

small rebellions inside him, which may break out like a periodic itch whenever enough small irritations accumulate.

For Webb is a master of the small moment which turns out to be bigger than it looks. He may not say much, but he has such a genius for thinking up bumbling, deadpan actions and dialogue that the joy is all in watching him say it.

Mike Nichols knew it, but Lawrence Turman, judging from his production of "Marriage of a Young Stockbroker," doesn't. He has learnt all the wrong things from *The Graduate*, and so his film is a piece of anti-Establishment exploitation which unbalances the novel by emphasising the wrong parts and playing down Webb's style.

In the novel, the young stockbroker's activities as a part-time Peeping Tom are acceptably comic because of his deadpan innocence. Somehow that was the joke — or the tragedy, since it was what he did instead of being able to communicate with his wife. But embarrassment and innocence on the face of Richard Benjamin come across as a snaky, glassy-eyed immobility that freezes sympathy. And nothing is helped by the fact that the film dwells on the voyeuristic sequences at the expense of the deadly little domestic duels fought over martinis and tennis points between Bill, the stockbroker, and Nan, his sister-in-law, one of the best portraits of a Middle American bitch written in a long time.

On the page, she is asexual, nosy, predatory, petty and omnipotent. The casting of Elizabeth Ashley in the part injects sex into her and turns her into a different and less effective character.

The film also manages to dissipate the conflict between Bill and his wife, so that it's difficult to care about Bill one way or the other. It has skipped the funniest confrontations, highlighted the kinkiness of Bill's sexual proclivities and used cliched short-cuts to bring home the banality of Nan and her husband (played well in a caricatured way by ex-Batman Adam West).

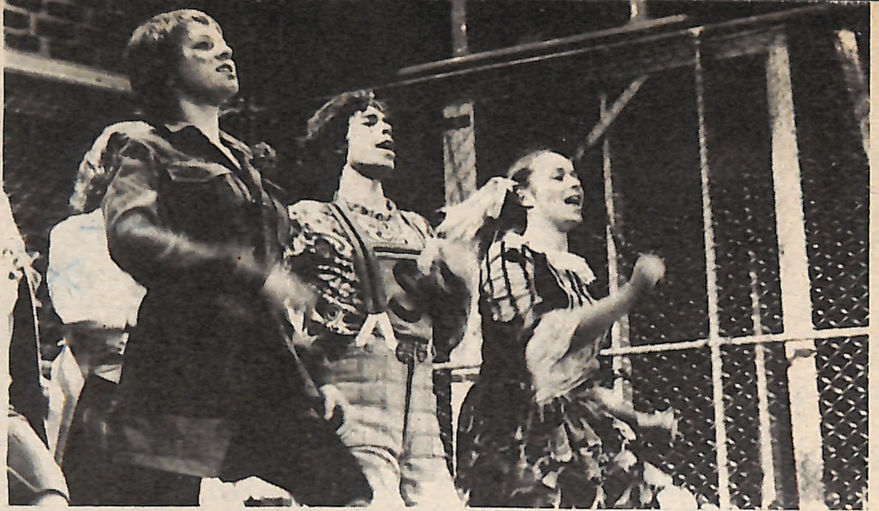
The style is hard-sell and what was Webb's doesn't survive it.

THEATRE

Joy, frivolity and some scepticism

By LEONARD GLICKFIELD

IN MELBOURNE, where Press manipulators find it hard going, Kenn Brodziak is known as the man who carried Harry Miller to success. Brodziak has the shrewdest show-business antennae in Australia. He bought "The Boys in the Band" and "Hair," turning the latter over to Miller because he didn't think he could get it past the censors. The packed "Charlie Girl," which he cheerfully admits is a terrible show, stands to gross the Edgley-Williamson combine



Christopher Pate (centre) plays Christ in "Godspell," the rock musical based on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which is now playing at Melbourne's Playbox Theatre

and his own Aztec Services an easy million before it pushes on to Sydney in April. And last week he opened his second hit in town, the first and least tendentious of the back-to-Jesus musicals—"Godspell."

To the majority who see it, John Michael Tebelak's "Godspell" is the first son of "Hair." Actually it stands about number one hundred in a long line of shows that build upon the tribal-theatre convention which was pioneered by such people as the Becks in the New York of the early 'sixties, and which was that decade's most influential contribution to theatre.

