

NUGGETS

from the

GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



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April 1926 (M) . . .

Youth and Music! Hand in hand, they skip along. Nowadays, you find a youngster doing well that which only would have been attempted by a seasoned performer, and then only after many years of preparatory study. The installation of pipe organs for solo use in theatres is responsible for bringing to the public many capable musicians.

A most engaging young chap has been added lately to our list of musicians, ROBERT MACHAT, organist at the Park Theatre in Washington, D.C. His programs, which add much enjoyment to the pictures, have received favorable comment. Mr. Machat was raised in a show business atmosphere. In the theatre idiom 20 years, his father owned a chain of theatres in this city and New York. When the Park was added to the chain, Robert was brought here from New York to take charge of the Wurlitzer organ.

He undoubtedly has more pupils than any teacher of theatre organ in the city, being very thorough and conscientious in this work. He will spend any amount of time with a pupil who is apt and interested, but will waste no time upon anyone who just wants to "play a little bit." Robert is very progressive, frequently going to New York for new ideas and music.

The young man played for road-show rehearsals in New York before he was 16, and for a number of years was pianist with traveling orchestras and shows. Such training proved valuable when he took up motion picture work, and his ability as a musician enables him to cue pictures in a novel and pleasing manner. One of his pupils, Mrs. MARGARET WATKINS, has been trained by him to play exactly as he does himself, and is now his assistant at the Park. Mr. Machat also acts as music supervisor of his father's other theatres, guaranteeing

public satisfaction with the musical programs presented.

July 1926 (M) . . .

The Liberty Theatre in Olympia, Washington, prides itself on having a beautiful Wurlitzer and SAMUAL PHELPS TOTTEN to play it. Mr. Totten has been at the Liberty since its inception in 1924, and his popularity with the capital city's theatre-goers is growing fast. Sam is well equipped for picture and vaudeville work. For six years, he directed musical comedy, and conducted orchestras, doing pictures and vaudeville work for the Pantages and Gussun circuits.

In 1917, he decided to confine his efforts to the organ, as he had played several years previously in Everett, Centralia, Wenatchee and Olympia theatres. Besides doing pictures, Sam plays for vaudeville, stages prologues, novelty solos and Sunday concerts. He has the distinction of being one of only four vaudeville organists on the West Coast.

Sam says that playing the organ for vaudeville can be very pleasurable to patrons and artists. An instrument of quick response, and a slight anticipation on the part of the organist are required. He's played for some very fast classical school dancing acts.

His opinions on so-called "modern" music are not very enthusiastic. Experience has taught him to give the public, as represented by the majority of moving picture attendees, what they want: i.e. melody; about 10% from the old masters, and the remaining 90% from masters not so old.

December 1927 (J) . . .

The Lyndhurst Theatre in Rochester, New York, recently installed a two-manual organ which was opened on September 12 by WESLEY RAY BURROUGHS. The organ was built and installed by a local concern, the Kohl Organ Co.

Mr. Burroughs received most of his training under Dr. William C. Carl at the Guilmont Organ School in New York. Like other theatre organists of the old school, Mr. Burroughs had built a reputation as a church musician before the organ took permanent abode in the theatre pit. One of his most notable positions was that of organist and choral director of the Delaware Baptist Church of Buffalo from 1908 through 1913. Directing a 30-voice chorus, Mr. Burroughs proved his ability for this work until it was forsaken for the theatre idiom.

In 1914, Rochester's Regent Theatre, the city's first large motion picture house, was built, and Mr. Burroughs was selected to design the organ specifications and be chief organist.

His three-year Regent stint ended when he accepted an offer in Detroit where he remained two years. In 1919, he received a return call to Rochester by the Piccadilly Theatre. In 1921, Mr. Burroughs accepted a return engagement at the Regent where he remained until the Lyndhurst opening.

Mr. Burroughs has made several tours, including 20 recitals on the Pan-American organ in Buffalo's Convention Hall. Since 1915, he has conducted a motion picture column in the *Diapason*. Rochester is fortunate in having an organist of Mr. Burroughs' calibre at the Lyndhurst console.

March 30, 1928 (LP) . . .

TOM GRIERSON, Rochester organist, who has been heard in theatres and churches here for the past 10 years, will leave tomorrow for Buffalo where he has accepted the position at Shea's Buffalo Theatre, playing its 4/28 Wurlitzer, largest of that make between New York and Chicago.

November 1, 1929 (LP) . . .

Loew's Rochester will introduce a new organist, MAURICE COOK, "The Jovial Console Master," at the opening of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's all-talking campus comedy, *So This is College*, tomorrow.

Maurice has been playing solos for ten years, and before that, he was a movie accompanist. He traveled in vaudeville as a member of Dunbar's Nine White Huzzars, a Keith headline act. For a season or two, he conducted an orchestra, playing with the *Birth of a Nation* production, and the Ramona Traveling Shows.

For over a season, he was at the Cinema Theatre in Los Angeles. He left that house to take up a similar position at the Blue Mouse in Minneapolis. He was also at the Tower in St. Paul and the State in Minneapolis.

In 1925, Maurice went to Chicago where he opened 11 Balaban & Katz theatres in one year — next to the Indiana Theatre in Indianapolis for a year, then to Loew's State in Syracuse until that house introduced a vaudeville policy. Baltimore came next with an engagement at Loew's Century, from which he comes to Rochester.

