

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

10th New Plays Festival

The Stage and Television Today 26 June 1969

SPOILED BY PROPAGANDA

DANNIE ABSE'S "The Dogs of Pavlov", the third and final play in this year's New Play Festival at the Questors, Ealing, proved to be a series of good ideas ruined because of a too propagandish style.

Mr. Abse's play is a perfect example of this kind of work. The first act progresses well, holds interest, and, even though in places it over-stresses its message, is not either too hectoring or too embarrassing. At least, that is, until the final scene of the act—the dream scene in which we get pleas and cries for tolerance and help for just about everyone and everything and a style of direction and writing impossible to tolerate and remain calm. The interval found me predicting scene by scene, what Mr. Abse would do in the second half of the play. Alas, my predictions came true.

The final image of this play about human guinea pigs in scientific experiments, is of the heroine strapped into a chair and crying for help. Society, don't you see, crying in vain for help and understanding whch neither mammon nor science are willing to give.

Such a pity that the whole work is spoiled by a pamphleteering style—it contains so much interesting material which could have been better used. The performances were crisp and sharp with admirable portrayals from Ann Whybrow and Peter Whelan.

P.W.B.