# **YOX 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.

Wondering what movie to run in order to draw a crowd to a silent film presentation with organ accompaniment? Perhaps some expert advice will help. Bill Coffman and Bill Field, who run the very successful Old Town Music Hall in El Segundo, Calif., when asked which two feature films drew the largest audiences, replied that the films they have found to be sure-fire are those silent classics, Phantom of the Opera and Ben Hur.



Field & Coffman - (Stufoto)

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From Howard Beach, N.Y. young (20) Ken Ladner is already "hooked" on the organ hobby, and he has a project: restoration of the 3/11 Austin in the Beacon Theatre, Port Washington, Long Island, an original installation. Ken, and one of his former high school teachers, Bob Atkins, are "graduates" of Mel Robinson's crew which restored the 3/15 Wurlitzer in the Academy of Music Theatre in New York. Skills learned then are being applied to the Austin, with additional help from Allen Miller whose technical knowledge of Austins (and most other brands) is well established. The restorers ran into water damage, some vandalism and missing pipes plus the usual ravages of time and neglect. To date, the console has been put in A-1 shape and the watered Main chamber is almost restored and playable. Work is progressing on the Solo chamber.



The Beacon's 3/11 Austin console. A new lease on life.

Ken writes, "Both Bob and I are impressed by the Austin's unique design and the efficiency of its 'Universal Chest' (large enough for a maintenance man to enter for servicing while the organ is playing. Ed.). While the Austin sound is not quite like that of a Wurlitzer, it's a pleasing sound." The cooperative theatre management plans on using the organ for intermission and kiddie shows when the restoration is completed.



Arizona ATOS chapsec Bob High informs us that the Chapter's June 24th en masse migration from Tucson via chartered Greyhound to hear Lyn Larsen at the Phoenix "Organ Stop" may have set off reverberations which could result in a similar pizzery for Tucson. While Lyn was railroading his steam-oriented "Chattanooga Choo Choo" on the 4/27 Wurlitzer, ATOSer Art Crowell and the Organ Stop's mentor, Bill Brown, were discussing the possibility of a Tucson pasta palace with pipes, says Bob, who has high hopes that Tucson will be first in any plans Bill may have toward expanding his pizza-plus-pipes enterprise. Bob High has only praise for the Larsen performances, especially an original by Lyn, "A Place in my Heart for You."



Lee Erwin

In Gotham, organist Lee Erwin is all whomped up over the donation of the 4/23 "Wonder Morton" in Loew's Kings Theatre to New York's Town Hall. Lee reports that Pete Schaeble, whose home boasts a fine Morton installation, will be in charge of the transfer. Lee hopes the installation will be complete this time next year. Lee's been busy with concerts. He has especially kind words for the big Morton in the Ohio Theatre, Columbus: "One of the best-sounding Mortons in this part of the country."



It has been said many times that the future of the theatre pipe organ lies in the hands of the young enthusiasts and performers. Rochester's Tom Lockwood, in firm agreement, is actively promoting this idea. On June 7, he conducted eight classes in silent movie accompaniment, with considerable discussion of the use of theatre organ, at Martha Brown Junior High School in Fairport, N.Y. Total at-

tendance was 1100, and the youngsters were responsive and enthusiastic. Teaching aids included a plug-in, 3 films, slides, and samples of pipes native to the theatre organ.



When the Toronto Theatre Organ Society gets its Casa Loma organ playing, it will serve as a monument to that group's perseverance. It had hoped to finish the work by the end of last year. However, troubles with duct work, and rebuilding of the console took longer than expected. The dedicatory date was moved back to October 1973. When the brass trumpets were unpacked, parts were missing, necessitating a complete rebuild. The French horns were water-damaged in storage, and they had to be restored. On top of this, the summer tour season of Casa Loma began in early May, lasting until September 30 which meant no work on the organ involving noise. As a result, the new opening date has been moved back again to February 12, 1974, and hopefully, Dennis James will do the honors, according to Jim Lahay.



