

# 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.*

Like so many enthusiasts with some extra space for more chambers, Joe Koon's cycle shop installation in Long Beach, California has grown and grown. The first time we visited Joe, he had about 15 ranks going in two chambers, controlled by a 2-manual console. That was perhaps four years ago. In the interim the 2-manual console has been replaced by a 3-decker, a third chamber has been built and the number of ranks has swelled to thirty-four! If Joe wants to expand any more, he'll have to move his motorcycle salesroom elsewhere. Joe wasn't even aware of the acute case of "expansionitis"; it just sorta crept up on him. Each new voice provided new wonders to Joe and the organ is his hobby. It's billed as a "Wurlitzer-Welte" but that's only part of the story. It's second Tibia Clausa is a Barton; there's a church Cornopean and Gedeckt, a rich Morton Violin, and a three rank 1-1/3' Mixture, plus many more offbeat voices (e.g. a whole Wurlitzer Band Organ). It has an English Horn — in addition to its English Posthorn. Added ranks have been carefully selected to blend into a

fine ensemble, or to solo. It has become a fine instrument and as it has grown, more and more visitors knock on Joe's door.

Joe's Saturday night "open console" parties are drawing always more attendance. Each Saturday afternoon, Joe and his staff move all the motorcycles out of his display area and set up camp chairs. It's difficult to find one unoccupied a few hours later after the music has started. We've counted over 300 listeners on a Saturday night, hearing up to 18 organists.

But now Joe is getting requests from organ and civic clubs with memberships ranging from 40 to 250; they want to hold their meetings at Joe's shop on weekdays.

"Now it hardly pays to move the cycles back into the shop", says a perplexed but delighted Joe Koons. He's having a ball.



Joe Koons and his two loves. Is it a bike shop or a cultural center? Joe isn't certain. (Curtis Photo)

The Rochester Theatre Organ Society's Board of Directors' meetings are literally "out of this world". Most monthly confabs are held in the Strassenburgh Planetarium, courtesy of its director and RTOS board member, Donald S. Hall. On May 29, the board took time out to hear a tape of the RTOS Wurlitzer while relaxing in the planetarium's auditorium. Don made a real production number out of it, utilizing projected stars, moon, meteors, floating clouds and panoramas. It may have been the first time a planetarium featured theatre organ music to observe outer space by.

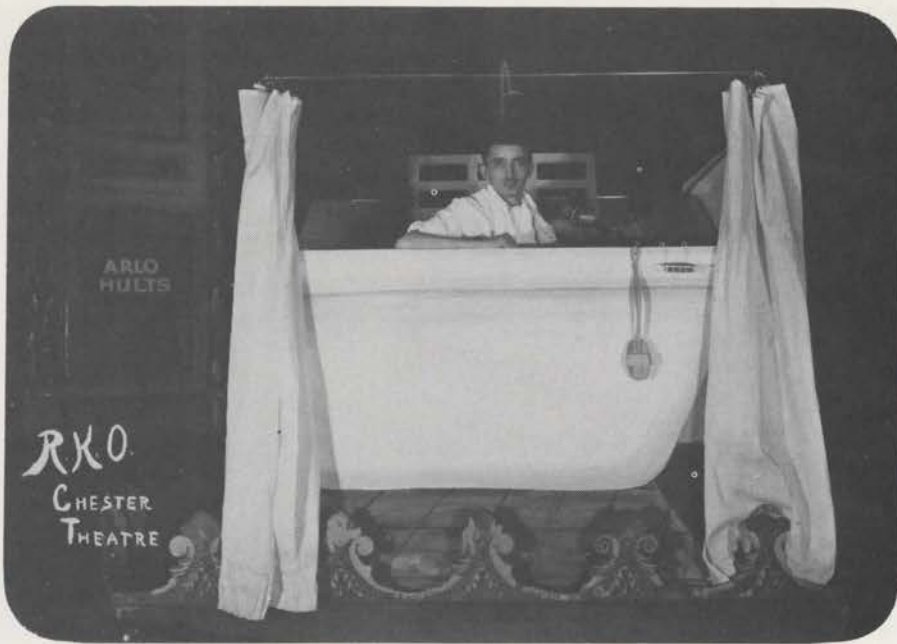


KLOS calls letters over Los Angeles. (Stufoto)

