

# 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.

ATOS prexy "Cap" Young has an advantage enjoyed by few of his predecessors — mobility. His work as an airline pilot get him around to chapters and installations with a frequency which keeps him informed firsthand of events and attitudes across the land. But sometimes it's nostalgia which moves him. He recalled hearing Leonard MacClain play the final concert on the 3/13 Wurlitzer in the

Rochester, N.Y. Paramount just before Dick Hull moved it to Colorado where it was installed in the Three Coins restaurant in Louisville. So, when Young visited Denver to confer with ATOS "Veep" Duane Searle in April he learned that Searle is maintaining the instrument. A trip to Louisville resulted and Three Coins owner Dick Codran put down the red carpet for the ATOS officers. They heard Sunday-Monday organist Keith Kendall (Ray Young is the regular) and learned from Codran that he credits the pipe organ with helping attract customers to the restaurant. Young found the installation to his liking. "I still feel a bit attached to that organ," he said.

Organist Dan Bellomy phoned from Houston, Texas, to say that our statement in a recent issue to the effect that Houston's entire theatre organ complement consisted of one 2/7 Kimball now in a residence, is happily obsolete. Dan informs us that auto dealer "Buster" Mattsen has acquired the 3/10 Wurlitzer from the local Metropolitan theatre and plans to have it playing as soon as he finds a suitable building. Dan also had an encouraging personal note for us; he has been selected to play the 3/11 Wurlitzer in the Fort Worth Casa Manana theatre-in-the-round before this summer's musical stage presentations.

George Downes Jr. writes from Magnolia, Ohio, that he uses his home-based 2/5 "You name it" organ to "make a few noises with" while trying to find a suitable home for a 3/16 1923 Voteler-Sparling-Holtkamp straight organ he bought and put in

storage two years ago. Wonder if George knows that the Cleveland firm, which developed into the staunchest promoter of the "baroque" classical organ, once built theatre organs?

Organist Bert Buhrman of the School of the Ozarks reports that his recent playing of theatre organs in England was a "fascinating experience". Urged on by "dear wife Denise", Bert played a November 26 broadcast on the Ronald Curtis' 4/19 Compton in Bolton. This instrument is probably the only studio installation whose keydesk is on a lift. Console is in the room's center with 10 ranks on the left and 9 ranks on the right. Bert said that 80 percent of the audience which witnessed the broadcast was male. "Evidently, English men aren't as insecure about their emotional lives as American men are."

After the festivities, the Buhrmans were taken to a pub where they were introduced to the North Country dance known as "the Slosh." Very unusual, says Bert.

Bert Buhrman announces for the third year, a series of four "Music for a Sunday Afternoon" programs for July, starting on the 8th at the Point Lookout, Mo., School of the Ozarks. Free tickets will be distributed, beginning at noon on the day of each concert. Capacity is 1,000. The Wurlitzer will be part of each program, of course. Those heading west for the ATOS convention in Portland might find it convenient to stop off and take in a show. The school was featured on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* on March 15, and mention was made of the "concerts on the massive old Wurlitzer theatre organ in the auditorium."

Jim Lahay sends us the good word that as of March the Casa Loma Wurlitzer installation in Toronto is 75 percent complete, with tuning, voicing and "bug elimination" scheduled for completion by May. On October 23, Dennis James will open the organ for TTOS members, with the first public concert scheduled in January. Plans thereafter are for monthly concerts from September thru May. Summer months are too hot in the non-air-conditioned castle. A feature story on



Duane Searle (front), Erwin Young, Keith Kendall (seated) and Dick Codran. Red Carpet at the 'Three Coins.'



*Casa Loma will be forthcoming shortly.*



Gaylord

A Los Angeles TV station recently broadcast a Ralph Story documentary entitled "Citizen Lloyd" which traced the career of the silent movie comedian, delved into his private life and toured Harold's estate. In the course of the feature, Gaylord Carter was shown at the Wiltern Kimball console as it rose from the pit to the throb of exciting organ sounds. Then something incredible happened and we think we have caught Gaylord in one of his rare goofs — if an anachronism can be called a "goof." Yet, there it was: Lloyd cutting up on-screen in one of his '20s comedies while Gaylord accompanied with "Herod's Song" from the 1960's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Trouble is, the music fit the comic action perfectly.

