

THE PASSING SHOW OF 1914

(3rd Annual)

Dates: June 1, 1914, to September 3, 1914

Type: A revue in two acts

Venue: Winter Garden, NY

Music: Harry Carroll, Sigmund Romberg

Book and lyrics: Harold Atteridge

Performances: 133

The Passing Show of 1914 was probably never surpassed in the history of the institution. The two earlier editions had leaned quite heavily on their stars—the Howards and Charlotte Greenwood. But the third *Passing Show* was in every way a rounded, balanced, and lavish entertainment. To be sure, it introduced (for the first time outside vaudeville) Marilyn Miller, who was to become within a decade the highest-paid star the American musical theatre had known. But now she was merely an unknown youngster [age 16], though she made an instantaneous hit with her capable dancing and her sprightly imitations of popular actresses.

But the third *Passing Show* went down in history primarily as the moment of final triumph for the slender, modern chorus girl. Gone forever now were the gigantic chorus ladies with their Amazon marches and drills. . . .

... the girls' legs, which had been emerging from their tights inch by inch for several seasons, were now presented unadorned and *au naturel*, underneath "torsos screened by glittering spangles." Skirts were short and arms were bare, and at one point the glittering spangles were dispensed with, revealing bare midriffs on the upper-class New York stage for the first time. . . . In the midst of this "uproarious upheaval of lingerie and laughter," demure little Marilyn Miller (who had not yet cropped the final "n" from her first name) appeared as a Dresden Doll. Nor were the purely spectacular elements overlooked in this carnival of undress. Voegtlin provided a panoramic view of the San Francisco World's Fair and a scene representing the transatlantic flight of an airship and art—not wholly forgotten—was solemnized in a "beautiful Persian Garden Scene," in the style of Maxfield Parrish.

[Cecil Smith, *Musical Comedy in America*, Theatre Arts Books, 1950, p. 188-189]