

Charles Hyatt

Actor and comedian of

highest calibre

by Clayton J. Goodwin

LONDON:

Charles Hyatt's performance in the highly successful Oxford Playhouse production of "The Blacks" revealed another side of the art of this talented entertainer. Through this Hyatt could transcend his role as a purely Jamaican performer into a truly great international actor. His style reminded me of the dictum of the late Tony Hancock: "I am not a comedian; I am an actor in a comic role".

Charles concurred . . . to a point. "I am still a comedian" he told me. That is also true. He is both an actor and a comedian of the highest calibre.

In "The Blacks" Hyatt played the role of the "white" Governor-General, a typical military, "blimpish" buffoon, remin-



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iscent of the character, Major Bloodnok, created on English radio by Peter Sellers. Charles's ability at verbal humour is well-known, but even greater is his capacity to hold the audience's attention during a silence. His antics, while standing on an elevated plane, of watching Diouf's seduction and murder by Village stole the attraction, even though the action was going on elsewhere on the stage.

The play made a deep impression on the . . . "It altered my whole thinking on the racial question. Previously I had thought that there were

two distinct untouched parallels. But here was a white man (Jean Genet, writing about blacks in a way in which blacks could appreciate and understand. His style is naughty and mischievous".

Apart from the play's tour to Rome and Scandinavian, Hyatt will be kept busy with appearances in four editions of the popular television series "The Doctors" and several stage appearances, scripts for which he is considering. It is a far cry from his first important stage part in "Share in the Sun", which production he described as a "resounding flop".

Does this success mean that the Charles Hyatt we know will be lost to Jamaican audiences? "Good Heavens, no. I enjoy playing to my own folks best of all. They appreciate much sooner than an all-white audience what I am on about".

He had had several offers to perform cabaret spots at the graduation dances of leading hair-styling salons, which were usually a great success, and he expressed regret that it was not possible for promoters to provide increased opportunities for him to appear before his own people. The regret does not lie entirely with the performer.

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