

THE NATION'S YOUNGEST THEATRE ORGANIST

Robbie Irvin Solos on the "MIGHTY MO"

story and photos by Ray Brubacher

To command the resources of one of the largest theatre pipe organs in the world is surely the aspiration of many professional organists. To Robbie K. Irvin this dream has been a reality ever since he was eleven years of age. Born in Miami, Florida in 1955, Robbie found himself a resident of College Park, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta, at the age of 2.

Robbie was indeed fortunate in having as a neighbor Joe Patten who is the man responsible for the maintenance of the "Mighty Mo" of four manuals and forty two ranks located

at 660 Peachtree St. N.E., in Atlanta. One morning some five years ago, Joe took Robbie down to the Fox to let him see the workings of the big organ and this was "it" as far as Robbie is concerned. An eleven year old fell in love at first sight and sound with the instrument and soon came under the tutelage of Bob VanCamp, then resident organist of the theatre. Bob coached his pupil well and soon Robbie found himself filling in on the console of the Mo.

On a visit to Atlanta, Lee Erwin chanced to hear Robbie play and was



ROBBIE IRVIN

impressed enough to continue the studies under his guidance and in November of 1970 the management of the theatre formally placed Robert K. Irvin on the payroll to play the organ for two shows each Friday and Saturday evenings. Ever since that time audiences at the Fox have been impressed by the capable handling of the immense console and the repertoire possessed by this young man who has succeeded in arousing considerable interest in the theatre organ by the younger generation, something which must be done if the theatre organ is to survive. Robbie occasionally journeys to New York to see Lee for further help and occasionally Lee will find time to go to the Mecca on Peachtree Street to coach its resident recitalist.

Robbie was featured at last year's ATOS national in New York playing the Morton in the 175th Street Theatre. A junior at age 16 in College Park High School, Robbie plans a career in naval aviation after graduation. When not piloting the Fox organ he finds time to fly gliders and is now completing work on his private license in glider flying and will soon solo in a power plane. When on the ground he is an avid sports car enthusiast which gives him a yen for the products of Mercedes Benz. With a taste for the very finest it is little wonder that the combination of Irvin and Moller add to very enjoyable theatre organ played in the new style, a style which the three hundred and fifty plus stops of the Fox Theatre organ respond so very well. □

