

SHORT SHOTS FROM EVERYWHERE

According to a UPI release, the Walcker Organ Co., of Ludwigsburg (West Germany) has exported 23 organs to Japan recently, "One for a major Buddhist Temple in Tokyo, and an 11-keyboard model to El Paso (Texas)." That would be a difficult assignment even for a musical octopus!

Theatregoers who are annoyed by sticky candy wrappers underfoot usually recall that theater floors were more tidy when they first started attending movies years ago, and they rue the day when refreshment bars appeared. Many think that the appearance of refreshment stands in theaters is comparatively recent. Not so. It all started in 1911, when a young man named Jack Beresin wanted to get married. His salary as an office assistant, at the old Metropolitan Opera House in Philadelphia, wouldn't support two. Refused a raise, he asked permission to sell snacks to theater-goers. The boss, figuring it wouldn't catch on, told him to go ahead. It did catch on, and Jack's refreshment bars and vending machines developed into a prosperous, life-long business. On his 75th birthday, Jack (now married to Helen for 52 years) was honored at a dinner staged by the Motion Picture Associates Foundation at the Philadelphia Bellevue Stratford Hotel. The millionaire popcorn vendor's story proves that the snack industry developed right along with the theaters, but he explains, "People were tidier in the early days. They wouldn't think of throwing trash on the floor of a theater."

The Empire State Theatre and Musical Instrument Museum (that's "long" for "Syracuse Theatre Organ Society") maintenance crew, piloted by Charles Schubert alone since Paul Fleming moved to Kansas

City, releathered the entire console and the stopkey relay pneumatics of their style 235 Wurlitzer, now safely installed in a permanent building on the New York State Fair Grounds near Syracuse. They were getting "the old girl" ready for a bash. It came off on March 23 with a well-attended concert played by the one man who will be forever linked to that instrument, Carleton James (who played it through the silent movie era when it was the pride and joy of now gone Keith's Theatre). Carleton presented a sing-along, then accompanied a silent comedy and some early film cartoons, close-cueing the slapstick as always, much to the amusement of his enthusiastic audience. With the organ in fine shape, the ESTMIM group hopes to present monthly programs from now on.

The Fort Lauderdale (Florida) News and Sun-Sentinel headed the story "An Old Treasured Idea—Organist Plays at Film," and it dealt with that too rare occurrence—organ music returning to charm theater audiences. But it was also a personal triumph for organist Merle Dewey in being chosen to play a prelude to the revival of "Gone With the Wind," as well as intermission music. For the event, an Allen theatre-style electronic was installed with plenty of extra amplification and the live music is reported to have hit the spot with both those who remembered and those too young to remember. Bailey?? settled in Fort Lauderdale after a 21-year hitch in the Air Force. He got the "bug" from listening to a theatre pipe organ in the town of his birth, Bridgeton, New Jersey, "quite a few years ago."

The Sequoia Theatre in Mill Valley, Calif. (North of San Francisco) took the same path, but on a more permanent basis. Owner Nate Blumenfeld has wanted an organ in the theatre practically ever since the style 165 (2-6) Wurlitzer was sold, removed and eventually installed 500 miles to the south in the swinging Friends Church in Bell, Calif. Baldwin dealer Al Gehl came to the rescue with a Baldwin theatre model, HT-2R. The amplifying equipment was set up in the empty chambers and tonal adjustments to the house acoustics were supervised by organist Larry Vannucci, who used to maintain the 2-6 Wurli in the same house many years ago. The "opening" was held after the last movie on Feb. 3 with a midnight party and music by many Bay Area organists. After one particularly loud passage, dealer Gehl observed, "It's like racing a Ferrari in a telephone booth to play an

organ like this in your home," reports "Tabs 'n Drawbars." Organ intermissions will be heard on Friday and Saturday evenings.

And San Francisco's Golden Gate Theatre now has a Conn model 645 (Deluxe theatre) to entertain patrons. It once had a 3-13 Wurlitzer on which Larry Vannucci cut a memorable record. Electronics replacing pipes lost long ago. Can this be a trend?

