



NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected by Lloyd E. Klos

This month, Jason and I have found some humorous and some offbeat gold nuggets which we hope will ease the reader through the hot weather. They're from American Organist (AO), Diapason (D), Jacobs (J) and Melody (M).

June 1918 (M): San Francisco is paying about \$17,000 a year for recitals on its exposition organ, but the receipts are about \$50. Organist EDWIN LEMARE's salary is \$10,000. Some newspapers are protesting, saying a better drawing card be put in his place.

(Served him right; Lemare was openly contemptuous of theatre organs.—Ed.)

Oct. 1918 (M): ARTHUR GEIS, almost 7 feet tall, is organist at a leading picture theatre in Canada. His very long fingers are well adapted to playing the Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra.

Aug. 1919 (J): LLOYD G. DEL CASTILLO, well-known Boston organist, has composed a march in 2/4 time, *Near Beer*, in observance of the new prohibition law.

Feb. 1920 (M): Singer Nora Bayes does not care for pipe organ accompaniment to a musical show, so to earn his salary, WALTER STEELEY, organist at Chicago's Cort Theatre, where Miss Bayes is appearing, plays a 3-minute number while the orchestra rests between acts.

October 1923 (AO): FORREST GREGORY of Rochester, NY, is on the Pacific Coast this summer "to escape from the prison life of a theatre organist." Up to this time, he has kept clear of organs with high hopes of maintaining the record.

Feb. 1924 (D): From an ad in the Oakland, Calif., Tribune — "Wanted: Pipe organist who can also fill the position of auto mechanic, or stenographer and typist, or building custodian or handy mechanic or undertaker. A good, steady position."

Oct. 1924 (AO): SIGMUND D. ROSEN, organist, while playing in a Detroit theatre, was shot and killed by his wife from whom he'd been separated.

Dec. 1924 (D): In connection with publication of the plans for a 6-manual organ for the Kindt Theatre in Davenport, Iowa, perhaps it is more than a coincidence that the organ is being purchased by the son of the founder of chiropractic treatment. It will take a chiropractor-organist to play the instrument—one who is expert in the laying-on of hands.

April 1926 (AO): Mr. and Mrs. JESSE CRAWFORD are proud parents of a baby girl. A novelty in the Chicago Theatre was devoted to this, via a parody to the song, *I Wonder Where My Baby Is Tonight*, entitled *I Wonder Why My Baby Cries All Night*.

Oct. 1927 (J): Richmond, Va.—The local here attempted to call a strike because the theatres were using organs instead of four-piece orchestras. All organists were supposed to give up organ playing and, perhaps, start digging ditches or slinging hash, while fiddles, drums, pianos and other instruments played away to the utter distraction of all present. Happily, someone saw the light, and the organists were notified to stay on the job.

Nov. 1935 (D): The Philadelphia Inquirer says: "A pipe organ, one would imagine, would not be the easiest thing for a thief to walk away with. Few objects, other than an elephant or a suspension bridge, would be more difficult to conceal. Nevertheless, according to police, a gang of thieves has sprung up, specializing in organ pipes. Smaller valuables don't interest these pilferers, but if you have a pipe organ in your home, look out! This apparent vogue for carting away big things may have startling consequences. We may yet see second-story men taking moving vans with them... to concentrate on hauling out grand pianos and coal furnaces.

Nov. 1935 (D): Sign of the times: The Center Theatre of New York has installed a Hammond Electric.

GOLD DUST 1908—Adolph Zukor hired a church organist to play for the three-reel "Passion Play" in a Newark, N. J., theatre; 1910—The Hope-Jones Organ Co., Elmira, N. Y., was closed in April because of financial difficulties. In May, a receiver was appointed; 1911—The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co., purchased more than 20 acres adjoining the factory in North Tonawanda, N. Y., for erecting additions. In February 1912, a \$150,000 addition was completed; 1914 New York's 3,500-seat Strand Theatre became the first big theatre devoted to feature pictures, an orchestra and huge pipe organ being featured; 1915—GEORGE L. HAMRICK playing the organ and directing the orchestra in the new Grand Theatre, Columbus, Ga.; WILHELMINA WOOLWORTH at the Beman Symphonic Organ in the Allendale Theatre, Buffalo, N. Y.; T. S. JOHNSON at the new Piedmont Theatre, Greensboro, N. C.; EDWARD A. HANCHETT opened the Hilgreen-Lane at the Grand, in Ennis, Texas; HERMAN F. SIEWERT at the Empress Theatre's finely voiced Kimball, Grand Rapids, Mich.; CLARENCE EDDY, billed as the "World's Greatest Organist," opened the 2,000-seat Empire Theatre in San Antonio, Texas, by playing Handel's *Messiah* on the Wurlitzer.

A reader whose home town is Spokane, Wash., wonders who played in that city's theatres in the good old days. Well, at the big Kimball in the Clemmer, were ESTHER STAYNER in August 1923, FRANCES TIPTON in March 1926, and ESTHER BODE in May 1926. In 1927, FRANCES TIPTON was broadcasting, having played 500 numbers in seven months and getting mail from all over the U. S. and Alaska, Canada and Mexico. At the Liberty, DON ISHAM was there in August 1926, and at the end of the year, FRANCIS SPECHT. WINIFRED RHODES played the three-manual Robert Morton in December 1927.

In October 1937, MAURICE COOK, the "Jovial Console Master," returned to Rochester's Loew's Theatre 5-24 Marr & Colton for an extended engagement. Maurice later had a memorable stint in Loew's State in Syracuse, New York.

We'll be back with another load of nostalgic treasure in October, partners!

—Lloyd & Jason