

# Angry Young Man Jimmy Porter Lives Around Us

By K. C. Harvey  
Standard Drama Critic

That John Osborne's candid play, "Look Back In Anger" is a shocking play is to use the adjective to imply impact. For the Jimmy Porter of Osborne's creativeness lives around us — everywhere and all the while.

But it is the impact of Jimmy Porter upon the audience that makes this play something out-of-the-ordinary, above-the-average.

Jimmy Porter is the angry young man who was born out of his generation. His tantrums and rantings are the outlet for pent-up emotions and frustrations that an unsympathetic, unappreciative world fails to recognise or appreciate.

Since Osborne brought Jimmy Porter to the stage, we have become more aware of the angry young men who make up a cross section of a misunderstood civilisation.

This Garrison Players' opening season production makes its point with cutting emphasis. A rasp drawn across jagged steel is sweet music compared with the vehement outbursts of Jimmy Porter.

Colvyn Haye's direction of the play is judicious.

Actor Richard Marquand is the Angry Young Man. Mr. Marquand, whose performances in Shakespearean recorded plays are familiar to many of us, sustains this difficult and complex role with valour.

In Act One he tends slightly to underplay the role — with good intent and, in my estimation, good effect; in the following two acts his Jimmy Porter stands out in stark perspective against the calm contrast of his wife, Alison.

Mr. Marquand's sense of timing, stage movements, effective control of voice in the vehement and the quieter sequences, are impressive. Moreover, he speaks his lines with sheer clarity.

June Armstrong-Wright shares with Richard Marquand the flair for submerging (herself) into a role. Remembering that Mary Ure played Alison in the London production, I am impressed by the quiet dignity and sincerity with which Miss Armstrong-Wright sustains and finalises the portrayal.

Robert Hanna, as Cliff Lewis, Jimmy's tolerant pal, handles a delicate assign-

ment with a good measure of credence—and once only did his Welsh dialect vanish.

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**HIC-TIGER  
STANDARD  
October 19, 1961**

## AMATEUR THEATRE

# Colvyn Haye does good job of Look Back in Anger

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"Look Back In Anger", a play by John Osborne produced by Colvyn Haye for the Garrison Players, opened a four night stand at King George's Hall, yesterday evening.

It was inevitable, I suppose, that this play would be produced in the Colony, for ever since the furor which accompanied the presentation of "Look Back In Anger" at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square in 1956, quite a number of our local mummies, while eschewing the sordid surroundings of Jimmy Porter, have assumed Jimmy Porter's manners while lacking Osborne's talent. For what is "Look Back In Anger"? As a play it lacks construction. There are no high-lights or those vivid flashes of drama known to good theatre.

In trying to think back and rewrite the play in order to get it produced, Osborne, had to give some psychological reason for the Anger part of the play. So he produced as mauling an example of him as ever has hit the British theatre; the boy Jimmy Porter saw his father die upon the latter's return from the Spanish Civil War.

### Hint of genius

What is left? A bitter, invective-ridden soliloquy, interrupted at times by other characters with mainly weakly written parts. Nevertheless, there is a hint of genius in the writing as the invective flows from the mouth of a young intellectual, Jimmy Porter, whose only panacea for the ills of society is to flout the rules. Therefore, Porter's talent is directed to a sweetstuff stall, and his feelings are relieved by a monologue of abuse directed at a worn long-suffering silent wife, while his home is a garret. As such, it is a superb picture of a certain section of contemporary youth whose adventure with life has been nullified by a Welfare State.

In fact, Jimmy Porter is John Osborne at twenty-six years of age. When Osborne wrote this play, he was an unsuccessful journalist, an unemployed actor, and "Look Back" had been refused by every theatre and agent in the UK. Success has taken much of the sting out of Osborne, it has fertilised the

barren soil of "Look Back In Anger." One had to be at the Royal Court on the opening night of "Luther" to see what strides Osborne has made. Now to the Garrison Players. Unfortunately, we get so busy here that it is impossible to sharpen our pens against drama grindstone. I could, therefore, say that I am a few people who really understand what Osborne is about, and I do not think an amateur society could improve on his production.

