates and it offers a nice break from the monotony of the prison walls. Of course, that's the purpose it serves for the characters as well.

However, "Kiss of the Spider Woman" is not for everyone. Those viewers who tend to fidget when screen dialogue proceeds for more than five minutes without a gratuitous sex scene or violent

death-should stay away. On the other hand, anyone who enjoys good writing, bright direction and excellent acting should see this gem before it gets away. Now showing at Millcreek Mall.

Turning to a completely different genre, the pseudo-horror flick "House" is now playing at the Plaza Theatre. Steve Miner, director of several "Friday the Thirteenth" films, takes on a new direction here and despite some flaws, "House" turns out to be reasonably well constructed.

The story concerns Roger Cobb, a young novelist whose off-beat aunt commits suicide and wills her home to our writer/hero. Though pressured to sell the estate, Cobb decides to keep it for awhile, hoping to cure his writer's block by working in the old place. He soon realizes that it was the house itself which drove his aunt to commit suicide and he learns that its walls hold many secrets.

Sounds like the makings of your basic horror movie, right? Well, it's not. Although there are

one or two good scares, the majority of this film is comedy. True, the house contains all manner of beasties, but most of them look like refugees from the 'Muppet Show'. One, in particular, looks like a hideously enlarged Miss Piggy.

Not to be outdone, the human characters get funny too. As the novelist, William Katt spends most of his time making silly excuses for his often hilarious "ghostbusting" actions. In one scene he attempts to bury a decapitated ghoul while telling a beautiful neighbor that he's planning trees.

Katt is joined by two members of NBC's Thursday night television line-up, Richard Moll (Bull from "Night Court") and George Wendt (Norm from "Cheers").

As a nosy, reluctantly helpful neighbor, Wendt is extremely funny. His sleepy, hound-dog face and relaxed, inherent humor are perfect for his character's lethargically nervous behavior.

In a smaller and more serious part, Moll is also quite good. He plays one of the nastier house ghosts and his performance gives the film its best jolts.

All in all, this film offers a reasonably good time. The ending is rather melodramatically contrived, and there are several character implausibilities, but the laughs are enough to keep your mind off the bad points.

To sum up the film's sense of humor, a decaying corpse with a fifty-calibre machine gun throws the weapon aside as he mutters, "Come all the way back from the grave and I run out of ammunition."

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