

THE MANSION--TEN YEARS LATER
A visit to Monmouth County College's
Woodrow Wilson Hall

by Tricia Trozzi

To commemorate the filming of **Annie's** Mansion scenes, which were done exactly ten years ago in May 1981, we are going to take you on a visit to Woodrow Wilson Hall, which is the current name of the administration building of New Jersey's Monmouth County College. The college is located in West Long Branch, which is not far from the famous Jersey shore. The college has pictures of the Mansion in all of its literature; professors lecturing in Annie's bedroom, students lounging around the area where Warbucks and Grace ate breakfast. The college is justifiably proud of this impressive and beautiful building and it seems to be a major selling point for the campus. There is even a flyer available for people to take self-guided tours around the building to study the history and the architecture of the place.

Roger Paradiso was the New York location manager who made the suggestion to use the Mansion. Production designer Dale Hennesy and set decorator Marvin March were in charge of transforming the functioning administration and classroom building into a movie set. Thousands of dollars worth of furniture, artwork, rugs, and drapes went into the rooms in which filming would occur. The famous pool scene required the complete restoration of the pool area, and the finale in which the entire mansion is illuminated showed off millions of lights and specially-planted shrubbery. One stipulation the college put on the movie company was that they could not do anything to permanently alter the building (with the exception of the pool) and they had to take down anything put up for the filming. The movie crew did, however, really take over the premises--secretaries told me stories of the upheaval that took place to accommodate the filming of **Annie**--it was still during the spring semester, and classrooms had to be moved into portable trailers. Equipment and trailer trucks were on the lawn, and the huge air-conditioning ducts needed to keep the equipment and the actors cool snaked throughout the building. The secretaries also told of hearing the bell that signaled that some shooting was about to happen--that meant no walking around the halls or talking, and they even had to stop typing!

On my wandering around the mansion on a Saturday afternoon, I happened to run into a small tour being conducted by Mr. Van Everbingen of the college's art department. Unfortunately he didn't have any keys to let me into the locked rooms, so I couldn't get any photos of Annie's bedroom or the former pool for this article, but he had lots of information to tell me. The original name of the building was Shadow Lawn and it was built in 1929 at a cost of \$10.5 million as the private residence of F.W. Woolworth Co. president Hubert Templeton Parson and his wife Maysie. The building has 130 rooms on three main floors, and in its time as a house it had an organ console (with a player-piano-type remote control), billiard tables, library, auditorium with a puppet theater, two bowling lanes, the pool, a gymnasium,

and golf locker room. Other features of the Shadow Lawn mansion include a fire-proof steel frame structure, vacuum outlets built right into the walls of the bedrooms, elevators, heat controls and light controls for the entire building located in the master bedrooms, and an intercom system. The grounds had greenhouses, barns for some livestock, gardens for flowers and vegetables, and an artificial lake! Hmm, I wish Oliver Warbucks could adopt me! Without the benefit of seeing home furnishings like those used in the movie, I tried to imagine what it must have looked like when the Parson family lived there, or when President Woodrow Wilson stayed at Shadow Lawn during the summer of 1916. Just the structure alone is grand enough for wishing that you lived there! (By the way, even though the movie filming is long gone, Annie and "Daddy" still live in the mansion: note that Leonard Starr uses it in his current comic strip.)

I was very pleased to learn from Mr. Van Eberbingen that there is not much vandalism to the building and grounds, even to areas like the completely marbled bathrooms. He also confirmed something that I learned from Ann Reinking; Grace's bedroom, where she and Annie begin singing "Let's Go To The Movies" is NOT in the mansion (it was a set in Hollywood). The famous pool had been covered up a few years after the filming; it was too expensive to maintain, and the space was needed to be converted into classrooms. The organ console, where Annie had a little fun playing during the "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here" number, is now kept covered and locked. It was still working about 20 years ago, and would be played at Christmastime, but has since fallen into disrepair. My guide doesn't think that it will ever be fixed, though, because the sound might shake loose the stained glass ceiling! (Which looks as breathtaking in real life as it did to Annie on her first entrance.)

