

### Garrison Players

# Old-Time Music Hall —And Foaming Ale!

By K. C. Harvey  
Standard Drama Critic

The season 1960-1961 has been distinguished for the effective efforts of local drama groups to ring the changes on conventional fare. Last night, at the Missions to Seamen, Gloucester Road, it was the turn of the Garrison Players to introduce something entirely new to Hongkong.

It took the form of an Old-time Music Hall, replete with Singing Waiters, tandards of foaming ale, served at separate tables, and a three-act melodrama, for lush measure.

This brave, old-look show in new guise, has its bitter-sweet tang, for it represents the Swan Song, for Colony drama, of the show's talented director, Mrs. Barbara Lawrence.

She and her husband, Loren, have generously endowed our local dramatics with talent, skilful guidance—and, above all, a wealth of backstage help, in sweet drama's cause.

The most ambitious venture of a local drama group, Music Hall is scheduled to run throughout the week. And judging from the success of last night's first presentation, it will enjoy a well-merited success.

Not a member of that audience of yestere-night is old enough to remember Old-time Music Hall of Victorian Days. And to the majority of last night's audience, the charming toast to "Queen Victoria" must have sounded strange and out of context.

But as the evening's entertainment progressed, the burnt of Old-time Music Hall flared as vividly as it did in days of yore—that is, as my "bearers" told me! For as for the others, these were Cradles

Hall will get across with progressive impact.

The Singing Waiters, of tuneful persuasion, were Mr. Roger Pennells, Mr. Timothy Birch, Mr. James Kelly and Mr. Alec Reeves—the latter providing a slick performance, as the Singing Coop.

Other singers whose contributions added considerably to the enjoyment, were Mrs. Betty Smith, Mrs. Patti Duncan—who also scored with her performance as Mary Wilson, in the melodrama, "The Drunkard"—Miss Chris Barber (a talented mimic of several "voices") and The Players' Ensemble, with Eric Smith and Alan Hare as the enthusiastic and tuneful pianists.

Special tributes go to Mr. Michael Tyler, as the scheming Squire; to Mr. Peter Holmes, as Edward Middleton (The "Drunkard"); to Mr. Stephen Wallis, as Arden Remoslaw; to Mr. Bob Dewar, as William Dowton; to Mrs. Celia Simpson, as Miss Spindle; to Miss Victoria Bryan, as the child, Julia—and appreciation of the remainder of this carefully-chosen cast.

Praise, too, for the colourful sets, designed by Miss Cuy Sichel, and to the back-stage team, for a smooth production. And by way, the first drink "on the house!"

Yes, Messrs. Pennells, Birch, Kelly, and Reeves were good value for your money, and Mr. Reeves brought down the house when he put down his tray and gave a very energetic impersonation of G. H. Elliott, the Chocolate Coloured Coon.

Chris Barber also brought the house down with "Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow," but the audience were a little feeble with their bars, Betty Smith gave us "Ora Pro Nobis," that Victorian tear jerker, and while I could not guarantee everyone cried into their beer, quite a few did.

Mrs. Patti Duncan and Mrs. Margaret Holmes also gave us some songs which the audience applauded in the usual manner, one or two glasses coming to grief on such occasions.

The play "The Drunkard" was both appropriate in sentiment and performance. We were warned in a terrible manner of the evils of demon rum and other such vigorous potations. Mr. Michael Tyler, as the evil genius of such plays was heartily hissed by the Pit, and what is more, he hissed back at the Pit. Mr. Holmes presented us with the awful spectacle of a victim of drink, while Mrs. McTavish

gave us a touching representation of the suffering angel of that period. The cast is far too vast to mention here by name, they performed well, bringing the atmosphere of the departed days of music hall right here to Hongkong.

The band opened the proceedings with a lively pourri of old time tunes, and struck just the right note for the occasion; the pianist bursting out with "Hearts and Flowers" and such ditties when the play demanded a weepy signature tune.

The hall is set out with tables, the first drink is on the house and foot lights and replicas of a lost age; in short, the atmosphere is there.

Barbara Lawrence directs the show, and I could not here right now exhaust all my superlatives on the variety show of this decade. Hongkong is crying out for a show that "takes you out of yourself" and here it is on your doorstep.

# I haven't enjoyed myself so much for years

### Says John Luff

ALL this week the Garrison Players are producing for our fun and entertainment Music Hall, a resuscitation of that delightful mixture of vulgar sentiment, knock-about, free-and-easy tunes, and exaggerated melodrama, which was the English folk art two generations ago.

