EDITORIAL

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AMUSEMENTS

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Omaha Folks Behind the Footlights

Talent from corn-fed Nebraska abounds in land of make-believe, both on stage and in the Movies

FRED ASTAIR

ELEANOR PAINTER

FRANKER WOODS

DAN CARROLL

ADELE ASTAIR

HELEN KRONER

HONER CONANT

BELLE STOREY

CHARLIE WITHERS HAROLD LLOYD

No Maud Adamses started in the Gate City, but we have leading ladies on Broadway, just the same.

No John Drews have lived here, but such boys as Harold Lloyd and Charlie Withers hail from our town.

Talent sprung from Omaha is now famed over America and in Europe.

Every angle of the theatrical game is covered by artists who were kiddies around Omaha.

They are in vaudeville, on the "legitimate" and in the movies. There are singers, dancers and designers. Some of 'em are managers.

Old Dan Carroll was the first to gather spotlight glory. He started in 1879. They've been at it ever since.

By H. R. HARRIS.

Were it possible for some superman among theatrical managers to assemble from the wonderful, colorful realm of make-believe that lies just beyond the orchestra pit all of the folk who once called Omaha "home," he could gather a cluster of stars fit for the sweetest dreams of the wildest and most imaginative impresario. For Omaha, the thriving center of a corn-fed country, a city busied with its huge grain and live stock interests, has not been too busy to raise a goodly number of the world's greatest entertainers.

Along old Broadway the names of native sons and daughters of Omaha flash out each night in blazing electric splendor; around the "big time" vaudeville circuits those who romped as kiddies here are playing and dancing and singing; in the great studios where the gorgeous creations of present day scenery and costume come into being; on the magic screen; on the concert stage, and in the "legitimate," they are to be found.

Daughter of Omaha Pastor.

Go into the mammoth New York Hippodrome and you will hear the flute-like notes of amazing sweetness sung by Belle Storey, leading lady in "Good Times," the big extravaganza being staged this season in the famed playhouse. Belle Storey was once demure little Grace Laird, student in Brownell Hall, whose father was the Rev. Asa Laird, pastor of the old Knox Presbyterian church here.

Step over to "Hitchy-Koo," one of the winners on Broadway this season, and you will, if you are anywhere near normal and well, get a convulsive snort and snicker or so out of the sight and sound of Charlie Withers, now among America's foremost comedians. Charlie Withers is no other than Garland Davidson, cutup and teachers' terror in Omaha schools not so many years ago.

Former Student Here.

Then, there is Eleanor Painter, celebrated prima donna, now leading lady in the revival of Floradora, former Omaha school student.

Do you remember the impressive beauty of the costumes and scenery of "Maytime," or the splendor and gorgeousness of the "Follies of 1919," the "Midnight Rounders" and various "Passing Shows?" Homer Conant, Omaha boy, designed these. He is rated today among the best artists of his profession.

In the careers of Omahans who have climbed the ladder of hard work and perseverance to success in stage and filmland there has been romance and adventure a-plenty. Take petite Helen Kroner, dancer extraordinary, for instance. Her art took her to faraway cities of South America.

Helen started out in New York in 1914 in a dancing part in "Katinka." Then she went to "Miss Springtime" on Broadway when "Katinka" took the road. Her magnificent dancing here won her a place in the troupe of Anna Pavlowa, premier dancer of all nations.

Helen spent two years touring Cuba, Porta Rica, Panama and South America with Pavlowa and then left her for an engagement of one year in a ballet which played at Buenos Aires and other South American cities. She returned to the United States last winter and is playing in Boston with Sam Bernard and Irene Bordoni in "As We Were," following a successful season in New York.

From Usher to Stage.

Franker Woods and Bunnee Wyde make up one of the best two-character skits on the Orpheum. Years ago Franker was an usher at the Orpheum when Bunnee had to reach up on her tiptoes at the Orpheum box office to buy her tickets. This she did every week, however, for she was very fond of the wonderful land behind the footlights. Right here it began. Today they are married.

Both attended Central High school before they went on the stage.

Bunnee started with the "Isle of Spice." She later appeared in "In Greenwich Village," which played at the Boyd theater. Both she and her husband played with Montgomery and Stone in "The Old Mill" and both appeared in "The Echo," which played at the Brandeies theater. For the last six or seven years they have made up a vaudeville team and have played in Omaha a number of seasons. They have a home in Long Island and have one of the cutest of little boys.