Outside the main entrance are two plaques which read:

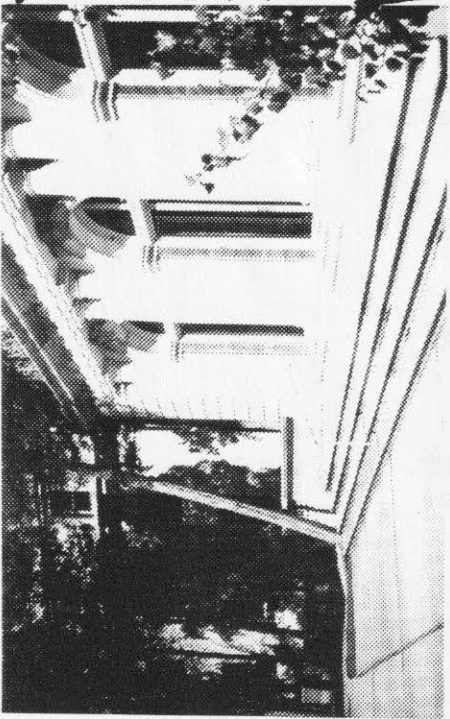
WOODROW WILSON HALL
THIS BUILDING, ON THE SITE OF HIS ONE-TIME SUMMER HOME
HONORS THE MEMORY OF
WOODROW WILSON 1856-1924
HISTORIAN, COLLEGE PRESIDENT, GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY,
28TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
AND PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS
DEDICATED MAY 7, 1966

("The League of Nations"?? Sounds like a song cue to me.)

WOODROW WILSON HALL/MONMOUTH COLLEGE
HAS BEEN DESIGNATED A
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
THIS SITE POSSESSES
NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE
IN COMMEMORATING THE
HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
1985

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR

I would like to see a third plaque added--"ANNIE, THE MOVIE OF 'TOMORROW' FILMED HERE, MAY 1981." Leapin'lizards!



Looking away from the building from the Breakfast/Walk area. This spot was the scene where Annie tells Warbucks "I didn't want to be just another orphan. I wanted to believe I was special."

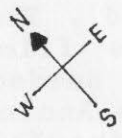


→ Where Warbucks and Grace ate breakfast and where Warbucks and Annie took their walk. Through the magic of movies, they exited the building on the South side and were instantly here without missing a word of their "Man-to-Man talk!"

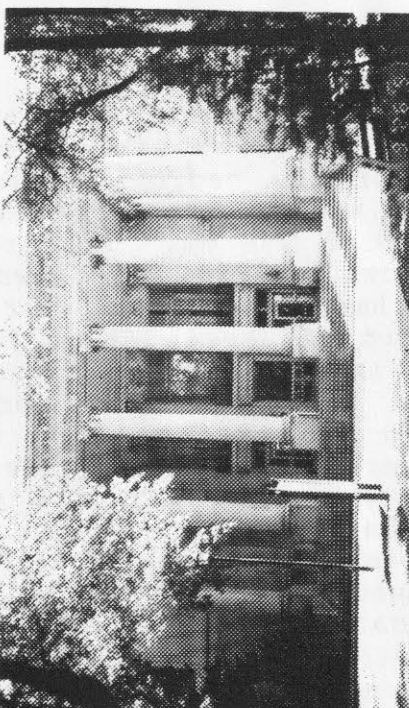
→ The driveway through which the Dupont came carrying Annie and Grace. Also where the Muddes picked up Miss Hannigan and the Orphans ran through (shown from across the street.)



OUTSIDE

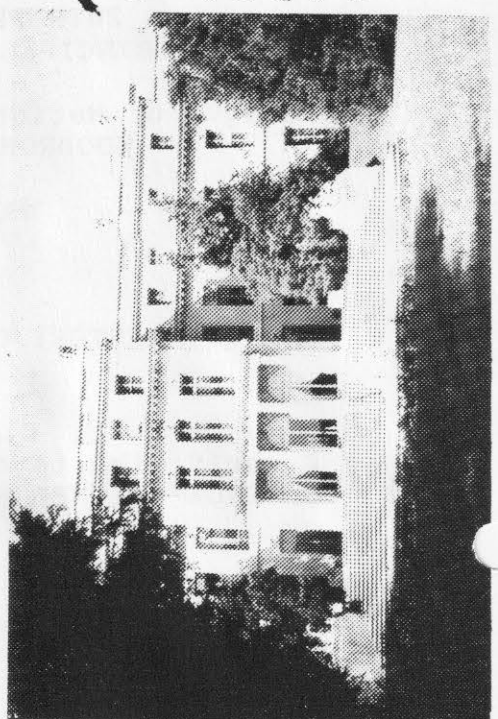


→ The Main Entrance. Not seen in the movie except for one close-up of the second-floor center window as the gardener gives Annie flowers during "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here."

