

Monday April 18

OUTH CHINA MORNING POST, HONGKONG

Scene From "Peer Gynt"



Anne Choy, playing the part of Anitra in the Garrison Players' production of "Peer Gynt," finds it easy to lure David Jordan in the starring role of Peer to halt his world travels. The scene is one of the highlights of the group's offering of Ibsen's outstanding play. There will be three performances in Loke Yew Hall starting on Thursday.



KEUNG SHEUNG - APR. 15

防衛軍劇團 將演出名劇

在「比爾·金特」劇中防衛軍劇團一角之表演，正在引誘飾比爾角色之佐爾放棄其世界旅行。按此劇中精彩表演之一。該劇將於本月二十日起，在香港大學禮堂連演三晚。入座券在本報史學書局出售。



SING TAO JIH PAO - 15th



圖片說明「比爾·金特」劇中本月廿一日在港大學禮堂連演三晚飾比爾角色之佐爾放棄其世界旅行。

PREPARING THE PROPS



Pritam Singh and Lee Foster, two members of the Garrison Players, spend their evenings, when not rehearsing, making the scenery for the group's production of Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" scheduled to open on Thursday in Loke Yew Hall. Mr Singh is a member of the cast and Miss Foster will remain unseen in her role of prompter.

Sunday April 17

"Peer Gynt" For Students

The Garrison Players will give a special performance of "Peer Gynt" for students at Loke Yew Hall next Wednesday at 7.30 p.m. Tickets will be on sale at the entrance an hour before curtain time. Approximately half of the receipts from this performance, as well as from the three regular performances on April 21, 22 and 23, will be donated to World Refugee Year local funds.

SEM Post April 14



PETER GYNT STAR—June Elliott, member of the Garrison Players and the pig she rides in the role of choice roles in the Players' production of Ibsen's "Peter Gynt" which opens at the Loke Yew Hall on April 21. Tickets from Skinners. H.K. STA 4/17



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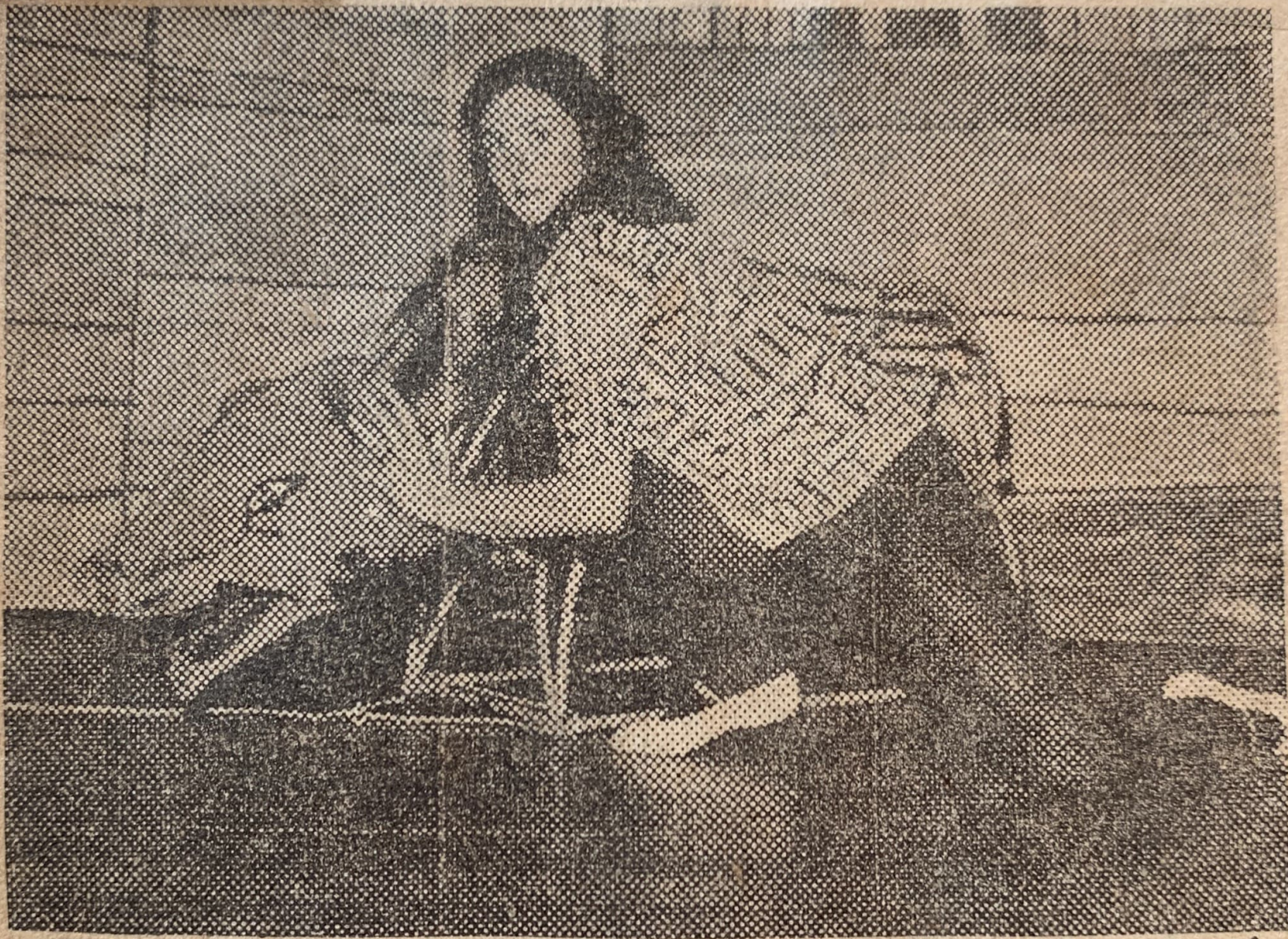
【本報訊】本報防衛軍劇團將於星期三下午七時半在禮堂演「比爾·金特」一劇。此場入座券，可於禮堂門口購買。該劇將於本月二十日起，在香港大學禮堂連演三晚。入座券在本報史學書局出售。