CLEVER BILLING: Pearl White and Hal Pearl, billed as "The Fabulous Pearls," for their March 13 and 14 one-night stands at the Chicago Patio CAT-OE'd affair. Silent movies, Singalongs, and Stan Dale of radio doing the MC chores. All for only \$1.75! What a deal!

George Orbits puts down rumors that the 4-34 ex-Fisher Wurlitzer, which he has leased to the Detroit Theatre Organ Club, has a "For Sale" sign hanging on it, calling such signs "gross terminology." The rumor resulted in Orbits receiving a number of offers for the organ in the DTOC's Senate Theatre. He states, "The DTOC, as well as other interested parties, have or may intend to present offers. The DTOC, of course, has the right to meet any offer I might receive, within the terms of the lease. The continuation of the Club would be my first choice."

What has been referred to as "the world's loudest organ" can be heard on Sunday afternoons at Roosevelt Memorial Park. It's the huge-scale 4-17 Wurlitzer which has survived earthquakes, vandals, water damage, windstorms and a dozen rehabilitation campaigns by both amateurs and experts, the famed "organ in a cemetery" in Gardena, Calif. (near L.A.). The latest plague is water damage suffered during the winter rains. It's an "outdoor" installation, with only a flimsy band shell-type structure to house the chambers. Its deeply entrenched console has sometimes been found floating, but somehow it survives. And it will overcome the latest water damage, too. The cemetery has earmarked funds for repairs. Meanwhile, a few ranks are silent, but with a range of two miles—who misses them?—except the organist.

Late last year, a television program was aired entitled "When Movies Were Made at Niles," and Eddie Dunstedter has been wondering what's going on ever since. The

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VOX POPS, contd.

show dealt with the early film studios located at Niles, Calif., (near San Francisco) and consisted mainly of film clips from the comedy films made at the pre-Hollywood studio where many stars-to-be (Charlie Chaplin included) made films before going to Hollywood. There was a "tin pan piano" musical accompaniment throughout which cued the quickly-moving shadows from a long-gone era of film production. The clincher is that the musical score was credited in the subtitles to "Eddie Dunstedter" When questioned about it, Eddie was puzzled. He hadn't scored a film recently (although his driving score to the science-fiction flick "Donovan's Brain" is well known to late show TV enthusiasts across the land). In fact Eddie was at a loss as the inquiries poured in. Then he remembered something he'd done along that line for a Red Skelton spoof on early movie making, a comedy called "Merton of the Movies," some years ago. Part of the film had been scored with a honky-tonk style piano, fingered by Eddie Dunstedter. That was the only possibility: music excerpted from "Merton." Then Eddie started thinking along another line: "If that's the case—why haven't I received my royalties?" Continued next issue!

A landmark in the village of Warsaw, N. Y., for over 50 years, the building which once housed the Marr & Colton organ factory has succumbed to the wreckers' axes, according to Mrs. Howard Reichert, daughter of the company's founder, David J. Marr. It was a sad time for Mrs. David Marr, who lives on nearby Maple Street. Mrs. Marr observed her 85th birthday in January.

Earl Long, manager of the St. Francis Theatre in San Francisco, announced the sale of the long-dormant 3-13 Morton in the house to Rod Burton, who will add the pipework to his 3-12 Morton home installation in the Bay City. The 3-12 came originally from the Fox Theatre in Burlingame, Calif.

The St. Francis Theatre will be remodeled in the new concept; the balcony will be sealed off to make a second theatre. Mr. Long's former association with the S.F. Paramount Theatre and its 4-34 Wurlitzer (now perking on the Vollum estate in Portland, Ore.) would indicate a weakness for organ music and the installation of a good plug-in wouldn't be too fantastic a prognostication, especially with a Conn entertaining customers dur-

ing intermissions at Sam Pearlman's Penthouse (balcony) Golden Gate Theatre nearby.