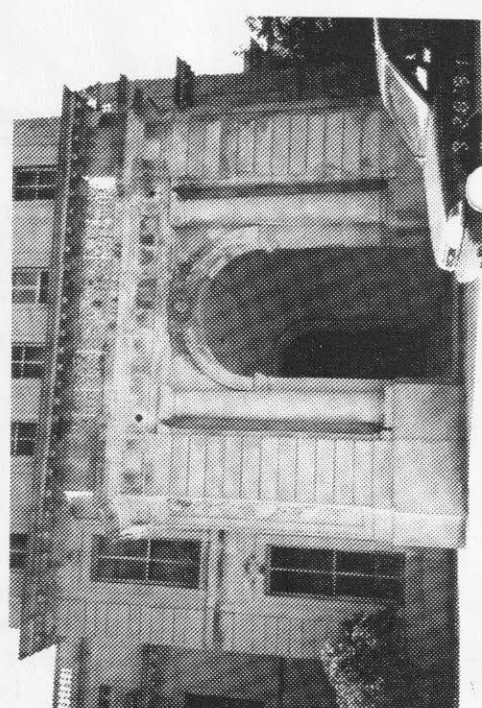


→ Grace and the gardener begin "We Got Annie"

→ The South side is the most famous view. Here was the finale circus. The basin of the fountain was covered to be a tap-dancing area for Annie and Warbucks.

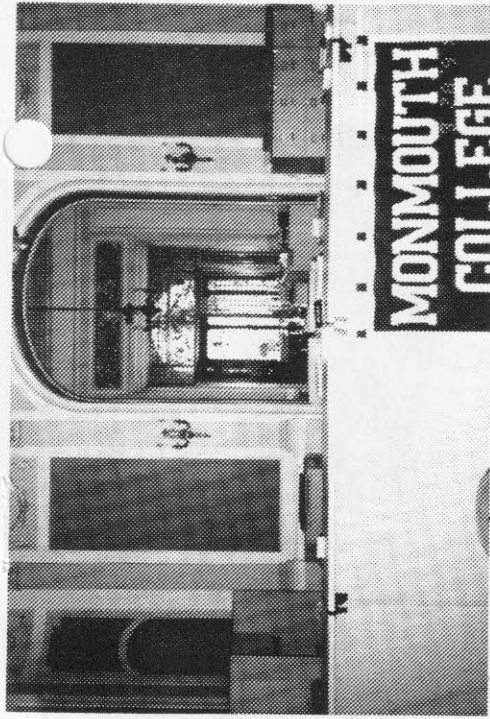


→ Through this archway Annie entered the mansion. The second floor balcony was where the Bolshevik bomber appeared, also where Warbucks reprised "Maybe" as the Muddes drove away with Annie.



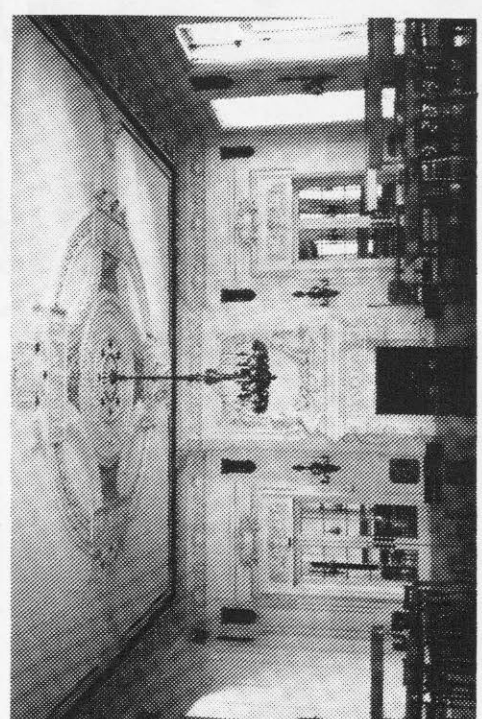
drawing not to scale

FIRST FLOOR



Looking towards the East entrance. Where Annie first walked through the mansion is now the College's Financial Aid office.

the library where Warbucks and Annie met the Muddes. (Room was locked - no photo available.)



