

# The Obrecht Family Band - entertaining the USA Midwest from 1898 to the 1930s

*Gavin Holman, 2 November 2023*

Christian David Obrecht was born in November 1851, in Jenins, Graubünden, Switzerland, and emigrated with his family to the USA in 1856. In September 1878 he married Augusta Bertram (born 1854 in Berlin, Germany) at Red Wing, Goodhue, Minnesota.

The couple had ten children, three of which died before the family's musical journey began: Christian (1879-1885); Arnold (1882-1890); Edward (1883-1885); Leon (1885-1964); Mae (1888-1983); Julia (1890-1990); Rose (b. 1892); Christopher (Christie) (1892-1969); Nelle (1893-1970); Sarah (b. 1895).

Christian was a barber by trade and a good musician who had studied violin, band instruments and composition. By 1892 he was selling musical instruments, music and jewellery in addition to his barber work. He taught his children to play at least two musical instruments each. The Obrecht Musical Family: "*a Musical Organization without Peer*" was founded in 1896. When Christian's business failed in the late 1890s the family relocated to North Minneapolis in 1898 and became a professional concert company that toured the Mid-West.<sup>1</sup>



*Julia, Leonard, Christie, Sarah, Nelle, May, Rose with father, Christian, on double bass*

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<sup>1</sup> Johnston, Patricia Condon - Nelle Palmer of Stillwater: Entertainer and Innkeeper - *Minnesota History* - Volume 48 (5), Spring, 1983, pp. 207-212

The Obrecht Bavarian Juvenile Band made its public debut on Thursday 29 December 1898 at the Hope Chapel in Minneapolis, playing their music accompanying Mrs Chapman's display of stereopticon views. The instruments played by the children varied, but it was usually as follows: Leonard (Len) – clarinet & violin, Mae (May) – cornet & violin, Julia – cornet & violin, Rose - cornet, Christie - clarinet, Nelle – cornet & tenor horn, Sarah – bass drum, snare drum & triangle.

In addition to their instrumental accomplishments, the children also provided songs, recitations, dances, cakewalks and 'specialities'.

The following are known engagements for the family from 1899 – locations are in Minneapolis unless otherwise given:

- Sunday 11 June 1899 – performed at the Children's Day at the Pilgrim Church.
- Wednesday 26 July 1899 – took part in an entertainment at the Soldiers' Home.
- Wednesday 21 February 1900 – gave a concert at the Malta Temple raising funds for the Minneapolis Knights of Malta.
- Thursday 22 February 1900 – took part in the Washington Festival at the Swedish Lutheran Emmanuel Church, Thirteenth Avenue NE and Monroe Street. The programme included a recitation by May Obrecht.
- Monday 16 April 1900 – the band provided music for the grand Easter opening of the St Olson Company Store in St Paul in the afternoon, followed by a concert at the Presbyterian Church in the evening.
- Tuesday 25 September 1900 – the band gave a grand concert and held a reception on the children's day at the Ak-Sar-Ben's Oriental Festival.
- Friday 15 March 1901 – gave an entertainment at the Thirty-Eighth Street Congregational Church, during which Leonard and Julia featured as soloists.
- Monday 18 November 1901 – the band performed for the Ancient Order of Hibernians at their hall, including "*Plantation Melodies*" and "*Old Kentucky Home*". Leonard and Julia gave a violin duet, and Sarah sang a character song.
- Thursday 21 November 1901 – the band provided music for the Engine Men's and Ladies' Auxiliary Social Club's card and dancing party.
- Monday 9 December 1901 – a week-long grand Orphans Fair was held in the city, at the Court House, through to Saturday 14 December, during which the Obrecht Family provide various musical selections and solos. A lengthy programme was given by them on the Thursday, at noon.
- Monday 30 December 1901 – a musical and literary entertainment for the Fourth Ward Republican Club engaged the Obrecht family band, and featured Leonard and Julia as soloists.



*Julia Obrecht, 1900*

- Monday 5 May 1902 – the band provided music for the meeting of the West End Improvement Association, at Kistler’s Hall.
- Monday 19 May 1902 – gave an open-air concert at Oak Lake Park on behalf of the West End Improvement Association, with over 1,000 in the audience.
- Tuesday 27 May 1902 – another open-air concert was given for the WEIA in Colonel Adam’s grove on the Cedar Lake Road.
- Thursday 3 July 1902 – the band performed at Redwood Falls, and also the following day, Friday.



