

An Old Fool Can't Quit, Says Actor

Barbier, After 35 Years on Stage and Screen, Signs New Contract.

BY GEORGE BARBIER

As Told To RUTH MATTAMAN
Times Hollywood Correspondent
(Editor's Note: Mr. Barbier plays in "The Princess Comes Across," opening at the Circle Friday.)

Some of us don't know when to quit, and I'm one. I've been an actor for over 35 years and that means I started carrying a spear as an extra and have come up through the grind of one-night stands, stock companies, and Broadway successes to Hollywood.

I'm old enough to sit in a rocking chair on my front porch; I'm tired enough to fall asleep in the afternoon sun—but I am just an old fool.

I looked at a sheet of paper the other day which, when signed, would probably keep me acting for the rest of my life. What did I do? I blustered and raved about "time to retire." I yelled "take it away" and then the soothing voice of a Paramount "big chief" said, "Now, George, the screen needs you, we can't get along without you" and I, an actor to the finish, fell for the flattery. I signed the contract.

Was to Have Been Minister

Too many years ago I was born in Philadelphia. Being the only child, my mother thought I ought to be a minister. At eight a fellow hasn't many ideas for the future so I listened to a family discussion with an occasional "Yes, Ma" and "Yes, Pop."

"He would make a fine minister," said mother, "I always wanted a minister in our family."

"What about it, son, would you like to be a preacher?" asked father. "Yes, Pop."

"Now then, you must be a good little boy because ministers have to be good men."

"Yes, Ma."

School Play Started It

And so, up until the time I entered Crozier College, I was going to preach. Then one day the dean cast me for a two-line part in a school play and all bets were off. I left school abruptly and made for the theatrical agencies. I got a job with a small company doing some one-night stands in New England. We got stranded and I had fare to New York—that's all.

When I arrived at the old Grand Central Station, I sat down in the waiting room to think things over. I was hungry, I didn't know New York; perhaps I should have been a minister after all. There was a fat man sitting across from me. He was well dressed and had a kindly face. I avoided his steady gaze by hanging my head over my knees. He got up, walked away. And when I lifted my head, I saw a lone green bill on the bench where he had been sitting. I imagined I was hungry, I even felt faint to justify my looking around to see if any one else saw that bill. No one noticed and I jumped over and sat down on it. I stayed there one-half hour before I had the courage to put the bill in my pocket. Outside the station I looked at it—\$2—and I went in a chop house and ordered. I have thought of it—did I steal? Or had the fat man with the kind face noticed my predicament and left it?

Leading Man Plus

In my next job I was leading man, drummer in the daily parade advertising the show, the meledeon player between acts, circular distributor—all for \$15 a week—promised. I was years in repertoire and stock before Daniel Frohman noticed me. Speaking of Frohman, there was a mark of quick decision and courage. I hadn't played on Broadway. I had never been on so-called "big time" when he called me to his office.

"Barbier," he said, "I have a great play here—'Hunchback of Notre Dame'—and I want you to play in it."

"I'd like to, Mr. Frohman, what is the part?"

"The lead—you'll create the role of the Hunchback."

"But, Mr. Frohman, I—I've never—"

"Listen, Barbier, if I can take the risk, surely you can. Don't ever remind a producer that you're not a 'big timer.' He knows that—your job is to prove that you were worth the risk."

Longs for Old Days

I have been saying "yes" ever since. There's scarcely a type of role written which I haven't played. The original "Hunchback of Notre Dame" played at the old Daily's Theater in New York and I hope I made good with Daniel Frohman. Since then, there was one stretch of 12 years in which I was not off Broadway and almost continually in a production.

How I hate to see those days of the successful theater pass on. And one by one my old actor friends pass on with them. I now find myself here in Hollywood, at the end of my fifth year. It's a great place, it gives me every luxury and security for which a man could wish. There's something tremendous about motion pictures. I feel like a little piece of metal in a vast industrial machine. And that machine is traveling ahead into a great future.

