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JOLSON CAREER IS REJUVENATED

Hottest Boxoffice Possibility Is 61-Year-Old Singing Star

By JACK O'BRIAN NEW YORK, April 5.—(AP)—The hottest boxoffice possibility currently decorating the theatrical horizon is Al Jolson who will be 61 May 26.

So spectacular is the rejuvenation of already spectacular Jolson career that dozens of Broadway managers are drooling dollar signs at the thought of presenting Al in a series of concert appearances such as that arranged by Arthur Lesser for Maurice Chevalier.

Negotiations are now in progress, with no papers signed by anyone concerned at this writing, to have the venerable but vocally and physically athletic Jolson appear for a series of one-man shows at the Alvin theater when the run of "Joan of Lorraine" is completed there early in May.

Nicky Blair, owner of the Carnival night club, is only one of a dozen or more who have expressed the desire to manage Al in such an engagement, Jolson would appear every evening except Sunday and twice on matinee days. For a month-long run, says Blair and his managing competitors, Al would be the season's ranking boxoffice sensation.

Mike Todd last year said he had Jolson signed for a musical play but that deal fell through. The mammy singer can just about write his own ticket for a radio show but has indicated his unwillingness to take over the physical burden of an entire weekly presentation.

Several times a millionaire, Jolson would not be making his current appearances for anything except sheer love of his trade. Not long ago he appeared at a New York radio studio at 2 a. m. and sang for the fun of it until dawn on an all-night disc jockey's program, bringing along his own accompanist in the bargain. What the Broadway promoters are counting on is Al's unregenerate love of the spotlight.

Cuff stuff: The Theater Guild announces Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne will end their Broadway engagement of "O Mistress Mine" on May 31, a run which tops all previous Lunt and Fontanne engagements by 152 performances.

The nearest to this record was the 300-time engagement of Robert Sherwood's "Idiot's Delight," in the 1935-36 season... counting performances in England, Scotland, Germany, France and Belgium, the Lunts will have appeared in their current vehicle a total of more than 1,000 times... It was written by Terence Rattigan... For the record, the boxoffice take for the run will have topped \$1,272,000.

"Call Me Mister" will be a year old April 18... "Voice of the Turtle" starts Sunday performances for the first time since the smash hit premiered. George S. Kaufman, long a bitter critic of all things Hollywood, finally succumbed to the cinematic blandishments and will direct "The Senator Was Indiscreet," starring William Powell and Peter Lind Hayes... Nunnally Johnson, who will produce, wrote the flop musical, "Park Avenue," in collaboration with Kaufman; Charles MacArthur also will be a party to the upcoming senatorial antics having prepared the screen script.

Richard Aldrich will open his cape playhouse at Dennis, Cape Cod, June 30... Bucks county playhouse, in the heart of the fashionable Pennsylvania writing colony, begins its summer semester June 6... "The Fourth Little Show" has been put off until September... Bert Leoni was wanted for two months in the fall... There's talk of Bob Hope coming back to Broadway for a musical comedy... and of Danny Kaye, Beatrice Little, Martha Raye, Grocho Marx, Jimmy Durante, Ray Bolger, Victor Moore, William Gaxton and Vivienne Segal... not together, however... who could afford them!

BURNING MAN DROWNS LONDON, April 5.—(AP)—Herber Winston Phillip, 1, was burning trash in a factory lot today. His clothes caught fire, he jumped into a reservoir stuck in the mud, drowned.

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Public Sentiment Saved Thalian Hall In 1938

As Wilmington's Thalian Hall stands practically in ruin, the municipal government again moves to seek federal aid for restoration of the building. Once before, in 1938, the city government saved the historic theater, and plans for renovation of the building are revealed in the May, 1938, issue of the North Carolina Municipal News, which are reprinted:

Thalian Hall, one of the oldest standing theatres in America, which though run down still has its beautiful proportions and original curtain will be restored to its former splendor. The Wilmington City Commissioners recently voted to restore the hall in response to public sentiment.

