



Effie

!MARTHA! LAKE rides again

I was so thrilled when I heard she would play at the ATOE convention that I downed an extra cream puff for lunch! Oh, my goodness, it was wonderful to learn that the inimitable Martha Lake—the idol of all of us “pointer system”-type girl—well, lady organists (I’m just a little mature for the “girl” bit)—Martha would make a rare personal appearance during the annual banquet. I ran right down to Loy Lynch and purchased a ticket to the banquet in the Cocoanut Grove instead of my usual procedure of attending by getting a job as a busboy for that night.

Finally, the big night rolled around and I didn’t do so well in the seating department because I didn’t know anyone at the table the waiter put me at. There I was, stuck between some guy who said his name was “George Wright” and a young squirt who introduced himself as “Lyn Larsen.” Both seem to be organists of sorts but I had hoped to land at a table with some notables, someone who runs interference for us gals, like lovable Martha. But there was no sign of Martha until nearly everything was over. I had spent most of the time contemplating how it was possible for the Ambassador chefs to roll up a thin slice of chicken breast and puff it so full of air that it “blew out” like a punctured tire when a fork was stuck in it. That got rather dull but there was music by a nice young man at the Hammond and later a very funny clown who did a terrific pantomime act and baggy clothes routine. But where was vivacious Martha Lake? Oh, I had visions of her sitting in her dressing room putting the finishing touches on her makeup, a dressing room that just had to be filled with flowers! And I needn’t have worried because, considering the weight she throws around in the organ world, she just had to have the featured spot—“next to closing” as they say in show biz!

Finally, that delicious moment arrived! It must have been a little awkward for the master of ceremonies, Ben Hall, to announce Martha—considering the rumors that he has toyed with her dear affections in the “on - again - off - again” situation which has existed ever since vivacious Martha declared her undying love for this big city Lothario. But he managed to blurt out an introduction which pictured Martha as the greatest musical development

“since a man named Hammond conspired with the Devil—back in 1935.” Hmph!

Suddenly there she was in the spotlight! She just slipped out from behind an enormous Hammond speaker and smiled, ear to ear, at her applauding audience. There she stood, dressed in a green shift which was very short and slightly baggy, looking taller than her somewhat—well, “filled-out” form normally allows. Then I noticed that she was

wearing pumps with very long spiked heels. Oh, that darling—about to do exactly as teacher Millie Alexander insists—play pedals with spiked heels!

As always, just the sight of Martha Lake does something to people. Some get so restless they just have to get up and walk around—usually out the door, as happened in this case. She’s just too rich a mixture!

Soon Martha was seated at the Hammond X-66, so recently fondled by Don Lee Ellis, and she started to play. But there were difficulties; those long spiked heels kept sticking between the pedals and poor Martha had to reach down and extricate her rather outsize pumps by hand. This she did time after time, without missing a note on the manuals. She’s so resourceful!



OH YEAH?—A look of doubt crosses Ben Hall’s noble visage as the photo of Dick Schrum is unfurled and Martha exclaims, “I owe everything I am or hope to be to that lovely Dick Schrum.” Dick, of course, is Martha’s manager, and we suspect Ben is suffering pangs of jealousy.

... In which TOB Staffer Effie Klotz reviews the convention effort of a most extraordinary organist!

There's one especially interesting characteristic common to all Martha Lake concerts; it is never quite clear as to the tune she's playing. That's my Martha! She doesn't trouble her audiences with details. As for the spiked heels, Millie Alexander's advice notwithstanding, Martha kicked them off (one huge brogan just missed a man seated near the stage) and played in her stocking feet. Of course, her feet are quite large and this gives her a distinct advantage, in that she can spread one sole over three pedals at a time. I'm certain that all will agree that this makes for a very interesting bass line, and one bound to keep listeners guessing. She's so clever!

Being a feminist, I see in Martha Lake an embodiment of a long line of outstanding women in history—Joan of Arc, Florence Nightingale, Carrie Nation and Margaret Sanger—all of whom carried the torch for women down through the ages. In terms of female organists there are Ethel Smith, the aforementioned Mildred Alexander, Rosa Rio. Ann



"ARF!" GOES SANDY—An expression of pure ecstasy on Martha's face reflects the moment of passion as Ben, turned vocalist, reaches the climactic cadenza of "Little Orphan Annie." That off-balance stance of Hall's was caused by the immense shoe (lower left) kicked off by Miss Lake in a moment of euphoric frenzy at the console; he had just stumbled over it!



Leaf and Helen Dell. The last three listed were among the artists who played for the 1968 ATOE convention, a good female representation, considering that big, hairy men planned the whole shindig! But I'm digressing.

Martha played several selections of great beauty, although it wasn't clear whether they were pops or classics—just—tone clusters. She performed some wonderful two-footed cadenzas, even though the progressions invariably ended on the wrong note. (I'm certain she missed her "Abyssinian Stringed Oboe." Martha backed her Finbucket Sportler over the delicate pipe strings so repairs are being made. The mechanism is in the custody of a plumber at the moment.)

But that audience! They were terrible! They were laughing at Martha and her divine music! That fellow Wright sitting next to me was practically having convulsions and that big, fat BOMBARDE editor, a few tables away, resembled a hogshead of palpitating Jello. Some guy whose badge read "Eddie Dunstedter" kept shouting "Give her the hook!"—which is possibly some show-biz term of acclaim. And a personage named "Bartlett" kept shouting "Hear! Hear!" like he was a member of Parliament, or something. I was disgusted with the whole crowd because they were so impolite to that wonderful girl.

The highlight of Martha's concert on the beautiful Hammond X-66 was when Ben Hall came on-stage and there they were—together—the immortal lovers who make Romeo

and Juliet seem like a couple of pikers. I figured they would sing a famous love duet—perhaps the "Liebestodt" from "Tristan"—but that great moment is yet to come. Instead, the two ogled one another for a moment, an electric moment! One could see the love sparkle in their souls as they stood nose to nose, peering into one another's eyes. There was dapper Ben Hall, man of the world—debonair—commanding masculine. And the object of his affection—lovely Martha Lake—coy—cute—huge—and masculine. Finally, the magic silence was broken as Ben said, "Martha—play the intro."

Martha broke away from her dreamy love look and started the introduction to some fine aria whose title escaped me until the first words (sung by Ben in a rakish baritone) clobbered the PA microphone. Sure enough, it was the great love theme from "The Saga of Daddy Warbucks," entitled "Little Orphan Annie." It was so romantic, especially where Ben encouraged the audience to supply the "Arf!" where Annie's dog, Sandy, has a word. The air was heavy with a chorus of "Arf's"—right on the beat!

Naturally, there was a great ovation for Martha and Ben. There they stood, hand in hand, acknowledging the applause of some 800 ATOE conventioners in the world-famous Cocoonut Grove—a truly great moment in a deathless (I hope!) romance.

—Effie Klotz, Hollywood