If I get homesick at times for the good old days when a star held his hand out to help a poor "extra" get a job, if I miss the Frohmans, the Belascos and Bradys, I am certain that I miss the last of the great producers in the theater. There will be no incentive for such a group of men . . . again.

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Highlights of Coming Week's Attractions at Local Picture Houses



Student Solos to Be Feature

Spring Concert by Jordan Artists to Be Given Friday Night.

The annual spring concert of the Arthur Jordan Conservatory of Music, which has given in past seasons such items as student opera and various faculty soloists, is to present student soloists with the conservatory orchestra this year for the first time, at 8 Friday night in Caleb Mills Hall.

Featured on the program are to be James Hartley, pianist; Martha Rucker, violinist, and Eugenia Magidson, soprano.

Mr. Hartley is a pupil of Boman Cramer, and is to be heard in the first movement of the Mozart A Major Concerto. Miss Magidson, student of Glenn Friermood, is to sing the "Cavatina" from Rossini's opera, "The Barber of Seville." Miss Rucker's solo will be the first movement of the Beethoven Violin Concerto. She is a pupil of Hugh McGibney.

Guests to Be Present
The orchestra, under Mr. McGibney's direction, is to play the Andante from Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, and compositions by Grieg, Jahnfelt, Gluck and Delibes, as well as soloists' accompaniments.

Three works by Clarence Loomis, head of the conservatory's theory and composition department, are to open the program when sung by the Conservatory Choir, Donald C. Gilley, conductor, and Virgil Phemister, bass soloist.

The concert is to climax the conservatory's annual High School Day and "open house," at which time high school seniors from over the state are entertained. Alumni and friends of the school are invited to Friday night's concert. The Jordan Spring Prom at the Marott is to close the activities following the concert.

Evans School Pupils Give Play Tomorrow

Eighth grade pupils of the William H. Evans School are to give a class play, "The Big Date," at 8 tomorrow night.

In the cast are to be Dorothy Bannon, Jessie Lowden, Betty Biehl, Walcie Chitwood, Virginia Hafer, Doris Linville, Dorothy Chitwood, Robert Davis, Orville LaFara, Joe Backmeyer, Carl Hardin, Chester Seitz, Leila Watson, Lillian Watson, Imagene Williams, Cora Irene McCubbin, Mary Kellams, Maxine Wells, Barbara Woods, Gerry Starkey, Betty Gibson, Wanda Martlage, Rosalie Snider, Margery Nackenhorst, Robert Weaver, Herman Tilly and Majorie Campbell.

Hopper's Son in Films
Wolfe Hopper, newly signed Paramount actor, is the son of DeWolf Hopper, noted actor, and Hilda Hopper, also of screen and stage fame.

HELD OVER
UNDER TWO FLAGS
AND HIS STARS OF RADIO AND FILMLAND
JEANNIE LANG Cutie Singer
MARTY MAY Roberta Star
Coming BARNEY RAPP

WHERE, WHAT, WHEN

APOLLO

"Under Two Flags," with Ronald Colman, Claudette Colbert, Victor McLaglen and Rosalind Russell, at 11:15; 3:20, 5:30, 7:45 and 9:30.

CIRCLE

"Show Boat," with Irene Dunne, Alan Jones, Paul Robeson, Helen Morgan, and Charles Winniger, at 11:15; 3:24, 5:35, 7:45 and 10.

LOEW'S

"The Unsung Hour," with Loretta Young and Franchot Tone, at 11:15; 3:30, 5:15, 7:45 and 10.

ROAMING LADY

"Roaming Lady," with Roland Young, Aileen Pringle and Lewis Stone, at 11:15; 3:24, 5:35, 7:45 and 10.

THE PRINCESS COMES ACROSS

"The Trial of Mary Dugan," presented by the Federal Players, at 8:15.

LYRIC

On screen, "The First Baby," at 11:45, 2:14, 5:07, 8 and 10:24.

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