

VOX POPS



Conducted by Stu Green

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.

We try to leave national politics to the dailies but the theme tune Harry "Pipes" Miller suggested for the president's gadabout emissary seems so appropriate, we can't resist: "I Wonder Who's Kissing Now?"



— New York Daily News

From Geneva, N.Y. ATOSer Louis Klein submits a clipping from the New York Daily News, the "Dream Street" column of Bob Sylvester with a letter from Father Cormac A. Walsh, chaplain of Clinton Prison, Dannemora: "We have an old theatre organ given us by the Brandt theatre people years ago. It's a magnificent piece but it got broken down. We pondered how to get it in shape again. We asked an organ company, they wouldn't touch it for less than \$1500. Then a miracle happened — Smokey appeared. Smokey turned out to be an expert organ man. He started at the pedals and is almost to the chimes. All it's costing is for parts. Now for the bad news; Smokey was up for parole, a sure shot to be released. But he told the Parole Board, 'I can't leave yet. I've got weeks of work left on the organ.' This is the first man I've ever known to refuse parole."

If Smokey seems like a solid organ fan, so is correspondent Lou Klein, who "commuted" 640 miles each weekend (Geneva, N.Y. to Baltimore, Maryland) to help with the restoration of the 2/7 Wurlitzer Roy and Dolores Wagner were installing in their Glen Arm home. The Potomac Valley Chapter's October '72 newsletter, *The Static Regulator*, summed Lou's help in three words: "This is devotion!"

From Picton, Ontario, Canada, ATOSer Clealan Blakely faced a situation with which organ enthusiasts are often confronted: the need to move out an organ before the building is razed. But in this case, the warehouse where Clealan had stored his 2/17 had been sold so a quick move was indicated. The transfer to Clealan's partly finished new home was managed with the help of friends and relatives, and the organ parts are now piled high in the new chamber, hindering installation work. But Clealan isn't complaining. He has managed to exchange and horse-trade most of the straight ranks for theatrical ones. He plans a 2/11 with Harp and Chimes.

Organist Rose Diamond made another sally last fall to the scene of her Broadway T.O. career in New York (she now lives in southern California)



ROSE DIAMOND — Manhattan adventure with memories. — (Bob Hill Photo)

and had some eye opening adventures. In the old Automat, across from Loew's State where Rose once played, she viewed the floor show (floor show in the Automat?!); enjoyed the New Jersey hospitality of Mary Bowles and "never saw one New Jersey mosquito"; caught Bud Taylor on his last day at the Surf City hotel Wurlitzer; took in Leroy Lewis' performance at the Lighthouse restaurant at Barnegat Light, N.J. ("he's fabulous!"); ogled the bumps and grinds of the topless beauties through the open door of the New York Metropole; took in two performances at the Music Hall, one as the guest of organist Jack Ward and another through the courtesy of the Hall's chief projectionist who guided her to the Rockefeller's private viewing booth near the projection room; had lunch at the Music Hall's commissary; saw two shows, *No, No, Nanette* with "forever young Ruby Keeler", and *Prisoner of Second Avenue* ("an absolute riot"). But it was the Music Hall which aroused the most memories. Rose recalls seeing Roxy during rehearsals before the Hall opened, seated in the dark auditorium (sporting a green eyeshade) and barking commands at the Rockettes on stage. Rose was then rehearsal pianist for the Center theatre. What memories she must have!

It seems to be happening for youthful Shirley Hannum; after several years of near stagnation (outside of her home area of Philadelphia where her music is much appreciated), her concert engagements started to pick up, due, says Shirley, to a change in "packaging." For the past seven years she has been playing as the "little gingham girl" of the organ, implied if not stated, and programmers weren't buying. This despite the fact that



Shirley Hannum. She's a new woman.

during the same period (starting at 16) she was staff organist at a Philadelphia suburban theatre. "But I guess I did seem a bit dowdy then," she admits.

But it's all different now, and Shirley credits her new image. No longer the "pigtail prodigy," Shirley appears now as a vivacious young woman, as her latest photos indicate and a favorite tune, "I Enjoy Being a Girl," now comes through in a more sultry manner. Along with the girl, the repertoire and technique have grown with a suddenness which even startles Shirley, whose new Malar recording was cut on the Bob Carson 3/26 Wurlitzer while she was in Los Angeles for an ATOS-sponsored Wiltern concert in January.

