

own David Johnston, who recently made the journey from Melbourne to Perth to play a silent movie and concert for the Western Australian Division of TOSA. From reports received, David obviously gave the audience a great time with his thoughtful arrangements and outgoing style of presentation.

Theatre organ has found its place back on radio in Sydney, New South Wales. TOSA Vice President Frank Ellis is presenting a weekly half-hour featuring tracks from overseas organists as well as our own. It is probably 30 years since a regular programme of theatre organ music has been broadcast in Australia. In Perth, past TOSA President Val McInnis is also presenting a half-hour show on FM radio with a similar format including current and coming events in the theatre organ world. Both men put a great effort into ensuring that there is a good spread of different playing styles.

That's all for now. □

## NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected  
by  
Lloyd  
E.  
Klos



This time, we incorporate items about well-known theatre organists from the pages of *Diapason* (D), *Metronome* (M) and local press (LP).

*August 1923 (M).* ALBERT HAY MALOTTE was born in Philadelphia and went to the Pacific coast several years ago, where he rapidly rose to the fore as one of California's leading organists. After playing in the large picture houses and receiving numerous offers from eastern houses, he came east where he is now featured at Shea's Hippodrome in Buffalo, New York.

Mr. Malotte is one of the few singing organists in the United States. For a number of years, the featuring of popular songs through slides has been in vogue in the west. It has only recently been introduced in the larger cities in the east, Mr. Malotte being a pioneer in this field. He is not only an authority on the organ, but a well-known teacher and songwriter of merit as well. Two of his recent successes were "After Every Party," and "I Cried For You," both published by Sherman & Co. We predict a great future for him.

*March 1925 (M).* C. SHARPE MINOR, the well-known feature organist, has been at the Rialto and Rivoli theatres in New York for four weeks. His original and interesting offerings were very well received and his demon-

stration of the organ was not only a complete exposition of the possibilities of that instrument, but it was also a practical lesson in music for the audience.

In this feature, which was called "The Organ," very well written and lucid slides defined what was meant by melody, accompaniment, bass and counterpoint, "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" being played.

Each of the stops was then displayed and the voices of the instruments were heard in characteristic music. The titles are very humorous. Of the clarinet, the following was said: "Lots of clarinetists, hearing how their instruments sound to an audience, have given it up and taken up bootlegging." The oboe was described as "an instrument which sounds like a motorman's glove tastes." The usual effects which a modern organ can create and a laugh-provoking series of tricks, imitations and dialogues completed the act.

Another feature was "Little Old New York." This treated of changes in fashions and customs, showed the development of the picture theatre, the passing of the horse, and the coming of the automobile. In telling this story with the organ, old melodies of years gone by were used and very vivid effects were secured.

*May 1926 (M).* An organist of the very first rank, and a pioneer in motion picture house music, is HENRY B. MURTAGH, who took command of the organ at the Rivoli Theatre, 49th Street and Broadway in New York, on Sunday, April 18.

Murtagh studied the piano under Godowsky, and in Springfield, Massachusetts, did concert work and conducted his own school of music. In the early days of motion picture houses, he realized the possibilities of the organ and was assigned to play the first large organ installed on the West Coast back in 1914, in Jensen & Von Herberg's Liberty Theatre in Seattle.

After two years in Seattle, Murtagh played for three years at the Isis Theatre in Denver. Sid Grauman engaged him in 1919 to open his new Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles and serve as assistant conductor. When Grauman opened his Metropolitan Theatre there, Murtagh was at the console. Murtagh's first vacation in 10 years was during the Metropolitan engagement, enforced by the fracture of his skull in a YMCA handball court.

From Los Angeles, Murtagh went to Buffalo where he was firmly entrenched for the past two years, endearing himself to patrons of the Lafayette Theatre by his novel entertainment on the 3/15 Wurlitzer organ.

Gifted with a keen sense of humor and knowing the public tastes enables him to create innovations which find ready listeners. Murtagh, moreover, is a believer of psychology, studying his auditors' moods, and continually striving to produce such entertainment from the organ as will synchronize with their attitude and with the screen presentations.

