



Sunday, 30 October 2016

Benny in Boston

50 or so years ago, symphony orchestras and old theatres needed financial help, and Jack Benny was there until the day he died to bring his special brand of music/comedy to raise millions of dollars to save them.

But there was one time Jack appeared on stage and played his violin with no comedy. It was a cameo appearance with the Boston Pops in 1955.

Here's how the *Boston Globe* explained it in the paper's May 5, 1955 edition.

Waukegan's Gift to Music

Crowds at Pops Thrilled by Violinist

Jack Benny

By MARY CREMMEN

Jack Benny looked down from the window of his suite at the Ritz Carlton: "I haven't been here since the Tea Party—boy, things have changed." He waved a hand toward the buildings that stand between the hotel and the Charles River. "They must be new."

Jack is in town to receive one of three awards that will be given tonight by the Massachusetts Committee of Catholics, Protestants and Jews. But last night he had quite a different experience—Waukegan's most famous violinist made his debut in Symphony Hall.

But that is getting too far ahead of the story. The evening began with dinner in Jack Benny's suite. When Irving Fein, director of public relations for C.B.S. Radio in Hollywood, asked the waiter for a menu, the comedian let out a roar, "You mean you've come all the way to Boston and don't know you have to eat fish chowder?"

In case you think he was kidding, I should add here that Jack finished a whole tureen of it.

As dinner went on there was no doubt that there has probably never been a celebrity with a pleasanter, more attractive manner.

He admitted that the Tea Party really wasn't his last trip to Boston. "I used to work at Keith's. Boston and Philadelphia were my favorite stops, I like the audiences."

He thought for a moment. "They had class."

Unlike many comedians who feel they must be funny off-camera, Jack speaks fluently on all kinds of subjects. In one of his more serious moments, he declared rather wistfully, "I go to all kinds of places and see all kinds of things, but I always feel bad about not having an education. It's so important in life."

Unnoticed . . . Almost

Also at the dinner were Dorothy Sweeney, Boston, and Harvey Struthers, WEEL. We were all just about ready for a second French pastry when Michael Kelleher, one of Boston's most public spirited citizens, appeared to take us all to Symphony.

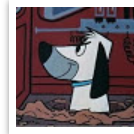
By the time we arrived there it must have been 9 o'clock. The concert had begun. Everyone was seated, intent on music. Jack could slip in—almost unnoticed.

He never took his attention from guest soloist Mineko Sasahara as she played a piano concerto by Saint-Saens. he learned over to whisper to me, "Don't you love the way she attacks the piano? Wonderful? Great?"

But although Jack's attention never wavered from the stage, word of his presence was making its way along the grapevine. You could almost see it travel. A head would turn, take a look to make sure, then lead toward whoever was nearest. It went down rows and across aisles, and soon as the ovation for the soloist had died, the autograph crowd swarmed in. "Sign my program . . . this napkin . . . a matchcover."



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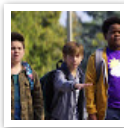
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The crowd got bigger, the aisles were blocked—and a worried look came over Jack's face. He stopped in the middle of an autograph, "Gee, this won't spoil the concert, will it?"

But Jack would never have bothered to ask if he'd known about the staunch crowd which goes to the Pops for only one reason—music. The second Conductor Harry Ellis Dickson appeared on stage a great SSSSssh! filled the hall.

The autograph seekers rushed back to their tables and Jack turned to Fein, "Let's have some of that pink stuff that they're serving in pitchers."

'An Open Rehearsal'

It was not until after the selections from South Pacific that Maestro Dickson solemnly announced from the podium: "For the first time in the history of the Boston Pops we are going to have an open rehearsal." A knowing laughter filled the air. "I introduce to you now a man who needs no introduction—you will know him by his violin."

Out walked Jack through the rows of musicians. And the hallowed old walls of Symphony fairly rocked. In that famous unsmiling way, he accepted the greeting, then nonchalantly reached into his pocket for a handkerchief to tuck under the violin. It looked like "Love in Bloom" for sure, but the orchestra began the "Chardis" by Monte.