Our VOX POPPER travels far and wide to find choice tidbits for this column. In our never-ending search for variety we got to wondering how the organ might fare in the distant future, perhaps after man has been eclipsed by other creatures. What better place to explore for the organ's future than "The Planet of the Apes?!" Visiting the Hollywood set where the final ape

saga was being shot, we interviewed the script girl. A smashing chimpanzee, who assured us that the pipe organ doesn't figure in future monkey business. A gorilla, dressed in fatigues and toting an army rifle, overheard the conversation and volunteered that there was something with a lot of "teeth" (stop keys?) over in the ruins of Radio City, but that sequence had been cut out of the production. The big ape asked if we had any flea powder, and took off without waiting for a reply, apparently returning to his guerrilla activities. It was learned that all of the ape actors face unemployment with the final film completed. "Guess I'll have to go back to being a grease monkey," chortled one Baboon.

With no organs in the brave new world, we decided to leave the simianery and were escorted to the gate by a couple of "MP's" who were dead ringers for some we recall from our army stint (see photo).

"Got any flea powder?" asked one fuzzy ape fuzz.

We didn't have any. But we have



While we're on the subject of movies, horror film addicts will note happily that the *Phantom of the Opera* genre is revived in *Wicked*, *Wicked* as cadaver-faced Maryesther Denver "plays" a bit of the original *Phantom* score while the All-American boy monster is shown stalking the girl through the lost rooms and hidden passageways of an ancient grand hotel. Organist Billy Nalle, slowly recovering



VOX POPPER Stu (center) looks into the future. - (Apefoto)



Billy Nalle

from his triumphal concert at the ex-Paramount "Dowager Empress" 4/36 in Wichita, submits a clip from New York magazine which reveals that Ladd Thomas did the off-screen playing. Nalle says the console seen is the 4/36 in Dick Simonton's California home.



Our travelling correspondent, Doc Bebko, assures us that things organwise are moving steadily in the upper middle west. Visiting daughter Barbara and her husband David recently the family visited Milwaukee's Schnitzelhaus Restaurant on two occasions. One was for Sunday brunch, and the group heard No. 2 organist, Gary Sette. During dinner, chief organist Don Lorusso did the honors,

Don, who studied with the late Quentin MacLean, "played things any fine English organist plays — classics, pops, sing-alongs and novelties in typical British style and most enjoyable." There was an organ group present from Kenosha and the night before a big delegation from Chicago.

Owner Gene Tenges remarked that he is set to host a session of the next Chicago-based ATOS national convention. He feels that the 3/28 Kimball in Milwaukee's Centre Theatre can be readied, as well as the Wurlitzers in the Avalon and Riverside Theatres.



Home Organ Festival Chairman Tiny James tells us that reservations are piling up for the event, which is held annually at Pacific Grove Conference Grounds (near Monterey,



Castillo and Hults. On the payroll this year, — (Stufoto)

Calif.), even though the Festival is still a month away (Sept. 19 through 23). This will be the 14th presentation of the event and Tiny adds that 14 major brands of electronic instruments will be demonstrated in concert and exhibited in showrooms. These will be played by such prominent artists as Tom Hazleton, Mildred Alexander, Byron Melcher, Jonas Nordwall, Bud Iverson, Rex Koury and many others. Ways are being sought to accommodate "dropins," visitors who come for one or two days. Tiny is investigating the possibility of bus excursions for one day trips to the Festival, departing from central locations in the Bay Area. In addition to such regular features as the Fashion Show and daily Champagne Parties, there will be a dance. Opening night festivities will be different, too. The opening night concert will feature a variety of artists in addition to those provided by the participating organ companies. Last year a duo of guests, Lloyd del Castillo (our 1972 "Hall of Famer") and Arlo Hults, caused something of a sensation with their afterhours entertainment in the showrooms. This year they'll be on the program.

Those planning to attend should make reservations immediately. For full information send an 8 cent stamped, self-addressed, legal-size envelope to Registrar, HOF, Box 248, Alameda, Calif. 94501.

