

Snippets from England

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A couple of years or so ago, the nationally networked radio show *The Organist Entertains* first hit Britain's air waves. A young producer named Chris Morgan was detailed off to prepare about 13 shows, and ex-theatre organist *Robin Richmond* was persuaded to act as MC.



Robin Richmond at the BBC Theatre organ — now he is producer of his own show. (BBC Photo)

Well the show has just kept running, bringing all sorts of instruments and performers to the ken of a delighted public and maybe being influential in persuading the BBC to have their own theatre organ once again (the Wurlitzer 3/13 from the Empress Ballroom, Blackpool which is now in their Manchester studios).

Chris "Organ" Morgan (yes, the Welsh really do nickname people this way, it wasn't Dylan Thomas's flight to fancy in "*Under Milk Wood*") went to other shows and a successor was appointed — Charles Clark-Maxwell.

Now he's been posted elsewhere and in a rare fit of logical thinking, the powers that be have made *Robin Richmond* producer of his own show. Since he has made his living by producing radio shows since the golden days, who better?

"In the coming months I hope to get out and about a bit more among all the clubs and things," he promised

on taking over the reins. Since previous forays have enabled him to unearth some rare delights there could be good listening ahead.



Even in Britain, where the Golden Age of theatre organs carried on right up to 1939, most sixties star names are now in their sixties or retired from full-time playing. Where are we going to get a new generation of Tibia-ticklers and Bombarde-bashers from?

One group who have an eye to this problem are the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust, who cosset the two lovely Wurlitzers in Manchester's Odeon and Gaumont.

Secretary John B. Potter put it to me this way: "I foresee in ten years, 20 or so preserved organs, with but three or four organists capable of playing them decently, unless something is done."

His solution is for the big names to pass on their expertise to the youngsters. The current LTOT stable of bright young hopefuls is *Michael*



Peter Jebson at Manchester (but not at the Gaumont, which he has just recorded. This is the Wurlitzer 4/20 of the Odeon, just across the road).

Thomson and *Nigel Ogden* (only 16) with *Peter Jebson*.

Basic encouragement, apart from tuition and practice, has come from spots in recitals. But they have been able to promote *Peter Jebson* a mite more. He has made an impressive broadcasting debut recently and his playing can be heard on the Trust's second LP, *Side by Side*. On one side, *Reginald Liversidge*, a popular veteran, does the honours. *Peter* plays the other and both were recorded on the Gaumont's 4/14 Wurlitzer, Opus 2189.

He is a native of the North of England and, though still only 21, combines a church organist's post with playing plug-in in a Blackpool hotel and studying for his musical diplomas. He is somewhat of a protege of *Ernest Broadbent*, resident at the Tower, Blackpool, Wurlitzer. He introduced young *Peter* to pipes and, of course, a whole new world of sound opened up for him.

His playing has all the assurance of youth and, on first hearing, sounds just like the best of the good old days all over again. Listen a bit closer, though, and you'll detect some highly individual styling and harmonies right in there.

You want me to stick my neck right out? Here goes: after *Reginald Dixon* at the the Tower, Britain's top Wurlitzer appointment, came *Ernest Broadbent*. When — and may the day be long distant — he retires, *Peter Jebson* could be a shoo-in if they want to keep the Blackpool style going. And if *Peter* tires of a planned teaching career.

Other people are encouraging new talent of course. Father Gerard Kerr, of the church of St. John Vianney, in Ilford, East London, has given practice facilities to a number of youngsters. Since they have a fine preserved Compton 3/6 plus Melotone (and the occasional visits of star *Andrew Fenner*) to boost their endeavours, somebody may emerge here.

And at a recent meeting of Essex Hammond Organ Society, *Billy Hiscocke* made his first public appearance. he is not yet 12!