May Obrecht, 1900

- Saturday 2 August 1902 – the band provided music at the Haddock Memorial Meeting at Hamline, where the ‘child orator’ Wendell Holmes Smith was reciting.
- Monday 22 December 1902 – gave a concert for the the Fourth Ward Republican Club.
- Thursday 5 March 1903 – the Knights of the Maccabees “Lyndale Tent” held a grand free entertainment at Kistler’s Hall with the Obrecht family as the main musical performers.
- Monday 23 March 1903 - the band took part in the anniversary entertainment of the Knights and Ladies of Security at Kistler’s Hall.
- Friday 17 April 1903 – a testimonial benefit concert was held in Kistler’s Hall, organised by several fraternal societies, the proceeds being given to the Obrecht family in recognition of their contributions to church and society entertainments.
- Thursday 23 July 1903 – the band provided music for the lawn social of the ladies of St Lawrence Church.
- Saturday 28 July 1903 – the Knights of the Maccabees “Lyndale Tent” held a benefit entertainment for the flood sufferers. The Obrecht family were included and performed: overture “*Harvest Days*” (H. Von Fitzer), selection “*Players of the Big Bass Drum*”, cornet duet “*I Would I Were a Bird*”, violin duet by May and Julia Obrecht, selection “*Hiawatha*”, illustrated song by Julia and May Obrecht “*Just Next Door*”, and “*Irish National Airs*”. Julia also performed her ‘serpentine dance’, where she presented herself in ‘a voluminous costume of white shimmering material and gracefully executes many figures of the serpentine dance, during which time varied colored lights are thrown on the moving form, the sweep of her garment suggesting different designs’.
- Tuesday 24 November 1903 - a benefit entertainment was held by the Excelsior Lodge No. 153, “Degree of Honor”, in the Maccabee Hall, at which the Obrecht family performed.
- Saturday 17 September 1904 – the band entertained visitors to the opening of the “Fall Millinery” at Kerr’s Store on Nicolett Avenue, in the afternoon and evening.
- Monday 27 November 1905 – the band fulfilled a week’s engagement at the Grand Theater, Sauk Centre, MN.
- Tuesday 8 May 1906 – the band, now calling themselves the “Obrecht Swiss Opera Company” started out on its third concert tour, to North and South Dakota, Western Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.



- Monday 6 August 1906 – the Obrechts spent two nights in concerts at Long Prairie, MN.

The Commercial Club are offering inducements to Professor C.D. Obrecht and his family to make Sauk Centre their permanent residence. Mr Obrecht thinks favorably of this plan and will in all probability settle here in the near future.<sup>2</sup>

- Thursday 28 November 1907 – the Obrecht family gave a Thanksgiving Day concert at the Minnesota State Prison in Stillwater. The inmates were lavish in their praise for the family, regarding their performances as the best to visit for some time.
- Saturday 5 January 1908 – the Obrechts performed at the opening of the Crystal Theatre's new season in Menasha, WI. This included the sisters in a dance and monologue act, and Christie – 'one of the best and most clever clarinet players for his age on the American vaudeville stage'.
- Thursday 19 March 1908 – the band entertained the Menasha Elks lodge at their seventh anniversary dinner.
- Monday 13 April 1908 – Sarah Obrecht featured in the bill at the Crystal Theatre, Menasha, in character songs.
- Monday 5 May 1908 – the family appear to be the 'house band' for the Crystal Theatre, the "Crystal Orchestra", performing the selection "*District Leader*", with three Obrecht sisters in a singing and dancing act.



*Leonard Obrecht, 1900*

The two little girls black up like a pair of pickaninnies and to say the least they are really funny and clever.<sup>3</sup>

- Monday 8 June 1908 – the band opened the evening at the theatre with the selection "*Lucrezia Borgia*", Miss Obrecht sang "*Fair Thee Well My Old Kentucky*" and "*The Star and Flower*" and a cornet duet was given by May and Julia.

