

Broadway Opening

DAPHNE LAUREOLA

(Opened Monday, September 18)

THE MUSIC BOX

A comedy by James Bridie. Staged by Murray MacDonald. Sets by Roger Furse and Roger Ramsdell. Lighting by Ralph Alswang. General manager, Herman Bernstein. Stage manager, George Desmond. Press representatives, Leo Freedman, Abner Kilpstein and Robert Ullman. Presented by Leland Hayward, Herman Shumlin in association with Laurence Olivier.

Maisie MacArthur Joyce Linden
 Bill Wishforth Robin Lloyd
 Helen Willis Eileen O'Hara
 Bob Kentish Alexander Harris
 George, the Waiter Martin Miller
 Lady Pitts Edith Evans
 Ernest Plaste John Van Dreelen
 A Bored Woman Elizabeth Ashley
 A Bored Man Ireland Wood
 Mr. Gooch Ernest Jay
 Mr. Watson Mark Stone
 Vincent Peter Williams
 Sir Joseph Pitts Cecil Parker
 The Manager of Le Toit Aux Porcs Terence Owen

To be blunt, *Daphne Laureola* adds up to another of those importations which have been hot as a pistol in London and unveil here at something less than simmering temperature. There is no question but that advance reports from the West End had a plush first-night congregation prepared to hail it with cheers. However, at the curtain any cheers were for two stellar performances and not for a garrulous and dull comedy. *Daphne* amounts to no more than a rather disappointing vehicle for the superlative talents of two top-rank British players and deserves no more than a tepid welcome.

The play is tidy-tidy in the manner in which all its characters are drawn together at the proper times and spots to enable author Janies Bridie to reach an amiable and credible conclusion. There are flashes of chucklesome humor and considerable literate writing, but there are longer stretches in inane talk by minor characters at the expense of the central story line, and the whole definitely runs downhill.

Briefly, Bridie appears to be concerned with the saga of a frustrated 50-year-old woman married to an octogenarian peer for reasons of security. Safety being no panacea for boredom, she seeks escape via the bottle, and during a potted interval upsets the emotional equilibrium of a pedantically romantic young Pole. A reporter concludes that the youth finds her the Daphne to his Apollo. However, like the nymph of the fable, the lady prefers practical security to a poetically passionate showdown and, when her philosophically amiable husband dies, ups and marries her heman bodyguard. This drives the youthful pursuer to a fainting frenzy. But the lady, apparently cured of much of her neuroses by her second marriage, tells him right stoutly that ladies have no desire to be put on poetic pedestals by romantic egotists. Bridie's stuffy poet, however, is still unconvinced at the finish.

In sum, *Daphne* is more than a challenge to the superlative ability of star Edith Evans and her meeting of it stamps her one of the great actresses of the English stage. Bridie's Lady Pitts is a pretty dull woman, but Miss Evans endows her with a personal warmth and magnetism to make her frequently fascinating. Also she gets terrific assistance from her co-star, Cecil Parker, who gives a truly wonderful performance as her dying husband. Parker is making his Stem stage debut, altho already well known on the screen to American audiences. At all events, Bridie's laurel bush should be sheared of an individual wreath for Parker's contribution to the best scene of the play.

Another effective Broadway debut is made by John Van Dreelen as the bothered and bewildered Polish lad. There is further good work by Ernest Jay as a bumptious bore and by Peter Williams as the bodyguard.

Daphne has been given an overall fine production and the benefit of some excellent acting, but as a

OUT-OF-TOWN OPENINGS

BLACK CHIFFON

(Opened Monday, September 11)

WILBUR THEATER, BOSTON

A drama by Lesley Storm. Directed by Charles Hickman. Settings by Larry Eddleton. Costumes by Natalie Barth Walker. Company manager, Michael Goldreyer. Press representative, Harry Davies. Stage manager, Phillippa Hastings. Presented by John Wildberg.

Roy Christie Richard Gale
 Louise Patricia Hicks
 Thea Patricia Marmont
 Alicia Christie Flora Robson
 Nannie Janet Barrow
 Robert Christie Raymond Huntley
 Dr. Bennett Hawkins Anthony Ireland

A psychological study of a quiet type is Lesley Storm's London success, *Black Chiffon*, which brings Flora Robson back to these shores after several years' absence. This is the kind of a family story the English seem to do better than anyone else. The strains and tensions of an outwardly normal family are shown with quiet force and, despite the requirements of drama, the story is told with dignity.

The theme of *Chiffon* is not of obvious appeal, nor would any but an imaginative and skilled writer tackle it. Miss Robson portrays a mother with an extremely strong, tho not abnormal affection for her son. This devotion has been caused by her husband's inborn jealousy of the boy. When the lad is about to be married, the mother has a rief aberration in which she steals a black chiffon night dress from a department store counter.