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An ATOS member for some time, is J. Earle Clarke of Aldan, Penna., once

worked as an installer for Wurlitzer and Austin. One was the 4/212 Austin which was installed in the Music Building at the Sesqui-centennial in Philadelphia in 1926, later bought by Mrs. Agnes Curtis and installed in the University of Pennsylvania's Irvine Auditorium in 1928. Originally, it had Orchestra Bells, Harp and Marimba, and these were used in the opening concerts by Dr. Frank Asper of the Mormon Tabernacle, and later by Alfred Reimenschneider. Mr. Clarke worked on the organ in both locations.

Another organ Clarke helped install is the 3/17 Wurlitzer in the Tower Theatre in Upper Darby, Penna. It has not been in use for some time. Organist Robert Lent, who maintained the instrument, has been in the service.





Carol Jones. Her Conn-tours expanded.

Organist Carol Jones took quite a ribbing when a large swelling saw her hospitalized in Chicago in June. Visitors entered asking "Are you expecting a boy or a girl?!" But one glance showed the swelling was in the wrong place for a parturition stanza; Carol's jaws were so puffed up she could hardly see. The swelling subsided after the removal of impacted wisdom teeth so Carol could resume her duties for Conn at the Chicago NAMM show. She's scheduled for a stint on Kimball pipes during the ATOS convention in Portland.



Add the 3/22 Barton in the State Theatre in Kalamazoo, Michigan to the list of those playing on a regular basis. William Mollema and John Caterwood play 20-minute performances on alternate Saturday evenings, according to William E. Bastian. The organ was originally an 11-ranker, but was augmented by 11 ranks from the Barton in the Capitol Theatre in Kalamazoo. Stan Kann has been featured on the refurbished organ, and there have been several silent movie shows in recent months.



Bob Wilson reports that the voters in Yakima, Washington, on May 22 rejected a proposal to establish a convention-cultural center there which involved restoration of the 52-year-old Capitol Theatre. The unofficial vote was 4,162 against, and 2,198 for the project.

The 1500-seat Capitol Theatre was recently placed in the National Register of Historic Places, making it eligible for restoration funds. Originally, it had a 2/9 Wurlitzer with small toy counter. The organ was sold to station KIT, installed in its studios, and played on the air for several years by Harrison Miller, principal organist at the Liberty Theatre in Yakima. The day after Larry Langevin bought the organ for home installation, the studios burned, destroying the console and much of the pipe work.



From Fort Worth, Texas, organist Dan Bellomy reports that the Casa Manana Theatre music show season was cut short as of July 14 with the staging of Cabaret. Reason: lack of



Dan Bellomy. A sad closing but with encouraging overtones. — (Stufoto)

patronage. The closing left Dan unemployed. He had been the staff artist since the season opened, playing the 3/11 Wurlitzer installed last year. Dan had one last fling when Casa impresario Mel Dacus scheduled a concert to be played by Dan on July 7.

Bob Yates of Glenshaw, Penna., owner of one of three workable Marr & Coltons with Symphonic Registrators, had a silent movie evening for friends on June 9. At the console was Harold Rouse who accompanied Buster Keaton's The General. Rouse played for the silents in their heyday. In the audience was the fourth grade class of Glenshaw School, and according to Bob, "the class really enjoyed the movie, even if there wasn't any sound."



Always clowning. Stan Kann does some cutting up with Helen Dell. - (Stufoto)

TRIVIA: St. Louis Fox organist Stan Kann always gets in a plug for pipe organs during his frequent TV talk show appearances as a mechanical gadget (mostly vacuum cleaners) hobbyist...By actual birthday count, Don Baker is a teenager. His is on Feb.

29 . . . Silent movie era sing-along organist Paul H. Forster sleeps in the buff... In the movie Let's Live a Little, now on late night TV, pop singer Bobby Vee appears as a hayseed guitar strummer named Jesse Crawford . . . Organist Luella Wickham admits she goofed when she predicted in 1929 that "talkies" just can't last" ... The Coronado Theatre Barton in Rockford, Illinois, now has a Posthorn



Paul H. Forster. Stark naked in the sack. -

rank . . . Ex-theatre organist Herbie Koch was seen on TV's You Asked for it recently playing the Stone Mountain Georgia carillon which he does daily for visitors.



