



Readers are encouraged to submit interesting sidelights on the organ hobby (exclusive of chapter news items) material they believe will be of general interest about local organ activities and installations and the people who work at the hobby. We know "there's VOX POPS in them there chapters" and it only requires a 6¢ postcard to get it to VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can afford an 8¢ stamp, why not include a black and white photo which need not be returned.

Conducted by Stu Green

Dewey Cagle sent us an enlightening clipping about San Francisco "Chronicle" columnist Stan Delaplaine enduring a cruise to Central America. Stan described his stop at the El Panama Hotel in Panama City thusly:

"The bar has an old theatre organ — 'the mighty Wurlitzer' — that used to play background music for silent drama. Organs put me in a mood for weddings and funerals — both sobering events. But Panama is very proud of the organ. It's one of two left in the world" said the tourist board lady . . . The Mighty Wurlitzer began to groan and huff and puff. The bar had a bunch of seamen. A few mellow-skinned hustlers sat on stools — waiting for Mr. Right — Mr. Right Away."

Panama has gone us one better. Grandpa tells us that all the hustlers of his day had for musical inspiration was the tinkling of a ragtime piano.

Anyone wonder where the first honest-to-goodness movie palace in the United States was built? If one believes a writer for one of the Seattle newspapers, that northwest city gave birth to this now vanishing American art form in 1916. The building was

the Coliseum Theatre, designed by B. Marcus Priteca. Both he and his initial work are still on the Seattle scene. It has been suggested that the city buy the Coliseum and convert it to a legitimate theatre, thereby preserving the last of the Priteca-designed houses. The Pantages fell to make a parking lot; the Orpheum deferred to the Washington Plaza Hotel, and the Metropolitan fell to provide an addition to the Olympic Hotel, recent convention headquarters of ATOS.



Organist Doc Bebko, reporting on the annual Christmas show at the Radio City Music Hall, informs us that the usual Nativity Scene, using orchestra and "Grand Organ", was the main bill of fare on stage. For the final act, the twin consoles were exposed with Donald Duck on the left and Mickey Mouse on the right, going through the motions of playing. Eventually, Jack Ward emerged to take over. Mickey graciously relinquished the bench, both exchanging bows in the process with nary a beat missed.

Doc states, "Of all the playable theatre organs, this one certainly must have the most awe-inspiring pedal tones of all. That rebuild a few years ago surely did wonders in that department." Business at the Music Hall was tremendous during the holiday season with endless lines outside. Reserve seats are a must for out-of-towners during Christmas and New Years' weeks.



Organist Esther Higgins reports the recent death of Sam Fox, founder of the Sam Fox publishing Co., in San Francisco at the age of 89. His passing marks the last of a triumvirate of publishers who specialized in silent movie cue music in the '20s. Fox, along with Walter Fischer of Carl Fischer Inc. and Gustav Schirmer of G. Schirmer, founded the Standard Publishers Group of ASCAP in 1924. Fox was the publisher of many John Philip Sousa compositions and for J.S. Zamecnik, who turned out an incredible 1500 titles tailored mainly for cueing silent movies.

Fox was the publisher for the 20th Century Fox Film Co. in the '30s and '40s. He remained active in the publishing firm until recent years and was Chairman of the Board at the time of his death.



Ralph Bartlett — (John D. Sharp Photo)

According to Ralph Bartlett, perennial secretary of England's Theatre Organ Club, the Compton Organ Co., one of the most respected British builders of theatre organs, did not come into its own until circa five years the end of the silent movie era. True, there were organs with Compton nameplates playing for silent films in British theatres, but these were not built in Compton's factory. Until around 1933 orders for cinema organs were farmed out by Compton to other builders. From 1933 more and more organs were built in the Compton factory and the firm's finest work is apparent in instruments built between 1936 and 1938. Most all of these were equipped with Melotones, the electronic tonal supplement which blends so beautifully with pipes. Development ceased with lengthening war shadows.



Arlo Hulst sometimes forgets how many electrical gadgets he has rigged in his Sherman Oaks, Calif. home. He was sharply reminded when the Feb. 1971 earthquake hit. The ex-silent film organist was awakened by the lurching house and crashing crockery, and decided the safest place would be under his bed. He made a dive for the sub-Beautyrest safety spot and enroute his hand hit a bank of switches on his night table. Whatever terror he experienced was transformed to laughter a moment later when a tape recorded voice broke into "Strangers in the Night."

