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'TAKING OFF' INTO NIGHTMARE AND FANTASY

[Extract]

Lunatics allow a playwright a very tempting degree of dramatic licence—the chance, for example, to escape from naturalism into surrealism and symbolism. Jenkin's [*Leonard Jenkins: Kitty Hawk at The Bush*] makes it work. Poet Dannie Abse in *Funland* (Questors) doesn't.

The title is the name of the asylum which shelters a motley crowd from the cruel chaos of the real world. But the play suffers from heavy-handed symbolism (an inmate named Pythagoras, for example, who does significant tricks with a stick), caricature, and problems of tone which made it difficult to take the material either seriously or humourously.

At least Dannie Abse was aiming for something more than the dreary old-hat naturalism which deadened any dramatic possibilities in Kerry Lee Crabbe's sub-Shavian, soporific soap-opera *The Last Romantic* (Actors Company at Wimbledon).