

# JOHN OSBORNE — A CONTEMPORARY

by Andrew Body

THE news that the Garrison Players have decided on "Look Back in Anger", as their first play for the current season, is exciting.

When the play burst on a startled public in 1956 the "Angry young man" became fashionable overnight—and Osborne rocketed to fame as the freshest talent in the post-war British theatre. But the penalty of fame is a label, and although Osborne broke fresh ground with "The Entertainer", "Paul Slickey", and "George Dillon", he was haunted by Jimmy Porter as a symbol of the beat generation. More, so considerable was the achievement of the first play that Osborne's subsequent efforts paled. Now, however, with "Luther", he appears to have come full circle and Jimmy Porter deserves re-examination.

There is a tendency to dismiss angry young men as of no account: they have become a somewhat tiresome cliché. Of course young men should be angry but must they shout so? To assume that all Jimmy Porter does is shout is to miss the point of "Look Back in Anger". This hero-villain is too vital a creature to be stereotyped emotionally. Why does he shout and to what purpose? There is such brilliance and power in the invective and rhetoric of the play that it is easy to lose the point of it all in sheer admiration of the author's virtuosity. But beneath the glitter there is deadly purpose and disturbing directness. Jimmy Porter is challenging the conventions of post-war Britain and he must be answered.

"Look Back in Anger" has been the subject of much cheap sensationalism. It is a shocker but not in the paper-back sense. It generates excitement because it is original and intellectual. The fact that it has become the expression of the frustrations and defiance of the post-war generation does not mean that what it has to say is outdated. Far from it. The challenge it hurls at society and all its hallowed taboos is as valid to-day as it was five years

ago—probably more so. It is a dismal fact that very few conventional people are capable of defending a way of life that seems to be crumbling before the onslaught of a vigorous materialistic ideology. In challenging them Osborne is asking them to think and in this he is as urgent and contemporary as any great dramatist of other times of crisis.

But Osborne is fundamentally an entertainer, and it must be remembered that he learnt his craft on the stage. People go to the theatre to be entertained and nobody knows this better than Osborne: a message must never be a sermon. Consequently "Look Back in Anger" is primarily a story—a very moving story of two young people. Jimmy Porter, tormented by the past and the present, and Alison his wife who is yet to learn wisdom in tragedy: their journey to understanding and maturity is a theme richly, almost fantastically embroidered by the idiosyncrasies of Jimmy's character and expression. The people in their lives, with the exception of Cliff, Jimmy's dog-like friend, and the conventional Helena who does not scruple to seduce Jimmy, are shadowy and vague only because the drama is so intensely concentrated in one room. Jimmy particularly has a frightening vitality before which all else quails: a terrifying individuality that is loathsome as it is splendid. He can be aped but never duplicated.

In creating living sentient creatures, with unique individual joys and agonies which are nevertheless ours and therefore universal, John Osborne has done what every true genius of the theatre has achieved—the making of people that will be remembered for themselves. And more: individuals who have something to say, with a wit that is pungent and fresh, and an appeal that is hard to resist.

"Look Back in Anger" is an original creation—it is startling, provocative and often very moving. It has vitality and malicious sense of fun. Hong Kong should like it.

THE END

SHOW BOX MAGAZINE  
September 1961

## Events And Reminders For Today

Anniversaries and Holidays. — Carmelite Convent established in Hongkong, 1933, St. John Baptist Viarney.

Auctions.—Household Furniture, at Flat 6, Grand Court, No 127 Kadoorie Avenue, Kowloon, by Lammet Bros, 10.30 am; Crown Lands, Wongneichung-road, L.L. 7749 and King's-road, North Point, L.L. 7738, at Crown Lands & Survey Office, Lower Albert-road, 3 pm and 3.30 pm respectively.

Entertainments.—Sino-German Cultural Assn German Film: "Dream Road of the World" China Fleet Club, 5.15 pm; US Cultural Centre Films: Promise to History, Pies, Kennedy's Report to the Nation; Fifteen Days in Space (English); Herald Tribune Youth Forum (Cantonese), Room 103 Hing Fat House, 8 Duddell-street, 8.15 pm.

