

NUGGETS

from the

GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



References were: *Diapason* (D), *American Organist* (AO), *Local Press* (LP) and *Jacobs* (J).

Circa 1920 (D) ...

The great new development in the last few years has been the increase in the number of theatre organs. This has created a wide demand for organists. At first, there was a deep-seated prejudice against theatre playing and this is hardly changing. The best theatres are demanding the best organ players and they are purchasing the best organs. The good theatre organists and the capable, high-grade organ builders have been setting a higher standard which will drive out the inferior. It will not be long before the theatre organist will be as highly respected as the church organist and certainly as well paid. But why wait until the uplift is completed? Why not join in bringing it about? It was Aristides, the Just, who, when he was appointed public scavenger in Athens, said "if the office did not honor the man, the man could honor the office."

Dec. 1925 (AO) ...

"Broadway Submits to the Ordeal." Kidding your audience into giving you a raise in pay is one of the easiest ways to get it. Some would rather take their chances on appeals to the audience than to their managers; the managers will listen to the audiences, but will not listen to their organists. In other words, "say it with music."

Nothing is more boresome and less worthy of an organist's endeavor than the playing of some popular songs with the words thrown onto the screen for the audience to sing. Recently, Mr. HAROLD RAMSBOTTOM (Ramsay) of the Rivoli used his Wurlitzer and his sense of humor to put over a good one.

He opened with a few bravado measures of something or other and then switched into Dvorak's "Humoresque," playing only the melody, but repeating it as often as necessary to carry the poem shown on the screen. The poem kidded the audience along nicely and invited it to sing the next number — so that perhaps Mr. Ramsbottom should "get a raise in pay." The audience approved heartily with giggles throughout "Humoresque," which

was played with marked rhythm so that screen words and organ music fitted easily. When it came to the number to be sung, it was "Yes, Sir, She's My Baby," and the audience sang the thing, too. Then the screen asked them not to sing, but to whistle, while the organ supplied a top flute melody which sounded as near whistling as an organ can, which incited the mob and accommodatingly they whistled:

"Often when I do my bit
And play for you the latest hit,
There's someone in the house who sings
along; Tho' he may not be on the key,
I'm glad to have him sing with me.
Because it sounds as tho' he likes the song.
I've no doubt that you'd sing too
If I just played the songs you knew
And flashed the words for you upon the
screen; Now this is what I have in mind,
I've picked the best song I could find —
So do your stuff, if you know what I mean.
I have scattered friends about
Who'll pick the loudest voices out
And sign you up for all the radios;
Galli-Curci and the rest
Are barred from singing in this test;
So show your teeth, and don't sing
through your nose.
"Yes Sir! That's My Baby" was
Requested by a lady who
I think is in the audience today.
And now, good folks, it's up to you,
So sing just like you ought to do —
And maybe I will get a raise in pay.

The raise in pay remains the only thing to be reported on. We have no data.

1926 (LP) ...

The following theatre organists are active in Sacramento: ALETHA BOWMAN, BERT HOPPS, GEORGE KING & ARTHUR POWER, Capitol; SEBASTIAN APOLLO, KENNETH BRILL, EUGENE SULLIVAN & LEE TENNY, Roseville's 2/8 Geneva; FRANK GRAVES, Elks Club's two-manual special Robert-Morton.

May 1927 (J) ...

By Chicago organist Henry Francis Parks
When Balaban & Katz opened the Uptown Theatre, the theatre of Chicago's North Side, they were besieged by organists who desired the honor of playing in this gorgeous movie palace. In a small neighboring theatre, there had been a quiet, serious musician who had created quite a sensational following because of his ability to play requests. A prodigious and unerring memory made it possible for him to give concerts night after night wherein he played anything which was asked of him, regardless of whether it were Bach or Berlin, Gounod or Gershwin.

ARSENE F. SIEGEL had recently arrived from Davenport Iowa, where he had been doing the same thing. Born in Lyons, France, where really good musicians have been the rule rather than the exception, he

arrived in America at age 14. Then a prodigy, he continued his studies until now he is one of the features of both the Chicago and Uptown theatres, alternating between them weekly.

At the Uptown for over a year, and four months at the Chicago, as associate organist, Siegel has given countless successful all-request concerts. And mind you, no request is barred. These recitals have been broadcast, and the thousands of letters received testify to the enjoyment they have afforded the public.

Mr. Siegel studied piano with Heniot Levy, and composition with Felix Borowsky of the Chicago Musical College. He specializes in arrangements of orchestral numbers for the concert organ, which he plays with a mastery and finesse of style no other organist has, except Murtagh, who boasts an equally tremendous repertoire.

The last time I heard Siegel, he played "March Slave" by Tchaikowsky — and he played it! The orchestral score was faithfully carried out in every particular. He is serious in his music and deep in study most of his spare time. In fact, though he plays jazz and popular things equally well as the classics, he summed the whole thing up when he said, "Parks, I would rather be known as the most versatile organist by good, substantial musicians, than as a so-called specialist. The latter has a following, limited to those who approve of his tricks or style. But, the versatilist has friends among them all. I try very hard to deserve the public's appreciation, and that is all a musician can do."

His radio broadcasting is one of the sensations of the Windy City. He has played over WEBH, WMAQ and WJN and for two weeks, he broadcast from all three stations, giving three concerts daily and not repeating a single number. Incredible? No. Murtagh can do it and I believe Mallotte can also. But in Siegel's case, special honors are due, for he had fought through almost insurmountable obstacles which the other two mentioned fortunately did not have to tackle. His playing may not be entirely characterized by the esoteric brilliancy of Mallotte nor the beautiful orchestration of Murtagh, but it has as many beautiful qualities such as precision of attack, vivid color, reposefulness and dependable character so that his concerts are always of a high standard, well-chosen as to balance and indubitably refined and elegant in style.

July 1927 (LP) ...

R. WILSON ROSS at Rochester's Victoria Theatre has been presenting entertaining organludes recently on the three-manual Marr & Colton. They included selections from the musical comedy *Queen High*, and original novelties "American Fantasie," "The Secrets of Composers" and "The One-Man Orchestra."

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

Jason & The Old Prospector