It looked like disaster in Denver. About the time Dick Hull's top-notch recording on the Wurlitzer in the "Three Coins" restaurant was released, Dick found himself without a job, parted from his Howard seat because of differences with management over the kind of music best for the beanery. The organ was silent and the future looked dark. Dick's chin was dragging. Then, the restaurant was put up for sale. A combination of patrons who appreciated the music Dick had played banded together to purchase the place and to put Dick back in the Howard seat, playing the kind of music people come to hear. Hope it comes off with a Happy Ending.

Doug Erdman, erstwhile "enfant terrible" of the organ hobby, is now ready to give it all up—and turn his attention to boats. Among the items he has put up for sale is the 4-20 Wurlitzer (from the Norsbore Theatre, Chicago), which is installed and playing in his Glendale, Calif., "castle." The eventual purchaser will someday discover six small holes in one Tibia pedal pipe.



ERDMAN'S AERIE—A lot of organ . . . and potshots at the parapets!

They are bullet holes, fired from a repeating gun, from down in the parapets. Asked if the shots were a protest against lousy organ playing, Doug quickly replies that the blower wasn't even on at the time. He was standing by an open window, and was called away. A split second later—"ping, ping, ping, ping, ping—pong!"—and there are six holes in the wooden pipe. So it was Erdman who was the target, not the organ. Sometime later a "mad sniper" was interrupted in his hobby and deposited in the "silly farm." It all happened five years ago and there have been no similar incidents. Doug "wants out" anyway.

Veteran silent movie organist Alice Blue is currently playing what she describes as "rinky-tink piano" at Shakey's pizzeria in Vallejo, Calif., on weekends and occasional plug-in organ stints during the week, even some with silent movies. Those who have heard Alice play a comedy say she gets in all the effects, from dogs barking to the "swish" of a facebound custard pie, without interrupting the flow of music.

In Hollywood, another ex-silent film organist was enjoying the glow of her first movie role. Those who saw *The Graduate* will recall the wedding scene near the end which included a closeup of a gal organist. That's Rose Diamond's big scene, and a gem!

Organ maintenanceman Walter Froelich took the news stoically, then got on the phone to summon all who would be interested in a final session with the 3-11 Wurlitzer in the Stanley Theatre in Newark. The amalgamation of the Stanley Warner and RKO theatres in the East apparently made the Stanley superfluous. Froelich had kept the organ in good repair for years and he wanted all interested parties to give it a farewell pat. On Sunday morning, Feb. 25, a little knot of the faithful showed up to do just that; among the devotees were house organist Bill Gage, Eric Zelfiff and his dad, Walter, and Wilma Dippe. They took turns putting the precious sounds on tape for future reference. The house shuttered two days later. The future of the organ has not been determined.

Speaking of Eric Zelfiff, he's so hip on organ that he won't go along on family trips in the 16-foot(!) house trailer unless he has a keyboard to fiddle with. Dad rigged up an inverter which plugs into the cigarette lighter to power a little Magnus chord organ; a sort of "double plug-in." En route to the ATOE Detroit convention last year, Eric said that the Ohio Turnpike never sounded so good.

He had such a fine turnout last year that he decided to do it again. On April 12th Dean McNichols accompanied the old DeMille epic, *King of Kings*, on the 2-7 theatre Wurlitzer in the Friends Church at Bell, Calif., a fitting show for Good Friday. He played all the music and effects except for the big gong. They turned on the sound track just long enough for the "pooiiiinnng!" The Wurli hasn't got a gong.

In Devault, Pa., lovely Dottie Mac-Clain is slowly picking up the pieces, getting adjusted to life without Leonard.

One thing on her mind is the disposition of what turned out to be something of a memorial fund for the late, great organist. At Laura Thomas' suggestion, people started sending money in lieu of flowers at the time of his death. The fund now totals \$400 and Dottie is wondering what to do with it, figuring that it might supply prizes for various organ-oriented contests and events. She's open to suggestion.

Reginald Foort has chalked up some impressive records. The mild-mannered organist has opened 43 new theatres,



FOORT

played over 2,000 radio and TV shows and cut over 200 recordings, most of this accomplished before coming to the U.S.A. in 1951. And then there's his 25-ton, 5-27 Moller which he carted around pre-war Great Britain in five huge trucks, in order to bring organ music to halls which had smaller organs or none at all. He maintained a staff of 14 technicians to assemble the organ for each concert. What a career! It continued to grow when he came to the U.S.A.; he recorded four LP platters on the Richmond Mosque 17-rank Wurlitzer in the early '50s which started a pipe organ recording spree that is still going on.

