

Reg'Arts

By Tanya Drouginska

AN ADDRESS TO THE ACADEMIE

In an amphitheater full of Academicians, Peter Red tells his story. It starts on the day he was captured as an ape on the golden coast and transported in a cage on a boat. In order to escape death he decided to become a man himself which he accomplished by observing and imitating the crew.

In 1917, two years after having written the famous "Metamorphosis", the great German writer Kafka, who is fond of disturbing topics, tackles in this novella the question of the origin of mankind and its supremacy over animals. It is a scientific fact that men descend from primates who looked like apes and for thousands of years, because they are afraid of not being the most advanced species, men have erected an ideological wall between themselves and animals. But neurologic techniques force us to look at animals in a different way, animals who were wrongly despised as Kafka had started telling in this play.

Jack Garfein, internationally known director and founder of the Actor's studio, is a survivor of Auschwitz, a place where humans sometimes had to go back to their primal instincts in order to survive. He therefore naturally analyzed the play through a very subjective lens thereby heightening the intensity of the message. The challenge of his *mise-en-scène* was to bring life to a character who is simply telling a story.

A very talented and sincere actor was needed in order to embody such a character. Erick Stouvenaker who studied at the Perimony school in Paris is used to great authors and received the "Masque d'Or" (Golden Masque) for best stage direction 2011 for "The Wild Duck", a play by Ibsen which was also directed by Jack Garfein. He embodies Peter Red with great sensitivity. The actor gives a spectacular performance by mastering the simian body language and soberly telling of the adventures, the doubts, the fears and the regrets of this endearing being. He inspires us, making us question the true nature of our humanity.

The eminent paleontologist Pascal Picq provides an answer through his written works by concluding "Homo sapiens is not actually human. We have in fact invented the idea of human beings, but are not yet human ourselves and will not be until we look at the world around us with humanity.

Those who love and respect animals will enjoy this quality performance. The others will hopefully find materials for reflection...