I had been looking forward to this for weeks, for although I like to think myself modest in many things, when it comes to anything concerning London, the home of music halls, I consider myself a hanging judge, and my verdict is, "I haven't enjoyed a night out so much in years."

As an audience we were a trifle too "retained" afraid of having a got we ate peanuts and cheese biscuits whereas the staple diet upon such occasions should be sheep's trotters and jellied eels; we drank bottled beer in place of pints of wallp; but I will say this, before the curtain rose on the final scenes, we were a very good audience indeed, and the Bronx serenade sounded very nice mixed up with the more conventional hisses and boos.

Then our Chairman, Mr. Michael Bulmer was a bit too "posh," and I am quite sure that at Collins' of Islington, or the Bedford in Cannon Town, he would have received a shower of sheep's trotter bones from the gallery for during the two or three hours the Londoners gave up to their favourite hall, the Chairman was a dictator who had graduated via gallery and pit to his table and gavel, not hesitating to use the latter on the more unruly members of the audience.

The "turns" who performed for our entertainment and diction were very good. While some noisy thirsty members at the back of the hall were annoyed when the waiters paused from circulating the beer to go on the stage and sing, the audience rose as a man when the waiters sang such works of art as "The Old Bull and Bush," and "Two lovely Black Eyes," and "Yes, Messrs. Pennells, Birch, Kelly, and Reeves were good value for your money, and Mr. Reeves brought down the house when he put down his tray and gave a very energetic impersonation of G. H. Elliott, the Chocolate Coloured Coon.

Chris Barber also brought the house down with "Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow," but the audience were a little feeble with their bars, Betty Smith gave us "Ora Pro Nobis," that Victorian tear jerker, and while I could not guarantee everyone cried into their beer, quite a few did.

Mrs. Patti Duncan and Mrs. Margaret Holmes also gave us some songs which the audience applauded in the usual manner, one or two glasses coming to grief on such occasions.

The play "The Drunkard" was both appropriate in sentiment and performance. We were warned in a terrible manner of the evils of demon rum and other such vigorous potations. Mr. Michael Tyler, as the evil genius of such plays was heartily hissed by the Pit, and what is more, he hissed back at the Pit. Mr. Holmes presented us with the awful spectacle of a victim of drink, while Mrs. McTavish

gave us a touching representation of the suffering angel of that period.

The cast is far too vast to mention here by name, they performed well, bringing the atmosphere of the departed days of music hall right here to Hongkong.

The band opened the proceedings with a lively pourri of old time tunes, and struck just the right note for the occasion; the pianist bursting out with "Hearts and Flowers" and such ditties when the play demanded a weepy signature tune.

The hall is set out with tables, the first drink is on the house and foot lights and replicas of a lost age; in short, the atmosphere is there.

Barbara Lawrence directs the show, and I could not here right now exhaust all my superlatives on the variety show of this decade. Hongkong is crying out for a show that "takes you out of yourself" and here it is on your doorstep.



Garrison players at yesterday's performance at the Missions to Seamen Hall. — (Staff Photographer).

### Garrison Players

# ILLUSION OF MUSIC HALL WAS RE-CREATED

By ALLEC M. HARBIE

The dramatic season has now come to an end. We have all suffered the miseries of young whimsical adventurers, of bold classical theatrical heroines.

And to these we must add license "psychological" studies of strange modern drama and modern witty drawing-room comedy—Some of us have enjoyed in addition romantic imagery of a more serious nature.

With all these horrors in the background I think the Garrison Players deserve our thanks for sending off the year with such an amazingly enthusiastic "ancient" version of English life and entertainment.

Last night at the King George's Hall, Missions to Seamen, the illusion of the old English Music Hall was re-created on a small stage and, almost, a larger hall. A most deliberate attempt was made to restore and relive the old and good idea of performer and audience sharing the experience of doing something for the amusement of somebody else.

This may be read as a simple statement, but nevertheless it is the elementary rule of the art. He and his listener belong to each other.

Spirit of England The whole programme of the evening's entertainment was part of, and it reproduced, the spirit and atmosphere of England some half-century, at least, ago—indeed one might go further back.

Away with all easy decorum and reverential awe for those who are gone (because they are gone),

The Garrison Players presented the most lively, typical and well-conceived programme that we have seen for some time in Hongkong. I do not go into details. A "Music Hall," Sizzlers, musicians and comedians provide the interludes in a "moral domestic" melodrama which should make you give up anything stronger than lemonade.

—But in the auditorium arranged into tables you may have your first drink, of any variety, "on the house."

