



The model theater, complete in every detail of equipment, used by Mr. Van Dusen for his classes in theater organ-playing. Could the embryonic theater organist wish for anything further?

A Trip to Yesteryear

On several occasions while thumbing through copies of *Billboard* and *Variety*, those leading newspaper-magazines of the entertainment world, I was amazed at the wide coverage given to popular recordings and television features. Ample space was also given to runners-up in radio, movies, and the carnival world. What advertisements and articles, I wondered, appeared during the heyday of the theatre organ during the 20's? Of course, there are no such ads now, but if I could only get to a back file of these magazines! Upstate New York where I live yielded nothing but I learned that the New York City Public Library had back copies.

Upon my arrival at that vast bibliotechnical storehouse, I arbitrarily selected 1925 as a sample year, requisitioned the entire year of *Variety* on microfilm, and set to work scanning the photographed pages. Between the scarcity of items and my difficulty in reading I discarded this source and went to the original copies of *Billboard* for that year. Equipped with four tremendous bound volumes I was whisked back into time to the silent movie era of pit orchestras, cinema organs, vaudeville, and burlesque. Unfortunately, reading matter for an organophile was sparse but the afternoon's research yielded some interesting items which are described herewith for THEATRE ORGAN readers.

Two schools which trained T.O. people of the day had ads in *Billboard*. Both were located in Chicago. Frank Van Dusen's conservatory had a model theatre for lessons and practice and was equipped with eight organs. A similar set-up was provided by Mildred Fitzpatrick in "studios fitted with motion picture projecting machines to provide actual experience in picture accompaniment." (see reproduction of ads)

Interesting bits were found in a regular column entitled "Motion Picture Music Notes." Eight of them appear below.

(June 20) "George Vail at the console of the Clavilux color organ was featured at the Palace Theatre, Dallas, last week."

(July 25) "The management of the Liberty Theatre, Portland, Oregon, has chosen Ernie Russell, well-known in the musical world, as organist. Mr. Russell has for the past two years played in many of the leading theatres in Southern California."

(August 15) "The organ novelties presented by Leonard Leigh at the Capitol Theatre, St. Paul, are always an added feature to the weekly program."

(August 22) "Betty Gould, one of the best known motion picture organists, resigned from the Detroit Broadway Strand in order to enjoy her first vacation in a long time. The Detroit Times had the following to say when it learned she was leaving: 'Detroit motion picture fans lost one of their finest entertainers in the passing of Betty Gould, organist at the

Broadway Strand, who resigned Friday.'" (Dec. 5) "An unusual organ novelty of unusual attractiveness was presented last week by Paul Forster with his original Empire Organ Minstrels at the Empire Theatre, Syracuse, N.Y."

(Dec. 5) "Among the recent engagements of organ pupils of Frank Van Dusen and his assistant teachers at the American Conservatory in Chicago are Virginia Curran, Campus Theatre, Evanston, Illinois; Kenneth Cutler, Shakespeare Theatre, Chicago; Alvina Michaels, Pearl Theatre, Highland Park, Illinois; Mae Porter, Oconto, Wisconsin; Stanley Anstell, New Wisconsin Theatre, Eau Claire, Wisconsin; and Mrs. B. W. White, Palace Theatre, Wilmington, N.C."

(Dec. 26) "Walter C. Simon, organist at the Hippodrome Theatre, York, Pa., has offered to that city his composition for adoption as the municipal march."

The most fascinating note had to do with Charles J. Possa, a T.O. artist of note who had returned in February from an engagement in Spain. He went to Madrid to preside at the new \$30,000 Wurlitzer at the Plaza Isabel II, a brand new theatre. *Billboard* reported that a sensation was created in Madrid, that here was something entirely new. The effects produced by the organ were so unusual that not until a special demonstration was given did the music critics cease to believe that the special effects were produced with the aid of musicians backstage.

Each issue of *Billboard* had a section entitled "Trade Directory" in which various technical and commercial services were listed. The King of Instruments was not well represented here as is shown by the following ads of January 31:

ORGANS AND CARDBOARD MUSIC

B.A.B. Organ Company
340 Water Street
New York City

ORGANS AND ORCHESTRIONS

Johannes S. Gebhart Co.
Tacony
Philadelphia, Pa.

REPAIR SHOPS

H. Frank
3711 East Ravenswood Ave.
Chicago, Ill.

In the classified advertising columns items could be found that give clues to the jobs of that day.

Page organist wanted immediately. Robert Morton organman with library to cue pictures. Play hot jazz and play piano for occasional vaudeville and tabs. Wire lowest salary. Newtonia Theatre, Newton, Iowa.

A-1 organist desires change. Large modern library. 15 years' experience. Alone or with orchestra. Man. Box 869, c/o *Billboard*, Cincinnati.