

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 an 8 cent postcard to get it to VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can afford a 10 cent stamp, why not include a black and white photo which need not be returned.

We were represented at the New York memorial service for Duke Ellington by Billy Nalle. The service was held in the huge cathedral of St. John the Divine where Ellington was no stranger. Billy writes:

"The service was one apart, an experience which left one feeling that the whole world had stopped all it was doing and had come there to praise and give thanks for all the beauty given to all people by the music of the great Duke. He left us more than 900 pieces of music, every last note of it having quality; he never 'ground out' anything. I never had the privilege of meeting him but I know some who were close to him and, just as might be expected, he knew and enjoyed good theatre organ.

"The effect of the 2-hour memorial was like nothing else I've experienced. The all-enveloping love of the Duke for music, and for all of the human family for which he reveled to play, left one wanting to put aside every narrow, small, dry, unloving thing and try to live with a bigger heart and mind. I left the Cathedral as a somewhat different person, with a memory

of that time which will remain in present tense with me for life."



Speaking of Billy Nalle, we have a running disagreement with him which makes interesting copy. In several of his communications he has described the Wichita "Dowager Empress" as a 4/42 and we picked it up in this column. It seems Billy counts the five additional ranks provided for with stopkeys on the new console but which are not yet installed. We feel that full organ on a 42-rank organ should blast out with 42 ranks. The Dowager doesn't. Built as a 4/36, a Posthorn was added to total 37 ranks now playing. So take your choice; is it an "ultimate 4/42" or a "current 4/37?"

Regardless, Billy is so enthusiastic about his approaching move to Wichita that he's written a tune named "Center City Rag" which he describes as "Joplin with a Wurlitzer accent."



With smug laughter we read of the completion of the Toronto Casa Loma Wurlitzer in the February THEATRE ORGAN and then of Dennis James' '74 opening concert. Horsefeathers! The Casa Loma Wurlitzer opening concert was played in 1972 by Al Bollington, and we hold in our palsied mitt a news handout released by none other than the Wurlitzer company in 1972, including the photo shown here, which states in part:

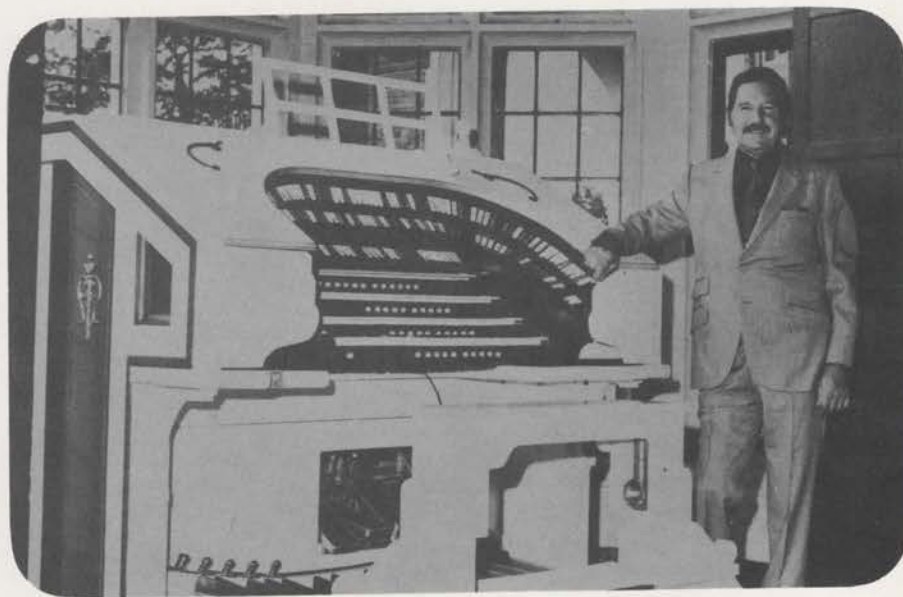
"The mighty Wurlitzer theatre organ which for years provided the music in Shea's Hippodrome theatre in

Toronto has a new home — Casa Loma, the castle owned by the Canadian city. The opening concert in the organ's new location was performed by Wurlitzer artist Al Bollington, who played the organ in its original theatre location from 1952 to 1955 (actually 1950 to 1954. Ed.)"

