

This Is Your Life...

ADOLPH ZAJIC

by Bob Mitchell

Adolph Zajic — A "voice teacher" whose ex-pupils sing regularly in churches around the world.

West Penn's Third Annual Concert at the Richard Kline Studio at Thurmont, Maryland was held on Sunday, September 16, 1973. Approximately one hundred and twenty-five guests were in attendance. Among these present were the executive staff, pro-

fessionals, and friends of the M. P. Moller Organ Company who, with Dick Kline, and his gracious mother, Mrs. Richard Kline, and West Penn honored Mr. Adolph Zajic, a world renowned reed voicer. The odyssey that brought Adolph from Bremen, Germany to Hagerstown, Maryland was the subject of a "This is your Life" tribute accorded him on this occasion. Staged as a salute to his

Adolph Zajic at his voicing machine.



unique voicing contributions to the field of organ building. West Penn presentations to Mr. Zajic were made by W. Riley Daniels, President of M. P. Moller. A concert at the M. P. Moller Factory Studio by Mr. Rey Galbraith, and an exciting program by Mr. Ray Brubaker on the Kline Studio Wur-litzer were musical highlights of the day.

As a "voice teacher", Adolph's graduates sing regularly in churches around the world. His pupils are very "brassy", but not sassy. They respond only musically in a Johnny-One-Note fashion.

Adolph Zajic "teaches" the metal pipes of the world-famous Moller pipe organs to "speak" in rich, sonorous, tones. When the "voiceless" pipes leave the fabricators, he gives them the larynxes, the tongues, and the throats which they need to articulate sound.

"It is not a great thing" says Adolph deprecatingly. "It is just a job — knowing what tools to use, what size holes to drill, how much to file and sand." That simple! — but you must also have a perfect ear for pitch and timbre, which Adolph does. How he still does, after more than 40 years on the job is a miracle in itself. The sound reverberating in his sound-proofed voicing room when he is working the more powerful reeds seems deafening to anyone exposed to such an experience for the first time.

"On the large reeds", he admits, "it sometimes does get nerve-racking. Especially if it is a difficult pipe — one that has a lisp or slur that spoils the sound and must be corrected. Then, on occasions, I am very glad to leave the voicing room to take a smoke and rest my eardrums. Usually, though, it does not bother me."

This is all the more incredible since Adolph's specialty is voicing the brass sections of a Moller pipe organ. These ranks of pipes range from soft delicate musettes to fiery strident trumpets. These latter powerful reeds are voiced for the spacious vaults of a great church. One can then imagine their intensity in a small voicing room.

"But this is what I always wanted to do", continues Adolph, "since I started my apprenticeship in New York City at the Welte-Mignon Pipe Organ Factory. I started in the erecting room", he recalls, "but voicing soon became my ambition. The crash of '29 left the Welte-Mignon Company in financial distress. The company was

bought out by a financier named Tripp. The staff was moved to Greenwich, Connecticut and became the Welte-Tripp Organ Company. Again tragedy struck and the Kimball Company of Chicago bought up all patents and moveable equipment. The factory closed."

Adolph did not abandon his dreams. He and a good friend Richard O. Whitelegg, former tonal director of Welte-Tripp were quickly engaged by Mr. Mathias Peter Moller of Hagerstown. This Danish immigrant and founder of the M. P. Moller Organ Company surely had an eye for talent. Both Mr. Whitelegg and Mr. Zajic made their mark and it will always be emblazoned on the hallmark of a truly great musical instrument – the Moller Organ.

Mr. Zajic and his wife, Freda love traveling together. After retirement, a trip to Holland and Switzerland is first on the list. Meantime, he's hoping to get back to a vacation he enjoys most



Mr. Daniels, president of M. P. Moller Co., presents a glass replica of Zajic at his voicing machine – one of several gifts Mr. Zajic received.

– surf fishing. Then he can listen to the roar of the surf and never have to concern himself whether the sound has the timbre and harmonics of a reed pipe.

Mr. John Hose, Vice President, and tonal director of M. P. Moller in an interview recently most aptly re-

marked: "Adolph is a great artist. Today, he stands as the foremost reed voicer in the world – a position gained after many years of dedication to his employer, his work, and the driving desire to leave a lifetime of experience and talent to those who would carry on in the "Zajic" tradition." □

Copy of the Plaque presented to Zajic.

