

# Hector at the Alabama



by Jo Ann Radue

Last year, Hector Olivera captivated the south with his appearance at the Alabama Theatre, the words, Tremendous! Gigantic! Super-colossal! Stupendous! Marvelous! Brilliant! All these seem to be commonplace in the world of show biz! But, what we saw and heard was anything but commonplace! That night there were about 1,000 more people who believe that all these words, and many more, can be summed up in two words — HECTOR OLIVERA! Those who have seen and heard him perform know exactly what we mean, and to that unfortunate group who have not heard and seen him . . . you wouldn't believe us anyway! All we can say is, if you ever have the opportunity to hear Hector Olivera in concert, don't miss it. You'll never forgive yourself!

Hector and his manager, Walt Molt, arrived in "The Magic City" in The Heart of Dixie on Thursday afternoon before the concert. After getting settled in the hotel, he went to the theatre to "check out" our beautiful 4/20 Wurlitzer and played until 2 a.m. Now, to us "organ nuts"

this is not at all unusual, but Hector had to be up again bright and early that morning for a 7 a.m. appearance on a local TV talk show, *Tom York's Morning Show*. After his interview there, he was introduced to a breakfast, southern style, complete with grits and "red-eye" gravy, and loved it. He even took some grits back with him!

Then, it was back to the theatre where he spent the rest of the morning — not in rehearsal primarily — but behind the scenes working on the organ to make last minute changes for the concert. As most of you know, he is just as adept at working on the organ and building them as he is at playing them . . . and just as happy doing it, too.

After a dinner in his honor we were all invited to a jam session at Joan and Lee Aured's home where Hector amazed us all with his versatility at the console of the Aureds' Schober theatre organ. Joan and Lee built this instrument and installed it themselves in their home several years ago. All who have heard it will agree when I say that their combina-

tion of speaker systems and the arrangement and location of the instrument itself produce a unique sound reminiscent of the much larger theatre pipe organs of old. For those of us hearing and seeing Hector play for the very first time, this was quite a thrill.

Saturday morning found Hector taking a "busman's holiday" by visiting some of the more prominent classical installations in our city.

Finally the big night arrived! Excitement mounted as Lee Aured, chapter chairman, introduced our guest artist . . . the spotlight went on . . . and from the moment the console of the Mighty Wurlitzer rose from the pit there was no doubt about it . . . Hector Olivera, 100 pounds of dynamite at the console, was "in charge" of this evening! He held his audience spellbound through some new things, some old things, and we might add he also stood at the console while playing "Dixie" as we consider this the National Anthem below the Mason-Dixon Line!

Among the many highlights of the evening was the unusual arrangement of "Amazing Grace," as well as the haunting rendition of "Battle Hymn of the Republic" played as it's never been heard before. Hector tried to close out the program with his "Battle Hymn," but the audience wanted more and more. For his first encore Hector did his legendary "Flight of the Bumblebee" with his feet, his usual encore. If you have never seen him do this, it's hard to believe.

After this spectacular number, we were gently reminded that it was getting late as he played "That's All," but the audience still hadn't had enough. An already perfect performance was finally rounded out with a rousing and beautiful rendition of "Malaguena" which once again proved to be a crowd pleaser.

All in all, a very personable young man came to our city and charmed all he met, dazzled his audience with a magnificent performance and left this chapter with a more than satisfactory second-concert-within-a-year at our Mighty Wurlitzer. He sparked memories for many of a bygone era when the beautiful sound of the Mighty Wurlitzer theatre organ was the king of the movie palace. □

Hector Olivera with Alabama Theatre Manager, Cecil Brown, on the night of concert.

