

NUGGETS

from the

GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



Sources were *Jacobs* (J), *Local Press* (LP) and *Radio Guide* (RG).

October 15, 1927 (LP) ...

TOM GRIERSON opened Rochester's 800-seat Webster Theatre, playing a \$25,000 2/8 Wurlitzer. HERBERT H. HENDERSON, formerly of the Jayhawk Theatre in Topeka, Kansas, is featured organist at this house.

March 7, 1928 (LP) ...

EDWARD C. MAY, Rochester theatre and concert organist, has been engaged as featured soloist at Schine's Riviera Theatre. Two months ago, Mr. May made his debut over WHEC and will continue as staff organist there. Although still in his twenties, he is considered an authority on theatre organs, having drawn the specifications of several instruments.

April 1928 (J) ...

With the founding of the White Institute of Organ at 1680 Broadway, New York, another milestone passed in the progress of the art of organ-playing in the city. Possibly in no other city has the theatre organist a better opportunity to perfect his art and advance to the front ranks of his profession. "Spotlight" organists have been limited in number, and the talent which one must have for this work is essential to a career in the field, but with the opening of Mr. White's studios with his able assistants, many organists desiring to study this phase of theatre organ work will have an opportunity of doing so under expert instruction. Mr. White has become tremendously popular with New Yorkers because of his splendid work at the Roxy where he presides at the main console of the three-console organ, his successful broadcasting and many recordings. Mr. White was formerly chief organist for the Stanley Co. of America and a pupil of Ernest Schelling, Herman Pfitzner and Dr. Alexander Mathews. He has accompanied noted artists, worked with Meyer Davis orchestras, and recently signed a contract with a prominent New York publisher to compose a series of photoplay music for them.

Associated with Mr. White are DEZSO D'ANTALLFY, noted concert artist and BEN PROTNOFF of Philadelphia. Mr.

D'Antallfy will teach a course in improvisation and organ foundation. Mr. Portnoff will specialize in modern theatre organ effects such as the glissando or "slide," so indispensable in playing contemporary ballads, and other idioms common to theatre organ work. The school will teach advanced solo work and elementary theatre playing. Screens and projection machines have been installed so that pupils may acquire experience in playing pictures.

The Institute's equipment is of the best. Three Kimball unit organs have been installed: two of two-manuals and a three-manual. The last is an exact duplicate of the one in the Roxy broadcasting studio. Each organ is in a separate room with separate pipe chamber. The walls are practically sound-proof, making it possible for three pupils to practice or receive instruction at the same time. The instrument's excellent installation is a credit to the Kimball Co. and their Mr. Fridlund who had charge of the work.

The decoration of the studio is especially noteworthy. A 17th Century Spanish motif predominates, the walls being finished in old gold Craftex, the fixtures of wrought iron, and the furnishings designed by Chesterfield to conform to the general scheme. Exquisite draperies and effective lighting add to the beauty of the whole. Mr. White has been wise in endeavoring to make his studios artistic as well as practical; for the subtle effect of pleasant surroundings upon a performer's art is not to be overlooked. Many music studios are crowded, messy and uninspiring. We feel certain that organists seeking to improve their opportunities, pianists changing to organ, and students desiring to use the splendid instruments for practice, will find the White Institute a notable contribution to the furthering of the organist's art in Gotham.

June 29, 1928 (LP) ...

Rochester's 711-seat Arnett Theatre opens today and features a Kohl "Triumphal Organ," made in the city.

September 25, 1928 (LP) ...

Rochester's Piccadilly Theatre, recently completely remodeled, features the Double Console Twins, HUGH J. DODGE and J. GORDON BALDWIN at the 3/13 Wurlitzer.

March 5, 1930 (LP) ...

Unable to read a note of music, but possessing a musical sense surpassing that of many musicians who have spent years in the cultivation of their talents, RICHARD "DICK" BETTS, the new organist at Loew's Rochester Theatre, is able to play any musical number, from the jazziest jazz to the most difficult classical one after hearing it played once — or twice at the most.

Mr. Betts, now in his early twenties, was discovered by H.M. Addison, the managing director of Loew's Rochester when he was scouting for an organist who could perform before the regular daily program begins.

"You mean to say," asked Mr. Addison, when told that young Betts could play any number after hearing it once, "that he can play these numbers well enough for public performance?" He was told such was the case. A skeptic who has been in theatrical business more than 25 years, Addison went to hear for himself and he returned convinced. The next week, Betts was engaged to play the Rochester's 5/24 Marr & Colton, and all the things said about him have proved true.

Mr. Betts sits at the console every noon before the first show and entertains in a novel manner, talking to the audience as if he were entertaining in a private home. He asks patrons for the names of compositions and when they are given, he plays them promptly with no improvisation. Before each of the three daily performances, Mr. Betts gives a spirited concert, often getting the audience to sing.

"I had no musical education," he says, "but I have a musical heritage. My mother and sister were organists, and my father played the violin. I was too lazy or too interested in games and sports during my boyhood to study the piano. But when I left school, I fell back on the piano for recreation and found that I could play without notes, so I never bothered to learn. Then I took up the organ and found it not much more difficult than the piano. First it was fun only; now it is a business but still fun."

September 1937 (RG) ...

The NBC Network is presenting the DICK LEIBERT Ensemble including soprano Dorothy Dreslin and the Showmen Quartet from WJZ, New York at 8:15 a.m. KDKA, Pittsburg is airing organist LOIS MILLER, while WBAL, Baltimore presents "At the Console" at 7:45 p.m.

August 1938 (LP) ...

BRAD BRADLEY is at the "Thunder-Throated Organ" in the Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Capitol Theatre. On the screen, Bing Crosby appears in *Sing, You Sinners*. A comedy short is *Talkatoon Grins*.

GOLD DUST . . .

In the thirties, many theatre organist transferred their talents to radio, some continuing on the air into the forties. In the following sizeable list, we have could many names whose talents shone brightly on "The Opiate of the Masses." 2/23 CARL COLEMAN, Buffalo's WKBW; HARRY E. RODGERS, Boston's WAAB; Cincinnati's "Moon River" program of organ selections and poems over WLW . . . 5/35 Buffalo's WGR "Nocturne" with contralto Ruth Koehler Nichols and organist CARL COLEMAN . . . 7/35 HAL BECKETT, Newark's WOR; FRED FEIBEL, New York's WABC; Baritone Ross Graham and organist WILLIAM MEEDER, NBC Network.

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