



Thomas Marshall

(Ward)

tehude's "Prelude and Fugue in E minor") to twentieth century Gallic dissonance (Alain's "Litanies") and including some attractive little confections in the Virginia folk idiom. Throughout, his playing reflected the assurance of a man who loves music and who knows his instrument, but I found the totally lifeless ambience an obstacle to full enjoyment.

Much more agreeable to my ears was the recital presented by Thomas Marshall on a small single-manual organ in the Wren Chapel. With only six stops (some divided), this still produced a surprisingly robust body of sound, and its Wood Flute is a delight. Mr. Marshall sensibly restricted himself to music written for an instrument of this kind, and the results were felicitous.

#### Thoughts General

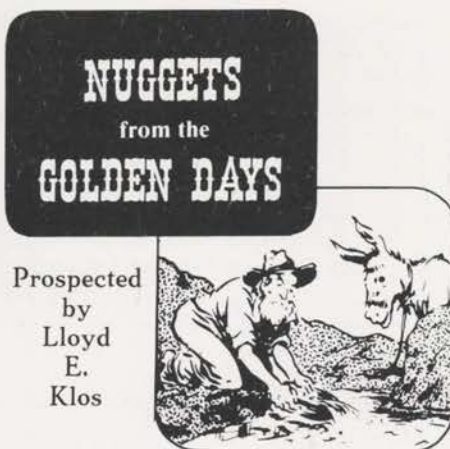
Before closing, there are two general points I should wish to make. First, regarding verbal introductions: where no printed programme is provided, these are obviously desirable, but I do wish performers could be urged to be concise — and audible. All that is needed are brief details of the music to be played: title and composer, perhaps date of publication, and where appropriate, data about the show/film/opera/ballet/suite/overture/cellar from which the music has been taken. Few members of the audience are likely to be interested in knowing that the number about to be rendered was a favourite of the performer's great grandmother, and I always bristle a bit when informed that what I am about to hear is a beautiful melody. That's a verdict I prefer to reach all by myself — after listening to the melody in question!

Second, I think several of the performers to whom I listened could make more effective use of the swell shutters. To watch more than

one of them at work, one could be forgiven for imagining that their early training had been done on one of those ancient domestic contraptions whose wind supply depended entirely on the flapping of pedals — or that they had been instructed to carry out an accelerated-wear-test on the shutter mechanism. Listening to recordings made at the convention confirms my view that this is one aspect of theatre organ playing which needs attention, particularly on an instrument where a very wide range of dynamics can be produced by this means alone. Well gradu-

ated crescendos and diminuendos add immensely to the performance of most music, and on a theatre organ they are not difficult to effect.

In conclusion, may I, as the first non-American to fill the role, say that I felt honoured to be asked to review the concerts at this year's convention. I was instructed to be as candid as I wished, and I have been. I trust the outcome will not be an immediate cancellation of my ATOS membership nor withdrawal of my American Visa, because I do love your conventions. □



This time, we include items about organists from the pages of *Melody Magazine (M)* and *Local Press (LP)*.

*February 1921 (M)* In a log cabin near Corydon, Iowa, in 1890, was born G. RAY SMITH. He learned to play by ear the old-fashioned melodeon at the age of three and later received instruction from his sister.

When 13, he began piano study and a few years later, was featuring hits and specialties with a medicine show. Mr. Smith has been playing the pictures for the past six years, three years at his present location, the Lyric Theatre in Redfield, South Dakota. Here he employs both organ and piano.

Mr. Smith states: "I consider that my early training in playing by ear is largely responsible for my success at playing the picture, as my ability to improvise stands me in good stead every day. I believe that the most important thing for the interpreter of the photoplay to remember is to fit his music to the action and atmosphere on the screen.

"I spend about two hours preparing my music for each picture. I read all available material and press releases to get a complete understanding of the story, then take the cue sheet (which is a great help but not absolutely reliable in every instance), and arrange my program."

*October 1925 (M)* Some theatre organists are very modest chaps, and tho our subject has met with enviable success and has built a considerable reputation, he isn't inclined to part with any of the details concerning his achievements. He is TOM TERRY of Loew's State Theatre in St. Louis. From things we've heard about him, we gather that he's one of

the leaders in theatre organ work.

Terry started playing a church organ when he was 14. Since then, he has played on some of the largest theatre organs in the country. He's played vaudeville programs for three years on the Orpheum Circuit, using the theatre organ for this purpose.