Looking towards living room area where Locket scene begins

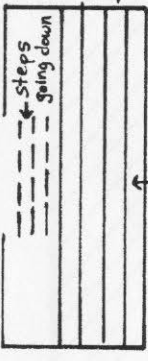
out to South lawn (Circus finale area)

false wall built here for movie

X - statue of Venus de Milo

the pool area (in the basement)

steps going up

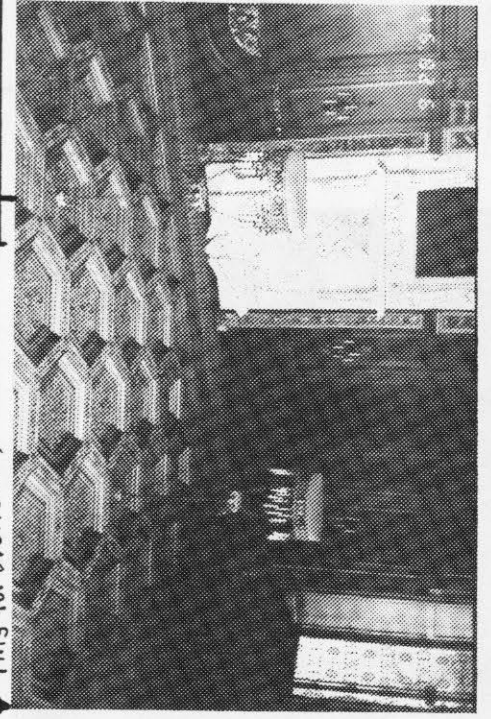


false wall built here for movie

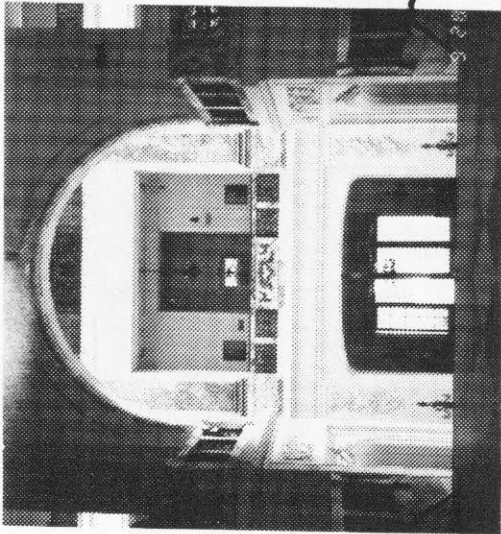
Looking towards where Punjab was doing magic tricks for Annie (seen in Red Dress for the first time.)

out to Breakfast/walk area

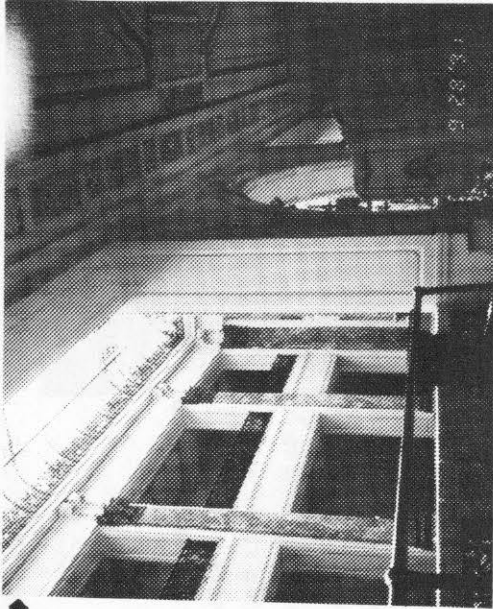
Dining room seen briefly in the middle of "I Think I'm Gonna..." ("When you wake..." ring for Drake...)



drawing not to scale



Looking south over the steps



Looking towards the organ → and across the railing to the second and third floors across the Great Hall. Part of the stained glass ceiling also visible. The third floor apparently was not used in the movie at all.



