

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

A FULL-LENGTH PLAY

Time Present

BY

JOHN OSBORNE



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

© MCMLXXIII by
JOHN OSBORNE PRODUCTIONS LIMITED

© MCMLXVIII by
JOHN OSBORNE PRODUCTIONS LIMITED

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved

(TIME PRESENT)
ISBN: 978-1-58342-511-4

© *The Dramatic Publishing Company, Woodstock, Illinois*

TIME PRESENT
A Full-Length Play
For Three Men and Five Women

CHARACTERS

EDITH

PAULINE

CONSTANCE

PAMELA

MURRAY

EDWARD

ABIGAIL

BERNARD

PLACE: *Constance's flat in Pimlico.*

TIME: *The present.*

"A time to embrace and a time to refrain
from embracing. A time to get and a
time to lose: a time to keep, and a time
to cast away."

Ecclesiastes

PROPERTIES

GENERAL:

Constance's apartment: Scandinavian furniture, abstracts; a wall of books, reports, white papers, volumes of Hansard, Year Books, filing cabinets and hundreds of back copies of political weeklies, all very neatly arranged for reference; a large Swedish desk covered with still more books, newspapers, reports, galley proofs, a telephone and a typewriter with paper still in it; a glass table with a large selection of drinks and glasses; a record player; a television set; records on the floor; a couple of modish, uncomfortable steel and leather chairs. Two doors lead to bedrooms and one to outside of the apartment. There is a partitioned kitchen full of jars of exotic herbs, chopping boards, wine racks, business-like knives, strings of garlic and so on. In a less severe part of the room are Japanese lampshades, a day-bed and a pile of expensive-looking clothes wrapped in plastic covers, clearly just back from the cleaners. On one wall on this less severe side of the room is an old poster that reads: "NEW THEATRE, HULL. GIDEON ORME--MACBETH --WITH FULL LONDON CAST." On a table is a rather faded production photograph of an aging but powerful-looking actor in Shakespearian costume; a scrapbook lying beside the photograph.

PERSONAL:

EDITH: She is in her late fifties, looks tired but alert. A cup of tea, a copy of Hansard. Act Two: Formally dressed.

PAULINE: She is eighteen and pretty. She wears "shoddy clothes," or sloppily dressed as some of the "hippie" teenagers usually are. Act Two: Subdued clothing (more normal).

CONSTANCE: She is in her early thirties. Carries a bulging briefcase. Act Two: Carries some parcels containing groceries and a small bottle of perfume; smokes a cigarette, evening papers.

PAMELA: She is also in her early thirties. Act Two: In a nightdress and dressing gown; a glass of champagne in her hand. At one point she is naked as she is dressing and packing some of her things into a suitcase; a few things, such as, a suitcase, fur coats, etc. to show she's moving out of the apartment.

EDWARD: He's twenty-eight. Coats. Act Two: A record.

MURRAY: He is thirtyish.

ABIGAIL: She is dressed in men's Carnaby Street clothes, wears a theatrical mustache.

ACT ONE

SCENE: Constance's flat in Pimlico. For the present she is sharing it with Pamela. There is some evidence that it is lived in by two people with different temperaments and interests. On the whole, the impression is rather severe, more a working area than a place to lounge around. The influence of Constance is in the Scandinavian furniture and abstracts. There is also the evidence of her profession of M. P. There is a wall of books, reports, white papers, volumes of Hansard, Year Books, filing cabinets and hundreds of back numbers of political weeklies, all very neatly arranged for reference. There is a prominent, large Swedish desk covered with still more books, newspapers, reports, galley proofs and a typewriter with paper in it; a glass table with a large selection of drinks; a record player; a television set; records on the floor (Pamela's untidiness). There are also a couple of modish, uncomfortable steel and leather chairs. Two doors lead to bedrooms. There is a partitioned kitchen full of jars for exotic herbs, chopping boards, wine racks, business-like knives, strings of garlic and so on. In the less severe part of the room there are Japanese lampshades,

a day bed and a pile of expensive-looking clothes wrapped in plastic covers, clearly just back from the cleaners. On one wall on this side is an old poster. It says simply "NEW THEATRE, HULL. GIDEON ORME--MACBETH--WITH FULL LONDON CAST," etc. On the table is a rather faded production photograph of an aging but powerful-looking actor in Shakespearian costume. It is late at night.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: EDITH, Pamela's mother, is sitting on one of the uncomfortable chairs with a cup of tea and reading a copy of Hansard. She is in her late fifties, and looks tired but alert. The doorbell rings. She goes to door and calls out firmly before opening.)

EDITH

Who is it?

PAULINE

(A voice, offstage)

Mummy? It's Pauline.

(EDITH admits PAULINE, her youngest daughter, who is about eighteen and pretty)

EDITH

I thought Pamela gave you a spare key.

PAULINE

She wouldn't.

EDITH

Wouldn't?

PAULINE

No.

EDITH

Well, why not? She gives them 'round to all sorts of peculiar people.

PAULINE

Don't know. Thinks I'm going to have a rave up while she and Connie are out, I expect. Any news?

EDITH

I rang about twenty minutes ago. Pamela's been with him since eight o'clock. She said he was a bit quieter. Whatever that means. He always seems to chatter whenever she's there. She lets him go on and on, then gets more exhausted than ever. By the time I get there, he complains all the time about how tired he is and can't sleep. "Why am I so tired, Edith? I haven't done any work for years. Not since I was at the Shaftesbury." He even got that wrong last night. That was long before the war. He complained all the time just before I left. Are you sure you want to come? It's not much fun, darling. You know, sitting up all night in a hospital room.

PAULINE

No, I'll come.

