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With Orchestra Rehearsal Federico

Fellini has fashioned a metaphor for the oscillation between anarchy and tyranny out of the antics of an orchestra at war with its conductor during a rehearsal of a piece of music by the late Nino Rota. I really don't know what else to say about it. Fellini's films have always been tough to write about because so much of their meaning is spread on their surface. After 10 viewings they do not reveal any more of the "secrets" than they do after one or two. This may explain why Fellini's works have inspired a relatively meagre critical literature in comparison with the widespread admiration expressed for the director. Fellini, even with *8 1/2*, his most difficult work, has always been instantly

impressive. As audiences left the theatre, tears had already formed in their eyes. Hence, there was no need for some pundit to proclaim Fellini's emotional effectiveness. Besides, Fellini's genius has always resided less in his design than in his detail. His structure has often been slapdash, but his images stay in the mind, nonetheless.

Orchestra Rehearsal, however, is not what most people would consider vintage Fellini. It is dominated by an Idea, and there is not all that much humanity splashing around the edges. It is an engrossing experience, and at times an enjoyable one. There are insights into music, art, politics, order, disorder, organization, disorganization. Fellini's own viewpoint seems to be apolitically anarchic. As long as he can raise money to make movies he is not likely to agitate for a change in systems. And yet he is fully aware of the fascist implications in the role of the Great Artist. In music, particularly, with its totalitarian "tonality," its onerous "beat," its repressive "rhythm," and its sacred "score," the members of an orchestra are led like sheep by their conductor. Where is their individual freedom and initiative in the theocratic state of holy harmony? Can a metronome replace the conductor? Does "liberation" equal the chaos of cacophony? Is there a Mussolini or even a Hitler lurking inside every Toscanini? Even if these questions do not interest you, Fellini's own attitude and the cinematic means he uses to express this attitude should be of abiding concern to anyone seriously interested in the art of the motion picture.

Andrew Sarnes