



Coping with a gambler husband

Delightful Miss Gynt

By A. E. WILSON

FORTUNE CAME SMILING at the Vaudeville Theatre, is mainly concerned with a rising playwright's hopeless addiction to gambling and the efforts of his beautiful young wife to wean him off the habit. This places him in an awkward situation engineered by a gangster.

Hugh Williams is the playwright and Greta Gynt the wife, but George Barraud, the author, has neglected to provide them with anything that allows them to express any genuine emotion or feeling. A string of improbabilities ends with reconciliation, reformation and an explanation that defies belief.

Miss Gynt looks ravishing in a succession of delightful dresses and Hugh Williams appears casual and worried. The only relief was when David Hutcheson in a tedious role, referred to an impresario character named Max Murray as "Max Miller" – an excusable slip of the tongue that raised the one loud laugh of the evening.

(16 March 1951)



John Mills and Joyce Heron.

A Buoyant John Mills

By A. E. WILSON

DOUBTLESS it would be possible to contrive more complex play than Andre Roussin's "Figure of Fun" at the Aldwych Theatre but it would need much ingenuity to invent anything quite so original and diverting.

Much praise must go to Arthur Macrae for wittily adapting this long-running Parisian success which, with delightful incoherence, mingles the stage and private lives of its actors in a succession of scenes.

At one time, John Mills is performing the stage role of jilted bridegroom and a little later is found coping with a similar situation in his domestic life. After which we revert to the play in a third act, which is so full of inconsequences and surprises that many of the lines are drowned in laughter. But there are quite enough to spare. John Mills gives a performance of the utmost buoyancy and rueful humour. He keeps this featherweight nonsense alive with perfect ease and resource backed up by the comical dismay and nervousness of Arthur Macrae, by the varied talents of Joyce Heron, Brenda Bruce, Viola Lyel, Lana Morris and Natasha Parry and by the stammering absurdity of Peter Bull as a radio interviewer.

(17 October 1951)



Diana Churchill hears unpleasant news.

His Own Life

By A. E. WILSON

EMELYN WILLIAMS plays this odious character with a mixture of childlike unawareness of iniquity and a boastful assertion of the artist's right to lead his own life. It is a skilfully acted but unpleasant study of moral degeneracy with a firm and relentless air of genuine feeling. There is a painful scene in which the father confesses the incidents of his shame to his child, a part played with rare intelligence by John Cavanah. I cannot think of any excuse for delving into so much squalor, and from me the attempt to defend such an extravagantly drawn character wins no sympathy.

Incredible as are many of the people the play is extremely well performed. You may not believe in the acquiescent wife but you recognise the sensitive beauty of Diana Churchill's acting. Anthony Oliver, Anthony Nicholls, John Stratton and Dora Bryan depict the novelist's strange assortment of friends and Noel Willman's blackmailer is alarmingly creepy.

(8 September 1950)



Charwoman and wayward son.

Play to Stir the Heart

Galsworthy's "The Silver Box" is revived at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, with an excellent cast (writes A. E. Wilson).

It is hard to remain dry-eyed with such a touching performance as Kathleen Harrison gives as the down-trodden charwoman wrongfully accused of theft. Sidney James makes the rough and sullen resentment of the out-of-work husband positively alarming. Frederick Leister and Marjorie Fielding represent the smug satisfaction of upper class virtue and respectability, and Peter Hammond as son is sufficiently weak as the other culprit who escapes the consequences of theft because of class privilege. There is a delightful sketch by Gabrielle Brune as "the unknown lady" and Henry Hewitt as the tired magistrate confers an air of realism on the court scene.

(1 February 1951)



Vera Lynn, singer of sincerity.

Palladium Fireworks

By A. E. WILSON

WHAT Val Parnell's "Peep Show" offers at the London Palladium is a super variety programme blended with the colour, liveliness and glitter of a firework display into high-speed revue.

No sooner have the swift-footed Tiller Girls decorated the scene than leaping acrobats perform whirlwind feats, extravagantly clad gipsies sing their haunting lays, Edmundo Ros and his Rhumba Band discourse exotic melodies with the Skyrockets Orchestra to add to the congenial clamour.

There, are also such other delights as Harmonica players and an exhilarating display of Neapolitan Dancing and melody, with Gillian Lynne and Malcolm Goddard to give the expert touch, as well as more acrobats and singers.

Vera Lynn, one of the stars, sings her simple tunes with all her customary appeal and sincerity and Jack Jackson keeps on appearing with japes and gags and trumpet playing.

But for many, chief joy of this vigorously entertaining show is the three Wiere Brothers, who are continuously droll with their playing, gagging, grimacing and general foolery, all delightfully done with original humour, neatness, briskness and perfect timing.

(31 October 1951)