

NUGGETS
from the
GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



This time, we emphasize reviews of organ presentations. Sources were *Variety* (V), *Metronome* (Met) and *Motion Picture Herald* (MPH).

1927 (V) Organ entertainment by EDWARD MEIKEL in Chicago is always novel. In this show, with the feature picture *Blonde or Brunette*, Meikel had the preferred and common sided in their singing. The lads in the audience joined the red-haired ladies, somewhat refuting the popular statement, "Blonde or Brunette."

Circa 1928 (V) ALBERT HAY MALOTTE pleased with excerpts from *Carmen*, including the "Toreador Song" a-la jazz, on the organ.

Circa 1928 (V) HENRI A. KEATES titled his stuff "A-la Cafeteria" and served it that way. "Help Yourself" was the key line to every slide, so they helped themselves, and how!

Circa 1928 (V) Mr. and Mrs. JESSE CRAWFORD were others who gave the period a recall with their organ recital. Mr. Crawford at the main console and his wife at another in the centre of the stage down front, impressively played "Jerusalem," intermingled with "The Holy City," a most happy choice for the occasion.

Circa 1928 (V) HENRY B. MURTAGH, solo organist, used what looked like music publishers' slides for the straight playing of a pop number, explaining that since Paul Whiteman introduced this particular song recently, there have been many requests for it. Devoid of novelty, the solo relied on Murtagh's ability to click on straight talent. He put it over easily.

Circa 1928 (V) ALBERT F. BROWN used the nearness of Mother's Day as the topical reason for his solo number, "Mother of Mine." Lyrics on a transparent screen fade, revealing a picture tableau, a gray-haired mother sitting before a fireplace over which is a big framed painting of a boy. Bernie Grossman sings from behind the painting. His voice is all which is required for this sort of number. Easy sentimental mother slush was avoided and results more substantial as a consequence.

April 1930 (Met.) For the past year, Miss BASEL CRISTOL has been playing at the Balaban & Katz Tower Theatre in Chicago, a sound house. Needless to say, she is the only

human touch on the program. Despite the marvelous success of the talking pictures, her audiences still acclaim the organ solo. Miss Cristol thinks the most entertaining type solo is the one consisting of community singing, built around a theme, using a subject of general or timely interest.

She avoids solos written in the first person, for they are uninteresting and she also avoids annoying gag slides, especially the type which nag the audience to sing. Not to let her public forget the good music entirely, she inserts occasionally a popular classic, which meets with their hearty approval.

On the whole, Miss Cristol believes the field for solo organists is still unlimited, for the organ is the only instrument left for sound houses.

Miss Cristol's parents were Lithuanians, worshippers of the Jewish faith, who emigrated to Ireland. She was born in Ireland and when her parents emigrated to the United States, she came along. Her name is unusual, her racial and national aspects are unusual — and Miss Cristol is a striking person herself with thick, auburn, bobbed hair and bright, brown eyes. You'd look at her twice.

She considers herself a Chicagoan. Here she attended grammar school and was graduated from McKinley High. She spent most of her life with music and much of her study was achieved through scholarships. She won prize after prize, and has had the distinction of playing as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

"I love this work," she says. "It is long hours of hard, actual work, planning organ novelties or solos. But when the audience applauds, even if just a little, I feel repaid."

February 1931 (V) ADOLPH GOEBEL is entering his third year as featured organist at Loew's Theatre in Yonkers, New York, and still going strong, thanks to G. H. Miner's management, a Robert-Morton organ, and Harry Blair's organ specialties.

March 28, 1931 (MPH) RALPH TUCHBAND at the New York Paradise Theatre, offered a mediocre novelty called "Happy Home" at his first program. Ralph played well and had the audience singing with him, but there seemed to be no "meat" to the novelty, seemingly just thrown together. This is no reflection on Ralph, but it is on whoever was responsible for his playing it. The songs chosen for the audience to sing were good, and they joined heartily in singing all of them, except the "drunk" chorus of "Sing Something Simple." The balance of the program consisted of the singing of "Home-Made Sunshine," "Take a Walk," "Tie a Little String Around Your Finger," and a final chorus of "Little Things in Life." This boy makes a presentable appearance at the console, is a good musician and plays in the manner which makes singing enjoyable. The reception accorded him at the finish of his solo was very good.

May 23, 1931 (MPH) DON & KAY at the Staten Island Paramount, presented for their first solo at the twin consoles, a clever and well-played novelty, "Sleepy Time Moods." Both consoles raced up simultaneously as Kay

on the right and Don at the left played a peppy arrangement of "Sleep, Sleep, Sleep." Little, demure Mrs. Kay announced that they would play the favorite "Sleepy Town Express." Word slides were superimposed on the screen of a train as Kay played the melody and Don played many novel and natural train effects. They followed with "Sleepy Time Gal," played in a most pleasing and harmonic combination. Then "Asleep In the Deep" as a pedal cadenza. (Modern lighting effects at the base of the consoles enhanced this bit). "Please Go Away and Let Me Sleep" was presented in a most unusual way, first as a straight spot solo and then with a comedy cartoon film with words for the audience to sing, designated with a bouncing ball. At the show caught by the reviewer, few were in the house, but they did sing and apparently enjoyed the entire novelty. This fine team closed their solo with the playing of "Here Comes the Sun," which the audience joined in singing.

September 26, 1931 (MPH) EDDIE SCHWARTZ at Brooklyn's Bushwick Theatre, engaged as guest organist for the 20th Anniversary program of this RKO house, had to work under difficulties but succeeded in making the audience sing beyond all expectation. Unfortunately, the house is not equipped with a slide machine and the organist was forced to play old timers and songs which have been outstandingly popular. Using a mike to make his announcements, Eddie sold the idea of singing right from the start. The numbers were "Hail Hail, the Gang's All Here," "Sweet Rosie O'Grady," "School Days," his own singing of "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain," a chorus of the same song for the audience to sing, "Beach With You," "Moonlight Saving Time" and a final chorus of "Sidewalks of New York." The solo was very well done and apparently (from the applause at the finish), the organist would be a box office attraction in no time if kept on at this house.

September 26, 1931 (MPH) HAROLD RIEDER at Jersey City's Stanley Theatre, presented an entertaining solo called "Radio Popularity Contest" which was built in a manner to give the reigning radio favorites and the songs associated with them, a big hand. Rieder opened by announcing the solo and explaining that the winner would be determined at the finish by the greatest applause for the particular star. Just before the singing of each number, a photo of the artist was shown and then those in the audience who favored the star, sang the song. The numbers used were "Just One More Chance," "For You," "In My Arms," "Many Happy Returns of the Day," and "Love Letters in the Sand."

Special presentations like the above were a means to keep organists employed after the demise of silent pictures, especially in the larger houses. Imagination, creativeness and originality coupled with an engaging personality, were hallmarks of success in this business.

That should do it until next time. So long, sourdoughs.

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