Now Shirley hardly finds time for her hobby, organ journalism. Besides being the Delaware Valley chapter's editor/scribe for their local *THE LIFT*, and for the chapter's news in this publication, she recently took on another writing assignment, Eastern correspondent for Bill Worrall's *THE ORGANIST*.

"It all seemed to happen at once," says a dazed but delighted Shirley.

The December 1972 issue of *THE ADVOCATE*, which is addressed to "gays," ran an extensive biographical piece on Robert Hope-Jones, who the writer hailed as a "gay genius". The article is well researched and well written with accurate historical data on Hope-Jones' accomplishments. Nothing new to organ buffs in this area was revealed but the writer, Ed Jackson, dealt very frankly with H-J's problems with the authorities concerning his alleged "gay" activities in an era much less tolerant, and considerably more

ignorant in this area, than now.

Outside of a totally incorrect statement credited to the 1972 LA chapter chairman about his wanting to bar homosexuals from ATOS, the worst error is *THE ADVOCATE'S* upside-down photo of the Radio City Music Hall console.

Was Hope-Jones really "gay"? His close friend (and long time chief voicer), Jim Nuttal, said no. But who really cares whether the answer is yes or no? Nothing that can be revealed at this late date can add to nor detract from the great legacy the genius of Robert Hope-Jones left us all — nothing less than the theatre organ as we know it.

Jim Gaines' "Echoing Antique Shop" in Los Angeles is no more. The shop gained recognition in the late '50s due to the 10-rank mostly Wurlitzer organ antique dealer Gaines assembled from several theatre organs in the Los Angeles area, plus the 3-deck console from the Indianapolis Circle theatre (an earlier 2-deck console now controls the Roger Angell home installation in Hawaii). Many club concerts were played on the instrument over the years. A few weeks ago Jim received a blunt eviction notice; the building is to be levelled. He had to move fast so he decided on an auction. On January 7, among vases, statues and chandeliers, the bidding started at \$1500 and went up rapidly to \$6000 — where it stopped cold. The buyer is Art Aslesen of Pomona, Calif., who will store the organ until he finds a suitable place to install it. John Scott did a nice job of demonstrating the organ's capabilities to the full house of antique enthusiasts and kibitzers.

The Boston Herald-Traveler ran an illustrated story on doings of the Eastern Massachusetts ATOS chapter on Nov. 22, '72. Highlighted was the chapter's project of installing Boston's ex-Loew's State Wurlitzer in Babson College's Knight Auditorium. Several ATOS members were mentioned, as well as Al Winslow, former theatre organist and now house organist at the John Hays Hammond Castle in Gloucester. He designed the console platform and built the pipe chambers. There are five sporadically played theatre organs in Boston: *The Paramount*,

Savoy, *Music Hall* (ex-Metropolitan) and two in the Bradford Hotel.

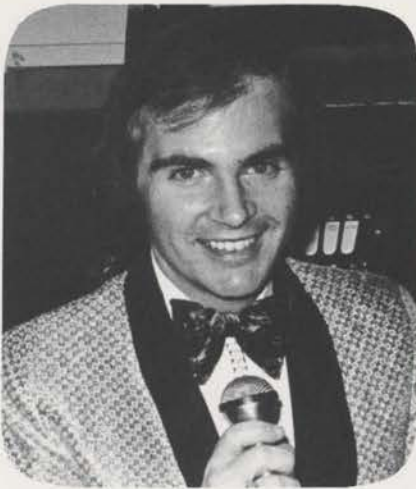
While making his annual Thanksgiving trip to Milwaukee, Doc Bebko accidentally came by the "Schnitzelhaus Restaurant" wherein is housed a 3/11 Wurlitzer. Doc was given a chance to play it, and though it is not finished, "It is a marvelous instrument; beats anything installed in a restaurant for hundreds of miles around." The organ is to be augmented by a 3/15 which has arrived from Syracuse. On the restaurant's menu is "Wurlitzer's Pipe Dream" — a turkey, ham and Swiss cheese sandwich, dipped in egg and fried to a golden brown to the tune of \$1.75. There will be more on this installation later.



