

With our season's greetings come these nuggets concerning big-name organists. Sources were *American Organist* (AO), *Local Press* (LP), *Motion Picture Almanac* (MPA) and *Motion Picture Herald* (MPH).

July 1923 (Ao) ...

FRANK VAN DUSEN heads the American Conservatory's organ department in Chicago. The recent graduation festivities presented six post-graduates in public recital in Kimball Hall, all of whom received their Bachelor of Music degrees. There were also four graduate and eight teachers' certificates given. The organ-playing contest resulted in the first-prize gold medal to EDWARD EIGEN-SCHENK, second-prize silver medal and teacher's certificate to GEORGE CEIGA, and special honorable mention to LOUIS NESPO.

August 31, 1924 (LP) ...

ROBERT J. BERENTSEN and HAROLD OSBORN SMITH, Rochester's Eastman Theatre organists, share with orchestra conductors Frank Waller, Victor Wagner and Guy Fraser Harrison, the credit for the excellent musical programs offered each week. Organ playing for the pictures is almost entirely improvisation, and good motion picture organists are rare. The organist must not only have an unusually wide repertoire to enable him to call to mind instantly the most appropriate selection to fit a particular scene, but he must also have a sound knowledge of dramatic values and a good sense of humor. Both Messrs. Berentsen and Smith are unusually well equipped in this regard. Their picture accompaniment and their daily recitals are among the most enjoyable features of the Eastman program. The letters S.T.O., found after their names on the programs, stand for Society of Theatre Organists.

January 1928 (LP) ...

HENRY B. MURTAGH, who has come to be known among picture theatre audiences as "an organist with a sense of humor," has been engaged to preside over the gigantic Estey console at New York's Capitol Theatre.

Mr. Murtagh started his musical career as a pupil of Leopold Godowsky, world famous pianist, and later was a concert pianist himself. But he was attracted to the organ before he had gone very far in his career, and soon became a convert. Today, he is so proficient at the latter instrument that he can turn a Gregorian chant into "My Hot Lips Baby Is a Cold, Cold, Mamma Now." Frequently, he plays "just for fun," and therein lies his charm and the secret of his popularity.

June 4, 1929 (LP) ...

Richard Arlen, Mary Brian and Jack Oakie are appearing in *The Man I Love* at the new Seattle Theatre. A deluxe program features RENALDO BAGGOT and DONOVAN MOORE (Ron & Don)

NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



at the twin-console, 4/20 Wurlitzer. (This house at Ninth and Pine became the Paramount shortly after its opening.)

September 7, 1929 (LP) ...

The \$4 million Loew's Paradise opened in the Bronx, New York today. Featured film is *Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu* with Warner Oland, Neil Hamilton and Jean Arthur. Don Albert conducted the Paradise Grand Orchestra in the overture "Divertissement Musicale" while HAROLD RAMSAY was at the console of the \$100,000 (sic) Robert-Morton organ.

September 1930 (MPA) ...

FRANCIS KROMAR, JR. is at Warner's Uptown Theatre in Cleveland as featured organist. Vienna-born, he features original organ novelties and presentations.

May 23, 1931 (MPH) ...

ADOLPH GOEBEL, formerly of the Atlanta and Springfield Paramount theatres, was in New York a few days ago and got the job of guest organist at Loew's Pitkin Theatre in Brooklyn for an indefinite stay. He is now in his third week and is going great.

August 22, 1931 (MPH) ...

JACK WARD is at the Fox Academy of Music, down on 14th Street in New York. FREDERICK KINSLEY and C. SHARPE MINOR are the latest organists in New York to get radio hookups. Fred is now featuring a lot of high-class music from the Astor Hotel, and Charlie is featured over the Mennen Hour, both on WOR. HENRI A. KEATES, for the past five or six years one of Chicago's biggest and most popular advocates of community singing, is soon to open at Brooklyn's Keith-Albee Theatre. Dr. MELCHIORE MAUROCOTTONE and WILL GILROY, organists at New York's Capitol, are out. Gilroy, however, opens next week at Loew's Pitkin in Brooklyn. ARTHUR "HICH C" GEIS, "the Eiffel Tower of Organists" ('67"), who presided at the console of the Jersey City Stanley for the past three years, opens at the Fox Theatre in Washington on August 27. KEN WRIGHT, "The Singing Organist," formerly of the Orpheum in Green Bay, Wisconsin, is now featured

at Lloyd's State in Rhinelander, Wisconsin.

