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The Films, by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

TROIS VALSES

(Ludwig Berger Production)



THE second of the French films to have been recently released in New Zealand is by no means up to the standard of the first, but it was scarcely to be expected that it would be. After all, a film of the over-all excellence of *La Kermesse Héroïque* (which has justified all one's confidence both in its own quality and in the perception of New Zealand audiences by running for three weeks in Wellington) is something of a rarity even for the French cinema. It is therefore not quite fair to compare *Trois Valses* (or, as you will see it advertised, *Three Waltzes*) with its illustrious predecessor; rather should it be judged alongside the ordinary musical romance from Hollywood or Great Britain.

For *Trois Valses* is, I should imagine, just about an average French musical film, lacking any great distinction except, for us, a certain novelty, but bright, tuneful, and flirtatious enough, and free from some of those dull, musical-comedy conventions to which we are accustomed. Not from all of them, of course. There are the usual protracted misunderstandings and hindrances (in this case protracted over three generations) before Boy Gets Girl in the last scene; the same old romantic conflict between love and duty, career and family; and the heroine has the customary tendency to burst into song at odd times and places. Yet even so there's a gaiety, a sauciness of treatment, even a sort of cynicism, which gives some freshness to the familiar material. This freshness, I am willing to admit, may lie partly in the eye of the beholder, but I think some of it is characteristic of the French cinema—I mean the fondness for the *reductio ad absurdum* method, the refusal to treat anything so inconsequential as a musical-romance in any way except frivolously.

Trois Valses is, as one might expect, in three parts, all of them dealing with a romance between members of the Grandpré and Chalency families. In the first part, which I liked the best, the

period is 1867; the love affair of the Chalency scion with a ballet-dancer named Grandpré is blighted because of his family's attitude and his fondness for the army. In the second part, in 1900, a Grandpré actress, the daughter of the first, turns down a Chalency because she is wedded to the stage; but in the final 1939 episode the families are at last united when the grandchildren of the original lovers are brought together in a film studio. The roles of the lovers throughout are, naturally, played by the same stars, Yvonne Printemps and Pierre Fresnay. I must confess I was disappointed in La Printemps; there may be spring in her heart, but there's something more like autumn in her face. Still, she sings nicely, and Pierre Fresnay as the blue-blooded lover has charm and aplomb. The dialogue is in French, with lavish English sub-titles.

What we really need, of course, to form a true estimate of the French comedy-romance with music, is to be shown some of the talkies made by René Clair before he went to Hollywood.

THE SECRET HEART

(M-G-M)



THE plot of this film doesn't make much sense, but it makes glossy, handsome, and quite fair entertainment. It also makes an effective shop-window to display the good looks and talent—and expensive clothes—of Claudette Colbert, the manly restraint of Walter Pidgeon, and the pouting, little-girl charm and not inconsiderable acting ability of June Allyson. And with its mixture of music and mental aberration—the same ingredients as in *The Seventh Veil*—it is likely to make the grade at the box-office.

The Secret Heart is a sad but not wholly doleful tale about a 'teen-age girl with a Daddy-and-Debussy fixation. Her adored father jumped over a cliff when she was five years old because he had been indulging in embezzlement and too much alcohol; but the poor child

(continued on next page)

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M83.

EGYPTIAN FILM STAR



BBC photograph
RAQIYA IBRAHYM, beautiful Egyptian film star, is here seen in a London studio of the British Broadcasting Corporation after broadcasting a message in the BBC Arabic Service