

HK DRAMA SEASON OPENS

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There are two significant features about the whole affair. For the first time in seven years, the plays are not part of the Festival of the Arts. And this year, both companies chose to open the season with a contemporary work.

The absence of the Festival is a sad thought; but when the organisers decided to abandon something that was criticised and was lacking in support, instead of endeavouring to improve upon it, there is really very little the man-in-the-street can do. The fact will have to be accepted.

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For it is a sophisticated comedy. The dialogue and the humour are sharp and refreshing, and a distinguished cast has been lined up to play the main parts.

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A special attraction of the play will be the part of the child actor Timothy, taken by young John Schofield, whose portrayal of the "little horror" will doubtless prove a delight.

The most important factor as far as I personally am concerned is that "theatre" exists for a few days in Hongkong, that despite being five years old, it is still theatre of our time, and that agreeing or disagreeing with it, it provokes; and so perhaps for three hours of their valuable time people may forget their effervescent social rounds and their stock-market gymnastics and their meticulous capacity for super-investment, and come down to earth and find out about some of us who are living down here.

The only theatre is live theatre, where the human element can create a human contact between assimilated reality and living reality—this contact was there when I saw the play, the review of which shook me out of my torpor of acceptance of local opinion, and I am thankful that there are some people who are enthused sufficiently to give up much of their spare time to create something positive rather than wallow in the negativity which an over-full stomach and an under-fed mind tends to breed. So please, let's have constructive criticism next time and at least let the motive force behind it be equal to that which drives all those concerned with local theatre to create something which is more than worthy of a not over-demanding audience.

MICHAEL TALBOT.

CHINA MAIL - OCTOBER 20, 1961

The Garrison Players

LOOK BACK IN ANGER
DUE TO COMPLETE SELL-OUTS
FOR PERFORMANCES TO-NIGHT & TO-MORROW
NIGHT, RESERVED TICKETS
MUST BE COLLECTED BY 8.15 P.M.

From our readers

Good theatre?

Sir,—Mr Colwyn Hays, who presents "Look Back in Anger" to the local audience this season, believes that they will find it "good theatre" but, looking at the play "with some objectivity," one may question its "theatrical quality."

Jimmy Porter's "outrageous tirades" merely strike this reader puerile and silly, but what repels this reader is not his purity or silliness, but his incoherence and insincerity of using protest as gesture. Since his main line of protest is to disparage anything in the old order, one has to ask what are his positives against it. The answer seems to be that he has none, save for his insistent, indiscriminate preferences (but not, it should be noted, real approval) for (anyone's) "revolutionary fire," "enthusiasm," etc. to (anyone's) "passionately," "lethargy," etc. "But at least they do seem to have a cause—not a particularly good one, it is true. But... which is more than you can say for the rest of us." But he himself does nothing (and it is significant that being a "gate-crashing plunderer" seems to be the only active kind of protest he ever makes); the justification for his own inertia is evidently his assumed superiority (the "being awake and watching" to both, which reminds one of Mr T. S. Eliot's: "It is better to do evil than to do nothing; at least we exist." But Jimmy, like Mr Eliot, seems to believe that to know (but not to do) is even better.

One can also detect this affected superiority behind self-mockery in his recurrent questioning of the reason for continuing to read the posh weeklies, etc., the inference of which is obvious: "I know better than to enjoy these things, of course, but there is nothing better to do." But of course he can, and does, enjoy doing such things (is his activity in life as restricted as he asks us to believe?), just as he enjoys love-making, clowning and horseplay. This pose of jaded misanthropy is merely a camouflage for his real sin: his irresponsibility to so much to society) as to himself. Actually, from the commonsensical point of view, being of his generation brings him no serious disadvantages: any man, having a good education and passable material comforts, can always find his footing in society. It is mainly his own fault that he is a failure in life.

