

Who's Who On Broadway--And Off

"JACK" JOHNSON is right bower in Pantages organization after 16 years as manager of local theatre. Has spent 31 years in the game and acquired an ample girth while working 16 to 18 hours a day, more or less.



By E. C. B.

JOHN A. JOHNSON might well have been a lumberjack or even a lumber baron, but he isn't. Instead, he's the right bower—the Jack of Hearts or something—in the theatrical deck of Alexander Pantages, who now holds 34 very choice cards in the shape of that number of theatres wherein his vaudeville is played from the Pacific to the other ocean.

Johnson was born to the lumber business as kings are to the manor born, but the outlook wasn't such as to indicate the present healthy proportions of the game that makes millionaires, so Johnson jumped into the show business. How many years ago, he won't tell, Johnson was introduced to the drama of life in Genesee county, New York state, just across the lake from Canada, where the setting of several of the important scenes of his youth and early manhood were erected.

In any event, sufficient years have elapsed to give Johnson a girth in the region of his appetite that speaks well for the cooking Mrs. Johnson provides. He has spent 31 years in the business of managing public entertainment and 16 of those years he has spent in Portland as local manager of the Pantages interests.

He has managed houses in Toronto, Victoria, Vancouver and several other important Canadian centers, as well as in Seattle and other American cities. But there is none quite like Portland, for here the fascination of life itself is attached to the fascination of the footlights and the glamor of the vaudeville theatre in an irresistible manner. Sixteen years ago Johnson came to

Portland and acquired the alias of "Jack" when he was installed as manager of the original Pantages theatre at Fourth and Stark streets. Although he enjoyed (on behalf of Pantages) a wonderful business there, he was stepping out for bigger things and shortly engineered the construction of the present house at Broadway and Alder street, where crowds are turned away seatless at every performance.

And just now Johnson has three hobbies, of which the first is building furcane fires before breakfast in the happy home to which he and his folks have recently removed after spending a couple of years in downtown apartments. The second is, perhaps, the erection of a still greater Pantages theatre in Portland.

"We have to have it," he declares, "for we can't afford to turn this money away for want of a place to seat its spenders."

The third hobby is prohibition, because prohibition has done more to build up the show business in Portland than any other one thing that has hit the village in many years, according to Johnson's opinion. When the state, and later the nation, went dry the aridity was reflected at the theatre box office first of all. If the wet regime ever returns the show business would suffer, he believes.

If there is anything else in Johnson's life that he likes better than anything else, it is work. Sixteen to 18 hours of it every day, with his feet cocked up on the oak and a fat cigar tilted elegantly over the diamond shirt studs that theatrical managers do not wear—that sort of work.

When Pantages was just daring to

Winstock Puts A Punch Into Service Plans

IN THE belief that some of the metropolitan exploitation of motion picture films, solution of house problems, and general information on any subject connected with the motion picture theatre, may prove valuable to exhibitors in smaller Northwestern cities, Melvin G. Winstock, local exchange manager for Pathe, has installed a "service bureau" in connection with his office here.

"Service" will be extended to exhibitors anywhere in the territory, totally disregarding the source of film supply and the same help will be given a house where a Pathe picture is never shown as in cases where Pathe bookings are exclusive.

"The metropolitan exhibitor," Winstock declares, "discovers many little tricks of the trade that do not get to the smaller towns until they are old and his folks have an expert to do nothing but advise with exhibitors in the solution of their problems, and in advising on any possible subject."

"For example, we will answer a question as to how to make a lobby cut-out. We will tell exhibitors how to make a lobby display have the appearance of a real thing. We will try to help him solve projection room problems, answer questions as to advertising campaigns and outline entire campaigns, and the like."

"The expert here has already started a circular campaign through the publication of a weekly letter to all exhibitors in the territory. The weekly letter will contain little business building hints of all kinds."

"Where an exhibitor requests we will send an expert to his town and advise with him and cooperate with him in upbuilding his business. If he wants to exploit a particular picture and wants our advice or personal help it will be available at his call."

New Orchestra Plan To Feature Violin And Omit Concerts

Under the theory that "the picture's the thing" for which film fans pay the price of admission and that the orchestra, no matter how splendid, is a secondary institution, A. C. Raleigh, manager of the Columbia theatre, has achieved a novelty in orchestration in that house as a basis for the musical background he hopes to create.

The orchestra of 11 pieces, including the organ, will contain, oddly enough, five violins and no brass at all, Raleigh declares. The violins will be augmented by a bass, cello and viola, as well as the piano.

With this plan in practice, Raleigh will not arrange concert programs, but will strive to accomplish emotional backgrounds that will harmonize.

Staging Spectacle Is Big Task Ten Cars Carry Cast and Props

THE magnitude of the task of staging such an entertainment is "Chu Chin Chow," which graced the Hellig theatre stage last week, can best be appreciated when the fact is known that the production required almost twice as many persons back of the scenes as took part in the actual performance.

"Chu Chin Chow" came to Portland in a special train of 10 cars, including Pullmans, day coaches, baggage cars and a stock car in which were carried the great camel, the Shetland pony and the diminutive burro that are the live-stock actors of the show.