Billy Ellsworth, night foreman in the World-Herald composing room, is a mighty proud daddy these days, for his daughter, Florence, has just broken into vaudeville. Here, too, has been a romantic adventure on the part of two little girls, one of them Florence and the other Hilda Lachmann, noted in Omaha since she was a mere baby as a dancer.

Try Out for Vaudeville.

This fall Florence and Hilda cast their lots together and journeyed to Chicago for a tryout for the Orpheum circuit. They got by this test and were given a contract. Some time this winter Omaha is scheduled to have the opportunity to welcome these youngsters.

Quite in striking contrast to these two young "flappers" is old Dan Carroll, dean of all Omaha stage folk, who played on the Orpheum when there were only two houses on the "circuit," one in San Francisco and the other in Los Angeles. This was way back in the early '80s. Dan played four weeks at each.

Dan was a "knockout" in the days of variety when the old straight jig and clog were the dances and such songs as "Golden Slippers," "In the Moonlight at Cape May," "Aunt Eliza" and the like were the rage. He served a long and honorable career, mostly in black-face work, and saw the present day vaudeville in evolution.

Dan started in the old variety shows in 1879. In 1880 he appeared at the Academy of Music on Douglas street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets. Back in the early days he also played at the old St. Elmo on Twelfth between Dodge and Douglas.

John Flynn was Dan's partner. They went under the name of Keating and Flynn, Dan taking the name of Dan Keating.

This pair went with Jack Haverly's minstrels all over the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Keating and Flynn played Chicago variety for two or three seasons and then made Chicago, New York and the other big towns of the east. They played for eight weeks with McIntyre and Heath.

When Dan next appeared in Omaha he played at the Grand Opera house on the northeast corner of Fifteenth and Capitol avenue. He came in Dan T. Jack's Lilly Clay company, he and his partner playing "ends."

In 1890-1-3 he played with McCarty's "Mishaps." In this he appeared at the old Boyd the first year and at the new Boyd the two following. Dan took the part of an Irishman in this play, in contrast to his usual black-face comedy.

Dan played the big eastern towns with the London Gaiety Girls, a burlesque show.

In the course of his career he also played with Leavitt's Minstrels, the original Pat Rooney's New York Stars in '86-7 and the William West minstrels.

Dan retired in 1910, when his mother died.

Dan has little use for the present run of actors. He goes to see the old-timers when they come to town. That's about all.

Prominence in Drama.

Real prominence in drama has been attained by Carl Eckstrom and his sister, Clara, both born and raised here. Carl Eckstrom made his name and ability known from coast to coast by his splendid work in "The Shepherd King."

Carl Eckstrom attended the Central High school about 18 years ago. He won the Frank Short Lee scholarship to the Franklin Sargent academy in New York and went from Omaha for a course in that institution.

On leaving the academy Eckstrom went into Charles Froham's company, "The Girl from Maxim's," in which he took the part of Chamerot.

Next the young actor was leading man with Grace George in "Under Southern Skies."

Eckstrom's biggest success followed this engagement. He played for four seasons in "The Shepherd King" with the late Wright Lorimer. He played the part of Jonathan and was understudy to Lorimer in the part of David, which he played at times when Lorimer's eyes troubled him.

Eckstrom then appeared in "Sopho" with Alberta Galletin, played an engagement with Margaret Anglin and went into vaudeville with Helen Ware.

In 1919 Carl played in "Scandal" for seven months at the Garrick theater in Chicago. From September to October this show ran. "Scandal" was then shifted to Thirty-ninth street theater in New York for a run. It is now in Boston for an indefinite engagement.

Clara Eckstrom, his sister, left Omaha about 15 years ago to study voice culture in the Chicago Conservatory of Music. Her debut on the stage was made in "The Sultan of Sulu." She subsequently played with Charles Dillingham productions for six seasons and for Charles Froham, two. She played with Donald Brian in "The Siren" and in Savage's production of "Parcival."

Recently Performed Here.

Any one who saw "Apple Blossoms," that delightful musical comedy which played at the Brandeis theater a few weeks ago, will agree that Ferd and Adele Astaire deserve their rating among the smartest and cleverest dancers on the stage today. Fred and Adele were born in Omaha as Fred and Adele Osterlitz. Their father was F. E. Osterlitz, state sales manager for the old Storz Brewing company until the family moved to New York 14 years ago.

Adele was a pupil at the Chambers Dancing academy here. After the family moved to Gotham both brother and sister studied "terp" art under Albert Cherry in the old Metropolitan theater.

The Adaires have been on the stage for several years, first in vaudeville and then in such shows as "Over the Top," "Passing Show of 1918" and "Apple Blossoms."

