

The Theater: 'Enter Laughing'

Really Funny Comedy Opens in New York

By **HOWARD TAUBMAN**
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Let's not waste time on ifs, buts and maybes. "Enter Laughing" is marvelously funny, and so is Alan Arkin in the principal role.

The major complaint against the new play that pranced into Henry Miller's Theater Wednesday night is that it doesn't provide enough rest periods between side-splitting laughs. Even an uproarious farce ought to be more considerate of the customer's staying powers.

"Enter Laughing" is the work of Joseph Stein, who based it on a novel by Carl Reiner, a comic fellow in his own right when he supported Sid Caesar in his halcyon days on television.

The play recounts the mad adventures of David Kolowitz, a young man who decides to follow his inner voice and become an actor. His parents, played by Sylvia Sydney and Marty Greene as a couple who have the conventional characteristics of Jewish parents in familiar comedies, want him to be a druggist. His boss, who is also drawn along conventional theatrical lines as part Jewish philosopher and part Jewish clown, and played with relish by Irving Jacobson, wants him to be a responsible errand boy. David defies them all and enrolls in an acting school.

One keeps recalling irresistible moments. There's one in which Mr. Arkin tries on his rented tailcoat and top hat and uses grease to make a mustache. At this point the boss walks in.

Mr. Arkin's neatly calculated mugging in the acting studio is priceless. The love scenes with the old actor's daughter, played sinuously by Vivian Blaine, are splendid caricatures of emoting. The domestic scenes, though predictable, are diverting. With Meg Miles, Mr. Arkin is an office Lothario, and with the young woman's date, played with proper bewilderment by Monroe Arnold, there is a lunatic business about costumes. With Barbara Dana as David's best girl, Mr. Arkin has some amusing romantic scenes.

Broadway does this sort of



Werner J. Kuhn

Sylvia Sydney, Alan Arkin in scene from "Enter Laughing"

The Cast

ENTER LAUGHING, a comedy by Joseph Stein, based on Carl Reiner's novel. Staged by Gene Saks; presented by Morton Gottlieb; production designed by Ed Wittstein; production stage manager, Del Hughes. At Henry Miller's Theater, 124 W. 43rd Street.

Mr. Foreman	Irving Jacobson
David Kolowitz	Alan Arkin
Marvin	Michael J. Pollard
Miss B	Meg Miles
Pike	Charles Randall
Don Baxter	Pierre Epstein
Don Darwin	Walt Wanderman
Marlowe	Alan Mowbray
Angela	Vivian Blaine
Mrs. Kalowitz	Sylvia Sydney
Mr. Kalowitz	Marty Greene
Wanda	Barbara Dana
Waiter	Shimen Ruskin
Roger	Monroe Arnold
Lawyer	Tom Gorman

play, which reminds one of the uninhibited farces of yesteryear, like a dream. Gene Saks's staging is inventive and swiftly paced inside Ed Wittstein's flexible and cheerful sets.

What an acting school! It is run by Alan Mowbray as a seedy old actor for any small sums he can extract from his students. It puts on deathless epics, not far removed from "East Lynn," with the old actor's daughter as the leading lady, a kind of stock-company femme fatale.

These characters and some others David meets and communes with are drawn broadly, as is proper in a farce. But no matter how exaggerated the situation or the action, there is always a firm link to recognizable human beings.

David has a friend who works in the same building. Marvin, as played by Michael J. Pollard, looks like a cupid who strolled out of an old painting and became an apprentice in New York. He and Mr. Arkin have several scenes in which they sit and examine life and love, scenes that might be out of Tarkington, if Tarkington knew New York's Jewish milieu.

Mr. Arkin, who was one of the talented band of comedians in the review, "From the Second City," has a field day as a young man entering the mysteries of acting. His variations on the initial phrase he copes with, which is, naturally, enter laughing, is a choice specimen of a shrewd actor ribbing his profession.