*June 1926 (M).* LLOYD G. DEL CASTILLO, organist of the Rialto Theatre in New York, received his musical education at Harvard from which he was graduated with hon-

ors in 1914. In his undergraduate days, he was conductor of the 50-piece Pierian Sodality Orchestra, secretary and co-founder of the Harvard Musical Review, and musical director and composer of one of the annual musical comedy productions of the Pi Eta Club. A "Fantasy on Harvard Airs" was written and conducted by him at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's pop concerts.

After graduation, he wrote the incidental music for a Biblical pageant, "The Chosen King," with which he toured two seasons as musical director. He was connected with eastern picture theatres as organist and musical director, but for the most part, in Boston where he was organist at the Fenway Theatre. During the war, he saw service overseas as bandmaster with the 302nd Field Artillery. In January, 1926, he went to Shea's Buffalo Theatre to open the largest Wurlitzer in the east, a 4-manual, 210-stop instrument. There he remained until called to New York for his present engagement at the Rialto.

He has written various short numbers, published by Belwin, Inc. and Jacobs, Inc., and two years ago conducted his own concert overture "Gonzalo de Cordoba," with the People's Symphony Orchestra of Boston, of which he was the organist. This overture was afterwards played at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's pop concerts.

*November 1930 (LP).* The Paramount Theatre in Lynn, Massachusetts, is showing Jackie Coogan, Mitzi Green and Junior Durkin in Mark Twain's classic *Tom Sawyer*. For his spotlight solo on the 3/22 Wurlitzer, ARTHUR MARTEL is presenting "A Wee Bit O'Scotch."

*August 1931 (LP).* BOB WEST is playing the 4/36 Wurlitzer in the Brooklyn Fox. Sam Jack Kaufman and his Band are featured in the pit.

*December 15, 1931 (LP).* The stage play *Once In a Lifetime* is being presented at Rochester's Auditorium Theatre. Organist ROBERT J. BERENTSEN plays "Hits From Hollywood" in a pre-show recital. (In January, the stage hit *Stella Dallas* was presented and Berentsen in the pre-show organlude played the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.)

*December 11, 1934 (LP).* The Laugh Clinic, supervised by Russell Pratt and Ransom Miles Sherman (later of "Club Matinee" fame from Chicago), known to thousands as the two doctors, will introduce their program from origination point, KMOX, "The Voice of St. Louis," from 10:30 to 11 a.m. They will be assisted by organist EDDIE DUNSTEDTER and Al Roth's orchestra.

*December 1934 (D).* PIETRO YON played a recital on the Möller organ for an audience of over 1800 in the Larkin Administration Building in Buffalo.

*GOLD DUST:* 2/27 AL MELGARD teaching at Barton Organ School, Chicago ... 5/27 ARSENE F. SIEGEL, Chicago and Uptown theatres ... 6/27 LLOYD G. DEL CASTILLO opens his organ school in Boston ... 7/27 Dr. MELCHIORRE MAURO-COTTONE, New York's Capitol ... 9/27



HENRY FRANCIS PARKS, Roosevelt in Chicago...10/27 MILTON CHARLES, Chicago's Tivoli...4/29 LEW WHITE, Chief Organist, New York's Roxy...3/34 JESSE & HELEN CRAWFORD, RKO Palace, Rochester, New York, on tour...12/34 STANLEIGH MALOTTE, WJZ, New York; DICK LEIBERT, WFAF, New York; ELMER TIDMARSH, WGY, Schenectady...9/35 FRANCIS J. CRONIN, WAAB, Boston; FRED FEIBEL, CBS at

noon; TOM GRIERSON, WHAM from RKO Palace, Rochester; ALBERT DAWELEY'S "Slumber Hour," WBEN, Buffalo; ELSIE THOMPSON with contralto Evalyn MacGregor and Baritone Roger Kinne, WABC, New York.

With this column go our best wishes for a most enjoyable holiday season and a New Year filled with happiness.

So long, sourdoughs!

Jason & The Old Prospector □

collar.

His comment on the duct tape is legitimate (*mea culpa*). It was temporary and should have been replaced with a flex collar during our experiments with windline lengths.