防衛軍增演一場
發行人：謝其文
得有一會欣賞此劇者
不致向隅見，特提前一日，於下午七時半，在香港大學禮堂增演一場。此場入座券可於禮堂前一小時在禮堂門口購買。

為便利學生欣賞
港防衛軍演劇
二十日增一場
防衛軍劇團同人啟：此劇於本月二十日增演一場，以方便學生欣賞。入座券在本報史學書局出售。

防衛軍劇團
廿日起演劇籌款
贈世界難民年
KUNG SHEUNG DAILY NEWS
APRIL 14, '60
H.K. TIMES





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HK Std 4/17

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S.M. Post
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店出售。

本港
防衛軍
劇團定
期演劇
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SING TAO JIH PAO - 15th

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JEM Post
April 14

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【本報訊】本港防衛軍劇團發言人稱：該團此次上演易卜生詩劇「比爾·金特」，為使本港學生得有機會欣賞劇劃藝術，不向隅起見，特提前日，於四月廿日（星期三）下午七時半，在香港大學陸佑堂增演一場，此場入座券，可於上演前一小時在陸佑堂門口購買。是場票款所得，以及四月二十一、二十二與二十三日晚售，均將撥出半數，捐贈與世界難民年。三晚入座券，現在本港史堅拿書店預售中。

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14*

為便利學生欣賞

港防衛軍演劇

二十日增一場

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'Peer Gynt'

By Roy E. Heinecke

A NEW YORK critic once voiced the opinion that Henrik Johan Ibsen, Norway's great poet and dramatist "would undoubtedly complain today that he is being remembered for all the wrong reasons." To bear this out he stated that almost all children of pre-college age describe the noted writer as the author of "The Doll House"; under graduates remember the man, who some call the father of modern theatre, for the stormy plays "Ghosts," which roused the fury of all Europe, and his answer to the shouts of engagement, aptly titled, "An Enemy of the People."

But many writers, producers and students of the theatre like to remember the great playwright for "Peer Gynt," the richest, the most imaginative and fantastic of his work.

And if Ibsen had the opportunity to be alive today its possible he would approve of the Garrison Players' ambitious selection of "Peer Gynt," as their final production of the season and their contribution to World Refugee Year.

The decision to produce this fantasy built around a sometimes bashful, of times feckless dreamer and teller of tall tales, has given many of Hongkong's amateur actors and actresses, plus several newcomers to the local theatre stage, an opportunity to test their ability. For Barbara Lawrence, the Colony's perpetual producer of successful plays, it is a challenge that other local directors might have hesitated to take.

ONCE she accepted the chore, producer Lawrence sent out an urgent call late in February for everyone and anyone interested in hard work and looking for a chance to perform behind the footlights to attend casting sessions. The response was surprisingly large and in two lengthy sessions held in the auditorium of the Missions to Seamen. She listened to more than 200 aspirants for the many roles that make up the cast of "Peer Gynt."

Fortunately, David Jordan, a very active and member of the Colony's amateur theatrical group, was available for the lead role of Peer Gynt. David has been acclaimed by local critics for his acting in "Amphitryon 38," "Windslow Boy," and in "Romanoff and Juliet."

Due to her exceptional performance in "Bell, Book and Candle" and also in "Romanoff and Juliet," Rosemary Brooks was chosen to play opposite Jordan in the role of Solveig, the girlfriend of Peer. In accepting the part Rosemary will be giving local theatregoers the first opportunity to hear her as a vocalist. She will sing the formances scheduled for the Solveig Song in the 2nd Act, evenings of April 21, 22, and 23 at Lok Yeh Hall are include June Elliot, feature sale at Skinners.

Mr. Pritam Singh, who has the role of Huhu, a lunatic, joins prompter Shirlee Foster backstage, building one of the many sets for the Garrison Players' production of "Peer Gynt." Actors double as carpenters and painters when not rehearsing.



HK Std April 17

Festival Of Drama HK Std
To the Editor: 4/21

In "Artistic Spice" Mr. Charles Harvey kindly draws attention to the production of "Peer Gynt" by the Garrison Players, this week, and of "The Prodigious Snob" (Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme) by the Stage Club next week, but regrets that the two productions are not better spaced.

