



# AMICA International

## Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association

### Honor Roll

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THE AMICA BULLETIN, SEPTEMBER, 1973

**ZEZ CONFREY**  
by Roswell J. Parker

Zeze Confrey was born in Illinois in 1895, and died in Lakeside, New Jersey on November 22, 1972. He was christened Edward Elzear, but took on the name of "Zeze" after he became a star piano player. For many years, during his retirement, he enjoyed living at Lakeside with his wife, Wilma. Previous to that he lived in Garden City, New York.

*Photo: ZEZE CONFREY AND BABE RUTH*

Zeze was an author, composer and extremely talented pianist. His style of playing could be recognized easily, and he had a special knack of transforming "arab" tunes into the style of the twenties. He composed about 100 songs, some of the best known being "Kitten on the Keys," "Stumbling," "Dizzy Fingers" and "Dumb-bell." Many of his tunes were recorded on records, and many on player piano rolls, some of which he teamed up with Max Kortlander and Victor Arden to make. "Stumbling" on a piano roll has appeared with all three artists, as well as a solo by Zeze himself, and both versions have the same QRS roll number:



#1938.



The Zez Confrey orchestra of about ten pieces was a well-known band that performed around the country and also made records. These can still be found in shops featuring nostalgia.

Babe Ruth and Zez were personal friends; some time in the thirties they both starred in a movie, "HOME RUN ON THE KEYS." Zez also was a close friend of Paul Whiteman, George Gershwin and Adam Carroll.

In the twenties the Mills Music Company published a piano course entitled "ZEZ CONFREY'S MODERN COURSE IN

NOVELTY PIANO PLAYING." This achieved great success, and this publication can today be found in Zez collections all over the country.

Zez Confrey is survived by a widow and two sons still living in the eastern United States. He was a fine musician, and his works will be sought after for many years to come.

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**Confrey, Zez (3 April 1895 - 22 November 1971)**

Zez Confrey was born Edward Elzear Confrey in Peru, Illinois. He studied at Chicago Musical College, worked in 1915 for the Chicago branch of the Harry Von Tilzer Music Publishing Company, and began cutting piano rolls for the QRS Company in Chicago while in the U.S. Navy during the first world war. He made over a hundred QRS rolls. Later in New York he cut more piano rolls, including Ampico reproducing piano rolls in 1924, and began making records.