As to the careless installation inferred in his letter, the Grant Whitcomb review which I cited, and Mr. Hedberg's comment thereon, I refer to page 40 of the September/October, 1984, THEATRE ORGAN, where Mr. Whitcomb also said, "... probably the best installed and voiced of the convention." If Mr. Hedberg would read and absorb comments of organ experts, he would not so readily cast aspersions on ideas other than his own on an organ he has not seen, heard or played. In fact, Henry Gottfried, of the famous pipe-making family, sought me out following the Afterglow, to tell me that this was one of the most beautiful Wurlitzer sounds that he had ever heard.

Mr. Hedberg also refers to "skimpy manual chest feed lines," relative to my recommendation to replace large, wooden, manual wind trunks with 4" metal feed lines. No less an organ expert than Allen Miller, in the same issue (September/October, 1984), page 59, suggests the same procedure to replace the wind trunks with a 4" line. The picture accompanying the article shows a 4" windline feeding a four-rank chest manifold with two of the ranks fed by a 3" branch line... a "soda straw" (?) feed, yet it works, and believe me, it does make a more effective tremolo, as Mr. Miller says.

As far as our designing this trem system by "committee," over a period of many months our crew tried several different designs of trem runs — heavy regulator weights, light weights, no weights, less elbows and more elbows, no trem weights, light trem weights and heavy trem weights, and different lengths of runs on each of our eleven tremolos. When we made the last run on the brass chest, the present configuration, we turned on the wind and the trem started immediately with near-

## 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.

Address: Editor, THEATRE ORGAN  
4633 SE Brookside Drive #58  
Milwaukie, Oregon 97222

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:

Mr. Lineback wants to know why organ consoles are placed "on the left side of the stage." I assume he means the left side of the pit. The reason is that the organ on the left balances with the same amount of room used by the percussion members of the orchestra on the right. In 1920 when I took my first job at the Fenway Theatre in Boston, there was no orchestra and no pit, so the organ was placed in a small pit in the center.

Theatre architects weren't always as knowledgeable about such things as they might have been. At the Fenway, the organ chambers were built backstage on one side so that the organ sound had to fight its way through canvas. In the deluxe movie palaces of the 1920s the organ frequently showed up on the right. At the Rialto in New York City the organ had to be on the right as the only usable backstage area was on the right. The State and Metropolitan in Boston both had the organ on the left where it should be.

In the grand old days of Jesse and Helen Crawford, Jesse would rise majestically on the left console elevator while Helen would unobtrusively sneak onto the duplicate console on the right platform. After the 1930s, most organs found their way into pizza parlors. With the advent of sound in 1928, the great days of the silent theatre organist were over.

Del Castillo  
Los Angeles, California □

Dear Editor:

I feel it incumbent upon myself to respond to Dennis Hedberg's somewhat vitriolic critique of my views on tremolos and the Emery Wurlitzer. ATOS and its journal is, and should be, a catalyst and forum for dignified discussions of technical ideas, not for recriminations. I am fully aware of Mr. Hedberg's reputation as an organ consultant and find it

hard to equate the caustic attitude in his letter to the fact that the systems have been recommended by both Dan Barton and Allen Miller, whom I will cite in this letter.

First, my article stated "no flex runs" which he quoted verbatim. A flex run, as any experienced organ man knows is a length of flex in lieu of a metal windline which can (and does) pulse with trem action, creating a secondary wave. A flex *coupling*, on the other hand, is not only acceptable, but is also desirable as a seal only, particularly in a trem line so a trem can be removed for service without having to take out flange-collar screws, often difficult to reach, and subsequent galling of the screw holes in the trem. When flex is used in this instance, opposing windlines are generally fitted about 1/8 inch apart, with the flex used only as a firm air-seal

*The members and guests were all nestled in seats  
To await the coming of musical treats*

*When out of the chambers there arose such a chorus  
Of melodious refrain; it was all right before us*

*The console in trim, ablaze in the light  
Was ready to show its Wurlitzer might*

*To herald the season of good Christmas cheer  
With Yuletide medleys; it was that time of year*

*As the artist's quick fingers flew over the keys  
I heard him exclaim what I'm sure he believes,*

*"The Season's best wishes for each member here,  
And to all of us present, a Happy New Year!"*

JOHN POLSLEY  
Central Ohio Chapter