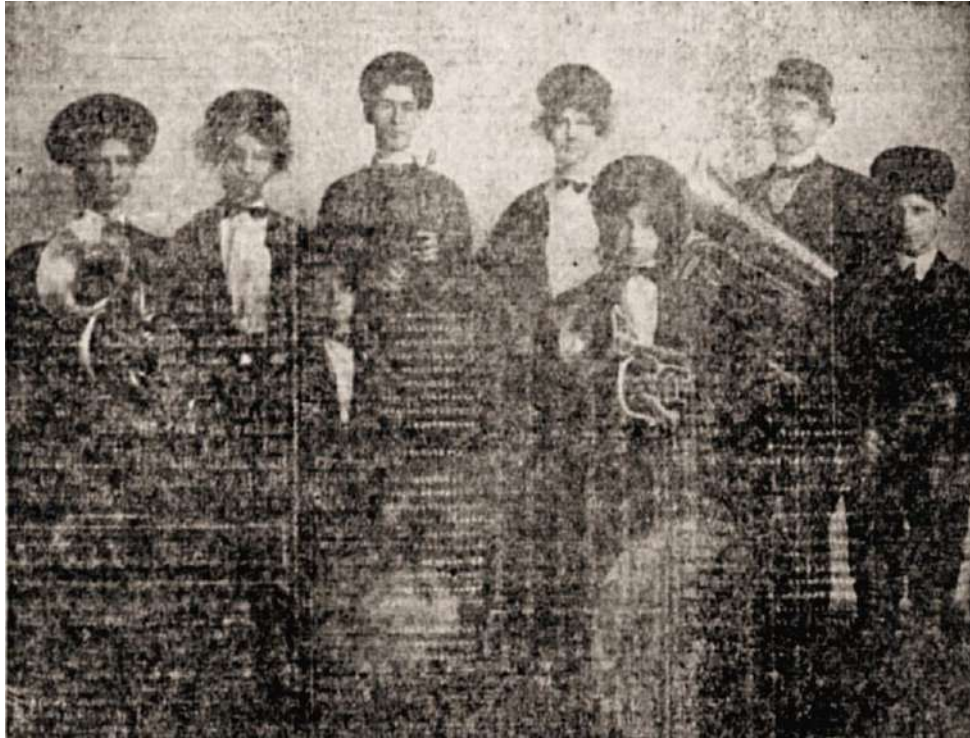
By now it is clear that the Obrecht family own the Crystal Theatre and have future expansion plans for vaudeville in Menasha.

Mgr. Obrecht of the Crystal theatre closed a deal today whereby he secures the Germania hall to present his theatre offerings in the future. A number of contractors have already been interviewed as to improving the appearance and Germania, when it is thrown open to the public will be as neat and pretty a vaudeville theatre as any in the valley. Among the improvements will be a slant floor with brand new opera seats, a new lobby in front and the entire place will be renovated and redecorated. Manager Obrecht stated to a representative of the Record that although the change from the old to the new Crystal will take a

<sup>2</sup> Sauk Centre Herald, 9 August 1906

<sup>3</sup> The Menasha Record, 5 May 1908

little time, work will be rushed immediately, and the grand opening will take place about the 15th of July. The Obrecht family have made many friends in Menasha and it is a pleasure to know that they will make Menasha their future home at least for a while. They have gained an enviable reputation with their ability as musicians and entertainers and the people of our city would not like to lose them. Announcements will be made later as to the exact date of the opening of the new Crystal.<sup>4</sup>



*The Obrecht Swiss Opera Company, 1906*

- Tuesday 30 June 1908 – the Crystal Theatre closed after its run of 26 weeks, with the Obrechts playing “*Morning, Noon and Night*”.
- Thursday 6 August 1908 – the family left Menasha for a six-week concert tour through the state of Wisconsin.
- Sunday 1 November 1908 – the family performed at Henning’s Hall, New Holstein, WI.
- Saturday 14 November 1908 – the new theatre, called “The Grand”, which seated 900 people, was opened, with admission being 10¢. The Obrecht family provided music and there were a number of vaudeville acts in the Obrecht’s Stock Company, including plays, motion pictures and songs between acts of the plays.
- January 1909 – Leonard Obrecht accepted a position as clarinetist with the Kloepfel Orchestra, doubling on violin.
- Wednesday 31 March 1909 – the Obrechts fulfilled a four-night engagement in New London, WI.
- Friday 23 April 1909 – the Modern Woodmen of America, of Appleton WI, held a big entertainment in the Odd Fellows building, with the Obrecht family as the main musical performers. The family played various selections, ‘cross-handed’ cornet duets, clarinet duets, and a cornet and trombone duet.

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<sup>4</sup> The Menasha Record, 26 June 1908

- Monday 3 May 1909 – the family performed for the week at the Elite Theatre, Appleton, WI, with Nellie giving cornet solos, Julia violinist, May piano accompanist, and Christopher clarinetist.
- Tuesday 18 May 1909 – the family, now living in Neenah, gave a concert at the Franklin school in Appleton.
- Monday 21 June 1909 – the Obrechts presented a comedy drama evening at the Opera House, Ladysmith, WI.
- Monday 19 July 1909 – performed in Iola, WI.
- Tuesday 20 July 1909 – performed at a dancing party in Marshfield, WI.
- Sunday 1 August 1909 – the family commenced a two-week engagement at Adler's Opera House, Marshfield.

