

NUGGETS
from the
GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by Lloyd E. Klos



Let's review some organ presentations which came after the silent movie era. References were *Local Press (LP)*, *Exhibitors Herald World (EHW)* and *Variety (V)*.

May 17, 1929 (LP) Though "the stage has moved to the screen" at the Tower Theatre in Chicago, where all the entertainment comes in talking, singing and dancing productions from the screen, the human note is still present in Tower programs. Miss BASEL CRISTOL has been appointed organist, and her novelties are already welcomed by Tower patrons.

She is well known to audiences in local motion picture theatres. Several years ago, she won considerable applause at the Chicago Theatre for her part in their Sunday morning concerts. She has also played the Tivoli and other Balaban & Katz theatres.

April 26, 1930 (EHW) CHARLES WILLIAMS, at New York's Loew's State, offered a timely solo in his "Spring Novelty" this week. Opening with a chorus of "Happy Days Are Here Again," as a colored Workstel Effect slide of flowers was shown on the screen, Williams then announced, via the mike, a special version of "Button Up Your Overcoat," which he played as the audience sang. Next, a cleverly worded announcement introduced "Telling It to the Daisies." His introduction of "Big Man from the South" was extremely well worded and had the audience in an uproar of laughter which did not subside until Williams started this number and everyone sang. For an added attraction, he employed a well known and good-voiced singer, Bonn Walker, for the next two numbers, "That's When I Learned to Love You" and "Garden of My Heart." For the finish, everyone joined in singing a chorus of "A Little Kiss Each Morning." Williams has made himself popular at this house, and each of his efforts gets a tremendous reception.

Circa 1930 (V) STUART BARRIE held the next spot with an organ solo which uses one of the best ideas so far. "Gallagher and Shean on Different Days of the Week," he called it. It's a demonstration of how the melody would be played in seven places: Sunday in church, a Chinese restaurant, Viennese beer garden, at the circus, Spanish cafe, a Turkish cabaret, and as played by Sousa's Band. Any organist who knows his stuff as Barrie does, and who has the necessary stops on his instrument, can devise his own effects, all worked around this basic idea.

Circa 1930 (V) JESSE CRAWFORD'S contribution was "An American Fantasy." It started out to be commendable, but cheapened midway with the flashing of lyric slides. It had to be pulled out through a double console conception of Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever." Mrs. Crawford was at the stage console, starting behind a scrim and lighted from the wings. A brief pop number served to introduce the feminine organist, after which the family combined for the finale. Use of the house orchestra would have swollen the finishing standard march for a corking sendoff, but the pit boys were allowed to rest.

Circa 1930 (V) EDWARD K. HOUSE, solo organist, had the slides of several pop songs mixed, and challenged the customers to follow him without a hitch as he slipped from one to another. Then, with no slides, he asked the Chicago crowd to whistle while he played a jumbled medley. Drew good results on the idea, with the mob's getting enthusiastic, trying to follow him.

Circa 1930 (V) TED MEYN, Cleveland's Loew's State organist, showed a new idea for novel organlogs by having the local telephone company install a phone attachment for his mike-amplifying set. Audience was skeptical about phone's being the real thing until

Meyn called up any requested number and let crowd listen in through broadcasting system. Plenty of laughs built up when one mug called out a number which contacted a hard-boiled honky-tonk.

Planted calls to Eddie Melniker, house manager, who razzed organist for sour notes, and radio station manager helped build up comedy. Phone calls were used to suggest appropriate illustrated songs for organ. Mike-phone stunt is part of the action in "Are You Listening?," but Meyn claims to be first to work it out practically for organ novelties.

Circa 1930 (V) HENRY B. MURTAGH, organist, took a try at the community singing idea so popular in this city and got a surprising response. His chatter on the screen slides was called "My Friend from New York," the friend being one of those guys who pans everything. Murtagh said that the gent was in the house to see what kinds of voices the city puts out — how about it? Okay, said the customers, and started dishing it out. It may be sacrilege to call it "harmony," but it was a response, and went over successfully.

Circa 1930 (V) ALBERT F. BROWN, foremost exponent of organ production, had another darb in "Evolution of the Organ Solo." Taking exception to his rule against congregational singing, he included one audience number for comedy effect, and it wowed. He traced the organ solo to its source — the nickelodeon pianny, inserted some "don't spit on the floor" slides and pulled a song bit with a comic plugger, crack-voiced, to make the first part all laughs. Second portion went legit for a pop ballad and a beautifully lighted set behind the scrim. Returns were excellent all the way.

Circa 1930 (V) LEO TERRY, solo organist, gamboled around on his excellent special Kilgen organ with a novelty called "A Trip Through the Organ." This bit not only gave Terry an opportunity to show his versatility, but was a great plug for the instrument. He imitated various musical instruments, vocal tones and plain noises, with the novelty of the number keeping the crowd wide awake throughout. Some regular music was included.

Circa 1930 (V) JACK TAYLOR at the organ, has another novelty. Using "A Young Man's Fancy" for gag lines, he has them singing several pops. Male voice on record sings a number to his accompaniment while the crowd joins in. Without singer, he smashes into the chorus again to a burst of applause. Eight minutes.

That will do it for this time. So long, sourdoughs!

Jason & The Old Prospector □

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