



**Every Black Day:** Crime and violence shatter the boundaries between fact and fiction in this new play by Don Hale, which opens in London this month. Bringing together the extraordinary life-story of Chester Himes, the Mack crime-writer of the 50s, and two of his hard-hitting detective heroes, this production plants the seedy world of the Harlem thriller in London's East End.

In this, his first full-length play, Hale explores the relationship between Himes and the characters he created. The narrative is driven by the detectives' challenging, 'last chance' mission to redeem themselves from fictional extinction. Bleak, naturalistic scenes based upon Himes'

autobiography, *The Quality of Hurt*, are intercut with the outrageous, high-camp, comic depiction of the fictional black detectives Coffin Ed Johnson and Gravedigger Jones.

No stranger to the world in which his novels are set, Himes spent seven years in Ohio State Penitentiary. After the second world war he settled down to a new life among the literati in Paris, where most of his novels were written. Though he never enjoyed the same popularity in the States as he did in France, his thrillers established him as the leading black crime-writer of the time.

*Every Black Day* is at the Half Moon Theatre, 213 Mile End Road, London E1, at 8pm, February 4-27. •  
Chris Granlund