Exhibitions.—Official Opening of Second Contingent of Isbrandtsen Mobile Trade Fair, Hongkong & Kowloon Wharf & Godown Co Ltd Pier No. 5, at 5 pm.

Lectures.—"Current Trends in American Philosophy," by a Student of Williams College, Mass, USA, in Jordan Memorial Library, Hongkong University, 8 pm; Radio Hongkong Broadcast, "The Government and the People," 9.15 pm.

Meetings.—Extraordinary, of Dutch Rubber Co N.V. Maatschappij, S.C.M. Post Board Room, noon; Weekly, Hongkong Rotary Club, Paramount Restaurant, Windsor House, 12.30 pm; Ladies' Day, attended by President Abey and Mrs Abey, Piano Recital by Master David Oei, Monthly Hongkong Amateur Radio Transmitting Society, China Fleet Club, 5.30 pm; Meeting of Victoria Toastmasters' Club, Gloucester Hotel, 8th floor, 5.45 pm; Speakers: Three World Travellers, Annual, St. Paul's College Alumni Assn, 8.15 pm.

City Restaurant, 7.45 pm; Garrison Players' Casting Meeting on "Look Back in Anger," Missions to Seamen, 40 Gloucester-road, 8 pm; Hongkong Round Table Meeting, Hongkong Cricket Club 8 pm, Lt-Col N. Watson on "Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, V.C., and the Cheshire Home."

Miscellaneous.—Salvation Army Graduation of Vocational Classes in Dress Making, Tailoring, Hairdressing, Central Hall, 9.47-9.49 Nathan-road, Kowloon, 10 am; British Red Cross Working Party: 9-11 am Cricket Club, 9.30 am-noon, YMCA; noon-4 pm, Chinese Women's Club, 10.30 and 1 pm, YWCA, Duddell-street; Family Planning Assn: Pui-oi Hospital, Yuen Long, and Central District Health Centre, Kau U Fong, 2-4 pm.

Rehearsals.—Crescendo Choral Society, China Congregational Church, 119 Leighton-road, 8 pm.

Moons.—Twenty-seventh Day of the Six Moon.

Socials.—Whist Drive, Cheero Club, Murray-road, 8 pm.

## CASTING MEETING

FOR

# "LOOK BACK IN ANGER"

TUESDAY, 8th AUGUST

8 p.m.

MISSIONS TO SEAMEN

Gloucester Road

PRODUCER — COLVYN HAYE

CAST — 3 males

2 females

The Garrison Players

SCMP - August 4, 1961

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## "LOOK BACK IN ANGER"

### CASTING TONIGHT

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Jimmy Porter, more than any other character in recent fiction, has come to epitomise The Angry Young Man. Brimful of savage irony and superb invective his part is an acting plum for which there should be keen competition.

Cliff, Jimmy's friend, who is described by the author as a natural counterpoint to the bitter twisted hero, should be almost as great a challenge. His is the difficult role of mediator in the fantastic ménage a trois that so shocked and titillated audiences at the Royal Court Theatre when the play exploded in the West End five years ago.

Alison, Jimmy's wife, is a natural victim. As a symbol

of the society her husband hates, she suffers for much of the action, but her role demands experience and skill.

It will be remembered that Mary Ure made her name in this part.

Helena, Alison's actress friend, who seduces Jimmy, is more conventional. If her character lacks the depth and subtlety of Alison, it has a forthright quality that appeals.

Colonel Redfern, Alison's father, is a kind, gentle man, and the product of an era for which Jimmy, despite his sarcasm, has a curious sympathy. A retired professional soldier, he is no caricature Blimp. This small, but important, part requires skill.

The play is to be produced by Colvyn Hays.—Contributed.

SCMP - August 7, 1961

### Casting meeting

The Garrison Players are to cast John Osborne's play at 8 pm on Tuesday at King George's Hall, Missions to Seamen, Gloucester Road.

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