The Obrecht family will be presenting high class vaudeville, motion pictures and illustrated songs. The company comes with a reputation, having played nearly all of the larger vaudeville houses in the U.S. and Canada. Adler's opera house will be turned into a regular vaudeville house during the two weeks engagement with a complete change of program twice a week. Among the many features are the Obrecht brothers in their comedy musical acts, Miss Nellie Obrecht, who holds a gold medal for being the world's greatest child cornetiste, the three Obrecht sisters singers and dancers, Miss Julie Obrecht, lady cornet and violin soloist, Christie Obrecht, the funny comedian, the famous Obrecht family concert band and orchestra. The band will give a concert on the street every evening at 7:45. Admission reduced to 10 cents for any seat.<sup>5</sup>



*The Obrecht family in Wisconsin, 1910*

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<sup>5</sup> Marshfield News and Wisconsin Hub, 29 July 1909



- Monday 30 August 1909 – the Obrechts fulfilled an engagement during the week at Smith's Opera House, Menomonie, WI.
- Monday 13 September 1909 – started three nights of performances at the Opera House in Winona, MN.
- Monday 20 September 1909 – performed in La Crosse, WI.
- Thursday 14 October 1909 – played for two nights at Daly's Theatre, Wisconsin Rapids, WI.
- Saturday 16 October 1909 – played for nine nights at the Majestic Theatre, Wausau, WI.
- Monday 27 December 1909 – the family leased the Adler Opera House in Marshfield for ten days for their performances.
- Thursday 6 January 1910 – the family returned to Menasha.
- Friday 14 January 1910 – four members of the family travelled to Escanaba, MI, for a two-day engagement.
- Thursday 20 January 1910 – the Obrecht family took over the management of the Adler Opera House in Marshfield, and turned it into a moving picture house, with musical accompaniment from the band.
- Saturday 5 February 1910 – the band gave a concert for the local Modern Woodmen, where they performed: march "*Lincoln Centennial*", overture "*Poet and Peasant*", southern chorus dance "*In Dear Old Tennessee*" (Obrecht sisters), comedy Dutch sketch (Leon & Chris Obrecht), cornet solo "*Emmett's Lullaby*" (Nell Obrecht), song "*Red Head*" (Sara Obrecht), comedy talking act "*Fritz and Louie*" (Leon and Chris Obrecht), "*The Gold Dust Twins*" (Nell and Sara Obrecht), violin solo "*Der Sohn den Haide*" (Jule Obrecht), comedy rural Dutch dance (Nell and Sara Obrecht), and a closing march by the band. This was followed by dancing until 12 o'clock with music from the band.
- Sunday 13 February 1910 – the Obrechts concluded their engagement at the Adler Opera House.
- Wednesday 23 February 1910 – the band provided music for Professor Cotie's dancing school in Appleton.
- Monday 7 March 1910 – the family performed in Marinette, WI.
- Monday 18 April 1910 – the band fulfilled a week's engagement at the Bijou Theatre, Racine, WI.
- Thursday 23 June 1910 – the Obrechts were booked to perform for four nights at the Turner Opera House, Green Bay, WI.
- Monday 1 August 1910 – the band appeared in Ripon, WI. During the month of August the family moved home to La Crosse, WI.
- Thursday 25 August 1910 – the band played for the Elks of La Crosse and Winona at their family picnic at Trempealeau Park.
- Monday 3 October 1910 – the family were engaged for a week at the Lyric Theatre, Watertown, WI.

**COMING! COMING!**

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**Adler's Theatre**

One week commencing Monday, Jan. 9.

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**The Obrecht Stock Co.**

Featuring The Obrecht Sisters Concert  
Band and Orchestra.

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**15 . People . 15**

—IN—

**New Plays - Specialties - Music**  
A Company of Picked Actors.

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—OPENING PLAY—

**"HER FATHER'S SIN"**

Prices 10c, 20c and 30c.

Ladies Free Monday Night—Usual Conditions.  
Reserved Seats on Sale Saturday Morning.

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**Listen To The Band**

- Thursday 10 November 1910 – the band played for three nights at the Opera House, Viroqua, WI. Billed as the Obrecht Stock Company, with 15 performers, featuring ‘new plays, beautiful costumes, featured vaudeville between acts’.
- Monday 9 January 1911 – the Obrecht Stock Company returned to Marshfield to appear at the Adler Theatre, the first play being “*Her Father’s Sin*”.
- Monday 16 January 1911 – the Obrechts opened a week’s run at the Grand Opera House, Stevens Point, WI, with 17 people in the company. However, they did not appear on the Monday night due to the leading actor and actress suddenly left for Chicago, without notice.
- Monday 24 April 1911 – started a week’s engagement at the Idle Hour Theater, Austin, MN.
- Wednesday 26 April 1911 – the band performed at the Market Day in Austin, MN.
- Friday 15 December 1911 – three nights at the Blanchardville, WI, Opera House.
- Friday January 26 1912 – two nights at the Viroqua Opera House.

