



SHORT SHOTS FROM EVERYWHERE

Larry Ferrari, who is scheduled to play his second concert on the 4-34 Wurlitzer for the Detroit Theatre Organ Club on June 22, is one of those rare organists-with-a-fan-club. Larry, who is familiar to FM radio TV audiences in the Tri-State area (Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware) and through his commercial recordings, is the subject of a "Larry Ferrari Fan Club" biographical brochure



Larry Ferrari

which traces his career from the time he first listened to a "tractor-action" organ as a small boy up to his present spot in the "linelight," all of which points to the youth of his fans. But if Larry's fan-flamed biography is lacking in literary style, it gets its point across; Mr. Ferrari is a most active organist as he travels around the Tri-State beat to such engagements as supplying electronic organ music for the ice hockey games in the Philadelphia Sports Arena and practicing for a new record album to be played on a Gulbranson "Premiere." That's in addition to his regular radio and telecasts. And although it isn't in his biography, we are glad to add that Larry is also a member of ATOE.

One of Ferrari's fans is ex-silent movie organist Esther Higgins, a gal who delights in recreating the old days by hauling a plug-in to an organ club meeting along with a projector and some reels of vintage silents, and staging a "this is the way it was" show, complete with "sing-along." She encourages audiences to bring old straw hats, gaudy garters and other paraphernalia of "way back when" to add color to her act. Although she

sometimes "subs" at the Sports Arena when Mr. Ferrari is out of town, the silent movie thing is her special love. She recently performed for the 200-member Oaklyn (New Jersey) Community Organ Club and left them wanting more. We'll wager they'll get it.



Esther Higgins

The Oaklyn group is a livewire outfit. One of its recent recitalists was Dennis James, the lad who did such a fine job at the 4-34 DTOC Wurlitzer during the 1967 ATOE convention in Detroit. Dennis gets around, too. In addition to his church duties, he's been playing the pipe organ during intermissions at the Lanesdowne Theatre on Saturday nights.

Bill Bunch, Prexy of the Seattle pipe organ firm, Balcom and Vaughan, slipped into Los Angeles in mid-May to take measurements from Frank Lanterman's erstwhile San Francisco Fox 4-36 Wurlitzer console. Bunch has been hired to build a new console for the currently "headless" New York Paramount 4-36 Wurlitzer which is being installed in the Wichita Civic Auditorium by the Wichita Theatre Organ group. The Lanterman console is in the same "Crawford Special" class as the N.Y. Paramount (five were built) and Los Angeles is closer to Seattle than Detroit or St. Louis. Still no progress toward incarceration of the culprits who burned the historic Paramount console on Feb. 25th.

In Utica, New York, the management of FM radio station WUFM was proud of its "Organ Loft" program as the radio show started its seventh year. The broadcast has been conducted from its beginning by ATOEer Don Robinson, who programs classical as well as theatre organ music.

GEORGE'S 'SECRET WAR'. Want to hear some movie scoring by George Wright? In the "Secret War of Harry Frigg," a Nazi officer warns his victims that soon the conquered land will "resound with the music of Bach!" This is followed by a blast of Bach played on a straight organ, for emphasis. It's the organ in the Hollywood Methodist church played by George Wright, a job he did for Universal's music director, Joseph Gershenson, strictly by stopwatch, without having seen the film sequence beforehand or viewing it at the time of recording. Speaking of George, he asked us to emphasize that he's playing his own 3-30 studio organ for conventioners, not the Pasadena Rialto Wurlitzer. A widely circulated rumor that he would play the Rialto Wurli is groundless.

Word has been received from St. Louis of the serious injury of John Ferguson, long a leader in St. Louis chapter affairs. John was struck by a vehicle operated by a bit-run driver and suffered a fractured rib and pelvis. As soon as he could be moved, John was flown home to his folks in Louisiana for the long recuperation.

In Lafayette, Louisiana, youthful organ fan Lew Williams waited a long time for that Crawford LP—the ancient Camden with the reproductions of many of Jesse's finest RCA Victor 78 rpm platters made originally in the '20s. But when he finally located a pressing, it arrived in two pieces (through the U.S. mail). Broken-hearted, Lew laid it out on the dining room carpet and shot a Polaroid as a remembrance of a mournful day. Here it is, looking like a bifurcated flying saucer nesting on a sea of nimbus clouds.



