

MILTON BERLE SET FOR NEW COMEDY

**Comic to Get First Broadway
Role Since '43—Carol
Channing Has Virus**

By SAM ZOLOTOW

From time to time, reports indicate that Milton Berle would like to return to the Broadway stage, from which he has been absent since the "Ziegfeld Follies" of 1943. Despite his wishes, however, nothing has brought him back.

Now he is linked with Arnold Schulman's new comedy, "The Nose of Jerry Pepper." The author, who proved his ability with "A Hole in the Head" (1957), his only Broadway play to date, said yesterday that Mr. Berle had agreed to star in the play next season and that terms were being negotiated.

In a recent television interview, the comic said he was eager to play the part. He will portray a TV comedian playing a night club engagement in Las Vegas. It is Mr. Schulman's theory that the celebrated men are the entertainers of today.

"The Nose of Jerry Pepper," which has its source in the Biblical story of Job, is not to be confused with Mr. Schulman's "Lady on the Rock," which also has a Las Vegas background. Both plays are completely different, Mr. Schulman said.

Cheryl Crawford was to have presented "Lady on the Rock," which has been filed for future reference. Although Miss Crawford was mentioned as the

sponsor of "The Nose of Jerry Pepper," she has bowed out. Mr. Schulman attributed the withdrawal to "a friendly disagreement about the artistic handling of the production," which is to be staged by Robert Lewis. Another producer is being sought.

That situation has not altered Mr. Schulman's status with "Hold Back the Dawn," which he is adapting for Miss Crawford. The show, which is based on the 1941 Paramount picture of the same name, will have music selected from unpublished compositions by the late Jerome Kern. The lyrics will bear Dorothy Fields' trademark. This offering is expected here next season. The central role would be suitable for Mary Martin.

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'Show Girl' Star Ill

Carol Channing is on the sick list with a virus attack that has settled in her vocal chords. Consequently, the star will not be able to appear in Baltimore this week, where her revue, "Show Girl," was to have opened last night. Her physicians, Dr. Samuel Burtoff and Dr. Donald Proctor, have assured her that with a week's rest she could resume the pre-Broadway tour of the revue next Monday night in Boston. The local premiere has been scheduled for Jan. 12 at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre.

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Thurber Story Stage Bound

Wolf Mankowitz is adapting James Thurber's humorous



Paul Duckworth

HAS STRAIGHT ROLE:
Jean Shepherd, radio, night club and TV entertainer. He will appear in "A Banquet for the Moon," due Jan. 19 at Theatre Marquee.

story, "The Wonderful O," into a song and dance plot. Mr. Mankowitz' qualifications include those of an antique dealer, novelist, playwright, scenarist and London stage producer. *

Kermit Bloomgarden, who with Herbert Greene, owns the rights to Mr. Thurber's book, met Mr. Mankowitz in London, where the job was casually discussed. Last week, Mr. Mankowitz came here and outlined his conception to Cy Coleman (composer), Carolyn Leigh (lyricist) and the producers, Messrs. Bloomgarden and Greene. All agreed he was on the proper tack. Now they are waiting for the treatment to be submitted in February. Contractual arrangements for Mr. Mankowitz' services were conducted by his New York representative, Joe Leboworth of the Famous Artists agency.

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Shepherd Gets Drama Role

Jean Shepherd has established a reputation for entertainment proficiency on radio, TV and in night clubs. A couple of years ago, he was starred in an off-Broadway revue, "Look, Charlie!" (subtitled "A History of the Prattle"), which was given special Monday night performances. That was the closest he came to the legitimate stage.

His next assignment in that department will be a straight dramatic part. He will impersonate Mephistopheles, the leading male role in "A Banquet for the Moon." John Cromwell's modern satire, derived from the Faust legend, will open Jan. 19 at the Theatre Marquee, 110 East Fifty-ninth Street.

By the way, Mr. Shepherd is under contract to Leonard Sillman for the next edition of "New Faces" and is forbidden to appear in a Broadway show until he opens in that one. Material Mr. Shepherd wrote for "Look, Charlie!" has been acquired by Mr. Sillman for "New Faces."