Arising To New Low

By Jeanne Miller

In more than ten years of reporting on the local theater scene, I remember no more punishing experience than last weekend’s “The Fantastic Arising of Padraic Clancy Muldoon,” mounted by a new troupe, the Everyman Theater, which performed in a converted gymnasium at 24th and Mission streets.

Written by the theater’s founder, Alex Horn, who co-produced, co-directed, and co-stars with his wife, Sharon Gans, the drama is a long (4 1/2 hours), loose, sprawling and incredibly trite opus about an Irish American college professor who decides to drop out by remaining in his bed until the world regains its sanity.

Muldoon’s students, including his young son, are marching in political revolution, providing the playwright with an opportunity he couldn’t resist to subject the audience to an in-terminable onslaught of sophomoric sloganeering.

The students and various members of Muldoon’s family approach his bed with monotonous regularity to shout bumperstrip homilies about peace and love in a world gone mad.

Though Horn purportedly intended a realistic comedy-drama, he has fashioned a tiresome and pretentious polemic that unceasingly exhort the audience in the persons of speech-making marionettes posing as characters in a play.

We are slapped over the head, time and time again, about things we know only too well -- how we assassinate those leaders who are truly fit to lead us, our President, our Senator and our Priest and how peace and love are preferable to the insanity of war.

The shapeless, turgid play is totally lacking in originality, drama or theatricality. Stereotypes abound, the most flagrant being the archetypal “pig” police officer who rushes into Muldoon’s bedroom brandishing a gun and accosts an Indian student with the following profundity: “Before we white men took this country away from you gooks, there wasn’t one lousy refrigerator in the whole country.”

That comment typifies the mindless quality of the dialog. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to assess the capabilities of the performers who are called upon merely to scream the bromides at ear-splitting levels of sound, in case we couldn’t otherwise get the point.

The play is conceived in four acts, plus a prologue and epilogue. Bored to the point of total exhaustion, my attention span completely destroyed, I escaped after Act Two ended, nearly three hours after the curtain rose.

The Everyman Theater at 24th and Mission Streets is continuing its children’s show of stories adapted from the works of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson: “Little Red Riding Hood,” and “The Gallant Tailor,” “Sleeping Beauty,” and “The Emperor’s New Clothes.”

The show is presented every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.