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● New Egyptian Theater Now Emerging, Says Hosni

Egyptian Cultural Minister Farouk Hosni met *The Experimental's* Staff in his office yesterday. Our reporters Mona Brenee and Adelina Lander write.

Commenting on the fact that Egypt has to date never won a CIFET award, Hosni said that such a thing will happen in good time, when Egypt presents a performance that really merits a prize: "Even without awards, we reap other benefits, including contact with other artists from various countries," the minister said.

"we ought to respect the jury's decision, for such panel is usually composed of distinguished critics and men of learning."

"Nevertheless, I believe that the quality of Egyptian performances is improving. All that we seem to lack so far is the ability to keep up with new trends and techniques in theater."

Hosni believes that CIFET has so far exercised a considerable influence on new generations of



Cultural Minister meeting with *The Experimental*

Egyptian artists. "We are trying to support fringe theater troupes through the Cultural Development Fund, larger theaters now being dominated by traditionalists from the older generation."

"In short, I can say that a new Egyptian theater is now emerging" he

argued.

Asked whether the UNESCO is likely to support the festival, Hosni said that so far the UNESCO's support to the festival has been moral, by recognizing the festival and recommending it on an international basis - a fact that led to the increase

of number of participant countries in this year's festival. "The organization can also support the festival by providing it with experts who will eventually be of benefit to our young theater artists".

Hosni dismisses the accusation that the ministry's interest in experimen-

tal theater is likely to affect regular, mainstream one: "Each trend has its distinctive identity, and I see no reason why traditional theater should not use experimental theater's technological advances and employ them in its own way."

Small

Fight

El-Taliaa Theater security staff and some members of the audience engaged in a short fight yesterday few minutes before the beginning of the Polish performance.

The reason behind the fight is said to be that a security staff had insulted and manhandled a member of the audience after denying him access to the theater building.

European-looking CIFET guests were seen video-taping the event.

Hala Kamal senses existentialism in Poland's *Herbarium*

The Polish production *Herbarium* proved to be an extraordinary audio-visual experience.

