

Introducing...

Sidney Torch

Our December issue will contain an interview with Sidney Torch, English organist. To many, his name may not have any significance. However, to the dyed-in-the-wool buff of long standing, the name "Sidney Torch" brings memories of some of the finest 78 rpm recordings ever produced in Britain. It is understandable that only a relatively few in America will know Mr. Torch since his records were imported in limited supply during the 1930's and he has not been involved with the theatre organ for nearly 35 years. Torch's greatness has not been completely forgotten, as the forthcoming interview will show.

ATOS member Judd Walton relates how this all came about:

It was on one of those Saturday afternoons when I should have been home doing chores an event occurred that introduced me to a new horizon of theatre organ music. The scene was a large Salvation Army store in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where I had for hours been searching through thousands of used 78 rpm records for organ selections. I met a young man, Joseph Dietz, who told me of several wonderfully different English records he had recently acquired. Little did I realize that this was to be my introduction to the wonderful world of Sidney Torch, Dudley Beavan, Horace Finch, Reginald Dixon, and other now famous Britishers who have a theatre organ style all their own. The first selection we played I will never forget — Torch's 12 inch 78 rpm Columbia recording of "Gypsy Princess" selections. It was fantastically unbelievable — so different — so precise — so satisfying — it was everything I had dreamed of in rhythmic style organ music!

My introduction to English theatre organ records began a search for any and all British releases. Through the years a large library of these, on

records and tape has been acquired. At small gatherings of theatre organ enthusiasts these were played and re-played many times (this was before ATOS). All of them were great, but one artist stood out from all the others — Sidney Torch. Through the years I was able to acquire nearly all Torch releases, but the source of supply had dried up and no more were available. It was obvious that somehow these fine English Columbia (EMI label) Torch records should be re-released.

Thus, about twenty years ago I contacted EMI in London, to see if it would be possible to find the original masters. Sadly I learned that almost all of them had been melted down for the war effort. But — they did have brand new unplayed 78's in their library files which could be made available for reproducing. Negotiations were begun but my correspondent in England became unavailable and the plan ended in failure.

A few years later it was my good fortune to meet Mr. Frank Killinger, a record and RECORDING enthusiast. Naturally I introduced him to Sidney Torch with session after session of listening, copying, and playing back these exquisite records.

At about this time, Frank decided to issue an organ recording under his new label, Doric (Tiny James recording of the Fox Oakland Wurlitzer, entitled, "Intermission Time" — just recently re-released in stereo). I urged Frank to re-issue the Torch records in synthesized stereo, and he finally agreed that it would be a great project — that these records should again be made available to the now over 4,000 theatre organ enthusiasts. Thus, negotiations started once again with EMI, this time through their Marketing Manager, Mr. Derek Allen.

During one of his regularly scheduled business trips to the States, he came to San Francisco where Frank



Sidney Torch — musician, arranger, artist. (Parlophone Co. Ltd.) — (Courtesy — Frank Killinger, Sidney Torch collection.)

and I met with him and completed the business arrangements for the release of the Torch originals to Doric Records. I explained to Derek on his next trip that I planned to come to England, accompanied by my wife, Verle, and my oldest daughter Jan. Shortly after arriving in London he invited the three of us to dinner. Little did I realize that I was to acquire a new son-in-law as a result of that invitation! Derek and Jan were married in London on July 17th, 1972, where they now reside.

One of the main objectives in going to England was to meet Torch. Over the years reports had been received that this would be difficult, if not impossible. Several contacts were made without success, and as my visit neared an end, it began to appear that the meeting would not be possible. On arriving at my Hotel in London from a trip to Scotland, however, a note was waiting for me with the message, "Please call Mr. Torch". The following Tuesday we met for lunch at Verrey's in Regent Street for two hours of delightful conversation. I was accompanied by Frank Killinger who was in London for the summer.

Mr. Torch was very gracious, hospitable and kind and proved to be as I had expected, a very warm, generous and considerate person. Above all he

was forthright in his opinions and is truly an individual musically. The meeting was the highlight of the entire trip — without exception.

