

# THEATER OPENING DAZZLING

## Warner Brothers' New Playhouse Voted Gem of Gems as Crowds Throng Premiere

BY EDWIN SCHALLERT

(Reprinted from Friday's late edition, The Times.)

Warner Brothers Theater was voted a gem in picture playhouse construction last evening, and its premiere was an event of events in the show world.

The new house had been sold out for weeks in advance. At the appointed hour for the start of the performance traffic was jammed to the degree that it was almost at a standstill. Throngs gathered on the sidewalks for a block or more in either direction from the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Wilcox avenue, where the theater is located, to watch the arrival of the celebrities. With a veritable aurora borealis display of lights adding to the general glamour, it was another of the cinema capital's great evenings.

Al Jolson was master of ceremonies for the premiere. The picture shown was "The Glorious Betsy," starring Dolores Costello. The prologue, portraying "The Evolution of Hollywood," was as attractive and artistic as any staged here recently.

### SINGS FAMILIAR SONGS

Jolson made the generally tedious presentation ceremonies something to be remembered, for he sang his familiar and popular songs for all of twenty or twenty-five minutes, adding, too, a few new ones. The ovation for Jolson was notable. Conrad Nagel, who made the introductions, was also applauded warmly.

The Warner Brothers Theater impressed because of its simplicity, and absence of rococo trimmings. Picture playhouses often run into some indiscretions in this respect. This new theater is singularly free from them, and quiet, sedate and spacious to a degree that gladdens the eye.

The intermission between prologue and feature picture found everyone in the promenade which more than half circles the house. For all its amplexity it was crowded.

The entire presentation at the theater moved very smoothly for a first showing. The house had been completed in plenty of time to permit rehearsals to be held with those taking part in the prologue, and with the innovations in Vitaphone equipment.

### "THE GLORIOUS BETSY"

The film, "The Glorious Betsy," is the first thus far shown here to include spoken dialogue in the dramatic scenes. There was a brief episode in "The Jazz Singer" which included dialogue, but the new production gives more place to the spoken word.

The musical score for "The Glorious Betsy" was reproduced by Vitaphone, but for the prologue there was the theater orchestra and also a jazz band.

Virtually all the resources of the motion-picture theater are therefore used in providing the initial entertainment. In this respect the program is exceptionally elaborate, and will unquestionably attract very big audiences.

Principals in the prologue are Daphne Pollard and Harry Keeley. Miss Pollard's travesties being unusually clever.

The outstanding number is one that she does with chorus showing the dress of 1890, with bustle effects much exaggerated. Two girls were required for each costume, one con-

cealed beneath mountains of cloth performing as the bustle part of the costume. Considerable novelty was added to this act, because of the fact that the bustles and long trains were detachable from the rest of the costume and ambled about the stage of their own volition.

There is a very beautiful climax to this prologue act, simply and artistically staged, in which the massing of color effects forms a glowing impression.

I don't know whether anybody ever did any mining in Hollywood in the days of '49, but the prologue doesn't hesitate to include this note of early California history.

Larry Ceballos is responsible for the production, which is decidedly original and delightful.

### THE SERIOUS SIDE

"The Glorious Betsy" is a pleasing picture of the romantic order. It is a fictional narrative of the love of Jerome Bonaparte for an American girl—a belle of the old South. Miss Costello is cast as the heroine, and Conrad Nagel as Bonaparte. The production has been safely provided with a happy ending.

One of the most significant things seemed to be Bonaparte's ability to escape from carriages in which the officers of the emperor apparently safely ensconced him. With a considerable dexterity he always manages to disappear at the moment when he is most in demand for some event of state. It so happens that a goodly portion of the plot hinges on this Houdini-like quality.

As regards the serious side of its story, "The Glorious Betsy" portrays the sacrifice made by Betsy for the political future of Bonaparte. This is done at the behest of Napoleon, who is portrayed by the opera singer, Pasquale Amato. I will say that Amato is rather more acceptable as the emperor than others that I recall at the moment, though perhaps still not a Napoleon. He is a good screen actor.

### CHARM AND APPEAL

The picture has charm and appeal in its romantic sequences, and is a novelty as regards its historical background. The singing of the Marseillaise is a brilliant moment, and the dialogue in this portion of the picture is very effective. The experiment with the spoken word is very interesting.

Andres de Segurola is the solo singer in the Marseillaise scene. Marc McDermott, John Miljan, Michael Vavitch are among the more prominent silent actors. Betty Blythe appears for a brief flash as the Princess of Wurtemberg.

Photographically and in direction by Alan Crosland, the production is attractive.

The audience enjoyed immensely a short Vitaphone presentation, portraying a mail-carrier's holiday, during which his family insists on his spending most of his time walking.

Warner Brothers have unquestionably added a new embellishment to the entertainment world here with their new theater, and furnished the occasion for one of Hollywood's most glittering premieres.