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CAPE TIMES

# Thought-provoking play held audience in close attention

**MUSIC AT MIDNIGHT**, directed by Robert Langford for MRA-Modern Theatre Productions (Hofmeyr).

**L**AST night a large audience gave close attention and generous applause to this thought-provoking play, which was having its South African premiere prior to its presentation in East London, Kimberley, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

In association with the Moral Re-armament movement, it was originally staged in 1962 at the Westminster Theatre, London, by the Westminster Memorial Trust, which acquired that particular theatre in 1946 as a living memorial to the men who gave their lives in World War II.

It has consistently pursued a policy which has made it known throughout Britain and Europe for "plays that are stimulating and creative in their ideas, plays where you can always bring the family and enjoy the pleasure of theatre at its best".

## GROWING CONVICTION

Inspired by this concept of the Westminster Theatre, a group of Johannesburg business men, associated with Moral Re-armament, recently formed MRA-Modern Theatre Productions as the result of "a growing conviction that a professionally performed play should be presented in South Africa and do for to-day what 'The Forgotten Factor' did after the war".

Peter Howard, who collaborated with Alan Thornhill in writing "Music at Midnight", is a leading spokesman for Moral Re-armament who feels that in recent years "the theatre as well as some of its critics has contributed greatly to the demoralization of our times".

## HIS PHILOSOPHY

He recently expressed his philosophy of the theatre as follows:

"Consciously or unconsciously people imitate what they see on the stage. If they see men behave like animals, hear barnyard morality extolled, watch jungle violence glorified behind the footlights, they go out into the streets more animal-like than when they went in."

## MORE IN MAN

"There is more in man than a beast wearing clothes in daylight. Man's spirit is meant to dominate his flesh. The future of civilization depends on whether man accepts his destiny of soul and conscience, or whether man rejects faith, God, absolutes of right and wrong, and decides to be a cruel, cunning creature of his lusts and desires.

"I want to see the British theatre once more play its part in restoring honour to homes, unity between colours and classes, and to all men faith in God."

Mr. Howard's incontestable earnestness and sincerity are compellingly evident in "Music at Midnight", a doctrine of humour and humanity which

By

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ran in London for 184 performances.

Briefly, it concerns an embittered yet dedicated rebel leader (Vaughan Scott) who escapes from an "occupied" European country to a Western state whose Chief Minister (George Korelin) had himself fostered an uprising in the young man's homeland.

Vital decisions must be made during 24 hours of emergency on both sides of the "Iron Curtain", with the Chief Minister's wife (Margery Dickie-Clark), their son (John Ramsbottom), an ambassador (Louis Ife) and a newspaper owner (Kevin Basel) also importantly instrumental to the unexpected outcome.

## EXCELLENT TEAM

Under Robert Langford's careful direction, the cast of Johannesburg stage and radio players are potentially an excellent team, and certain first-night moments of sluggishness, over-intensity and understatement, which tended to upset balance, will possibly not be found in future performances.