Charles Dillingham has instructed Fred and Adele to brush up on their singing. Next season he has promised them he will put them in a new production in which they will act, dance and sing.

The older Osterlitz is now connected with the Movette Moving Picture company of New York. The mother travels with her children wherever they go.

While in Omaha Fred and Adele enjoyed their first airplane ride through the efforts of their uncle, Dan Geilus, Omaha Gun club member and former state game warden.

Changed His Name.

Many stories of Charlie Withers are told in Omaha. He was known in his boyhood as an eccentric and was always in one sort of a scrape or another. In the first place he adopted the name of "Charlie Withers" when he was in the Sixth grade in school. He did this for no particular reason except that it suited him better than his own.

In High school Withers won fame as a speaker. Here, though, as in everything else he mixed up in, he pulled a prank that ruined him.

There was an important debate on at the Central High school on the subject of "Capital and Labor." Withers was closing for his side. His eloquence had just about won the decision of the judges. He was telling how no one escapes from work, how the bank president, the teacher, the scientist, etc., must all labor.

Charlie couldn't resist the temptation. He came to the climax of his brilliant argument.

"In short," he declared, "everybody works, everybody—but father."

This was the "you tell 'em" of the day and the audience roared, the judges purpled and Withers' side lost the debate while Charlie, himself, was plunged into disgrace.

Charlie, as a boy and youth, tried to dress as much like a tramp as possible. His parents were well able to supply him with nice clothes, but he insisted on tattered attire. Now, however, he has quite changed, according to Fred Heyn, local realtor who was a playmate of Withers and has followed his career with interest.

Goes Into Vaudeville.

Withers took to the stage, and vaudeville, much in the manner in which a duckling waddles to a puddle. For a while he served as supernumerary with the Eva Lang company here. In 1909 he drifted into vaudeville in New York. He starred on the Orpheum circuit for a number of seasons. He has appeared in "The Fiji Islander" and scored a tremendous hit in "For Pity's Sake." Now he is in "Hitchy-Koo," having just returned from England.

When the curtain goes up on such shows as "The Follies of 1919" and the breath-taking beauty of the scenes and costumes is first revealed, Homer Conant gets recompense in the exclamations and bursts of applause from the audience.

Homer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harley Conant, is rated today among the top-notch designers of theatrical costume and scene designers of New York. He has designed the costumes for a number of the big New York musical shows for a number of years, including many of the Shubert productions.

Some of the big shows he has dressed up are "The Follies of 1919," "Maytime," "The Midnight Rounders" and the various "Passing Shows."

Young Conant was graduated at the Omaha High school 15 years ago. He studied two years at the Art Institute in Chicago and two years at the Art League of New York. Following this he conducted an art class in Maryville, Mo., for one year.

The most recent of his creations is "Piccadilly to Broadway," new this season.

Conant was with the Shuberts for a number of years.

Studies in Europe.

Belle Storey lived in Omaha with her father and attended Brownell Hall. She went from here to Kansas City, where she became a pupil of James Powers. When he moved his school to New York she followed. She then went abroad and studied in Paris and in Italy.

Returning to this country she went on a concert tour. Her next appearance was in "Chin Chin" with Montgomery and Stone. Next she was on Keith's vaudeville circuit.

Belle went to the Hippodrome. She played in the revival of "Pinafore," and in "Happy Days" at the Hippodrome last year.

Mrs. Warren Switzler and her daughter, Mrs. John D. Lynn, now living in Boston, have visited Belle Storey at the Hippodrome and found her the same sweet, unaffected girl she was when Mrs. Lynn was a schoolmate of hers at Brownell Hall.

Belle Storey has appeared in private concerts with Caruso at the Biltmore in New York. Her voice is remarkably clear and sweet. She is also an accomplished pianist.

Belle Storey is married and lives at Pelham Minor, N. Y.

Goes to High School.

Eleanor Painter attended the Park school in Omaha. Later she went to Central High. The family moved to Colorado Springs, where Eleanor studied voice culture. Following this her rise was rapid. She sang grand opera in a number of the large European cities and when she returned to New York starred in a number of big musical comedy productions, the latest of which is the big revival of "Florodora."

Francis Nash, daughter of E. W. Nash, attended the Du Chesne school here. She studied music abroad and was in Germany at the outbreak of the war. She became a pianist of note and has played with a number of the finest orchestras in the country, including the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra. She returned from a tour of South America last year and went to Paris, where she married Lieut. Col. E. M. Watson of the United States diplomatic service September 1. She is to appear in Omaha in February in concert.