Honest, Rose Diamond wasn't generating puffery when she told in a recent column about a Los Angeles radio station with which our own "Old Prospector" shares call letters — station KLOS. A reader in Peoria, Illinois, takes us to task for "concocting convenient but unfounded tales just to publicize your staff." Yes, Dorothy, there really is an FM station KLOS and to convince you we latched onto our Brownie and made a genuine snapshot of one of its many promotional billboards around Los Angeles, just to set your mind at ease. The only thing all of this has to do with organs is that the sign is atop an old theatre with empty chambers. So give us a break, Dorothy, a station break.

Add the Orpheum Theatre in Omaha, Nebraska to the fast-growing list of theatres which are to become performing arts centers. According to ATOS member George Rice, the 2975-seat theatre was closed for three years. When the city took control, city employees cut the 3/13 Wurlitzer's console cable, necessitating a new cable being installed from the console to a new junction board, and all key contacts renewed. The console will be on a dolly, and raised to stage level for use. Omaha's Civic Cultural Center is scheduled for opening in January 1975.

There were plenty of goofy tricks played on audiences by theatre organists during the Golden Era. Some would pass off a vocalist or instrumentalist stashed in a chamber as a "new stop on the organ." Some would appear in garish costumes, or argue



Arlo Hulst at his soggy console, ready for 'Singin' in the Bathtub.'

voiciferously with "Old Man Vita-  
phone" who was always attempting to  
serve an organist with walking papers.  
But in our humble estimation, the guy  
shown in this early '30s photo takes  
the all-time crocheted chamber pot.  
For his presentation of "Singing in the  
Bathtub" at the New York Chester  
theatre, youthful Arlo Hulst, sporting  
a seven month-old mustache, disguised  
his console as plumbing. Arlo is still  
very much up to the tub's ring in  
music; he's top honcho of the Los  
Angeles Professional Organists' Club  
and continues to clown at the monthly  
meetings and once a year at the Home  
Organ Festival in concert with his  
"straight man," Del Castillo.

The 1974 convention seemed to  
please just about everyone who at-  
tended, as reflected in the subsequent  
chapter newsletters which devoted  
much space to reporting it. An ex-  
ception was volatile Randy Piazza,  
who holds down the Chair at Niagara  
Frontier. Writing in his chapter's  
SILENT NEWSREEL, irascible Randy  
complained about too much classical  
music in convention concerts ("most  
classical music, to me, is just a lot of  
noise."), too many ballads ("Jesse  
would starve today in the music  
world."), and not enough use of per-  
cussions by convention artists. Then to  
underscore his complaints, Randy  
gives us what may be either a typo or a  
Freudian slip - "Thank heaven for the  
pizza parlors."

Looking like a sporty member of  
the World War I Lafayette Escadrille,  
the "aviator" strode boldly over to his  
mount, tossed his long scarf over his  
shoulder and climbed into the "cock-  
pit" of the 4/78 Schantz. That was the  
scene in Bloomington, Indiana, as the  
university's summer offering of "Lilac  
Time" started, before an audience of  
1900, with Dennis James supplying  
the music. Dennis got into uniform to  
match those of the cast in the Colleen  
Moore/Gary Cooper 1927 starrer.  
Dennis says that the Schantz' 32'  
Bombarde makes the best Gotha  
Bomber motor simulation he's yet  
heard. (Oh, Messerschmidt! We were  
certain it was a Fokker!)



With 'Ace' Dennis in the cockpit, the Baron never had a chance.

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When Don Thompson goes to London for several public concerts, it will be a case of "local boy makes good — in the 'Colonies.'" Don has memories of leaner days when his income was solely the tips earned while playing a piano in a lowdown London pub. He'd go home each night with a sack of metal coins "which felt like a fortune but counted up to only a few shillings." Things will be different this time. When Don plays the Compton in the Leicester Square Odeon, it will be before a paying audience. Remember us to Leicester Square, Don!



