

FIRST NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

'Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,' With Carol Channing, at the Ziegfeld

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Happy days are here again. The musical version of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," which lighted the Ziegfeld last evening, is a vastly enjoyable song-and-dance antic put on with humorous perfection. Millions of people doted on Anita Loos' comic fable when it appeared as a play in 1926 with a memorable cast and the laughs pitched fairly low in the diaphragm.

Fortunately they are going to have an opportunity to enjoy it again in a thoroughly fresh treatment. For Miss Loos and Joseph Fields have now fitted it to the formula of an old-fashioned rowdy-dowed with Tin Pan Alley tunes by Jule Styne and some brassy and amusing lyrics by Leo Robin.

Staged expertly in a festive manner by John C. Wilson, it brings back a good many familiar delights to a street that has been adding art to the musical stage for quite a long time. But thanks to the clowning of Carol Channing, it also brings us something new and refreshing. Let's call her portrait of the aureate Lee the most fabulous comic creation of this dreary period in history.

You will recall Lorelei Lee as the flapper gold-digger who made her way through masculine society with a good deal of success in the Twenties. In Miss Channing's somewhat sturdier image, Lorelei's rapacious innocence is uproariously amusing. Made-up to resemble a John Held creature, she goes through the play like a dazed automaton—husky enough to kick in the teeth of any gentleman on the stage, but mincing coyly in high-heel shoes and looking out on a confused world through big, wide, starry eyes. There has never been anything like this before in human society.

Miss Channing can also act a part with skill and relish. They have given her a funny autobiographical ballad, "A Little Girl From Little Rock," which she translates into a roaringly entertaining number. She has something original and grotesque to contribute to every number. She can also speak the cock-eyed dialogue with droll inflections. Her Lorelei is a mixture of cynicism and stupidity that will keep New York in good spirits all winter.

Having good taste in general, the producers of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" have hired Yvonne Adair to appear with Miss Channing as Dorothy, the more cautious brunette; and Jack McCauley to play the part of Lorelei's protector. Since they are both expert performers with a sense of humor, this turns out to be very happy casting.



"A kiss on the hand may make you feel very good, but a diamond bracelet lasts forever."—Carol Channing, left, expounds her philosophy to Yvonne Adair in a scene from "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes."

The Cast

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES, a new musical comedy. Book by Joseph Fields and Anita Loos, based on the latter's novel. Music by Jule Styne; lyrics by Leo Robin; dances and ensembles by Agnes de Mille; production designed by Oliver Smith; costumes designed by Miles White; musical direction by Milton Rosenstock; musical arrangements by Don Walker; vocal direction and arrangements by Hugh Martin; lighting by Peggy Clark; entire production staged by John C. Wilson; produced by Herman Levin and Mr. Smith. At the Ziegfeld Theatre.

Dorothy Shaw	Yvonne Adair
A Steward	Jerry Craig
Lorelei Lee	Carol Channing
Gus Esmond	Jack McCauley
Frank	Robert Cooper
George	Eddie Weston
Lady Phyllis Beekman	Reta Shaw
Sir Francis Beekman	Rex Evans
Mrs. Ella Spofford	Alice Pearce
Deck Stewards	Bob Burkhardt
	Shelton Lewis
Henry Spofford	Eric Brotherson
An Olympic	Curt Stafford
Josephus Gage	George S. Irving
Pierre	Bob Neukum
Bill	Peter Birch
Gloria Stark	Anita Alvarez
Taxi Driver	Kazimir Kokic
Leon	Peter Holmes
Robert Lemanteur	Mort Marshall
Louis Lemanteur	Howard Morris
A Flower Girl	Nicole France
Maitre d'Hotel	Crandall Diehl
Zizi	Judy Sinclair
Fifi	Hope Zee
Coles and Atkins	Themselves
The Tenor	William Krach
Policeman	William Diehl
Headwaiter	Kazimir Kokic
Mr. Esmond Sr.	Irving Mitchell

A pleasure-mad, teetering old lady by Alice Pearce; a handsome, genteel young man from Philadelphia by Eric Brotherson; a philandering Britisher by Rex Evans, and an indecently healthy zipper manufacturer by George S. Irving—round

out the principal performers of a singularly affable cast.

Although the tone of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" is old-fashioned, the spirit is modern and the pace is swift. Oliver Smith has provided a suite of good travelogue settings, combining the best features of New York and Paris. And Miles White has designed stunning costumes with a humorous accent.

Agnes de Mille has done the ballets with a light touch—managing somehow to combine precision dancing with gay improvisations in her pleasant folk style. Anita Alvarez sweeps in and out of the show with a whole series of impish dances, performing one of the best with Kazimir Kokic. As a matter of fact, there is a lot of entertaining and expert dancing through the many scenes of this plausible burlesque of one of the most ancient rackets of the world.

Every part of it is alive and abundantly entertaining. And above it all towers the blonde thatch of Miss Channing, who is batting her big eyes, murdering the English language and carrying the whole golden world along with her by sheer audacity. "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" was always funny. It is even funnier, now that the lustrous Miss Channing has taken such a strangle hold on the part.