

NUGGETS

from the

GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



This time we include a few mini-biographies. Sources were *Diapason* (D), *Jacobs* (J), *Local Press* (LP) and *Melody* (M).

April 1926 (M) . . .

MYRON C. BALLOU of West Barrington, Rhode Island, is evidently a very modest sort of chap. When we learned that he had completed his 29th year at the First Universalist Church in Providence, and almost 10 years at the Strand Theatre there, we asked him for some information about himself and his work. He told us that some time ago, a prominent organ journal ran a picture of him and "it is just beginning to get on its feet again." He has just become a *Melody* subscriber and hated to "run the risk of doing anything to decrease its circulation." So, he felt somewhat hesitant about sending us his picture.

The Strand Theatre is probably the finest first-run theatre in Providence. It employs three organists in lieu of an orchestra. The organ is a Moller, and it has been enlarged three times since Ballou has been there. It has three manuals, 50 straight stops, 12 duplexed stops, 14 traps, and is reputed to be the best theatre organ in Providence. Mr. Ballou has been a serious student of organ all his life, has a certificate from the A.G.O., and is the Rhode Island Chapter president of the National Association of Organists.

November 1926 (J) . . .

One of the leading teachers of the Chicago theatre organ field is CHARLES H. DEMOREST. To him, the credit for the establishment of the theatre organ department in the Chicago Musical College should be given. Incidentally, he is also organist at the Vitagraph Theatre, a community house on the North Side.

He studied piano under Friedheim (the celebrated pupil and friend of Liszt) at the very college where he would later teach. Continuing his studies under the best teachers, he earned a reputation as a recitalist and church organist.

However, the call of the West brought him to Hollywood where he decided to take up the movie game. He became more and more identified with the picture theatre, playing at two of the largest theatres in Seattle, and then moving to New York where he played in some of the leading theatres.

Mr. Demorest has built an enviable reputation in the Windy City and has more pupils than he can handle. Quiet, modest and unassuming, he is beloved by his pupils, who are his life, his world. Occasionally, he steps out of the role of teacher and becomes impresario, conducting a recital in which his pupils take part. This spurs new interest in study, stimulates the old, and affords genuine pleasure and entertainment as well as instruction for the members of his classes.

January 1927 (J) . . .

RALPH MASON HIX, who replaced Johnny Devine at Chicago's Biograph Theatre Wurlitzer when he left for the top job at the Mid-West Theatre on the South Side, has just returned to the city after several seasons on the Publix Circuit, first at the Des Moines Theatre and then at their newest house, the Broadway in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Organ playing is not the only thing of which this dignified gentleman is capable. He has gained recognition in fields outside the theatrical and concert organ world. For instance, he served as accompanist for Mme. Matzenauer and the late Mme. Gervaille-Reache, of the Metropolitan Opera, and singers Miles Berri and Jonani on the Orpheum Circuit. A member of the Chicago Society of Organists since its organization, Mr. Hix is also a member of the AGO Headquarters Chapter in New York.

An organ recital recently given by this estimable musician disclosed a knowledge of classical literature unusual to the casual theatre organist. It took place in St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Council Bluffs and included the "Sonata in D" by Bach; "Sonata in E Flat," Opus 22 by Buck; "Two Twilight Sketches" by Lemare, etc. — all professional reputation-builders. Such a musician is always welcome, especially in Chicago where musically moralizing influences are surely needed.

February 1927 (J) . . .

There are few organists in Chicago who enjoy the popularity which AL MELGARD of the Barton Organ School in the Mallers Building does. There isn't a better liked organist in the city and it is not only because he lends a helping hand to every deserving organist who comes along, but because Al has yet to be heard passing an unkind remark about any organist, or criticizing his own pupils.

He is no "yes" man, either! Just one of those rare specimens of the genus homo who thinks of the other fellow's feelings before he opens his mouth. That is one of the reasons why Al has opened many Barton organs in new theatres throughout the country; why he broadcasts from WLS, the Sears Roebuck station in the Hotel Sherman; why the aces of the profession come from all parts of the country to learn his tricks; and why he needs an eight-day week to teach all who apply for instruction.