The Obrecht Stock Co. closed a week’s engagement at the [Rochester] Opera House last night, and no company has ever left with a better reputation. The plays were new, clean, up-to-date and well presented, also the vaudeville between acts is great. Of the musical part of the Obrecht ladies’ concert band and orchestra, too much cannot be said in its praise, and there are many who will tell you that this part of each night's performance was well worth the price of admission charged. Not like most companies they do not try to see how little they can hand you and get your money, but give you all you could reasonably expect and then throw in a little more for good measure.<sup>6</sup>

- Thursday 15 February 1912 – three nights at the Scenic Theater, Edgerton, WI.
- Sunday 30 June 1912 – the Obrecht family and company started a short season in their home town of La Crosse, at the Majestic Theater. The general programme of the performance evenings was a band concert at 7.30pm, the Obrecht sisters would play at 8.15, and the play would start at 8.30, with vaudeville contributions and music between the staged acts.
- Monday 19 August 1912 – the company opened at the Opera House, Portage, WI, with the plays in following days: “*Under Arizona Skies*”, “*In Old Virginia*” and “*A Romance of the North*”, with cornet solos from Miss Jule Obrecht, specialities from Sarah and Nell, and musical acts from Christy and Nell.
- Monday 26 August 1912 – a week’s show at the Grand Opera House, Stevens Point, with the opening play being “*The Tenderfoot*”.
- Monday 18 November 1912 – a week at the Turner Theater, New Ulm, MN, starting with the play “*The Earl of Dunmore*”.
- Monday 20 January 1913 – a week’s engagement at the Opera House, Willmar, MN.
- Monday 3 February 1913 – a week at a theatre in Little Falls, MN.
- Monday 10 February 1913 – opening at the Opera House, Sauk Centre, MN, for three nights.

**Turner Theatre**

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One Entire Week At Remarkable Prices

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**THE OBRECHT STOCK CO.**  
 And Obrecht Sisters' Concert Band and Orchestra  
 An Excellent Comedy of Players Presenting a Repertoire of  
 High-Class Comedies and Dramas

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**Seven Nights, Beginning Nov. 18**

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**YOU LIKED THE KELLYS--YOU WILL  
 LIKE THE OBRECHTS**

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Concert Every Evening By The Obrecht  
 Silver Cornet Band and Ladies Orchestra

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NEW PLAY AND NEW VAUDEVILLE EVERY EVENING

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Opening Bill--“**THE EARL OF DUNMORE**”  
 An English Society Comedy

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**NOTE THE PRICES:** Gallery 10cts.; Balcony and  
 Lower Floor, 20cts.; Boxes, 30cts.

<sup>6</sup> Vernon County Censor, 24 January 1912



- Monday 17 February 1913 –at the Opera House, Morris, MN, for three nights. By this time Christy Obrecht had taken over the management and direction of the company. His father, Christian was suffering from ill-health and retired with his wife to ‘the warmer climate of the southern states’.



**COMING FOR THREE NIGHTS COMMENCING**  
**Monday, Feb. 17, 18, 19**

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The Famous Musical Family  
**CHRISTY**  
**OBRECHT**  
**BABY SARA**

Mae  
Jule

Nell  
Rose

Supported by the **OBRECHT STOCK CO.**, in new plays, Comedy Dramas, New Music, and Feature Vaudeville between the acts. A Ladies Concert Band and Orchestra.

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**MONDAY NIGHT, FEB. 17th, "THE EARL OF DUNMORE"**  
 An English society comedy in three acts. Overture at 8:15 every evening by Obrecht's Ladies Orchestra.

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Seats on Sale at Krueger's. Prices 25c, 35c, 50c  
**A Guaranteed Attraction**

- Thursday 4 September 1913 – played three nights at the Opera House, Ladysmith, WI.
- Monday 18 May 1914 – the family and company returned to La Crosse, appearing in the theatre there, with the plays “*Dolores*” and “*Father’s Way*”, continuing to provide their multiple instrumental acts in addition to the full band and orchestra concerts.
- Thursday 7 January 1915 – three nights at the Lyceum Theater, Baraboo, WI.
- Thursday 14 January 1915 – three nights at the Portage Opera House, starting with “*The New School Teacher*”.
- Monday 15 November 1915 – a week’s engagement at the Odeon, Marshalltown, IA, with the opening play being “*Missie’s Awakening*”. The ‘ladies band’ is still providing a short concert each evening before the plays.
- During 1915, Christy Obrecht married Catherine "Kate" McCool, who was one of the actors in the company.
- Monday 10 April 1916 – three nights at the Orpheum Theater, Morris, MN – the opening play was “*A Woman Pays*”.
- Thursday 26 October 1916 – three nights at the Opera House, Lancaster, WI – the plays being “*The Traffic of Souls*”, “*Madame X*”, and “*Bringing Up Father*”.
- Monday 11 December 1916 – the company, now known as the Obrecht Sisters Stock Company, opened at the Armory Theater, Redwood Falls, MN, the plays including “*Mrs Temple’s Telegram*” and “*Madame X*”.



