

# Treasure Hunt!

by Esther Higgins

*Editors Note: Veteran Theatre Organist Esther Higgins tells us about another facet of our hobby, old music sheets and pop songs of yesteryear. We found her observations very entertaining and informative.*

It seems to me, that four out of five musicians are searching for an old song, out of print and almost impossible to locate. Right now I am trying to track down "The Orient Express", a march, "Over and Over Again" from *Jumbo*, a melodic waltz, "Nature Boy" and "Grandma's Boy" with a picture of Harold Lloyd on the cover.

Recently, I was lucky enough to locate "Mickey" by Harry Williams, first published in 1918. This number was used as the theme from the picture of the same name, starring Mabel Normand, and was the first silent, full length picture I ever played as a kid. Mabel's photo was on the cover also, in large print, a line about this picture having cost \$500,000 — an unheard price in those days. I am a bit sentimental about that song, plus the fact that it took 55 years for me to find.

Now how did I locate this gem? From my lists of dealers in old music throughout the country. I'd like to share with you the names of some dealers and, as you might have suspected, this is the purpose of this story.

There is one shop in Philadelphia where some numbers bring as high as \$5.00 a copy. A lot depends on the condition, the year of print and scarcity of the number. Even the cover enters into the value, especially two and three color lithographs. Years ago the music was five and ten cents a copy; the shelves were loaded. Now I have to order a number and pay \$1.25 a copy for a mere intro plus 32 measures. One of the shops in Philadelphia keeps their doors locked at all times, due to violence in the neighborhood.

On the back page of the older music was the usual "TRY THIS ON YOUR PIANO" teaser of 16 measures, omitting the bridge so we had to buy the number anyway.

A few years ago, during Music Week in Philadelphia, Mary Bowles and I attended a Collector's Convention held in the Main Library. These collectors were from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The speakers were excellent and we learned a lot, including the values placed on certain covers. Later, we proceeded to the top floor of the library where the dealers opened suitcases and brought out stacks and stacks of music and displayed their wares. Each number went for \$2.00 that day. Business was brisk. One woman was interested in political songs only. Another was looking for baseball numbers. I was lucky to find one of my great favorites of 1935, "Why Do Stars Come Out at Night" by Ray Noble. On the main floor of the library, there were many glass cases showing very old music, parchments, two and three color lithographs, mostly old waltzes, marches, gavottes and minuets. We spent hours there. Mary Bowles found some old movie books she had been wanting for a long time. The director of that department was most helpful.

There is a Helen W. Cole of H. W. Cole Enterprises, Post Office Box 19004, Portland, Oregon 97219, who has a large collection and conducts auctions monthly. Her lists are very complete and state the condition of the music — good, fair, excellent, mended. One bids on the number starting (at last date) at 75 cents. The space on the order blank has lines for three bids. It is requested that no money is sent until you are notified if your bid was the highest. I have received some great old favorites this way. I recently bid on "Just an Old Love Song", love theme of *Robin Hood* with Douglas Fairbank's photo on the cover. I bid \$2.00 for this. The list even states the star on the cover. Some titles that I found interesting

were "When You Played the Organ and I Sang the Rosary" with a photo of organist William Dalton on the cover. Several copies displayed organist Verge Ford. Many display the late Jesse Crawford, sometimes Mr. and Mrs. Crawford. Mary Pickford's photo graced many numbers. Some titles, such as, — "Cows May Come and Cows May Go But the Bull Goes on Forever" are hilarious.

There are two women, ex-vaudeville stars, who live in Oak Park, Illinois, who have a marvelous listing available. They are Dulcina and Lillian O'Neill of 1117 South Taylor Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois 60304. I have bought from these gals and the prices are very fair. They did have a copy of "Jingles" by Zamecnik, but I was too late for that gem.

Ernie Lawrence of 33 East 125th Place, Chicago, Illinois has a small listing available and sells from 50 cents to \$1.50. Some of his numbers date back to 1899. His listing included that old goodie "Rings on my Fingers, Bells on my Toes" — 1909, and "Napoleon's Last Charge", a mighty march of 1910.