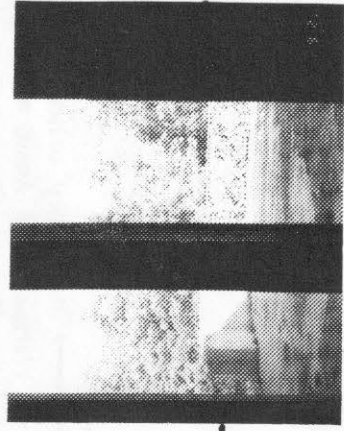
X ← statue of Winged Victory

↑ steps

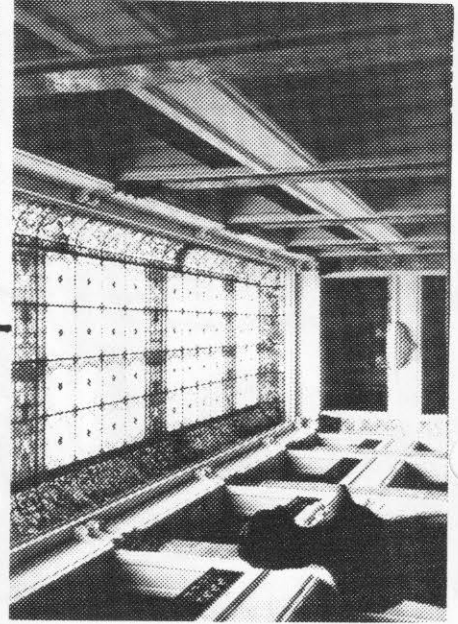
the organ

(first floor)

Annie's bedroom was locked - no photo available (is a classroom now)



Looking out from Warbucks' office (Boleshevnik bomber and "maybe" reprise by Warbucks.)



Warbucks' office. The mirror seen in photo had a painting set into it for the movie, it's behind Annie when she's talking about going to the movies. Warbucks' desk was along the wall.



SECOND FLOOR

drawing not to scale

"Annie": Better Than on Broadway

"...we have come naturally to expect, when a movie is good, that it will be good all the way; made with and by the right people, it stands complete in itself, and fumbles with its cap before no art whatsoever..."

Thus wrote the late great film critic Otis Ferguson 43 years ago anent *Dark Victory*—but he might well have been writing about *Annie*. The key word is, of course, "expect"—and the news about this almost over-publicized, lavish, literate and, God help us, lovable musical is that it goes beyond expectation.

I confess to small expectations. Though the stage musical is now in its sixth year on Broadway, having spawned touring companies in 50 American cities and 14 foreign countries, I found it old-fashioned, musically undistinguished, mawkishly sentimental and even, in its political references, offensive (anybody here remember the fascistic overtones of the *Orphan Annie* comic strip during the Roosevelt era?).

But indeed, "the right people" took over the movie-making. At the heart of the matter is Ray Stark, the agent-turned-producer who is a master packager and a man of taste. For script he chose Carol Sobieski, one of television's finest writers; for direction, the venerable John Huston, whose humor we tend to forget because of the "classic" stature of his works; for musical sequences, Broadway's gifted Joe Layton. For stars? Start with Albert Finney to give dimension and brio to Daddy Warbucks; Carol Burnett to give comic appeal to Miss Hannigan's villainy, as do Bernadette Peters to Lily's and Tim Curry to Rooster's; Ann Reinking, that exquisite dancer, to give Warbucks a secretary who's a proper romantic foil; Geoffrey Holder to make Punjab both magical and mortal. And then there's Aileen Quinn as Annie. As someone with an aversion to child belters, those banes of Broadway musicals, I lost my heart—within a half hour—to this completely un-cute, simply charm-

ing and charmingly simple nine-year-old.

What works, of course, is the space—and pace—of the production and its governing intelligence. The fairy-tale aspects are edged with a Depression-era grit, the sentimentality is bolstered by genuine emotion, and all is leavened by humor. For example, in the instant-classic sequence, "Let's Go to the Movies" (one of four songs written for the film), a gorgeous extravaganza that starts in the Warbucks mansion and explodes in Radio City Music Hall, War-

finale has been changed to a loud, lavish Fourth of July. Very fitting for the ideal "summer" movie—one that is an exhilarating entertainment for any season.