Al Mason — 'up there' (Stufoto)

Al Mason gone! It seems incredible that his great intellect and warm personality are lost to us. Few persons outside of his circle of friends and associates were aware of his great contributions toward keeping ATOS on an even keel during his presidency and, as an advisor, ever since. He came down hard on those who seemed ready to subvert ATOS to further their own personal ambitions during his presidency. His weapons appeared to be will power and wisdom — with the greater emphasis on the latter. He often spoke in parables studded with natural wisdom and we once heard a friend say, when Al was expounding on the national scene, that he wished he had a pocket recorder to catch some of Al's gems. Al's monument is the 1974 ATOS convention, of which he was Chairman. Those who attended recall the minute detail of the planning which made the events mesh like clockwork. The "ticker" started acting up during the planning stages of the

1974 convention but Al insisted on finishing what he had started, and very probably the travails of convention making shortened his life. At least his time on earth saw him through the convention to which he had given so much. Although obviously weakened by his illness, he thoroughly enjoyed the convention. Since his death we have seen many tributes to Al Mason but none more succinct or touching than that which appeared in the Motor City BLOWER, his chapter's monthly newsletter. Among the "address changes" was listed,

Al Mason: Up there  
(We'll Miss You, Al)

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Since westerner Dave Schutt was moved East by his employer, one solace is the opportunity to attend shows at the Radio City Music Hall. He's seen 'em all for the past two years, sometimes more than once. Dave, who plays organ as well as doctoring them, is deeply impressed by new RCMH staffer Jimmy Paulin. "He's bringing great distinction to the console," writes Dave, "there's nothing old fashioned in his playing. And Jimmy is as genuine an organ enthusiast as you'll find anywhere. He says one of his greatest joys about being there is the chance to meet organ enthusiasts who come to the Music Hall. Jimmy hopes they'll come up to the console and say hello to him."

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During the 1974 convention banquet awards were made to a number of

notable ATOSers, one going *in absentia* to Carl Norvell of Corsicana, Texas, who was ATOS National President from 1964 to 1966. ATOSer Fred Mitchell was delegated to deliver the award to Norvell at the Corsicana Holiday Inn which he manages. The inscription reads "for outstanding service to ATOS."

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Barely had he unpacked following his return from Detroit, Old Prospector Klos was invited to a rehearsal of the Gloria Swanson-Lee Erwin show which is scheduled for its American tour shortly. A handful of RTOS personnel was present at Rochester's Auditorium Theatre when Queen Gloria and Lee went through their paces.

Miss Swanson made her time count while in Kodakville. She assisted George Eastman House curator James Card in attempting to locate about 30 of her early films. Some were destroyed to realize the silver content. She also served as judge in a costume ball at the Memorial Art Gallery's Gadsby Festival. Klos observed, "I was thoroughly impressed not only with the graciousness of this lady, but her sharpness of memory, keenness of wit, and her excellent physical state. Her appearance on the tour should guarantee standing-room-only houses. Picture to be featured is Queen Kelly for which Lee Erwin wrote the score in 1967. She was amazed at the number of persons who work on the theatre organs as a labor of love, 'something you rarely see these days', she said."



Carl Norvell (left) and Fred Mitchell. A job well done — and remembered. (Corsicana Daily Sun Photo)



Helen Dell. Good Dodger.

The Sweetheart of the Los Angeles Dodgers, organist Helen Dell, following her memorable performance at the Detroit convention, returned to Dodger Stadium in time to musically pep up the players and start a win streak which increased the team's lead in the National League's western division. Meanwhile, ATOS member Bob Beck, son of the late Brooklyn Dodger organist, Gladys Goodding, found his mother's composition, "Follow the Dodgers", and sent Helen a tape of it. Soon the faithful will be singing the words, exhorting their charges to greater efforts which hopefully could lead them into the World Series.