When questioned, Al replies with an application of the British wit and charm which have made him a top entertainer in both Britain and the USA: "There it is in black and white. But the THEATRE ORGAN article described my residency at Shea's as 'only a short engagement.' To me, four years (1950-1954) adds up to a rather substantial engagement." We stand corrected Al — but did you really play the Casa Loma opener in 1972?



The That Girl TV episode concerning the organ stolen from the "Omaha Rialto" is around on the small screen in reruns. Described by Marlo Thomas as "a cuddly old dinosaur," organist Everett Valentine (Sterling Holloway), whose silent movie organ career ended in 1929 with the "talkies," has the snatched organ installed in his apartment and bothers the neighbors with his organ-accompanied silent film screenings. The console is that of a reed harmonium and the sound is strictly Hammond. Everett and the organ, both on the lam, vacate the apartment in one day. Thus do careless TV programmers strain our credibility. Serves Everett Valentine right that he ends up as chapel organist at Sing Sing in the episode, and its a shame the



The caption for this Wurlitzer Co. 1972 news release photo is: "Al Bollington Plays Opening Concert at Casa Loma." Eat your heart out, Dennis James!

research-shy producers couldn't have gone along with him.



Bill Dalton
(Dick Harold Photo)

Bill Dalton, in his first RTOS appearance, provided one of the most enjoyable programs ever done on the Rochester Auditorium Theatre Wurlitzer, on May 22. The group's last concert of the season, Bill's program embraced a wide spectrum of music from classical to contemporary. Three highlights were "Waters of the Minnetonka", "Marche Slav", and Glenn Miller's arrangement of "In the Mood". The enthusiastic audience gave Bill two standing ovations.

The ex-Cincinnati RKO Keith's Theatre 3/13 Wurlitzer, Opus 1834, has been sold again. Purchased in 1967 by Wilbur Bond, it has been in storage until recently purchased by RTOS member, Jim Webster, who is already the owner of a fine 3/15 Wurlitzer in his Penfield, N.Y. home. Jim hopes to install his new acquisition within three years in a Central New York area 1500-seat pizza parlor. "There are several vacated discount stores in Monroe County, and I'm still looking for the right place." Meanwhile, Jim's plans for a sternwheel steamboat with calliope are progressing, and he hopes to launch the craft on Chautauqua Lake in the summer of 1975.

From Chicago we learn that Walter Strogny (pronounced "STROHN-

ye") has taken over Al Melgard's organ instruction studio in Oak Park, Illinois. Long a student of the now retired Melgard, Walter and his teacher have been very close. Al is delighted with the arrangement, and the 18-year-old is digging in with both feet. Walter Strogny, 18? It seems only yesterday we heard him play the huge Chicago Stadium Barton during an ATOS convention. The pre-teenager then looked so tiny at that 6/62 console, but he made fine music. Good luck Mr. Walter Strogny!



Luella. No more dues.
(Stufoto)

From Syracuse, N.Y. comes the announcement that the Empire State Theatre and Musical Instrument Museum (whew!) has awarded life membership to three organists who have given the Syracuse organ club much support. Luella Wickham, Carleton James and Karl Cole will no longer have to pay dues.

Work is progressing on schedule on Rochester New York's Eisenhart Auditorium, situated on Museum and Science Center property. Contractors, barring strikes, believe the tentative finish date of August 1 will be met. Meanwhile, RTOS volunteers have been at work to ready the 3/8 Wurlitzer, Opus 1492 (got it, Judd?) originally in the Capitol Theatre in Worcester, Massachusetts, for installation in the auditorium in late summer. The new auditorium will seat 401 and will be used for master organ classes, open console sessions, silent films and chamber concerts. The pipe

chambers will allow for the addition of at least three more ranks if desired.

ATOS members who saw the telecast of the Emmy Awards on May 28, had a rare opportunity to see the interior of the modernized Pantages Theatre in Hollywood which housed the proceedings. The theatre never had a pipe organ (although chamber space was provided and grilles exist), but patrons were regaled with preprogram organ music, a plug-in being located in a niche to the left of the stage. A white-suited organist did the honors. The orchestra rose on its elevator like in the old days, and when it was lowered into the pit after the overture, host Johnny Carson remarked that they "left so soon they probably went out to call another strike." Incidentally, there's interest among some LA Chapter members in moving the entombed 4-manual Marr and Colton in Hollywood Warner's theatre to the Pantages.