Ungroovy Gap!

VOX POPS, contd.

Then there was the organ-oriented tippler, whose musical preferences were so firmly rooted to the "golden era" of theatre organs, that he would drink only Crawford's Scotch!

GOOF CORRECTION DEPT.: In a recent issue we moved the Oakland Paramount 4-20 Wurlitzer about 50 miles from its actual storage place by stating that it was stashed near the Oakland city dump. Shoulda said the Benecia city dump. And our stock is probably a bit low in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, after we referred to organist Merle Bailey as Merle "Dewey" in an April VOX POP. And in the VOX POP about Doug Erdman's bullet-riddled Tibia, the printer left out a few words which had shots coming from "down in the parapets" instead of "down in the valley, below the parapets." Our old friends, Mickey, Goofy and Donald, are furious for our having moved Disneyland from Anaheim to Santa Ana. And up in Seattle, Eddie Zollman, Jr., caught us in a classic goof (Feb. FOR THE RECORDS) in which we added a Pedal Diaphone to a well known studio organ. Yes, Eddie, George Wright did play those passages in the "Sounds of Love" on the 16' Double Solo String, as you corrected us. Our printer kindly "corrected" "orchestrian" to read "orchestration" in April's FOR THE RECORDS. And we really hit bottom when we omitted all mention of the one gal in the crew of "the Guys Who Fixed the Organ" (Feb.) Carolyn Kissel, Neal's bride. Some days it doesn't pay to get out of bed.

Give New York organist Billy Nalle much credit for the liberal attitude of the AGO's new magazine, "MUSIC," toward the theatre instrument. Billy keeps the fire lighted under MUSIC staffers with hints and suggestions concerning TO items of interest which also serve the AGO interest. Evidence of effectiveness is MUSIC's April issue with our own Dennis Hedberg's article, "Rebuilding the Mighty Wurlitzer." Dennis should know how; he's rebuilt three big ones that we know about.

When Doc Bebko made his annual pilgrimage from his home in Olean to New York and Radio City Music Hall (where he once titillated the 4-58), he was surprised to find not Jack Ward, Ray Bohr nor Dick Leibert at the mighty Wurlitzer, but a stranger. He inquired and was told the organist's name was "Mr. Detroy." Dick Leibert cleared up the mystery: "Mr. Detroy subbed for

Jack Ward, who took Ray Bohr's place after Ray broke three ribs in a fall and needed time to heal." (No, Ray didn't take a dive from a raised console!) But Dick Leibert, who recently returned to the 4-58 after a tour through Michigan, South Dakota, Iowa and Missouri, had this to add: "For my birthday, my family pooled resources and presented me with a shiny, red Honda. Maybe soon I'll need someone to substitute for me!"

Speaking of the RCMH behemoth, Organ fixer Henry Pope arrived in New York in mid-May to complete a project he, Dick Simonton and Gordon Kibbee started nearly three years ago; a complete overhaul of the big Wurlitzer after it had started to "breathe hard." The job is now nearly finished, with a complete re-leathering of the instrument by Warren Westervelt just ended. Pope will remain for about six weeks to do some regulating. Then the big "beast" should behave and sound like new.

1968 A.T.O.E. CONVENTION VIGNETTES • 4

FLASH! 'OLD FIDDLEFOOT' SIGNED!—Yes, kiddies, the inimitable Martha Lake will make an appearance at the convention, in spite of all that could be done to prevent it. Chairman Bob Carson reluctantly announced that the "blowsy Brunnehilde of the bulgy Bourdon" will confront conventioners during the banquet entertainment, and would probably haul along the stop with which she first stupefied victims during the ATOE convention at Portland in 1965—the unexplainable "Abyssinian Stringed Oboe," an instrument with half a mind of its own, but one which can't seem to decide matters of pitch (it wobbles) or intonation (it scrapes worse than Jack Benny's violin). With her mad love affair with author Ben Hall a shambles, Martha will undoubtedly loose her passion on conventioners with some real torchy ballads. All that can be predicted is that it will be awesome.

But back to Doc Bebko, who was known as Eddy Baker back when. His report on the RCMH Easter show is significant: "The movie was putrid, the stage show very smart and entertaining," which indicates that conditions haven't really changed since the days of "Dinny Timmins" (Dec. 1967 TO-B, p. 7).