Our June story about the planned Ben Hall Theatre on the Harold Lloyd estate in Beverly Hills, Calif., was lacking something very important according to a number of correspondents; namely, an address where contributions may be sent. We didn't intend the article as a pitch for contributions but estate manager Woody Wise would be the last to discourage



Harold Lloyd. Still "box office."

generosity on the part of willing ATOSers. Checks may be made out to "Ben Hall Theatre Fund" and mailed to Harold Lloyd Estate, Box 470 Beverly Hills, Calif., 90210, attn. Woody Wise. Be sure to designate the Ben Hall Theatre Fund so your contribution will be used specifically for that project. The unexpected clamor for a mailing address reveals an enthusiasm that may portrend a much sooner realization.



Organist Mildred Alexander read the caption under the photo and did a double take. There was her name (p.6, April THEATRE ORGAN) identifying her among a group of organists in a 1925 photo. "It couldn't be me," said Millie, "I was a preteener in 1926, a child, yet." She looked at the handsome woman in the photo, and added, "Maybe I should let well enough alone." But we didn't. We checked with author Lloyd Klos and he 'fessed up to a goof in captioning. The gal pictured was, of course, the subject of the story, Mildred Fitzpatrick. "I must have been thinking about Mildred Alexander when I wrote the caption," admitted usually accurate Lloyd.



Ever wonder how some ATOS chapters manage to put on well-attended public concerts to help finance organ restoration work? From Chicago, Richard Sklenar tells some of the

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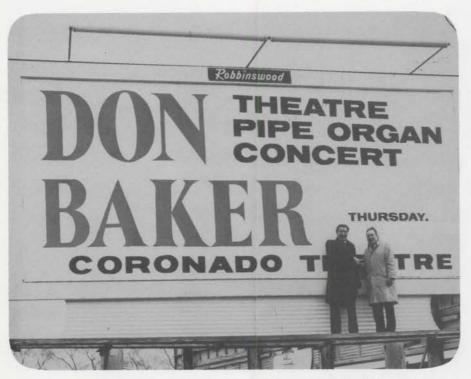
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Don Baker (left) and Orrill Dunn, Up the ladder to promote a full house.

secrets. It all boils down to organization and hard work. Most of us are familiar with the top-notch publicity work of CATOE's Bill Benedict. During the winter/spring months the chapter presented public concerts starring Don Baker, Gaylord Carter, Hector Olivera and Lee Erwin. All attracted good crowds and put money in the coffers. When so many ATOS chapter's depend on their organist members who play for little or nothing, how does CATOE manage a full "show biz" approach? For example, explains Rich, the Don Baker show at the Coronado Theatre. Orrill Dunn masterminded both the presentation and promotion, while George Smafield supervised the organ work. Promotion included flyers mailed to 3000 prospects, posters in store windows throughout the area, TV and radio interviews with Don, an appearance at a church banquet and seven outdoor billboards."

"It worked," says Rich, "because the house was sold out." The CATOE approach would seem to be most effective in areas of population concentration, and that appears to be everywhere these days.



ATOS members who may be passing through Brookline, Penna. on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, have a standing invitation from Jim Breneman to see and play his Opus No.

6941 – 3/26 Kimball in the Brookline Theatre, but be sure to phone ahead: the number is 1-215-446-5299. The organ is played weekends as part of the theatre's program.



In RTOS' final concert of the season, Gaylord Carter, making his second appearance at the Auditorium Theatre Wurlitzer, played before an enthusiastic audience of 1325 on May 5. Fresh from appearances in France, Mr. Flicker offered movie music, a sing-along, the accompaniment to Douglas Fairbanks' *Mark of Zorro*, and quiet music to unwind the folks before leaving.



