Dern & Nettleton no Strangers to Lewis

Strangers, by Sherman Yellen, starring Bruce Dern and Lois Nettleton, now playing at the Colonial Theatre through February.

By Margie Beale

By the time he met journalist Dorothy Simpson, Sinclair Lewis had already produced four of his greatest novels, and was already a world's celebrity. Bruce Dern, is initially charming as the casually persistent, matrimonially-minded author, while Lois Nettleton comports herself as the engagingly independent and determined reporter who repeatedly denies his suit. Their opening scenes are filled with playful exchanges, discussions, and arguments which very clearly suggest the personality conflict later to destroy this relationship. Further these scenes point up Thompson's forthright enthusiasm, as well as Lewis's gift for the pithy remark.

The two travel to Moscow together, where Thompson delights her news service with fine reporting, while Lewis scandalizes the doctrinaire revolutionaries with his matter-of-fact humor. Eventually they are married, and problems begin to show. Lewis is increasingly insecure about his creative powers, and exists from his spouse's unreasonable vow of devotion. Thompson is trapped by her promise and continues as a farmbound wife in Vermont, while her husband is irritated by her desire to fully comprehend his self-doubts, remarking at one point, "No passion can withstand such understanding." While the presentation remains frequently amusing, the laughter here is bitter, and Dern's portrayal makes evident the manipulative, demanding, yet strangely insecure temperament that will slowly destroy Lewis.

Early in the second act, Lewis discovers that he has won the Nobel Prize and reacts with a mixture of feelings, for he doubts his ability to live up to such an honor. The deterioration of his gifts as a writer and his personality become increasingly difficult to accept. Instead of having one or two stars, Measure for Measure has several prominent roles. The BSC quite capably portrays Lewis's character, and some of the production's most telling moments occur when the rise of his career is juxtaposed with Lewis's self-induced artistic paralysis. Here the contrast between Thompson's matter-of-fact enthusiasm and determination and her husband's consuming and depressive artistic sensibility is most striking. Lewis has become a pathetic incarnation of one of his own characters, and he freely admits it.

The performance concludes with a

on the town

Niclaus Wys will guest conduct the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 10 and Mozart's Flute Concerto No. 2. Concerts are Thursday and Saturday, 8pm, Friday, 2pm.

Chris Church, Cambridge, will offer a recital Sunday February 11 at 5pm. Ron Konowicz, viola, and Adrienne Harrell, viola da gamba, and Beverly Scheiber, keyboard, will perform chamber works of the nature and late Baroque periods.

These are the Armies of the Night.

They are 100,000 strong. They outnumber the cops five to one. They could run New York City tonight, they're all out to get the Warriors.

"Paramount Pictures Presents A Lawrence Gordon Production "THE WARRIORS" Executive Producers Michael G. Wilson, based upon the novel by S. YANCEY, Script by David Shaber and Walter Hill. Produced by Lawrence Gordon and Directed by Walter Hill."

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