

Script of broadcast on Alan Bobbe's "Around And About" programme  
on June 3.

I suppose during the past two and a half years I must have seen every theatrical production, amateur and professional, presented on the Nairobi stage. During that two and a half years I have seen some good plays well acted. I have seen bad plays well acted and good plays badly acted. I have seen some indifferent plays, indifferently acted and produced. And I have also seen what I can only describe as some shocking bits of tripe.

It is therefore after due consideration and comparison that I commend to you tonight the current production by the Nairobi City Players of Dorothy and Campbell Christie's play, "Carrington, V.C."

I've been rather surprised to find that the play doesn't seem to be very well known, even to regular theatregoers in Nairobi. In fact it had a long and successful run, I think at the Westminster Theatre in London, a few years ago, when the leading parts were played by Alec Clunes and Rachel Gurney. It has also been made into an excellent film starring David Niven, which I believe has been seen here.

Presumably because of its title, a number of people appear to think that "Carrington, V.C." is a war play. The leading character certainly won his V.C. and his ~~deeds~~ <sup>day</sup> D.S.O. during the last war, but the action of the play takes place in the present. It is an undoubtedly dramatic piece --- dramatic with a drama that springs from interplay of character, emotions and motives --- <sup>should say</sup> and it is probably the most interesting and well-constructed piece of work its authors have produced since the successful <sup>play</sup> His Excellency.  
1809 January

Its characters are, with two exceptions, Army personnel: its setting is the court room in a Royal Artillery barracks where Major Carrington is facing a court martial; and its general subject is a contemporary problem not necessarily confined to the Army.

To tell too much of the plot would be to spoil it for you. So I will merely tell you that among people who feature prominently in the case are Carrington's wife, his commanding officer, and an A.T.S. Captain. Valerie Carrington, a nervy semi-invalid, whom her husband nevertheless still loves deeply, is a vital witness for his defence: Colonel Heniker is an embittered <sup>2017</sup> who dislikes and is thoroughly jealous of Carrington; and Alison Graham <sup>2017</sup> with him. The main action takes place in the court room, but we ~~can~~ <sup>can</sup> listen in to some behind-the-scenes conversations between

various people involved in the case which greatly heighten the drama of the court scenes.

I don't think I shall be accused of being partial <sup>4</sup> when I say that I personally consider the Nairobi City Players to be our best amateur dramatic company. Mr. Norman Marshall thought the same when at this year's Drama Festival he awarded them the Challenge Shield for the best production, ~~for~~ *A.P. Herbert!* "Two Gentlemen Of Shho". Since their formation something over eighteen months ago they have been seen in six outstanding productions: "The Love Of Four Colonels"; "The Man Who Came To Dinner"; "Ring Round The Moon"; "Payment Deferred"; "Romanoff And Juliet"; and now, "Carrington, V.C.". Their choices have been ambitious and, on the face of it, courageous. Having selected what they consider a dramatically interesting and worthwhile play, they set about casting and producing it with the very best and most suitable talent available. They have ~~on~~ <sup>at</sup> least one occasion shelved a production because what they considered to be the ideal talent was not available. This kind of "perfectionism" is rare anywhere, and certainly unexpected in a comparatively small town like Nairobi.

The producer of "Carrington, V.C.", Leonard Pierrepoint, has a number of successes to his credit, including the prize-winning Festival entry. I would say that he has cast this particular play quite brilliantly. There are eighteen characters, each of whom is important in his or her effect on the action, and every one rings a bell as a recognisable human being.

Major "Copper" Carrington and his wife, Valerie, are played respectively by John Ebdon and Gwyn Ashmore, both of whom have considerable stage experience and both of whom give excellent, intelligent performances, well above the normal run of the Nairobi amateur stage. Other players who give first-rate performances are Bryan Epsom, Patricia Reynolds, Brian Charters, Denis Patience, T.C. Colchester, Teddy Eggins and Alan Simmance. But to mention these nine out of the total cast is perhaps invidious. All the acting is sound and entirely convincing.

I hope I have said enough to make you realise that you will be missing something good if you miss "Carrington, V.C." The play, incidentally, opened at the Kenya National Theatre last Thursday and will run until the end of this week, with performances every evening at nine and a matinee tomorrow at half past five. I have so often heard complaints that we rarely

very good straight play. It is human and it has contemporary interest.  
It is often dramatic and it is occasionally humorous. Most importantly,  
the production and acting are of a high standard. If, like me, you enjoy  
a good evening's entertainment, you can scarcely <sup>by the theatre</sup> ~~expect~~ <sup>hope for</sup> more than that.