

**NUGGETS  
from the  
GOLDEN  
DAYS**



Prospected by Lloyd E. Klos

There are some, including one or two on its staff, who believe THEATRE ORGAN should be goosed up with more humor. With the dog-days of August upon us, we submit the following from the American Organist of February 1930, entitled "Poets' and Peasants' Corner" by James E. Scheirer, as a means of easing you through these hot days:

Editor's Note: We take great pleasure in presenting for the first time (and possibly the last) a review of current poetry culled from the more aloof and supercilious magazines. Unless something better than the following balderdash presents itself, we will henceforth confine our critical comment to Homer, Shakespeare, Longfellow and others.

The spirit of the incorrigible optimist, who with unquenchable enthusiasm surmounts all obstacles, pervades the following lyric. Mr. John D. Pedalthumper, noted organist, composer, improvisateur, conductor, arranger, author, lecturer, pedagogue, teacher, writer, iconoclast, philanthropist, organ architect, clubman and man-about-town, appears in the columns of "The Organ Pumper" with the following:

**Try, Try, Again!**

*Hey diddle, diddle, the viol di fiddle,  
The vox was way out of tune.  
The organist laughed when he heard such sounds,  
So he changed to the oboe-basson.*

From the facile pen of the same gifted writer, comes this pensive sonnet. The reviewer, a rather hard-boiled individual, must confess shedding a surreptitious tear as he read it:

**Forte Strepitoso**

*How dear to my heart are tones of the tuba  
When placed unenclosed on the great organ chest;  
The unenclosed tuba, the ear-splitting tuba,  
The tuba which blares out above all the rest.  
The fifty-inch tuba,  
The brass-lunged tuba,  
The Mirabilis Tuba, that blithering pest.  
The unenclosed tuba, the ear-splitting tuba,  
'Tis unshaded tuba which roars at its best.*

A former prohibition agent, since turned music critic and who prefers to remain anonymous, strikes a rebellious chord in the following dithyramb which we quote from a new magazine called "The Twelve-Mile Limit":

**Watch Your Step**

*Sing a song of six pence; hip pocket full of rye,  
Four and twenty pistons made the program dry.  
When the fugue was opened, the audience began to sing,  
Why in heck does the organist play such a blankety blank-  
blank thing?  
The tuner was in the chamber, looking for a leak,  
And greasing all the bearings to stop a swell shade squeak.  
He slipped off the walk board, some pipes caught in his  
clothes,  
And down fell a tibia and whacked off his nose.*

From the same source, we derive the following in which an even more martial note is sounded:

**Quintessence**

*Hark! Hark! the bourdons bark  
Queer notes never found in print;  
Some do grunt, and some do woof,  
And some bark only the quint.*

The rising tide of feminine dominance is presaged in the next group of poems selected at random from the columns of "The Lady Organiste, Why Not?" Miss Susie de Floot, noted organiste and still a lady, contributes our next quotation:

**Toot Sweet**

*Mistress Mary, quite contrary,  
How does your tibia toot?  
With wooly wheeze and hoot hoot  
And I think that the tone is quite cute.*

From the same writer comes contradictory verse which is somewhat at odds with the one above. The vernacular contains delightful tang of early vulgarism, indicating that our modern poets have swung completely away from the sweet prissiness of the Victorian rhymsters.


**Tutti Flutti**

*Mary had a little flute  
She called it Tibia Clausa,  
And everywhere that Mary was  
T'was said, "That tone is lousy."*

Still another from the same writer in the nature of a Pastorale:

**Vox Humana**

*Whaa, whaa, Billy-goat, can you carry a tune?  
Yes, yes, master, listen while I croon,  
A squawk for the master, a squawk for the dame,  
And a bleat for the little boy who lives in the lane.*

A weary organ tuner sends this little gem. It was evidently written after wrestling with a three-rank mixture: 





## the letters to the editors

Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

Address:  
George Thompson  
Editor  
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Salinas, Calif. 93901

Dear George:

Congratulations on another excellent issue (April 75)! Your color covers get better all the time, and the expense is well worth it. I read with interest the "Letters" column (column?). It was most provocative, and if I may be so bold I would like to comment on a few comments.

Anna May Wyeth's letter brings up an interesting point. Half the fun of going to a concert is, to be sure, watching the organist do his or her

thing. Most organists do feel the music with their bodies. But one must be careful not to let the visual part of a concert overshadow the aural part. I have seen too many organists leaping around consoles with arms swooping and feet flying, but not producing any MUSIC. Too many organists use flamboyant body English to cover up poor playing. A lot of organists are highly disappointing on record because there is nothing to watch; the music, or lack of it, is there in its naked state. A good organist, when playing, does not sit "stiff as a ramrod," but neither does he waste any movement. He does not try to impress the audience with console calisthenics as if to say, "Look at me! I can thrash about like this and still hit the right notes!" A good organist can get his musical message across without having to resort to gymnastics for effect.

The controversy over Jesse Crawford appears to be in full swing again and the opinions expressed seem to lean toward either of the two extremes. As one who has never heard Crawford live and in color, my opinions on his playing are based only on his recordings (of which I have most in my collection). Crawford's playing was definitely much better in his Victor days than in later years; his formal lessons in the thirties took away the spontaneity and carefree feeling so evident in his twenties output. While I become bored very easily with his over-use of *portamento* and ballad after syrupy ballad on his records, there is no doubt that Crawford had strict ideals and a

sense of musical integrity which, throughout his career, he would never compromise for the sake of commercialism. (I often wonder at the small paradox in the fact that he left the Posthorn out of his design for the Publix Wurlitzers so the organist would not be tempted to use it to excess, yet he used the *portamento* trick he so finely developed to the point of overkill.)

His playing is flawless, correct, innocently inspired and always sensitive, and in the context of the time when his records soared to popularity he was right in the musical mainstream. However, one must realize that since 1930 the music world has changed to a phenomenal degree, and in the context of today's music and tastes he has been left far behind. Crawford was the theatre organ innovator of his time; he dared to try things other organists would not, he was a first-rate showman, and he knew how to give the public what it wanted. The unfortunate thing is that he did not develop his style with the rest of the music world, but stayed in the twenties.

John S. Carroll states that Lew White was better. More lively and interesting, certainly, but not "better." Crawford's forte was the sensitive ballad and White's was the novelty. They both had a reasonably predictable style, at least on record, and each was a product of the time. Personally, I like Dick Leibert's playing more. Whether or not "George Wright can play rings around either of them" is totally irrelevant because Wright is operating in a completely

### Ennui

*Ennui, ennui, meinui, mo,  
Cone a flauto at the toe,  
If it shirps, let it go.  
Ennui, ennui, meinui, mo.*

For our last, we quote a poem rescued from the waste basket of the late Viola d'Orchestra. Miss d'Orchestra came to a tragic end recently in a blind-fold test. She reached for a flute instead of a sweet tibia and the raged organ builder shot her where she sat.

### Angelus

*Tinkle, tinkle little chime,  
How I wonder \*\*\*\*\**

And, with that, we say, So long, Sourdoughs!  
Jason and The Old Prospector

## Whatever happened to July?

*A plausible explanation of the May-June and August-September issues of THEATRE ORGAN.*

**Nothing has changed, but it may seem like it has.**

Since THEATRE ORGAN is a bi-monthly publication, published every even numbered month, we thought we should account somehow for the missing months of Jan., March, May etc., so members would know they had not missed an issue of the magazine. Following publication of the June issue (called the May-June issue) it was decided by the editorial office that the actual month of publication should appear first. Thus, this is the August-September issue. The June issue should have been the June-July issue.