

Allan Sherman's "Fig Leaves Are Falling" Falls Short

By Jack Gaver

NEW YORK (UPI)—Unlike most musicals, "The Fig Leaves Are Falling" Thursday's opening at the Broadhurst theater, finishes with a strong second half, which is certainly a plus.



SHERMAN

It will depend upon the individual whether that is enough to make up for a somewhat tepid first act that has flashes of antic humor now and then but doesn't really ignite. I found it not quite sufficient, although enjoying the last act to a considerable extent.

The show, presented by Joseph Harris, Lawrence Carr and John Bowab, is an original created by Allan Sherman, with Albert Hague supplying the music.

Sherman is the chubby fellow well known to night club and television audiences as the author and interpreter of comedy parodies, several of which have become hit recordings.

Last Fling

Sherman, using one of the oldest of drama gambits — the fortyish husband seeking a last fling with a young woman — has to be credited for trying to turn out a musical that does not fit the ordinary mold. In this he has had

valuable help from the veteran director, George Abbott.

Some speeches, especially by the hero, played with his usual skill and personal appeal by Barry Nelson, are directed at the audience. The old blackout technique of the revue is used occasionally.

When given a chance Eddie Gasper has staged the dances and musical numbers with as much verve as the script will permit.

After a while you are aware that Sherman isn't going to come through with anything particularly daring or witty in his stress on the theme of shedding sexual inhibitions. So you have to settle, if you will, for several fetching songs, pleasing both as to melody and lyrics, some funny bits of stage business and the over-all pleasing talent of the performers.

Miss Loudon

Nelson plays Harry Stone, an executive with a wife he married 20 years ago and a teenaged daughter and son. Suddenly he feels that the struggle for success has overwhelmed him, that he has

a right to live before it is too late. This he proceeds to do with a young secretary, who is a free-soul type, but you know how it winds up.

Perhaps the show itself is its own best (or worst) critic. You realize this in the second act when matters really begin to sparkle, and Dorothy Loudon, who plays the wife, really gets a chance to show her captivating abilities as a comedienne and belting singer.

A Darling

Jenny O'Hara is a darling as the secretary, and Kenneth Kimmins is strong talent as a sort of Madison avenue roue. Others in important roles include Jay Barney, Louise Quick, David Cassidy, Alan Weeks, Marilyn Mason and Anna Pagan.

Songs to watch for are "The Fig Leaves Are Falling", "Today I Saw a Rose", "Light One Candle", "For the Rest of My Life", "I Like It", "All My Laughter", "Did I Ever Really Live", "Old-Fashioned Song" and "Lillian, Lillian, Lillian".

William and Jean Eckart, sets, and Robert Mackintosh, costumes, designed the show.

Other Critics

Richard Watts, jr., New York Post: "... it is reasonably agreeable in its modest way, and has a show-stopping performance by Dorothy Loudon in one of its three central roles, but it otherwise fails to achieve anything exciting in entertainment value."

John Chapman, Daily News: "... 'The Fig Leaves' is a pleasant show with pleasant people for pleasant audiences."

Clive Barnes, New York Times: "... there is nothing

much wrong with the show... that a new book, new music, new lyrics, new settings, new direction, new choreography and a partially new cast would not quite possibly put right... Sherman's jokes are so feeble that they are too boring to write down and too unmemorable to remember."