Albert Finney as Daddy Warbucks and Aileen Quinn, thankfully "uncute," as Annie.

bucks, his secretary, and Annie sit through *Camille*, with Garbo and Robert Taylor: It's a nostalgic wallow—capped by a funny conclusion. "Taste" is the guiding word in the light-handed orphanage-horrors, personal affections, and chase sequences, and particularly in the White House affair, where Annie doesn't inspire the Cabinet to the New Deal (as she did on Broadway), but has a sweet private encounter with FDR and Eleanor. And finally, albeit inspired by weather conditions during filming, the sloshy exploitation of Christmas in the

COLUMBIA PICTURES

SOMEWHERE toward the middle of "Annie," John Huston's gigantic screen version of the still-running Broadway musical, Sandy, Annie, Daddy Warbucks, Daddy's beautiful secretary Grace Farrell, and Punjab, Daddy's bodyguard, take themselves off to see a movie at Radio City Music Hall. This is the era of F. D. R., the Depression, the National Industrial Recovery Act, orphan asylums and the Music Hall. Daddy, as in his way, does things right. He buys out the house for one performance.

There, in lonely splendor in the middle of that vast gold auditorium, Sandy, Annie, Daddy and Grace sit in a row, with Punjab behind them, beholding the Music Hall's wonders. First there is the elaborate stage show, including the Rockers, followed by the feature attraction, *Great Garbo and Robert Taylor in "Camille,"* projected, for some reason, in the wide-screen ratio of today.

After being held spellbound by the stage show, Annie and Sandy fall asleep as soon as the movie begins. Daddy Warbucks generously hides his boredom and worries about Grace, who weeps happy bucketfuls as Mr. Taylor's Armand is denounced by the great Garbo's Marguerite.

"No one has ever loved you as I love you," says Armand with all of the conviction of a Nebraska shoe salesman.

"That may be," says Miss Garbo, sublime even when acting by herself, "but what can I do about it?"

It's a marvelous, moving and very funny moment that suddenly defines this "Annie." It makes comprehensible what Mr. Huston, the director; Ray Stark the producer; and Carol Soberski, the writer, are up to in their spending of a reported \$40 million to \$50 million, to bring to the screen an immensely popular but not exactly classic example of Broadway schmaltz-and-hotlary.

"Annie," which opens today at Loews Astor Plaza and other theaters, is a no-expense-spared tribute to the Music Hall and the kind of show business it represents. Though it's longer than most movies that played the Music Hall in its heyday, "Annie" is a nearly perfect Music Hall picture. It's big, colorful, slightly vulgar, occasionally boring and full of talent not always used to its limits. It's a movie in praise of waste-space.

If I say that I like the film far better than the show, I also must concede that the show is the sort that almost brought me out in hives. Except for the spectacle of seeing a dog follow cues before a live theater audience, and except for David Mitchell's stunning, Tony Award-winning set, everything about the film is an improvement over the original.

There is, first of all, the Annie of Aileen Quinn, who has Shirley Temple's dimples and a strutting, breezy self-assurance that Mr. Huston holds discreetly in check. Miss Quinn is a performing doll, not out of life but out of the long tradition of American show business that produced Baby LeRoy, Jackie Cooper and Margaret O'Brien. It's meant as praise to say that Miss Quinn, compared to such contemporaries as Gary Coleman and Ricky Schroder, is a sweet, modest Dore, a mistress of understatement.

Albert Finney, his head shaved and looking a lot like a classy Telly Savalas, seems to be having a ball as literature's most benign robber-baron, Oliver Warbucks, whose very name is auto-criticism that, as it turns out, is unwarranted. Mr. Finney sings a bit, dances a bit and barks in the Anglo-American accents of the once-poor Liverpool cabin boy who struck it rich in the States and lost his hair.

"I love money!" he shouts at one point. "I love power! I love capitalism! I don't love children!" This is pronounced immediately before he admits to being captivated by the plucky little orphan.