We are the first to admit it is unfortunate because in fact we shall probably both achieve smaller audiences than if a wider gap in time separated the two productions, but Mr. Harvey is mistaken in implying that the two groups did not consult each other in an attempt to avoid this. We did so, weeks ago, but simply could find no way round the problem.

The Lok Yeh Hall is for the next couple of months almost exclusively in use for examination purposes and the Stage Club's booking of the Hall was made as late as possible, taking into account that University Degree examinations start on May 2; the Garrison Players would not have had time to prepare the production before Easter-week, and for obvious reasons could not present their play during Easter-week itself. The only possible remaining week for them was this one.

Both Clubs hope that despite this, audiences will treat the fortnight as a kind of Festival of Drama to end the current season, and attend the performances of both these plays, each different in style and mood, but each a masterpiece by a world famous European dramatist.
R. OBLITAS
BARBARA LAWRENCE

HK Std 4-17

「比爾·金特」精彩劇照
在「比爾·金特」劇中飾安尼塔一角之羅美玲，正在引誘此劇主角比爾。此劇將於本月廿二日，在港大戲院堂連演三晚。入票券在本港戲院出售。(來)



WAN KIU YAT PO - AP. 15

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The ConGen Pao

PEER GYNT

Tickets are now available at Skinners for the three performances of Peer Gynt to be given April 21, 22, and 23 at Lok Yeh Hall at 8:30 p.m. Prices range from \$10.00 - \$6.00 - \$4.50.

Festival Of Drama

HK Std

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Other with prominent roles include June Elliot, feature

vocalist with the Jericho Jazz Band, and Jill Davidson, the girl chosen by Hongkong experts two years ago as "Miss Hongkong Legs" and who has appeared in many of the Garrison Players' productions.

Victor Ladd, acclaimed by local critics for his outstanding interpretation of the trumpeter in "Amphitryon 38" is also participating in the production.

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IN addition, a 21-year old Chinese girl who has chosen the teaching profession as a career and who is leaving little doubt in the minds of the play's production staff that she has outstanding acting ability will make her first appearance with Garrison Players. She is pretty Anne Choy, a member of the English Department who has won the role of Anitra, described by Barbara Lawrence as a "sultry Eastern dancer who attempts to lead Peer astray." However, the young English teacher is not a newcomer to the stage. She is a member of the Masquers and has appeared in their productions of "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It," and in "Puck and Cleopatra."

Due to the large cast and Ibsen's love of children, many of the Colony's youngsters are getting their first taste of greasepaint and bright footlights. Barbara Lawrence has been holding special rehearsals for the youngsters, fitting them into her busy schedule in order to keep parents happy by not interfering with their school work. Small fry actress include Netta and Louis Allen, Patricia Lacey, Toni Leavitt, Chris Lawrence, Christine Rich and Judy Willard.

And while rehearsals go on, other members of the group are busy with hammer and saw, paint brushes and lights, all working under the direction of set designer Bob Elliott. Almost every night of the week voluntary backstage helpers and actors, when not taking part in the rehearsals, can be found on stage and backstage hard at work on the sets necessary for the 22 scenes that comprise the three acts of "Peer Gynt."

Others are busy negotiating with local charity groups, making arrangements to hand over half the proceeds from ticket sales in aid of World Refugee Year and scheduling buses for Kowloon ticket holders. The buses will leave Queen's Pier for Loke Yew Hall 15 minutes before each night's curtain time.

Students in Hongkong will also have the opportunity to see the play. The Garrison Players' have booked an additional performance for April 20 at Loke Yew Hall. Tickets for students are priced at \$2.00 and will go on sale at the entrance to the Hall an hour before the curtain goes up at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets for the three performances scheduled for the evenings of April 21, 22, and 23 at Lok Yew Hall are on sale at Skinners.

W.K. Std
4-17

Peer Gynt - it was terrific!

By JOHN LUFF

China Mail Drama critic

Last night, at the Loke Yew Hall, the Garrison Players, in presenting "Peer Gynt", not only broke every record achieved by amateur productions in this Colony, but set so high a standard that it is difficult to imagine it being reached by any other amateur company.

A "packed house" is not only a delightful phrase in professional circles, but in amateur circles also. Only a few unoccupied seats remained, and these right at the very back.

Then follow three personal triumphs—First Barbara Lawrence, who has taken over a very ordinary little group of players, and with skilful adaptation of Ibsen's drama and with efforts of production that can only be imagined, presented the Colony with the most outstanding production in its stage history.

Stage settings

The second triumph is in stage settings, designed by Bob Elliott assisted by Peter Wong. By austere formalism, suggestion rather than realism, the imaginative use of lighting, but over and above all, the sense of achieving, just what was required, took "Amateur" out of "Amateur Dramatics."

Then there was David Jordan. These laudatory suggestions of "Peer Gynt" will know that the title of the play is just what it says. It is Peer Gynt all the time, a long, long, long, calling for every artifice in the actor's box of tricks.