A few years ago one of the stops on the routes of pipe organ music seekers was the Beefeaters restaurant in Phoenix, Arizona, to hear Bob Read play his circa 17-rank mostly Marr & Colton, while chomping a chopped sirloin. At the end of Bob's contract with the eatery he couldn't line up another job including the pipes, so the M&C went into storage, and Bob continued his career on plug-ins. Many years passed and one rainy night Bob looked up from his beanery manuals to see Garry Moore with a smashing brunet, listening intently.

"Er — you are Garry Moore?" asked Bob.

"Fooled another one" said Garry's look-alike. "No, I'm Robert Carson from Los Angeles and this smashing brunet is Helen Dell. We make Malar records".

"Records," mused Read, "I used to make records — when I had pipes."

At the mention of the word

"pipes," Carson's ears got pointed.

"You've got pipes?" asked Carson, with a quaver in his voice. After all, he missed the camaraderie of the 3/26 Wurlitzer in the former Joe Kearns Hollywood home where he had lived for so long and recently vacated.

"Yes, I've got an organ. It's been in storage so long — I fear . . ."

"Ya wanta sell it?" demanded Carson, his eyes narrowing.



Bob Carson. Back in the saddle again, with no help from Garry Moore. (Stoneypic)

Perhaps we'd better stop here and confess that maybe it didn't happen *exactly* as our improvised dialogue suggests, but the upshot was that the Carsons bought Bob Read's long-stored Marr & Colton with the intention of installing it in their new Hollywood home.



Anson Jacobs, ATOS member and ex-theatre organist of Franklin, Pa., tells us that the Pittsburgh Area Theatre Organ Society has the South Hills Theatre's 2/6 Wurlitzer 95 percent restored after two years of effort and several thousand dollars in parts, contributed by James L. Baker, owner of the theatre. Pittsburgh is "theatre organ poor", ever since the flood of 1937 inundated most of the city's theatres. The group, whose members range in age from 9-year-old Gordon Heggfield to those in their seventies, has tentatively scheduled a public concert for December.



Still another organist has been located who played the New York Times Square Paramount during the days of the Crawfords' reign, Miss Jessie Griffiths of Mechanicsburg, Pa. She played the "substitute breakfast" early morning show. "Though it was not the

greatest organ I have played, it did have lots of flash." One of the reasons she was not too keen about the job was because of Jesse Crawford's setting all his presets, then locking them so the substitute organist could not make changes. She also played theatres in Newark, Montclair and Upper Montclair, N.J. Recently, she has been playing an electronic at county fairs in Pennsylvania. Has a lot of cue sheets from the old days, too.



Bud Taylor, organist at the Red Vest pizzeria in Monterey, Calif., submits a clipping from the SACRAMENTO UNION covering the installation of a 2/7 Wurlitzer in the new Golden Bear theatre on the California State Fair grounds, Sacramento, in time for this year's Fair. The paper



Bud Taylor

(Stufoto)

states that the installation was made by members of the Sierra ATOS Chapter, which retains ownership of the instrument. It will be known as the George Seaver Memorial Organ to honor the late chairman of the chapter whose dream was of an organ owned by the club.



Vic Hyde, the "International Musical Phenomenon," who helped kick off the July ATOS convention is still in the clouds over his appearance:

"My act with John Muri at the Redford Theatre — what a thrill! The audience with its big laughs and resounding applause — Boy! And THEATRE ORGAN Magazine has helped my act. When I arrived at the Lycoming County Fair in Pa., pianist

Richard Gruver, who accompanied me, quoted from the magazine all he had learned about me. Yes, he's an ex-theatre organist."



There seems no end to the number of theatres which are hopefully to become Performing Arts Centers. Add the Paramount Theatre in Ashland, Kentucky. Chris Gundlach, a theatre organ and cinema buff (when he isn't working at his printing business) in Tronton, Ohio, is spearheading a move to restore the 1200-seat theatre and install a pipe organ. The chambers are there, years ago converted to dressing rooms, but will be utilized for the purpose intended when renovation begins. The first problem is to secure a suitable organ. It is hopeful that an ATOS chapter can be organized and serve as the catalyst for the organ project.