Miss Nell Obrecht, as  
The Niece

- Wednesday 31 January 1917 – the sisters now abandoned the ‘Stock Company’ theatrical plays, and concentrated on their musical vaudeville act. This day they performed at the Star Theater, Decorah, IA.



*The Obrecht family – Christie, May, Julia, Rose, Nelle, and Sarah - 1915*

- Monday 5 February 1917 – the Obrecht Sisters were engaged for three nights at the Opera House, Cresco Plain, IA.
- Friday 9 March 1917 – three nights at the Grand Theater, Eau Claire, WI.
- Monday 19 March 1917 – the sisters returned to Menasha, appearing at the Orpheum Theater for two nights.

The Obrecht Sisters carry a beautiful setting of scenery of their own featuring. Beautiful Nell Obrecht, solo cornetist; Dainty Sarah Obrecht, violinist and novelty drummer; Jule Obrecht, dancing violinist; and Rose Obrecht, rag pianist. These girls wear the most beautiful costumes, and are, without question, wonderful musicians, having played the last three seasons with the Boston Ladies' Symphony Orchestra.<sup>7</sup>

- Monday 26 March 1917 – the sisters performed in the Neenah Theater, WI.
- Friday 30 March 1917 – the Appleton Theater, WI.
- Sunday 15 April 1917 – the Rhode Theater, Kenosha, WI.
- Friday 1 June 1917 – performing at St Paul, MN, followed by two days at Mankato.
- Wednesday 6 June 1917 – the Ruby Theater, New Ulm, MN.
- Sunday 29 July 1917 – one night at the Empress Theatre, Brainerd, MN.
- Friday 31 August 1917 – performed, in association with a Pathé feature, at the Strand theatre, Morris, MN.
- Saturday 27 October 1917 – two nights at the Winona Opera House, MN.

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<sup>7</sup> Cresco Plain Dealer, 2 February 1917

- Saturday 5 January 1918 – at Hurd’s Opera House, Boscobel, WI.
- Monday 7 January 1918 - two nights at the Grand theatre, Lancaster, WI – their act including a ‘classical overture, novelty cornet duet, patriotic medley, violin solo & dancing.’



*The Obrecht sisters, 1917*

- Tuesday 16 January 1918 – two nights at the Princess theatre, Freeport, IL – only four of the sisters appearing.

The Obrecht Sisters, well known on the Orpheum and other big circuits favored the Princess audience with a musical treat last night. They use cornets, violins and drums effectively and present harmony of an entrancing nature, swinging from operatic and classic strains into the jazziest of jazz. The girls are pretty and beautifully gowned.<sup>8</sup>

During January two of the sisters, Mae and Rose, left the group to pursue other careers. Both would eventually marry, Rose to Paul Morris, in 1925, and Mae to Leif A. Berger.

- Tuesday 19 February 1918 – the three sisters, Jule, Nell and Sarah, performed for two nights at the Princess theatre, Viroqua.
- Friday 22 February 1918 – two nights at the Star theatre, Viroqua.
- Sunday 24 February 1918 – the sisters appeared at the La Cross theatre, when visiting their parents at their home on 418 South Fourth Street, they were persuaded to perform for a local audience.
- Monday 25 February 1918 – opened at the Orpheum Theater, Madison, WI.

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<sup>8</sup> Freeport Journal Standard, 18 January 1918

- Friday 29 March 1918 – two nights at the Grand Opera House, Wausau.
- Friday 12 April 1918 – three nights at the Appleton Theater, WI.
- Friday 17 May 1918 – one night at the Orpheum Theater, Menomonie, WI.
- Saturday 18 May 1918 – the sisters gave an impromptu performance for the convention of the John Wildi Evaporated Milk Company in Menomonie.
- Tuesday 27 August 1918 – appeared for two nights at the Strand Theater, Princeton, MN.
- Friday 30 August 1918 – the Dreamland Theater, Willmar, MN.
- Sunday 24 November 1918 – the Winona Opera House.
- Monday 30 December 1918 – two nights at the Star Theater, Decorah, IA.
- Thursday 6 March 1919 – the Lyric Theatre, New Ulm.
- Thursday 27 March 1919 – for two nights, the New Dream Theatre, Redwood Falls
- Wednesday 2 April 1919 – the American Theatre, New Ulm
- Sunday 20 April 1919 – for two nights at the Strand and Orpheum Theatres, Morris.
- Friday 25 April 1919 – the Bentley Grand Theatre, Millbank, SD.
- Friday 2 May 1919 – the sisters were engaged to provide music for the moving picture “*Les Miserables*” for two nights, in Millbank, followed by a concert on the Saturday.
- Friday 23 May 1919 – for two nights at the Lyric Theatre, Madison, SD.
- Monday 16 June 1919 – one night at the Dreamland Theatre, Willmar, MN.
- Friday 20 May 1919 – two nights at the Bentley Grand Theatre, Millbank, accompanying the film “*The Heart of Humanity*” starring Dorothy Phillips.
- Tuesday 29 July 1919 – appeared at the Cashton Opera House, Viroqua, WI.
- Thursday 4 September 1919 – the Orpheum Theatre, Lancaster, WI.
- Sunday 7 September 1919 – the Blende Theatre, Benton, WI.
- Sunday 14 September 1919 – two nights at the Orpheum Theatre, Darlington, WI.
- Thursday 23 October 1919 - two nights at the Falls Theatre, Sheboygan, WI – featuring the sisters’ new ‘Egyptian Musical Act’.
- Tuesday 4 November 1919 – three nights at the Grand Opera House, Wausau, WI.