A word of reassurance regarding the Buddy Cole organ came in a letter from Mr. Richard Pike from the East, where the instrument is stored. The current owner of the famed 3-26 "WurliMorton" states, "Be sure that no 'organ broker' will ever get his hands on the Buddy Cole Organ." Mr. Pike is as intent as Buddy's widow, Clare, on finding a reasonably secure home for the famed instrument. Fears had been expressed that it might be sold piecemeal before Mr. Pike decided to spike the possibility.

From all the mileage we've gotten from the Baton Rouge Paramount Morton, one might come to the conclusion that it's the only windjammer blowing free in the area. Not so, writes Dolton McAlpin (who plays up a storm on that same Morton). In addition to seven organs in theatres within a 200-mile radius of Baton Rouge, there are several home installations worth noting. Among the latter is Jeff Seale's 2-10 Morton, installed in his Laurel, Miss., home. Also Tom Walton's 2-8 Wurlitzer from a Biloxi, Miss., theatre, now perking in his Mobile, Ala., home.

Organist Al Bollington has dreams—musical dreams. He gets musical ideas in his sleep and if he remem-

bers them in the morning, jots them down. But recently he had a beaut, at 3:00 a.m. one so forceful that it awakened him—and just as well. He wrote down the melody and resumed his slumber. Next morning he tried it out and says he didn't have to alter one note of what he had drowsily scribbled. In fact, record fans will be treated to a hearing of Al's "dream melody" on his Concert release, out about now and played on a Wurlitzer plug-in. Al says in all modesty, "I feel that this is a most unusual way to compose." Amen!

Veteran organist Clark Fiers braved the Eastern winter, coming all the way from his home in Florida to play a concert for the Rochester Theatre Organ Society on their 4-21 Auditorium Theatre Wurlitzer on January 16th. Clark included a Gershwin medley, selections from *Finian's Rainbow*, tunes he helped popularize in the '20s, *Echoes from Brazil*, *Slaughter on 10th Avenue*, *One Fine Day* from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and many others. His long theatre organ career started when he was billed as "the boy organist" at 16, in 1924.



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Michael Candy, now the owner of the former Picture House (Leicester) Wurlitzer (more famous as the "organ in the cowshed" in later years), sent in this photo of Leonard Rawle waiting bug-eyed for the flash bulb to pop while seated at his home installation console,

RAWLES

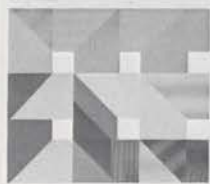
the former Empire, Leicester Square Theatre (London) 4-20 Wurlitzer. It is installed in Leonard's especially built home (with the organ in mind, of course) in Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, "where it makes a very nice noise, indeed," Michael assures us. This is a reply to the box in the October 1967 issue of this magazine which asked in big type, "Have you saved a mighty Wurlitzer lately?" Obviously, our friends across the pond can answer affirmatively.

Also across the pond, John Hoeben writes from his home in Liege, Belgium, asking about T.O. publications. He says, "In my capacity as a concert organist, I am still very interested in all theatre organ news—all I can gather about theatre organists and organs." John's attitude is a comment on the historical closeness of classical and theatre organists on the Continent. There never existed there the artificial barrier imposed on American organists, a wall only recently breached by common sense, fair play and a refusal to allow snobbery to prevail for all time.

That lively Sierra Chapter staged another silent movie show at Grant Union High School in Sacramento, Calif., on April 19th. With George Seaver at the Wurlitzer 4-21, attendees saw the epic Doug Fairbanks film, *The Thief of Bagdad*, plus a Laurel and Hardy comedy—all for only \$1.50! With prices for open concerts now averaging \$3 in the larger cities (except Chicago!), an exodus of the faithful to Sacramento could be blamed on thrift. Siera's presentations are in all ways first class, too.

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