Neither has the creator of "Dinny Timmins"—organist Lloyd del Castillo. As a result of BOMBARDE columnist Lloyd Klos' "exhumation" of one of Dinny's 40-year-old columns, the entire Timmins thing has been pulled out of mothballs and del Castillo, who now lives in Los Angeles, is again putting Dinny's often weirdly expressed observations on human foibles down on paper for publication in the LA (Pro) Organists Breakfast Club monthly, OFF THE KEYBOARDS.

Mention of del Castillo brings to mind a warning we must make about a book just published by the former New England solo organist. The book, with a preface by Gaylord Carter, is entitled "An Alphabetic Primer of Organ Stops"—but the title is most misleading. Actually it's a humorous parody of an organ stop dictionary, with outrageous tangents, puns galore, and vaguely related corn. Sample definition: BOMBARDE—a slam at Shakespeare (Bum Bard). Another: VIOL—a glass container, despicable, a French villager calf meat, a fiddle...down to and including 'he Bull Fiddle, or Dog House."

We wouldn't be surprised to find del Castillo following a Spritzflute around with a cuspidor. What's wrong with all this good clean fun? Nothing, for those with enough organ background to know when he's kidding, which is usually. But for the novice who is just learning, he could sure assimilate a raft of misinformation. If the reader feels he can't live without a copy—well, keep an eye on the CLASSIFIED column of this mag.

Organ expert Fred Meunier has a priceless memory of the 1913 opening of the famed Paris Theatre in Denver, one of the Hope-Jones early "big ones." Meunier, who still lives in Denver, was working on the installation, assisting the famed James H. Nuttall, Hope-Jones chief voicer. But just before the opening, Robert Hope-Jones in person showed up to check every detail of the installation. He was lionized locally and so great was the prestige of the organ builder that on opening night when a spotlight focussed on organist Frank R. White, and the organ thrilled audiences for the first time, the curtains parted and a second "spot" settled on Robert Hope-Jones sitting in a huge wicker chair, his mop of white hair resplendent in the glare of the light. Both builder and organist were warmly applauded, recalls Fred. And admission was only five cents!

In Sydney, Australia, organist Noreen Hennessy, only recently returned from a cruise which took her to the East Coast of the USA, had a problem; on short notice she had to play before an audience on half of a long unused 4-21 Wurlitzer. The problem was that she didn't know which stops were usable until she tried them out—as the console started up on its elevator. It happened when the Greater Union Theatre decided, almost overnight, to stage a "Hollywood Premiere" for a movie entitled "How to Save a Marriage and Ruin Your Life."



Noreen Hennessy

The big searchlights were raking the sky outside while the Theatre Organ Society of Australia was having a concert inside between 6 and 7 p.m. There had been a valiant effort to touch up the long unused instrument by organman Peter Rowe, but time had run out, so poor Noreen had to find out what would work and what wouldn't as she played for the sympathetic TOSA members. Later, when the premiere crowd came in, Noreen had the organ "down pat" and the big audience which filed in to see Stella Stevens in person, favored Noreen with huge waves of applause, reports John Clancy from Sydney.

Gene Featherston, writing about the fine artists who have appeared for the Central Indiana Chapter (at Tom Ferree's Louisville "Uniphone" organ in the Rivoli Theatre, Indianapolis), is hopeful that joint ATOE-AGO meetings will tend to get AGOers interested in TO. Along this line of thought, the Chapter, which has sponsored concerts by such greats as Reg. Foort, John Muri and Kay McAbee, purposely starts joint concerts with perhaps a few Bach numbers, which come off well on the Uniphone. "Perhaps we'll win some of them over," hopes Gene.

Organist Dean McNichols, announcing a future concert at the Friends Church in Bell, Calif., to be played by Ann Leaf, phrased it neatly: "Besides being an organist, Ann is a musician."

Droll organist Al Bollington, whose latest record release, "Organ Magic," is played on a Wurlitzer plug-in for Concert Recording, became alarmed when he noted some digital sluggishness in his right hand which was affecting the fast passages. Says Al, "I thought I had a

touch of arthritis—until I did some backtracking. I finally concluded that I'd only sprained a couple of tendons—while opening a can of beer."