Gaylord, He never misses, - (Jim Osborn Photo)

Describing the RTOS organ as the "finest theatre organ in the world," Gaylord's drive and enthusiasm were much in evidence. He kept Old Prospector Klos and RTOS librarian Tom Lockwood on a crushing 4-day schedule which included a television appearance on the Louise Wilson show, practice sessions etc.



Attendance at the nine RTOS concerts during the season totaled 11,365, and the group hopes to top that figure next season as Program Chairman-President Gary Haines promises "topflight artists". Family membership totals 910.



Rumors have been rife that the 4300-seat Music Hall Theatre (ex-Metropolitan) in Boston is to get the wrecking ball. The owners, the Boston Medical Center (Tufts College) flatly deny the theatre's impending demise, saying it is to be kept open. They did admit that the 4/26 Wurlitzer is available to anyone who comes up with a five figure offer, according to Curt Mangel of Bradford, Penna. Mangel is trying to locate a theatre organ to install in an auditorium in Bradford to be used for concerts. "Five figures is a bit too high for our group," he says.



Is there any measurable correlation between musical ability on a keyboard instrument and the ability to type expertly? In the reams of correspondence from organists which pass through our hands annually, we have often noted that hands that can do beautiful work on organ manuals often turn out "hunt and peck" typing loaded with crossouts and errors. There have been a few exceptions; Alice Blue can do 60 error-free words a minute, a skill she developed as a newspaper reporter/editor many years after her engagements as a prominent theatre organist in the '20s and '30s. Our most recent "discovery" in the field of organist/typists is Lawrence Welk's organist, Bob Ralston. Bob can turn out faultless pages of typed material at the rate of 100 words a minute. To prove it he copied several pages of these VOX POPS from our sloppy handscrawl at a speed which nearly charred the ribbon. However, he declined the secretarial post with



Bob Ralston. Speed demon on the 4-manual Underwood. – (Stufoto)

VOX POPS we offered in a frenzy of admiration for his skill. Bob is contemplating a pipe organ record to be grooved in the near future.



An early-morning fire on May 18, destroyed the picturesque Monroe Avenue United Methodist Church in Rochester, N.Y. The roof and cupola collapsed onto the main floor at the height of the blaze. Included in the loss was Opus No. 1493, 4 manual, 50-stop Moller organ which had originally been installed in the old Gordon Theatre in 1913. When that theatre, which was supposed to have had the first escalator in a theatre in the country, was razed to make way for the RKO Palace in 1928, the organ was removed, modified and installed in the church. Included in the modification was the removal of all percussions, including a set of tuned doorbells which were spotted along the rim of the Gordon's balcony with a colored light on each. Richard Henry Warren was the first organist in the

theatre. Others were Gladys Clark, L. Grace Drew, Forrest Gregory, Norman Nairn, Harry G. Sullivan and Art Taylor.



RTOS entertained 600 members and their friends with Talent Night on May 24 at the Auditorium Theatre. This event was an outgrowth of Competition programs of 1970 and 1971. Those participating included 12-year-old David Peckham; 14-year-old Jim Young; 22-year-old Tom Lockwood, who accompanied a silent movie; Robert Legon, who came the greatest distance (Boston); Brad Kummer; Bruck Decker; and Dorothy White. If the calibre of much of the talent were an indication, the future of the theatre organ is assured.

A suggestion was made that the windup of next season's 10th anniversary year of RTOS activities be an old-fashioned vaudeville show. Program chairman, Gary Haines, has pegged the opening concert on September 20, when Leroy Lewis makes his first appearance at the RTOS Wurlitzer.



In Reading, Penna., organ service expert Henry Hunsicker was using a quiet moment to review old issues of this publication. Turning to the October 1970 "Requiem for the Roxy," he noted the author's statement that no records of the 5/34 Roxy Kimball had been made. Not so, says Henry, who has a copy of part of a tape made by Ben Hall just before the organ was closed down for the last time. It features Gordon Seaman, Henry figures the complete tape is somewhere among Ben Hall's effects. Other reports claimed there was once a com-

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mercial record made, and so there was, but not on the 5/34. It was played on the lobby organ.