Any weaknesses appear in inadequacy of the script, or in Richard Marquand's upholding an exhausting role of Jimmy Porter, a tremendous feat of memory alone. But his performance lacked the sting of self-pity and self torture, and at times his face betrayed his lines. Yet on occasions, I was reminded of Kenneth Haigh, and the business with the newspapers was good. Albert Finney, Cliff Lewis is the character written in as a foil for Jimmy Porter, and thinking about it, Robert Hanna, by underplaying the role came out with an excellent interpretation.

June Armstrong-Wright was less fortunate in an unfortunate role. The character of Mrs Porter requires a long sustained performance of still patience and repressed spirits, flaring up at least into trembling rebellion. We had nothing of the kind. Thelma Stuart makes the take-over bid for Jimmy. It just wasn't there. The character was not moulded to the part.

David Jordan entered as Colonel Redfern, obviously Osborne's idea of all that is reactionary, yet wistfully Lords and Wimbledon of Edwardian days. So we get less a character and something of a caricature. Nevertheless, Mr Jordan is equal to the role and much more than it demands.

Summing up, it was an interesting and exciting evening.

## On The Stage

# Look Back In Anger A Good Production

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What is this wonderful play that has aroused so much controversy and that we saw at King George's Hall, Missions to Seamen for three hours last night?

much controversy? I wonder how the critics, literary dramatic, will bother to go into this problem.

Osborne was tempted to look back in anger rather than anger. John in his first 'success' 'Luther' the shadow of a contemporary and a Victorian melodrama is visualised in the last of the play; however, the mention of 'plots' was almost replete with the hisses it generated and in less angry years I should have had from a London audience.

In his own words 'Do you have to be so offensive?' I find it difficult to appreciate Jimmy Porter's 'private morality' and his obsession with the single point that the world should understand him. He is lonely—and who isn't? He was worried at the 'wrong people dying' and in that situation (can it be believed?) 'I was the only one who cared.' Hence his anger; death may shock more than John Osborne realises but sympathy usually comes upon those who have experienced the sight.

I suppose a Teddy-bear is a man hugging a Teddy-bear is a symbol of some delayed development in the generation that were annoyed after the Second World War and had not the grievances of their equivalents after the First World War.

INAUDIABLE  
The Garrison Players fought magnificently, and this is one of the best all-round productions I have seen in a Hall which is no help to producer or actors. Faults—the principal one was inaudibility and Richard Marquand in the 'Method' style was the chief offender. He, and most others, rush along without a natural intonation.

The audience were not attacked by voice or emotional appeal. The sound effects were too loud in this context. I wish Alison — her speech was excellent in control—would not rely on her flapping hair for continuous gestures.

This was a fast production, the movement and gestures were easy and natural. Richard Marquand and June Armstrong-Wright had some very good moments and some real acting scenes. Robert Hanna was always comfortable and completely in part. Thelma Stewart and David Jordan both underplayed and so emphasised unrewarding parts.

Here is a good production of a play that, I understand, is already a novelette in a woman's magazine.

**CHINA MAIL  
October 19, 1961**

## 'Look Back in Anger'

a glimpse by Frank Fishbeck.



"How I long for a little enthusiasm. Just a little ordinary human enthusiasm, that's all. I want to hear a warm thrilling voice call out Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I'm alive!"

Jimmy Porter has come to epitomise the Angry Young Man, but few understand why he was angry and to what purpose. John Osborne explains this

in his controversial play which is the story of Jimmy's relations with three people—his wife Alison, her friend Helena, and his friend Cliff. In much of the action Jimmy torments his wife savagely, as he . . .

"If only something would happen to you and wake you out of your beauty sleep! If you could have a child and it would die. Let it grow; let a recognisable human face emerge from that little mass of india-rubber and wrinkles. If only I could watch you face that. I wonder if you might become a recognisable being yourself. But I doubt it."