Continued Friday night broadcasts, featuring John Schrader, gave radio listeners hope that the famed Louisville WHAS Kilgen was about to be revived. Late night "tuner-inners" of the '30s and '40s recall Herbie Koch's broadcasts with the same reverence they attach to the memory of WLW's "Moon River." The instrument has been heard intermittently since Koch's retirement. But hopes were dashed when it was learned that the famed theatre-style studio organ had been dismantled when the WHAS studios were moved. The Schrader broadcasts were tapes (enough for 26 weeks) made before the organ was removed. But there is still a glimmer that the glorious voice of Louisville will be heard again. Program Director George Walsh told the BOMBARDE that WHAS owner, Barry Bingham, has donated the Kilgen to Jefferson County, Kentucky, for installation in its convention center, "where it should continue to be a valuable asset to the Louisville community."

The Southern Illinois University Library (Edwardsville, Illinois) received a priceless gift from the brother of late St. Louis film cuer Ralph Booker who scored silent movies from many a St. Louis theatre pit. The gift consisted of all Booker's sheet music, scores and arrangements dating from the early days of silent films to the advent of "talkies."

ATOE member, Bob Nye, owner of a piano and organ store in Reading, Pennsylvania, reports that part of the ex-Buffalo Paramount Theatre 3-11 Wurlitzer which he purchased in November 1961, is playing in a special auditorium he built at his business location. This organ was originally opened on May 30, 1927 by Alex F. Taylor. Theatre was closed in early 1965, and most of it demolished a few months later.

While we're in Pennsylvania, "our man in Pittsburgh," Rey Galbraith, has some nostalgia. Time was when the late Bert Shoff broadcast a residence-style Wurlitzer from the then Wurlitzer Building at 719 Liberty Avenue. Bert was one of the early exponents of the "swing" style of playing, which was introduced to the Pittsburgh area by "Wild Oscar" (Lloyd Hill).

For a residence, the instrument is a monster—146 ranks of mostly "straight" pipework in seven divisions. Three blowers supply the air pressure which powers the ranks with from 8 to 30 inches of wind. The battery of percussions includes a nine-foot concert grand piano. The pedal division boasts five 32-footers. It's located in the grand ballroom of the former Pierre duPont estate near Wilmington, Delaware. Normally the Wednesday night concert features what the handout describes as "a distinguished recitalist of the classical concert field"—in short, a church organist. But the concert of April 30th would be different. Scheduled was Billy Nalle, and his program was announced as improvisations, using various popular themes as source material. If anyone heard any 32-foot rumblings in the Wilmington area during that evening, we'd like to know about it. With those ingredients, anything could happen.

Purely by a fluke we learned that Don Baker's birthday is on February 29, so he can celebrate every fourth year. "I'm just past 15," admits Don.

A lot came to light when evangelist Oral Roberts put the 18-rank theatre organ in one of his Tulsa broadcast rooms up for sale. Back in 1958, the information came in bits and pieces that Oral Roberts was having a theatre organ built new by Wicks. Actual information was at a premium because, due to its church clientele, Wicks didn't want it known that it was building a theatre organ. So we never were able to get a story. With the organ recently advertised for sale, everything falls into place; Wicks retains the ability to fabricate theatre organs and the cost is moderate—\$40,000 for 18 ranks. But Roberts asked only \$10,000 for the ten-year-old instrument, and we can't help but wonder why he wants to be rid of it.

ATOE Veep, Dick Kline of Frederick, Maryland, reports considerable theatre organ activity in the Washington, D. C., area. As of May 15, he has 22 of the 28 ranks of his own Wurlitzer in operation, and will have all four manuals in operation shortly. Trolley buffs will be interested to know that Dick gets his 3-phase electric power from the abandoned Hagerstown & Frederick interurban which ran behind his farm.

Meanwhile, Woody Wise has removed a 3-10 Barton from a Newport News, Virginia, theatre, and will install it in the Virginia Theatre, one block from Jim Boyce's Skating Rink in Alexandria

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wherein is the ex-NY Center Theatre 4-34 Wurlitzer. Looks like the beginnings of a potential area for an ATOE convention.

A new book which will be of interest to those interested in the history of radio broadcasting is *Radio's Golden Age*, by Frank Buxton and Bill Owen. This excellent book contains references to all programs which were beamed nationwide, from the "A&P Gypsies" to the "Ziegfeld Follies of the Air." The entire casts, directors, producers, musical directors, writers, in fact, all personnel connected with the shows are listed. The organists for about 35 shows are listed, among them Rosa Rio (12 times), Dick Leibert, John Gart, Lew White, Ann Leaf, Paul Carson, Charles Paul and Skitch Henderson. Over 100 pictures are in a special section. Good nostalgia of a memorable era.