*Up in Issaquah, Washington lives antique car enthusiast Bert Lobberegt, Jr. In addition to his twenty mint-condition autos, he has a 1919 Wurlitzer "theatre orchestra" which he purchased in Fairbanks, Alaska three years ago. Once used in a silent-movie theatre, it boasts organ pipes, drums and 10 sound effects. Lobberegt also has restored a mobile circus wagon with calliope. Five of his player pianos have been placed in restaurants and business establishments in the Seattle-Bellevue area. Wonder if Dick Schrum ever considered one for his Plaid Piper Restaurant so he could have a night away from his plug-in occasionally?*

Dr. C.A.J. Parmentier is observing his 57th year in the United States as a

professional musician, and his superb musicianship is becoming known again now that he is emerging as a soloist on the theatre organ circuit. Old Prospector Klos spent several hours with this amazing man not long ago and gathered some interesting items. For example, names of organists who played in New York theatres; Dr. Parmentier remembers Frank Stewart Adams, J. Van Cleft Cooper, George Crook, George Epstein, John Hammond, Herbert Henderson, Vera Kitchener, Sigmund Krumgold, Walter Litt, Melchior Mauro-Cottone, John Priest, Harold Ramsbottom (Ramsay), Rosa Rio, and Walter Wild.

*During his March 22 attendance at Radio City Music Hall, Doc Bebko was favorably impressed by John DeTroy substituting for Dick Leibert and Co. "He was so good, he had me fooled; I thought that Leibert was back! DeTroy must be the least-known substitute organist (no credits). He is the most frequent 'sub' for the three organists at the Music Hall. His work is flawless. But who is he? From where does he hail? What is his background?" Can anyone provide the answers?*



Rex Koury — (Stufoto)

Lloyd Klos reports that an audience of 700 witnessed the first appearance of Rex Koury at the Auditorium Theatre Wurlitzer in Rochester on April 19. The Flower City was one of six on his eastern tour. Holy Thursday and a concert of the Eastman Wind Ensemble reduced RTOS attendance, he says. Klos states that those who did attend were rewarded with one of the best concerts of this or any season.

"Now firmly entrenched on the concert trail, Rex took the 4/22 on a musical journey which an enthusiastic audience rewarded with a standing ovation. In Koury, the theatre organ circuit is blessed with a performer having superb musicianship and a personality which makes friends of anyone with whom he comes in contact. Keep your eyes on this fellow!"

*From Bartonville, Illinois, ATOSer J.R. Jones blasts the constant repetition of selections on current organ recordings. He writes, "I note a number of songs and styles repeated on one record after another. We must have more variety." Jones suggests a source usually neglected by recording organists — Country-Western music. "There are many country-western songs that have great feeling," he writes.*

*We agree about the repetition of a few "favorites," Years ago the late Ben Hall wrote about founding a "Society for the Prevention of Organ Recordings of 'Laura' and 'Tenderly,'" two tunes which showed up on LP's with nauseous regularity in monaural days. In recent times the most repeated tunes seem to be "Alley Cat" and "Lara's Theme." These have long been on our record reviewer's "List Unexpurgatorius" but with little effect. Published fulmination warning of the horrors of repeating "most requested" tunes may provide some reader titillation but apparently "box office pinch" is the only factor which will effect a cure. There are plenty of neglected standards, forgotten pops and silent film cues worthy of exhumation by recording organists, but the idea of an all country-western music program is frankly one which escaped us until suggested by J. R. Jones. Perhaps its time to saddle up and go the Nashville route. Who'll be first?*

Ray Brubacher sends in a correction on our April item about the Wheeling, West Virginia, Capitol theatre-turned-TV studio. The 2500-seat house once housed a 4/17 Marr & Colton (not a Morton as we said) and Ray reports the instrument is being installed in the home of Norman Ziegler in Potomac, Maryland. Better yet, Ray is writing a story about it for this mag.



While we're on a correction binge, Kenneth Wilson, of North Wilmington, Massachusetts, is the resident organist at the Hammond Castle in Gloucester. He has played more than 100 concerts on the 144-rank straight organ, writes Mrs. Leonard Winter.



George honored.

When the Rochester Theatre Organ Society presented George Wright with its rare Honorary Membership during his concert at the auditorium theatre's 4/22 Wurlitzer late last year, no one managed to snap a photo of the event. But the matter was taken care of later at the home of Jim Webster where George and RTOS past prexy Gale Smith re-enacted the presentation scene for Dick Harold's camera. With George Wright less and less on the theatre organ scene, this just might be a historic photo.

Those who attended the ATOS convention last July, remember the hilarious antics of the radio "Joy Boys" who performed onstage during the Rosa Rio recital at the Virginia Theatre in the skit "As the Worm Turns". Potomac Valley chapter chairperson Jean Lautzenheiser reports that the boys have been dismissed from WRC in favor of a "more modern format" - rock!

The Piedmont Chapter's newsletter, *Reeds and Strings*, reports that ATOSer Dave Kalmbach's "WurliPage" (the 3/17 Page console is from the Chicago Tivoli) is playing in the 1908 300-seat Marietta Theatre in Marietta,

Pennsylvania, less some ranks and sans swell shutters but okay for an opener starring John Muri. Kalmbach moved to Marietta from Grand Rapids, Michigan (where he staged concerts) when the ancient theatre became available as a permanent home for his organ.

