

Sunday, 21 September 2025

Carnegie Hall in Bloom

Jack Benny's radio show began in New York, but when the film capital beckoned, he packed up and moved to Los Angeles. He and his cast made periodic returns to city—for personal appearances, war-time morale-boosting shows for the military, and in the early days of TV when network shows came out of Big Town (there was also the jewellery smuggling trial, but we'll skip that).

In January 1943, Jack was in the east for several reasons. Wherever he went, reporters would follow.

Billboard assigned someone to a rather large news conference to push a charity event. Jack never failed to give reporters some kind of amusing angle to put in their stories. This one appeared on January 16th.



Benny Ad Lib Session Launches Drive

NEW YORK, Jan. 9. — If there were any doubts left in the trade as to whether or not Jack Benny could show his face in public without a script, they were dispelled Wednesday (6) when Benny treated upwards of 500 cohorts, hangers-on and lunch time expendables to an ad lib session which marked the opening gun of the drive of the amusement division of the Federation of Jewish Charities.

Benny, guests of honor at the two-buck-a-head feed at the Hotel Astor, threw plenty of good-natured but well-aimed needles at Paramount (Barney Balaban is chairman of the drive), and there were enough Para big shots on the dias [sic] to cringe with laughter.

Louis Nizer, Paramount attorney and banquet orator, in introducing Benny with the eloquence these affairs always seem to bring out, cited the comedian's contribution to the morale of the armed forces and even quoted Sigmund Freud on humor and the will to carry on.

Benny, however, said that even Freud couldn't ask him to be funny after signing a donation pledge. There isn't a worthier cause, said Benny, but he suspected that Balaban, in his letter asking him to appear, addressed him as "Dear Jake," so that "If I didn't appear it would make me feel as tho I were turning down a relative."



One of the reasons for Benny's coming to New York, in addition to appearing at eastern army camps, is to arrange a deal for him to produce his own pictures. Said he's working on a deal with United Artists now to "write, produce, direct, finance and blow my brains out." Paramount came in for a bit of heckling in his reasons for switching to Warners. Not only, he related, did he get tired of trying to steal his pictures from Rochester, but the straw that broke his back was that his next picture was to be *The Life of Booker T. Washington*. Said that under his first independent schedule he hoped to star Bob Hope and Fred Allen in *The Road to Grossingers*.

Only other speakers were Judge Samuel Proskauer and Davis Bernstein, Loew executive. Advice from the judge was to give plenty this year and deduct it from income taxes. Bernstein said that naval officers at Lakehurst Air Station, where Benny made an appearance, told him that nothing done so far has built up the morale and efficiency of the men stationed there as much as Benny's visit.

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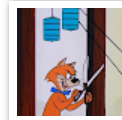


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NOTE

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My Blog List



[Mr. Jinks' Weighty Problem](#) - Mr. Jinks may have been better

in the little cartoons between the cartoons on the "Huckleberry Hound Show" than he was in the actual Pixie and Dixie cartoon...

1 day ago



[December 1937 - W2XBS](#) was set to move on to the new

step in television in December 1937. That's when it got mobile vans that would enable it to cover horse racing, baseball...

2 months ago

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Benny, in a more serious vein, told the gathering that he was really honored to have this clambake tossed for him, because it's the first testimonial dinner in New York where he was the guest of honor. Back in the old days, he related, he was always toastmaster at the Friars, but couldn't get the top spot because the two people who had the guest of honor racket tied up were J. C. Flippen and Doc Michel.

There was a bit of inconvenience for the Benny gang during one military stop. The *Hollywood Reporter* told readers on Jan. 12th:

Jack Benny Certain Sherman Was Right

Rigors of war-time traveling for theatrical troupes were impressed upon Jack Benny and his troupe on their present tour of eastern Army camps. Arriving in Bangor, Me., recently in sub-zero weather, Benny's gang could find no red caps or taxicabs at the depot, so the company of 39 carried their luggage for six blocks to a hotel.

They ran the gauntlet of autograph seekers, who clamored for the frozen-fingered Benny to sign his name, but none offered to carry his bags. Next day they rehearsed in a cold theatre because of the fuel oil shortage, and that night did three shows to accommodate all the men at Dow Air Field.

Returning to Boston the following day, the blue-nosed performers rode all day in an unheated coach, with no dining car attached. They missed lunch and didn't have dinner until after 11, when their show at the Boston Navy Yard was over. They left Boston at 1 a. m. that night, arriving in New York in the cold dawn.

The Benny troupe has scheduled future shows at the Maritime Service Training Station at Sheepshead Bay, New York; Camp Lee, Virginia; Fort Mead, Maryland; Quantico, Virginia; Norfolk Navy Yard, and then around Toronto, Chicago, Great Lakes and St. Joseph, Mo. Transportation expenses of the troupe are being paid personally by Benny.

There was another reason for Benny to surface in New York City in January 1943. It found its way into the plot of one of his radio shows. The *New York Times* of January 14th had this story:

JACK BENNY SET FOR VIOLIN DEBUT

Comedian Will Invade Carnegie Hall at Concert on Sunday to Help Paralysis Fund TO PLAY 'LOVE IN BLOOM'

Oscar Levant Will Be the Piano Accompanist in Super-Special Arrangement of Favorite

Jack Benny's prowess as a violinist will undergo its most severe public test on Sunday evening, when he invades New York's shrine of classical music, Carnegie Hall. This was announced yesterday by Basil O'Connor, president of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, under whose sponsorship Mr. Benny's performance will be held.