The cast of performers numbered approximately 150 persons, according to the statement of Milton Stiefel, the youthful stage manager who directs the presentation just as a major might direct his battalion in action. In addition to the cast, which includes men and women of several degrees of importance and consequent social standing in their own realm, and persons of black and white shades, the troupe includes a skeleton orchestra, stage department chiefs, such as carpenter, electrician and the like, with their first assistants. It is expected that the manual labor can be hired in each city the big show visits, and that such cities, too, will provide the additional orchestra necessary.

When "Chu Chin Chow" arrived in Portland there were stage hands and mechanics enough to bring the total troupe up to almost 200 persons, a third of whom were back of the scenes and the other two thirds presenting the show.

The company carries four baggage cars filled with scenery and "props," not to mention nearly 200 trunks carried by the performers. In addition to each artist's trunk there were hampers major for the costumes—bamboo hampers in which the fine silks might be folded away for each "jump."

No one appeared on the Hellig stage in "Chu Chin Chow," who was not an actual member of the cast recruited, for the most part, in New York, the haven for show folks and the source of this spectacle. Once the curtain dropped on a scene in the production a young army of stage hands appeared from nowhere and started tearing down the set and erecting another, so quickly that while one was thinking about the change it had been made.

As each set was struck on Saturday night it was rushed onto waiting trucks and hauled at once to the train, which departed from Portland in less than two hours after the close of the show.

With the train went special lighting effects; the countless costumes of silk that garbed the production; the many drops and wings that are part of the beautiful stage pictures built for the presentation of the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

There were formerly more animals in

the cast. Two albino asses of much value were lost in Chicago en route West. One of the team was killed by a streetcar, and the other, Stage Manager Stiefel declared, grieved itself to death at the loss of its mate. A second camel contracted a cold and died.

The effort of staging "Chu Chin Chow," as seen from behind the scenes, was an effort of well trained, rapidly moving men, working under a system and a discipline as exacting as that of a war-time army. Everything must be done exactly so, everything must be ready for a given signal—there must be no slips 'twixt the curtain and the audience, else the performance is ruined for that time.

Incidentally, special wires had to be run into the theatre from the street to serve the added electrical energy required by the elaborate lighting effects.

There are a thousand costumes that must be ready to do in an instant; there must be no searching for anything. There are a thousand and one little stage properties that must be at hand for each performance and for each scene, and there must be nothing out of place, nothing in different position from that it occupied at the previous performance. There are lights, canvas plants, great rocks, rugs, drapes, spears, ancient crockeries and brasses, furniture, baskets and what not that must be just exactly where each performer is accustomed to find them. It is a job to try the soul of a saint.

But there is no job in the lot more trying, no more needful, perhaps, than that of Mme. D'Orville, mistress of the wardrobe, who, with several assistants, works continually at keeping the raiment of the cast in perfect order, stitching, cutting, repairing and replacing something always.

"See this," Mme. D'Orville said, as she held up a gorgeous silken costume that adorned one of the manikins in "Chu Chin Chow's" fashion show, "that pan velvet cost \$12 a yard—see, here's a receipt for it, and this cloth of gold cost \$24 a yard. We paid \$25 for the bath work on this half-yard of silk, which will become a corner on one of the costumes worn by Miss Marjorie Wood."

"Honestly," she said, with quaint French accent, "if I had half the money invested in these costumes I'd never take another stitch in my life."

Back stage there is constantly in progress a drama that the audience never sees. The principals of the cast, declared by Stiefel to be more temperamental than the artists of the average drama or vaudeville stage, are a social set among themselves, never hobnobbing with the chorus, and vice versa.

"We have a wonderfully fine class of girls in this cast, though," the stage manager said, "but we nevertheless are vexed by a million little problems that folks on the other side of the footlights would never suspect."

"System is the secret of success in staging a production of this kind. Everything back of the scenes must be as systematic as the work of an army; every man know his work and be so schooled in it that he acts almost automatically."

"Speaking of stages, however, I believe I can safely say that the Hellig affords perhaps the best stage we have worked on west of Chicago. It is large and suitably arranged, giving much needed exit room and vital points—an item that many theatre architects have overlooked."

'Three Wise Fools' Due for Christmas

"Three Wise Fools," one of John Golden's string of comedy hits, leaves St. Paul next week for a tour of the Pacific coast, bringing the original New York and Chicago cast. Golden is the producer of "Lightnin'," now in its third year on Broadway, but is chiefly remembered here as the producer of "Turn to the Right," which had two successful coast tours. Those who saw "Three Wise Fools" during its 40-week run at the Criterion theatre in New York say it is one of the real comedies of recent years. In the original cast, which will be seen here, are Claude Gillingwater, Harry Davenport, Howard Gould, Helen Menken and others. It will be the attraction at the Hellig theatre over Christmas, starting Thursday, December 23.

Newberg Professor Author of Film Hit

Newberg, Nov. 27.—Alexander Hull, popular magazine writer and professor of music in Pacific college, is the author of "Homer Comes Home," which was shown at the local theatre this week. Charles Ray was the movie artist. All the fans and a few others who never before indulged in this particular kind of worldly amusement, turned out to honor the achievement of "a boy from the old home town."

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