Bill Thomson. Maybe a real 'welcome back' this time — as a Conn 'artist-clinician.'

Last year an advertisement for a "welcome home from Australia, Bill Thomson" party appeared in organ publications, which was a bit odd, because Bill hadn't been in Australia. He had planned a tour but had to call it off because of other commitments. It looks as though he'll make it this fall and will most likely be "down under" by the time this hits print.

Judd Walton's  
**THE WURLITZER THEATRE ORGAN  
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 is still available through Doric Records, P.O. Box 282, Monterey, California 93940. Price \$22.00 Postpaid.

But not before another big assignment overtook him: Bill became a "Conn man," with the title "artist-clinician." However, we assume that won't preclude some organ playing after he puts his stethoscope away at 5:00 P.M. In a news release Bill was dubbed "the jet set organ teacher" and Conn's John Nelson chortled, "His skill is apparent not only in the manner in which he handles the instrument, but also in his manner of handling the audience!" We can't argue with John.



Various phases of the theatre organ era continue to provide entertainment for the American Guild of (classical) Organists whose members once considered the TO as anathema. For example, a recent Riverside-San Bernardino AGO chapter meeting first featured a classical recital at the First United Methodist Church in Redlands, Calif. Then the concertgoers adjourned to the TO-equipped home of Bill Blanchard who accompanied Laurel and Hardy's "Big Business." Mr. Blanchard explained that in the silent film days, the organist was given musical suggestions (cue sheets, scores), but usually the easiest method was to "play it by ear." This he demonstrated on his pipe organ as he accompanied the film.



Alden E. Miller reports from Minneapolis that the 3/14 Robert Morton transplanted years ago from the De-

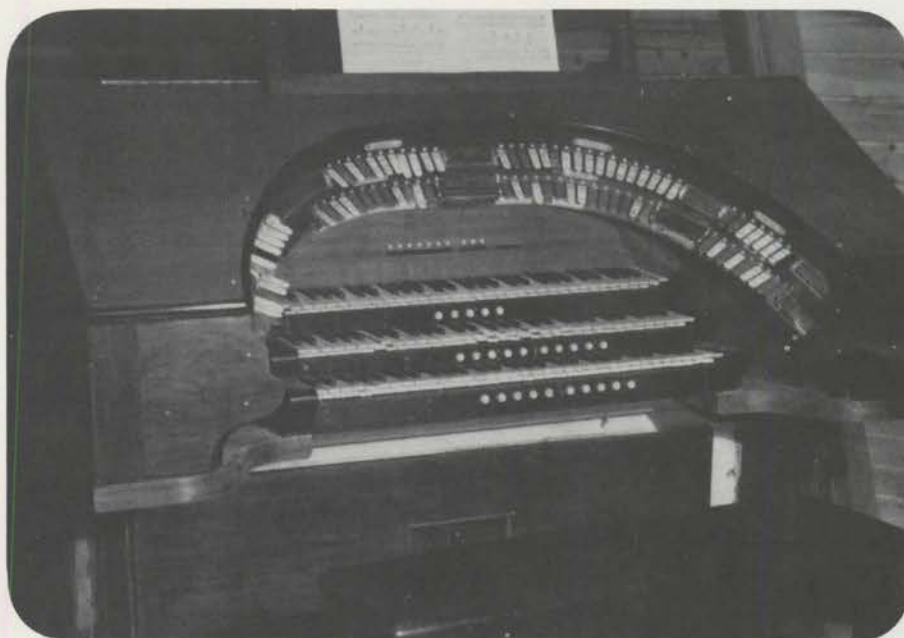
troit Annex Theatre to the Minneapolis Powderhorn Baptist church (installed by the late Ray Steffens), has been neglected, is inoperative and has been replaced by a plug-in. But before the rush of organ hunters starts, the Morton is not for sale, advises the pioneer editor of the first THEATRE ORGAN magazine published in the USA who has been appointed "Historian and Archivar" for the Land of Lakes Chapter.



