

# Students break new ground

FOR young playwrights and theatrical directors with a strict budget, it is often a daunting idea to incorporate technology such as live-streaming webcams as a mean to progress the plot of their show in front of a live audience.

Without proper hi-tech equipment, most low-budget theatrical productions would only serve their audience with low-risk performances where every technical aspect is within their total control, hence making most of the shows predictable.

A group of undergraduate students from the Theatre and Stage Drama course from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) have decided to challenge this view by staging an immersive theatrical show entitled "Pelesit: An Immersive Theatre Experience".

Organised by UPM's

Co-curriculum and Student Development Centre, this show, was written by budding playwright Muhammad Imran Ibrahim. It was held from May 11 to 13.

This was the first of its kind to be produced in an effort to introduce the immersive genre to young theatregoers in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.

What also made the show unique was that it was performed inside a generic classroom which had been transformed to mimic the ambience of a black box, thanks to careful planning of the set designer duo Nurul Iffah Nabilah Ramlan and Nur Lailatul Elyani Ahmad Raji.

The course facilitator, Nur Izzati Khairuddin, said that the use of live-streaming webcams was an innovative idea to inject authenticity into the overall show.

"It helped to alter its atmosphere

to become suspenseful and elevated the audience's engagement throughout the show.

"By having technology like live-streaming webcams and actors communicating via walkie-talkie, we are telling the audience that despite being absent in front of the audience, our actors carry on in their characters, which makes the show more believable," she added.

"Pelesit: An Immersive Theatre Experience" follows a story of a group of students who were in the midst of performing a play of their own when an unknown infection began to spread across the room, causing several cast members and crew to transform into zombie-like creatures.

During the show, the audience was forced to run through a hallway in order to escape the infected "pelesits" before finding them-



(From left) Muhammad Imran, Raihanah Arifah Mohammad, Nurul Nadhirah Roslan and Muhammad Zahfiq Mohamad Zaihan Pang are the main actors.

selves in another room, seeking refuge and witnessing drama unfolding among the surviving cast as they all waited for help to come.

According to Nur Izzati, this

immersive show incorporated the concept of "a play within a play", giving a nod to one of the most notable Shakespearean plays of all time, Hamlet.