



George in Portland

How does THIS grab you Mighty Wurlitzer lovers: a sunny, balmy October Indian Summer afternoon; a 4-manual, 49-rank Wurlitzer in mint condition and installed in ideal acoustical and esthetic setting; and—appearing in his third Portland concert in the past year and a half—Mr. George Wright himself playing a two-hour "at home" concert to wrap up the whole package! It grabbed the lucky 150 persons who just comfortably filled the Howard Vollums' studio on the outskirts of Portland and quite well, thank you!

George's lively opener, *Così cosa*, was a virtual trip through the organ and a fitting introduction to what followed. Informal and relaxed in what he termed his "second home," George Wright topped even his own previous performances in this city by (nearly) vaulting over the balcony rail, singing a brief vocal (the "... to your razzle-dazzle" line from *Old Devil Moon*); and playing three (count 'em!) encores, including a final, swinging "Portland version" of *Stars and Stripes Forever*.

Billy at Roberson

The renaissance of the theatre organ is growing by leaps and bounds. What could have been described ten or fifteen years ago as a "toy for the wealthy," because of so many instruments being rescued from doomed theatres and installed in homes, the theatre organ has literally come of age once more in the sixties because of some elaborate installations now open to the public.

This was dramatically proved on September 28 in Binghamton, N.Y. when a packed house of 400 in the new Roberson Memorial Center for the Arts and Sciences heard the sterling artistry of a true master of the instrument, Billy Nalle. The organ, a 3-12 Link, will have five more ranks added by the end of the year.

SPACE LIMITATIONS . . .

. . . made it impossible to include the complete text of Lloyd E. Klos' detailed concert reviews of the Billy Nalle, Ashley Miller and Kay McAbee concerts in this issue. In addition, Howard Vollum and Dennis Herberg have consented to release the revised stoplist of the ex-SF Paramount organ for publication in our next issue.

Ashley at RTOS

If ever there is a "Battle of Organists" at some future ATOE Convention, between the West and East Coasts, the two artists to represent the East might very well be Billy Nalle and Ashley Miller. That in the latter's case, became most convincing when Miller gave an audience of about 1500 at Rochester's Auditorium Theatre on October 25, a concert of great magnitude, depth and artistry. This was the Rochester Theatre Organ Society's second concert of the season, and open to the public.

Kay McAbee Opens Rochester Season

One of the stars of the 1967 ATOE National Convention in Detroit was selected to kick off the 1968-69 recital season of the Rochester Theatre Organ Society on September 18. Kay McAbee, veteran of theatre consoles in Illinois, was the artist for a members-only program at the Auditorium Theatre 4-21 Wurlitzer. And, a most creditable job it was.



BILLY NALLE at the 3-12 Link organ in the Roberson Memorial Center for the Arts in Binghamton, N.Y.

(Below) ASHLEY MILLER, pictured at his Radio City Music Hall console, played a concert for RTOS at their Auditorium Theatre.



A "LINK" WITH THE PAST



Billy plays the beautifully restored 11-ranker. Note the simple beauty of the Link console, the cut of the side jambs and the graceful lines of the supporting bolsters.

—Photos courtesy of Harvey N. Roehl

by Lloyd E. Klos

Thus, for the first time anywhere, an honest-to-goodness theatre organ with all its appurtenances has been installed in a cultural center. The organ was given to the center by Mr. Edwin A. Link, whose firm built many of the instruments in the golden days. Originally built in 1927 and installed in the Capitol Theatre in Binghamton, the organ has been completely rebuilt by Mr. Link to mint condition. According to Mr. Keith Martin, Director of the Center, it is hoped to recapture the golden era of the silent cinema and its movie palaces by the use of the organ in concerts and as accompaniment to silent films.

Beginning his memorable program, Billy Nalle brought up the console, playing the lively "Great Day", which served to show off the newly added Steinkampf-voiced Post Horn. The airy "Tip-toe Trough The Tulips" was a real swingy number, followed by "Do Re Mi" and "More". Gershwin's "Fascinating Rhythm" showed the artist's arranging prowess. An ascending syncopated triplet figure in the chorus, featuring the xylophone, really got the audience buzzing.

The entire organ is located on the third floor of the center. Chambers are arranged from left to right—Main, Percussion and Solo. Console is situated on a lift in front of the percussion, but the swell shades are

situated along the sides of the chambers. Among the percussions are piano, carillon, glockenspiel, xylophone, marimba (harp), chimes and traps. With Mr. Link's exacting hand guiding the restoration and adding ranks, this instrument promises to be a real showpiece, indeed a magnet for organists to exhibit their artistry. Much will be written about this installation in the future, make no mistake.

Bringing up the console for the second half, Billy did a rousing version of "There's No Business Like Show Business", followed by a classical arrangement of "On Wings Of Song."

A Nalle arrangement of "Hello Dolly" or "How Dolly Tangled With That Newfangled Music Box," was dedicated to Mr. Link and to Dolly Kelly, a member of the International Music Box Society which sponsored the concert as part of its convention. Billy asked the audience to picture a music box enthusiast's showing one of his collection to a guest, then forgetting to wind the machine. The portrayal was most realistic. The simulated box slowed down and went flat. Then came "sharping", caused by a sudden burst of speed, due to "overwinding." This number was indeed one of the comedy high points of the program, as the guffaws from the audience proved.

The final three numbers were "Falling In Love With Love," "As Long As He Needs Me," and a real brassy "That's Entertainment." Two encores brought

Billy back. The first was a John Philip Sousa arrangement of his opener, "Great Day." The second was a soft version of "Sleepy Time Down South."

The Roberson Center is looking forward to the day when Billy will return to record the organ. Distribution of a Nalle recording of the Link, this reviewer feels, will really put Binghamton on the map of leading theatre organ installations in this country.

Ashley Miller In Rochester

by Lloyd E. Klos

Heralded by the strident tones of the Brass Trumpet, Ashley brought up the 4-22 Wurlitzer console in the true tradition of the spotlight solo, playing Gershwin's "Strike Up the Band." "Put On a Happy Face" used Glock and Post Horn passages, and the Tuba, Kinura, and reeds climaxed "On a Wonderful Day Like Today."

Every good theatre organist from time to time will switch off the tremulants and give his audience a change of pace. This was done in a group of three classics "Allegro" (Trumpet Voluntary) by Boyce; the famous "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" by Bach; and "Tocatta" from the Suite Gothique.

He stated after this group that "people enjoy a little bit of good music. So, now, should we go from the sublime to the ridiculous?"

The "ridiculous" turned out to be a smooth arrangement of "I Wish You Love", which started with a Vox solo, and used the sobbing Tibias and the Harp. One could detect combinations similar to those Ashley used on his earlier Radio City Music Hall discs.

The second half of the program opened with a medley of some lively ones—"Step to the Rear" in jazz tempo; "Tijuana Taxi," which featured the xylophone, auto horn, cymbals, etc, thereby gaining the inevitable snickers from the audience; and "It's Delovely" with glock tinkles.

A sing-along came next, and in true tradition, Ashley asked that "ladies sing", then "men sing", then "altogether" on third chorus. Either the audience forgot the words or they wanted only to hear the artist play, as the decibel level was not raised materially. Numbers were "For Me and My Gal", "Ramblin' Rose", "Daisy Bell", "Chiapanecas", "Put On Your Old Grey Bonnet", and "I Want a Girl."

The enthusiastic audience demanded and got three encores.