The Three Classy Girls – violin solos, violin duets, also cornet duets, dance Egyptian with costume and lighting effects. Hear that vampy, zazzy, peppy, classy, chicken drummer. Can she vamp? Well, girls, keep your best feller close to you.<sup>9</sup>

- Friday 8 November 1919 – for two nights at the Adler Theatre, Marshfield.
- Tuesday 11 November 1919 – the Orpheum Theatre, Menomonie.
- Tuesday 25 November 1919 – two nights at the Rialto Theater, Ironwood, MI.
- Tuesday 9 December 1919 – the Opera House, Eagle River, WI.

<sup>9</sup> Wausau Daily Herald, 4 November 1919



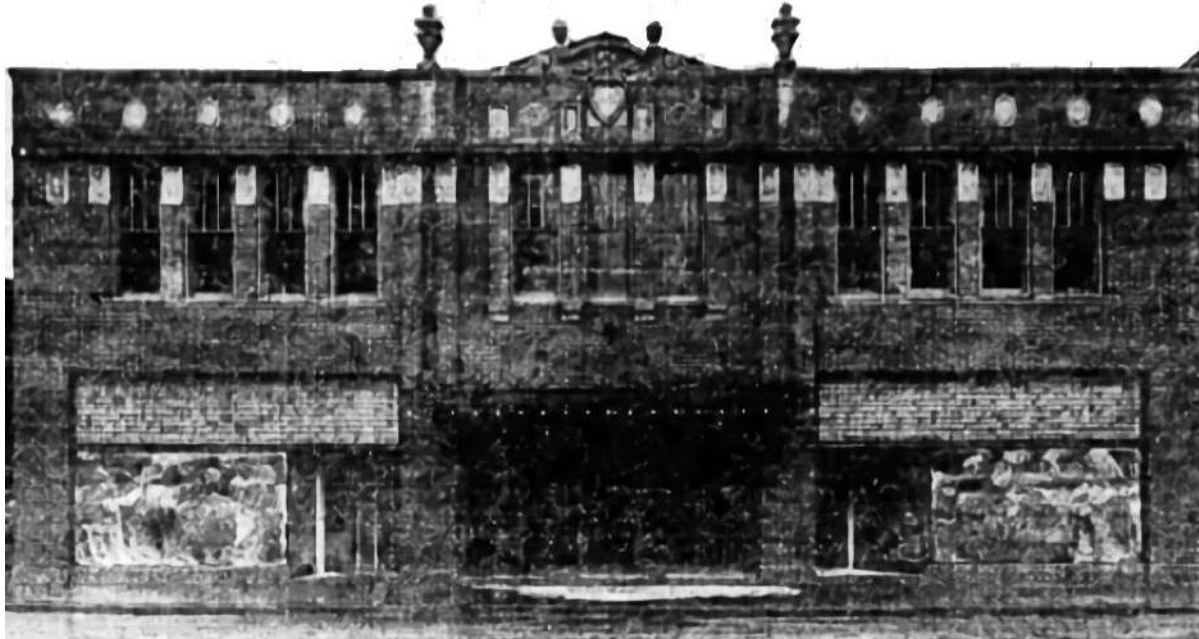
- Sunday 14 December 1919 – the Grand Theatre, Eau Claire, WI.
- Wednesday 7 January 1920 – the Plaza Theatre, Manchester, IA.
- Thursday 4 March 1920 – the Lyric Theatre, New Ulm.
- Friday 12 March 1920 – the Dreamland Theatre, Willmar.
- Saturday 13 March 1920 – the Orpheum Theatre, Morris