October 24, 1931 (MPH) ...

JOHN HAMMOND at the St. George Theatre in Staten Island, presented an entertaining solo this week. After the console ascended, during which time Hammond played a hot arrangement of a special arrangement of a special number, he stood beside the bench and introduced the numbers. The first was a special arrangement of "If I Had To Go On Without You," with the first chorus played in concert style, the second for the audience to sing. A beautiful arrangement of "Mother Macree" was next, played as a straight "spot" solo with the audience singing the second chorus. The final number was "Me," in which Hammond sang special lyrics for the first chorus, and the audience's singing of the second chorus closed the solo. Beautiful and appropriate "effect" slides were used as background for each song, and they lent a pleasing effect as opposed to the usual black background slides. Hammond received fine applause.

November 21, 1931 (MPH) ...

CORNELIUS "CON" MAFFIE at New York's Paradise Theatre offered an original song fest which earned him favor with the local patrons. He played both the Fordham and N.Y.U. school songs and dedicated two or three more to the gridiron warriors. Following this, he gave "advice to the lovelorn," answering the question with popular songs and then introduced a local girl, Vera Thielman, who does very well in singing "Why Can't We Be Sweethearts Once Again?". Con harmonizes with her and then has the audience sing a special version to "Through With Love." The solo was very well presented, and applause at the finish was very good.

November 28, 1931 (MPH) ...

STANLEIGH MALOTTE, formerly of the Minnesota Theatre in Minneapolis, is at Toledo's Paramount.

June 18, 1932 (MPH) ...

In addition to his junior organist's duties at the New York Paramount, FRED FEIBEL is a radio artist on CBS.

October 22, 1932 (MPH) ...

HERBIE KOCH at Shea's Buffalo, responding to popular demand for a song-fest and old-time favorites, called his console session this week "Long, Long Ago." Exhorting the audience through the mike to do their best, he had them sing lustily "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "Let the Rest of the World Go By," "Shine On, Harvest Moon," "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" and "Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet." Suitable screen backgrounds were used; those for "Apple Tree" being especially effective in this reminiscence of the old song. Original and strictly modern words for "Let the Rest of the World Go By" brought the act to a rousing climax.

GOLD DUST ...

12/16 NORMAN NAIRN, Rochester's Piccadilly ... 2/26 EDDIE DUSTED-TER, Minneapolis' WCCO; OTTO F. BECK, Washington's WRC; ALFRED HELLEMS, Philadelphia's WOO; LEON WOOD, Newark's WOR ... 5/26 BERNIE COWHAM, Milwaukee's WHAD and Tower Theatre ... 9/26 UDA WALDROP, San Francisco's KPO ... 3/27 RUSSELL M. FLOODAS, Madison,

Wisconsin's Orpheum ... 6/27 R. WILSON ROSS, Rochester's Victoria; J. NEWTON YATES, Berwyn, Illinois' Auditorium Theatre; CLARK FIERS Scranton's Comerford West Side Theatre ... 7/27 BERNIE COWHAM opens Milwaukee's Oriental Barton; P. HANS FLATH opens Kansas City's Midland Robert-Morton ... 9/28 HELEN ANKNER, Rochester's WHAM ... 11/28 LEW WHITE and EDWIN LEMARE

in recording sessions ... 1/29 JEAN WEINER, Atlantic City's WPG ... 7/29 Rochester's EDWARD C. MAY on WHEC from the Riviera Theatre ... 10/29 KEN WIDENOR at Loew's Rochester ... 3/31 ARLO HULTS, alternating at New York's RKO 86th St. and 58th St. theatres.

Have a Merry and a Happy! See you next time!

Jason & The Old Prospector

Closing Chords

JOSEPH J. DEC

Joseph J. Dec of Minneapolis, Minnesota, passed away recently just two days before his 64th birthday. He is survived by two sisters, Stephanie Dec and Frances Wacker. A sweet and gentle man, he was devoted to the music of the theatre pipe organ.

During his spare time, Joe searched out every second-hand store, every Salvation Army store, and any other possible source of 78 records of theatre organ music. His search was long and lonely as he thought he was the only one left in the whole world who shared his love of theatre organ music, this being years before ATOE (not ATOS) was founded. As the organs were silenced in theatres and on the air waves, he had left only his precious record library as the source of his enjoyment.