Should organ pipes be washed, or otherwise cleaned before reinstallation? We had assumed cleansing was a sound practice until reading an article by respected organ innovator Aubrey Thompson-Allen in the May issue of AGO/RCCO's MUSIC, who claims the cleansing changes the sound. He writes: "I eventually discovered why the pipework of an old organ, after it has been cleaned and washed and restored to its original condition, no longer sounds the same or as sweet nor as captivating as it did prior to cleaning. (After cleaning) people sometimes accused us, wrongfully, of having ruined a masterpiece. (The difference) is due to the fact that after organ flue pipes have been subject to 50 or 100 years of use, the flue (between the languid and the lower lip) becomes impregnated with a satin-like cloth of fine, sticky dust which softens and sweetens the eddies which pass the flue when a pipe is sounded. Cleaning and washing the pipe restores them to the original condition as when they left the factory. The fine, silken coating of the pipe mouths having been removed, the soft surface of the languid, lower and upper lips has gone. The pipes sound more harsh and less gentle in tone. As time marches on, this film returns and the pipes become mellowed again in tone, but I have noticed that it takes



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many years before this condition returns." Could we conclude that perhaps pipes are one item which old man time improves, if mellowness is the goal?



In these days of canned music in many public places, it is gratifying to note that in a few sports stadia the record player hasn't replaced the live musician. Helen Dell presides over a Conn at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, and tenuously remained at her post into the wee hours of the morn-



John Kiley - (Red Sox Pic.)

ing of May 25, until her beloved Dodgers lost a 19-inning marathon in 5 hours and 42 minutes!

Across the country, ex-theatre organist John Kiley presides over a Hammond atop Boston's Fenway Park, a post he has held for ten years. Beantowners insist he plays the best National Anthem of any organist. John's career as a professional musician began in Symphony Hall when he played the organ at the age of 12. His theatre experience in the Bay State included stints at Boston's RKO Keith Memorial and the Washington Street Olympia; Egyptian in Brighton; Strand in Dorchester; and Critereon in Roxbury. He recorded the Metropolitan's 4/26 Wurlitzer under several nom-deplumes.



Former theatre organist Johnny Mack had opportunities to witness the playing of some of the great organists of the past. Once known as Johnny



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McCartney, he heard Oliver Wallace, "who played a fantastic organ" in Seattle's Liberty Theatre. When the Portland Paramount opened, Johnny "heard a great show by Georga A. Johnson." Henri A. Keates was playing at the Liberty down the street" as only he could do it." Others he heard were Henry LeBel, C. Sharpe Minor, Homer McDonald, and Leo Terry.

In St. Louis, he caught both Stuart Barrie and Milton Slosser when they performed at the Ambassador Theatre's Wurlitzer. "Barrie and Slosser seemed to get more out of that organ than some others, though their styles were definitely different," he says.



Friends of former theatre organist, Harold Jolles, will be pleased to learn that he is enjoying retirement on his farm in Cattaraugus, N.Y. He played the Roosevelt Theatre's 4/18 Marr & Colton in Buffalo up to the final days in 1963, weekends only. Harold is particularly sad about the demise and removal of the Austin in Rochester's Eastman Theatre. Says that Tom

Grierson, who was demonstrating for Wurlitzer in 1922, almost was successful in getting a big Wurlitzer into the theatre.

Jolles played a couple weeks in 1924 at Loew's Willard Theatre on Long Island for Rosa Rio when she was on vacation. It was a 3-manual Austin of about 57 ranks, and "sounded great". Harold's regular job then was at Loew's new Coney Island Theatre "which had a draw-knob Moller console, with 32' Contra Bourdon and a 32' Bombarde — a really beautiful organ."



George Wright - (Stufoto)

George Wright is recording again, but in limited edition available only to Conn dealers for use as a sales lubricant. "The Sound of Conn, at Home With George Wright" reprises several of his earlier pipe hits, including some in the Crawford vein. Because the disc is not for sale there was not point in our offering a review. Dyed-in-the-wool Wright fans might be able to arrange for a hearing by polishing their Conn dealers.

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