David Jordan was there all the time, I have no hesitation in saying that never in a lifetime of trailing drama everywhere have I seen anything to approach Jordan's performance upon the amateur stage, and come to that, rarely upon the professional stage.

Peer's power, intelligence and appreciation of the role of Peer Gynt, David Jordan has set a mark so high that it is impossible to think of it being surpassed.

Amusing himself

Barbara Lawrence writes success over her production, whether she is aware of it or not, when she says in her programme notes of "Peer Gynt", speaking of Ibsen, that he was "as I suspect (writing) to amuse himself."

Of course, he was. Ibsen was a man of the theatre. All the metaphysical rubbish that has been written about Ibsen would merely have amused his former theatre manager.

Peer Gynt is everyman. Callan, if you like, looking into a mirror, and not particularly liking what he sees.

Symbolism there is, Douglas as the Troll King; Robin Manely, as Death the button boarder; Victor Ladd, as the Devil decked out in a person with a butterfly net. Symbolic surely, but with a strong flavour of satire.

I mention the above performances for each in his way was outstanding.

An excellent performance came also from June Elliott. And the second excellent performance from the disaffected character of Anitra. Ibsen scored all his points here.

Bones to pick

However, in spite of an evening of triumphs, there is still a bone or two to pick.

First, the play is still too long, and when it means tumbling out past midnight because of a late start, the most desirable playgoer is a little peeved. Then, I do not feel happy about Act II Scene 7, the Lunatic Asylum. Surely all that Ibsen wanted to achieve here was to show that Peer Gynt had reached his criterion of being crowned the emperor of fools. As it was, this scene was painful and embarrassing. In fact, it did not fit into the adaptation of the play; it scored only the point I have mentioned, and all the other business seemed downright satirical nonsense.

is the most important scene upon which the play pivots. Now my space is used up, but not my superlatives. Congratulations! Tonight at 8.15, two drama critics, Claire Blunden and Charles Harvey, will discuss the play over Rediffusion at 8.25 a.m.

Tremendous Impact

'Peer Gynt' Is Living Reflection Of Live Theatre

By K. C. Harvey
Standard Drama Critic

When it became known that The Garrison Players intended to present Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt as a full-scale stage spectacle, there were doubts and fears. Rest assured, these misgivings have been proved groundless, for on Thursday night, in Loke Yew Hall of the University, Barbara Lawrence's adaptation and production of Ibsen's "poetic fantasy" made a tremendous impact upon

Never before, in the history of Colony dramatics, has a production of this magnitude been brought to compelling reality: faced with a gigantic task, Mrs. Lawrence tackled the project with confidence and conviction. Her Peer Gynt is a living reflection of live theatre and I am certain that no other non-professional group could better perform the performance.

Says Barbara Lawrence, in a preface to the programme: "So, while we have tried to give this production a flavour of the Norwegian atmosphere which gave it birth, we have not attempted a literal translation of Norway to the stage of Hongkong. . . . we believe that to make a purely Norwegian character of Peer Gynt and to tie the play too firmly to Norway would have limited its impact. . . ."

The point is logical. And to give strength to that aim, Producer Lawrence has ensured an essentially international character within the casting.

The play centres around our "hero," Peer, his trials and tribulations, his triumphs and sorrows — and his many love affairs. For this, David Jordan is on stage for almost three-and-a-half hours in a role that would tax many a professional actor.

I was not aware of a single prompt throughout. Jordan's wonderfully sustained portrayal and this is all the more remarkable because the role of Peer necessitates many soliloquies and other digressions from the main issue. His clear voice carries perfectly throughout the auditorium.

My main criticism of David Jordan's otherwise outstanding performance was that he overpowered virtually throughout the play. I would have liked more flexibility in his voice and gestures. And when that flexibility came upon us — as, for example, in some of the soliloquies — Peer Gynt really lived again. A notable example of this occurred in the closing stages of the play, as Peer prepared to meet his Maker.

This is but a slight criticism of an otherwise masterly interpretation of the odd character who dreamed of conquering the world — and almost succeeded.

GARRISON PLAYERS
SCHEDULE 4/12
The Garrison Players presented Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" at Loke Yew Hall last evening. A report on the play by our drama critic will appear in tomorrow's S. C. M. Post.

'Peer Gynt' A Big Hit Opening Night

The Garrison Players opened last night at the University a three-night presentation of Ibsen's "Peer Gynt," the Norwegian play which has been brilliantly translated by R. Farquharson Sharp. The adaptation and production are by Hongkong's Barbara W. Lawrence.

The first night's audience almost packed the Loke Yew Hall and the production proved to be one of the most outstanding in the history of the Colony's drama groups. It required a great cast, special arrangements of Grieg's music and a series of cleverly conceived sets.

This is a production that is deserving of the fullest support that can be given.

K. C. Harvey's review of the play will appear in tomorrow's Standard.

HK Std 4/12

The second major role, that of Solveig, is played by Rosemary Brooks. This is a sincere well-timed, sympathetic performance, which gains strength in the closing stages of her personal drama. The famed Solveig's Song, whereby the lovely maiden pledges her love and her life to Peer, is sung to a recorder accompaniment of Elizabeth Klein.