There are other reasons. He has studied theory, harmony, counterpoint, composition, etc. He has been a legitimate church organist, and has held some of the best movie positions in this section of the country.

Above all, one has yet to see Al ruffled or rattled. Despite his many responsibilities, he keeps an even keel than most. Al Melgard is a mighty high-class fellow, a gentleman, and a real organist!

June 19, 1927 (LP) . . .

Organists Wanted. Number of openings for theatre organists who are not employed, playing Wurlitzers. Apply: Mr. Weber, Wurlitzer store, 364 Main E., Rochester, NY.

December 1927 (J) . . .

One of the competent organists and pleasing personalities on the Loew's Circuit is Miss HENRIETTA KAMERN of the Rio Theatre in New York. Miss Kamern has been with Loew's for over seven years and has been at the Rio most of the time with the exception of a brief stay at the 116th Street Theatre.

When she came to the Rio, an old Hall organ was in use, which was replaced by a splendid three-manual Moller, one of the finest organs on the circuit. Miss Kamern's mother is the talented director of the Burland Theatre orchestra of the same chain.

Miss Kamern has been doing some remarkably successful broadcasting on WHN, the official Loew's station. The recitals are usually given Sunday evenings and have met with great favor. Her first program included the popular "Rhapsody In Blue" and other hits. We are sure her success, which she deserves, will be Miss Kamern's in even greater measure in the future.

(Continued . . .)

All inquiries regarding membership matters should be addressed to . . .

DOUGLAS C. FISK
Executive Director of ATOS
P.O. Box 417490
Sacramento, California 95841

February 1931 (D) . . .

RUSSELL V. HUPP, who has returned as solo organist to the three-manual Marr & Colton in South Bend, Indiana's Armo Theatre, is one of those who are encouraged over evidences of the restoration of the organ to its proper place as a theatre attraction of the first order. The Armo's new management, after feeling the public's pulse, decided that Mr. Hupp's programs are a distinct drawing card. Mr. Hupp writes thusly which should buoy the spirits of many theatre musicians: "Just when things for organ-

ists looked darkest in this town, The Public Colfax Theatre engaged two organists to play its Wurlitzer, and the RKO Palace and RKO Granada have reinstated their organ presentations, using their big Kimball and Wurlitzer instruments. The public here has demanded the organ's use in the theatre because of the fine organ programs broadcast from Chicago, the middle west, and our local station, WSBT.

"I firmly believe that the theatre organ is coming back stronger than ever and will be featured on a higher plane on its

own merit alone. The day of the theatre organist who wisecracks and uses the king of instruments to accompany gag slides before bellowing audiences, is passing. Community singing will always have its place, but the timely presentation of effective organ solos, artistically displaying the resources of the organ, is what audiences, educated by the radio, are beginning to demand as an adjunct to the talking pictures."

That should do it until next time. So long, sourdoughs! Jason & The Old Prospector

Minutes

American Theatre Organ Society General Membership Meeting First United Methodist Church July 3, 1988

Call To Order:

The annual meeting of the General Membership of the American Theatre Organ Society, Incorporated, was called to order at 7:15 p.m. on July 3, 1988, at the First United Methodist Church in Portland, Oregon; the meeting was conducted under Robert's Rules of Order.

Introduction of Officers for 1987-88:

President - Jack Moelmann; Vice-President - Russ Hamnett; Secretary - David Barnett (absent); Treasurer - Dale Mendenhall.

Introduction of Officers for 1988-89:

President - John Ledwon; Vice-President - Russ Hamnett; Secretary - Beth Palmer; Treasurer - Dale Mendenhall.

Introduction of New Directors:

Paul Quarino, Historian (new position this year); Laurel Haggart, Promotion and Publicity; Alden Stockebrand, National Headquarters Project.

Introduction of Continuing Directors:

Catherine Koenig, Education; Allen Miller, Technical and Nominations; Ashley Miller, Ben Hall Memorial Organ Project; Vern Bickel, Curator of Archives and Library; Dorothy VanSteenkiste, Young Organist Competition; Bob Markworth, Chapter Relations.

