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A conversation with  
CHARLES MARGULIS  
by Dick Holbrook

Charles A. Margulis (he accents the first syllable) is well-known in the musical world as trumpet virtuoso, arranger, composer and teacher. He lives on Hickory Kingdom Farm in a quiet corner of northern Westchester County (N. Y.), forty miles from the big city. His years in music have been cram-jammed with exciting memories, yet he still maintains a dizzy pace as network consultant and musician, and as a frequent visitor to the recording studios. (See 1960 photo at upper right.)

"I was born in Minneapolis and studied first under Professor Heintzman of that city. Later, Tony Cafarelli (uncle of Gene) was my teacher. Then Ben Klatzkin of the San Francisco Symphony. And along about 1932 I studied under the great Max Schlossberg of the New York Philharmonic."

What was your first professional engagement?

"There was a movie house on the north side of Minneapolis - the Liberty Theatre. I was in a four-man orchestra under the leadership of Volke Gilbert who was Assistant Concert Master of the Minneapolis Symphony."

What groups did you play in after that?

"Eddie Elkins. And Paul Specht. And the Sam Lanin organization in New York. Then I joined Jean Goldkette's Book-Cadillac Hotel Orchestra in Detroit. That was in December of 1924. My wife Hildur was with me. Our oldest daughter was about six months old then. I was with that Goldkette unit nearly a year. Joe Venuri was the director."

Can you remember some of the other men?

"Well, let's see. We had a nine-piece orchestra. Joe of course played violin. When he left during the summer Marion Rowinski was the violinist and Owen Bartlett, alto sax, became leader. Don't recall who was the tenor sax when I joined. Bill Hutchins, Mike Ploven and Paul Mason all came later. Russ Morgan followed James Casseday on trombone and Wesley Barlow was our pianist.

"We had an Indian who played string bass. Bill Webster. Six foot three and strong as an ox. He heaved a bowling ball the way you or I would throw a baseball. What a man! Then "Irish" Henry played helicon bass, Stewart Hennerschnitz on banjo and Jerry Bittick on drums."

Weren't there several other Goldkette units around Detroit?

"Oh yes. Jean led one at the Detroit Athletic Club. And around the spring of 1926 I played in his big stage band at the Capitol Theatre. Harry Wismer on piano ... Bob Chester, Rube Lerner and Sidney Trucker on reeds ... Harry Gluck in the trumpet section with Lennie Lehewe and me ... Stanley Zablotski played bass and Herman Fink on drums. It's amazing how all those names start coming back to mind. Later the theatre took over the band and put Russ Morgan in as director.

What about Jean's band at the Greystone Ballroom?

"That was fifteen pieces. I remember one Sunday night in the summer of 1925 Fuzzy Farrar was off the stand because of a tangle with Tommy Dorsey who had ribbed him to a point where the fists started flying. I sat in for Fuzzy. Charles Horvath was the manager and drummer. Later, Chauncey Moorhouse played the drums. Spiegel Wilcox was trombone with Lloyd Turner. Doc Ryker was alto sax. Jimmy Dorsey played tenor, but was in and out a lot. Don Murray was clarinet and sax until he joined Ted Lewis.

"Ray Ludwig, Fuzzy and Bix were on trumpet. You know, Ray was living with Bix in New York when Bix died. Bill Rank joined Goldkette in the spring of 1926. Paul Mertz was piano, then Itsy Riskin. Howdy Quicksell was on banjo, and Steve Brown from New Orleans was on bass later on. I should also mention George Crozier, Rupert's brother. He was a wonderful arranger for Goldkette. He's dead now."

Did you join Whiteman after being with Goldkette?

"I had a couple of engagements in between. Then I replaced Vic D'Ippolito in late September of 1927. Bix came in a month later. After that, Goldie replaced Busse.

Do you remember this picture of some of the men in the band around 1928? (See picture at upper left on opposite page) They say this is the only known picture of Bix Beiderbecke with his horn to his lips.

"Are you kidding? That's not Bix. Bix never held his arms that way when he played. That's me. Bix was sick at the time. I have a copy of the whole band picture. This just shows Boyce Cullen and Willie Hall left and right, and Mario Perry on accordion.

"You want to see Bix playing trumpet? Look at this (See picture at bottom left). That was a publicity shot. Bix is nearest the center. Then me. Then Harry Goldfield. Notice the difference in the way we hold the instrument. And my curly hair?"