*The three Obrecht Sisters, 1920*

- Wednesday 17 March 1920 – the sisters appeared at the Lowell Theatre, Little Falls and, afterwards, contributed to an evening's St Patrick's Day entertainment in the K.C. Hall for the local Women's Guild.
- Sunday 6 June 1920 – the three sisters returned home to La Crosse to their parents' house. During the summer season break they planned to continue their musical studies under Professor George Klass, former concert master of the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra, and to make frequent trips to his studios at Minneapolis.
- Thursday 2 September 1920 – back on the road, the three sisters appeared at the Opera House, Boscobel.
- Thursday 9 September 1920 – the Opera House, Shullsburg, WI, in conjunction with the feature picture "*The Misfit Earl*", providing musical accompaniment and also a concert/vaudeville act.
- Friday 10 September 1920 – the Gem Theatre, Platteville, WI.
- Thursday 16 September 1920 – at Magee's Opera House, Janesville, playing for the picture "*Prince of Avenue A*".
- Saturday 25 September 1920 – at the Grand Theatre, Wausau, supporting the picture "*Forbidden Woman*".
- Sunday 17 October 1920 – the new Riviera Theatre, La Crosse, opened with the Obrecht sisters, now augmented by two additional musicians, supporting the feature films and performing their musical and vaudeville acts as usual.

*NORTH SIDE'S MOVIE PALACE OPENS TODAY*



*The new Riviera Theatre, La Crosse*

- Monday 1 November 1920 – the sisters moved to a new engagement at the Bijou Theatre, La Crosse. They played “*Lucrezia Borgia*” for the overture and “*Florodoro*” for the theme of the picture, which was “*Thirty Pieces of Silver*”.
- Friday 5 November 1920 – the Obrecht Sisters at the Bijou supported the film “*The Virgin of Stamboul*” with the music “*The Turkish Patrol*”.
- Monday 6 December 1920 - the sisters moved to another new engagement at the Majestic Theatre, La Crosse, supporting the film “*Earthbound*”.
- Monday 7 February 1921 – they appeared at the Radio Theatre, Edgerton, WI, for three nights supporting the films “*Broken Butterfly*”, “*The Daughter Pays*” and “*Go and Get It*”.
- Wednesday 23 March 1921 – two nights at the Strand theatre, Princeton, MN, accompanying the film “*Bab’s Candidate*”.
- Monday 11 April 1921 – two nights at the Strand theatre, Morris, MN, accompanying the films “*Dollar for Dollar*” and “*Fool’s Gold*”.
- Sunday 14 August 1921 – the ‘four’ Obrecht Sisters took a week’s engagement at the Grand Opera House, Oshkosh, WI, supporting the Winner Players and their series of plays. They continued with this theatrical group on tour through to February 1922, playing in Neenah, Appleton, Portage, Marshfield, Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point, Wausau, Green Bay, Sheboygan, Kenosha, Janesville, Dixon IL, and Muscatine IA.

Julie, Nell and Sarah continued with their vaudeville acts and tours, over the next five years, with the Obrecht Stock Company, performing plays and musical accompaniments, together with concerts featuring the Obrecht Ladies’ Orchestra at or near to the various tour venues. Sarah and Jule often played duets on the violin and Nell entranced the audiences with her cornet solos.

The sisters were one of the early broadcasters on the fledgling radio network in the U.S.A., giving a programme of music on the WFAT station (Sioux Falls, South Dakota) on 22 December 1922 at 11 p.m. Mae Obrecht joined them for this broadcast, and the music played was “*Hot Lips*” (Fiest), “*By the Shining Sapphire Sea*” (Snyder), “*Three O’clock in the Morning*” (Fiest), “*Nobody Lied*” (Remick), “*The Cavalymen March*”, “*Two Little Wooden Shoes*” (Shapier/Bernstein), “*Why Should I Cry Over You?*” (Fiest), and “*Sweet Indiana Home*”.

This concert was well received and praised by listeners (who communicated as such) from Crowley, Louisiana; Winnipeg, Canada; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Youngstown, Ohio.

The company was joined by Arthur V. Palmer around 1925, as musical director and pianist.



*Nell Obrecht, 1922*

By 1927 the company was known as the “Obrecht Sisters and Johnnie Sullivan Players”. Nell left the company in August 1927, after her marriage in June to Arthur Palmer, to take up a position with the Bainbridge Players.

Sarah married Johnnie Sullivan in 1930, and together with Julie continued touring with Johnnie Sullivan through to October 1932 – limited to being ‘novelty violinists’ as their musical contribution to the shows. In 1933 Sarah and Julie were appearing on their own as part of vaudeville variety shows. They rejoined Sullivan in spring 1934 for his revue shows. There was even an evening’s entertainment in La Crosse, in August 1935 when Nell joined them for a single appearance. Although they did not reform the Obrecht Sisters, Julie and Mae were still performing in the late 1950s, sometimes with their brother Len (Leon).

Nell and Arthur bought the Lowell Inn, Stillwater, Minnesota, in 1930 and ran it as a very successful restaurant and entertainment venue for many years.



*Sara Obrecht, 1924*



**Obrecht Sisters &  
Johnnie Sullivan  
PLAYERS**



*Nell Palmer, 1930*



*Julie & Mae Obrecht in 1959*