EDITH

Want some tea before we go?

PAULINE

No, thanks.

EDITH

I've got a flask for us. That night sister, not the

other one, she's not very concerned for your comfort.

PAULINE

Glad I'm not a patient. I've never been ill in bed. It must be a bit odd.

EDITH

Yes, you have. You've had measles and tonsillitis. And very badly.

PAULINE

Yes, but I don't remember that. I mean being ill, like a, like an experience, lying there. Wondering what they're going to do to you, if you're going to get up. So he complains?

EDITH

Nurses, the doctors, the food, the bed--oh, everything.

PAULINE

He never says anything to me much. Oh, he looked at me a long time Tuesday night and then just asked me if I took drugs.

EDITH

Oh, he asks me silly questions.

PAULINE

He said would I get some for him. What'd he ask you?

EDITH

Oh, nothing. I think he often doesn't know what year it is. He thinks he's still on the stage or that we're still married. You really needn't come, you know.

PAULINE

I know.

EDITH

Pamela's his daughter. He's made that very clear. And besides, it's different with him and her.

PAULINE

Hello, reading the old Hansard?

EDITH

Yes.

PAULINE

Daddy?

EDITH

No, Constance.

PAULINE

Ah. Any good?

EDITH

I should think so. Not exactly my subject. "New Humber and Fisheries Development Act." Second reading.

PAULINE

I should think not.

EDITH

One of the brightest of the last batch. So Daddy says. Perhaps we should ask her to dinner one evening. When all this is over.

PAULINE

Odd fish for Pamela to shack up with.

EDITH

How do you mean?

PAULINE

Oh, I don't know--but I suppose she's frightfully intellectual and an M.P. and all that. And--well, I mean, Pamela's an actress.

EDITH

She's not exactly unintelligent, darling. Even if she does get her life in a bit of a mess. And I think Constance has been kind to her and after that last affair bust-up and all.

PAULINE

What? Oh, Alec. But that was for years. Like marriage. Worse.

EDITH

And I think she genuinely admires Pamela. As an actress. And she says Constance is the only person who's really encouraged her in her work. Which is true. I used to take an interest. But I had two younger children. And your father's impossible to get to a theatre.

PAULINE

Didn't the old man encourage her?

EDITH

Well, with her own father it was complicated, of course. I could never make out what he really wanted for Pamela, being such a famous actor. But then when I said she ought to get a good degree and a profession, he wasn't too keen on that either. Still, she might have spent fifteen years or so, like I did, training her mind to end up washing nappies and

getting up coal.

PAULINE

Did you mind much?

EDITH

Of course I minded. Well, I had three children. But of course, I minded. One always minds waste. And the worst waste I can think of is training a woman to the top of her potential and then just off-loading her into marriage when she's probably at her most useful. Probably at the height of her powers.

PAULINE

Well, you can't say Pam's done that.

EDITH

No, but then she's an actress. I meant someone like, well, like Constance is a good example.

PAULINE

Do you think she'll end up first woman Prime Minister?

EDITH

She's got a very good chance of being a Cabinet Minister. Well, so Daddy says, and she's always in the papers. Still, Pamela hasn't done too badly. Having a famous father may not have always helped her. It's hard to tell. They either expect too much of you or compare you unfavorably. She should have done better.

PAULINE

Perhaps they don't write the parts. I mean Pamela's a bit special too, isn't she?

EDITH

How do you mean?

PAULINE

Well, she's not a raving beauty exactly but she's not ugly, but you don't quite know what to do with her. I suppose it doesn't matter these days. But she's been at it a long time. I mean years.

EDITH

I wonder if she'll want some tea.

PAULINE

I mean I remember coming up to London to see her play Titania years ago. I was a little kid. I'd just started school.

EDITH

I don't remember.

PAULINE

She wasn't very good.

EDITH

If you were so young, you wouldn't have known. I thought she was excellent. And a beautiful costume.

PAULINE

You just said you didn't remember.

EDITH

Well, I do now. I'm tired. It's these long waiting sessions with Gideon. And that place is so freezing.

PAULINE

Would you like me to go for you tonight? I don't mind.

EDITH

That's very sweet of you, darling. But I think it has to be me. Me or Pamela. I think it's all right for you and Andrew to help out in the daytime.

PAULINE

I don't think he likes me all that much.

EDITH

I don't know if he really wants anyone with him. He's certainly not particularly pleased to see me. He usually just grunts when I go in or makes me do something for him. Make him comfortable or change his pillows. Or sometimes he just looks away as if he's not seen me. . . . Pamela, I suppose. He must want her with him. But he's harsh with her too sometimes; I've heard him.

PAULINE

He's jolly old.

EDITH

He's only seventy-two, for heaven's sake, Pauline.

PAULINE

Well, if you don't think that's old---

EDITH

Well, I'm fifty-eight. I suppose you think I'm half in the grave.

PAULINE

No. But the old boy really seems different somehow. Different scene altogether. What else did he ask about?

EDITH

Gideon? Oh, oh, he rambled. I think he thought I

was some actor-manager he used to know. Kept talking about seeing the returns, and the week--and then he asked, well, if Daddy and I still made love to each other.

PAULINE

What did you say?

EDITH

Asked me in front of the nurse. Anyway, he didn't really want to know.

PAULINE

No?

EDITH

He was never a jealous man. Sexually, I mean. They said that's why he was no good as Othello. He simply couldn't understand. I'd say he was pretty free of all jealousy. But then he's rather a simple man in many ways.

PAULINE

And do you?

EDITH

What?

PAULINE

What he asked you. You know, Daddy?

EDITH

Good heavens, Pauline, I've told you, I'm not a zombie just because I'm not your age any longer.