

# 'Palace' for Plays, Dinner

That booming national phenomenon, the dinner theater, is making another inroad into Kansas City's entertainment scene. Early next month the Palace Dinner Playhouse, operated by a Tulsa corporation, will open for business in the old Uptown Theater building.

"We're shooting for an opening on Aug. 3," said Harold Nixon, president of Berude, Inc., the firm that will run the new playhouse. The first show will be Neil Simon's comedy, "The Star-Spangled Girl," set to run six weeks. Cast in the show are professional actors (though none is a member of Actors Equity, the theatrical union) hired through recent auditions in New York.

Meantime Nixon's company is completing an extensive renovation of the Uptown Theater at 37th and Broadway. For many years the Uptown was run as a movie house, and for two seasons it was home for the city's opera company, the Lyric Theater. Berude, Inc., leased the building in mid-April.

Nixon said \$300,000 has been spent "to restore the theater to its original elegance, install kitchen facilities and tier the seating floor." The playhouse will have 400 seats arranged on stairstepped tiers facing a proscenium stage with an apron thrust. Dinner will be served buffet-style and cocktails will be available.

As an added attraction, the Palace will offer pre-show revue acts by young singers and dancers who also will serve as waiters and waitresses.

One unusual feature of the Uptown design—the "sky effect" with artificial clouds floating over electric starlight—is being put back into operation. This and the Italian baroque balconies and statues should create the illusion "of dining in a courtyard in an Italian villa," Nixon said.

"There isn't a bad seat in the house," he added, noting that the audience arrangement will resemble that of the Las Vegas supper clubs "but with a more relaxed and intimate atmosphere."

The Palace will operate six nights a week, though it has not yet been decided whether Sundays or Mondays will be the "dark" nights. In the case of the opening show, the first two or three performances will be in the nature of "shakedown" previews, followed by an invitational press preview either Aug. 5 or 6.

The newest but not the first supper showplace in Kansas City, the Palace is one more reflection of a national entertainment trend. Dinner playhouses are springing up in

scores of American cities, giving actors more new employment than any other phase of theater.

Already well-established here is the professional Tiffany's Attic Dinner Playhouse at 5028 Main. Still another such theater, the Waldo Astoria, will have its public opening Aug. 25 in the old Waldo cinema on 75th near Wornall. Then there's the Limelight Theater in the River Quay district, which offers dinner-theater productions with community talent.

Nixon, who has moved to Kansas City to operate the Palace, has had three years experience as manager of a similar supper playhouse in Tulsa.

