

# ENTERTAINMENT

Some of PEAK's last

## Closing productions mesmerizes loyal fans

By DAVID HINKLE

Last week PEAK, York's Graduate Theatre Programme, presented two plays by Fernando Arrabal, Orison and Fando and Lis. Whatever one thought of the plays themselves the productions were refreshingly different.

In most productions, speed is important. The general feeling is that in order not to bore an audience, a play must move quickly. The Arrabal plays contrasted this normal assumption by being deliberately slow. One found oneself not bored, however, but mesmerized.

This could only have been achieved through the strength of the PEAK actors to hold most of the audience's attention. The fact is that not one performance in either Orison or Fando and Lis could be considered weak.

Orison, the shorter of the two plays, was staged as if two children were having a theological

discussion while playing in a sandbox. Absurd as this first may sound, the staging worked quite well as it was textually valid.

Fidio, portrayed by Joseph Di Iorio, announces that he and Lilbé, played by Penelope Whitmore, are, starting that day, going to be "good and pure". The rest of Orison, with some digressions is a dialogue of not only the meaning of "good and pure" but also of the impossibility of achieving that goal. By occasionally dropping out of their child-like voices into serious adult tones, the performers helped to emphasize certain important lines. They indicated that Arrabal with Orison had written more than a children's show. It seems he has written, at least in part, a demonstration of the discrepancy between man as he is and man as he morally is supposed to be. It is a pessimistic play.

The pessimism of Orison carries

over into Fando and Lis. Ostensibly, this play is about the title character's journey to the city of Tar and the fact that they will never arrive at their destination (no one, we are told, who journeys to Tar ever reaches it). Certainly, on one level, this theme parallels that in Orison. Just as Fando and Lis will never reach Tar, neither will Fidio and Lilbe ever be pure and good.

The second play was quite striking visually. Utilizing the entire PEAK Passage (McLaughlin dining hall) a depth was achieved by breaking up the audience's field of vision with flats. The performers moved among these flats and so seemed as if they were traveling great distances. Striking too were the appearances of the "umbrella men". Wrapped in bandages so as to look like mummies, one often found the three actors, Gloria Shantz, Raymond K. Cosgrove, and James D. Rosenberger terrifying indeed.

Undoubtedly, the best performance of the two evenings was given by David Bently, who portrayed Fando. Fando seems schizophrenic because of the rapidity of his changes in emotion; now calm and kind, now angry and sadistic. In addition, Fando had to carry the burden of the play as his is the largest speaking part and the production was paced slowly. Bently accomplished these challenges.

Bently was greatly helped by Gina Laight who played Lis. It was not that the part has much to do or say, but, as Lis is a foil to Fando, she must always have presence while on stage. This Laight had and so contributed to



James Rosenberger, Gina Slaight, David Bently, Raymond Cosgrove, in PEAK's Fando and Lis.

### PEAK philosophy not in question, says director



PEAK director John Juliani.

• from page 1

According to Juliani, "there have been no substantive criticisms of PEAK philosophy. The faculty meeting that decided on the termination of PEAK was not qualified to rule on the matter, considering that no faculty member present had attended more than seven per cent of our public performances; they don't know what PEAK is all about. On top of this, it flies in the face of the wishes and interests of students."

A petition circulated in the Theatre department which called PEAK "an essential part" of the department and demanded that Green detail his reasons for its cancellation, received 125 signatures.

In his reply, Green reiterated his original claim that, because Juliani was going, PEAK had to go — no one else could direct the programme. However, the "lack of money" argument was dropped, reinforcing the claims of PEAK supporters that more

is involved than simple economics.

"Perhaps we pose some kind of a threat because we're different," said a PEAK student.

PEAK has recently received considerable off-campus recognition. In its two years of existence, it has gone on tour three times, once as the first official Canadian representative to the Wrocław theatre festival in Poland. Its play Cue to Cue received favourable reviews in the Globe and Mail, and it has performed Pirondello at Waterfront.

