

## OUT-OF-TOWN OPENINGS

### GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES

(Opened November 17)

FORREST THEATER,  
PHILADELPHIA

A musical comedy in two acts and 13 scenes. Produced by Herman Levin and Oliver Smith. Book by Joseph Fields and Anita Loos. Music by Jule Styne. Lyrics by Leo Robin. Directed by John C. Wilson. Dances by Agnes DeMille. Costumes by Miles White. Settings by Oliver Smith.

CAST—Carol Channing, Yvonne Adair, Alice Pearce, Bob Neukum, Jerry Cooper, Jerry Craig, Robert Cooper, Eddie Weston, Susan Steel, Rex Evans, Muriel Bentley, Peter Birch, Rex Cooper, George S. Irving, Curt Stafford, Eric Brotherson, Bill Bradley, Charles Basile, Bob Burkhardt, Shelton Lewis, Kasimir Kokik, Peter Holmes, Mort Marshall, Howard Morris, Nicole France, Grandal Diehl, Judy Sinclair, Hope Zee, Cole and Atkins, William Krach and Irving Mitchell.

Whatever fate will eventually befall this blustering and swaggering musical transformation of Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, it at least establishes Carol Channing as a great gift to the boards. In spite of the glitter and opulence that has been poured into this production—almost to the point of being overbearing—it's the dizzy skirmishes of wide-eyed and six-foot la Channing as Lorelei Lee from Little Rock, that gives this new musical its greatest hope.

Bringing back the turbulent '20s when it was only gold that gave for the gals that gentlemen preferred, Miss Channing makes completely merry with this materialistic philosophy as her comedy antics sets the stage ablaze. The mercenary maid with a keen sense of timing, a facility for mugging and a singing voice that is completely guttural and grouty, draws laughs at will and fairly converts this massive musical into a personal triumph, all of which speaks well for the box office at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York when the company takes over after a fortnight's pruning here.

#### Show Book Like Original

The show book follows the pages of Miss Loos's original with a reverence that almost becomes revolting. It rehearses the tale of Lorelei Lee, who expresses it so much better in her song, *Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend*, her trip to Paris, financed by her button boy sponsor in the person of singer Jerry Cooper, coming to the stage from the nitery floors, and all the familiar complications arising from the hue of her tresses. Miss Carol has seven songs to her credit and, with Miss Cooper, carries the scores most tuneful-hit potential in *Bye, Bye, Baby*.

As her partner in pillaging, Yvonne Adair as Dorothy Shaw is completely charming as she scores with her singing and dancing as well as being the wise-cracking foil for Lorelei Lee. It's Miss Adair, with Eric Brotherson, her romantic interest who is a gentleman without likings for the kind of female the so-called prefer, who helps in putting over the best musical number. It's to her credit that *Just a Kiss Apart* bears hitdom well, with equal potentialities for Brotherson's song efforts for *You Say You Care*.

#### Credits' Due

Agnes DeMille's ballets, led by Helen Wood, all capture the spirit of the Charleston and Black Bottom era, with full justice given to her choreographical designs in the individual efforts of Muriel Bentley, Peter Birch and Kasimir Kokik. The sumptuous settings of Co-Producer Oliver Smith, and Miles White's imaginative costume creations all rate right-eous bows in the right direction. And not to be overlooked are the lovelies in the ensemble, particularly the six towering torsos of the special kind that gentlemen prefer.

There is much that has to be done before the running can be wrapped up to sock proportions. But with such a head start and Carol Channing the show can hardly miss.

Maurie Orodener.

### METROPOLE

(Opened Monday, November 14)

FORD'S THEATER, BALTIMORE

A play by William Walden. Staged by George S. Kaufman. Set by Edward Gilbert. Costumes by Blanca Stroock. Presented by Max Gordon.

Fanner.....John Glendinning  
Miss Merriam.....Frances Waller  
Stumm.....Henry Jones  
Frederick M. Hill.....Lee Tracy  
Mrs. Killian.....Jane Seymour  
Curtis.....Rud Brown Jr.  
Miss Harrington.....Edith Atwater  
Lois Dantine.....Jean Carson  
Mr. Young.....Malcolm Lee Beggs  
Crowell.....Reynolds Evans  
Ellington.....Royall Dano  
Carolyn Hopewell.....Ariene Francis  
Furniture Movers.....George Cotton, Lee Parry

In *Metropole*, the ebullient Lee Tracy gives a brilliant, incisive performance as Frederick M. Hill, the editor of a magazine suspiciously like *The New Yorker*. The plot is concerned with Hill's continuing fight to keep his mag solvent. Arrayed against him are his former wife, who conspires with one of her husband's co-editors to establish a rival publication patterned after his magazine, and the business office, which drives his best writers and cartoonists to other periodicals by paring their rates.

