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By LAWRENCE RASKY

The robin's trill as a harbinger of spring is being replaced by the electric cacophony of 'Cricket. "

More than 50 winter-weary persons, aged 10 to 60, paid \$2 last week to pirouette, lounge, gawk and chirrup at the goings-on in a single room at Toronto Public Libraries' Forest Hill Learning Resource Centre at 666 Eglinton Ave. W.

The whole thing was a unique amalgam of psychedelic flashing lights, chirring sounds, group poetry participation and weird images simultaneously projected on gauzy scrimms of a squirming pink octopus, a whirring ballerina, a rising scarlet sun, gyrating dots, a pendulous water drop, and exploding galaxy of stars and a single tree about to burst into bud.

It was intended as a homage to the new season, but after the rite was over, I was left with a hot bluey feeling, more suggestive of a sultry summer night. This was okay' with' the four Toronto collaborators of: "Cricket" - painter Aiko Suizuki, poet Sean O'Huigan, musician Ann Southam and electronics engineer John Fourdraine.

LIKE FOUR-LEAF CLOVER

"In Japan, finding a cricket in the home is like finding a four-leaf clover," explained 32-year-old Miss Suzuki, the production's' originator and visual designer.

"They're kept in wooden cages as pets and bring, along with good luck, feelings of warmth and happiness. After Toronto's depressing ice and snow, 'Cricket' aims at creating a

soothing, relaxed atmosphere. "

I was puzzled when handed a white plastic cape at the door and wondered if I was about to have a haircut.

"I feel like an angel," is what one 15-year-old, pale-faced brunette said. But most thought their tent-like costume gave a Linus-style sense of security out of Peanuts, and was a dandy inhibition breaker.

Like a Moore sculpture, "Cricket" was best appreciated when seen from all sides. And while it was comfortable sitting on the carpeted floor, people strolled, danced and even crawled about, so as not to miss anything. The capes became colorful reflectors of light, with the audience in a sense performing for one another as 'moving screens.'

MULTI-VOICE POETRY

"Most mixed-media either alien-ate or force you to participate," said Miss Suzuki. "The idea here was to integrate an audience, but NOT forcefully."

"The greatest visual experience since 'Space Odyssey: 2001,' " was O'Huigin's appraisal. The 25-year-old director of the New Writers' Workshop at Markham St. Village scripted the multi-voice poetry played on tape. At times, black-bearded O'Huigin circulated about the room reciting his poetry, alternating parts with three other Workshop members.

"It's the first time that poetry and electronic music have been combined together effectively," he said. "What's different is that the whole thing is so complex but has a cohesiveness that creates a definite mood."

Complex is right. A peek behind the curtained area at the front reveals technologist Fourdraine, age 26, all 6 ft. 2 in. hunched over a maze of dials,

buttons and winking lights, giving the impression of an airplane pilot in his cockpit

REALLY QUITE SIMPLE

"It's really quite simple," said the former University of New Brunswick and Ryerson Poly technical Institute electronics student, waving a hand at the light-organ that took him over 2 years to build.

"The organ, hooked into a tape recorder, picks up the audio signal and translates it into four pitch ranges. The sound impulse is relayed to two banks of lights, sensitive to changes in frequency and volume."

The electronic oscillations and 'fluba-dub' sounds composed by Miss Southam age 31, were musical miles apart from her work at the Toronto Dance Theatre at Cumberland St. Her first involvement with a mixed-media production, she was "surprised everything went so well, considering we only had four rehearsals".

The group plans to market "Cricket" as a package deal. They supply the tape and cues for slides; the buyer supplies the readers and any additional light and sound effects.

And, by Jiminy, Miss Suzuki hopes that the original cast can extend their season by having "Cricket" hop over to Rochdale College for an 'off-Broadway' run.



AIKO SUZUKI, CRICKET ORGANIZER