ORGANIST ANN LEAF went home to Omaha, Nebraska, in October, 1967, for visits with her many friends there and with her sister, Esther, also an organist. Naturally, word got around, and soon a group of buffs had enticed her to the Orpheum Theatre for an informal session at the 3-13 Wurlitzer restored by George Rice and his associates (see the April 1967 issue for "The Pipes Are Playing Again in Omaha").

Ann played an after-midnight session for more than 80 enchanted fans, then did a repeat Sunday a.m. performance at the 2,850-seat house for those who missed the first concert. Ann was well pleased with the instrument, and the Omaha fans were most happy with Ann's concerts. It was all part of a vacation trip Ann made with hubby Russ Butler.

More happy fans will hear Ann Leaf in concert at the 1968 ATOE National Convention in Los Angeles on July 14 at the Wiltern's 4-37 Kimball organ.

THE RENAISSANCE OF THE THEATRE ORGAN

by Billy Nalle

(The following article by organist Billy Nalle is reprinted in its entirety from the November 1967 issue of MUSIC/THE A.G.O. MAGAZINE by permission of the publisher.—Ed.)

The Theatre Organ is in renaissance and not only so in theatres. Several hundred homes, auditoria, schools and colleges have installed theatre pipe organs during the past fifteen years. Two new situations represent the increasing activity. This fall a theatre pipe organ will be opened in the Empire State Theatre and the Musical Instruments Museum, Syracuse, N. Y. In the fall of 1968 the first theatre pipe organ to be installed in a United States cultural center will be inaugurated. This will take place in the Roberson Center for the Arts and Sciences, Binghamton, N. Y.

The first golden era of the theatre organ was brought to an end much more by the depression of the 30's than by the advent of sound films in the 20's. Even in the organ world many who should have known better pronounced lavish conversational requiems. The return today of a great instrument in new situations and on new terms brings to mind the words of Mark Twain, "Reports of my death greatly have been exaggerated."

Love Required

Until about 1950 a few theatre and home installations plus a small, hard core of enthusiasts, constituted the whole picture. Then two things happened which were destined to produce the impossible. The recording companies discovered the range, brilliance and excitement of the theatre organ and it was "love required." The instrument provided sounds which could utilize and promote their new high-fidelity recordings. In the rush to titillate record buyers, there was a flow of albums running from the finest to those provoking nausea. Not long before this was the appearance on the scene of a handful of organists who were developing fresh ideas and styling. Among my colleagues whose recordings helped greatly to spark the field are George Wright, Johnny Seng and the late Buddy Cole of this country and Bryan Rodwell of England. Also the church organ field provided an outstanding contributor as

player and teacher in the person of Searle Wright.

The nationally organized American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts has regional chapters coast to coast and there are excellent independent groups such as the Rochester, N. Y., Theatre Organ Society and the Detroit Theatre Organ Club. In England there are two major groups, the Theatre Organ Club and the Cinema Organ Society. Even Australia now has the large and musically industrious Theatre Organ Society. These organizations have contagious enthusiasm for everything from buying organ parts to sponsoring public concerts.

What About the Future?

The theatre organ world now is at the crossroads. Of course there always should be available the best of the older music and the older styles of playing it. This must be true for any instrument; there is no argument there. However, what about the future? Those who are experimenting with new ideas in theatre organ construction, both pipe and electronic, and those who are playing the instruments via present-day musical language as yet are a minority. For all the versatility and tonal color of the theatre organ, if it is to build on its new popularity and make a serious contribution to the future, new players must include temporary musical vocabulary in their listening and playing. After all, we are well into the second half of the Twentieth Century. The language of popular music has grown so much in variety and sophistication in barely 35 years that no excuse remains for permitting other instrumental musicians to have a corner on the market of fresh thinking. A fossilized attitude carefully nurtured by the organist hardly is a fit companion to so marvelous an instrument. It is an anachronism today to burn vigil lights before the Howard swivel seat once used by the justly celebrated Jesse Crawford.

Mature Musicianship

The best organists I know make time
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