

'Curriculum Vitae' is fun from England

By Richard Christiansen
Critic at large

IF YOU WANT TO SEE the Triple Action Theater of England during their two-week visit to Chicago (and they really are worth a look), try to catch their "Curriculum Vitae" first. It's a stimulating and sometimes most entertaining

"CURRICULUM VITAE"

A theater piece inspired by Stanislaw Lem's novel "Solaris" and written and directed by Steven Rumbelow. A production of the Triple Action Theater of England presented in Chicago by Remains Theater. Opened July 14 at Steppenwolf Theater, 3212 N. Broadway, and plays at 8 p.m. July 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24. Tickets are \$7. Phone 472-4141.

THE CAST

Carole Pluckrose, Julian Richings, Tim Stone, Maciej Suszynski, and Michael Wilcox.

example of experimental theater that serves as a good basic introduction to the methods and intellectual interests of director Steven Rumbelow's small troupe. It also helps prepare one for the group's less accessible assault on James Joyce's "Ulysses," the other production in Triple Action's two-play repertory here.

In a rather stupefying program note, Rumbelow

states that "Curriculum Vitae," which opened Tuesday night under sponsorship of Remains Theater in the Steppenwolf Theater space at 3212 N. Broadway, is a work inspired by the science fiction book "Solaris" by Stanislaw Lem.

The book, according to Rumbelow, "is an ambiguous work which questions the methods by which we accumulate knowledge, filtering it through various forms of power and valued reality to the public and then how people in general select and dissect the knowledge they require. Eschatological reasoning, absolute answers, and final solutions are discounted by Lem (a committed scientist) as a product of a false logic."

WHAT THIS HAS TURNED OUT to be in actual theatrical practice, thank heavens, is not nearly as dense as that statement. Rather, Rumbelow, inspired by the Lem book, presents a series of striking avant-garde riffs that select and dissect such matters as the actor and his art, the nature of art and science, the connection between the artist and his audience, the relationship of man to his universe, and the conflict of illusion and reality.

It's obviously a very personal work, and since Rumbelow is an artist and man of the theater, much of it concerns the role of the actor-artist in life.

A lot of this is quite specific, quite amusing. The opening minutes of the work, which begins with Carole Pluckrose in an excruciatingly basso profundo rendition of the "Wilkommen" song from "Cabaret," have some hilarious bits on the actor's livelihood; and there's a most ingenious spoof of "great acting" by Julian Richings as he stands on a table and blurts out garbled quotes from the Immortal Bard.

THERE ALSO ARE SEVERAL segments on the hypocrisies of politics and religion that were beyond, above, or below me.

The heart of the work, however, lies in Rumbelow's passionate concern with the nature of art and its place in our lives. He makes this concern funny in a mock interview about avant-garde art that is a wonderfully insightful spoof, and he makes it startling in a segment where Richings confronts the audience with a little test on what's truth and what's illusion.

Finally, he asks in an extraordinarily haunting scene why man feels compelled to create art in the first place.

It would be unfair to spoil that last scene with further description, but be advised that though the playing time of "Curriculum Vitae" is only about 75 minutes, it can last as long as you want.