The history of "Godspell" is a history of workshoping, which should be a lesson to Australian entrepreneurs. It started as Tebelak's thesis for a master's degree with the students of the Carnegie Teaching Institute in New York, progressed at the Cafe La Mama Theatre, and gained a new songwriter to make the final professional version.

The tribe of "Godspell" differs from the tribe of "Hair" in that it has turned its back not only on society but also on revolution. In the beginning they break into a playground and don the patchwork mufti of circus clowns. From there on in they begin to search out and enact the Gospel according to St. Matthew in joy, frivolity and some scepticism. The enactment skirts sacrilege and, worse, pretentiousness, because of the humbleness of their disguise and the childlike simplicity of their means.

The most important prop is a trestle-table made of two planks, the parts of which are utilised to build different scenic structures. Mostly the actors rely on their own bodies and invention to relate and relate to the parables and passion of Jesus. One parable is performed as a finger play. Another is a game of charades. Still others are mimes ending in song.

A similar economy finds its way into the Stephen Schwartz score, which utilises everything from rock to jazz to pop, soft-shoe, hillbilly and hot gospel. Heard to best effect in chorus, the tunes are attractive without being sentimental and there are two you can

carry out of the theatre — the hit parader "Day by Day" and the hymn "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord."

The director, Sammy Bayes, has done well to choose a cast of rough-edged theatrical freshers. If the parables fail to involve you completely it is partly because Bayes directs at hell-for-leather pace as if everyone has heard them before, but also because the comedy holds no consistent attitude. Sometimes the burlesque treatment succeeds as a joyous celebration, while at other times it smacks of flippancy or ridicule, as when phrases in the parables are performed literally or the fly in Jesus' ointment is glimpsed.

Ultimately this is why the audience does not become involved enough to come on stage and take the sacramental snort of wine offered at the interval. However, even without involvement "Godspell" has enough skill and taste to keep you admiring, and when the clowns take off their makeup and sit down to a Last Supper at which Jesus compels Judas to betray him, the show moves to a stirring finish.

ARCHITECTURE

Two more witnesses to a great talent

By DAVID SAUNDERS

ONE OF the many tasks occupying Robin Boyd in the months before his death was the organisation of the publication of the series known as the "Melbourne Architectural Papers." The first two were published before he died and the third, by Gian Carlo de Carlo of Italy, who was here last month to speak, should appear later this year. The two papers now available are "A Critic's View," by the Englishman J. M. Richards, and "The New Forces," by the American Peter Blake.

Peter Blake's vigorous lecture comes over excellently in print: it's one of those rare times when reading the paper of the speech offers an air of immediacy. The topic helped, for there is urgency

in the forces he singled out. They are: the impact of pop; the way building technology has gone beyond architecture; and the effect on design of programs which cannot be completely described because only change is certain.

To discuss pop in architecture is to discuss Robert Venturi. Blake continues to disagree with him, but readily professes a fascination with his "dumb buildings" and his "decorated sheds" and his ability to mesh new buildings in with the vulgarity of American cities. His criticism of Venturi, he says, lies in that, whereas pop art is detached from its context and becomes a form of social criticism, pop architecture merges with a deplorable social situation.

Blake also discusses the "going beyond" that building technology has achieved, exemplified at Cape Kennedy in the immense—but really immense—structures there: a launching tower equal to a 22-storey skyscraper which is also, incredibly, mobile; a vehicle-assembly building so vast that four New York skyscrapers could be tucked away inside it—clouds gather in there and it has been known to rain.

The other paper, given here in 1969 by J. M. Richards, shows Richards looking at the world of architecture with much the same concepts as he applied to it in 1940 in his "Guide to Modern Architecture," an early Penguin which still flourishes. What he offers in "A Critic's View" is a useful resume of architecture since the 1920s and then the view that increasing factory fabrication of building elements is a force at work in transforming architectural practices. He mentions increasing responsibility to the environment as a second agent for change.

It promises to be a good idea to

possess this series. All are illustrated and the vivid covers on these first two are very good. And the lectures provide yet another witness to the talent and enthusiasm of the late Robin Boyd.