He gave us his approval of the re-issue on Doric label, and offered his help in any way possible. At a later meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Killinger, he provided many pictures from his personal collection for our use.

The Sidney Torch Columbia record re-issue on Doric label will soon be available (see ad on page 15). It was given the final degree of perfection by the meeting with Mr. Torch and his warm reception to the project.

There is no question as to the genius of his music. The following comments from some of our finest artists here in the States is testimony worthy of review!

Larry Vannucci, San Anselmo, California, stated, "Sidney Torch is an artist of unsurpassed precision and accuracy. Most organists cannot perform with both hands nearly as well as Torch can with his left hand alone! It is all done in such good taste — he was years ahead of his time!"

Jim Roseveare, San Francisco, California, comments, "Torch impresses me with his superb technique combined with good imagination. Rhythmically he seems so very much a part of the instrument. His arrangements, while typically English, are as inspiring today as they were in the 30's — even more so, having stood so well the test of time!"

Tiny James, Alameda, California, noted, "His orchestral background is so beautifully evident in his excellent renditions. Many of today's organists find themselves emulating his style almost without realizing it as it was so very modern. His present orchestral work is further evidence of his great musicianship. It must be remembered that when his Columbia records were made, there was no stopping and splicing of tape — they were done straight through — amazing!"

Billy Nalle, New York City, New York, observed, "He is one of only two players of major rank of that first theatre organ era, the other being Buddy Cole, who seemed aware that musical language in every way was turning the corner into a new day. He had vision to see that pop music was changing and reflected that in his own thinking which was imaginative and fresh — he did not retrogress to the use of other organists' style as a crutch. His playing is forward looking, has great anticipation, with no looking backward . . . original and fresh!"

The entire interview with Mr. Torch was recorded. It has been transcribed and will appear in the December issue of THEATRE ORGAN. His background, recording experiences, views and opinions are thoroughly explored. After nearly 35 years of silence, Mr. Torch tells his observations of the contemporary theatre organ scene.

Watch for this exclusive highlight in December. □

ATOS FLOWER

Fanny Wurlitzer Rose

At the annual Board of Directors meeting in July, the motion was passed to declare the Fanny Wurlitzer Rose as the official flower of ATOS.

The motion was brought to the attention of the meeting by Dick Simonton who advised that this plant had been developed by TY-TEX Nurseries of Texas.

Upon contacting Mr. Charles Cadey of the nursery firm, we were told how this flower came into being.

Mr. Cadey stated: "The rose was named for Mr. Fanny Wurlitzer in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of Music during the past sixty-three years."

Because of his high regard for Mr. Wurlitzer, Mr. John Bilotta, a representative of Wurlitzer Organization in Neward, N.Y., asked us to name a rose for Mr. Wurlitzer. After meeting Mr. Wurlitzer and learning of his love for roses, this came about.

It took seven years to bring this seedling to its present status, and is a cross between Poinsetta and Charlotte Armstrong.

A haunting old rose fragrance is just one of the charming attributes of this new hybrid tea which has proved to be just as happy in the North as in the South.

The rose is ideal for a cut flower. The bud is a rosey red which opens slowly and gracefully into a magnificent 4" flower that shades from a rich red into a lighter color of Charlotte Armstrong when fully opened. This is a very prolific variety, its continuous bloom is in classic hybrid tea form.

While plants may be expected to average 3 to 4 feet in the North, warmer climates may look for growth of 5 to 6 feet. Each bush is covered with luxuriant glossy foliage which has a strong inbred resistance to diseases.

Price — one bush is \$3.75, plus \$1.00 packing and handling charge; three bushes for \$9.90, plus \$1.00 packing and handling. These are two years old, field fresh plants, ready to plant in your garden.

For further information or order, contact: Charles R. Cadey TY-Tex Rose Nurseries, P.O. Box 532, Tyler, Texas 75701. Mr. Cadey will be happy to furnish a color picture of this beautiful rose upon request. □

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