

Stanford Summer Theatre's 'Chairs' stands on all four legs

By **JEREMY KANE**
EDITORIAL STAFF

Don't be caught without a seat for this one. Stanford Summer Theatre, raising the bar from last year's extraordinary "Waiting for Godot," delivers another riveting performance with Ionesco's comedy, "The Chairs." Everything about this performance deserves praise and, more importantly, your attendance at one of their remaining performances.

The comedy revolves around an old couple, superbly played by Geoff Hoyle and Jarek Truszczyński, who remain alone and waiting for death on their island home. The couple, isolated physically and emotionally from

people and their pasts, painfully resort to familiar stories and games to keep themselves entertained. The Old Man (Truszczyński), a retired general of the army, is put off by the many lost opportunities of his life and the all-too painful familiarity of life. His wife (Hoyle) prods him to retell the same story she has heard every night. Thus are the seeds of an absurd existential comedy watered.

What grows out of the initial investment is a powerful play that rides through the deeper questions it is trying to answer on the coat-tails of comedic absurdity. The actors pull the audience in with their witty jokes and word-plays until they become quite

comfortable before attacking their onlookers with their real purpose — to challenge. This play is a challenge.

The couple's comic remembrance degenerates into a wicked game of make believe. In the midst of the game, the Old Man announces that he has invited everyone he knows, including the emperor, to a reading in which he will reveal a plan that will save the world. However, the trick is he will not read it. It will be read by an orator (Rush Rehm) because he lacks the oratory skills to accurately produce his thoughts — another missed opportunity.

The arrival of the guests is a true masterpiece with the lights



and music coming to life and the actors displaying their talents. There are only three actors in the whole piece, but there are hundreds of guests, and the real actors make believe magnificently. As more and more guests arrive, the Old Man and Womau gather more and more chairs on stage until the stage and actors are choked with chairs. Watching Truszczyński and Hoyle maneuver amongst the imagined guests

showcases their acting prowess.

As the room becomes more crowded, the anticipation for the orator increases. The ending to this superb play ends in dramatic absurdity. You will have to see the play to learn whether or not the Orator arrives or if he is a figment of the couple's vivid imagination.

Other highlights in the play are the set, designed by Truszczyński, which works wonderfully with the lighting. The direction is superb and the music is gracefully incorporated into the play. The play will continue its run at The Little Theater until Aug. 11. Take your seat for this one and try not to lose it in your laughter