DEL CASTILLO reminisces. — (Stufoto)

The Nuggets pertaining to the New England area in the October issue contained fond memories for ATOS "Hall of Famer" Del Castillo. "I wonder how many are left," he says. "Martel and Frazee are gone. Earl Weidner was an assistant at my school. Roy Frazee, Sally Frise, Chet Brigham, Eva Langley and Harry Jenkins were all associates of mine in Boston theatres. Gladstone Kincaid, Eddie Lord and Roland Pomerat were graduates of my school, and Ollie Strunk was assistant organist with me at the New York Rialto."

Mabel McGuire of Doylestown, Pa., a former theatre organist, is bursting with pride since learning that her nephew, Karl Cole, will be performing at the RTOS Wurlitzer on March 16. "I personally feel honored and pleased that RTOS has asked Karl to appear



Karl Cole

during the 1972-73 season which includes such nationally known artists as George Wright, Rex Koury, Rosa Rio and Gaylord Carter. Mrs. McGuire has fond memories of her days at the Eastman School of Music and remembers Harold Osborn Smith, Robert Berentsen, J. Gordon Baldwin and Beatrice Ryan, all having played the Eastman's big Austin, which was removed during the recent renovation.



Those attending the July convention in Portland will not have the opportunity to hear the Photoplayer in the bar of the Hoyt Hotel. The hotel was closed a few months ago due to lack of business. An auction was scheduled and among the effects were 150 oil paintings; antique furniture; 85 Tiffany lampshades and a movie locomotive, the "Hooterville Cannonball."



When Martha Mitchell served as a gadfly in Washington and made all those nocturnal telephone calls, did you know that she was taking music lessons from one of the theatre organ concert circuit's glamorous members? Yes, the wife of the former U.S. Attorney General was a student of Rosa Rio, and the "Queen of the Soaps" sent Martha the printed program of her RTOS concert of last October.



The School of the Ozarks at Point Lookout, Missouri, has become a big visitor drawing card through the three pipe organs installed there. In September, the Central Missouri AGO saw the Skinner, the Wicks practice organ



"Ask not what ATOS can do for you,
but what you can do for ATOS!"

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and the Wurlitzer theatre instrument. Bert Buhrman, the resident organist, says: "It was a revelation to see the reaction to the Wurlitzer. A church organist who is also conductor of the Jefferson City Symphony, loves the theatre organ sound. I have never had a nicer letter of appreciation following the visit. Kansas City and Oklahoma chapters of ATOS have written for visiting dates following our return from Europe, and there have been numerous calls and visits from individuals."

Incidentally, the school's Wurlitzer may boast the only steam locomotive whistle in a pipe organ installation in the country. It is the Terrell whistle, named after R.G. Terrell, a 40-year employee of the Southern Pacific Railroad, who established a maintenance fund for the whistle. It should furnish colorful accents for such tunes as "The Wreck of the Old 97" and "Casey Jones."



Blind organist Carlo Annibale, in duet with fellow organist Dorothy Grainy, performed on two electronics in concert with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra last November 27 in Buffalo's Kleinhans Music Hall. This was a novel undertaking; the organists were their own "angels," putting up

\$4500 for expenses of hall rental, orchestra, stage hands, and ushers. It was something which Annibale had desired for a long time, though realizing the financial risk. However, 2,400 showed up at \$4.00 a ticket, which meant a neat profit for the organist-promoters. The music played was popular, and popular versions of symphonic numbers. Two standing ovations resulted. They attributed the success of the venture to advance publicity by the local media.



RTOS, competing with the Ice Follies and "Kiss Me, Kate", drew 1,000 to the Auditorium Theatre on December 5. Featured were Dean Robinson and Doc Bebko. The former rode up the 4-deck console dressed as Santa and played Christmas music for 15 minutes, with a 35-colored light simulated Christmas Tree on the contour curtain in the background. The tree was the creation of Don Hall, who has produced these spectacles for the four December programs. The audience loved it and rewarded Don with a burst of applause.

Following Dean's remaining part of the program, Doc Bebko accompanied Harry Langdon's comedy, "The Strong Man".

