

NUGGETS

from the

GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



Sources for this column were *Diapason* (D), *Melody* (M), and *The Musician* (TM).

June 1915 (TM) . . .

The Echo Organ by H.C. Macdougall.

Someone has suggested that with the "movie" organs, a new style of playing will come into being. This is no doubt true. The dignified legato, sostenuto style of the church organist, is manifestly inapplicable to the needs of film drama. An instrument having bells, drums, and all sorts of traps to give realistic effects can hardly be played as if contrapuntal music were the only music native to it.

At the same time, one must not lose sight of the fact that a "movie" organ is not a piano, and that its power of sustaining tones and its lack of rhythmic capacity are its most strikingly positive and negative characteristics.

This may be illustrated by some comments on organ playing heard in two large moving picture palaces in two of our great cities. In the first case, the organ was large and powerful and during the time I was in the theatre, was played by two persons. The first player extemporized in a fluent and interesting manner, using the staccato style often, but always so that there were sustained inner parts; in this way the performer was able to play brightly and with rhythmic interest and yet not in the jumpy and disagreeable manner of his colleague who followed. The latter played like a pianist; there was little or no legato, contrast, or union of legato with staccato. To me, the performance of the second player was clearly a failure, because he did not take into account the nature of the instrument he was playing.

In another case, the theatre was smaller and the organ on light wind pressure; the full organ, owing to super-octave couplers, was thin and squally. The organist, of ordinary taste with no particular orchestral or organ sense, played several waltzes in a highly effective manner. It seems reasonable to suppose that a light-tone instrument, favorably

placed with regard to a resonating chamber or sounding board, will be better adapted to the simpler dance rhythms than a larger organ. In this particular case, however, the rhythmical deftness of player and organ led to curious results; for the waltz appeared as illustrating all sorts of pictures and situations, sometimes most inappropriately.

And this leads me to say that given the ability of the player to extemporize, and position of the console where the screen is plainly visible, best results are obtained. I have a theatre in mind where a clever player with a comparatively poor, though much advertised instrument, gets excellent effects through adapting his music to the picture. Of course, any fool would know enough to give a bit of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" when the lovers are finally and happily united. What I refer to are those subtler but still unmistakable correspondences between the music, absolutely extempore, and the scene — be it pathetic or gay, or of no specially emotional type.

It seems reasonable to say that the organ player in the movies is playing a sustaining instrument, that excellent results are gained when he has power in extempore playing, and that the orchestral type player here comes into his own.

June 1917 (D) . . .

Imagination is a necessary qualification for the successful motion picture organist or pianist, according to RALPH H. BRIGHAM, organist at the Strand Theatre in New York. Mr. Brigham came directly to his first position as a theatre organist from the Church of the Holy Spirit in Boston. Before that, he played 11 years at Grace Church, the Baptist Church in Amherst, Massachusetts, and in the First Church of Christ in Northampton.

"Music in itself," he said recently, "is one beautiful picture after another, but for the organist to interpret what he sees into music is a difficult task. To become a picture organist, one must have vivid imagination. He must concentrate so as to note the quick changes and different moods which are constantly before him. I believe every little detail in the picture should be brought out and in order that this may be done, the organist must be familiar with improvising. I think this is most essential to picture-playing, for in so many pictures, changes are made so quickly it would be impossible to play even part of a selection.

"The picture organist should have a large music library and be familiar with it so when he goes to the showing of next week's picture, he will know at a glance

the selections fitting the situation and jot them down, thus making a cue sheet which I think is invaluable to the picture organist. When a picture permits, I use a theme. For instance in *The Pride of the Clan*, I used "Bonnie Sweet Bessie" for the theme, as it seemed so closely associated with the story.

"Picture-playing is recognized now as an art separate from any other and the theatre musician is being elevated to a high standard."

January 1926 (M) . . .

Imagine yourself in Minneapolis, being introduced to FRANCIS W. RICHTER, famous concert pianist and organist there. Richter, who plays the deluxe performances at the Strand Theatre, is totally blind, and has been from birth.

He is, without doubt, one of the finest organists and most talented musicians in the country. His knowledge of music is nothing short of remarkable, and he is a master of the Wurlitzer. At 10, he was playing piano in an orchestra with his father, who was also a very talented musician; at the age of 16, he composed a complete opera, *The Grand Nazar*, which he completed without any assistance. He is now only 37.

Besides his opera, he has written several symphonic suites, a great number of violin and piano solos, and his "Symphony in C Minor" may well be classed with Tchaikowski and Richard Strauss works. Some of the largest symphony orchestras are planning to feature his symphony this season. Mr. Richter is writing "Symphonic American," in four movements, for one of the largest modern jazz bands in the country.

Mr. Richter studied abroad for three years; piano with Leschetizky in Vienna; composition with Labor in Vienna; orchestra and opera construction with Karl Goldmark in Vienna; and organ with Alexander Guilman in Paris, one of the greatest organ teachers in the world. He gave recitals in London, Paris, Berlin and Vienna amid great acclaim. Returning to America, he gave recitals in the far and middle west, making a name for himself in the larger West Coast cities.

Mr. Richter speaks Italian, French and German besides English, and is a profound student of everything which tends to make him a better musician. Minneapolis is indeed favored in having the services of so remarkable a musician. No small credit is due to his wonderful wife who sits beside him at the console, giving each cue as it comes on the screen. It is a very rare occurrence when he misses the smallest cue, a thing which even the finest organists with good eyesight sometimes do. He has an unlimited repertoire, all memorized, which enables him to fit the mood perfectly in the most difficult pictures.

