

NUGGETS
from the
GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by Lloyd E. Klos



Awhile back, we came upon this interesting and amusing review in the *Musical and Theatre News* of March 16, 1930. Several famous organists took part in the program.

On March 10, the San Francisco Theatre Organists Club of Local 6 gave a midnight show at the RKO Orpheum to a record attendance of members, friends, press and others.

Without doubt, the most effective number was BUSS McCLELLAND's two-console novelty which opened in the darkened house with the big Morton console twisting up into view. A deep magenta spot disclosed no one playing, but plenty of organ heard.

After several 11th chords and changes, plus Tibia rolls, a white spot flashed on Buss at a miniature white console in a side niche. This set-up included two manuals, six pistons, an octave of pedals, and shade levers. The whole effect was good for a laugh from the invited highbrows. Bussy announced the builder of this midget: JOHN McCARTNEY (MACK), who sat down at his thousand-dollar toy and played a solo. Next, Buss played "Humoresque" on the big organ while Johnny played "My Old Kentucky Home" on the small one. The stunt landed deserved applause on the pair.

Buss next told the gang they would demonstrate the power of the organ with a rendition of "The Anvil Chorus." McCartney opened the finale, McClelland joining later in a rousing climax, even employing an electrical hammer in the pit to simulate the anvil.

Bussy's other number was to the reviewer, hardly what one might call second best. It was too much on a par with the console duet. It included "Evening Star" and "Pilgrims' Chorus" from *Tannhauser*, played as a duet on the big console with CHARLEY RUNYON. Charley is the pianist in Tommy Boyd's RKO Orchestra, and a perfect son-of-a-gun at technique. For this number, Buss had a specially-built organ bench with one end slightly higher than the other.

Johnny McCartney, by the way, is an inhabitant of Seattle where he has been connected with theatre organs for some time. His midget console is the first ever constructed. They have become popular in Seattle, and he hopes to create a demand for them here.

Lloyd Klos, a free-lance writer, has been a member of ATOS since 1959 and of the Rochester TOS since 1969. He has contributed his "Nuggets . . ." column for 16 years, plus nearly a hundred other pieces since 1960. In addition to writing for THEATRE ORGAN, Lloyd takes a very active part in the operation of the RTOS. □



C. SHARPE MINOR was inveighed into giving a sample of the showmanship with which he has been winning audiences for the past 15 years, and the invitees took heartily to his number, "The Organ," and to another of community warbling. He was entirely surprised upon manipulating the console elevator controls, he dropped out of sight in the pit!

Next, a trio of organ, harp and violin, playing "Andante Cantabile." GERTRUDE LYNE led at the console, and surprised with her obligatos of harmony, and looked ravishing in a flame-colored creation of something or other.

(There were other numbers by various musicians and singers before the organ was again featured in the program.)

Master of Ceremonies for the evening was our friend, DON GEORGE, who recently left the organ bench to wield the baton at the Granada. He introduced his worthy successor at the Granada's console, HAROLD RAMSAY. Harold's appearance pleased the gathering, and they responded heavily.

Much credit must be given here to those who made the evening a success: Frances Huntly, Mathilde Keller and Doc Wilson. A lot of praise goes to Claude Wagner, the Orpheum's electrician and stage hand who helped iron out the wrinkles in the program. Appreciation, too, to the house for the floor service; to Mr. Aldrich, the operator, who stayed to run slides and spots, and most of all to Buss for putting on the whole thing!

(It must have been a great group, this San Francisco club. Following are a few items from the same issue of MTN.)

LOUIS FLINT, who is at the California Theatre, has just earned a Bachelor of Music degree at the College of the Pacific.

M. E. FALLON, a new member of ours, and formerly of Los Angeles, has decided to settle in this part of the state. He has bought an apartment house in Oakland, and believes he'll get more out of that than playing in theatres. The funny part of it is, he undoubtedly will.

A brand new member hails from Chicago, Mrs. CLARA HOFFMEYER. We want her to feel right at home, come to meetings, and be as active as she can be in the club.

Remember WINIFRED "DULCIE" DECKER? Knew what she was doing, didn't she? Went to business school while she was still swelling the Met mouse-trap and is now about ready to take a nice place in the world where the paycheck is regular, if not exceptionally heavy. We will see her in church.

STEW FARMER promised to have a house-warming soon after he moved into that crow's nest on Russian Hill, but never had his party. So, the membership is determined to rush him and this is the fairest warning he could expect.

And can you beat it? Here comes the scandal: FELIX GREGORIE, having just returned from Australia, has been besieged by the menfolk of the club to know how he regained his health so astonishingly. At first, the Briton waved it all aside with something about the sea air, but finally it got out. There were some exceedingly attractive sights in Samoa and Fiji, and whatever they were, it is generally believed to be the cause of Felix's new lease on life. Went on another vessel, and it piled up on the rocks. We therefore, advise shipwrecks for the tired and run-down feeling.

(Just as the organ clubs and ATOS chapters furnish fun and entertainment today, the theatre organ clubs of the great era had a similar function.)

Until next time, so long, sourdoughs!

Jason & The Old Prospector □