Tracy etches an excellent characterization of a weird editorial genius, which in less competent hands would have been a ridiculous caricature. The Baltimore playgoers, who haven't seen Tracy on either stage or screen for many a year, gave him a tremendous ovation.

#### Field Day for Him

This lampoon is loaded with Kaufman gags and provides Tracy, who is onstage for most of the three acts, with a field day. In addition to the fine performances of Tracy and Arlene Francis, other rib-tickling jobs are turned in by Jean Carson, who plays a luscious and incredibly dumb blonde; Henry Jones, as a dim-witted "liaison" editor; Reynolds Evans, as an intellectual editor with a string of college degrees, and George Cotton and Lee Parry, as the furniture movers. Edith Atwater has a thankless task of portraying Tracy's implausible first wife. Despite the hard-working cast, *Metropole* was foundering even in its fourth day at Ford's.

August Maher.

### A LA CARTE

(Opened Wednesday, November 16)

EL CAPITAN THEATER,  
HOLLYWOOD

A musical intimate revue presented by Ernest Matray, Maria Matray and Edward Heyman. Music by Victor Young. Lyrics by Edward Heyman. Sketches by Hal Finberg, Henry Piff and Ernest Matray. Direction, choreography and staging by Ernest and Maria Matray. Musical conductor, Harry Sukman.

CAST—Gale Robbins, Bill Shirley, George Zoritch, Jim Hawthorne, Patricia Denise, Helen Stanley, Joseph Warfield, Gisela Werbezirk, Erika Lund, Eddie Robertson, Dolores Boucher, John Perri, Priscilla Allen, Sherree Bessire, Gloria Dewerd, Marilyn Russell, Gloria Stone, Angela Velez, Felice Basso, Richard Cahill, Robert Rosselot, Phil Terry, Bill Tremaine, Dick Wyatt.

For the stage sweettooth, *A La Carte* is made to order. The staging shimmers with polish, choreography is highly imaginative, tunes are catchy and the talent is refreshing. From all appearances, the El Capitan—home of the record running *Blackouts*—will have another long-term tenant. But to make sure that it pleases the public palate, it would be wise to trim off a little of the icing, for as it stands now, the frosting is a bit too rich. More body and substance and fewer frills would enhance its chances.

Show as a whole smacks of a strong Continental flavor. This, undoubtedly, indicates the influence of Ernest and Maria Matray, who capably conceived the choreography and staging and handled direction. Staging and choreography, by their excellence, overshadow other factors. Such numbers as *There's No Man Like a Snowman* and *Half of Me* employ spectacular effects. In the former, a string of realistic snowmen come to life to dance and melt at sunrise. In the latter, dancers appear to split in half

## 'Kate' Contributes House Seats

NEW YORK, Nov. 19.—Producers Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayers of *Kiss Me, Kate* have joined Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Leland Hayward and Joshua Logan of *South Pacific* in making house seats available to the public in a move to raise revenue for the Damon Runyon Memorial Cancer Fund. Under the plan originated by the *Pacific* producers, down-front locations for *Kate* will be on resale by the fund beginning December 5. Prices will include the regular b.-o. tariffs plus an override to be decided upon by the fund committee. All excess over b.-o. cost on the tickets goes to medical research.

Walter Winchell, founder of the fund, is arranging for the resale of tickets for the New York *Kate* troupe. Ernie Byfield, co-owner of Chicago's Hotel Sherman and operator of the College Inn nitery, has volunteered for a similar chore for the Chicago company.

Also climbing on the fund bandwagon is the recently organized ticket brokers' org, the New York Ticket Brokers, Inc. The ticket boys have bought out next Wednesday's (23) preview performance of *Texas, Li'l Darlin'* at the Mark Hellinger Theater for a reported flat \$23,000, and all agencies are selling the ducats at straight b.-o. prices. The entire profits go to the Damon Runyon Fund and the Heart Fund. A sell-out will result in a tidy donation.

## 7 Do Sketches For Wiman Revue

NEW YORK, Nov. 19. — Samuel Taylor, Russel Beggs, Nancy Hamilton, George Oppenheimer, Vincent Mennelli, Marya Mannes and Nedda Harrington will contribute the sketches to *Dance Me a Song*, Dwight Wiman's new revue. While James Shelton is chiefly responsible for words and tunes, additional numbers will stem from Herman Hupfield, Leonard Bernstein, Albert Hague and Kay Swift. Dance patterns will be handled by Zachary Solvo, and Anthony Cabot is the musical director.

