

Comédie musicale écrite par **Kenneth Tynan**, mise en scène par **Jacques Levy**, *Oh! Calcutta!*, (1969)



Comédie musicale composée de sketches sur la sexualité, la pièce est écrite pour un casting d'hommes et de femmes nus. ce qui créa une considérable controverse à sa sortie.

Plusieurs artistes ont contribué à l'écriture de sketches, dont Jules Feiffer, Dan Greenburg, John Lennon, Jacques Levy, Leonard Melfi, Sherman Yellen, David Newman and Robert Benton.

Les spectacles ont débuté sur l'Off-Broadway de 1969 pour 1 314 représentations, puis à Londres pour plus de 3 900 représentations, avant que des reprises ne soient entamées sur Broadway en 1974 pour ne se terminer qu'en 1989 (5 959 représentations de la reprise).

Extrait d'une critique de 1969 (à la Première sur l'Off Broadway) : «Innocent it is completely. It is childlike when they strip--and the stripping dancing and staging are the only tolerable parts of the evening for the "mature audiences" to whom the producers are somewhat foolhardily addressing their sales pitch--and childish when they talk. The sketches are unbelievably weak. The sex joke, I must protest, has not in reality sunk so low. This is the kind of show to give pornography a dirty name. [...]

The failure here is almost exclusively a failure of the writers and the producers. The director, Jacques Levy, has done his best with the weak material at hand. The opening--a group-spoof striptease--has just the right touch of erotic sophistication, but regrettably it is a touch never again repeated in the show. [...]

It is curious how anti-erotic public nudity, as opposed to private nudity, is. There is a clinical lack of mystery about it that, speaking for myself, makes me disconcertingly think pure and beautiful thoughts. Other people of course may have other reactions.» (Clive Barnes: «Theater: 'Oh, Calcutta!' a Most Innocent Dirty Show», *New York Times*, 18 juin 1969).

Extrait d'une critique de 1989 (à la dernière des reprises sur Broadway): «Sunday night was the 5,959th and final Broadway performance of "the world's longest running erotic stage musical" - the show that began its career in 1969 as a chic, notorious avatar of what was once called "the sexual revolution" but that in recent years settled into the anonymity of those New York tourist spots patronized mainly by visitors who don't speak English too well. [...]

"We are not trying to make a revolution," Tynan told reporters before the opening. He wanted to make mischief, fun and money. But 1969 was a time of social upheaval in the United States on all fronts, and "Oh! Calcutta!," with its full nudity and simulated sexual activity, was inevitably seen in the context of such contemporaneous stage and film breakthroughs in erotic frankness as "Hair," "I Am Curious (Yellow)," "Dionysus in 69" and the briefly censored "Che!" Caught in the ideological crossfire, Tynan's show was labeled too mild and schoolboyish silly by serious critics and yet reviled as "hard-core pornography" by The Daily News. Only the public loved it. [...]

What I saw was a throwback to the "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice" America of two decades ago - a land of would-be "swinging" couples, new-fangled sex therapy and the Playboy Philosophy. It was a place where women were erotic appendages to men, where the mere mention of euphemisms for sexual organs or acts caused blushing and eye-popping and where masturbation was viewed not as a form of safe sex but as a naughty embarrassment. [...] s this an America where many of us would want to live now? Perhaps not, which explains why the native audience of "Oh! Calcutta!" was long ago supplanted by visitors from the Far East. » (Frank Rich: «Critic's Notebook; The Asterisks of 'Oh! Calcutta!','», *New York Times*, 8 août 1989).