

JESSE CRAWFORD, POET OF THE ORGAN, DIES

Death has ended the career of Jesse Crawford, known throughout the English-speaking world as "The Poet of the Organ."

On May 28, the 66-year-old famed organist suffered a stroke in his Hollywood home while entertaining friends, and died the following day in a Los Angeles hospital. Funeral services were held May 31.

Crawford started his career as a young organist in a Seattle theatre after hearing for the first time a newly-installed Wurlitzer theatre organ. Born and raised in his early years in Woodland, Calif., his early musical training on the piano led him ultimately to nationwide, and even worldwide fame.

He was playing the theatre organ in the old Strand Theatre in San Francisco when he was discovered by Sid Grauman. An extended engagement in the Los Angeles Million Dollar Theatre followed. But it was in Chicago that he first attracted nationwide fame as a theatre organist, during which time he started recording for the Victor Company. Nearly a hundred records were made for Victor, and Crawford was recognized as the star recording organist of the 1930's. One of his most famous records, "Valencia," sold over a million copies.

Crawford ultimately was called to the pinnacle of theatre organ posts, at the famous Paramount Theatre on Times Square in New York, where there was installed for him the largest and most complete Wurlitzer theatre organ ever built. It was here, in a studio above the theatre, that Crawford broadcast for both NBC and CBS throughout the country his well-remembered "Poet of the Organ" programs on a specially designed studio organ.

At the peak of his theatre organ career, during which time Crawford brought that instrument into recognition as a new and different art form, he made a guest appearance as featured organist at the Empire Cinema in London, where he was enthusiastically received by press and music circles alike. On his return to this country in 1934, he appeared as a solo organist in the Swift open-air pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair.

Following the demise of the theatre organ, Crawford conducted student courses and concerts throughout the country. In recent years, he had again returned to prominence as a theatre organist through recordings made for the Decca Company. His latest recording was completed just prior to his death, but not yet released.



Jesse Crawford

Crawford in his life attained recognition as the greatest theatre organist of his time, and his recent return to the instrument by means of recordings was long awaited and enthusiastically received by the record buying populace.

The public and organ enthusiasts alike will miss Jesse Crawford greatly. Few like him appear in a lifetime.

.. NEWS.. AND VIEWS

Terry Helgesen of Hollywood advises that the Los Angeles Paramount was never the home of Fanchon & Marco's "Ideas"; these famous stage presentations played at Loew's State Theatre, Seventh and Broadway - - later, when the "Ideas" were over, Fanchon & Marco did elaborate stage shows at the Los Angeles Paramount for a long time - - - Member Johnny Ferguson will be playing the 3/11 Barton in the Springfield, Illinois Orpheum (THEATRE ORGAN, Winter 1961-62) every Friday, Saturday and Sunday starting May 11, doing three shows a day - - - Member Ferguson would appreciate meeting and talking with any and all organ bugs who might be passing through Springfield - - - Member Art (Braniff Air Lines) Stovall of Dallas, Texas was a recent visitor in the San Francisco Bay Area - - - next stops Portland, Los Angeles, Salt Lake, Denver and Dallas, making quite an organ tour holiday - - - Wurlitzer No. 2068, a divided Model 165 shipped to the Regent Theatre, Ipswich, England will in the future receive tender, loving care following a long silence, says its new

owner, David H. Hayes of Surrey, England, who plans to install No. 2068 in his home - - - Lloyd Klos mentions the ex-Atlantic City Warner Theatre Wurlitzer 3/77 that is going to be installed in the Panama City Hilton Hotel - - - We will have to try and get a story on this installation - - - The Brooklyn Paramount Theatre is the latest candidate for the big round wrecking ball - - - The Delaware Valley Chapter held a meeting there Sunday, May 6, enjoying Opus No. 1984 Wurlitzer 4 manual special - - - John Clancy from 'down under' tells us that only two Theatre Organs are being played professionally in Sydney at this time while Knight Barnett continues his programs at the Wurlitzer in the Regent Theatre, Adelaide, Australia - - - no activity at present in Melbourne - - - Our apologies to RAY BRUBACHER for trying to change the spelling of his name in our last issue - - - Don Baker certainly gets around the country with that 3 manual Horseshoe Console Rodgers Organ, almost every chapter has reported Don and the Rodgers being in their neighborhood - - - ATOE member John Ledwon has a ter-

rific LP just released entitled 'Organist At Play' - - - It was recorded on his own Wurlitzer and is available from Alpha Records, 5965 West Boulevard, Los Angeles 43, California - - - Woody Wise Jr., 413 Farmington Drive, Alexandria, Virginia wants to know about Wurlitzer Organ Opus 2036 R-J4 now located in the balcony of the Hotel Sterling, Wilkes Barre, Penna. - - - Number of manuals, ranks, where it was first located, straight or theatre organ - - - Can anyone help? - - - Mrs. S. H. Cargill, widow of the late 'Sal' Cargill, has offered his superb 3/26 Wurlitzer for sale - - - Anyone interested in an organ with lots of 'goodies' such as Brass Sax, Brass Trumpet, Skinner French Horn, and others, should get in touch with Mrs. Cargill at Route 3, Excelsior, Minnesota.

The 4m/34r Wurlitzer, formerly in the Fisher, Detroit, Mich. is now installed in the Iris Theatre Detroit...It is rumored that the management of the Chicago Theatre, Chicago, is seeking bids for the restoration of the famous Chicago Theatre Wurlitzer .. Jesse Crawford was featured on this organ before the New York Paramount was built..Lamp-lighters Inn, restaurant lounge, Olmstead Falls, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland has the 3m/10r from the Variety Theatre, Cleveland.