During his Los Angeles assignment, Maurice frequently played the organ for big premieres. A number of leading film stars are among his friends. "People who have never been there have a mistaken idea of Hollywood," he says. "They think it is a place where more whoopee is made than pictures. Many of the stars are exceptionally hard workers, and often retire as early as 9:00 p.m. so that they

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Thoughts About The 1989 Young Organist Competition

It seems as if our committee's decisions to elect Russell Holmes, John Cook, and Barry Baker have met general approval. I have received no complaint, although I didn't expect any. The winners played well, were always courteous and gentlemanly, and brought credit to their sponsors, teachers, families and friends. I am especially happy with the winners because they exemplified musical characteristics that I like: restraint in registration and dynamics. I like the pedal work of all three, for they were sparing in their use of those muddy old sixteen-foot bourdons, and not one of them was hooked in addition to snarling posthorns that make more noise than music. We had evidence at the Convention that they were competent to play everything to which they professed in their tapes; there could have been no tape-doctoring or double-recording. I had a talk with Russell Holmes about his training and was pleased to find him able to indicate some knowledge of harmony as we talked about triad-inversions, seventh and ninth chords.

Something should be said about music-contest judging. As musicians, we have lasting opinions about composers, compositions, and styles. At such times our prejudices, along with our dislikes of performers and personalities, are showing. For hundreds and perhaps thousands of years musicians have been envious of each other. The famous German critic of the latter half of the nineteenth century, Eduard Hanslick, often thought that the music of Richard Wagner was tasteless and long-winded. In 1881 he reviewed the first performance of Tchaikowski's Violin Concerto, of which he said in effect, "Normally we smell through out noses, but here is music that stinks in our ears." Happily, nothing stank in my ears at the Convention, although the rock-and-rollers are trying hard enough. The Chinese, perceptively have their word for "rock-and-roll": *yao* pronounced *yow*.

Concerning our demands upon the contestants' musicianship, we need to be careful not to make

too rigorous requirements. I think "Embraceable You" was a little too demanding. In his book, *American Popular Song*, Alec Wilder discusses George Gershwin's skill in the use of bass notes, his avoidance of musical cliches, and his ever-moving harmony. This latter characteristic explains why several of our candidates found it necessary to use too slow a tempo for a popular tune that is basically happy and affectionate in spirit. The first measure starts after a quarter-rest, and then imitates it in the second, to be followed by an unexpected phrase in the third. Another unexpected novelty is the eighth-note e-flat in the final cadence (the piece is written in G).

There are two ways to help our young students avoid pitfalls: (1) use popular material in the form A-A-B-A. It is simple and repetitive. Students who can't handle this need ear-training. (2) Have the students sing the songs they are proposing to play. This will insure that they catch the mood and style of any piece before they get carried away into the briar-patches of excessive imitation and mannerism.

Now some words to our young organists. Long ago Sophocles said that the most enviable of our endeavors should be to "grow wise in old age," but music history has usually found that the wisdom of old age is seldom as rewarding as the genius of youth. Youth in music is fine melody; it's like a flower garden full of roses. Young people, please keep the weeds of boredom, incompetence, and evil from choking out the roses. Then may your musical world stay full of roses.

A last word of praise should be given Tony O'Brien who had the courage and the good musicianship to include in his program a composition by German composer Sigfrid Karg-Elert, whose works are not often played or appreciated. Tony's performance had class.

John Muri
954 DeKalb Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30307

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may be in fit condition to meet their obligations on the lot early the next day. Picture stars who have held their high places are, for the most part, surprisingly orderly persons."

July 29, 1942 (RD) . . .

DOLPH GOEBEL, musical director and organist of WWRL in Woodside, New York, since June 1941, has been named by the U.S. Treasury Dept. to make personal appearances Sundays at Forest Park, Long Island, in behalf of the sale of War Bonds and Stamps. Goebel will be featured at the Hammond, supplying the music for community sings and rallies.

GOLD DUST: 7/38 ERIC THINMAN and REGINALD FOORT over GSG and GSI, England; LEW WHITE, CBS; ARTHUR CHANDLER, Jr., WLW, Cincinnati; Chicago's HAROLD TURNER on MBS playing piano; Canada's ROLAND TODD over MBS; MILTON CHARLES & The Four Notes, CBS . . . 10/38 CHARLES PAUL, CBS; GEORGE LUNDQUIST, WJTN, Jamestown, NY; MARY FOUNTAIN, WHP, Harrisburg, PA; DICK LEIBERT, WJZ, NY; JESSE CRAWFORD, NBC; ROSA RIO on "Between the Bookends" with Ted Malone, NBC; TRUMAN TAYLOR, SWYR, Syracuse; FRANK RENOUT, WORK, York, PA; TOM GRIERSON, WHAM, Rochester; HARRY SPRINGER, WESG, Elmira, NY; JOHNNY HEREFORD, CBS; GUNTHER DECKER, WBNF, Binghamton; ROBERT SMITH, WKBW, Buffalo; MATHILDA & IRENE HARDING on "Twenty Fingers of Melody," CBS; FRED FEIBEL, CBS.

That does it for this time. So long, sourdoughs!

Jason & The Old Prospector

JESSE THE GREAT!

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boys, tenor sax Eddie Miller and pianist Bob Zurke, appeared in solos. Miller played SENTIMENTAL OVER YOU beautifully, and Zurke added variations to BODY AND SOUL in a masterful rendition. Both were splendid . . . Jesse Crawford left me stone cold . . . It is sad but true that he 'Ain't what he used to be!' . . . His execution especially has slipped; too, he has failed to keep up with the trend of modern organ music . . . Maybe I'm wrong, but I like his performance on the house organ much better than his pieces on the Hammond Electric Organ . . . Finis. Hal C. Rees.

Yes, Jesse was a great legend, but he was a mortal, too. Which one among us had not fallen flat on his face at least at one concert. But this is a side of the Poet of the Organ that you never hear about.



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