To link you with the stage is the traditional Chairman—I

wish he had known what he wanted to say and had said it with more bravura. Control your audience, Mr. Chairman, but do not patronize them. Where was your chair?

As a reproduction of a mood and period this is otherwise almost complete.

I would advise any student of English life and stupidity to go to this production.

The cast is too large to deal with. "Mary Wilson" was a careful heroine; as with the rest of the cast she took herself seriously—and she sang well in the right mood as another character! "Edward Middleton" warned us carefully of the dangers of a hero who abandons his family in favour of alcohol.

"Squire Cribbs" was the evil time villain, and a prepared audience hated and boo-ed him on all the appropriate occasions. Perhaps "William Dowton" deserved more than he received. He seems to be more than a melodramatic actor.

Delightful Music The whole evening is more than the play. The music was delightfully chosen in tradition. The interludes were sometimes more accomplished than a Hongkong audience might expect. The "Singing Waiters" had all the serious vacuity and irregular tone which we enjoy.

Alec Reeves gave amazing personality and life to his vigorous interpretation of the old favourite, G. H. Elliott.

"Miss Chris Barber" was suspiciously accomplished as the enfant terrible of the Music Hall era. She had a wonderful sense of the timing between Chairman, audience, and herself.

One of the subtlest performances of the evening, and there were several, was Mrs. Betty Smith's "rendering" of "Ora Pro Nobis." I fear I, for one, was quietly censured because I sniggered at this accomplished piece of satire. A delightful performance. Incidentally, how was it that "The Lost Chorus" was not the encore?

"Well Done!" Over all, I congratulate Barbara Lawrence for this recreation of the atmosphere, off and on the stage, of an old-time memory. The speed, energy, business and vitality had to rely on her. Well done! I advise anyone interested in English popular theatre or in the nonsensical ways of the English to go to the King George's Hall this very week—But, I warn you, hardly any seats remain for Friday or Saturday.

As a postscript, let Edmund Blunden who was a great frequenter of the old English Music Hall and who unexpectedly arrived at this performance add a few words:

"You and I and all were listening the other evening to Sir Max Beerbohm's voice, through Radio Hongkong, and he was extolling and resuscitating the Music Hall of his days. I scarcely expected so great an evening was even more delightful, for after all more delightful was a little later, than that of pion. . . I think even he would have said that the Garrison Players had excelled this time. I have also to salute the generosity of those who, so merrily, did so many things to give us the evening out."

HK STANDARD April 25 1961

CHINA MAIL April 25 1961

SCMP April 25 1961

China MAIL April 29, 1961





## Garrison Players

# Old-Time Music Hall —And Foaming Ale!

By K. C. Harvey  
Standard Drama Critic

The season 1960-1961 has been distinguished for the effective efforts of local drama groups to ring the changes on conventional fare. Last night, at the Missions to Seamen, Gloucester Road, it was the turn of the Garrison Players to introduce something entirely new to Hongkong.

It took the form of an Old-time Music Hall, replete with Singing Waiters, tankards of foaming ale, served at separate tables, and a three-act melodrama, for lush measure.

This brave, old-look show in new guise, has its bitter-sweet taste for it represents the Swan Song, for Colony drama, of the show's talented director, Barbara Lawrence.

She and her husband, Loren, have generously endowed our local dramatics with talent, skill and guidance—and, above all, a wealth of backstage help in the sweet drama's cause.

This most ambitious venture of a local drama group, Music Hall, is scheduled to run throughout the week. And judging from the success of last night's first presentation, it will enjoy a well-merited success.

Not a member of that audience of yester-night is old enough to remember Old-time Music Hall of Victorian Days. And to the majority of last night's audience, the chairman's toast to "Queen Victoria" must have sounded strange and out of context.

But as the evening's entertainment progressed, the flame of Old-time Music Hall burnt as vividly as it did in days of yore—that is, as my forbears have told me! For me, as for the others, these were Cradle Days.

This enterprising venture, born of wishful thinking and welded into effective reality, provides a made-to-measure answer to skeptics who scorn local drama initiative and vigour.

For this is the kind of audience—participation fare of which we should have more. The Garrison Players have achieved the bold venture: we welcome more Old-time Music Halls such as this.

This is a palatable mixture of song and melodrama, seasoned with wit and repartee and laced together by a Chairman, whose authoritative manner and dignified bearing, did much to contribute to the overall success of the evening.

In this tail-coated role, Mr. Michael Bulmer's commanding presence and well-modulated voice set the sights for credence; but greater strength and a quicker response to the hisses and cat-calls of a receptive audience, would have strengthened the characterisation.