Grace Cameron sang in the Trinity Cathedral choir when she was a girl in Omaha. She later went on the Orpheum, where she played for a number of years. She was afterwards prima donna in "The Bostonians." Of recent years she has developed into a singing comedian. She played in Omaha this fall in "The Scandals of 1919."

Dr. Frank Anson, former young Omaha dentist, and his wife, have had remarkable success in the motion picture game since they went to California a year ago.

Dr. Anson first broke into the movies after he had been lured to the studios while in California for his health two years ago. He came back to Omaha and he and his wife both decided to make the venture. Some 12 months ago they did.

Dr. Anson, under the stage name of Jack Franklyn, has appeared in pictures with Wanda Hawley, with Ethle Clayton in "Crooked Streets," and in a number of other Goldwyn and Lasky productions.

Lura Anson, the other member of the firm, made good from the jump and has already appeared with Wallace Reid in "What's Your Hurry?" with Mary Miles Minter in "A Cumberland Romance," and in pictures with Fatty Arbuckle and Thomas Meighan.

F. B. Rogers, Omahan, who went into the movie game nine years ago, on the distributing end of the business, declared in Omaha recently, that noted directors are predicting a big future for Lura Anson.

Rogers left a grain business in Omaha to go to Kansas City, where he took a position under Ralph Proctor, then branch manager for the Vitagraph company. He subsequently went to the Metro people in Chicago as salesman, thence to the Standard Film company as assistant manager of the Chicago office, then to the district managership of the central western district. Next he took two more hurdles and today is general manager of J. Stuart Blackton, Inc., which has produced such films as "The Battle Cry of Peace," and "Passersby."

Success on Screen.

Jean Armour, as she is known in the movies, is Jessie Bowie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Bowie of Omaha. She has already attained considerable success on the screen. Some of the pictures in which she has appeared are: "On the Firing Line," with Irene Castle; the "Branded Woman," with Norma Talmadge; "Lady Rose's Daughter," with Elsie Ferguson, a new picture just released in New York. She has also played with Geraldine Farrar, Constance Talmadge and June Caprice.

Marie Snowden, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Snowden, who were formerly Omahans but are now Californians, was brought up and received her early training in Omaha. She learned dancing from W. E. Chambers and then started out in vaudeville. Eventually she became a vaudeville star.

Marie Snowden made an Omahan-in-law out of Art Hickman, famed as the greatest jazz band leader in New York, where he is playing with the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic when she met and married him in San Francisco.

Among the earlier stars to leave the Gate City was Mae Naudain, who won a national reputation in musical comedy. It was she who introduced and popularized "Glow Worm," the tremendous song hit of some 11 or 12 years ago. She was later in the famous musical comedy success, "Katinka."

As a newsboy taking a flyer at an amateur performance in Omaha a number of years ago, Ed Lee Wroth, one of the burlesque kings of today, got his start.

Wroth went from the vaudeville "sticks" to burlesque and from burlesque jumped to "big time" vaudeville, taking bookings around New York. Later Wroth organized a burlesque show of his own. In this he appeared at the Gayety theater in Omaha several weeks ago.

Wroth is an Omaha boy, raised and educated here. His brother, Leroy Wroth, is proprietor of Wroth's cafe, opposite the court house.

Parents Oppose Movies.

Rodney La Roque when in Central High school gave very little indication that he would become an actor, for though he was talented, being an accomplished musician and a born elocutionist, he had hardly anything at all to do with amateur theatricals of any kind. His parents were opposed to him going and held him back.

Rodney's inclinations would not be denied, however. In 1915 he went with the Essanay people in Chicago. Later La Roque appeared in a number of films, including "Venus Model," "A Perfect 36," "Hidden Fires," "Easy to Get," "Greater Than Love," etc.

George M. Clarke, son of Mrs. Bruce Barndollar, 205 South Twenty-fifth, is one of the best "juveniles" who has gone out of Omaha.

George was graduated at the Missouri Military academy at Mexico, Mo., in 1909. He studied with Lillian Fitch in Omaha. His first appearance in a big New York play was with Mrs. Leslie Carter in "Two Women." He played a juvenile role.

He played the part of Laurie with "Little Women," for two seasons and then "Along Came Ruth." He next went with May Irwin in "33 Washington Square." His next appearance was with Shubert's "Eyes of Youth."

George has played three summers in stock at Dayton and two winters in stock at Akron. He plans to return to Broadway following his present engagement.

Clark Marshall, Omaha boy, who

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