I liked especially the transition of the young girl into womanhood — thence gracefully into old age. It was not only skilful make-up that assisted the passing of time; the characterisation of Rosemary Brooks ensured it.

Another impressive performance is given by June Elliott as the sensuous and irresistible Woman in Green. Her rhythmic dancing and stage gestures are among the many highlights of the production.

Another vital role that fits well into Ibsen's imaginative pattern is that of The Troll King. Douglas Scriven speaks his lines clearly and uses gesture and movement with telling effect. His big scene, in the Hall of the Mountain King, is excellently mounted and enacted. The Young Trolls dance their way elusively and sinuously within the confines of a limited stage and prudent lighting enhances the weird effect.

The Troll King's transformation, in later years, is well portrayed.

Another cameo that impresses is Gill Davidson's Sister of the Woman in Green, an aged role that is well simulated.

Mary Smith's Ingrid is sufficient and contrasts well with the other women of Peer's adventurous life.

Garrison Players Held Audience's Attention With 4-Hr. "Peer Gynt"

(By CLAIRE M. BLUNDEN)

"Peer Gynt" is the Garrison Players' last and most ambitious production of the season and the performance last night in the Loke Yew Hall was certainly a successful one. It was no small matter to have held the attention of a good-sized audience for a performance which lasted nearly four hours.

Barbara Lawrence, the producer, all the actors and the backstage members are to be congratulated on their devoted hard work and enterprise, and stage, on a remarkable feat of physical endurance and power of memory for an amateur actor.

Brisk pace sustained the interest in the long series of episodic scenes which are loosely held together by the hero's personality rather than by the major construction. All the same, four hours is rather a long time for entertainment which apparently was the aim of the production rather than thoughtful interpretation, and another whole scene could probably have been removed. Whether "Peer Gynt" is the right choice for an amateur company with the limited resources of the Loke Yew Hall stage for lighting and set changes is a more serious question. This baffling satiric analogy on a life journey, beginning and ending in Norway, in which Peer Gynt attempts to be himself until finally, through disillusionment and fear, he finds his self-realisation in love, needs not only considerable imagination in interpretation but more lavish staging and visual effects to compensate for its lack of true dramatic power.

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And in spite of her statement that Grieg's familiar music is more outdated than the play, Peer Gynt remains a 19th Century morality just as much as the immortal "Everyman" is a medieval one. A 100 years ago is not "old-fashioned" now but a historical period, and a consistent sense of period in dress and manner would, I feel, have given the production more unity.

The sets were disappointing. Half-sized black cloths on a screen against black curtains do not create a atmosphere. Solveig's hut, so symbolically important, looked ridiculous — simply needs to be more daring to be truly effective.

Visually, there were some bright moments and they belonged to the best large scenes in the play when the grouping and movements of the supporting cast were well organised — the wedding scene at the farm with the pleasing Norwegian costumes and the lively dancing was one — and the bizarre lunatic asylum another. The Hall of the Trolls was good in conception, but not unique and ugly enough. Also it was too crowded to the back of the stage.

To come to the acting, the supporting cast on the whole enjoyed themselves and were disciplined and expressive, especially in the group scenes, the children were especially natural. The Lunatic in Act II were terrifying — convincing — the woman in red, and the timing of the sudden death fall were outstanding in a group which conveyed all the horrors of lunacy.

Characters Underplayed Two of the significant characters of the play, the Devil and the Button Moulder tended to underplay. If Robin Manely developed the character a little more he would have given the end of the play a real sense of mystery and awe.

Solveig, Peer's ideal love, can be an unrewarding part. Rosemary Brooks looked and moved as the charming, innocent young girl first attracted to Peer, but lacked depth and tenderness as the years passed. Her love did not shine through her, and this made her difficult to follow.

June Elliott as the Green

woman and Anne Choy as Anitra both gave good performances. At first, June Elliott seemed to overtranslate the weird Troll Princess, and the weird goblin quality was spoiled somewhat by commonplace serious movements, but her return as the ugly old woman was very fine and one of the really sinister moments in the play. Anitra, by contrast feminine and naturally alluring, was played with delightful sparkle and grace by Anne Choy, and she was one of the few who spoke her words with variation and depth of tone. She twined Peer, as the Prophetess, round her finger, and for the brief space of the scene, held her own.

In the end, of course, the play must stand or fall by the interpretation and acting of Peer Gynt himself. David Jordan is known as an accomplished amateur actor who has performed well in the past and this

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They were arrested and yesterday they were charged before Mr. P. F. X. Lee, sitting in Kowloon Court with evading payment of entertainment tax.

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The play was a very great test and opportunity for fine unselfish acting, needing much imagination and a subtle feeling with a power of reserve for the great scenes. Unfortunately, Jordan had decided to hold his audience captive from the start by shouting his speeches and continued to shout on the same tones throughout the play. This often became more ranting and a physical hard labour, unrelated to acting, which must have cost him much needed energy.