Terry did it successfully and proved that his previous experience in orchestral work could be applied to the theatre organ in supplying effects demanded by the vaudeville acts. It has also familiarized him with the biggest orchestral numbers, and the effects to be produced in presenting these numbers.

*December 1925 (M)* JAMES F. THOMAS is the organist of the Albee Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island. His personality is so genial and friendly that Jim has become one of the most popular citizens of that city he now calls home. No matter how good a musician, or capable an organist he may be, his usefulness to himself, his theatre, and his community can always be increased by a reasonable amount of wholesome friendliness and congeniality.

Thomas plays practically all of his programs from memory. He has such an extensive repertoire of suitable music that very seldom he needs to have recourse to the printed page. New numbers he finds suitable are memorized and filed away with the old standbys and brought forth deftly when the occasion demands.

He has been an organist for 15 years, and previously directed orchestras in western cities and in New York at the Broadway Theatre. He played extended engagements at the Newark Theatre, in Chicago, Denver and on the Pacific Coast.

When he came to Providence, John Philip Sousa learned that he was playing at a theatre there, and wrote a letter to the manager, congratulating him on having secured Mr. Thomas as organist, and saying, "I have known Mr. Thomas for a number of years and have a very high regard for him, both as a musician and as a man." This was especially pleasing to Thomas, because he harbors a very ardent admiration for Sousa. In fact, he has named one of his sons after the famous March King.

*July 1926 (M)* FRANK GALLAGHER, "The Little Irish Organist," is the very successful and capable artist in Loew's Doan Theatre in Cleveland. He has the unusual distinction of having played the first organ installed in a theatre anywhere, which was the

old Fourteenth Street Theatre on Sixth Avenue in New York. At that time, Jack Driscoll, the booking manager, was the well-known singer.

After seasons in New York and New Jersey theatres, Mr. Gallagher journeyed west and became affiliated with Loew's Doan where he maintains a degree of popularity which is most enviable. He possesses the facility of making the patrons join in wholeheartedly with his songs, from which performance the audience derives a great deal of pleasure. Among Frank's feature numbers are "So Is Your Old Lady," "Rah! Rah! Rah!," "The Lonesome Girl In Town," and "My Dream of the Big Parade," all of which are Jack Mills' publications.

That Mr. Gallagher's popularity is quite extensive can readily be seen by the fact that his aggregation of birds in his country home garden bid him farewell when he leaves for the Doan.

"The Little Irish Organist" is one of the most interesting personalities in the world of popular music, and Cleveland fully appreciates him.

*January 1928 (LP)* FRED MYERS, former student at the Eastman School of Music, has returned to Rochester as organist of the Webster Theatre. Each evening before the start of the first and second performance, Mr. Myers will give a short concert.

*June 1928 (LP)* The Roxy Theatre in New York is showing "The Michigan Kid" with Conrad Nagel and Renee Adoree. Chief organist is LEW WHITE with DR. C. A. J. PARMENTIER and GEORGE EPSTEIN as associates.

*September 14, 1928 (LP)* The Paradise Theatre in Chicago has opened with HENRI A. KEATS at the five-manual Wurlitzer. The organ is a standard Publix model of 20 ranks, plus Post Horn. Several percussions are outside the chambers. The console is done in French style with alabaster cupids. The organ is plagued by echoes and dead spots in the theatre.

*October 1928 (LP)* For the past week, Loew's Midland in Kansas City has presented the classic film *The Lost Command* with Emil Jannings, Evelyn Brent and William Powell. The Ritz Brothers are a part of the stage show and the Robert-Morton organ is played by BILLY WRIGHT and GOLDEN EVISTON.

*October 1928 (LP)* The 3050-seat Loew's United Artist Theatre has opened in Louisville, Kentucky. On the screen is Joan Crawford in *Our Dancing Daughters* (which launched her to fame). The stage show features Jan Garber and his band, while HADEN READ plays the 3/11 Wurlitzer.

