

'Fig Leaves' Opens in N.Y.; Glaringly Lacks Wit, Taste

By WILLIAM GLOVER
AP Drama Critic

NEW YORK (AP) — A musical about marital mixup, "The Fig Leaves Are Falling," opened Thursday night at the Broadhurst theater and awarded a roast chicken to one customer in a drawing. There was plenty of turkey for everyone else.

George Abbott, dean of Broadway showmen, has directed the oom-pa-pa pace that cannot atone for some dreadful absence of wit or taste.

The production—and a lavish one it is with sets, costumes and flower-power doilies around the spotlights—gets into swinging high gear sporadically when Dorothy Loudon hits stage center and takes over.

Miss Loudon Energetic

Miss Loudon, best known on the night club beat, has a distinctively comic, diffidently arrogant style, brassy pipes and awesome energy. As the wife in Allan Sherman's story of the eternal triangle, she strives bravely but then blessedly gets four songs that deserve the tidal waves of applause that developed.

Her starring partner, Barry Nelson, officiates as the spouse torn between the good gray life of suburbia and the kooky charms of a miniskirt lass with his familiar low-key authority, panting uphill steadily against the weak little jokes and obvious complications.

Sherman, in his first musical stint after all those song take-offs that he's been punching out for several years, is better at lyrics for Albert Hague's score than as author of the book, which has been largely used up by intermission.

Tunes Have Zip

In addition to Miss Loudon's specials, there are a half dozen other melodies with diverting zip if no noticeable originality.

As the young temptress, Jenny O'Hara exhibits wax-faced exuberance and one of those throaty voices that refuse to stay on key, so who cares?

Kenneth Kimmins, a newcomer to Broadway with a face filled with teeth and a bravado manner, comes on strong as the interloper who first leads the company through some lurid hippie capers and then becomes the squarest of squares.

Another newcomer is adolescent David Cassidy, whose father Jack is performing up the block in "Maggie Flynn." Not bad.

Lists Credits

Choreography by Eddie Gasper is best in a love-in interlude; credit the settings to William and Jean Eckart, costumes to Robert Mackintosh.

The winner, by the way, of the fishbowl drawing for that plastic wrapped chicken, was Mildred Hunter of Sarasota, Fla. The episode had something to do with the plot. Integrated involvement, you might say.

What other press critics said: **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."