*It is said that the hobbies or second-line work of musicians are more interesting than their main occupations. For example, Billy Nalle. He is as prodigious at a 4/44 IBM typewriter as he is at a 4/28 Wurlitzer. Recognizing this, the AGO, before whom Billy has performed several times, has approached him for a regular column in the AGO publication "Music". It is expected that by the time you read these lines, Billy will be covering the theatre organ front for that periodical. Another barrier successfully assaulted!*

*On the west coast, Helen Dell, concert artist, recording star, and executive of Malar Recordings, spends her spare time making glamorous dresses*



Helen Dell — (Stufoto)

*which she wears at her concerts, thereby upholding her title as "The Dainty Miss". Incidentally, Helen was in St. Louis in December to supervise the Malar label taping of Stan Kann at the 4/36 Fox.*

Audience reaction to a 15-minute program on Channel 21 January 8 and repeated the following evening concerning the Rochester, N.Y. Theatre Organ Society and its 4/22 Wurlitzer, was most encouraging. The show, sponsored jointly with the Rochester Arts Council, featured former RTOS program chairman Don Hall narrating a visual trip around the organ, a summation of RTOS concert and educational programs, as well as its plans to install a 3/8 Wurlitzer on Rochester Museum property in a few months. Coordinator for RTOS was Joahn Fox, educational committee chairman. Publicity like this is priceless in advancing the theatre organ cause. Yet it's usually free to clubs who ask for it.



JOHN DEMELLO

*Lowell Angell (Alpha Chapter) reports from the 50th state that staff theatre organist John DeMello was asked not to play for some Waikiki Theatre intermissions recently. It seems that there were such large crowds for the new James Bond film, "Diamonds are Forever", that the new show patrons couldn't get seats because the earlier patrons wouldn't leave after the show was over. They wanted to hear John at the Robert Morton organ, and were creating a "traffic jam".*

*But, fortunately for theatre organ buffs, John is back on his regular Friday and Saturday night schedule now. The DeMello story will be presented in these pages shortly.*

Dr. C.A.J. Parmentier, who performed at New York's two largest theatres, the Roxy and the Music Hall, is still active and plays concerts "whenever the fee is satisfactory." In talking about the death of ex-Roxy organist, George Epstein, Dr. Parmentier says, "George and I were very close at one time, but I only learned of his demise by reading it in the *Local 802* magazine, which news is sometimes a couple months old (Epstein died in November.)" Dr. Parmentier says he phoned Epstein's widow, but was told the house at Brighton Beach was sold and she had moved to Florida, address unknown.

Approximately 1300 members and guests of the Rochester Theatre Organ Society heard John Ferguson at the Auditorium Theatre's Wurlitzer on December 28. This is the John Ferguson who is teaching at Kent State University and working toward his master's degree from the Eastman School of Music. There are two other John Fergusons, both organists, just to confuse things. John's program showed his "straight" organ leanings, as he presented considerable Christmas music, augmented with a sing-along. A "trip around the organ" with very ample dissertation in which he acted the part of a teacher instructing his "class" as represented by the audience, was well received. Family membership of RTOS now totals 750.



JOHN MURI

*Detroit organist John Muri was so busy in December that he didn't have time to address Christmas cards. His newsletter, sent later, describes the activity of this busy man. Besides his concerts in the east, he is teaching in three colleges; he has made a half-hour educational TV film for the University of Michigan; and two recordings made on the Detroit Fox and Senate Wurlitzers are ready for pressing. Wayne State University awarded him his second master's degree for work in James Joyce Studies, and on top of that, he purchased a 20-acre farm near Lakeport, Michigan. His biography is slated for THEATRE ORGAN shortly.*

Returning for his third appearance under RTOS auspices, Lyn Larsen received a standing ovation from 1200 enthusiastic Rochester theatre organ addicts on January 25 at the Auditorium Theatre, following a program of semi-classics and popular numbers. Of special interest was the two-foot pedaling throughout the concert which



Lyn Larsen — Ephatpic

proves that the 26-year-old Californian is no "left-foot" organist. After several years on the concert circuit, Lyn has now developed his own brand of musicianship. According to Times-Union reviewer George H. Kimball, "judging by the reception Lyn received, and his own spoken wish, (this appearance) won't be his last."



LUELLA WICKHAM

Veteran Syracuse, N.Y. organist Luella Wickham was honored by the Niagara Frontier Chapter one Tuesday night in February with a "This is Your Life" — type of testimonial at the No. Tonawanda Riviera theatre. That Luella, now 80 but still making music, has made a lot of friends along the way was indicated by the "Standing Room Only" sign in the lobby, the floral gifts on stage and the bales of congratulatory telegrams — not to mention the friends from her musical past who came in person to pay their respects. Said beaming Luella, "It was a sell-out. The SRO sign went up at 7:45 P.M.; it was about the most fantastic thing that ever happened to me!"



The Sacramento Union on December 4, ran an interesting item in its tabloid section, giving publicity to the Sierra Chapter ATOS. The occasion was a recent program of silent film fare with organist George Seaver's playing the accompaniment to the Buster Keaton epic "The General" at Grant Union High School. Seaver, who played during the silent era, suggested a horror film for the next program to be held in about six months.



The Granada Organ Loft Club was the subject of an excellent article in the *Seattle Times* on January 16. The history of this club, which was organized in February 1963 for the showing of silent movies with organ accompaniment, was given, as was a discussion of the public's taste in nostalgia. The non-profit organization has grimly hung on through several adversities. When a profit is realized, it is pumped into a scholarship fund for piano and organ students. If there was a shortcoming in the article, it was the failure to mention the periodic concerts by leading organists. The Granada was the site of a memorable concert by Jonas Nordwall during the 1971 ATOS Convention.