When did you first hear and meet Bix?

"Back around 1922 at the Valentino Inn in Chicago. Gene Cafarelli was trumpet, but Bix was sitting in that night. I particularly noticed him because he played the horn left-handed like I did. This was Vic Benning's band. Later on I followed Bix at the Sihu Inn on Cottage Grove Avenue. That was a Chinese-American restaurant."

What did you like most about Bix?

"He was very intelligent. Had a fine sense of humor. And a wonderful sound. His strong point as a musician was his improvisation. He had great ideas. Today's recording might have done justice to his sound."

What is your most vivid memory of Bix?

"Well, I'll tell you. We had adjoining chairs in the trumpet section of Paul Whiteman's great Concert Orchestra on tour in 1928 and 1929.

"I tell you truthfully a lot of the time on tour I had to play Bix's choruses. Bill Challis was one of our arrangers. He wrote them out for me and I played "Bix" when he was too far gone to appear."

At this point, Charles Margulis rummaged in the back of a closet and drew out a copy of the official Souvenir Program of the tour. It sold for 25¢. One page was devoted to "Paul Whiteman, Ever in the Camera's Eye". (See the front cover of this issue). The picture upper left shows Paul Whiteman, Benny Leonard, John Philip Sousa and Babe Ruth. Upper right: President Cal Coolidge and Paul in plus-fours. Circle: Paul with Maurice Ravel, the great French composer. And center right: Charlie Chaplin, Paul and Doug Fairbanks. And at bottom The Whiteman Orchestra rehearsing for Fritz Kreisler in Berlin

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MARGULIS IN WHITEMAN BRASS SECTION



CHARLES MARGULIS



MARGULIS, BIX, WHITEMAN, ETC.



PAUL WHITEMAN AND HIS GREATER CONCERT ORCHESTRA

The center spread was an excellent photograph of the full orchestra, with "proof positive" identifications, as follows: Back row (on stand) left to right: Charles Gaylord (violin and vocalist), Edward Pinder (trumpet), "Skin" Young (vocalist), Rupert Crozier (alto sax), Charles Strickfadden (tenor sax), Wilford Leibrook (tuba and bass sax), Frankie Trumbauer (C melody sax), Bill Rank (trombone), Jack Fulton (trombone and vocalist), Bix Beiderbecke (trumpet), Boyce Cullen (trombone) and Harry Goldfield (trumpet). Front row, left to right: Matty Malneck (violin), Chester Hazlett (alto sax and clarinet), Michael Pingitore (tenor banjo), Lenny Hayton (piano, celeste and arranger), Paul Whiteman, Roy Barge at the piano, Kurt Dieterle (violin and concert master), Mischa Russell (violin), Charles A. Margulis (trumpet), Irving Friedman (tenor sax), Roy Maier (tenor sax), George Marsh (drums, etc.), Michael Trafficante (string bass and tuba), and Wilbur Hall (trombone). Not shown: Ferde Grofe (chief arranger) and Bill Challis (arranger). Other men in the organization were James F. Gillespie, Paul Whiteman's personal representative, General Manager F.C. Coppicus and Tour Manager F. C. Haas.

Margulis left the organization in California four days before his second daughter was born (3/1/30) and returned to New York.

Just before our conversation ended, I played several records, all of which have been considered possible Bix sides. Charles Margulis waved a firm "no" to all of them until I put on Frankie

Trumbauer's MANHATTAN RAG (OK 41330). Here were his comments:

"That's me at the start. Then that long solo is LIKE Bix. Could it be Andy Secret? Oh no. I know his style. That's not Andy. But it's not me. Let me listen again.

"Hmmm. That IS Bix. Yes, that's Bix all right. First Venuti, then Min Leibrook and then Bix. That's his fingering and his attack."

But the researchers say Bix was sick that day. It was October 10th, 1929. Want to listen again?

"All right. Hmmm. Well, it's NOT Bix. It's Andy Secret. It is being played as written. Bix always improvised. This is too close to the script."

This indecision by the man who knows the Bix sound so well should be a lesson to the rest of us who sometimes believe our ears in preference to the solid factual documentation upon which final judgment must depend. And I'll include myself in that category. I'd a-sworn that MANHATTAN RAG had more Bix than SINGIN' THE BLUES!

We owe a vote of thanks to Charles Margulis for the interview. Hear his MALAGUENA on Carleton. His tone today is more brilliant than ever. The days of great trumpet are far from past.