Also most entertaining is Carol Burnett as the evil, sex-starved, drink-sodden Miss Hannigan, the wayward, warden of the Hudson Street Home for Girls, the orphan asylum from which Daddy Warbucks saves Annie. Miss Burnett, curlier permanently snarled in her hair, a bottle of gin always in one hand and ever-ready with a sarcastic quip about her charges ("Why any kid would want to be an orphan is beyond me"), tears into her role as if there were no "Tomorrow," which is all to the good. "Annie," after all, is based on a comic strip, not on a play by Endre Bognod. This is not an occasion for subtleties.

However, it's also not a movie that is as satisfying as it could have been, considering the care taken on the casting and physical production. The major hitch is the score. The music by Charles Strouse and the lyrics by Martin Charnin never deliver the epiphanies anticipated. The songs are either anticlimactic or plain dull, though, in the film, the ubiquitous "Tomorrow" seems less shrill and grating than in the show.

Here is a musical whose show-stoppers seldom stop the show. A typical example is "Easy Street," in which Miss Hannigan, her ex-con brother Rooster (Tim Curry) and Rooster's light-fingered mistress Lily (Bernadette Peters) enthusiastically imagine the lives they'll lead after they've ransacked Daddy Warbucks out of \$50,000. Never do the music, the lyrics and the choreography achieve the hilarious abandon promised by the situation.

This is even more apparent when Annie moves uptown to Daddy's Fifth Avenue mansion and Ann Reinking, who plays Grace Farrell, comes onto the scene. Miss Reinking is not only a beauty and a comedienne, she's one of the great, dancing assets of the American musical theater, though it would be difficult to tell from the material she's given by Joe Layton, who created the musical sequences, and Arlene Phillips, who choreographed them. She seems always to be on the verge of busting loose — lifting those long legs skyward to kick out the lights in a chandelier — but the opportunity never arrives.

She is largely wasted, as are Mr. Curry, Miss Peters and Geoffrey Holder, who plays Punjab.

The film's best, all-out production number comes early in the film, at the orphanage, when Annie, her very funny, pint-sized friend Molly (Toot Anz Giondoli), and a small, unidentified person who does running flips, plus all of the other orphans explode in the frenzy of the "It's the Hard-Knock Life" number. Quite tolerable, too, is the film's sentimental centerpiece when Annie, at the White House, leads Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt (Edward Herrmann and Lois DeBenedictis) and Daddy in a reprise of "Tomorrow," which becomes something of a New Deal anthem.

The film musical is not the form Mr. Huston is most at home in, but he must be credited for having obtained such high-spirited performances from Mr. Finney and Miss Burnett and such a calmly winning one from Miss Quinn.

"Annie" is far from a great film but, like the Music Hall in the good old days, it is immaculately maintained and almost knocks itself out trying to give the audience its money's worth. They don't build movies like this anymore.

"Annie" has been rated PG ("Parental Guidance Suggested") for reasons that are beyond my powers to guess.

Tomorrow Is Here

ANNIE, directed by John Huston; screenplay by Carol Soberski, based on the Broadway play by Thomas Merton, which was based on "Little Orphan Annie," by permission of The Chicago Tribune New York News Syndicate; director of promotion, Richard Hertz; film editor, Michael A. Sheverson; music by Charles Strouse; lyrics by Martin Charnin; musical staging and choreography by Arlene Phillips; produced by Ray Stark; released by Columbia Pictures, At the Astor Plaza, Broadway and West 44th Street, 34th Street Showplace, at Second Avenue, and other theaters. Running time: 130 minutes. This film is rated PG.

Olivia Warbucks	Albert Finney
Miss Hannigan	Carol Burnett
Lily	Bernadette Peters
Grace Farrell	Ann Reinking
Rooster	Tim Curry
Annie	Aileen Quinn
Punjab	Geoffrey Holder
Ally	Roger Williams
Molly	Toot Anz Giondoli
Pepper	Lara Park
Isabel	April Lerner
Katy	Lucie Stewart
Duffy	Robin Greco
F. D. R.	Edward Herrmann
Eleanor Roosevelt	Lois DeBenedictis
Sam Finley	Peter Marshall
Brian Stiers	
Sam Ackerman	Marsha Cross and Kathy McNair

The New York Times
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Jon Merrill
Annie People
517 North Fenwick Street
Allentown, PA 18103

CompuServe 73677,135
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LittleOrphan
Annie