

BLUES FOR MR. CHARLIE



LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE
THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT

presents

BLUES FOR MISTER CHARLIE

by James Baldwin

Presented October 30, 31, November 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8, 1969
as production 477 in the Forty-First Season of the Theatre Arts Department.

CAST

(In order of appearance)

Richard Henry Mike Sims
Lyle Britten David Greer
Meridian Henry Rod L. Gist
Mother Henry Sheila Trott
Pete Arthur M. Graham
Jimmy Gyl Waddy
Tom Celestus Blair
Juanita Betty Phillips
Lorenzo Eric
Jo Britten Susanne Traeger
Parnell James Phil Kellard
Papa D Joc Ferrell
Hazel Margo Dean
Lillian Patricia Nagel
Susan Karene Frederick
Ralph Jim Robertson
Ellis Glenn Schnars
Rev. Phelps Rex Hill

George Joe Hoffman
The State Allen Payne
Counsel for the Bereaved
..... Mike Anthony
Judge Johnny O'Deay
Clerk Edwin Lee Williamson
Reporters Albert Glass,
Alan Trugman

BLACKTOWN

Mabel Marie-Anne Balthard
Sam Merritt Dickson
Saphire Olivia Hills
Johnie Mae Gwen Stokes

WHITETOWN

John Ben Haga
Martha Deborah Pederson
Eugenia Lily Tanner

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Locale—A small town in the South
Time—1964

ACT I

Intermission

ACT II

Intermission

ACT III

The action of the play is presented in a series of flashbacks, soliloquies and scenes designed to recreate the events and reveal the forces that led to the murder of Richard Henry and the trial of Lyle Britten.

FACULTY STAFF

Director Mrs. Donna Tollefson
Set Designer Mr. Randall Edwards
Costumes Mrs. Jo Jones
Department Chairman Mr. Norman Mennes

SPECIAL STAFF

Assistant Director Jerry Bailey

STUDENT STAFF

Stage Manager Linda Wilson
Assistant Stage Manager Chris Diaz
Electrician Charles Hunter
Preset Board John Ferrall
Follow Spot Michael Connelly
Sound Scott Hancock
Assistant Sound Richard Rae
Prop Master Sylvia Carces
Props Charles Sitman, Rina Gamboz, Carlos Hernandez
Carpenter Charles Friedman
Stage Hands Anne Garman, Ignacio Salazar,
Richard Savin, Monica Svensson, Larry Martinez
Flyman Scott Davis
Assistant Flyman Vick Walker
Choral Arrangement and Soloist Merritt Dickson
Guitar Arrangement and Accompaniment Jeff Chase
Wardrobe Master Mark B. Woodall
Wardrobe Assistant Sam Sanzone
Wardrobe Mistress Gerri Bevins
Wardrobe Assistants Lynne Slate, Holly Palance
Costume Coordinator Doris Dutton
House Manager Stephan H. Bell

THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT STAFF

Beverly Baker	Jo Jones	Barbara Burnett
Jerry Blunt	Fred Martin	Scene Shop Mgr.
Robert Board	James R. McCloskey	
Dan Desmond	Barry McGee	Angela Huffman
Randall Edwards	Norman Mennes	Costume Assistant
Peter Gibbons	Alice Parichan	
Tiiu Harunk	Donna Tollefson	Karen Newson
John Ingle	Charles Vassar	Department Secretary
	D. M. Wells	

Notes for "Blues for Mr. Charlie"

This play has been on my mind—has been bugging me—for several years. It is unlike anything else I've ever attempted in that I remember vividly the first time it occurred to me; for in fact, it did not occur to me, but to Elia Kazan. Kazan asked me at the end of 1968 if I would be interested in working in the theatre. It was a generous offer, but I did not react with great enthusiasm because I did not then, and don't now, have much respect for the American theatre. I am not convinced that it is a theatre; it seems to me a series, merely, of commercial speculations, stale, repetitious, and timid. I certainly didn't see much future for me in that frame-work, and I was profoundly unwilling to risk my morale and my talent—my life—in endeavors which could only increase a level of frustration already dangerously high.

Nevertheless, the germ of the play persisted. It is based, very distinctly indeed, on the case of Emmett Till—the Negro youth who was murdered in Mississippi in 1955. The murderer in this case was acquitted. (His brother, who helped him do the deed, is now a deputy sheriff in Rulesville, Mississippi.) After his acquittal, he recounted the facts of the murder—for one cannot refer to his performance as a confession—to William Bradford Huie, who wrote it all down in an article called "Wolf Whistle." I do not know why the case pressed on my mind so hard—it would not let me go. I absolutely dreaded committing myself to writing a play—there were enough people around already telling me that I couldn't write novels—but I began to see that my fear of the form masked a much deeper fear. That fear was that I would never be able to draw a valid portrait of the murderer. In life, obviously, such people baffle and terrify me and, with one part of my mind at least, I hate them and would be willing to kill them. Yet, with another part of my mind, I am aware that no man is a villain in his own eyes. Something in the man knows—must know—that what he is doing is evil; but in order to accept the knowledge the man would have to change. What is ghastly and really almost hopeless in our racial situation now is that the crimes we have committed are so great and so unspeakable that the acceptance of this knowledge would lead, literally, to madness. The human being, then, in order to protect himself, closes his eyes, compulsively repeats his crimes, and enters a spiritual darkness which no one can describe.

But if it is true, and I believe it is, that all men are brothers, then we have the duty to try to understand this wretched man; and while we probably cannot hope to liberate him, begin working toward the liberation of his children. For we, the American people, have created him, he is our servant; it is we who put the cattle-prodder in his hands, and we are responsible for the crimes that he commits. It is we who have locked him in the prison of his color. It is we who have persuaded him that Negroes are worthless human beings, and that it is his sacred duty, as a white man, to protect the honor and purity of his tribe. It is we who have forbidden him, on pain of exclusion from the tribe, to accept his beginnings, when he and black people loved each other, and rejoice in them, and use them; it is we who have made it mandatory—honorable—that white father should deny black son. These are grave crimes indeed, and we have committed them and continue to commit them in order to make money.

The play then, for me, takes place in Plaguetown, U.S.A., now. The plague is race, the plague is our concept of Christianity: and this raging plague has the power to destroy every human relationship. I once took a short trip with Medger Evers to the back-woods of Mississippi. He was investigating the murder of a Negro man by a white storekeeper which had taken place months before. Many people talked to Medger that night, in dark cabins, with their lights out, in whispers; and we had been followed for many miles out of Jackson, Mississippi, not by a lunatic with a gun, but by state troopers. I will never forget that night, as I will never forget Medger—who took me to the plane the next day. When he died, something entered into me which I cannot describe, but it was then that I resolved that nothing under heaven would prevent me from getting this play done. We are walking in terrible darkness here, and this is one man's attempt to bear witness to the reality and the power of light.

James Baldwin
New York, April, 1964

Coming Attraction

"Hotel Paradiso"

November 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

CAMINITO THEATRE