The effective "barracking" of the audience was specifically invited by the Garrison Players, who also requested that the villain of the melodrama should be hissed and that suitable wolf-whistles should be heard.

The audience-participation thus created is the life's blood of the venture's success. And as the nights succeed each other, this Old-time Music

Hall will get across with progressive impact.

The Singing Waiters, of tuneful persuasion, were Mr. Roger Pennells, Mr. Timothy Birch, Mr. James Kelly and Mr. Alec Reeves—the latter providing a slick performance, as the Singing Coop.

Other singers whose contributions added considerably to the enjoyment, were Mrs. Betty Smith, Mrs. Patti Duncan—who also scored with her performance as Mary Wilson, in the melodrama "The Drunkard"—Miss Clara Barber (a talented mimic of several "voices") and the Players' Ensemble, with Mrs. Smith and Alan Hare as enthusiastic and talented pianists.

Special tributes go to Mr. Michael Tyler, as the scheming Squire; to Mr. Peter Holmes as Edward Middleton (the "Drunkard"); to Mr. Stephen Wailes, as Arden Rencelaw; to Mr. Bob Dewar, as William Downton; to Mrs. Celia Simpson, as Miss Spindle; to Miss Victoria Bryan, as the child, Julia—and appreciation of the remainder of this carefully-chosen cast.

Praise, too, for the colourful sets, designed by Miss Cuy Sichel; and to the back-stage team, for a smooth production. And by way, the first drink is "on the house"!

HK  
STANDARD  
April 25  
1961

# I haven't enjoyed myself so much for years

Says John Luff

ALL this week the Garrison Players are producing for our fun and entertainment Music Hall, a resuscitation of that delightful mixture of vulgar sentiment, knock-about, free-and-easy tunes, and exaggerated melodrama, which was the English folk art two generations ago.

I had been looking forward to this for weeks, for although I like to think myself modest in many things, when it comes to anything concerning London, the home of music halls, I consider myself a hanging judge, and my verdict is, "I haven't enjoyed a night out so much in years."

As an audience we were a trifle too "refained" afraid of having a go; we ate peanuts and cheese biscuits whereas the staple diet upon such occasions should be sheep's trotters and jellied eels; we drank bottled beer in place of pints of wallop; but I will say this; before the curtain rose on the final scenes, we were a very good audience indeed, and the Bronx serenade sounded very nice mixed up with the more conventional hisses and boos.

Then our Chairman, Mr. Michael Bulmer was a bit too "posh," and I am quite sure that at Collins' of Islington, or the Bedford in Camden Town, he would have received a shower of sheep's trotter bones from the gallery for during the two or three hours the Londoners gave up to their favourite hall, the Chairman was a dictator who had graduated via gallery and pit to his table and gavel, not hesitating to use the latter on the more unruly members of the audience.

The "turns" who performed for our entertainment and detection were very good. While some noisy thirsty members at the back of the hall were annoyed when the waiters paused from circulating the beer to go on the stage and sing, the audience rose as a man when the waiters sang such works of art as "The Old Bull and Bush," and "Two lovely Black Eyes."

Yes, Messrs Penels, Birch, Kelly, and Reeves were good value for your money, and Mr Reeves brought down the house when he put down his tray and gave a very energetic impersonation of G. H. Elliot, the Chocolate Coloured Coon.

Chris Barber also brought the house down with "Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow," but the audience were a little feeble with their barks. Betty Smith gave us "Ora Pro Nobis," that Victorian tear jerker, and while I could not guarantee everyone cried into their beer, quite a few did.

Mrs Patti Duncan and Mrs Margarete Holmes also gave us some songs which the audience applauded in the usual manner, one or two glasses coming to grief on such occasions.

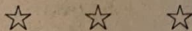
The play "The Drunkard" was both appropriate in sentiment and performance. We were warned in a terrible manner of the evils of demon rum and other such vigorous potations. Mr Michael Tyler, as the evil genius of such plays was heartily hissed by the Pit, and what is more, he hissed back at the Pit. Mr Holmes presented us with the awful spectacle of a victim of drink, while Mrs McTavish

gave us a touching representation of the suffering angel of that period.

The cast is far too vast to mention here by name; they performed well, bringing the atmosphere of the departed days of music hall right here to Hongkong.

The band opened the proceedings with a lively pot-pourri of old time tunes, and struck just the right note for the occasion; the pianist bursting out with "Hearts and Flowers" and such ditties when the play demanded a weepy signature tune.

