

Do YOU Suffer from

**NERVE
and
MUSCULAR
PAIN?**

HEADACHE?
SCIATICA?
NEURALGIA?
RHEUMATISM?

THOUSANDS TAKE VINCENT'S TABLETS

Once you take Vincent's you, too, will realise how wonderfully they relieve pain. Vincent's Tablets are a scientific combination of Aspirin and Phenacetin, and absolutely safe and dependable for relief from headaches, neuralgia, rheumatism, and sciatica. Remember — genuine Vincent's Tablets are pink, obtainable from all chemists and stores.

Trade mark owned by
Vincent Chemical Co. Pty. Ltd.
76-78 Liverpool St.,
Sydney, N.S.W.



Salmond & Spraggon Ltd., Wellington.
Registered User.

3.4

MURDER FOR FUN AND FOR PROFIT

"Arsenic and Old Lace" Seems Queer Fare For War Time

WHAT special quality does a play need to catch and hold audiences all over the world for week after week and month after month in the middle of a war? Though it would be a bold person who would try to give a final answer to that question, most people would probably be inclined to say hilarious farce, emotional drama, or domestic sentiment—but not a farce that turns on 13 murders committed by two charming old maiden aunts. Yet in "Arsenic And Old Lace" that is what does the trick.

Since this famous play is now being presented in New Zealand by a touring company, many of our readers will be interested in this account of its history, written by Russel Crouse, one of the two original Broadway producers, and condensed from "Life."

LATE in the afternoon of January 10, 1941, a few hours before the curtain rose on the first New York performance of Joseph Kesselring's *Arsenic and Old Lace*, Mr. Howard Lindsay, who is known as the charming member of the firm of Lindsay and Crouse, shook my trembling hand and said:

"We have not long to wait. It is my studied conviction that we either have a very big hit or we will both be run out of town."

He vanished into the dusk. With a hasty glance over each shoulder I hurried home, instructed my man to lay out my running pants, and took a hurried look through my dog-eared copy of the elder James' (*Jesse*, not *Henry*) *Posses and How to Outwit Them*. Depressed at the calculation that I probably would not get my second wind until I had passed Sandusky, Ohio, but cheered in the hope that if I could reach the Linwood Boulevard Methodist Episcopal Church in Kansas City, of which I believe I am still a member, I could claim sanctuary, I set out for the theatre.

That, by even the Aztec calendar, was more than three years ago. Mr. Lindsay and I are still in New York and walk its streets freely. *Arsenic and Old Lace* is still in New York, too, playing at the Hudson Theatre. Only three plays in the annals of the American

theatre have achieved longer runs — *Tobacco Road*, *Abie's Irish Rose*, and *Life with Father*.

In those three years *Arsenic and Old Lace* has had, I believe, more unusual adventures than any other play of our time.

At this moment it probably is being played in 20 communities in various parts of the world from Wellington, New Zealand, to Goose Creek, Texas. It has made three tours of the U.S. and has been shown in every nook and cranny which still boasts an op'ry house, with casts headed by such chill-billies as Boris Karloff, Erich Von Stroheim, and Bela Lugosi. It is also well into its second year in London.

At the conclusion of its third year on Broadway, a phalanx of certified public accountants and double-entry bookkeepers, working in eight-hour shifts, gave out a bulletin to the effect that it had grossed, in New York, 1,835,875 dollars; on tour in America, 1,793,234 dollars; and in London £144,327 — a total of more than 4,000,000 dollars. And the end is not even within artillery range.

Add to that, which you will have to do sooner or later, the motion picture version with Cary Grant as its star and Frank Capra as its director. It will soon be released to army camps overseas and later in the year generally, and its producers, Warner Bros. expect it to amass a conservative 2,500,000 dollars.

Why the Worry?

Why then, you ask, did Mr. Lindsay and I, its producers, tremble on the eve of its opening and prepare to flee the city? The answer is simple. *Arsenic and Old Lace*, because it defies practically every dramatic convention, was probably the greatest gamble so far as audience interest is concerned, in the history of the American theatre. It is not a home-spun idyl of sweetness and light. Its principal characters are murderers or maniacs or both. Its love interest consists of several scenes in which the juvenile tells the ingenue to go home and stop bothering him. It is as devoid of sex as a plate of corned-beef hash.

That audiences in whose homes homicide and paranoia have never been the subject of jest, should suddenly embrace them both as highly ludicrous and at the finish of three acts be urging two dear old ladies to commit their 13th murder, is fantastic. But it is no more fantastic than many other things that have happened to the play.

It is, for instance, the only play ever presented on Broadway in sign language.

(continued on next page)

Delicious!

Vi-MAX

**EXTRA
WHEAT GERM**

Yea, all the best of the wheat including the wheat germ plus EXTRA wheat germ. Young and old like the flavour of vitalising vitamin-plus VI-MAX.

Made from selected wheats by D. H. BROWN & SON, LTD, Moorhouse Ave., Ch'ch.