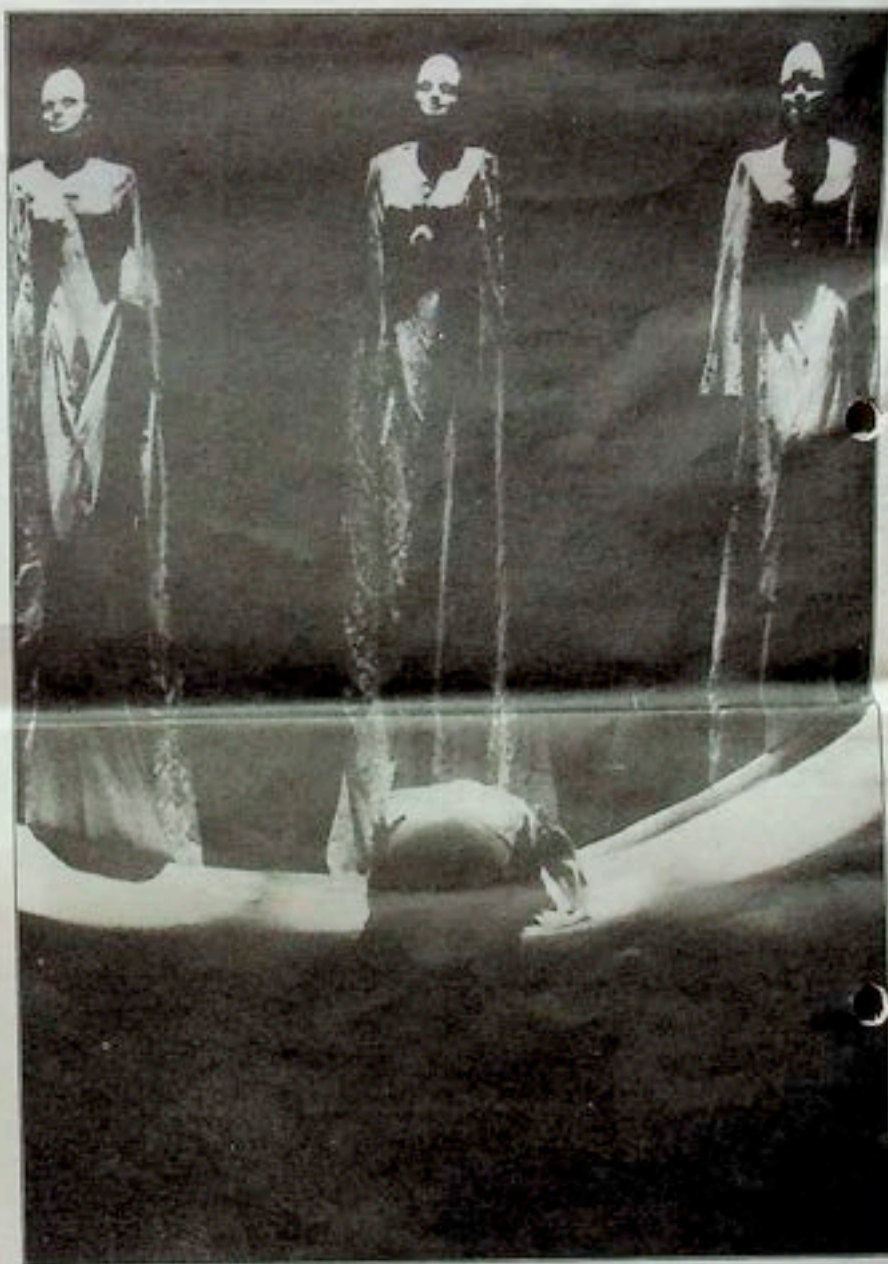
The performance was presented by "Scena Plastyczna - KUL" (Visual Stage - Catholic University in Lublin), established by Leszek Madzik in 1969. Madzik's theatre is basically a non-verbal universal theatre, dealing with existentialist themes and concerns such as birth, being, death, time, suffering, and seeking transcendentalism. It has, therefore, been described as "philosophical theatre". The ideas of life, love, faith, and death are definitely among the universal concerns of humanity.

The most interesting feature of this show, however, is perhaps the severe reduction and almost absence of the traditional components of drama: the word, the actor, and the concrete

Madzik's theatre relies on three elements: space, rhythm, and mood. In *Herbarium*, space and rhythm are absolutely inseparable rather than just complementary. The lights, setting, and scenography as a whole, together with the "participants" (actors) form the element of space; which is in turn determined by the monotonous - though with variations - rhythm suggesting time.

Space and time together form a series of dynamic images creating a general mood of human confusion, disappointment, and death.

Actors thus become more of visual aids and stage props than agents of action; they seem to contribute to the scene rather than create it. Human beings are masked and disfigured, and the human being is shown throughout as "more done to than doing". The "spectacle" opens with a full three-sided white curtain drop which envelopes one-third of the auditorium. A human figure hangs oscillating pendulum-like, to and fro, and once it drops to the ground, it becomes engaged in a sequence of roll-



ing across the stage; again being rolled rather than rolling itself in a rhythmic motion to the beat and light. Perhaps the only action taken by the rolling figure is its approach to the four tall apparently female figures. These searching hands manage to find nothing but rope, thread, and nothingness.

The sequence is disturbed by the head and torso of a female figure emerging icon-like and stretching herself to music reminiscent of religious chant. The finale is marked by eleven deformed, "dried", and seem-

ingly pressed human figures being dropped one after the other accompanying the sound of gunshot. They hang all over the stage, while the sound fades away and the lights dim out, leaving the audience at a loss. "Is that it?" many wondered; while others kept asking "where are the actors?" (The actors did not show up for the curtain call)

A final thing worth adding here is Madzik's words: "The most essential thing I can say about a spectacle is one word: its title. The rest should be seen and experienced."

Yes indeed!

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