

# NUGGETS

from the

## GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected  
by  
Lloyd  
E.  
Klos



This time, we present some names who were known more in the areas in which they played, than nationwide. Sources were *Around the Town* (ATT), *Local Press* (LP) and *Melody* (M).

### December 3, 1916 (LP) ...

At Rochester's Piccadilly Theatre, organist NORMAN NAIRN (on a Photoplayer) accompanies *A Coney Island Princess*, starring Irene Fenwich and Oliver Moore.

### October 1920 (LP) ...

Beginning on October 24, a week-long first anniversary program is being held at New York's Capitol Theatre. Managing director Major Edward Bowes offered a program which included the playing of the Overture "1812" by the Capitol Grand Orchestra under Erno Rapee; the Russian Cathedral Choir; and MELCHIORE MAURO-COTTONE at the four-manual Estey, playing Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C Sharp Minor." It is stated that "The Capitol's organ is conceded to be the largest of its kind ever designed and one unexcelled in thrilling power and varied, flexible effects."

### March 1926 (M) ...

New ideas or revitalized presentations of old ones are always welcome to photoplay musicians. It is a considerable task to stay on the job, fit appropriate music to the pictures, and have something left over in the way of inspiration to assist in properly observing special occasions such as Christmas, New Year's, Fourth of July, etc.

TED SCHLENKER of the Garden Theatre in Battle Creek, Michigan, seems able to handle all the situations and emergencies in which the photoplay organist is apt to find himself. During the past holiday season, he arranged a special Christmas Day recital which made quite a hit with the theatre patrons.

The organ console was decorated with silver and gold holly sprays, wreaths, bells and lighted candles, and when the spotlight was turned on it, the effect was not only decidedly impressive and Christmassy, it was also extremely pretty. The organ presentation was programmed just ahead of the feature picture, and consisted of Christmas Carols, carefully

arranged to suit the organ and the occasion.

Ted also featured a similar recital on New Year's Day, named "The Musical Review of 1925." It consisted of sketches from the most popular musical numbers of the year past. The approbation and interest expressed by the theatre patrons were so flattering that Mr. Schlenker plans to observe every holiday during the coming season in a similar way.

He is one of the leading organists in his city, and apparently one of the first in that vicinity to feature a special observance of this sort for national holidays.

### April 1926 (M) ...

ARNOLD SCHAMMELL, organist at the Lynbrook New York Theatre for the past three years, has had extensive experience in that profession.

Born and raised near Syracuse, he was one of the first to enter the music department of Syracuse University when it opened, studying piano and composition with Dr. Will Schutze. He studied organ with D.V. Flagler and began his public work as church organist in Syracuse when only 18.

After filling church positions in Detroit and Toledo, he was called to Spokane, Washington, in 1906 to take charge of the small goods and sheet music department of Eiler's Music House. Serving as organist at Westminster Congregational Church, he became interested in photoplay work. He returned east four years ago, and for the past three years, has been at the Lynbrook.

This theatre is equipped with an excellent Kimball unit organ, and besides solo work, Mr. Schammell uses it with the orchestra. He has written several piano, voice and organ numbers which are in the catalogues of leading publishers, and

many of his songs are being used by leading concert and recital artists.

### April 1926 (M) ...

New Yorkers are familiar with ROBERT SOFFER by reputation, if not personally. The young man is musical director of the Cosmo, Harlem Grand and Stadium theatres, and plays the organ at the Cosmo.

After study with capable teachers, he initiated his professional career as organist at the Dominion Theatre in Montreal where he served three years. Coming to New York as organist at Hugo Risenfeld's Central Theatre on Broadway, he was said to have been the youngest organist who ever served under that director.

After working under Risenfeld for some time, he was attracted to Harlem by an offer from the corporation controlling the three theatres named above. The Cosmo is equipped with a very fine instrument, reputed to be the best organ in Harlem. Mr. Soffer has broadcast over WMCA, WGBS, WHN and WEBJ. Several numbers he composed have been published and have met with considerable popularity. One of these is a waltz entitled "Sentimental Nights."

### August 1926 (M) ...

The Strand, one of the largest, and the most popular theatre in Providence, Rhode Island, is noted for its fine pictures and excellent music. The Möller organ has been enlarged three times, and is now the largest in the state. It contains nearly 15 straight stops, a few duplexed ranks, and a full set of traps.

One member of its excellent coterie of organists is AURELE J. FOREST, who has been organist and choir director of St. Charles Church in Providence for a number of years. He was connected with

(continued)

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several first-run houses here, having filled a number of engagements as pianist, including a six-year engagement with the B.F. Keith interests. Well known and very popular among Providence musicians, Mr. Forest has an excellent musical memory, is well informed on the newest music, and has the ability to tastefully extemporize. He also teaches a limited number of pupils.

#### August 22, 1926 (LP) ...

Balaban & Katz announce a grande organ concert today at their Chicago Theatre from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m., featuring BASEL CRISTOL, with soprano Mable Boyer. Gloria Swanson is in the film *Fine Manners*, with the second feature *Sidewalks of New York*.

