



Sunday, 11 December 2022

No Rochester In Rochester

Rochester, the butler, was connected with Jack Benny for so many years. I wondered if Rochester, the city, had a connection with Jack as well. I mean besides airing his show.

The answer is "yes."

And if you're wondering if Jack ever explained to people in Rochester why his butler was named Rochester, the answer is also "yes."

A parade of ancient cars—we suspect a Maxwell was among them—greeted Jack upon his arrival in the city on Saturday, November 14, 1959, according to a local paper. He had just raised \$41,300 for a musicians benefit fund in St. Louis. Tickets there went for \$50 and 3,500 filled the concert hall, bringing the total Jack raised for musicians and concert hall preservation to \$1,700,000 in three years.

Here's what the *Rochester Democrat Chronicle* had to say the following day about the Benny arrival.

It's the 39-Year-Old Prodigy **'Oh, No, It Isn't the Breeze ...'**

By ARTHUR DEUTSCH

The strains of "Love in Bloom," performed by a perennially 39-year-old musical prodigy, rent the air and broke up a small but highly critical audience in a fifth floor suite of the Sheraton Hotel about 6 o'clock last night.

Jack Benny was rehearsing.

The famed comedian, here to prepare for his appearance tonight in the Eastman Theater, put his Stradivarius under his chin, put bow to strings and succeeded in convulsing Theodore Bloomfield, conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; Millard Taylor, the concertmaster; Joseph T. DeVitt, president of the Rochester Musicians' Assn., and others from the orchestra and Civic Music Assn.

Benny's appearance with the orchestra will benefit a special fund for the musicians and comes on the heels of a similar concert Friday night in Detroit, where a benefit fund gained more than \$59,000, and one Tuesday in St. Louis, where the gross for a charity was \$41,300.

It was quite a day for the gentle comedian. His plane was 2 1/2 hours late, he was rushed into a press-radio-TV conference room at the airport, led by a motorcycle escort to the hotel and promptly plunged into a preliminary rehearsal with Bloomfield and the orchestra principals.

Between his arrival and a quick run-through of the concert program, however, the man who made "Gee!" and "Well!" his trademarks proved that his wit isn't manufactured by writers alone. Some samples:

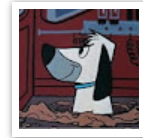
"Eddie Anderson? We named him 'Rochester' because it seemed like the right name to yell at a guy. Eddie comes from Oakland."

"Sure this is a genuine Stradivarius. I have the papers to prove it. I wonder . . . hmmm . . . a magazine had a story about some forged papers . . . Do you think I may have bought a fake?" "This will kill the audience. This is especially good. I know . . . Now you just play this straight . . . no, I'll play this straight."



WELL!! Jack Benny assumes a characteristic pose of head to cheek to the delight of Joseph DeVitt, president of Rochester Musicians Assn., at news conference.

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News From ME

The Lazarus Effect - If we're going to mention newspaper strip guys who drew a lot of strips, it's only fair to mention Mell Lazarus, a very funny man who had two long-running

...

3 hours ago



Cartoon Research

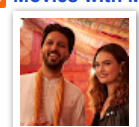
Famous Studios:

Noveltoons 1948-50 - And in general, the studio inched closer to launching its own stable of original characters to compete with the Looney Tunes and Tom and Jerry.

5 hours ago



Movies with Michael



Movie Grade:
Review:
What's Love Got to Do With It - Michael's

Movie Grade: D- A bland and overly familiar romantic comedy. The idea of a romantic comedy that takes a look at Arranged (or assisted mar...

6 hours ago



Fernando Liera Cartoons

Mother's Day will bring big business for services, restaurants and commerce.

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fernandollercartoons.com

20 hours ago

That'll convince 'em."

"You know, I competed with Isaac Stern in Detroit. He sold out and so did I. But I have real competition here in Rochester on television. That's the Jack Benny Show (Channel 10, 10 p.m.). It's a good show, too Jimmy Stewart and his wife and Barbara Nichols. Gash, I'd like to see it . . ."

Benny had a sympathetic word for Bloomfield. The Rochester maestro planned to watch Benny's concert in Detroit on Friday. But he was grounded in Chicago, spent the night there and was able to reach home only four hours before the comedian.

Irving Fein, who manages Benny's television production company, and Mahlon Merrick, for, 24 years his music arranger, accompanied Benny here.

Merrick said Benny loves the life of a trouper.

"This tour is good for him. It's amazing how he keeps his health. It's medicine for him. After all, if I can let the cat out of the bag, Jack'll be 65 years old in February."

Merrick said that on this trip his life was "very easy."

"All I do is carry" the fiddle," he confided, then went into serious conference with the orchestra member's.

Benny extended to Taylor the personal regards of another Taylor, actor Robert, for years a close friend of the comedian. Robert Taylor and Millard Taylor were Pomona College classmates and members of the same musical groups.

The comedian was given a key to the city by Vice Mayor Joseph Farbo, along with a life membership in the musicians' union. Only three others have the life, memberships, Farbo told Benny—Jose Iturbi, Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein—and the vice mayor.

How did Benny's concert go? The review in the paper the following day is much like those elsewhere over the years dealing with Jack's concerts. Critics try to be nice about his playing and point out spots where he was acceptable or better. The comedy is always first-rate, and the members of the orchestra involved in the bits always rise to the occasion. I do think the paper's fine arts reporter meant to write "Love in Bloom."

