

## HELEN DELL WARMS DAMP AUDIENCE AT "TUBES, INC."

It was raining on February 24th. In fact it had been raining, on and off, all over southern California for three days prior to the date set for Helen Dell's initial concert on pipes. Even without



DAINTY MISS—Helen and friend at 'Tubes Inc.' The 2-9 Wurlitzer served her well.

the rain, the location was a hard-to-find warehouse, miles southeast of Los Angeles. To complete the difficult conditions under which Miss Dell performed, the weather turned cold late in the afternoon and the rain perked up. An hour before concert time it was coming down in blinding sheets and it continued that way half way through the concert.

With all those negative factors, did anyone show up for the petite lady's debut? They sure did, over 250 strong. Some were attired in "sou'westers" and oilskins. Some came equipped with rubber boots (they were the dry ones), but they came. The concert was held in the "Tubes Inc" warehouse, located inconveniently in the badly-lighted industrial area of beautiful downtown Commerce, Calif., mainly because the building houses Chuck Baker's 2-9 Wurlitzer (yes, 2-9; we checked). Inside the building it was a few degrees colder than outside, so when foot-stomping accompanied applause, it was for a dual purpose. Irving Cosgrove was seen lurching around the seating area cursing himself for failing to apply for the hot water bottle concession.

In the tooth-chattering atmosphere, organist Lyn Larsen stepped to the microphone and gave Helen a warm introduction, welcoming her to the Malar label for which they both record. Helen appeared immediately, stepped to the immaculate white and gold horseshoe through a blast of applause and opened with a fast "I Know That You Know."

After the handclapping died down she greeted the enthusiasts who had so valiantly braved the elements. She was wearing a knee-length white sleeveless dress with a gold belt and golden "Cinderella" slippers with glass heels. She spoke in a confident, lowpitched (almost husky) voice and it was soon evident that she was quite at ease doing her own MCing. After a vox version of "I'll Remember April," with solos on the excellent Clarinet on the Baker organ, she greeted her parents who had come from Arizona to take in daughter's debut.

Among the tunes which highlighted the first half of the program were a simple but pleasant "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?", an emotional "Dancing in the Dark", "I'm Through With Love" (as done in her album) and a timely "Button Up Your Overcoat", which was a comment on the TV commercial that spoofs musical films of the '30s. Helen programmed her concert carefully, avoiding overripe cliche tunes and including some novelties. One was "Les Myrtles" which, she explained, she had heard Harry Mills play on the Welte which once graced the Barker Bros. department store in L.A. Another was a swing-band arrangement of "Shiny Stockings" a minor masterwork in jazz which had toes tapping. It smacked of "Artistry in Rhythm" in its pattern and drive, ending on a dirty, lowdown chord.

Then, Helen asked musically, "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?" "Hopefully, warmer than here" stagewhispered Bill Exner. She closed the section with that fine old depressionistic morale builder from a long ago Dick Powell movie, "Marching Along Together."

During intermission we looked at the organ in closeup. The pipework is installed in two ample-size, floor-level chambers in a corner of the warehouse. The console is located on a dolly about 25 feet from the chambers. Drapes have been hung in the corner of the warehouse to provide a proper setting for the console and, perhaps, to take the edge off any excessive reverb in the huge, high-roofed building.

The organ has a bright sound, with considerable treble emphasis on reeds and strings. The Tibia is adjusted for Stopped Flute quality. The ensemble sound is excellent and even at full organ the sound was never overpowering due to the immense interior of the steel tube warehouse. The corner occupied by the organ and about 300 folding chairs doesn't make a dent on the over-all capacity.

After intermission, Miss Dell played a medley from "Oliver", a '20s group ("Lilac Time" and "Baby Face"), "The Song is You", Anderson's "Jazz Pizzicato" and the tune most closely associated with her, "One Morning in May". Her encore was "Step to the Rear" and those who did, following a whopping round of applause, found themselves out in the reality of a cold, damp night. Somehow, the musical enchantment had caused listeners to forget that getting there wasn't half the fun.

— Peg Nielsen

## Au Revoir to the Boyd Kimball

For once, thankfully, a final concert did not mean the end of a Theatre Organ, or a theatre, or both! The Boyd Theatre at 19th and Chestnut Sts., became for a brief period the only operating theatre in downtown Philadelphia, Pa. with a playable instrument. This neatly groomed theatre boasts a 3-19 Kimball first heard on Christmas Day in 1928 and which had become as silent as the "silents" it once accompanied. Used for intermissions from 1931 until 1939, it had remained silent for 30 years. With its dark and dusty pipes hidden behind red velvet curtains radiating from the edge of the cinerama screen, and its gray-blue handsome console lurking like some archaeological specimen beneath a covered orchestra pit on an inoperative lift, the presence of this instrument was known only to the theatre management and a handful of enthusiasts until recent weeks.

Then, along came Robert E. Dilworth, an energetic and imaginative teacher and organ enthusiast on the faculty of John Dickinson High School in Wilmington, Delaware. Bob Dilworth had become aware that RKO-Stanley Warner Co. was willing to donate Theatre Organs to qualified non-profit or tax-supported institutions. Having secured the cooperation of faculty and students at his high school to install a Theatre Organ at the school, Mr. Dilworth arranged through agent Walter Froelich to obtain the Boyd Kimball to be removed to nearby Wilmington by student volunteers. A preliminary examination of the instrument revealed that while a considerable amount of restoration work was necessary involving extensive releathering and repairing about 100 squashed pipes, the organ was immediately playable to some extent. Mr. Dilworth saw an opportunity here to arrange for a final concert on this instrument in its original setting for the sake of nostalgia as well as the practical idea of raising funds to defray the costs of relocation. Enlisting the help of organ expert Brantley Duddy of the Austin Organ Co. plus volunteer workers from the Delaware Valley Chapter (TOSDV, Inc.) and John Dickinson High School student and faculty volunteers, serious restoration work commenced at the beginning of 1969.