Introduction of Retiring Directors:

Lois Segur, Young Organist Competition; Tom B'hend, continuing with *ATOS International NEWS* and member of the Executive Committee; Russ Joseph, Vice-President and Bylaws; David Barnett, Secretary (absent).

Introduction of Staff:

Doug Fisk, Executive Director; Grace McGinnis, Editor of *THEATRE ORGAN*; Len Clarke, Advertising Director; Tim Needler, Convention Planning Coordinator and member of Executive Committee.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of the July 1987 general membership meeting were approved as published in *THEATRE ORGAN*. (Ed Mullins/Cyndae Diaz/Unanimous).

Treasurer's Report:

Dale Mendenhall - accepted as submitted. (Ray Danford/Jim Koller/Unanimous).

Executive Director's Message:

Doug Fisk - 5629 members; a new membership brochure.

Board Action and Activities:

Summary discussion of Board activities and plans.

a. Acceptance of Chapter Annual Reports:

Reports received from Alabama, Central Ohio, Chicago Area, Connecticut Valley, Eastern Massachusetts, Gulf Coast, Joliet Area, Los Angeles, Motor City, New York, Piedmont, Potomac Valley, Puget Sound, Red River, River City, Rocky Mountain, St. Louis, Sierra, Southwest Michigan, Valley of the Sun and Wolverine chapters.

b. Announcement of New Chapter:

North Florida.

c. Young Organist Competition:

Announce winners - Jelani Eddington, Central Indiana, Junior Division and Overall; Norine Castine, Motor City, Senior Division; Martin Harris, London and South of England, Intermediate Division. Thank judges: Gaylord Carter, Lew Williams, Lin Lunde, Candi Carley and Judd Walton. Changes in Young Organist Competition: chapter may enter a person in each of the three age categories; awards have been increased to \$300 each, plus an additional \$300 to the overall winner; all winners are to be brought to convention. The Board welcomes donors to this designated scholarship fund.

d. Future Conventions: National - 1989, Detroit; 1990, Indianapolis; 1991, Nor-Cal; 1992 Delaware Valley. Regional - 1988, Birmingham, October 14-16; 1989, Phoenix, Thanksgiving weekend; London and South of England planning organ crawl for April 16-23, 1989.

e. Library and Archives: Catalog of materials in archives available; archives accepts bequests; needs 16mm sound movie projector and at least one new hi-fi stereo video tape recorder.

f. Technical Manual: Allen Miller. Ready to be printed for distribution in August; price \$30 plus postage and handling.

g. Newsletter: Mailed in Journal and separately in interim months; after trial period, reduced to previous four-page format.

h. National Headquarters: Reviewed a number of proposals, including Alabama Theatre in Birmingham, Redford Theatre in Detroit and a museum in Indiana. Now concentrating on Towe Ford Museum in Sacramento. Continuing investigation.

i. Young Theatre Organ Enthusiasts: 60 members under age 35. Chairman Melissa Ambrose; Board Liaison, Dorothy VanSteenkiste.

j. Chapter Relations: Bob Markworth. Preparing a chapter handbook to exchange ideas and suggested procedures. Request chapter input.

k. Convention Recordings: Under discussion by Board. Show of hands from members interested in purchasing. (100 +)

l. Bylaws: Revising and clarifying; no changes in member rights. When completed, revised bylaws to be published in Journal.

m. Election of Directors: New direct mail procedure. Only 850 ballots returned this election.

n. Education: Following general membership meeting will screen 13-minute slide show being developed by Catherine Koenig and produced and narrated by Russ Hamnett. When completed, will be available for chapter use in gaining both local and national exposure.

New President's Message:

John Ledwon.

Presentation:

John and Ray Danford of Valley of the Sun Chapter presented retiring President Jack Moelmann with a gift in recognition of his successful January 1988 concert in Phoenix.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m. (Jim Koller/Ray Danford/Unanimous).

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Palmer, Secretary



It's Music Time in '89 See you in Detroit!! JULY 2-8, 1989