Harry Dichter of 808 Brighton Towers, Atlantic City, New Jersey is another dealer with many numbers on his collection. Also, a Robert Greenlaw of 307 North Rampart Street, Los Angeles, California 90026 (Room 412).

Mr. Walter A. Maloney of 205 A. Maple Terrace, Pittsburg, Pa. 15211 has a large collection of old Song Folios, the kind that contained 10 or 15 old tunes. A real buy for \$5.00. I have close to 125 folios myself, but few as old as Mr. Maloney's. He also lists folios on Strauss, Marches, Tchaikowsky, Russian-Italian-Spanish songs, Gilbert and Sullivan-Ragtime-Blues-Min-strel songs (with jokes), Zez Confrey, and later folios of Vincent Lopez, Man-

cini's scores of "Peter Gunn" and "Mr. Lucky", Irving Berlin and "Duke" Ellington, and others.

Another fine dealer with whom I have done a lot of business is Mr. Tom Radcliffe of 210 Ocean Avenue, Ocean City, New Jersey. At one time Mr. Radcliffe had many of his show tunes and glossy prints from the old shows mounted on cardboard that could be displayed on peg boards on stands. These displays attracted wide attention at various malls and I had the pleasure of playing organs in conjunction with the show, filling requests of the songs displayed. Incidentally, the most requested number was "Mandy" from *The Ziegfeld Follies*, don't ask me what year! We were in New Rochelle, New York for a week, Huntington, Long Island and nearby Moorestown, New Jersey. It was while playing old tunes here that a lovely young girl requested "Tip Toe Through the Tulips" many times as she was an ardent admirer of Tiny Tim. It was no surprise to me to learn a little later that she was Miss Vickey who later became Mrs. Tiny Tim.

Mr. Radcliffe was selling his numbers at \$2.00 a copy, the last I wrote him. Usually a small postage charge is due on these numbers.

Some of my friends have found some wonderful old music, in their own neighborhood, on a trash box, waiting to be carried away to the dump. Another friend recently took a bus trip to New Hope, Pennsylvania. This colorful town is in the heart of Bucks County, the home of many show people, retired actors, artists, etc. Many European show folk retire here. My friend was browsing through an antique shop where she found a lot of old music. As she joined her group at the restaurant, owned by that once great French actress, Odette Mytel, she was ecstatic about her bargain, saying, "I got all of this for \$5.00 and I could have had lots more if I could have carried them." I am still hunting certain numbers and I suppose you are, too. If you are interested, contact these dealers and get on the mailing lists. What a thrill it is, when the postman delivers your package of music, to tear off the wrappings and try it over and over. You will be on Cloud Nine all day with your find.

Recently in our attic I found an old out-of-print overture book. I was horrified to see the name of Ace Pancoast on it. I worked with Ace, a fine fellow

and an excellent organist, many years ago in the theatres. I located Ace at a concert and returned the book with a thousand apologies, saying "I'm dreadfully sorry, Ace, but I don't usually keep borrowed music this long!" Only about 30 years!

If you have any questions, drop me a line at 17 West Browning Road, Collingswood, N.J. 08108. Who knows, I may be in the old music business myself one of these days. □

#### Potomac Valley Member Has Prestige Job

The American Film Institute Theatre located in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C., the National Cultural Center, has as its organist and musical consultant, Potomac Valley Chapter ATOS member Ray Brubacher. Ray is at the console of the Rodgers Theatre Organ to accompany all silent films presented by the A.F.I. □



#### ALABAMA

The Alabama Chapter was represented at the National Convention this year by Chapter Chairman Riedel West, Dr. and Mrs. Cecil Prescott, Ralph and Jim Ferguson and Alleen Cole. We had a ball and we were impressed with the tremendous job the

Motor City Chapter did in handling the mountains of details such a convention entails.

The convention ended rather abruptly for this correspondent. I received word of my husband's heart attack and I had to rush off — sort of "in the heat of the day without my



Alabama Chapter presents brother and sister act with presentation of Cathy and Tom Helms during July meeting at Alabama Theatre 4/20 Wurlitzer. (Thomas L. Hatter Photo)