

Ann Leaf Enthralls Large Eastern Audience

by Lloyd Klos

Just as she did almost 35 years ago when she came to Rochester to dedicate the WHEC 3/11 Wurlitzer, Ann Leaf, the "Mighty Mite," captivated her Rochester Theatre Organ Society audience on May 20, playing the 4/22 Wurlitzer in the Auditorium Theatre. She also appeared on Eddie Meath's morning talk show, discussing her great days in New York when she "opened and closed the CBS radio network until it got too tiring."

Before an audience which filled at least two-thirds of the theatre, she brought up the console, playing "In Time", the number which identified her "Nocturne" show in the golden era. The very sprightly "Dance of the Comedians" opened the program, and here was exhibited the artist's ability to intertwine a counter melody with the left hand, something in evidence throughout the evening.

Enesco's "Romanian Rhapsody" was heralded as a long piece, "and anyone who wants to go out and do something, now is the time." Ann followed the orchestral score for this classic. Reminding the listener of the style of Eddie Dunstetter, "Blue Violins" was a slow, deliberate number.

Two of the artist's compositions were next — "Waltz On a Cloud" and her inimitable "Happy Island" which was recorded several years ago. In fact, a goodly portion of the program's tunes have been recorded by Ann through the years. Nothing beats a live presentation, however.

It was a pleasure to talk with the artist, and when she had mentioned on the TV show that she couldn't remember when she played in Rochester last, the reviewer was able to check, and prepared page photostats for her, relative to her October 1934 visit. She also did a special program for the dedication of a Gulf service station, playing the Auditorium organ when it was in the late Palace Theatre.

Ann during the second half, asked "if there were any sensitive Marines in the audience." She took "The Marine Hymn" and made a jazz waltz out of it. But, the highlight of the entire program in the ears of this listener, was her rendition of "On the Beautiful Blue Danube". Normally, this is a waltz in 3/4 beat, but she proceeded to make a very inspirational march in 6/8 time, complete with drums, cymbals and reed/woodwind embellishment typical of a marching band.

"Bluesette" was followed by a medley of old favorites — "Embraceable You", "It's Only a Paper Moon", "Give Me Something To Remember You By", and a real zingy "St. Louis



ANN LEAF — She had been there before.

TOM LOCKWOOD PHOTO

Blues" in which the honky-tonk piano was brought prominently into play. The usual standing ovation was rewarded by "Take Five", and the artist had finished another concert on a tour which saw her play in Binghamton, and scheduled her in Detroit before flying home.

Thus ended the final concert of a most successful season by the Rochester Theatre Organ Society. Program Chairman, Jim Webster is hard at work lining up talent for next season, and it is hoped that more headliners in the class of Ann Leaf, Gaylord Carter, Billy Nalle and Ashley Miller will stop to play at the Flower City. □

This 1934 clipping reminded her.



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