Benny Rocks Audience With Violin, Humor

By HARVEY SOUTHGATE

THERE was an audience of near capacity size in the Eastman Theater last night, but Jack Benny, as you might expect, got in for free. Free, that is, in terms of money, not in the other values he gave forth. In those other values he was on a spending binge, and what he gave to the audience in laughs were to be measured only in terms of the incomparable showman he is. The financial profits of the highly successful evening went to the musicians' pension fund.

The Eastman Theater has never had a show just like this, for there is no one like Jack Benny. In the audience were many who had seen him come up from vaudeville and had watched him develop into one of the masters of comedy. The mastery was all there last night in the little shadings, smooth manner, the silent pauses that are funnier than words.

In addition there was the violin, speaking triumphantly with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Theodore Bloomfield in some of the funniest sounds ever heard from the stage. There were, of course, some very pleasant sounds too, for Benny, as his audiences know, began playing this instrument longer ago than his 39 years. He can do all right when he puts his mind to it. (He freely acknowledged last night that Heifetz is better.)

FROM THE moment he stepped on the stage, he had the audience in his hand. Slightly out of tune most of the evening, he tackled the Gypsy Airs of Sarasate with a flourish, beaming happily until Concertmaster Millard Taylor "stole" some of his lines and played them better than he could. For this Taylor was banished from the hall. The cymbal player who drowned him out at one point, followed him. Assistant concertmaster Abram Boone, who took the spotlight with a sweetly played phrase, slunk out, without waiting to be ordered.

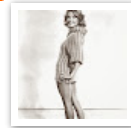
Plunging into the first movement of the Mendelssohn concerto, Benny at least kept pace with the orchestra, showed some agile finger work and some occasionally warmly melodic phrases. If he really put his mind to it, who knows?—maybe he really would be a concert artist.

The audience had come to laugh, and Benny saw to it that it did. There were more high jinks with the violin, as Benny took over the concert-master's chair for the Capriccio Espagnol, then offered imitations of other great violinists—Isaac Stern, Szigeti, Heifetz. Of course he managed to work in "Love in Spring" and wound up with the inevitable "Bee."

BETWEEN numbers he look to the microphone, with what seemed an unrehearsed line of comedy patter, told of his pleasure in being back in Rochester with an orchestra he praised as one of the best in the land. In this sort of genial, intimate humor, Benny is of a matchless old school which, we fear, is passing from the stage.

Before the appearance of Benny, the orchestra played the "Meistersinger" overture, the "Lieutenant Kije" music of Prokofieff and the "Finlandia" of Sibelius. The first two of these were among the especially well liked selections the orchestra has played at regular concerts, the "Finlandia" of course is always a good audience number. Many in the audience presumably were not regular Philharmonic

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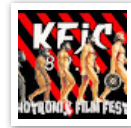


Chris Noel
1967 -
Chris Noel
is back with
a 1967 visit.
It's a Date

With Chris. *Date With
Chris - 1967* More Chris
Noel

22 hours ago

Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog

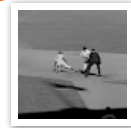


Coronation
and The
Return Of
The KFJC
Psychotronic
Film

Festival - *Can't say I'm
exactly nutty about the
royals and would not want
to be in King Charles' spats,
but am positive...

2 days ago

Old TV History



September
1947 Part 2
- Maybe
Happy
wasn't
happy, but

baseball fans in the east
were. A last-minute deal
was signed at the end of
September 1947 to put the
World Series on televi...

2 days ago

Buddy's Cartoons

"Mice, Ducks, and Rabbits"

- Chapter Two is officially
done! Chapter Three is
about the explicit copy-
Disney era, such as
Warners' Buddy, Iwerks'
Flip, and the post-Code
Betty Boop. ...

2 days ago

Termite Terrace headlines

Soaky Toy Commercials -
Superman and Tennessee
Tuxedo! Musky the Muskrat
and Dick Tracy! These rule!
These Soaky commercials
are incredible. According to
Darrel Van Citters there...

6 days ago

Yowp

Tally Ho Ho Ho
Backgrounds - Fernando
Montealegre was among
the first staffers at Hanna-
Barbera, jumping over from
MGM where he started as
an assistant animator and
became a background...

1 week ago

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patrons. They heard a good taste of the orchestra's quality. Benny, as most people know, is filling a limited number of engagements with leading orchestras to raise funds for charitable purposes. Rochester was fortunate to get in on this generosity.

Perhaps the best story about Jack came in a sidebar story, regarding the arrival of a noted space scientist in town for an anti-Communism speech:

Dr. Wernher von Braun took a ribbing from his wife on arrival at Rochester-Monroe County Airport yesterday.

The space scientist remarked about the crowd, and his attractive wife needed:
"Oh, they're not here to see you. They're waiting for Jack Benny."

Jack's road trip wasn't over. The following Saturday, he was in Washington, D.C. for a dinner at the National Press Club where he received the Laurel Leaf award for outstanding contributions to American music. It's pleasing to Jack Benny was accorded recognition for his work besides the applause and cheers from audiences.

Posted by Yowp at 07:17



Labels: Jack Benny

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