The hall is set out with the first drink is on the house; the house and foot lights are replicas of a lost age; in short the atmosphere is there.



Barbara Lawrence directs the show, and I could here right now exhaust all my superlatives on the variety show of this decade. Hongkong is crying out for a show that "takes you out of yourself" and here it is on your doorstep.

CHINA  
MAIL  
April 25  
1961





Garrison Players at yesterday's performance at the Missions to Seamen Hall. — (Staff Photographer).

## Garrison Players

# ILLUSION OF MUSIC HALL WAS RE-CREATED

BY ALLEC M. HARDIE

The dramatic season has now come to an end. We have all suffered the miseries of young whimsical adventurers, of bold classical theatrical heroines.

And to these we must add dense 'psychological' studies of strange modern drama and modern witty drawing-room comedy—Some of us have endured in addition romantic tragedy of a more serious nature.

With all these horrors in the background I think the Garrison Players deserve our thanks for rounding off the year with such an amazingly enthusiastic "ancient" version of English life and entertainment.

Last night at the King George's Hall, Missions to Seamen, the illusion of the old English Music Hall was re-created on a small stage and, almost, a larger hall. A most deliberate attempt was made to restore and relive the old and good idea of performer and audience sharing the experience of doing something for the amusement of somebody else.

This may be read as a simple statement, but nevertheless it is the elementary rule of the actor. He and his listener belong to each other.

### Spirit Of England

The whole programme of the evening's entertainment was part of, and it reproduced, the spirit and atmosphere of England some half-century, at least, ago—indeed one might go further back.

Away with all easy decorum and reverential awe for those who are gone (because they are gone!)

The Garrison Players presented the most lively, typical and well-conceived programme that we have seen for some time in Hongkong.

I do not go into details. A "Music Hall." Singers, musicians and comedians provide the interludes in a 'moral domestic' melodrama which should make you give up anything stronger than lemonade.—But in the auditorium arranged into tables you may have your first drink, of any variety, "on the house."

To link you with the stage is the traditional Chairman—I

wish he had known what I wanted to say and had said it with more *bravura*. Confront your audience, Mr Chairman, but do not patronise them. Where was your cigar?

As a reproduction of a mood and period this otherwise almost complete I would advise any student of English life and stupidity to go to this production.

The cast is too large to list with. "Mary Wilson" was a careful heroine; as with the rest of the cast she took her part seriously—and she sang well in the right mood as another character! "Edward Middleton" warned us carefully of the dangers of a hero who abandons his family in favour of alcohol.

"Squire Cribbs" was the old-time villain, and a well-prepared audience hated and boo-ed him on all the appropriate occasions. "William Dowton" deserved more than he received. He seems to be more than a melodramatic actor.

### Delightful Music

The whole evening is more than the play. The music was delightfully chosen in tradition. The interludes were sometimes more accomplished than a Hongkong audience might expect. The "Singing Waiters" had all the serious vacuity and irregular tone which we enjoy.

Alec Reeves gave amazing personality and life to his vigorous interpretation of the old favourite, G. H. Elliott.

"Miss Chris Barber" was suspiciously accomplished as the *enfant terrible* of the Music Hall era. She had a wonderful sense of the timing between Chairman, audience, and herself.

One of the subtlest performances of the evening, and there were several, was Mrs. Betty Smith's "rendering" of "Ora Pro Nobis." I fear I am for one, was quietly censure because I sniggered at this accomplished piece of satire. A delightful performance. Incidentally, how was it that "The Lost Chord" was not the core?

### "Well Done!"

Over all, I congratulate Barbara Lawrence for this re-creation of the atmosphere, on and on the stage, of an old-time memory. The speed, energy, business and vitality had to rely on her. Well done! I advise any one interested in English popular theatre or in the nonsensical ways of the English to go to the King George's Hall this very week—But, I warn you, hardly any seats remain for Friday and Saturday.

As a postscript, let Edmund Blunden, who was a great frequenter of the old English Music Hall and who unexpectedly arrived at this performance add a few words:

"You and I and all were listening the other evening to Sir Max Beerbohm's voice, through Radio Hongkong, and he was extolling and resuscitating the Music Hall of his days, scarcely expected so great a treat again for ages, but this evening was even more delightful, for after all my Music Hall was a little later, than that of Max. I remember Harry Champion . . . I think even he would have said that the Garrison Players had excelled this time. I have also to salute the generosity of those who, so merrily, did so many things to give us the evening out."



China  
MANILA  
April 29, 1961