Since 1910, Klann Inc. of Waynesboro, Va. has been known as a supplier of organ parts. Now, the company is introducing a new, compact pipe organ utilizing a newly developed valve system. The valve operates with only a film of polyurethane to admit air to the pipe, eliminating the spring and fiber valve of the traditional chest. It's claimed it gives quicker response at lower wind pressures.



Ed Mayo, Box 187, Boulder Junction, Wisconsin, has jumped in with both feet. He has purchased the 3/11 Wurlitzer which Gary and Elaine Franklin removed from the Des Moines Paramount in 1963, also the 2/9 Wurlitzer originally from the Shaw-Hayden theatre in Cleveland, O. The Des Moines organ suffered water damage and because Ed wants to hear some music soon, he plans to use parts of the 2/9 to play from the 3/11 console until chest repairs have been made. Ed Mayo is seeking historical



The 3/11 portion of Ed Mayo's 5-manual, 64-pedal, 20-rank organ collection.

information about both instruments — also suggestions for a home installation. Ours is — “Ed, you need a barn in your backyard!”

1974 ATOS convention-goers will recall the young man who did such a professional job playing the Rodgers during the banquet — Rick Shindell. Rick recently liberated a sleeping beauty — a five division, 30 rank composite theatre organ in a high school near Toledo installed about 1939. It consists of a 4-deck Wurlitzer console of unclassified design, 10 ranks of Wurlitzer, 4 ranks of Barton, several ranks of Estey-Haskell, 3 ranks of Gottfried, and more. Is it any wonder Rick’s piggy bank is very empty?

Organists at baseball stadia generally play a half hour before the start of each game, render the National Anthem, provide musical interludes between innings and “play the house out” after the game. What happens when games are halted by rain? Well, if the organist is John Kiley, official Boston Red Sox pedal thumper, he fills with appropriate music on his Hammond X-66 atop Fenway Park. The former theatre organist supplied background music with such numbers as *Singin’ In the Rain* and *Raindrops* during rain pauses in both games of the day-night doubleheader on June 22.



Rosa Rio. The spice of life — from a straight organ?

Rosa Rio informs us that she will be playing a concert on the 4-manual Austin pipe organ in Bridgeport’s United Congregational Church on Nov. 1. “They want variety”, she says. On a church organ it can be a bit difficult, but knowing Rosa’s ability to adapt to any situation (out-of-tune organs, no combination pistons etc.), we are sure she’ll give a good account of herself.

Gaylord Carter continues to pop up in unexpected places. One recent gig was playing a concert and silent comedy accompaniment for a group of non-enthusiasts at the Camarillo, Calif.

home of Bob and Alice Powers. The powers planned on a straight cocktail party for friends and neighbors, with no music from their “style 260” Rodgers because it wasn’t a musical crowd. But at the last minute Bob broke down and phoned Gaylord Carter. Gaylord had nothing planned so he grabbed a couple of cans of film and drove north to Camarillo. As always, he quickly converted the non-music-oriented group with his music and showmanship. “They really loved Gaylord,” reports Bob. It was the first time a film has been accompanied on Bob’s Rodgers.



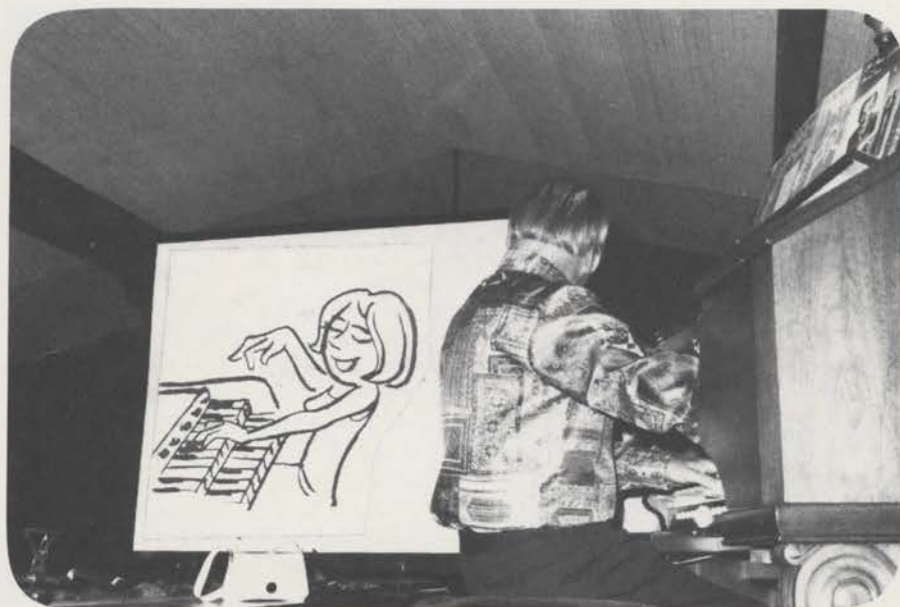
Bob Power. Gaylord was the life of his party. (Stufoto)

