

THE PASSING SHOW [1894]

Dates: May 12, 1894, to November, 1894

Venue: Casino Theatre, NY

Type: Revue in three acts

Music: Ludwig Englander

Book and lyrics: Sydney Rosenfeld

Performances: 145

And so, on May 12, 1894, the Moorish interior of the Casino Theatre . . . sheltered an elegant and knowing audience which had come to see *The Passing Show*, the first American example of the kind of show that later came to be known as a revue. Good talent went into the production, which had a score by Ludwig Englander, now on the swift upgrade as a theatre composer, a book by the experienced Sydney Rosenfeld, and a cast including Adele Ritchie, Johnny Henshaw, and Paul Arthur. It was a long, loose, poorly organized affair, but it succeeded with its audience on the timeworn, and sometimes risky, principle of providing a little of everything, so that nobody could fail to like something in it. There were imitations of well-known actors, ribs of contemporary plays, and jibes at a nameless prima donna, “whose repertoire will be *Faust*, *Faust* and after which *Faust*.” . . . Gus Pixley demonstrated “his original manner of walking with his head near his heels”; Mabel Stephenson told “her familiar stories about Jonah, Daniel, and the bear.” Comedy was furnished by the Tamale Boys; muscular empathy was excited by the Acrobatic Burlesques of the Amazons; and the usual response, presumably, was stirred by Living Pictures and by a “Divertissement on *L’Enfant Prodigue*,” a brush with art which was made palatable by the Parisian—i.e., risqué—attire of the dancers. [Cecil Smith, *Musical Comedy in America*, Theatre Arts Books, 1940, pp. 120-121]