One day in the early forties, he quite accidentally encountered another collector of organ records in one of the Salvation Army stores that he haunted. A beautiful friendship quickly developed, and they continued their individual searching for records, and meeting weekends to play for each other their recent "finds". One such weekend, Joe produced the first English-made theatre organ record that either had ever seen. This was Reginald Dixon's "Land of Hope and Glory," which sort of became Joe's theme song! This was a whole new field for these friends, but the English organ releases were very few, indeed.

As WWII progressed, Joe's friend was stationed on the West Coast, and Joe joined the Navy. Contact between the two friends was lost. It was after nearly forty years that Joe's friend located Stephanie only to learn that Joe had died; his injuries had left him a double amputee, and he was honorably discharged. He enjoyed his music to the end, faithful to the last to his beloved theatre organ record library. His life was blessed by the beauty of the music that the theatre organ bestows on the listener. *Judd Walton*

EDWARD WIELGOT

Edward Wielgot passed away at his Denver home July 29, at the age of 66, after a long illness. Long active in the af-

fairs of Rocky Mountain Chapter, he served as its president in 1981, and, with his wife, Virginia, helped on many chapter projects and helped to guide the chapter through difficult years. They served on concert committees, took care of newsletter printing and mailing, and hosted club gatherings and board meetings. Ed was also involved in work on the club organ and on the Aladdin Theatre organ. He and Virginia were also active participants in National Conventions. *Donald Zeller*

FRED RISER

Memorial services for **Fred Riser** were held in his organ studio on August 21. Fred passed away on August 17 at the age of 81. Until recent years, Fred had been active in many Rocky Mountain Chapter projects, and in return, chapter members had helped with the installation of his mammoth instrument. Fred served as chapter president in 1979. His studio has been the setting for many chapter meetings and concerts, and we listened with fascination as the instrument continued to grow. Chapter members gathered at the studio in August 1986 to help Fred and Evelyn celebrate their 60th anniversary as well as Evelyn's birthday. The studio was also one of the venues during the Afterglow of the Rocky Mountain Regional last fall. At present the organ stands at 31 ranks, with 24 playing, and is controlled by two consoles. Following the memorial service, the console was open to all, but NO solemn music was allowed — as Fred had requested. *Donald Zeller*

HAROLD PETERSON

Harold Peterson of Minneapolis, Minnesota, age 77, died August 14. In earlier years, as chairman of Land O' Lakes Chapter, he organized several bus tours to the Hermes organ and other instruments in the area of Dairyland Chapter. He designed and installed theatre projection and sound equipment throughout the country, working for the National Theatres Supply Company. The sophisticated Cinerama-like equipment in the Johnson Wax Rondelle was installed by Harold in the sixties.

Harold had his own 2/5 Wurlitzer from the Paramount Theatre in St. Cloud, Minnesota, which replaced the 3/8 Barton he had from the Uptown Theatre in St. Paul. He was also responsible for helping Fred Hermes acquire the Brenograph projectors used in his home productions.

He will be missed by all who knew him.

Fred Hermes

MARIE SINGLETON

Former theatre organist **Marie Singleton** died in Kansas City, Kansas, on July 21 after a long illness. She was 92.

During the twenties, she was employed by the Royal Theatre in Kansas City, Missouri. While on vacation, she chose young Billy Wright to substitute for her, and they remained friends for years. After the advent of talking pictures, she was employed by the Jenkins Music Company and introduced the first Hammond electronic to the area to audiences in many concerts and demonstrations. *Lloyd Klos*

ALDEN E. MILLER

Alden E. Miller, one of the pioneers in the ATOS movement, died on June 17 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, following an illness of several years. He was 75.

Miller published the *Kinura* newsletter and wrote the *Kinura Korner* in the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Club's *Posthorn* around 1961. In the 1950s, he owned the three-manual Wurlitzer from the Lyceum Theatre in Duluth, Minnesota, which he subsequently sold to John Ledwon. A lifelong collector of organ memorabilia, Alden donated his collection (which included that of Sylvester "Sal" Cargill) to the Archives of the Land O'Lakes chapter, which he helped form in 1959. Many ATOSers are model railroad hobbyists, as was Alden; however, he was also a genuine railroader for the Chicago and Northwestern.

He is survived by his wife, Lorayn, and three children. His sister, Alice Rabus, has been treasurer of Land O' Lakes Chapter since 1980.

John Zetterstrom