But life in the Porter home is not unrelieved savagery. Jimmy is capable of tenderness and affection. If he makes life hell for all around him it is because he is suffering himself. The emotional scars of the past are long in healing, and his skin is too thin for the world of the present. He and Alison can escape sometimes into a world of make-believe . . .



"You're very beautiful. A beauty great-eyed squirrel. Hoarding nut-munching squirrel. With highly polished gleaming fur, and an ostrich feather of a tail!"

How Jimmy and Alison find spiritual peace is the theme of "Look Back in Anger". They find happiness through suffering, much of it made by themselves which is the tragedy. But in these two people Osborne has created recognisable human beings, and this is the measure of his success as a writer. Jimmy Porter's violent opinions and the pungent manner in which he expresses them supply the controversial element in what has been described by Kenneth Tynan as, 'a minor miracle . . . the best young play of the decade . . .'



'Look Back in Anger' is being presented by the Garrison Players at King George's Hall in the Missions to Seamen on Wednesday, 18th October 1961, at 8.30 p.m.

The cast is:

- Jimmy Porter . . . . . Richard Marquand
- Alison Porter . . . . . June Armstrong-Wright
- Helena Charles . . . . . Thelma Stuart
- Cliff Edwards . . . . . Robert Hanna
- Colonel Redfern . . . . . David Jordan

The producer is Colvyn Haye.

THE END

**Show Box  
MAGAZINE -  
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Now to the Garrison Players. Unfortunately, we get so little theatre here that it is impossible to sharpen our pens against the drama grindstone. I count it fortunate, therefore, that I am recent from a stay in London.

Mr Haye seems to me one of the few people who really understand what Osborne was about, and I do not think an amateur society could improve on his production.

Any weaknesses appearing, originate in the script, or the inadequacy of the players. Richard Marquand upheld the exhausting role of Jimmy Porter, a tremendous feat of memory alone. But his performance lacked the sting of self-pity and self torture, and at times his face betrayed his lines. Yet on occasions, I was reminded of Kenneth Haigh, and the business with the newspapers was good Albert Finney.

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So much controversy? I wonder how long the critics, literary and dramatic, will bother to go on with this problem.

I was tempted to look back in pity rather than anger. John Osborne in his first 'success' amalgamates the shadow of Shaw as a contemporary and transient commentator, with the relics of a Victorian melodrama as it is visualised in the last scene of the play; however cynically done, the mention of "dark plots" was almost received with the hisses it deserved and in less angry years would have had from a London audience.

### THE TRICKS

We have moved from the drawing-room to the attic (unfortunately, not the top-storey of Bohemia). The tricks continue—tea in vast quantities, 'realistic' manners; the heroine in her slip drawing on her stockings, trousers coming off in the best Robertson Hare tradition.

Further, we had to listen to more than one long explanatory scene which our gallant young amateurs ought not to be asked to sustain.

More variety of Music-Hall acts of singing and dancing, knockabout scenes and somewhat revolting complexities as the two male leads roll each other around the floor.

And, finally, if we want to be 'shocked' as Shaw's 'Pymalion' audiences were shocked by the use of that word and more vulgar abuse than Hamlet would want to use to Ophelia, with Lady Chatterley and Co in mind, then, we should better all

go and see 'Look Back in Anger.'

John Osborne avers that we should be annoyed, and if I want to anger and irritate me, then he must take as much in reply. If he misunderstands me as an audience, then I have the right to misunderstand him.

In his own words 'Do you have to be so offensive?'

I find it difficult to appreciate Jimmy Porter's 'private morality' and his obsession with the single point that the world should understand him. He is lonely—and who isn't? He was worried at the "wrong people dying" and in that situation (can it be believed?) "I was the only one who cared." Hence his anger; death may shock more than John Osborne realises but sympathy usually comes upon those who have experienced the sight.

I suppose the sight of a grown man hugging a Teddy-bear is a symbol of some delayed development in the generation that were annoyed after the Second World War, and had not the grievances of their equivalents after the First World War.

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