

EL CAPITAN DRAWS THROUG

*Spoken Drama, in Invasion of Motion-Picture Realms,
Meets Auspicious Introduction*

BY EDWIN SCHALLERT

(Reprinted from yesterday's late morning edition of The Times.)

The invasion of the realm of the motion picture by the spoken drama was accomplished last night without any fatalities. El Capitan Theater threw open its doors to the public with a sweeping gesture and drew an audience that was brilliantly representative of the cinema metropolis.

A big, roomy and, at the same time, very friendly playhouse disclosed itself to the eyes of this notably distinguished audience. And Charlot's Revue of 1926, a show that was both effervescent and novel, met with a delighted response even from those who remarked that \$15 in the West is still to be regarded as a high price for entertainment especially in so far as the movies thus far have never demanded half as much for a premiere. It is regarded as setting a very obviously bad precedent, in that it may make it necessary for them to raise the admission somewhat higher so as not to be outdone in any future competition.

The opening was devoid of spectacular display, but it had the excellent elements of elegance and distinction. No glaring lights out in front of the theater, and a very quiet and well-restrained crowd that had congregated from along the boulevard, and from other parts of the city to behold the entrance of the film celebrities. E. D. Smith, the boss of the theater, had, however, placed rather adroitly a bank of lights in the neighborhood of the Hollywood Hotel opposite that made it quite clear who was who among those who stepped from limousines in top hat, plush cloak and with diamond tiaras. How many top hats were present could probably easily be estimated as it is not the fashion to overdo this phase of the film-social gathering, at least in California.

Thoroughly distinguished, though, in every other respect El Capitan premiere was—and for the first-nighter one of the memorable and historically important events in the history of the western theater. A new Broadway may be foreseen. Indeed, in this affair de luxe, at which will be assembled on every occasion the most dazzling professional and social gatherings. A new mark of metropolitan enterprise and worth promises also to be therewith associated.

The theater is cheerful especially in its appointments. The lounge room was a-buzz with delighted conversation during the "Interval," as the English will have it—and they sponsor the Charlot Revue—meaning, of course, the intermission. There was exchange of greetings, repartee, and causerie—some of it with quite a marked British accent, doubtless a sign of camaraderie which the great majority of the audience felt for the attraction offered on the stage.

APPLAUSE PROFUSE

There was also pleasure both expressed and implied in the applause and the mirthful reactions of the audience to the very clever troupe of foreign stage artists—and stage artists they truly are—that are appearing in the premiere presentation. A great ovation was tendered the company at the close of the first part of the show, to which James Buchanan, the leading comedian—though not actually the leading comedy star, for that is Beatrice Lillie—appreciatively responded. Mr. Buchanan mentioned among other things that the organization hoped to make a protracted stay in Los Angeles, and that he felt that it was a very particular honor to be invited to offer the first production at the first of Hollywood's stage theaters.

At the close of the performance the audience also met and chatted with the various members of the "Charlot" organization, and in many instances because of the large representation of English actors in Hollywood there was the delighted renewing of old acquaintances.

Before the opening curtain there were ceremonies of introduction, with Pauline Frederick offering the dedication—this being the first instance in which a feminine star has done this here. Emmett Corrigan was master of ceremonies, and introduced Mr. Smith and C. E. Toberman to the audience.

"The Charlot Revue" is both a charming and a remarkably fine

divertissement, that will merit the interest of the theatregoer by virtue of its novelty.

It glories in the presence of one superlatively clever comedienne, whom I have already spoken of—namely Beatrice Lillie. To give any adequate idea of the cleverness that she possesses would in the space of this review be almost impossible. Her work is essentially so different and so individual.

HAS RARE GIFT

At that, though, I must say that she impressed me not only as gifted with the rarest sort of poise, but also with the most amazing whimsy—if those two rather too insistently used words mean anything.

Better to describe her, perhaps, is to say that she is one of the most delightful and ardent caricaturists of life that has ever been known on the stage. Beyond that she has a sense of the values of highly intelligent burlesque that is absolutely inimitable. There is also some of the mischief of true clowning, though a remarkably refined clowning, that will perhaps be popularly even more irresistible.

You will find her fascinating in a variety of impersonations. The "After Dinner Music" especially was a riot. It is an imitation masterfully cosmopolitan of a singer giving a recital—a very gauche, awkward but determined and insistent type of singer—which everyone will recognize as a painfully pleasant memory. It will remind every member of the audience of a time that he or she wanted to laugh but couldn't because of the so-called social proprieties.

This bit of fun furnished by Miss Lillie comes during the first part—and is perhaps its brightest spot, though there are plenty of others that are merrily entertaining.

The show, as a whole, is one that gains impetus every minute.

An English revue is different from an American revue in that it does not start with a whirlwind of dancing. The show builds to its climaxes rather than slambanging them at its audience. So if the first fifteen or twenty minutes seem a little quiet don't be at all discouraged. There is plenty of liveliness coming as the first part progresses, while there is even more animation in the second part, and a great finish to top it all with the good old Highland airs and the Scotch bagpipes stirring.

INFORMAL TONE

There is a tone of the informal about all of the show that is delightful and that culminates when the audience is asked for suggestions as to how to dispose the finish of a dramatic playlet—this in the second part.

Apart from Miss Lillie, there are James Buchanan and the lovely languorous-eyed Gertrude Lawrence, whose dancing captivates nearly as much as her presence. She acted and pantomimed "Early Mourning" with a fine adroitness.

Buchanan is energy personified. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead when he had finished the Cigarette number, at the close of the first part. His sense of humor is both dependable and versatile—and not too English either to be genuinely applauded.

Altogether it is a rare triumphate that will not be forgotten for a long time by those who saw the opening here—even though they may have seen a similar Charlot's Revue elsewhere. They have added a note of class to comedy upon the stage that is thoroughly distinguishing.

The production in its entirety is very creditable—for there is no one, either among the principals or the chorus, who does not enter wholeheartedly into its spirit. They are well trained, and though their dancing is less zealous than that of the American troupes the pleasure that they seem to take in their work reminds one a trifle of that bubbling life which characterizes our own choruses as assembled here in California. Still the California choruses are unique and unsurpassable as already evidenced in such productions as "No, No, Nanette" and "Patsy." It is to be hoped that there will be others like them at El Capitan in the future.

Until that time, Charlot's Revue will without a doubt provide a rare and distinctive novelty of enjoyment.

Douglas Furber, among the lesser principals of the production, stood out interestingly.