With the nostalgia binge in full swing, one never knows when reference to a theatre organist will pop up. Old Prospector Klos was twirling a radio dial January 14 while having a nighttime snack (milk and pretzels!) when he came to a Chicago station which was presenting an old-time burlesque of a quiz show, starring Bob & Ray. "Play the next song, Rosa Rio", said the MC. Yes, the vivacious occupant of the house beside a Connecticut water-



Old Prospector Klos — Shorn. — (Stufoto)



Rosa Rio during a recent concert at the Waterbury (Conn.) State Theatre 2/10 Wurlitzer. — (Photo, Art Dietle)

fall was playing a plug-in for the hilarious antics of Wally Ballew, Mary Magoon and musical chairs game. Incidentally, Convention Chairman Woody Wise has informed us that Lloyd Klos will present his Seminar on Promotion and Publicity during the convention.



Don Robinson, maestro of the "Organ Loft" radio program in Utica, N.Y., reports that the program will have observed its tenth birthday on April 23, which probably makes it the longest-running pipe organ program in the country. Don also reports that the Wurlitzer, once housed in the Stanley Theatre in Utica, is in its final phase of rebuilding. The group engaged in this work, of which Don is a member, will begin installation of the instrument in a high school very shortly.



Shirley Hannum — No batteries.

Organists playing theatre intermissions on pipes are accustomed to the confusion of the young when confronted with theatre pipes for the first time, usually resulting in the question "Where are the speakers on this crazy Hammond?" But Shirley Hannum, who keeps intermissions live-

ly at the Lansdowne Theatre Kimball in Landsdowne, Penna., recently confronted with a different question: "Where are the batteries?" And Shirley wasn't even using the stylus!



Youthful organist Dolton McAlpin still denies that the leggy girl whose likeness is spread across the 2/6 Baton Rouge Paramount Morton console for the cover photo on his Concert Recording release, "Hey Look," is actually TV star Sandy Duncan before she made it big. If not, it's a very good likeness. On other subjects he's more revealing. Dolton reports from Oxford, Miss. that over in Laurel, Jeff Seale has added a Wurlitzer Tuba and Clarinet to his little 2-deck Morton making



JEFF'S 'WURLIMORTON.'

it a rare "Wurlimorton." Now Jeff is shopping for a 3-deck console. Looks as though he has come down with the syndrome which hits so many buffs. — "Expansionitus."



Due to the ever increasing public interest in his one-of-a-kind "style 260" Rodgers theatre organ, owner Bob Power listened to the proposition made jointly by organists Bill Thomson and Lyn Larsen. The result was a weekend of organ music at the Power Camarillo, Calif. home open to all who could crowd into the limited seating space. To avoid overcrowding strict limits to ticket sales were observed. Over two weekend days (Feb. 26 and 27), more than 350 auditioners peopled the folding chairs set up in the Power patio for four concerts, two by each organist. Thus a segment of those interested in the world's



Concerto at 37,000 feet. Enroute to a midwest concert engagement via American Airlines Astrodome, Bill Thomson entertains his fellow passengers with ditties played on the firmly battened-down piano.

most elaborate (and expensive) electronic theatre organ had an opportunity to sample the pipelike voices of the instrument under the guidance of Thomson and Larsen. Many in the audiences expressed wonderment at the realistic tonalities after hearing both popular and standard organ works played. So much interest was generated that Larsen and Thomson are considering a second concert on the "3/14," perhaps during the summer, which is okay with Bob and Alice Power. Those interested in attending may obtain further information by sending a self addressed 8¢ stamped envelope to Lift Records, Box 884 Woodland Hills, Calif. 91364. Replies will be delayed until firm dates are set.



After playing silent film accompaniments, concerts, sing-alongs and spotlight solos since the early '20s,



Carleton James. — (Alvah Finch Photo)

organist Carleton James finally received his first standing ovation — and liked it. Playing the same 3/11 Wurlitzer he used to play in Syracuse N.Y. Keith's Theatre, James cued "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" for a group in ESTMIM's Harriet Mills building on New York State Fair grounds. "I put my best playing in the accompaniment and for the first time in my life I got a standing ovation. It was such a surprise — the whole audience standing and applauding!"



BOB EBY

Our old friend, Bob Eby, has a slew of available goodies listed in his Newport Organs bulletins. Bob, who originated the do-it-yourself kit organ ("all you need is a screwdriver, pliers and a prayer"), has expanded his present service to include consignment sales of available pipe organs in addition to a fascinating array of custom electronics, many of them trade-ins which were assembled with "TLC" by enthusiastic soldering iron welders. All are listed and illustrated in Bob's brochures, along with the individual tone generators, filters, percussion boxes, manuals and consoles needed to build a plug-in from scratch at a considerable saving. Send a large self-addressed, 8¢ stamped envelope for the bulletin: Newport Organs, 846 Production Place, Newport Beach, Calif. 92660. Great browser bait. □