The occasion for his appearance is a concert for the benefit of victims of infantile paralysis, in which Metropolitan Opera and concert stars will participate. The other artists will be Marjorie Lawrence, who recently recovered from paralysis; Gladys Swarthout, Jarmila Novotna, Jan Peerce, Ezio Pinza and John Charles Thomas of the Metropolitan Opera; Josef and Rozina Lhevinne and Oscar Levant, pianists, and Isaac Stern, violinist. Deems Taylor will be master of ceremonies.

The first announcement that Mr. Benny would "do his stuff" came several days ago. But when the foundation's publicity department sent out a release giving the news there was an unexpected reaction from some of the recipients. Three of them telephoned excitedly demanding explanations and accusing the organization of pulling their legs.

E. A. Powers, campaign director for Greater New York, realized the seriousness of the situation. He told all and sundry to come to his office yesterday afternoon and they would see for themselves that it was no joke. Skeptical, reporters turned up. So did Jack Benny. And Oscar Levant, too. There was no kidding. And each bought—and paid for—five tickets. Photographers took pictures to prove that to the world, too.

But, you may ask, why was Oscar Levant there? The answer is simple. He will be Mr. Benny's accompanist.

The press was told that the performance will be the comedian's "much discussed, long awaited debut as a concert violinist." But no one need take that too seriously. Jack says it will be both serious and funny.

What is he going to play? "Love in Bloom," of course. Persons close to Fred Allen say he does not dare try anything else. Anyway, this time it will be a super-special arrangement for piano and violin.



News From ME

Today's Bonus Video Link - Here's a charming piece that was on CBS Sunday Morning three and a half years ago. It's about musician Sonny Curtis, who just died at the age of 88, bringi...
9 hours ago

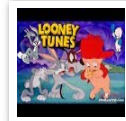
Way Too Damn Lazy To Write A Blog



Happy Birthday, Jay Ward - ...

23 hours ago

Movies with Michael

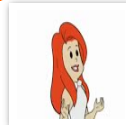


Some Cartoons for Saturday Morning #249 - Hello

my friends and happy Saturday morning. Once again it is time for some classic cartoons. Today's cartoon selection begins with one of the all-time...

1 day ago

The Exposure Sheet



Video of the Week: The Women of Hanna-Barbera Use Dove -

For this week's video, I've decided to go with one that I think many of you will remember seeing back in the day. From the long-forgotten world of 2005 co...

2 days ago

Cartoon Research

Cereal Killers of 1965: Sixty Years Ago, on Saturday Morning - The final part of a tribute to Saturday morning cartoons that made their debut sixty years ago.

2 days ago

Tom and Jerry: Toon by Toon



Pent-House Mouse (1963) - *Pent-House Mouse

*marks the first Tom and Jerry film to be directed and produced by Chuck Jones. After Chuck Jones was fired from Warner Brothers fo...

2 days ago

Ben Gross of the *Daily News* Ben Gross didn't review the concert, but he waxed about the Benny radio broadcast in his column of Jan. 18th:

The Jack Benny broadcast last evening (WEAF-7) abounded in laughter again. Oscar Levant proved an amusing guest star, even if the burlesque on "Information Please" was not so funny as it might have been. A new comic to radio, a funster named Besser, made his bow in a wacky stooge role. His rather effeminate spoof was a veritable riot with the studio audience. Being present at the broadcast, I naturally wondered how he sounded over the loudspeaker. On returning to the office, my assistant, Bill Levinson, remarked: "That fellow Besser was very funny, but not quite the howl over on the air that he seemed to the visible audience." Benny's easy going, casual technique improves with the years, and, as for Dennis Day, the singer, he, too, is becoming more and more of an outstanding comedy attraction. P.S.— All of the foregoing was but the prelude to the real wow of the evening, Jack's appearance as a violin soloist at a benefit show in Carnegie Hall.

Three thousand packed Carnegie Hall. The *Times* story on the 18th about the concert mentioned "sporadic clashings of a cymbal" during the Benny/Levant performance. But we'll leave the final word to Jack's "foe" as reported by Ed Sullivan in the *Daily News* on Jan. 20th:

After Jack Benny tied up the Carnegie Hall show in a knot, with Oscar Levant at the piano, Fred Allen sneered to Alfred Hitchcock: "First time a violinist combined his debut with his farewell performance."

Allen, of course, was joshing. And years after his death in 1956, Jack was still on stage with his violin, raising millions of dollars for various causes. They were stopped only by Benny's passing in late 1974.

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:36](#)
Labels: [Jack Benny](#)


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Early AFN - Been a long time since we looked at AFN in the 1940s and 50s. Here's some misc material from Frankfurt and Stuttgart with Bob Smith, Keith Griggs and ...
4 days ago

Mark Kausler's CatBlog

Mabel Concludes 7-9 to 7-26-1919 - Here are the remaining "Now Listen Mabel" strips by George Herriman from 7-10 to 7-26-1919. These gags are mostly about transportation, Jimmy Doozinberry ...
4 weeks ago



Prydain on Film



40th Anniversary of Disney's The Black Cauldron -
1 month ago

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