The Wiman office announced this week that Robert Ross is associated in production, and that Shelton will be in over-all charge of staging. Ann Thomas and Cliff Ferre are latest additions to the cast which goes into rehearsal Monday (21).

for a highly effective routine. Ballet-flavored dancing of George Zoritch and Patricia Denise, Ballet Russe alumni, add gloss to the choreographic portions of the revue.

Song-wise, Gale Robbins and Bill Shirley are admirably suited to their lead parts, scoring vocally and in stage presence. Helene Stanley, a beautiful redhead with plenty of talent, practically romps away with the honors. Her best is in the *Cat Party* number in which her sense of comedy is seen to full advantage. Lion's share of the comedy is ably shouldered by Jim Hawthorne, ex-zany disk jockey, whose panto talent rolls 'em in the aisles in *The Flower Song*. Gisela Werbezirk, still the grand comedienne, adds considerably to most of the comedy numbers, but proves she can still outshine them all in *Clara the Devine*.

Ballads claim the song honors, *Bella Signora*, *Half of Me*, *Sweetheart*, *Until Tonight*, *A Face in the Crowd* and *I Ought To Know More About You*. Brighter paced *Poker Polka* may fare best on disks, as it's well suited to the current polka platter trend. Music by Victor Young is tuneful and catchy, while Eddie Heyman's lyrics, not too inspired in spots, generally hold up well. Buddy Morris holds publishing rights to score. Lee Zito.

## Broadway Review

### THE FATHER

(Opened Wednesday, November 16)

CORT THEATER

A drama by August Strindberg. Staged by Raymond Massey. Setting by Donald Oenslager. Costumes by Eleanor Goldsmith. General manager, Paul Vroom. Stage manager, Elmer Brown. Press representatives, Karl Bernstein and Harvey Sabinson. Presented by Richard W. Kraeur and Robert L. Joseph in association with Harry Brandt.

A Captain of Cavalry.....Raymond Massey  
A Soldier.....Charles Snyder  
The Pastor.....Philip Huston  
Another Soldier.....Paul Larson  
The Captain's Wife.....Mady Christians  
The Doctor.....John D. Seymour  
The Nurse.....Mary Morris  
The Captain's Daughter.....Grace Kelly

"In the mountains, in the valleys," as *Death of a Salesman* Willie Loman would say, "remember you gave up your life for spite." That is the opinion that this reporter has held of August Strindberg over the years, altho he was taught early in life that the Swede was someone to be regarded with reverent awe. Somehow, the inoculation never took.

At all events, if ever a play was written out of pure, unadulterated spite, *The Father* is it. It is quite possible to understand that 63 years ago, before such items as complexes, psychoses and fem infidelity became run-of-the-mill matters of parlor conversation, Strindberg's drama of acid domestic hatred could burst on a Victorian world like a dramatic atom bomb. But today the sorry machinations of the maestro's misogynistic mind anent a wife savagely bent on driving a husband insane with suspicion as to his child's paternity add up to a musty and frequently tedious conversation piece. It seems to take Raymond Massey an unconscionably long time to be driven mad by Mady Christians at the Cort Theater—much longer than the tally racked up by the clock. And the touchstone of all this bitter wrangling rests on the fact that papa wants daughter to be a school teacher and mama wants her to be an artist. The girl never appears to know what she wants. But, according to Strindberg, she is for mama 99 per cent.

#### Staged by Massey

Richard Kraeur, Robert Joseph and Harry Brandt have given the revival a handsome production, with a fine period set by Donald Oenslager and costumes to match by Eleanor Goldsmith. Joseph has prepared the English version with credit and co-star Raymond Massey has staged it slanted for tragic grandeur. Unfortunately, it achieves the grandiose rather than the grand and its small excitements are stultified in tedium.

Personally, this reporter found it hard to believe the portrait of either Massey or Mady Christians. Massey's bedeviled Swedish captain never engenders any real sympathy and while Miss Christians' hell-cat wife is gifted with all vicious abominations, she still falls short of the witch she would have to have been in order to get away with it. Much of the time she is just a sullen, vain woman. Mary Morris's nurse seems more truly Stringbergian than any of the rest of them, but there are good, solid performances from Philip Huston as the pastor and John Seymour as the doctor. Young Grace Kelly makes a creditable Stern debut as the bone-of-contention daughter.

In sum, it is not likely that *Father* will go mad at the Cort for any great length of time. There will be some, no doubt, who will worship it as "exciting" and "dynamic." Plenty more will tab it a prodigious bore.

Bob Francis.

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