Monotonous

One bad effect of his ranting was that it was incoherent and was caught by those seeing and was particularly true of Anne Choy as she became shrill. Jordan's performance as a whole was monotonous in voice and gesture and range could not cover the wide range of emotion demanded by the part. The wild painful postures by the would-be sophisticated traveller to the afraid and disillusioned old man still hoping for another chance at another cross-road — the great grief of his mother's death, though needing more imagination, was one of the few quieter scenes and consequently slowed deeper feeling.

He tended to bludgeon the other actors rather than play sympathetically with them. With a good emphasis and a mixture throughout he brought rather too coarse humour to the past. However, in some of all faults, he was always content and alive on the stage, and carried the audience with him.

The Garrison Players' venture was bold and has attracted good attention. I hope they will continue to aim high. The same time not forgetting the finer points of acting and production that are still within the scope of amateurs in Hongkong.

'Peer Gynt' A Big Hit Opening Night

The Garrison Players opened last night at the University a three-night presentation of Ibsen's "Peer Gynt," the Norwegian play which has been brilliantly translated by R. Farquharson Sharp. The adaptation and production are by Hongkong's Barbara W. Lawrence.

The first night's audience almost packed the Loke Yew Hall and the production proved to be one of the most outstanding in the history of the Colony's drama groups. It required a great cast, special arrangements of Grieg's music and a series of cleverly conceived sets.

This is a production that is deserving of the fullest support that can be given.

K.C. Harvey's review of the play will appear in tomorrow's Standard.

WLC stel
4/22

GARRISON PLAYERS

SCM Post

4/22

The Garrison Players presented Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" at Loke Yew Hall last evening. A report on the play by our drama critic will appear in tomorrow's S. C. M. Post.

'Peer Gynt' Is Living Reflection Of Live Theatre

By K. C. Harvey
Standard Drama Critic

When it became known that The Garrison Players intended to present Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* as a full-scale stage spectacle, there were doubts and fears. Rest assured, these misgivings have been proved groundless, for on Thursday night, in Loke Yew Hall of the University, Barbara Lawrence's adaptation and production of Ibsen's "poetic fantasy" made a tremendous impact upon a nearly packed house.

Never before, in the history of Colony dramatics, has a production of this magnitude been brought to compelling reality: faced with a gigantic task, Mrs. Lawrence tackled the project with confidence and conviction. Her *Peer Gynt* is a living reflection of live theatre and I am certain that no other non-professional group could better the performance.

Says Barbara Lawrence, in a preface to the programme: "So, while we have tried to give this production a flavour of the Norwegian atmosphere which gave it birth, we have not attempted a literal translation of Norway to the stage of Hongkong . . . we believe that to make a purely Norwegian character of *Peer Gynt* and to tie the play too firmly to Norway would have limited its impact. . . ."

The point is logical. And to give strength to that aim, Producer Lawrence has ensured an essentially international character within the casting.

The play centres around our "hero," Peer, his trials and tribulations, his triumphs and sorrows — and his many love affairs. For this, David Jordan is on stage for almost three-and-a-half hours in a role that would tax many a professional actor.

I was not aware of a single prompt throughout Jordan's wonderfully sustained portrayal; and this is all the more remarkable because the role of Peer necessitates many soliloquies and other digressions from the main issue. His clear voice carries perfectly throughout the auditorium.

My main criticism of David Jordan's otherwise outstanding performance was that he used power virtually throughout the play: I would have liked more flexibility in his voice and gestures. And when that flexibility came upon us — as, for example, in some of the soliloquies — *Peer Gynt* really lived again. A notable example of this occurred in the closing stages of the play, as Peer prepared to meet his Maker.

This is but a slight criticism of an otherwise masterly interpretation of the odd character who dreamed of

In casting Anne Choy for Anitra, the sultry slave of the Desert Scene wherein Peer is seen as an Arab Chieftain surrounded by a batch of pretty Dancing Girls, Producer Lawrence scores again. Anne Choy's enunciation is excellent; her speaking voice has music and her movements are graceful. She dances lightly and with delicate yet positive expression.

The full script of *Peer Gynt* has 39 scenes: in tailoring the production to 22 scenes, Barbara Lawrence has not lost the vital context. Before the final cuts were made, the play ran for 4¼ hours: on Thursday night, the curtain went up at 8.42 p.m. and was run down at 12.15 — the following morning — a remarkable achievement.

Is this too long for local audiences? My personal reaction is "no," because my interest was held from start to finish. I would counsel, however, that Scene 7, set in a Lunatic Asylum, should have been deleted. I found it embarrassing and of little value to the story. A simple soliloquies by Peer would have bridged Scenes 6 (of Act II) and Scene I (of Act III). Two intervals, each of fifteen minutes, are unnecessary. Why not reduce the second interval to five minutes? This time — economy, plus the deletion of the Asylum scene, would clip the production by almost half-an-hour and ensure that patrons living far from the University, would be on their way home by approximately 11.45 p.m.