From the Bay Area of California, both organist Warren Lubich and Doric Records' Prexy Frank Killinger give similar reasons for the paucity of public pipe organ concerts in San Francisco and environs: too many places where one can mainline pipe music for the price of a beer or a pizza. With pipe installations in bars, restaurants and pizzerias in nearby San Raphael, Redwood City, Santa Clara, Campbell, Los Altos, Hayward, Martinez, Fremont, Vallejo and San Francisco proper, it's difficult to attract audiences to pay concerts — unless it's something exceptional and offbeat. Such a show was Gaylord Carter's 1972 Halloween presentation of *The Phantom of the Opera* which bagged more than one thousand paying customers.



FRANK WOODÉ practicing for his ATOS stint at the San Gabriel auditorium. (Bob Hill Photo)

Remember Frank Woode? He's the projectionist-organist who was largely responsible for focussing organ enthusiasts' attention on the South Pasadena Rialto Theatre's 2/10 Wurlitzer after John Curry had rescued it from a dozen soakings in the '50s and early '60s (we recall one 1959 story headlined "Wurlitzer Wetted, Warped, Wrined, Wrescued, Wrehabilitated!"). Frank Woode was the first to play a public concert on the instrument. It was a well-attended show MC'd by the Rialto's manager, Don Boxwell, and it proved a forerunner of later concerts by Bill Thomson, Gaylord Carter, Lyn Larsen and George Wright. Of course, fire ended the Wurlitzer's career (what was left was sold for parts) but Frank Woode is still projecting in the area, currently at the Fox Theatre in Covina. He's still playing, too. He did a cameo spot during a recent LA chapter event in the San Gabriel civic auditorium.



BILL THOMSON among varied treasures. Pupil Julia Jackson offers congratulations after the Power residence concert. (Stufoto)

Remember our account of the Lyn Larsen/Bill Thomson concert on the Bob Power very special "style 260" Rodgers organ a few issues back? At that time we predicted a repeat performance due to the high degree of interest generated, and invited those who would be interested in travelling to the Power Camarillo, Calif., home for a future audition of the greatest theatre electronic to send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to a P.O. box address for the date. Enough did to merit a repeat of the arrangement and Lyn and Bill, playing on separate weekend days (afternoon and evening concerts), enjoyed an enthusiastic turnout for their recent "twin bill."

From L.C. Merrifield of Wellsville, N.Y. came the October issue of GOOD OLD DAYS magazine which ran an excellent feature on the theatre organ, written by a Harry Wilkinson. Obviously a resident of the Boston area during the golden days, Mr. Wilkinson emphasized the organists who played the theatres in the bean-town area: Al Forest, Lloyd Del Castillo, Roy Frazee, John Kiley (still going strong at 59), Arthur Martel, Francis Cronin and Frank Simpson. Eight excellent photos illustrated the article including one of Esther Higgins, still active as a teacher and concert artist. There was mention of New York organists Jesse Crawford, Lew White, Dr. C.A.J. Parmentier, Ann Leaf, Dick Leibert and Don Baker. A plug for ATOS was also given.

Composer and former theatre organist, Anson Jacobs, a recent ATOS joinee from Franklin, Pa., likes THEATRE ORGAN. "I read and re-read all contents and do enjoy it so much! The magazine sure covers many places, things and people with whom I was familiar in the 'golden era'. It is good to read about all this after so many years have passed, because I was a small part of it."



JOHN BECK at his 2/7 Wurlitzer — 'Goodnight — sweetheart'.

In Dallas, Texas, ATOS chapter chairman John Beck said a fond adieu to his 2/7 Wurlitzer, the instrument for which he had built a vaulted roof church-like structure of generous dimensions in his backyard. It had been a fine organ but it was time to be rid of it, so John sat down and played himself a concert of farewell tunes — "Goodbye Forever", "We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye", "Farewell Blues". "So Long, Oolong" and "Who Put the Overalls in Mrs. Murphy's Chowder!" (that last one, although not fitting for the occasion, is a favorite of John's). Why would an airline pilot with everything going for him give up a fine little instrument, one he had taken great pains to install so neatly that it would be sure to rate the legendary Walton-Bethards seal of approval should that team ever drop in for a look-see? John had a very good reason; the little 2/7 was being displaced so it could be replaced by the 3/15 Wurlitzer from the El Paso Plaza Theatre which he had bid for successfully. He sold the 2/7 to an enthusiast in the Dallas area and as soon as it had been removed the process of redesigning the