Wilmington has theatrical traditions second to none in the country. Archibald Henderson in his biography of Thomas Godfrey, calls it "the cradle of American drama" because Thomas Godfrey, who lived and died here and is buried in St. James' graveyard, was the author of "The Prince of Parthia." This play, published in 1765, still holds unchallenged claim to being not only the first tragedy written by an American and published in America, but also the first play written by an American to be performed on the professional stage.

In addition to this, the Thalian Association is generally acknowledged to be the oldest little theatre group in America, having been organized in 1790. Ten years later they opened their own theatre on the lower floor of Innes Academy which they had taken with a perpetual lease. Here the Thaliens produced both classic and current popular plays until town authorities decided to erect a town hall on the site of the academy and purchased the building. The Thaliens received half of the purchase price and planned Thalian Hall.

Cornerstone Laid in 1855 Henry J. MacMillan, who has devoted considerable time to a study of the history of Thalian Hall and who has taken a leading part in the move to get it restored, describes the opening of the hall thus:

"The cornerstone of this beautiful theater, which reflects so much credit on the town, was laid two days after Christmas, in the year 1855. James F. Post was the architect and builder. He also was the architect of the magnificent Bellamy house at Fifth and Market. It is considered by authorities to be the most perfect theater of the Nero Classic or Greek Revival architecture in the south. This is the type of architecture which was introduced and made popular in the south by Thomas Jefferson. The famous French Opera House in New Orleans, destroyed by fire, was of the same period and New Orleans is working on a project to have it rebuilt.

"The hall, while very run-down, still has its beautiful proportions and the original curtains. It was opened by the Thaliens with a performance of a musical extravaganza titled 'The Invisible Prince,' followed by a farce 'Box and Cox,' on the night of December 2, 1857. One wonders how an audience described as 'brilliant' ever sat down with half of its members in voluminous hoop-skirts if the seats were anything like they are today."

Professional as well as amateur performances were given in the hall, with Joseph Jefferson managing a stock company which played there for two seasons. Savini, the great Italian actor; Janashek, the Polish actress; Richard Mansfield, Mary Anderson and in later years Maude Adams, Nazimova, and Robert Mantell are among the great figures of the stage who trod the boards of Thalian Hall.

Dramatic Festival When the work of restoring the hall is completed the Thaliens plan to stage a dramatic festival which it would attract interest throughout the nation. If the theater is restored to the former splendor of its original condition, reflecting the fabulous period just before the war which caused the economic collapse of the South, it will be a tourist attraction of prime importance. With the aid of the Federal Theatre project we can revive some of the old plays that were put on by the Thaliens a century ago.

"We might find encouragement in what Charleston has done recently. They have built a new playhouse on the site of the old Dock Street Theater, it is neither a restoration nor a reproduction, as they did not even have a written description of the old theater—no documents at all with which to work. Think how much more we have to start with, and yet their building has received mention in the press all over the country, and articles have appeared about it in many of the leading magazines. It is also a great addition to the cultural life of the community itself."

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BAPTIST CHURCH HITS GAMBLING

Also Opposes Conducting Of Scrap Drives In Community On Sunday

The Maffitt Village Baptist church has joined Wilmington churches in opposing gambling and scrapper collections and other such activities on Sunday, it was announced yesterday.

In a resolution made public by the Rev. Paul C. Nix, pastor of the church, the organization states its aim as follows:

"We as a church do hereby adopt the principles of teaching set forth in the sermon presented by the Rev. Charles A. Maddry, pastor of the First Baptist church, Wilmington, appealing for more reverence observance of the Lord's Day and the condemnation of scrap paper drives and collections on Sunday, and the operation of Bingo and other gambling vices in our city and county."

The board members of the church will meet in conference next Wednesday, but officials declined today to comment on the business to be taken up at the meeting.

26 Africans Arrested In 'Lionmen' Killings

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanganyika, April 5.—(AP)—Twenty-six tribesmen have been arrested by Colonial police in connection with more than 40 killings attributed to "Lionmen", who dress in lion skins and prowl the villages of this East African country.

Police said investigations indicated that witchcraft and rivalry between witch doctors might have been the underlying cause of the slayings.

The deaths occurred mainly in the Sigida district, which is infested with man-eating lions. Police were handicapped by the refusal of superstitious tribal folk to say whether their relatives had been ripped to death by lions or by the knives of the "Lionmen".

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