

new dodger southpaw delivers merry tunes

This article is excerpted from the Sept. 16, 1972, issue of SPORTING NEWS Magazine. It provides a different insight into the realm of organ-dom, that of sportswriter Bob Hunter.

Los Angeles, Calif. — The popular quiz question on those radio shows in the ol' Brooklyn days went like this: Can you name the one person who played for the Dodgers, Rangers and Knickerbockers?

The unexpected answer, of course, was Gladys Goodding, the organist who became, as much a part of the lore of Ebbets Field as Duke Snider, Jackie Robinson and Walter O'Malley.

Now the Dodgers have a new sweetheart, known as the "Dainty Miss" from Tokyo to Sydney to Hollywood, where she played, literally, in *The Interns* for Columbia Pictures. She's smiling, attractive, popular Helen Dell, the new darling of the Dodger Stadium keyboard and thousands of fans.

A member of the American Theatre Organ Society, she has been featured at its annual conventions, where they all fell in love with her. But Helen, born and raised in Los Angeles and a professional since she was 12, also fell in love in 1959, when she saw her first baseball game. It was a World Series game at the Coliseum.

"Right away the Dodgers became my first love," recalled the young lady who started playing the accordion but skipped the piano for both pipe organs and electronic instruments, "I wondered how long this game of baseball had been going on." Now Helen is part of

the team, and feels right at home, especially because the Dodgers have a corner on lefthanders. She's a southpaw, too, although whether she plays the bass with her right hand, or vice versa, I forgot to ascertain.

She had filled in a couple of times for Shay Torrent at Anaheim Stadium, but when the Conn Organ executives called her for an audition one afternoon at Dodger Stadium, she still didn't know what job was open. Red Patterson, Dodger vice president and "musical director", immediately was impressed and she jumped at the chance to join her favorite team. In between games, Miss Dell makes numerous other appearances, including playing for silent film presentations.

"Silent movies are coming back, but so many of the scores have been lost. I have played for them cold, but I try to see the movie first if possible.

"For instance, I want to know just how many times the lover is going to tap on the window, or just when the villain will come around the corner and grab the heroine".

She recalled when she was in the wardrobe department preparing to shoot a scene for *The Interns* and asked to have her sleeves pinned.

"Are you actually going to play the organ?" asked the surprised wardrobe lady.



Helen Dell 'Conning' for the Dodgers. She listens to her music through a headset which protects her from the sound coming back from the stadium speakers seconds later. (Dodgerfoto)

Helen attended high school in Los Angeles, then Whittier College, L.A. City College, East Los Angeles College, Harbor Junior College and El Camino College, studying everything from music to art, to drama to business calculation. "But I never did learn how to become a calculating woman," she said.

The concert star has taught the organ, and has made a number of recordings and albums with such titles as "I Feel Christmas," "Helen Dell Plus Pipes," "Sugar and Spice," "Bright Pipes," "The Electric Touch of Helen Dell", and others.

Miss Dell not only plays requests for the players, fans and management, but ad libs her own sound effects and tunes to fit the situation, including Kay O'Malley's favorite if the Dodgers are behind in the ninth inning, "You Gotta Have Heart."

So far she has not goofed as Gladys Goodding did when she couldn't refrain from saluting the umpires with "Three Blind Mice." It was the first and last time, however, as it seems the National League office took a dim and curt view of her selection.

Although Helen has yet to hear from the league brass, she has heard from the Dodgers and the fans. They tell her they like what they hear. □