

The Children's Hour – Shirley MacLaine shares her thoughts United Artists
1962

The Children's Hour proved to be one of the most talked about and financially successful pictures of 1962. Many critics and audiences felt I had delivered my finest screen performances. I remember that Time Magazine said, "She gives viewers a touching and indelible lesson in what Cinema acting is all about." Despite the rave reviews and success of the picture it failed to receive any Oscar nominations in any of the top categories.

In retrospect, I feel the subject matter may have hurt the film Oscar chances but, it was instrumental in establishing me as a first rate dramatic actress in a role without a trace of "kookiness." But, I now know that I should have fought more with Billy Wilder to investigate the lesbian relationship, because John Michael Hayes had written a brilliant script from Lillian's play. In one scene, I baked a chocolate cake, cut it like a work of art, and placed doilies just so. Every nuance was the act of a lover. There were several scenes like that, but Wilder was afraid, so they were cut from the script the day before we started shooting. And I had built the concept of my character on precisely those scenes. I was devastated and dismayed for quite sometime that the 1934 play by Lillian Hellman could be compromised by fear of the truth. But, unfortunately the moral climate of America in the sixties, frequently to the detriment of the story line.

Even though I lost the battle of the story line, I had a ball making *The Children's Hour*. Audrey Hepburn and I became good friends. She taught me how to dress and I taught her how to cuss. And James Garner... WOW! Not only handsome but also one of the funniest men I have ever known. James and Dean Martin were witty and real men! James kept us laughing in this suicidal drama, and when he was away, Dean and Frank would show up on the set when Audrey and I were trying to be dramatic and they would break us up with their jokes and antics.

copyright © 2004 - 2014 ShirleyMacLaine.com, Inc. and MacLaine Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.