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Vanity

Prova D'Orchestra**(Orchestra Rehearsal)****(ITALIAN-FRENCH-W. GERMAN COLOR)**

3-7-79

Rome, March 2.

Released worldwide by Gaumont (Paris) and SACIS (Rome). A RAI Channel I presentation produced by Daimo Cinematografica (Rome) and Albatross Productions (Munich). Stars Balduin Baas. Written and directed by Federico Fellini with script collaboration by Brunello Rondi. Camera (Eastman Color), Giuseppe Rotunno; art director, Dante Ferretti; editor, Ruggero Mastroianni; music, Nino Rota. Reviewed at Rivoli Cinema, Rome, March 1, '79. Running time: 70 MINS.

Orchestra conductor Balduin Baas

Federico Fellini originally conceived "Orchestra Rehearsal" as a tv divertissement to keep active during delays on his upcoming feature, "The City of Women." Between original conception and release print, "Orchestra Rehearsal" grew to a 70-minute feature and developed into a highly creative social metaphor, unlike anything the maestro has done in the past.

Release of this very special, non-narrative, explosive overview of the film director's judgment on the anarchy and violence of modern times can be counted on to whip up interest for the Gaumont-SACIS entry in all markets, but very special handling is a basic requirement in bringing the RAI-I production to world masses. It is not circuit fare and has little in common with standard film entertainment, but it constitutes an intriguing tribute to visual audacity as Fellini abandons, for the first time, his perpetual revocation of times past and looks melancholically at the world around him.

A symphony orchestra is certainly a valid symbol of the complex variance in society itself. In its details an orchestra offers the elements to demonstrate, instrument by instrument, the loss of harmony and the eruption of violent discord in the social texture of today.

Regardless of the many details illustrating Fellini's civic irks and social fears, he really takes over the podium for a long view, with the help of Nino Rota's ironic score, to issue a solemn warning over the masses' heads that democracy and violent discord are incompatible, leaving society a helpless prey to dictatorship.

Sustained development meticulously identifies and situates the orchestral components musically and metaphorically — reaching climax during general mayhem when a demolition ball shatters one side of the rehearsal hall inside a century-old church to set the stage amid shock and disarray for the contested conductor to regain the podium and reassert authority with jargon expressions reminiscent of the Hitlerian bark.

While Fellini's social posture is open to debate and the ending subject to individual interpretation, there can be little or no quibbling with the creative depth of this exercise — intensified, if anything, but Giuseppe Rotunno's ingenious lensing, the stark pace — once the orchestra is fully assembled — of Ruggero Mastroianni, and the sardonic notes of Nino Rota's score — an integral part of the Fellini pic in which an unknown German actor, Balduin Baas, and a score of hand-selected Fellini characters (aided only by a few professional musicians) constantly keep the metaphor alive. —Werb.