Rather than permit a psychiatrist to testify in her behalf, and perhaps injure her boy's marriage, she pleads guilty and goes to prison for three months.

There is an unflinching delicacy and nicety of balance in both the writing and the acting of this story. Perhaps the play may originally have had a stronger emphasis on the mother-son relationship than on the theft and its consequences. As such, it would have been a cruder, less convincing play. As it stands, however, *Chiffon* is a sensitively written, well-knit drama in which the characters seem thoroly real, the action entirely believable.

Miss Robson, as the mother, is absolutely superb. The depth of her personal tragedy is shown in flashes of conflict between son and father, and when she discusses her "crime" with the psychiatrist and her family. It is a wonderfully detailed and honest portrayal. The supporting cast gives her strongest help. Anthony Ireland makes a most sympathetic and warm psychiatrist in his brief appearances. Raymond Huntley skillfully portrays the severe, cold nature of the father. Patricia Hicks, as the boy's fiancee, and Patricia Marmont, as his sister, are natural and pleasant. Only Richard Gale, as the son, seems awkward and ill at ease.

Costumes are simple. The setting is a comfortable living room. *Chiffon* won't set the world on fire. It has its slow moments in the second act. But it is honest and effective theater and should be good for a full season's run. *Bill Riley.*

'MADAM' IN SQUALL

(Continued from opposite page)

"They all want fifth row center for Friday or Saturday night." He points out that no allotments have been made to ticket brokers, and says that none will be—until the mail order jam has been cleared and the b.o. opens for business.

It seems to a bystander that if impetuous pew-buyers for what sizes up as a Broadway smash would send in their money with a request to "give me the best this will buy, at the earliest possible date"—it would save a lot of shattered tempers. If *Madam* is as good as they evidently think it is, it will be around plenty long enough for everybody to see it.

West End fire ball, it's a New York clinker. *Bob Francis.*

LITTLE BOY BLUE

(Opened Monday, September 11)

EL CAPITAN THEATER, HOLLYWOOD

A new musical comedy. Directed by George Murphy. Book and lyrics by Albert G. Miller. Music by Max Showalter. Sets designed by Rita Glover. Wardrobe designed by Odette Myrtil. Choreography by Louis Da Pron. Musical director, Leon Leonardi. Orchestra arrangements by Ruby Raksin. Presented by Paula Stone and Mike Sioane.

Guido Buck Young
 Lady Tourist Janet Beverly
 Cheer Leader Bill Foster
 Actress Jeanette Le Vere
 Contestant John Kessler
 Mannish Woman Jeanne Mahoney
 Little Man Frank Bisho
 Singing Page Jerry Cardoni
 Bobby Blue Johnny Kirby
 Texan Bob Williams
 Aunt Addie Margaret Hamilton
 Mother Effie Laird
 Dora Maxine Semon
 Harry Jack Mendes
 Molly Carol Richards
 Steve Craig Stevens
 Wife Janet Beverly
 Husband Buck Young
 Emily Emmaline Henry
 Elsie Effie Laird
 Cynthia Cynthia Robbins
 Mother Chris Fortune
 Mrs. Bongo Bob Williams
 Bongo Jack Mendes
 Mrs. Wolf Maxine Semon
 Wolf Bob Scheerer
 A Girl Mary Ann Niles
 John Krackjohn Emory Parnell
 Secretary Chris Fortune
 Joe Frank Orth
 1st Actor Buck Young
 2nd Actor Dick Scott
 Actress Barbara Logan
 Three Customers Lee Ledford,
 Dick Scott, Jerry Cardoni
 Hubert P. Troxel Authur Gilmour
 Cowdrick Bob Scheerer
 Announcer Bob Williams
 Mr. Tripleday Jan Avran
 The Girls Emmaline Henry,
 Chris Fortune, Barbara Logan
 Salesmen Jerry Cardoni,
 Buck Young, Dick Scott
 Sales Girls Jeanne Mahoney, Carol Plead
 Customer Jeannette Le Vere
 Store Manager Bob Williams
 College Boy Bob Scheerer
 Shy Girl Mary Ann Niles

Little Boy Blue is pleasant, and sometimes entertaining, but as it stands, is far from blowing its horn on Broadway. It lacks strength both in plot and score, but it's the latter that needs the hasty hypo. Furthermore, the present version is handicapped by a green cast. With the exception of a few competent vets and a couple of fine dancers, it is shy of the necessary talent to give it a proper trial. What does come to the surface is not too exciting.

Bobby Blue (Johnny Kirby) succeeds in passing himself off as radio's all-American boy for a breakfast food sponsor, but it takes a pretty news-hen (Carol Richards) to see thru the phony garb and Henry Aldrich voice. Before she can share this startling discovery with her readers, she falls in love with our hero. To make matters worse, the same sponsor signed him to a marriage-banning teevee contract, and he must either lose his impatient girl or return all the money to the sponsor that he had been paid during his years on the air. He nips his contractual ties by penning a best-selling sex thesis that out-Kinseys Kinsey.