#### November 24, 1926 (LP) ...

Rochester, New York's, Madison Theatre opened last night. W. RAY BURROUGHS, formerly of the Regent Theatre, is organist.

#### December 31, 1926 (LP) ...

The Stand Theatre management in Rochester says, "We are very proud of our new four-manual Marr & Colton organ. The installation is not yet completed, but the portion now being used sounds great. The job should be finished in about two weeks."

#### February 18, 1928 (LP) ...

Rochester's WHEC has installed its official organ studio at the Liberty Theatre and has engaged EDWARD C. MAY, the celebrated and widely known artist, as staff organist.

The studio is equipped with a Wurlitzer organ. There will be several concerts a week, owing to repeated requests for organ music. A committee was formed to determine possibilities of the new studio: William E. Belcher, Schine Enterprises; E.V. Clark, Wurlitzer Co.; Howard B. Bloomfield, WHEC; and Mr. May as musical advisor.

Mr. Belcher will be announcer and master of ceremonies. Mr. May has become a favorite of audiences throughout western New York who have heard his brilliant performances during the past season.

#### December 1928 (ATT) ...

GEORGE H. FULTON is featured as solo organist at the Carmen Theatre in Philadelphia where he has played eight years. In that time, he has built a tremendous following with straight organ work.

#### GOLD DUST ...

7/25 JOHN HAMMOND, WGBS, Richmond Hill, New York; ARTHUR BROOKS, WNYC, New York ... 8/25 HAMLIN HUNT, WCCO, Minneapolis-St. Paul ... 10/25 UDA WALDROP, KPO in San Francisco ... 8/26 JOHANNA GROSS, WLW, Cincinnati.

That does it until next time.  
So long, sourdoughs!

*Jason & the Old Prospector*

## Closing Chords

**Charles F. Cooney**, 67, passed away on June 15. A long-time Chicago Area Chapter member, many ATOS members will remember Charles as the fun-loving emcee for the "Pipes Alive in '85" National Convention hosted by Chicago. Recently, he was emcee for the highly successful CATOE Aragon Ballroom (Down Memory Lane) Show on May 3. He has been an active member of Chicago Area Chapter since 1977 and has attended most conventions since that time. He was, in fact, registered for the Los Angeles conclave at the time of his passing.

Charles is survived by his wife, Dorothy, of 44 years and three children. He will be sorely missed by all of us.

*Jim Koller*

**Sigmond (Sig) Ross**, 84, passed away on June 12. Sig was a member of Motor City Chapter and an honorary member of Detroit Theatre Organ Club. His long career in music spanned both the silent film era and the modern age of theatre organ. He got his start in Buffalo, New York, at the age of 16, and during the next ten years played in 22 theatres in eight cities.

Following the arrival of the talkies, Sig refined his piano-playing skills and continued his career in supper clubs, roller rinks and theatres in the Detroit area. His many friends, both local and nationwide, will agree that, with the passing of Sigmond Ross, the organ world has lost a very special person.

*Charles Baas*

*(A biography of Mr. Ross will appear in a forthcoming issue of THEATRE ORGAN. Ed.)*

**Robinson Cleaver**, president of the Theatre Organ Club and long-time member of ATOS, died on July 23, at the age of 81, in Llandudno, North Wales, of cancer. He was born Harold Arthur Robinson in the small village of Eckington in Derbyshire, England, on May 25, 1906.

His interest in music, and particularly the organ, began at an early age, and he was organist at Bramley Parish Church, near Rotherham, at the age of nine. He entered the cinema world at the Albert Hall, Sheffield, and then to the Royal Manchester College of Music where, at the age of 18, he gained his A.R.C.O.

Cleaver's career commenced at the La Scala, Hyde, where the pianist was Molly Bailey, who later became his wife. Eventually he moved to the Picadilly Manchester where, it is believed, he took the additional name of Cleaver as there was at that time a chain of stores called Robinson and Cleaver.

He was appointed organist at the Lonsdale Carlisle, and in 1935 moved to the new Regal Bexleyheath in Kent, where he commenced to broadcast for the BBC from the Regal on January 7, 1936. The Bexleyheath Cinema was taken over by Union Cinemas, and Cleaver toured the circuit for them, also recording for Parlophone label. He made six 78s from the Regal.

The next move was to Granada Theatres, Ltd., early in 1938, and he made his first broadcast from their Clapham Junction theatre, but truly arrived when he opened their new Granada at Welling in Kent. He was given leave to appear at the Palladium, Copenhagen, and also recorded five more discs for Parlophone. Apart from Denmark, he also broadcast several times from AVRO Hilversum in the Netherlands. He finished with Granada in 1958, and apart from promoting concerts at Llandudno, he also started his own music publishing business in Tin Pan Alley.

He is survived by a younger brother, John, who lives close to Derby. Robinson Cleaver will be sadly missed as he has given musical pleasure to millions since 1935.

*Ralph Bartlett*



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