chambers for the 3/15 was started. This included a plan also for a 3rd chamber way up near the arched ceiling to accommodate the 3/15's percussions. In rebuilding the chambers John used the experience gained during the 2/7's sojourn. He had learned that wallboard makes poor reflective surfaces in a chamber so he settled for hard plaster this time, after lining the walls with sturdy metal screening on which to hang the plaster. Work is progressing under the watchful eye of veteran organ builder Weldon Flanagan, whose experience includes re-installing the Dallas Paramount 4/20 Wurlitzer in his own suburban home.



Hall of Famer Fred Feibel is now a member of the Senior Musician's Association. He has been a member of New York local 802 since 1928. Writing from his home in Vero Beach, Florida, Mr. Feibel says: "I now think of my active career as a marvelous fulfillment of my innate desire to create music. It has been my great pleasure to be the choir director and organist for the First Presbyterian Church of Vero Beach for the past 10 years. And it is a privilege to pass one's later years in such a happy and rewarding way." This organization is the one to which Don Baker, another Hall of Famer, joined two years ago, and now proudly carries a Golden Card, symbolic of his 50 years as a professional musician. Doc Bebko will get his card in 1975.



Anson Jacobs informs us that George Shaw of Franklin, Pa. has purchased for \$200 the 3/9 Wurlitzer which was installed in 1928 in the Latonia Theatre in Oil City, Pa. There were some pipes missing and the organ needed re-leathering. The instrument is now being installed and renovated in the Big Red Barn on Route No. 322, where it is planned to show silent movies with Anson Jacobs at the console. The organ won't be entirely unfamiliar to Anson; he played it for a special program in 1935.

Anson also tells us that there is a 3-manual Robert Morton quietly sitting in a 730-seat theatre in Meadville, Pa. More on this instrument later, in the form of an old picture of the organ being played. Anson has checked out Titusville, Pa.; no organs there. So, the above two instruments are the only ones remaining in his area. □



CHAPTER NOTES

BEEHIVE

On November 26, 1972, Beehive Chapter members were treated to a very special meeting at the newly decorated and beautifully refurbished Organ Loft. Surrounding the 5 manual console are many yards of red velvet; the walls have been covered with red velvet wallpaper, from the ceiling hang huge crystal chandeliers. Red and black carpet adorns the floor and a wooden dance floor replaces the old tile floor.

The organ never sounded better. It had been tuned and re-voiced. Lyn Larsen, recorded on this beautiful organ last fall, and his new album, "Lyn Larsen At The Organ Loft", was released in December.

After the meeting, members were invited to play on this magnificent Wurlitzer.

Christmas decorating had begun on the building and I think everyone went away with a little bit of the Christmas spirit starting to show.

New officers for the chapter were elected: Walter Schofield, President; Clarence Briggs, Vice President and Maxine V. Russell, Secretary-Treasurer.

MAXINE V. RUSSELL

CEDAR RAPIDS

On November 9, 1972 at 8 p.m., Ray Snitil, our vice chairman stepped


into the spotlight at the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Paramount and greeted another capacity audience of over 2,000. Ray knew that the crowd had come to see and hear Lee Erwin, so he quickly explained what ATOS is all about and then introduced Lee.

For the next 2½ hours Lee Erwin again displayed his great talents to Cedar Rapids and the Paramount's mighty Wurlitzer.

There was eighty minutes of Buster Keaton's *The General* with Mr. Erwin's accompaniment vibrant with sounds characteristic of theatre organ. Like the best of the film scores of the vanishing symphonic era, Lee kept sound effects minimal. Because he is good and silent films are the remarkable medium that they are, nobody missed the lack of dialogue.

This was Lee's second appearance, and again he kept the capacity crowd thrilled with his great organ melodies and outstanding movie accompaniment. Thanks Lee, and a special thank you to the Kyle Mills who were hosts to Lee while he was here.

Pat Marshall, our secretary, wrote "These shows don't just happen by themselves. They are the result of a lot of hard work by many people, including membership and mail order ticket sales, record sales, taking tickets, ushering, watching doors, handing out



REMEMBER

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