A larger implication, however, does emerge from his marital situation: the argument that only actual suffering can arouse people to the awareness of the real values of life is a pertinent one, but it is hardly realised in Jimmy's personal attitude. Why should he—assuming that his personal tragedy is relevant to his social view—suppose that only his class (or his kind) know real suffering? Many have suffered, but not all are, like Jimmy, defeated by life. That Jimmy's view is also the author's is brought out clearly in the final scene, where Jimmy is explained as "out of his time." The truth is a man like Jimmy is "out of his time" in any period. Like Colonel Redfern, he has no confidence in the possibilities of the present; the difference is the Colonel has something concrete—the lost values of a past—to look back to, but Jimmy merely finds his consolation in an imagined order remote from the present. In these passages he practically gives himself away: "Phoney, of course... Still, I regret it somehow. If you have no world of your own, it is rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's." Alison's disclosure his "loose but harsh" morality is also a

telling betrayal of its speciousness: he was angry "with her chasteness because 'he seemed to think an untouched woman chaste himself in their' great marital relationship ('It certainly is (funny)—knowing him,' comments Cliff). To set (impulsively) against one's private morality is not unnatural, but to behave consciously in a mode that is against one's private morality is highly unnatural.

To suggest his is a marriage for revenge would seem ridiculous: it is obviously a marriage of love, and it is love that the play finally asserts. But the sanctimoniousness in the finale makes one wonder what kind of "love" his is, and what kind of society he wants. "I may be a lost cause; but I thought if you loved me, it needn't matter." One can reverse the statement and ask: she may be a lost cause; but if he loves her, need it matter? Alison's ritualistic suffering through her miscarriage finally brings her to his level; but has he (who has seen, but has not gone through, actual suffering) made any effort to "sweat his guts out" himself? The answer seems to be squirrels are reconcilable to bears only after they have "grovelled and crawled in the mud," but they are still squirrels; bears (whose "suffering" and "loneliness" are very much taken for granted) are on the other hand, the "heaviest, strongest creatures in the world" by birth-right, and do not need this kind of hell-fire redemption. (It may seem farfetched to compare Mr John Osborne to Mr Eliot, but a comparison of the "religious" quality of "Look Back in Anger" to that of Mr Eliot's "The Cocktail Party" would suggest the two authors have more in common than people think.)

SCMP-HERALD
OCTOBER 22, 1961

SCMP-
DECEMBER 19, 1961
PROCEEDS FROM
LOOK BACK IN ANGER



Mr Horst Heilmeyer, President of the Garrison Players, on the left, presenting a cheque to Group Captain Leonard Cheshire yesterday. — (Staff Photographer).

"Look Back In Anger"

Sir,—The production in Hongkong of the original "Angry" play was bound to cause controversy, and it is worthwhile to examine your correspondent's arguments a little more closely than they deserve at first sight. "Look Back in Anger" is not a great play but it is a significant one. Perhaps Mr Talbot would inform those of us who think the play a bore and the anger synthetic, in what way is Osborne "significant, and about what?"

I have no doubt as to the real answer about Osborne and most of the other "Angry" writers; they are angry at not being the Establishment themselves—in other words an acute form of envy and indignation.

Mr Talbot then waffles on: "The only theatre is live theatre where the human element can create a human contact between assimilated reality and living reality." After struggling to extract some sense out of this for some time, I have

come to the conclusion that all it really means is that the live theatre is—live. Surely not a very profound statement after all the verbiage?

The real crux of the matter is that Mr Talbot has missed the point of newspaper criticism. It is not to proclaim virtues or otherwise of either the type of play or the basic theme. Rather, it is to say whether the play is good of its type and whether the production reviewed was good or not. A good critic will thus give his own reactions to the play and his reasons for these reactions; this I think your critic has done. He thought that the play is not at all good of its type, and that this production was, despite this, good. These views are as valid as Mr. Talbot's. Even if Hongkong is culturally starved (or is it a hunger-strike?) that is no reason to greet any play with unmodified rapture.

As Mr Goldwyn said, messages are for Western Union, not plays.

LUCIANUS.

SCMP - OCTOBER 23, 1961

Cheshire Homes

REFUGE FOR THOSE IN DESPERATE NEED

"The Cheshire Homes thrive by using things other people discard." Group Captain Leonard Cheshire said yesterday at a party given in his honour at the Union Restaurant.

People of many walks of life and denominations who had helped in any way to start the Cheshire Home, recently opened at Chung Hum Kok near the Stanley Peninsula, were invited to meet the Group Captain who has devoted his life to the service of incurables and homeless all over the world. He thanked every one present for the work done voluntarily and spontaneously in response to the appeal in the Colony started by Lt-Col Nigel Watson.