Miami's Eddie May, because of a very busy schedule, has had to refuse several requests of the South Florida ATOS chapter to do a program. However, he was able to participate at the March 25 meeting as a story-teller. The artist was Betty Lee Taylor, a fine theatre organist in the twenties and thirties (remembered in the Syracuse and Schenectady, N.Y. area) on the *Schine*, Paramount and Loew's circuits. Her program was "Theatres Thru the Years", spiced with anecdotes. Eddie told the story of when, as an organist in a Kentucky theatre during World War II, he and the manager heard a buzzing sound. Fearing it might be the noise of a time bomb, they were almost ready to empty the house when a fellow in the rear row unplugged his electric razor from an aisle light socket.

VOX CATOE's Tom Tibia says in the Chicago chapter's April issue that Tom Gnaster should have played *The Lost Chord* at the chapter social held at the remote Fred Hermes organ aerie in March as a tribute to all the members who got lost on the way to the event because "they innocently relied on the map" supplied. Fred's woodland home is rather hard to find, even with no map.



Ken Wright - Conn man.

Veteran radio and TV organist Ken Wright, who made quite a splash with

the release of a record made 20 years previously on a 3/14 TV studio Kilgen in Oklahoma City a couple of years ago, informs us he's now "selling plug-ins." He bought him a Conn 650 and liked it so much he felt he could push the brand commercially. So he joined Bob Hankey and they have two stores in Oklahoma City. Organ buffs are always welcome to their Conn Organ Studios and "has Ken got a deal for you!"



E. Power Biggs at the mighty Wurlitzer! At last!

Last time we left you with a cliff hanger, the possibility of E. Power Biggs at a Mighty Wurlitzer! Yes, it happened; the noted classical organist performed before a sell-out audience in Radio City Music Hall. On March 3, a "milkman's matinee" featured harpsichordist Anthony Newman, a chamber orchestra, and pianist Eugene List with his "monster 10-piano ensemble." But the guy who stole the show was "baroquist" Biggs, who has expressed distain for "romantic" organs, playing the biggest Wurlitzer of them all. He performed Bach's familiar "Tocatta & Fugue," "Battle of Trenton," and "to hear what it sounds like on the mighty Wurlitzer", "Variations on America." The Finale was Sousa's "Stars & Stripes Forever," with the whole company; pianos revolving on the stage turntable, stars flashing and the national colors waving.

Just as Ann Leaf, Rosa Rio and Elsie Thompson were noted years ago





Ashley Miller

for accompanying radio soap operas, another group of organists, versed in both electronic and pipe technique, perform similar tasks on the TV "soaps" of today. Ashley Miller, for example, can be heard daily on Search For Tomorrow with piano and organ. Eddie Layton's talents are featured on Love Is a Many Splendored Thing. Charles Paul provides both organ and piano music on As the World Turns, while George Wright's artistry is heard on General Hospital. The Guiding Light, Edge of Night, and Another World use piano and organ background music, but the networks are lax in providing the names of the musicians.

After our recent item about how busy he is with his concert work, organist Bill Thomson changed his mind about concert dates in Australia. Instead he had the opportunity to substitute for George Wright on the TV "soaper," *General Hospital* while George was touring for Conn in Britain, a chore Bill has performed before during GW's vacations.



Karl Cole at the RTOS Wurlitzer console.

The second largest crowd of the season welcomed Syracuse organist, Karl Cole, to Rochester's Auditorium Theatre on March 16. Just getting his spurs as a theatre organist, Karl demonstrated that he can be classed with the best of the crop of youngsters who are keeping alive the heritage of the Mighty Wurlitzer. Twice he generated spontaneous applause for his playing of two numbers simultaneously, and a standing ovation was his reward at the end of the concert.

At a recent Carnegie Hall concert in New York which featured four electronic organs many people headed for the exits after 10 minutes of an avant-garde composition based on two chords. Whistles, jeers, catcalls and shouts of "Get off the stage!" added to the confusion. Those concertgoers remaining to the end of the 20-minute cacophony whistled and booed. In defense of his work, the composer stated, "Today's concert is designed for dead people . . . I'm interested in learning new things even if I don't like them, and expect my audiences to have the same attitude." HmMMMM!