Mr. Wurlitzer

Dick Simonton submits a clipping from the house periodical of the Buffalo General Hospital announcing the unveiling of a bronze plaque in the hospital lobby honoring two people who made one of the largest donations ever received by the institution - Mr. and Mrs. Farny Wurlitzer. The late president of the Wurlitzer company and his wife willed the hospital \$1,687,509.

About 100 friends of the Wurlitzers and hospital officials attended the

unveiling. The plaque reads: "In memory of Farny R. and Grace K. Wurlitzer, in appreciation of their generous support of the Buffalo General Hospital."

During the ceremony it was revealed that the Wurlitzer philanthropy extended far beyond the BGH donation. Gifts to local hospitals and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra totalled \$4,000,000, not including a Foundation which has provided \$615,000 in scholarships to hundreds of students.

The Wurlitzers never sought publicity or recognition for their generosity, and only the plaque installed by grateful hospital officials brought it to light.



Raymond Bohr is now Chief Organist at the Radio City Music Hall. To celebrate his elevation, and also his 27 years with the Hall, the New York ATOS Chapter will present a musical salute by two of Ray's good friends on Sunday, Nov. 10 starting at 8:00 A.M. Leroy Lewis and C.A.J. ("Cass") Parmentier will preside at the twin consoles of the Music Hall's 4/56 (or is it 4/58?) Wurlitzer. Al Rossiter advises that a \$4.75 ticket includes not only the concert but also the Hall's Christmas Show. Send your check, made out to New York Theatre Organ Society, Inc., and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to ATOS, Box 1331, Passaic, New Jersey, 07055.



There is only one organ left in a theatre in the State of Mississippi, reports Alleen Cole, and its in the Temple theatre (a Shrine Temple) in Meridian. It's a 3/8 Robert Morton installed in 1927 and thanks to the efforts of ATOSers Mr. and Mrs. Frank Evans, the leadership of Howard F. (and Mrs.) Evans plus the help of Chris Carmean, Mike Williams and Chris Harwell, who repaired water damage, removed eons of dust, releathered pneumatics and refinished the console in white and gold, it's playing again. They started in 1972 and had the Morton in good shape for an opening concert on May 11, 1974, played by ATOSer Richard Ahlvin, who hails from Vicksburg. Organist Ahlvin, a computer specialist, played on the Mississippi riverboat *Sprague* until it burned.



Restored Morton console in the Temple theatre.
(Colepic)

The concert was sponsored by the Hamasa (Shrine) Temple. The organ hadn't been used much since the '40s and had fallen into the usual ills caused by neglect. But Alleen reports it has been completely restored. "With the organ playing, why not an ATOS chapter?" asks Mrs. Cole. Well, why not?



ATOS members who were present at the Potomac Valley ATOS Convention in 1972 (the "year of the Marriott") will remember organist Doug Bailey and his diversified program at Loew's Richmond. Though we haven't heard about him lately, he is still very much a theatre organ booster. Station WXLN, which operated from his Rockville, Md. studio, has been sold and the station has moved. However, Doug's 2/11 Moller is still in top condition and any ATOS member passing through town is invited to stop and hear the organ. Doug's hobby is composing tunes from telephone numbers.



Rochester New York's one time great legitimate theatre was ravaged by fire in the early hours of April 17. Cook's Opera House, later the Family Theatre, and finally the Embassy, was the second theatre on this site and was opened in 1892. Many of the greats of the theatre trod its boards: Sarah Bernhardt, "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Jenny Lind, John Drew, Edwin Booth, Oscar

Wilde, Lilly Langtry, and Minnie Madern Fiske. From 1913 to 1936 it was the Family Theatre, complete with pipe organ, and from 1936 to its closing in 1955, it was the Embassy, devoted to the burlesque trade. Sally Rand and Rose LaRose were two of the gals who paraded their charms in that era. It is hoped that the front facade will be saved so that the remaining structure can be restored as part of Canaltown, an urban renewal project.



