



Two on the Aisle

A Colorful but Confused Show Based on 'Beggar's Opera'

By Richard Watts Jr.

It is not altogether easy to tell why "Beggar's Holiday," the Duke Ellington-John Latouche musical show based on "The Beggar's Opera," is not more satisfying an entertainment. Certainly it is not enough to report that things seem to have gone wrong with it from the start, that there were

east changes up to the last moment, and that several well-known directors have had at it so unhappily that the production opened at the Broadway Theatre last night with the name of none of them attached to it. These are the symptoms, rather than the causes, of the disappointment.

As it is, there is so much that is good about it. It has a great deal of colorful atmosphere and considerable excitement; the Duke Ellington music is attractive if rather reminiscent; the Latouche lyrics are intelligent and the book has its points; the dancing which Valerie Betts has staged is vigorous and striking; the people of the cast are agreeable. On all of these points, this very freehand version of the John Gay classic is above the average.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to escape the impression that the evening doesn't come off. For one thing, it takes too long to get started and, for me, appeared rather too complex in its opening scene. For another, it never quite makes up its mind whether to be social satire, melodramatic burlesque or just plain musical extravaganza, and while such an objection may seem academic it is justified by the confusion of treatment displayed in the show. **Not Slavish**

Anyway, "Beggar's Holiday" cannot be accused of trying to be a slavish paraphrase of the original "Beggar's Opera." Save in the names, morals and professional activities of its characters and the general sardonic rejoicing over the amabilities of vice and crime, the similarities between them are by no means excessive.

The current version of the plot spends a lot of time, I am afraid, on the misadventures in love and crime of Macheath, now a dashing young gang leader in an American city. He gets into trouble with two corrupt gentlemen named Peachum and Lockit, jilts their two pretty daughters, as well as a dubious young woman named Jenny, and is about to be electrocuted for something when the book stops, and he is relieved to join the three girls who love him.

It isn't a bad plot, as musical comedy narratives go, but it is hampered by the confusion of purposes I have suggested, and it often gets in the way of the musical numbers and the dances just when they are going well. I much preferred the show when, for example, it forgot the book and

'Beggar's Holiday'

A musical in two acts and 13 scenes, based on John Gay's "The Beggar's Opera" opened last night at the Broadway Theatre. The musical comedy had its music written by Duke Ellington and its book and lyrics were by John Latouche. The book was directed by Nicholas Ray, the production was designed by Oliver Smith, costumes by Walter Floren and the technical supervision and lighting were performed by Peggy Clark. The choreography was by Valerie Betts and the musical director was Max Meth. Orchestration was under the personal supervision of Billy Strayhorn.

Included in the cast were Zero Mostel, Bernice Parks, Avon Long, Mildred Smith, Jet MacDonald and Marie Bryant.

went in for some fine singing and dancing in a hobo jungle. Then "Beggar's Holiday" is really good.

Among the Players

As the irresistible Macheath, Alfred Drake, who is still remembered from "Oklahoma!" sings attractively, plays disarmingly enough and looks even more like Orson Welles than ever. By far his most important support from the men of the cast comes from Avon Long, of "Porgy and Bess," who continues to be one of the most winning dancers and comedians available in this vicinity.

Of the girls, my first enthusiasm went to Mildred Smith, the only pleasant memory of the recent Negro "Lysistrata," who is delightful as the third of Macheath's jilted loves. The second of the jolly fellow's girls is attractively played by the blonde Jet MacDonald, and the first of at least his major romances, the lady who keeps the bordello, is well enough managed by Bernice

AMUSEMENTS

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A NEW MUSICAL OPERETTA by HARRY SCHACHTER
by SHERI GALT and JESSIE COHEN
with the NEW YORK CAST
BROOKLYN ART THEATRE
Brooklyn 44th St. & East 18th St.
Brooklyn - 4-8100

ALFRED DRAKE in BEGGAR'S HOLIDAY
A New Musical in the American idiom with ZERO MOSTEL
BERNICE PARKS - AVON LONG
Mildred Smith Jet MacDonald Marie Bryant
Music by DUKE ELLINGTON JOHN LATOUCHE
BROADWAY Theatre, 53rd St. & Broadway
Eves. at 8:30 - \$1.50 to \$1.20, Matinees
TOM'W & Wed. at 2:30 - \$1.00 to \$1.20
NEW YEAR'S EVE PRICES - \$2.40 to \$1.50

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LEO FUCHS
Nathan & Rose Jacob & Betty
GOLDBERG-JACOBS
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Every Eve. (incl. Sun.) Mats. Sat. & Sun.

"Packs A Wallop!" - Hawkins, War.-Tele.
JOSEPH M. HYMAN & BERNARD HART present
MOSS HART'S New Play
CHRISTOPHER BLAKE
WHEPPER MARTHA RICHARD
STUDWICK SLEEPER TITLER
AND A CAST OF FIFTY
MUSIC BOX THEATRE 45 St. W. of B'way
Eves. 8:30 Sharp. Mats. TOM'W & Thurs. 2:40 Sharp

"A Happy Village"
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Parks, although it is not hard to see why Libby Holman didn't enjoy the role. The songs I remember most pleasantly are "Tooth and Claw," "The Wrong Side of the Railroad Tracks" and, I believe, "Tomorrow Mountain," and there must certainly be a word for the excellent atmospheric sets of Oliver Smith. There is, as you can see, a lot to praise in "Beggar's Holiday," and I would even include Zero Mostel, as a comic scoundrel, if he didn't work with such fatiguing effort. But the show just doesn't work out.

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"Jubilant & Joyful" - Brown, Sat. Eve. of LT
RODDERS & HAMMERSTEIN present
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ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Music and Lyrics by IRVING BERLIN
Book by HERBERT & DOROTHY FIELDS
with RAY MIDDLETON
Directed by Joshua Logan
IMPERIAL THEATRE 45th St. West of B'way
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A New Musical in the American idiom with ZERO MOSTEL
BERNICE PARKS - AVON LONG
Mildred Smith Jet MacDonald Marie Bryant
Music by DUKE ELLINGTON JOHN LATOUCHE
BROADWAY Theatre, 53rd St. & Broadway
Eves. at 8:30 - \$1.50 to \$1.20, Matinees
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Harold Rome Arnold Aschbach Robert H. Gordon
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Eves. 8:30, Sat. 4:45, 8:30, 2:40, 1:00, 1:30
Mats. TOM'W & Jan. 19:2:30: \$1.50, 2, 40, 1, 50, 1:20

"Packs A Wallop!" - Hawkins, War.-Tele.
JOSEPH M. HYMAN & BERNARD HART present
MOSS HART'S New Play
CHRISTOPHER BLAKE
WHEPPER MARTHA RICHARD
STUDWICK SLEEPER TITLER
AND A CAST OF FIFTY
MUSIC BOX THEATRE 45 St. W. of B'way
Eves. 8:30 Sharp. Mats. TOM'W & Thurs. 2:40 Sharp

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Book by Kennedy JOHNSON - Lyrics by KAUFMAN
Lyrics by KAUFMAN
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2 SHOWS SUNDAY 2:30
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SHOW BOAT
Music by IEROME KERN
Book & Lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN 2d
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Staged by HASSARD SHORT
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BEATRICE ALAN VICKI
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