Speaking of the impressions of his first visit to Hongkong, Group Captain Cheshire said he was particularly struck by the vigour and virility of the Colony. "This is a most exhilarating

place. So much is being done here and yet people are willing to come forward and do that much extra because of the great need," he added.

He spoke of the main aim of the Cheshire Homes to house those in desperate circumstances who have nowhere else to go, to care for the chronically sick, in as homely an atmosphere as possible. "We try to make our people as useful and productive as possible for their own sakes as well as others. We learn to help and care for each other as members of one family."

Group Captain Cheshire said that once the need and the reasonableness of their appeal was realised, the public was quick to respond. "We care for the sick and incurable ones for whom no place can be found in hospital or institution and at literally one-sixth of the cost.

MEALS AND SHELTER
"We give them regular meals and provide them with shelter, then we ask people to give us anything they do not want, household articles that are no longer needed. That is the way all our Cheshire Homes started, on nothing, but collecting odd bits of crockery, furniture and of course, using all the voluntary help we can get."

"Anyone who wishes to go out to Chung Hum Kok will be found something to do, whether it is bricklaying, gardening or writing letters. Donations, no matter how small, are most acceptable, but the spirit of service is the mainstay of our Homes," he said.

Acknowledgment was made of two donations announced yesterday by Mr John Leckie. These were the gift of \$1,000 from Mr Tang Shu-kin and the presentation of a cheque for \$1,000 from the Garrison Players.

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"Look Back in Anger"

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

Sir,—May I raise my voice this once in your columns. Your critic of the current Garrison Players' production of "Look Back in Anger" must have been suffering a grave theatrical bellyache nurtured on preconceptions of Osborne's unpalatable fare, titillated into a positive frenzy of deep-rooted pain as he groaned in his critic's chair during a performance which for him must have been an agony of protracted nausea, and I imagine him forcing his indignation into an inspired orgy of key-bashing as he panted feverishly away, lost in a whirlpool of amateur criticism, in order to hit the morning reader with his astounding revelation that "we wuz robbed."

I'm sorry, this isn't good enough—I can take him as an average member of an average audience, but I cannot take him as a critic who uses space in your columns to throw a disjointed and not very dazzling array of brickbats at an aspect of theatre which his fellow-citizens have little or no opportunity to experience in the culturally moribund backwaters of a British Colony.

"Look Back" is not a great play, but it is a significant one; I would not, at this stage, stick my head into an intellectual noose, by voting for Osborne as a great playwright, yet he is most assuredly a significant one, and despite the valid weaknesses of his expose "Paul Slickey," his literary ability has, judging from most reliable reviews which I have recently read, gained universal approval by virtue of his latest play "Luther" and his broadened theatrical experience proves that he is not, most certainly not, the fraud your reviewer makes him out to be.

SCMP

OCTOBER 21,

1961

CHINA MAIL - OCTOBER 20, 1961

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One can also detect this affected superiority behind self-mockery in his recurrent questioning of the reason for continuing to read the posh weeklies, etc., the inference of which is obvious: "I know better than to enjoy these things, of course, but there is nothing better to do." But of course he can, and does, enjoy doing such things (is his activity in life as restricted as he asks us to believe?), just as he enjoys love-making, clowning and horseplay. This pose of jaded misanthropy is merely a camouflage for his real sin: his irresponsibility not so much to society as to himself. Actually, from the commonsensical point of view, being of his generation brings him no serious disadvantages: any man, having a good education and passable material comforts, can always find his footing in society. It is mainly his own fault that he is a failure in life.

A larger implication, however, does emerge from his marital situation: the argument that only actual suffering can arouse people to the awareness of the real values of life is a pertinent one, but it is hardly realised in Jimmy's personal attitude. Why should he—assuming that his personal tragedy is relevant to his social view—suppose that only his class (or his kind) know real suffering? Many have suffered, but not all are, like Jimmy, defeated by life. That Jimmy's view is also the author's is brought out clearly in the final scene, where Jimmy is explained as "out of his time." The truth is a man like Jimmy is "out of his time" in any period. Like Colonel Redfern, he has no confidence in the possibilities of the present; the difference is the Colonel has something concrete—the lost values of a past—to look back to, but Jimmy merely finds his consolation in an imagined order remote from the present. In these passages he practically gives himself away: "Phoney, of course.... Still, I regret it somehow. If you have no world of your own, it is rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's."

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