

Reginald Foort at RTOS Wurlitzer

The artistry of Reginald Foort was proven in the Auditorium Theatre on December 7 last, when the Rochester (N.Y.) Theatre Organ Society presented him in a two and one-half hour recital, plus a silent picture with organ accompaniment. What made the concert even more enjoyable were the informal remarks he made to the audience concerning his early career and subsequent activities in this country. Size of the audience, over 800, was held down by the county-wide bus strike and inclement weather.



"MICHAEL CHESHIRE" was Reg's pseudonym when he ushered in the high fidelity organ era with his Cook label recordings played on the Richmond "Mosque" Wurlitzer. He later switched to his own name.

He began with praise for the organ, emphasizing that "everything is in mint condition and everything works." Mr. Foort is an artist with a long professional history who plays the theatre organ as intended by Hope-Jones, as a unit orchestra. Space limitations preclude listing the innumerable changes of registration heard during the evening.

First on the program was his signature tune with which he was long famous on the BBC, "Keep Smiling!" Next, the "Raymond Overture," which featured a Kinura-topped solo and built to a grand climax. Clarinet, Strings, Oboe and Tibia were heard during Gounod's "Berceuse." One of the high points in the varied program was his famous rendition of "In a Persian Market" with Orchestra Bells, Castanets, Kinura and the whole "hardware department." The entire organ was used during this one, and he remarked that for recording "Market" in 1926, he got no royalties, although 3,250,000 discs were sold!

After mentioning his playing at St. Paul's Church and Royal Albert Hall in London, a Hammond in a tavern, and

even at a roller skating rink, the beautiful "Barcarole" by Offenbach was offered by Foort. Next came a group of semi-classics: "Polonaise Militaire," "Fantasie Impromptu" and two waltzes by Chopin, Tchaikowsky's "Waltz of the Flowers" and Kreisler's "Liebesleid."

It all brought back memories of the "Sounds of Our Times" recordings. In 1952, the first hi-fi organ recordings came onto the market, thereby launching a movement which is still going strong. Reginald Foort was the organist and, in cooperation with sound engineer Emory Cook, showed that the wide dynamic range of the organ, when captured by modern recording technique, could indeed make the theatre organ a true king of instruments in every home.

Instead of the waltzes which were programmed, Mr. Foort changed to six Christmas numbers, preceding them with the remark: "What a beautiful church organ this would make," as he turned off the tremulants. One of this group was a very sprightly "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" which triggered his viewers to watch the upright piano to the left of the pit for solo passages — a real toe-tapper.

A group of pops came next: "Petite Waltz," "Lullaby of Broadway," "My Heart Stood Still," and "Winchester Cathedral," played with counter-melodies from the "Blue Danube Waltz" and then like a Bach fugue.

A clever British-style "Anchors Aweigh," with the "Sailor's Hornpipe" running counter, was next, the Tuba and Strings highlighting it. "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers" followed, and what was supposed to be the "Hot Canary" came out as another version of "Winchester Cathedral" which brought snickers from the responsive audience. This worked into a rousing version of the "William Tell Overture" before the console was lowered prior to intermission.

Speaking with the artist backstage, this reviewer was told how close the ex-Palace organ came to be recorded for a four-record collection sold by a national magazine. "Everything was set; then the powers-that-be decided that an organ in California would be used. The disc was subsequently cut on the California instrument but there is no doubt that Mr. Foort considers the Auditorium organ one of the finest in the country, as he stated during the 1964 ATOE convention here in Rochester.

The second part of the program was

by Lloyd E. Klos

a 55-minute silent film accompaniment of "Ella Cinders," featuring Colleen Moore and Lloyd Hughes. This was a natural for Mr. Foort, because he performed the accompaniment to this movie 40 years ago for the first trade show in England he ever played. It came off perfectly.

Larsen Captures Rochester

Rochester, New York—

It was the journalist, Horace Greeley, who once advised all young men to go West. Native Californian, Lyn Larsen, pulled a switcheroo to this advice when, on November 19, he entertained Rochester Theatre Organ Society members at the Auditorium, playing the 4-21 Wurlitzer. Although Lyn is a youngster of 22 years, his playing is decidedly mature. That he captivated the membership-only audience, there can be no doubt.

Relaxed and informal, with no gimmicks (such as missing insects), the artist deviated several times from the printed program, but who cared? There was something in his well-balanced recital for everyone.

He began with "Married I Can Always Get," rising from the pit in the golden spotlight, with Posthorn spicing full organ. A stuck tremulant caused momentary anxiety, but was corrected speedily. The artist next did what he described as an "Ashley Miller arrangement" of "Poinciana," which featured Harp and sobbing Tibias. Incidentally, Lyn and organ maintenance man, Dan Schultz, worked into the wee hours of the previous morning, completely going over the Tibias and adjusting them. The organ never sounded better; it sounds more like a true Wurlitzer than at any time in its 38-year history.

Next came a piano novelty right from the Roaring Twenties—"Flapperette," in which the upright piano in the pit was featured. This developed into a rouser, which included the Posthorn to the finish. Victor Herbert's lovely "When You're Away" featured the Oboe and Tibia, and a decided remembrance of the great Jesse Crawford. The artist, besides having a style of his own, can furnish excellent "impersonations" as well. The Crawford style was also evident in the next two numbers: "Shine on Harvest Moon," featuring a solo passage of Orchestra Bells, and "A Broken Rosary" with shim-