To sum up: This is a tremendous production, with a cast that is all the more convincing because it was moulded from local material and brought to a very creditable state of near perfection. The sets are too basic: I would have dispensed with the stark "drops" and made greater use of silhouette and outline. Lighting is impressive, cues are slick; the general pace and timing are excellent. The use of the auditorium for extra entrances and exits succeeds and, in so doing, further enhances audience participation.

The play is repeated tonight. It should not be missed.

The second major role, that of Solveig, is played by Rosemary Brooks. This is a sincere, well-timed, sympathetic performance, which gains strength in the closing stages of her personal drama. The famed *Solveig's Song*, whereby the lovely maiden pledges her love and her life to Peer, is sung to a recorder accompaniment of Elizabeth Klein.

I liked especially the transition of the young girl into womanhood — thence gracefully into old age. It was not only skilful make-up that assisted the passing of time: the characterisation of Rosemary Brooks ensured it.

Another impressive performance is given by June Elliott as the sensuous and irresistible Woman in Green. Her rhythmic dancing and stage gestures are among the many highlights of the production.

Another vital role that fits well into Ibsen's imaginative pattern is that of The Troll King: Douglas Scriven speaks his lines clearly and uses gesture and movement with telling effect. His big scene, *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, is excellently mounted and enacted. The Young Trolls dance their way elfishly and sinuously within the confines of a limited stage and prudent lighting enhances the weird effect.

The Troll King's transformation, in later years, is well portrayed.

Another cameo that impresses is Gill Davidson's Sister of the Woman in Green, an aged role that is well simulated.

Mary Smith's Ingrid is sufficient and contrasts well with the other women of *Peer Gynt*.

Peer Gynt — it was terrific!

By JOHN LUFF

China Mail Drama critic

Last night, at the Loke Yew Hall, the Garrison Players, in presenting "Peer Gynt", not only broke every record achieved by amateur productions in this Colony, but set so high a standard that it is difficult to imagine it being reached by any other amateur company.

A "packed house" is not only a delightful phrase in professional circles, but in amateur circles also. Only a few unoccupied seats remained, and these right at the very back.

Then follow three personal triumphs:— First Barbara Lawrence, who has taken over a very ordinary little group of players, and with skilful adaptation of Ibsen's drama and with efforts of production that can only be imagined, presented the Colony with the most outstanding production in its stage history.

Stage settings

The second triumph is in stage settings, designed by Bob Elliott assisted by Peter Wong. By austere impressionism, suggestion rather than realism, the imaginative use of lighting, but over and above all, the sense of achieving just what was required, took "Amateur" out of "Amateur Dramatics."

Then there was David Jordan. Those familiar with "Peer Gynt" will know that the title of the play is just what it says. It is Peer Gynt all the time, a long, arduous, role, calling for every artifice in the actor's box of tricks.

David Jordan was there all the time. I have no hesitation in saying that never in a lifetime of trailing drama everywhere have I seen anything to approach Jordan's performance upon the amateur stage, and come to that, rarely upon the professional stage.

For sheer power, intelligence and appreciation of the role of Peer Gynt, David Jordan has set a mark so high that it is impossible to think of it being surpassed.

Amusing himself

Barbara Lawrence writes success over her production, whether she is aware of it or not, when she says in her programme notes of Peer Gynt, speaking of Ibsen, that he was . . . "as I suspect (writing) to amuse himself."

Of course he was. Ibsen was a man of the theatre. All the metaphysical rubbish that has been written about Ibsen would merely have amused this former theatre manager.

Peer Gynt is everyman. Caliban, if you like, looking into a mirror, and not particularly liking what he sees.

Symbolism there is, Douglas Scriven as the Troll King; Robin Maneely, as Death the button moulder; Victor Ladd, as the Devil decked out as a parson with a butterfly net. Symbolic surely, but with a strong flavour of satire.

I mention the above performances for each in his way was outstanding.

An excellent performance came also from June Elliot. And the second excellent performance from the distaff side was given by Anne Choy in the character of Anitra. Ibsen scored all his points here.

Bones to pick

However, in spite of an evening of triumphs, there is still a bone or two to pick.

First, the play is still too long, and when it means tumbling out past midnight because of a late start, the most charitable playgoer is a little peeved. Then, I do not feel happy about Act 11 Scene 7, the Lunatic Asylum. Surely all that Ibsen wanted to achieve here was to show that Peer Gynt had reached his criterion . . . to be crowned the emperor of fools. As it was, this scene was painful, and embarrassing. In short, it did not fit into the adaptation of the play; it scored only the point I have mentioned, and all the other business seemed downright sadistic nonsense.

The wonderful scene where Jordan strips the onion was played too low. It should be higher and centre stage. This

is the most important scene upon which the play pivots.

Now my space is used up, but not my superlatives. Congratulations!

Tonight at 8.15, two drama critics, Claire Blunden and Charles Harvey, will discuss the play over Rediffusion at 8.25 p.m.

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To come to the acting, The supporting cast on the whole enjoyed themselves and were disciplined and expressive, especially in the group scene, the children were agreeably natural. The Lunatic in Act 11 were terrifying convincing—the woman in red, and the timing of the sudden death fall were outstanding in a group which conveyed all the horrors of lunacy.