According to PEAK supporters, Green and the Fine Arts administration are interested in neither the quality of the programme nor the support it has in the theatre department; they simply want a programme to their liking.

"It's imperative that students have input in the decision-making process" said Juliani during Tuesday's Bearpit session, and the PEAK case makes it evident they don't."

PEAK's successful production.

Within an education context, actors must show development from one play to the next. If they do not, the program can hardly be

justified.

Throughout this year the PEAK ensemble have steadily increased their individual and collective skills as performers.

### York author's book

## Novel's sleek language liberates

By AGNES KUCHIO

Snip, snip. Cut. Splice. Hot splices. Words in a string. Words in a book. Great words. Together words. Words with meat. Thesaurus empty. Book nearly so.

A whole entire novel. In short choppy sentences. Exceptions, in the last 60 pages or so, just to prove the rule. The medium is the message. Sentences fun. Sentences great. Sentences frustrating. Language is meaning. Meaning? I failed to retrieve much of this commodity in Harry Pollock's new novel, Gabriel.

Gabriel as a novel about a boy has serious shortcomings which its assets just cannot uphold.

The novel's focus is on a young Jewish Toronto immigrant, Gabriel Gottesman, arriving in the Queen city, Hogtown, at the tender age of six from his native Poland. The book is about Toronto in the 30s, about the Depression, and only incidentally, about Gabriel Gottesman growing up.

Absurd. Does one have to be a reactionary for wanting a novel to have a plot? Do such beats still roam the circuits which claim to be hotbeds of literary innovation?

Circuses are fun. The one thing to be said for the novel Gabriel, is that its language is just plain fun. It's compact and innovative, suggestive and imaginative, and seems only occasionally manufactured. The phrases that are just too gimmicky to bear, such as "Arthur Vale loudspeaks" (the latter an expression to mean speaking over the loudspeaker) are few and far between, and are forgivable, even if they do strike the reader as being cumbersome and just too calculated.

Pollock undoubtedly has an enormous command of language. He shapes his words, his phrases and sentences for just the right effect, and the result is a well-sculpted, nearly palpable piece of writing.

His descriptions of the immigrant quarter of Toronto, Leonard Avenue are brimful of colorful, crass, teeming images which allow the life on the sidewalk in the ghetto to nearly spring off the page with forceful buoyancy. Reading the author's descriptions, in his no-non-sense, unsentimental language is like looking down a microscope at a slide

teeming with minute, grotesque creatures, each pursuing its senseless, endless journey into nowhere with unparalleled ferocity.

There is a parade of weird, animal-like creatures, their humanity obliterated by the author's obvious lack of sympathy. These immigrants, who come from such alien environments, receive a treatment from the author's pen which emphasizes their profound nastiness, and creates mostly revulsion in the reader. Under his pen, the parallel which would allow a disdainful anti-semitic Anglo-Saxon establishment to say on a sign on the Islands: No Jews or Dogs Allowed, becomes only too obvious.

The author's journalistic style soon backfires. After we have become well-acquainted with Toronto as it was then, we would expect to come to see and understand Gabriel, the main character.

Yet still the language, ever controlled to get just the right emotional reaction, keeps relentlessly manipulating the reader into reading the next episode and the one after that, long after the structure of the novel has become hollow.

Gabriel is left behind, no more than a vortex for the circle of boys and their relentless search for a lay. Sex, mostly sordid, is a predominant interest for the adolescent ghetto gang, though Gabriel himself has an incidental interest in Latin, French and literature.

Gabriel is treated to the same measures as the city itself, but what works for describing the city, fails when it comes to describing the hero. He becomes little more than a landmark in the cityscape.

We would wish for more bread in this novel, as well as circuses.

Perhaps it is unfair to generations of writers, but it is a fact that Mordechai Richler has scooped everyone on the topic of the Jewish-immigrant boy growing up. Anyone who tackles this theme will have to come up with something more than just a change of locale to make the idea interesting.

Gabriel, Harry Pollock, McGraw-Hill, \$8.95.