



Sunday, 3 February 2019

Jack Benny, Official Musician

The Jack Benny radio show had its tiffs with the head of the American Federation of Musicians, James Caesar Petrillo (not pictured to the right), so perhaps it was appropriate that Benny did not become a member of the union until after Petrillo's ouster. Even then, it was an honorary membership.

But it was certainly well-deserved. Benny travelled all over North America, raising funds for concert halls, symphonies and even musician pension funds. That's what he was doing in San Francisco in March 1959, and that's when the federation made him an honorary member.

Jack gave one of his many concerts. They all followed the same format that you should have read about in previous posts. Reviews of Benny's performance varied. Here's a story from the Associated Press of March 3, 1959.



Jack Benny Has Musicians Card

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Jack Benny has a musicians union card now.

The comedian received an honorary membership card in the American Federation of Musicians Monday night in an appearance as guest violinist with the San Francisco symphony orchestra. Herman D. Kenin, who recently succeeded James C. Petrillo as president of the AFM, and Charles H. Kennedy, president of San Francisco AFM Local 6, presented the gold card. Benny's performance with the symphony grossed \$51,800 to benefit the orchestra's pension fund. It drew this comment from music critic Alfred Frankenstein of the San Francisco Chronicle:

"Musical criticism flinches, quails and quietly resigns its office when it is faced with an artist of Benny's caliber."

Frankenstein declared that the harmless earthquake here Monday afternoon "was caused by Felix Mendelssohn whirling in his grave while Jack Benny rehearsed his violin concerto . . . in preparation for last night's pension fund concert."

He said that fortunately Mendelssohn was a mild-mannered man.

"If Benny had played the Beethoven Concerto, it would have been 1906 all over again," San Francisco's devastating earthquake was in 1906.

We don't have the *Chronicle's* full review—parts of it were quoted in other newspapers—but we do have a review from a rival newspaper. Here's what the *San Francisco Examiner* wrote on March 3rd.

Jack Benny Gags Up Fiddle in Pension Benefit

By ALEXANDER FRIED

PEOPLE LAUGHED when the silly chap in a dress suit had the nerve to bring his violin out in front of the great San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

Jack Benny, I mean.

They laughed even harder when he discovered he had forgotten his bow, and had to dash backstage to get it. Then the question arose: Wouldn't it have been better if he had left the bow outside after all?

But this problem like wise resolved itself into laughter as the one and only Benny—fiddler extraordinary and popular comedian—gave his services last night to an Opera House benefit

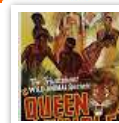
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Queen Of The Jungle! - "Queen of the Jungle" is a 1935 serial from Mascot

which takes footage from an even earlier silent film and tries to bond some new scenes. It's not reall...

11 hours ago

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Sunday Evening - Convention's over. Now, we can concern ourselves with more important matters... like what kind of silly news stories is Trump going to create to divert attent...

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Longest living animals in Chapultepec's Zoo in need of special

care. - ©2019 fernandolleracartoons.com 23 hours ago

Movies with Michael



Cowboy Church #19 - Hello my friends and welcome to another addition of Cowboy Church. We start

concert that fetched several tens of thousands of dollars into the symphony Pension Fund. Believe it or not, Jack can play the violin. With his free bow arm and lively left hand fingers, maybe he made nearly as much effort to produce his funny sour notes as he did to produce his good tones. The real Strad that he had in hand did its bit for the latter. The whole show—a travesty of symphony solo fiddling—was a stunt in typical Jack Benny understatement. He didn't wear baggy pants or make loud noises or break a fiddle over anyone's head. Instead, he could tickle his audience by a priceless little glance of smug pride when he thought he had handled a violin flourish particularly well.

And there was subtle stagecraft in his slight look of hurt when the concert master—during Sarasate's "Gypsy Airs" and the first movement of the Mendelssohn Concerto—took the play away from Jack by standing up behind his back and performing his fancy cadenzas for him. Two successive concert masters, as a result, were banished from the stage, at Jack's indignant whispered request to Conductor Enrique Jorda. And a cymbal player also was chased in disgrace for banging his brass plates loudly in what the honored solo violinist considered to be the wrong musical sport.

In addition, Jack won genial applause by a typical monologue at the microphone; by inserting the palpitating ballad tune of "Love In Bloom" into his Sarasate, and by sitting down as a concert master himself to meddle in an orchestral performance of Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Spanish Caprice." For serious business, he introduced the truly great violinist, Nathan Milstein, who was present because he's going to be this week's regular symphony soloist. And Herman Kenin, successor to James Petrillo as president of the American Federation of Musicians, came to the stage to hand Jack a life membership card in the Musicians' Union. Jack showed particular joy on learning the card will always be dues free.

For good measure. Jack offered imitations of four famed violinists—Stern, Milstein, Heifetz and Szgeti—in their various personal throes of musical performance. He played as encore Rimsky's "Flight of the Bumble Bee."

At a top price of \$30 a seat, the hall was pretty full, though not entirely so. The concert started with Jorda's orchestral performances of Rossini's "Barber" Overture, Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony, some Stravinsky "Petrouchka" music and Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings." If these performances weren't as polished as they might have been, remember the concert was an extra event in a busy week, and rehearsal time for its orchestral selections had to be closely rationed.

How well Jack Benny played may not really be all that relevant. The main thing was audiences enjoyed his performances and he raised millions upon millions of dollars to preserve the fine arts.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:55](#)

Labels: [Jack Benny](#)

1 comment:

Errol 4 February 2019 at 11:37

Yep, Even Bugs got in on the Petrillo jabs. In "Hurdy-Gurdy Hare", as Bugs plays the music and Gruesome Gorilla goes from window to window, terrifying people into handing over money for the musical entertainment, Bugs ends with "I hope Petrillo doesn't hear about this".

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1 day ago



The World of Knight

[SATURDAY AFTERNOON](#) - Nice view. I actually drew it into a panel

today.
1 day ago



Termite Terrace headlines



[Animation Websites in the Archive #1](#) - The newest series!

These are some of the best websites on animation that are either unsung or just have been wiped out from the internet. Some of these si...
1 day ago



Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog

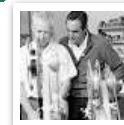


[The Classic Comedy Rorschach Test](#) - * In 13 years and 1072 posts, onl...

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Yowp



[Fewer Drawings, More Gimmicks](#) - Adult humour today isn't

what it was 60 years ago. Today, "adult" humour brings to mind a lot of sexual references and crudity. In other words, the stuff...
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Mark Kausler's CatBlog

[Racketty Ann's Mystery Flight!](#) - Here are pages 5 through eight of "Racketty Ann and the Lost World". There's delightful fantasy here as Racketty Ann and Bla Bla take a ride on the back o...
2 days ago



Peter Gray's Comics and Art



[New blog on my Art work...Original art...prints for sale](#)

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2 weeks ago

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**Supervised By Fred Avery: Tex Avery's Warner Brothers Cartoons**



Coming Soon To This Blog...


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...
2 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...
6 months ago

Kids, Eh?
#1288: Bird Call - #1288:
Bird Call
10 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**

Zozor ruine la réputation de sa famille (Zozor Ruins the Reputation of His Family) - After his move to the United States in 1912 Émile Cohl starting experimenting with putting the idiom of comic strips to the animated screen, being the firs...
2 hours ago

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