*GOLD DUST: 5/26* FRED MYERS at the Kohl "Triumphal Organ" in Rochester's Cameo . . . 6/26 AUGIE SIMS, WRVA, Richmond . . . 7/26 JEAN WEINER, WPG, Atlantic City . . . 11/26 ARTHUR CLIFTON and Capt. MILTON HOWELL RALEY, WBZ, Springfield, Massachusetts from the Estey Studio . . . 8/27 EDWARD C. MAY, Rochester's Liberty . . . 11/27

ALEX TAYLOR, WMAK, Buffalo . . . 12/27 HARRY SULLIVAN, Rochester (New York) Theatre . . . 1/28 EDDIE DUNSTEDTER, WCCO, Minneapolis-St. Paul . . . 9/28 C. A. SHELDON, WSB, Atlanta . . . 11/28 FLOYD WALTERS, WGY, Schenectady . . . 7/29 JOHN ELTERMANN, WBAL, Baltimore . . . 8/29 JESSE CRAWFORD, WABC, New York . . . 9/29 JOE ALEXANDER from Rochester's Piccadilly over WHEC . . . 10/29 MAURICE COOK, "The Jovial Console Master," Loew's Rochester . . . 4/30 BASEL CRISTOL, Balaban & Katz Tower Theatre, Chicago . . . 10/30 JESSE & HELEN CRAWFORD, "The Alfred Lunt and Lyn Fontane of the Mighty Wurlitzer" at New York's Paramount . . . 3/31 RALPH TUCHBAND, New York's Paradise . . . 9/31 EDDIE HOUSE, Bala-

ban & Katz' Paradise, Chicago . . . 4/35 ROLAND POMERAT, Paramount in Springfield, Massachusetts . . . 9/35 WILLIAM MEEDER, WJZ, New York; LLOYD G. DEL CASTILLO, WEEI, Boston; CARL COLEMAN, WKBW, Buffalo; MAURICE B. NICHOLSON, WBEN, Buffalo; MILTON CHARLES on the CBS Network; GORDON JOHNSON, WBEN, Buffalo . . . 3/37 MARY FOUNTAIN, WHP, Harrisburg; LESTER HUFF, WFBL, Syracuse; DOC WHIPPLE, WTAM, Cleveland.

A number of the above names are little-known, nationally. In their home towns, however, they were popular in their own right.

That's all for now. So long, sourdoughs!  
JASON & THE OLD PROSPECTOR □

## Letters to the Editors

Opinions expressed in this column are those of the correspondents, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN.

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Letters concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are welcome. Unless clearly marked "not for publication" letters may be published in whole or in part.

Dear Editor:

Reading E.S. "Tote" Pratt's article, "Toward More Effective Tremolos," in the March/April, 1986, THEATRE ORGAN was as humorous as reading the Sunday newspaper comic strips. Does he really expect to be taken seriously? For the sake of theatre organs everywhere, I certainly hope not! For instance, the most obvious chuckle: "Only hard lines (metal, soldered) used on all chest and trem lines, no flex runs." Two accompanying photographs show what appears to me to be generous use of duct tape and flex hose coupling. If this is typical of the entire installation, it is no surprise the installers had to resort to such radical procedures as described in his article.

"Long windlines to tremos, 3" unobstructed, 18' to 25' long . . . elbows, minimum of five in each line." Mr. Pratt states long, multi-elbowed trem lines are necessary to "cushion reverses caused by trem exhaust/shut-off cycles, preventing 'bubbles,' uneven trem action and doubling of the beat at regulators . . ." With all that weight piled on the poor tremulant valve and the skimpy manual chest feed lines Mr. Pratt describes, it is a wonder to me that it works at all! As a matter of fact, some professional organists who have played this instrument tell me that musically it doesn't.

My investigations into tremulants lead me to believe this organ's tremulant performance is suffering from a chest/regulator air system (with its soda-straw feed lines) decoupled from its associated tremulant valve by an in-

ordinately long, excessively elbowed trem line. Thus, we have two systems not working in sympathy with each other or, at best, the trem system working with a harmonic of the regulator/chest system. If everything were functioning together as one homogenous system, there would be no wind "reverses caused by trem exhaust/shut-off cycles" to contend with in the first place.

In this article, Grant Whitcomb is reported to have said, in his review of the 1984 Convention Afterglow at Emery ". . . the organ . . . with probably the best rate of tremulation . . . of the convention . . ." The key word here is RATE. Rate suggests to me speed, and speed is only one facet of tremulant performance. It says nothing of a tremulant's musicality, and music is what it's all about.

I mean no malice toward Mr. Pratt or anyone else, but if this letter sounds a bit sarcastic and raises the hair on a few peoples' necks, it is meant to. I am so weary of hearing second rate performances by first rate organists on instruments designed, installed and maintained by committees that I rarely attend theatre organ concerts any more. Funny, that sounds like a lot of ATOS installations, doesn't it?

In a future article for THEATRE ORGAN, I will attempt to explain tremulants from a vastly different viewpoint than Mr. Pratt's and will substantiate my point of view with mathematical evidence.

Yours truly,  
Dennis Hedberg  
Portland, Oregon □