Just plain 'Walter' — (Stufoto)

Motor City chapter members were scheduled to bus from Detroit as guests of CATOE to Chicago's Patio theatre late in April to hear Walter Strojny play the 3/17 Barton on a Sunday morning. Walter, now a high school senior, studied with Al Melgard and is remembered for a striking ATOS convention cameo performance at the Chicago Stadium 6/62 behemoth a few years ago when he was kneehigh to a spinet bench. We wanted to congratulate him then but didn't

want to chance mispronouncing his name, so the congrats were sent by mail. By return mail we received a communication from the young man explaining that his name was pronounced the same as that of messrs Raleigh, Winchell or Matthau — simply "Walter." Also enclosed was a plan for a tracker action (!) theatre organ he was hoping to build. Wonder what became of that project?

Veteran Chicago theatre organist Mildred Fitzpatrick has a rugged constitution. Last September, the thumb on her left hand was smashed by a friend's car door. It was a bad fracture and she says she nearly bled to death. In November she had a bad virus, followed by a case of pneumonia which put her out of circulation for some time. Reading her life story in THEATRE ORGAN boosted her morale, however, and now "everything is OK".

From Westminster, Maryland, long time organ fan Alvah Finch submits a clip from the Baltimore News-American of April 15 with a 5-column spread about the M.P. Moller Co. of Hagerstown. Included is a history of the firm, which will celebrate 100 years of organ building in 1975, and a claim that it has built one third of all the church organs in the world. The well-researched article by J. W. Joynes makes no mention of the firm's theatre organ project of the '20s. Mentioned are long time tonal expert John Hose, chief flue voicer Donald Gillett, console expert Roger Moser and Moller's current president W. Riley Daniels.

A Prelude, an Etude,  
A Jig Fugue by Bach,  
Three Dances, some Ballads  
and Day by Day Rock.

That's how Betty Heffer summarizes John Seng's March 24 concert at the Detroit Senate Theater in the DTOC News. John's programs have included some ambitious classical transcriptions in recent years, the most astounding being his performance of Ravel's 'La Valse.' His DTOC program included Debussy's 'Afternoon of a Faun,' Smetana's rollicking "Dance of the





Johnny Seng — (1966 Photo).

Comedians," a jazzy "Improvisation on a Gospel Tune," audience participation (metronomic handclapping) during a Bach selection, Delius' serene "Winter Night" and Chopin's "Black Key Etude" — all these interspersed among such current items as a rhythmic piece from "Godspell." Hope John has time for more of same after he gets settled playing in that west coast pizzery — if only as relief from myriad requests for "Doctor Chicago."



John Muri

Another organist who tackles king-size projects is our commentator, John Muri. Besides teaching at Wayne State, work on his farm, playing concerts, and writing articles for us, Detroit-based John Muri has added an imposing title to his list of concert selections — an organ transcription of the entire score of that distinctive

work of musical Americana, Ferde Grofe's orchestral "Grand Canyon Suite."



Word from Germantown, Pennsylvania, reveals that Keith Chapman, head organist at the Wanamaker store colossus, is playing a twice weekly radiocast from WUHY-FM. The program is called *The Grand Court Organ* and from the title we assume it is played on the big beast. Chapman and his Mrs are currently building a studio in a 100-year-old Victorian mansion in Germantown.



Harvey Heck. Back in the saddle again. — (Stufoto)

*It isn't that California organ enthusiast Harvey Heck is inconsistent, but one of the reasons he gave for selling his 4/27 Wurlitzer to Bill Brown (to install in the Phoenix "Organ Stop") was that 27 ranks are just too much for one man to maintain. So what does he do? Nothing for a year following the sale. Then, quite suddenly, he latched onto two choice instruments, a Smith and a Wurlitzer (the latter once owned by Paul Pease, son of famed organist Sibley Pease) with stoplists adding up to better than 30 ranks!*



From Detroit, the DTOC NEWS reports that international finance problems are holding up the key recovering project on the 4/34 Wurlitzer in the Senate Theater. The ivory to be used is coming from England and the varying values of USA versus British currency are causing "further negotiations."



*We hate to poke a hole in someone else's pneumatic, but the widely-circulated report about that broadcast airline plug which ended up talking about the Atlanta Fox theatre and its pipe organ was in error — so far as the*

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*instrument is concerned. The organ heard in the background was not the Atlanta Fox Moller but the New York Plaza Studio Wurlitzer.*



ATOS conventioners at the "Sweet 16th" in Seattle two years ago probably recall the Food Circus Wurlitzer with Tubby Clark at its fire-engine-red console. According to Puget Sound Chairman, Margaret Sabo, the Circus is due for a remodeling, which means the 3/8 has been removed (by a crew of 16) put into storage, to be reinstalled after renovation. This will avail the Puget Sounders the opportunity to re-leather and make repairs.



Millie Alexander — (Stufoto)

*Mildred Alexander made a trans-continental leap when she and her husband, Bill Appleton, decided to buy into a business in Sarasota, Florida. Long anchored in San Diego, Calif., Millie and Bill made the leap in April to the Hammond Organ Studio in Sarasota.* □