

The Questors Theatre Archives
Questories
10th New Plays Festival

Middlesex County Times, 20 June 1969

FILM USED TO INVOKE STAGE NIGHTMARE

Most exciting and provocative of the three plays in The Questors new plays festival is "The Dogs of Pavlov" by Dannie Abse.

To me this play is what the theatre is all about. It has a strong plot, interesting characters, exciting techniques, and a thought-provoking inner thread.

The plot concerns a successful young man, his neurotic girl-friend, and the young man's middle-aged employer who has also been his great friend since his parents died.

The girl is persuaded to take part in a psychological experiment tests the extent to which the average person will take orders from a superior, however cruel those orders may be.

A LOVE STORY

The play is interesting enough purely as a love story—the love of a young couple which turns sour and the love between two men which forces the older man to manipulate a rift between the youngsters.

But it is manipulation and trust that seem to interest the author most. We are shown the extremes of trust and cynicism, and are left to ponder the results of both.

A special technique was the use of film to portray the girl's memories of a past affair. This was successful up to a point, but I felt it was used too often as an easy distraction while props were being moved.

NIGHTMARE

But it was a chilling success when used in conjunction with the whole cast to illustrate a nightmare. The flashing pictures on the screen and the and chanting of the actors combined powerfully to produce a terrifying effect.

On the whole the cast handled the play magnificently, and made the most of some very amusing dialogue. Sylvia Estop, as the stuttering Liz, caused almost continual mirth in the audience with a brilliantly-timed performance.

Peter Whelan was outstanding as the enigmatic older man. The only time the acting left anything to be desired was in the love scene between the young couple, played by Ann Whybrow and Michael Langridge, which was slightly stilted.

A very well-attended discussion group afterwards fired questions at the author.

The talk proved vintage brandy after a satisfying meal.

P.C.