During a recent weekend in New York, Doc Bebko stayed for two shows at the Music Hall. "The stage show was a salute to Irving Berlin and was one of the better ones of recent vintage," Doc says. "Jimmy Paulin was at the console, attired in red trousers, cowboy boots with high heels, and contrasting jacket. At the slightest applause, usually led by youngsters, Jimmy took a bow. The policy on all this must have been relaxed because in my day we wore black or white, whatever the season, and acknowledging applause was unthinkable. However, Jimmy has developed his own style of playing; not the rich, sonorous manner of a Jack Ward and not the preciseness of a Ray Bohr. He picked up his cue to play with the orchestra on key, but when the tremors were shut off for a passage, the reeds and strings were noticeably out of tune."





TV horror movie man 'Seymour' tries unsuccessfully to ruffle Gaylord at a Wiltern film preview during which both did their thing. Gaylord gets around. (Stufoto)

Gaylord "Flicker Fingers" Carter reports good attendance at his Ohio concerts in April. "Cincinnati was a sellout. Columbus was a little hurt because I appeared the night of the tornadoes in the area, and a lot of folks were probably in their storm cellars. But I love Columbus still because of the wonderful friends I have there." From all reports, Gaylord played up a storm inside the theatre as he always does.

He still harbors fond memories of his Rochester concerts in 1971 and 1973. "The other evening, several of us listened to the tape of my 1973 concert and I was astounded by the magnificent sound of the Auditorium Wurlitzer and the terrific response of the audience. Wow!"

Organist Bill Gage was greatly interested in the New York Paramount story in the April THEATRE ORGAN. "I was there many times to hear Jesse Crawford and Egon Putz on early morning programs before the theatre show started. Sigmund Krumgold was there, playing the pictures, and Dan Papp, the maintenance chief, told me that Krumgold was a most wonderful musician, probably the best film cuer at that time. Reginald Foort was credited with getting the most applause ever received by an organist there. He

really communicated! The King LP by George Wright and Ashley Miller's 'Showtime' disc captured the terrific sound of the 4/36. Fred Feibel told me that when the extravaganza with Sousa's Band, house orchestra and organ was presented, he was in the audience for the first time to hear Crawford and was so overcome by the production that he could hardly walk out of the theatre! Later, Fred would be doing solos and radio broadcasts there."

The Embassy Theatre Foundation Inc. has been organized in Fort Wayne, Indiana in an effort to save the theatre from razing. Montgomery Ward, holder of the mortgage, has started foreclosure on Sportservice Co., present title holder of the property. A receiver, Fred Hunter, has been appointed by the court to see that the property remains intact and no damage occurs.

The foundation will make an attempt to purchase the theatre and is accepting donations. Address is Embassy Theatre Foundation, c/o Robert Goldstine, 303 Strauss Blvd., Ft. Wayne, Indiana 46802. "In addition to saving the building", Goldstine says, "I am particularly interested in saving the 4/15 Page organ which I have been playing as a hobby since

high school days." Banks, art organizations, the city, educational institutions and fraternal organizations have pledged their support of the project. This kind of effort has been responsible for saving the Ohio Theatre in Columbus and the Paramount Theatre in Oakland.

Information on Cozatt organs slowly oozes to the surface as Old Prospector Klos and Vic Hyde seek to learn something regarding the company in Danville, Ill. which built Hyde's 4/8. ATOS Advertising Director, Len Clarke, was under the impression that the firm merely tuned or repaired organs. "I met them years ago when I engaged them to tune an old Hinner's tracker where I was organist. I had arranged for a concert by a top-notch organist and wanted the instrument in perfect shape. The technicians arrived in the worst old broken-down car I have ever seen. I, too, will be interested in anything unearthed concerning this company."



Anyone for merry-go-rounds? If so, you may want to attend the Second Annual Conference of the National Carousel Roundtable to be held at Flint, Michigan, October 25-28, '74. The three day session is loaded with slide presentations, panels, a field trip to an operating carousel and lectures with such intriguing titles as "Coney Island Night", "Painting Carousel Figures", "Carousel Construction", "Band Organs", "Restoration on a Shoe-string" plus a swap session (which we can't figure out). The Conference is well staffed with authorities on merry-go-rounds and there's even a rigidly controlled "horse trading" session. The conference is open also to non-members. For further information send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to NCR Conference Chairman Armand G. Winfield, 82 Dale Street, West Babylon, New York 11704. □