At a signal from Maestro Dickson, Benny raised his bow. I can honestly say I have never heard the Pope audience more silent. The listeners seemed to hold their breath, strain their ears listening for just one sour note. But the Waukegan master played without a flaw. Occasionally he beamed down at the photographers clustered by the stage and once he called out to the audience, "Here comes the hard part—if I don't go fast, I'm dead."

What followed the finale was like an explosion. If anyone applauded more vigorously than the audience it was the musicians.

With just a suggestion of a smile, Jack strolled off the stage. A few minutes later we were back in the car. He just sat there in the back seat, beaming, laughing, slapping his knee.

The first thing he said was, "You must admit I've got guts walking out there and playing it straight when they expected 'Love in Bloom'." He shook his head.

"It was so much more fun than telling jokes—I can do that anytime."

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:01](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

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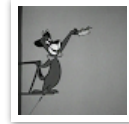
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2 days ago

Yowp



**Helicopter
Huck -
Huckleberry
Hound** was
probably
never
animated

as gracefully than on the
little cartoons between the
cartoons on his show. It's so
nice to see Huck and the ...

3 days ago

**Way Too Damn Lazy To
Write A Blog**



**This
Weekend in
San
Francisco:
Godzillafest
2019** - *As
of 5:00 p.m.

Pacific Standard Time on
August 23, 2019,
Godzillafest is back,
bombarding San
Francisco's B...

4 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

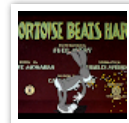
Close Up On The Eggs -

Here's the third part of
Cathy Hill's epic story:
Racketty Ann and The Lost
World! In pages 9 through
12, Racketty Ann continues
her story (I love how the ...

4 days ago

Supervised By Fred

**Avery: Tex Avery's
Warner Brothers
Cartoons**

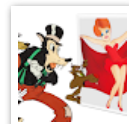


**Tortoise
Beats Hare:
Protagonist
Loses;
Shreds
Opening
Credits** -

Release date: 3/15/1941
Available on Looney Tunes
Golden Collection Vol. 2
(WHV DVD); Looney Tunes
Platinum Collection, Vol. 2
(WHV BR) You may
download a ...

4 days ago

**Termite Terrace
headlines**



**Top 10 in
My Opinion-
Little Red
Riding
Hood
Cartoons** -

Today, I'll
be sharing what I believe
are the ten greatest
cartoons based on the fairy
tale Little Red Riding Hood.
But first... Honorable
Mentions: 1. ...



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 A new painting. *** Done with leftover paint at end of day. *** I found the opening of PSYCHIATRICS a bit bare of human expressions, so I reworked ...
1 week ago


 **Peter Gray's Comics and Art**
 New blog on my Art work...Original art...prints for sale petergrayart
 ist@gmail.com for prices etc... -
<https://petergrayart.blogspot.com/> Will update it like I do on facebook.
1 month ago

What About Thad?
Chris Reccardi Interviewed
 - I don't want to start a practice of publishing an interview every time someone from Ren & Stimpy dies, but Chris Reccardi (1964-2019) was too important a f...
3 months ago

 **Likely Looney, Mostly Merrie**
That's all, folks! - My posts have gotten thinner over the years. I'm aware of that. I've been hopeful for a long time, that I can remain active with blogging and sharing furth...
7 months ago

Kids, Eh?
#1288: Bird Call - #1288:
 Bird Call
11 months ago

 **Cartoons, Model Sheets, & Stuff**
 Pete Hothead Model Sheets -
 Here are a few model sheets from the first Pete Hothead short. Released in 1952 and directed former Tom & Jerry animator Pete Burness. Ted Parmelee was the...
1 year ago

 **Dr. Grob's Animation Review**
Swamp - Director: Gil Alkabetz Release Date: October 1992 Rating: ★★★★★ Review: With 'Swamp' Gil Alkabetz showed to be a strong new

voice in the animation
world. M...
1 day ago

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