(continued on page 24)

LETTERS cont.

cessfully introduce the accordion into mainstream pop Rock and Blues (he did — four albums worth), there must be a place for theatre pipes.

Mr. Ledwon mentions media exposure and advertising. The right group with a theatre organ in a Rock Video could have more impact than all previous publicity. Massive horseshoe consoles with three, four, or five manuals and hundreds of stops have endless artistic possibilities for video.

Do these suggestions sound "off the beaten path?" I'm sure they do, but as I interpret Mr. Ledwon's message, the "beaten path" is not leading us to where we want to go.

Les Knoll
Carol Stream, Illinois

Dear Editor:

In the Chapter Notes from Quad Cities (November/December) there are some important corrections to the items written about me: 1) I became a professional musician in 1949 not 1969; and 2) at Augustana College, I also studied piano with Gladys Southwick — studied organ with Dean Swanson, who was a former theatre organist.

Thank you for setting the record straight.

Sincerely,
Charlotte McCoy
Davenport, Iowa

(Editor's note: We received several letters from members correcting information in the article by J. Marion Martin. Rather than print all of them, we have elected to mention the basic facts which are being challenged: 1) Jesse Crawford did not record on Blue Bird, but rather on Black Seal Victor; and 2) Crawford's appearance could not have been in 1933 as Hammond organs did not exist that year and the movie in the ad is for VOGUES of 1938).

Dear Editor:

I have decided to emerge from the distant past to re-acquaint myself with the National. As a dedicated long-time member (probably 30 years plus), I continue to hold our group in very high esteem for their undying efforts in continuing the preservation of such a fine and cultural entertainment medium.

I just received my issue with my good friend, "Tiny," on the cover. He was truly an outstanding person with so much talent. He most certainly will be greatly missed.

Also in the most recent issue, in the ATOS *International NEWS*, on page 2, "School Dedicates Donated Link Organ," that great baby, opus 616, was mine originally — I dubbed it the "Missing Link." My efforts to remove it and haul it home (26 days worth) were awesome, to say the least. Months of restoring and refinishing the console in wedding-cake fashion and cleaning years of coal soot from the more than ten tons of components was a staggering challenge, and thinking back 30 years ago I wonder how I ever accomplished the chore! Must have been my youthful strength and abundant enthusiasm!

It's really no big deal, I suppose, but I just can't figure how a dumb little four-letter work can get so bungled. No harm done since no one remembers me, anyway, but the name Arey (not Airly) has been in the ATOS Archives one way or another for a good, long time and is even mentioned in the *Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ*. By the way, the specs of the 616 were submitted by me way back when, while I was in the midst of restoration!

My best wishes to all my fellow ATOSers for now and the future.

Sincerely,
Duane D. Arey
Painesville, Ohio

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GOLD DUST . . .

7/27 R. WILSON ROSS, Rochester's Victoria ... 2/35 ARTHUR CHANDLER, Jr. WLW, Cincinnati; JOHNNY WINTERS, WOR, Newark; HARRY E. RODGERS, WAAB, Boston ... 5/35 GORDON JOHNSON, WBEN, Buffalo; FRED FEIBEL, WABC, New York; LLOYD DEL CASTILLO, WEEI, Boston; FRANCIS J. CRONIN, WORC, Worcester, Massachusetts; HAL BECKETT, WOR, Newark; "EDDIE DUNSTEDTER Entertains," CBS Network; EDDIE WEAVER, WICC, Hartford . . . 7/35 MAURICE B. NICHOLSON, WBEN, Buffalo; J. GORDON BALDWIN, Rochester's WHEC ... 9/35 WILLIAM MEEDER, WJZ, New York; JESSE CRAWFORD, NBC Network; RICHARD LEIBERT, WJZ, New York; CARL COLEMAN, WKBW, Buffalo ... 3/37 "Organ Moods" with ANN LEAF, CBS Network; LEN SALVO, Chicago's WGN; TOM GRIERSON, Rochester's WHAM.

That should do it for this time. So long, sourdoughs!

Jason & The Old Prospector



With thanks to Mary Jane Secor of Indianapolis for the following as it appeared on the editorial page of the STAR on Wednesday, October 11, 1989:

His Songs Sang It All

IRVING BERLIN, for whom SAY IT WITH MUSIC was the theme of a lifetime, has joined the other American musical immortals. His probably was the most imposing presence in all of Tin Pan Alley.

It didn't matter in what situation you found yourself — there was a Berlin melody to fit the scene.

If you were ALL ALONE and it was SUPPERTIME, he would remind you, IT'S A LOVELY DAY TOMORROW.

We were told it was all right to be LAZY and to LET YOURSELF GO.

If there was a HEAT WAVE, why not think about the time when there would be a WHITE CHRISTMAS?

In the spring, always there was time for the EASTER PARADE. If you had insomnia, you were to COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS. Should it shower, he remarked, ISN'T IT A LOVELY DAY TO BE CAUGHT IN THE RAIN? Don't worry. There's always A FELLA WITH AN UMBRELLA.

When you kept telling yourself, SAY IT ISN'T SO, it was time for SOFT LIGHTS AND SWEET MUSIC.

THE BEST THING FOR YOU, I learned long ago was music by Irving Berlin.

GOD BLESS AMERICA for nurturing this marvelous talent. After all, THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS. Will the world REMEMBER Irving Berlin? ALWAYS.

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