TRENDS

Over-indulgence in bush oysters

By FRANK MOORHOUSE

I RECEIVED a package addressed to me at The Bulletin containing a 200-page typed manuscript and a letter which said in part, "You are now the proud owner of the Manuscript Gigantic. What you do with it is anyone's guess. Why me? you ask. Well, I read your little piece in The Bulletin about censorship. I would like to see my book published and care not for any financial gain but, as you could work out for yourself, my schooling was minimal and I had to pay to get it typed. You can do what you like with the book, as I am fed up. But I just want someone, anyone, to read it . . . So you are now in possession of the first and last work of Brutal Blue — the Beastie from the Eastie, otherwise known as The Phantom Scribe."

There was no signature and no forwarding address.

The book has an author's note which says the experiences are purely in the mind of the author, but a handwritten note adds: "The above statement is not true at all, the experiences in the book actually happened in the life of the author up to the age of 20."

Its dedication is firstly for "The Women's Liberation Movement?" Handwritten again is the popular maxim "There is only one way to keep a woman — barefoot, pregnant and flat out."

The foreword contains further dedications — "to the man who wants to go bush and start a tribe of his own . . .", "to homosexuals, for most of the women in this dollar-hungry society of ours would be enough to drive any man to the ridiculous crime of trying to enlarge the circle of his friends . . ." The dedications tell the story — sexual frustration, aggression against women (except his mother), bravado, self-pity and isolation.

Mick Hunter is born in the country on a dairy farm and fails the Intermediate Certificate: "However, had one of those subjects been how to get into all sorts of strife, succeed at being an uncouth youth, rude, crude, and unattractive, I would have passed with honors."

His father was "heavy on smack-in-the-mouth and very light on Dr. Spock." He goes west to be a cowboy, "an apprentice Gene Autry." He experiences riding a horse while suffering from piles and diarrhoea, and eating bull's testicles, or "bush oysters" as

they're known (the doctor in "Wake in Fright" had a penchant for kangaroo testicles). Mick Hunter attributes his "morbid, unbalanced lust for the opposite sex to over-indulgence in bush oysters." He describes the taste this way: "Testicles are to meat as monstera deliciosa are to fruit."

Mick Hunter's obsession is to "score" with a woman. He is an itinerant, unskilled worker, drifting about Australia mixing with Aborigines, other drifters, dealing with bad bosses and police ("grunters") harassment. He tries to sexually befriend waitresses, barmaids, shop assistants and other girls he meets through daily living and is usually rebuffed. He reads in libraries — mainly the Bible and history books. Much of Mick's rumination is about the inconsistency and manipulations of religion — most specifically, religious sexual morality which blocks his efforts to score.

In Sydney he at last loses his virginity to a prostitute in a room that smelled "like a stallion's pen." His first sight of a naked woman decides him that women are society's second-biggest con (after religion).

Mick goes on, one job to another, one room or camp to another, fights with bosses, mates, the police. "At this stage in my life I didn't look like I would fit into any organised society. I was seriously thinking of heading out into the wilderness to start a tribe of my own."

His sex life doesn't improve. "If it was raining beautiful blue-eyed blondes I would be the only man in the crowd to be swept down the stormwater drain beside a homosexual with an abscessed neck."

Then love comes to Mick Hunter, although he sees it as "an emotional disturbance between two complete fools" and rejects it — "When you come in to anchor at the same spot every night it's just a job . . ."

The story runs to an end in a chapter called "End of My Tether" and in a destructive fantasy he dynamites symbolic targets — St. Mary's Cathedral, the Stock Exchange and the headquarters of Women's Lib ("that fixed their little game").

Then self-destruction. He is killed in a car accident. His heaven is described as a beer garden with free grog of all types and naked angels who'd be in anything.

With a screaming sexual frustration and free-floating aggression, the book presents the miserableness of a person at socio-economic zero — the person who is totally disadvantaged — and young. It shows also the vulnerable young person just before he hardens to an armored personality and retreats.

If a publisher was prepared to put in some work there is a novella, or at least a social narrative, buried somewhere in the manuscript, shot through with tearful psychological pain and telling of another part of contemporary "Young Australia."



The late Robin Boyd: a continuing contribution