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One bad effect of his roaring was that it was infectious and was caught by those acting with him, particularly Ase who became shrill. Jordan's performance as a whole was monotonous in voice and gesture and he could not cover the wide range of emotion demanded by the part from the wild fanciful poetical boy through the would-be sophisticated traveller to the afraid and disillusioned old man still hoping for another chance at another cross-road—the great scene of his mother's death, though needing more imagination, was one of the few quieter scenes and consequently showed deeper feeling.

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The Garrison Players' venture was bold and has attracted good audiences. I hope they will continue to aim high, at the same time not forgetting the finer points of acting and voice production that are still within the scope of amateurs in Hong Kong.

Sir,—Whilst dusting off Radio Hongkong's so-called critics on the air last night, Harry Odell might have taken the opportunity to go into their qualifications for their exalted position. And why not a little dig in the ribs for our worthy press "critics."

If "Peer Gynt" is to be the standard by which all future dramatic efforts are judged by, then our three stage clubs are in for an easy time.

"Peer Gynt" is a bad play. Only a people as humourless as the Norwegians could ever raise it above the status of a poor man's Faust. After the Garrison Players got through with it, it was even less so.

Apart from some clever stage, lighting and sound tricks, and an undeniably imaginative series of sets, it was a complete and utter bore.

The play was still far too long, the continuity was practically non-existent, and the acting ordinary.

The leading player has no conception of tone control and played everything at a hearty shout—for the rest apart from two delicious little cameos—all

too small, the play was never more than an extra-ordinary play done in a mediocre manner.

Yet our critics raved. Truly we are living in a cultural and intellectual backwater.

"TUCKER Bill"
SCMP-AP, 27, 1960

NO COMMENT!



Kudos For Garrison Players

The subscription to The Garrison Players is only \$5 and anyone who joins before the ADM will be paid up for the entire forthcoming season. It is not necessary to be an actor or a producer, in order to be of value to the Players: backstage, the scope is also considerable.

THE radio member is a very responsible representative of the Players' executive committee, for upon the personality, drive and know-how of the elected one will depend, to a considerable extent, the success—or otherwise—of the drama group's contribution to radio drama.

Off to a promising start, the opening radio play will be *The Uncivil Servant*, by Rodney Quest — a piquant choice for Hongkong! — and one that brings to mind that victorian, but still operative cliché, "your obedient servant."

Murray Leavitt will produce this hour-long play, which offers parts for "six or seven females, eleven or twelve males"—a conveniently flexible cast suggesting that the author must have had in mind the limitations of talent which face producers at casting meetings!

AUDITIONS for this play will be held tomorrow evening (May 11), from 7.30 to 9.30, in the concert hall (sixth floor) of Radio Hongkong.

The Players' request that those attending this casting meeting shall arrive promptly, as auditions must be completed within the hours made available.

Time is short, but in case the Players' have not filled these roles, there is need of an assistant producer ("who need not have had experience in producing radio drama"), plus someone for sound-effects and another volunteer for the incidental music.

Rehearsals usually take four nights plus a recording session.

Good radio scripts are needed, so if you think that you can adapt stage plays or stories for radio, please contact The Garrison Players.

potential of the Colony is limited.

MAIN reason why *Peer Gynt*, proved to be an outstanding success was because this was a team effort, throughout. We need more big productions of this calibre. And we need more producers like Barbara Lawrence.

From the Garrison Players comes news of further activities concerning the business side of the organization.

On Friday, May 20, at 8 p.m., an extraordinary general meeting will be held at the Missions to Seamen, Gloucester Road. The purpose of this meeting is to enable the existing constitution to be extended and amended.

Any proposals or recommendations must be put *in writing* to the hon. secretary, Murray Leavitt, seven days before the meeting.

Only paid-up members have a "voice" on this occasion — which is constitutional and fair.

The Players seek a maximum attendance, so that full advantage shall be taken to make those extensions and amendments that will further the expansion and development of the organization the most favourable manner.

ON Tuesday, June 7, at 8 p.m., the Players' annual general meeting will take place — also at the Missions to Seamen.

This is when the new committee for 1960-1961 is elected; therefore nominations must reach the hon. secretary, *in writing* seven days before the event. This applies, of course, to members whose subscriptions are paid.

Five officers are to be elected at this meeting — chairman, secretary, business' manager, treasurer and radio member. Four members-at-large will be elected by votes from the meeting, at the conclusion of which refreshments will be served.

CONGRATULATIONS to The Garrison Players, not only for the success of their big-scale production, *Peer Gynt*, but also for having been able to donate, from the proceeds of the public performances, the sum of \$2,000 for World Refugee Year.

This generous gesture is especially praiseworthy because non-professional drama groups have little "in the kitty" and rarely make money on any production. To "break even," after staging an expensive play, is the best that can be expected.

One of the main reasons for this is that it takes many weeks of selfless, dedicated time and effort, in order to mount a production; yet three or four performances are not always sufficient to ensure a reasonable profit from the proceeds.

Conversely, our local production could not run for more than 3-4 days—except in very special circumstances — because the audience

