

# THE PLAY

## 'You Can't Take It With You,' According to Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman.

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU, a "farical comedy" in three acts, by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. Staging by Mr. Kaufman; settings by Donald Oenslager; produced by Sam H. Harris. At the Booth Theatre.

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|------------------------|------------------|
| Penelope Sycamore..... | Josephine Hull   |
| Essie .....            | Paula Trueman    |
| Rheba .....            | Ruth Attaway     |
| Paul Sycamore.....     | Frank Wilcox     |
| Mr. De Pinna.....      | Frank Conlan     |
| Ed .....               | George Heller    |
| Donald .....           | Oscar Polk       |
| Martin Vanderhof.....  | Henry Travers    |
| Alice .....            | Margot Stevenson |
| Henderson .....        | Hugh Rennie      |
| Tony Kirby .....       | Jess Barker      |
| Boris Kolenkhov.....   | George Tobias    |
| Gay Wellington.....    | Mitzi Hajos      |
| Mr. Kirby.....         | William J. Kelly |
| Mrs. Kirby.....        | Virginia Hammond |
| Three Men { .....      | George Leach     |
| { .....                | Ralph Holmes     |
| { .....                | Franklin Heller  |
| Olga .....             | Anna Lubow       |

BY BROOKS ATKINSON

Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman have written their most thoroughly ingratiating comedy, "You Can't Take It With You," which was put on at the Booth last evening. It is a study in vertigo about a lovable family of hobby-horse riders, funny without being shrill, sensible without being earnest. In "Once in a Lifetime" Mr. Hart and Mr. Kaufman mowed the audience down under a machine-gun barrage of low comedy satire, which was the neatest trick of the season. But you will find their current lark a much more spontaneous piece of hilarity; it is written with a dash of affection to season the humor and played with gayety and simple good spirit. To this column, which has a fondness for amiability in the theatre, "You Can't Take It With You" is the best comedy these authors have written.

To people from the punctilious world outside, the Vanderhof and Sycamore tribes appear to be lunatics. For thirty-five years, grandfather has done nothing but hunt snakes, practice dart throwing, attend commencement exercises and avoid income tax payments. His son-in-law makes fireworks for a hobby in the cellar; various members of the family write plays, study dancing, play the xylophone and operate amateur printing presses. Being mutually loyal they live together in a state of pleasant comity in spite of their separate hobbies. If Alice Sycamore had not fallen in

love with the son of a Wall Street banker there would be no reason for this comedy. The contrast between his austere world and their rhymeless existence in a cluttered room supplies the heartburn and the humor. By the time of the final curtain even the banker is convinced that there is something to be said for riding hobbies and living according to impulse in the bosom of a friendly family.

Not that "You Can't Take It With You" is a moral harangue. For Mr. Hart and Mr. Kaufman are fantastic humorists with a knack for extravagances of word and episode and an eye for hilarious incongruities. Nothing this scrawny season has turned up is quite so madcap as a view of the entire Sycamore tribe working at their separate hobbies simultaneously. When Mr. Kirby of Wall Street and the Racquet Club walks into their living-room asylum his orderly head reels with anguish. The amenities look like bedlam to him. What distinguishes "You Can't Take It With You" among the Hart-Kaufman enterprises is the buoyancy of the humor. They do not bear down on it with wisecracks. Although they plan it like good comedy craftsmen, they do not exploit it like gag-men.

And they have assembled a cast of actors who are agreeable folks to sit before during a gusty evening. As grandfather, Henry Travers, the salty and reflective one, is full of improvised enjoyment. Josephine Hull totters and wheedles through the part of a demented homebody. As a ferocious-minded Moscovite, George Tobias roars through the room. Under Mr. Kaufman's direction, which can be admirably relaxed as well as guffawingly taut, every one gives a jovial performance—Paula Trueman, Frank Wilcox, George Heller, Mitzi Hajos, Margot Stevenson, Oscar Polk. Well, just read the cast. The setting is by Donald Oenslager, as usual.

When a problem of conduct raises its head for a fleeting instant in the Sycamore family, grandfather solves it with a casual nod of philosophy, "So long as she's having fun." Mr. Hart and Mr. Kaufman have been more rigidly brilliant in the past, but they have never scooped up an evening of such tickling fun.