

DRAMA:

Three Summer Musicals — All of Them Feeble

THE SUMMER SEASON brought to Broadway only three major productions, all of them musicals and all of them, alas, several miles removed from brilliance. The most popular seems to be *The Streets of Paris*, which will probably be running long after the fall season opens. A collection of vaudeville skits rather than a play, and with the thinnest of stories binding them together, it was written largely by Tom McKnight, Charles Sherman, S. Jay Kaufman, Harold J. Rome, and Al Dubin. Jimmy McHugh composed most of the music. The performers include the celebrated Bobby Clark, Luella Gear, the team of Abbott & Costello, and the new South American importation, Carmen Miranda.

Of the sketches little can be said. They will bring back pleasant personal memories to men and women who frequented variety houses twenty years ago, but few such former fans will find much of a lift in them now. The least effective and most unoriginal sketch, "History Is Made At Night," by Mr. Rome, is acutely embarrassing, while the best, "That's Music," by Mr. Sherman, owes its appeal to the superb acting of Abbott & Costello rather than to the script. Miss Gear, who has achieved a reputation as something of a comedian, left at least one observer wondering what all the shouting was about. The music, on the whole, is very humdrum.

A word about Carmen Miranda, who closes Act One with the singing of a half dozen South American songs. The present reviewer must report that the Miranda, as an artist, is ordinary stuff. Whatever charm and voice

she may have are duplicated by at least a hundred veteran night club singers and dancers in Manhattan.

FEEBLE AS *The Streets of Paris* is, *Yokel Boy* (music and lyrics by Lew Brown, Charlie Tobias, and Sam H. Stept) is even less appetizing. Describing it presents difficulties, for Mr. Brown, who is also the producer, apparently saw fit to include everything, from a cheap gloss upon American Revolutionary times to the stalest retelling of the woes of life in Hollywood. The very able Buddy Ebsen does his dolorous dancing very well, but the script and commonplace music manage to get in his way too often, and the excellent Judy Canova has similar troubles. Altogether a bewildering, dull evening.

From Vienna, a musical revue by the Refugee Artists Group, has brought before the New York public some first-rate acting, but unfortunately the skits are not timed to American audiences. They are too long and not sufficiently pointed, even when the ideas, especially in "Garden of Eden," contain considerable merit. One skit, "Little Ballerina," a satire upon interpretive dancing, has received much praise, and rightly so. It has sharpness and pace, and the very charming and gifted Illa Roden does magnificently by it. One hopes that in their next production the Refugee Group will come nearer to the American way in the theatre.

CHARLES ANGOFF

CINEMA:

Weak Summer Productions
— *Music on the Screen*

AT THE FIRST SIGN of Summer there is always a long, low moan from the cinema capital. Audiences fall off, the box office suffers terribly from the heat, and it is necessary, due to excessive production costs, to withhold the showing of the major efforts till fall. A lighter and less costly fare is released for hot weather showing.

This would be amusing if those who control the industry didn't seem really to mean it. It is amusing when one considers that the Summer output is not below the standard of any other season. The only difference lies in the absence of super-super type productions, and super-super names.

When the industry spends three times the money necessary on a film it naturally needs three times the audience to show a profit. It needs three times as long for publicity campaigns with which to work the public and the daily press into a four banzai fever before release.

If this were money and effort invested in excellence it would be excusable; as an exemplification of the old theory "spend money to make money" regardless of its contribution to quality, it becomes ridiculous. The same nonsense will be released late next Spring.

There has been a diminution in quantity from foreign sources. The Soviet Union came through with some fine contributions, as usual. Great Britain offers us several films not below her customary grade. The only noticeable lack, and a lamentable one, is that of any entries from France. Since the continued imminence of war, the stiffening censorship and the curtailing of the parliamen-