

The Hongkong Theatre

(To the Editor, S.C.M. Post)

Sir.—The action of your correspondent Aeneas, in criticising the Hongkong Stage Club for producing "Othello" at the Lee Theatre, appears not only to do a disservice but also to underestimate the public of Hongkong.

The Garrison Players applaud this initiative and faith on the part of our Stage Club colleagues in attempting to make their dramatic contribution to the Festival of the Arts an even more resounding success than last year, and in addition, are attempting to complement these efforts by producing "The Circle," both in Kowloon and Hongkong and thus catering for a greater percentage of the public.

Surely, the discriminating theatre-goer in our midst should be given the opportunity to see live performances not only of contemporary drama but also of the better examples of the playwright's art through the ages; equally should our younger generation be given the opportunity to acquire this discrimination. To be fully appreciated for their true value, these examples of dramatic writing must be seen in the medium for which they were originally written and not with all the trappings available to the film producer.

We are confident that the action of both the Stage Club and our own Society in breaking new ground (albeit in different ways) for this year's Festival productions will be amply rewarded by the public's response and support. No reminder is necessary that both Societies are taking a considerable financial risk; they seek merely to cover expenses from production to production and not to make a profit. Should they fail through the exercise of courage, whither the theatre in Hongkong?

JOHN LITTLE,
Hon. Secretary,
The Garrison Players

Major Player Indispose

Substitute Does Well: The Circle Is Triumph For Garrison Players.

By K. C. HARVEY

Within less than 48 hours of the curtain rising upon the Garrison Players' Festival play, *The Circle*, by Somerset Maugham, the major player, Bruce Vaughan, relinquished the part through indisposition, and it was played, at less than two days' notice, by Roger Needell.

That should have been sufficient to deter any producer, but to Eric O'Neil Shaw it was a double setback, for only two weeks ago, Reginald Glanvill, who was playing the important role of Clive Champion-Cheney, was compelled, through exigencies of the Service, to hand over.

Glanvill's stand-in was a newcomer to the Colony. He had, in fact, just arrived, and within a matter of hours had taken over. To Colin MacCallum-Stewart (Clive) and to Roger Needell (Edward) the greatest credit is due.

A third problem faced the producer and cast of *The Circle*. To cater for Kowloon patrons, the Garrison Players have taken the bold step of crossing the water for two performances. They opened last night at Morse House—Scout Headquarters in Cox's Road—before an appreciative Service representation of nearly one hundred; but tonight, when the Players ring up the curtain before a fully-fledged audience, headed by their President, Lt.-General W.H. Stratton, Commander British Forces, the spacious hall of Morse House is expected to be filled within near capacity. It will then be seen if the commendable venture of the Players, in carrying out the

(Continued on Page 15 Col. 4)

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experiment of giving two performances in Kowloon and two in Hongkong, receives the full encouragement merited.

With two major changes in cast it was to be expected that the Players' production had its initial teething troubles, but taking into consideration the fact that Roger Needell, in less than two days, had gained a reasonably good insight of the lead part—sufficiently good to enable him to dispense, in part, with script, the overall result was praiseworthy and highly encouraging for future performances.

To Colin MacCallum Stewart goes my warmest admiration, for

a performance that has conviction and sincerity—and all this achieved within two weeks.

Peter Alderton's Lord Porteous is a gem. He carries the part like a veteran—and looks one.

The major laurels I award to Dreda Holman—a natural—and the perfect conception of the Lady Catherine Champion-Cheney, a woman worn and well-weathered, as the part ordains. Her voice of rising cadence and cascading laughter rings in my ears. And that perfect for stole! It could not have been bettered.

As Arnold Champion-Cheney, William Mayne tends to be stilled. Although his reading of the part has much to commend it, he should move and act with greater elasticity and freedom.

Alma Stone, as Elizabeth, gives a sincere portrayal, but her performance needs more conviction. In the quieter moments she achieved a fine evaluation, but in times of stress more drive is required. Make-up and bearing are impressive.

As Mrs. Shenstone, Jennifer Spikins satisfies: it is a colourless part and no sinecure.

Eric O'Neil Shaw plays the Butter with more than a fair measure of the accepted Jeeves. He fits the part imposingly and adjusts the furniture professionally—if a trifle noisily at times.

To O'Neil Shaw is due warm praise for the finish given to his production—especially in view of the major problems with which he and his stalwart cast have been faced.

The set is excellent, lighting is effective—although rather bright in the evening scene, when an over-lighted set tends to illuminate too freely the "in depth" pastoral backcloth. Full marks, otherwise, for the stage team.

The play will also be presented in Hongkong—at The Missions to Seamen, on Friday and Saturday. It is well worth your patronage.

SCMP- 7 MARCH '56

"THE CIRCLE"

Garrison Players' Performance

UNIQUE EFFORT

The Garrison Players' performance of "The Circle" at the Boy Scouts' Headquarters, opposite to the Kowloon Cricket Club in Cox's Road, is a unique experiment.

There has been constant demand that such presentations should be made more accessible to Kowloon residents and despite the high cost of transport of effects across the harbour, the trial showing is being made there during this period of the Festival of Arts.

Playgoers will have the opportunity of witnessing this typical Somerset Maugham play this evening at 8.30 p.m. in Morse House, the fine new Headquarter building of the Boy Scouts' Association in Kowloon.

Last night a special performance was put on for the benefit of members of Her Majesty's Forces. This was organised by the Rev. J. G. Froud and an appreciative reception was given by an enthusiastic audience.

Owing to the sudden indisposition of Bruce Vaughan, the part of Edward Luton was taken at incredibly short notice by Roger Needell who received a special ovation. Colin MacCallum-Stewart, who only arrived in the Colony two weeks ago, gave an outstanding performance as Clive Champion-Cheney.

In the capable hands of Eric O'Neil Shaw, producer, the players gave sincere and entertaining portrayals of personalities of the early 1920's.

4 FEB '56

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