Musicals have been known to stand up despite similarly implausible plots, but must have a strong score. There's nothing in this songbook for the customers to whistle on their way home. Such tunes as *It's Molly*, *By Golly* detract from the few more palatable ditties. Of the ballads, *A Year From Today*, *Lovely Autumn Day* and *I Can't Believe My Arms*, and of the novelties, *Knock on Wood* and the *Bartender's Song* (expertly handled by Frank Orth), could possibly stand a chance. But even these lyrics would have to be sharpened.

Both Johnny Kirby and Carol Richards are weak in the leads. Neither has sufficient acting know-how or a voice to handle the tune material. Miss Richards warms up a little towards the latter part of the first act, but Kirby remains stiff and ill at ease thruout. There are no others in the cast who can help shoulder the song load. Freshest offering of all comes from the dance department, with Bob Scheerer and Mary Ann

ROUTES

Dramatic and Musical

As You Like It, with Katherine Hepburn (Shubert) Philadelphia.
 Barrier, The (Gayety) Washington.
 Brigadoon (Metropolitan) Providence, R. I., 25-26; (Aud.) Worcester, Mass., 27; (State) Portland, Me., 28-30.
 Burning Bright (Shubert) New Haven, Conn., 28-30.
 Call Me Madame (Shubert) Boston.
 Come Back, Little Sheba (Erlanger) Chicago.
 Curious Savage, The (Wilbur) Boston.
 Death of a Salesman (Capitol) Salt Lake City, 25-26; (Aud.) Pueblo, Colo., 28; (Chief) Colorado Springs 29; (Mackey Aud.) Boulder 30.
 Devil's Disciple, with Maurice Evans (Blitmore) Los Angeles.
 Diamond Lil, with Mae West (Blackstone) Chicago.
 Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Curran) San Francisco.
 Innocents, The (Harris) Chicago.
 Kiss Me Kate (Ford's) Baltimore.
 Lady From Paris (Erlanger) Philadelphia.
 Legend of Sarah (Locust St.) Philadelphia.
 Lend an Ear (Cass) Detroit.
 Lost in the Stars (Philharmonic Aud.) Los Angeles.
 Mr. Roberts (Forrest) Philadelphia.
 Oklahoma (Colonial) Boston.
 Olsen & Johnson (Boston Opera House) Boston.
 South Pacific (Kiel Aud.) St. Louis.
 Texas, Lil Darlin (Great Northern) Chicago.
 Two Blind Mice (Erlanger) Buffalo 25-28; (Aud.) Rochester, N. Y., 29-30.

PETER PAN PRODUCER

(Continued from opposite page)
 that this is an evil, whoever practices it. Nothing would please the perpetrators of a blacklist more than to have people blacklist themselves. Taking this a step further, I should imagine that I would be against blacklisting if the government practiced it. America was founded by people who objected to taxation without representation by a government, and civil war was fought against State government's condoning the practice of slavery.

So it seems incumbent upon the trade unions in our industry to take a strong, firm, united stand against this deprivation of the right to work—from wherever it stems. The Authors' League of America, parent body of all major writers' unions in America, has, I believe, correctly, come out strongly against any establishment of "loyalty boards" within the unions. Such loyalty boards not only transfer this evil into the people's own hands but gravely weaken the unity of any trade union which participates.

THE AMAZING ADELE

(Continued from opposite page)
 one hypo for Broadway b. o. blues. Already ticketed for the Stem, the comedy should have a long and prosperous stay.

Kanin's character comedy is an adaptation of a French farce. Tho s. r. o. for many years in Paris, the story is paperweight, but the central character is so delightful and fresh that her impact on the funnybone is immediate. Faced with a servant problem, a not-so-Gallic family hires this gem. Before 24 hours have elapsed Adele, a maid who can prophesy the future, turns the entire house upside down.

Kanin's writing, structure and comic lines are clever, but without Miss Gordon's gift for comedy the play would lose much of its impact. As the wife and husband, Linda Watkins and Donald McClelland turn in two more strong comic portraits. Miss Watkins especially, seems to have a natural zany quality. In a small part Naomi Riordan establishes herself as a first-rate ingenue. And Ron Randell, whose slight British accent is a handicap, does well as the object of Adele's affection.

Kanin's pacing makes for the most in laughs. The set, a living room in a middle-class French apartment, executed by Herbert Gahagan, catches the spirit of its inhabitants.

Leon Morse.

Niles providing excellent terpsing. Louis Da Pron's choreography and Rita Glover's settings provide gloss to an otherwise ho-hum vehicle. George Murphy's direction is unable to overcome a slow start, but keeps the pace on the up-beat thereafter. *Lee Zitto.*