The generally accepted reason for the demise of the theatre pipe organ was the advent of the “talkies.” If one believes a financial writer in a Western New York newspaper, it was because of something else. In a June column, entitled “The Economist”, the writer had this to say when talking of the phasing out of still another Wurlitzer product, the juke box:

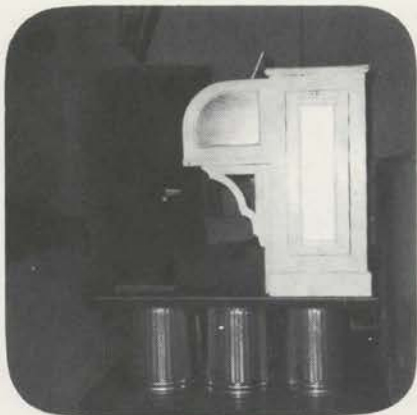
“It was in the early 1930’s that the Wurlitzer Company began phasing out the Mighty Wurlitzer the mammoth theatre organ which had become too expensive to produce and sell.”

How’s that again?

From Roswell, New Mexico, comes news of a novel type of console elevator — run by manpower. The 3/14 Hillgreen-Lane console at the New Mexico Military Institute was



A “first” for the Rodgers “style 260” — silent movies in the Power home, with Gaylord doing the honors. (Powerpic)



An elevated console from trash cans — and some muscle men.

first secured to a stout wood and steel platform. When it's time to raise the console, a car bumper jack is placed at each corner of the platform and secured to the other jacks with a steel rod for safety. Then four stalwarts strike a "yo-heave-ho" cadence and heist the platform up high enough for the placement of nine up-ended metal trash cans to support the elevated console. The whole operation takes only five minutes, reports R. MacNair.



From Jackson, Tenn., Bill Oberg fills in more details about the huge double Kimball in the Memphis Municipal Auditorium (April '74 column). Bill says there are actually two auditoriums with a stage between them. The South Hall is equipped with a 4/40 Kimball with four chambers

above the stage. The North Hall is equipped with a 5/70 Kimball with chambers in the proscenium arch. They are entirely separate except that both are playable from the 5-manual console. Both were installed in 1928. Wind pressures range from six to thirty inches. Bill informs us that he has worked on both instruments, touching them up enough for graduations, but they are seldom used at any other time.

Now there's a worthy project. Anyone interested?



Visitor Ralph Bartlett has a go at the John Ledwon Wurlitzer. (Stufoto)

The British Theatre Organ Club's Hon. Secretary, Ralph Bartlett, was a visitor to the USA for a brief period in July concurrent with the ATOS convention. He was a house guest of Lee and Laurel Haggart in Granada Hills, Calif., and they arranged a reception

for him at the John Ledwon Wurlitzer-equipped residence.



School of the Ozarks' organist Bert Buhrman has been making 30-minute broadcast tapes, utilizing the school's 3/15 Wurlitzer, for KSOZ-FM. By early July, Bert and his musical associates at the school had made 14 tapes, "and I suppose we'll go on until we're exhausted", he says. In late June, Bert performed a private show for a motor home convention on the school's campus.

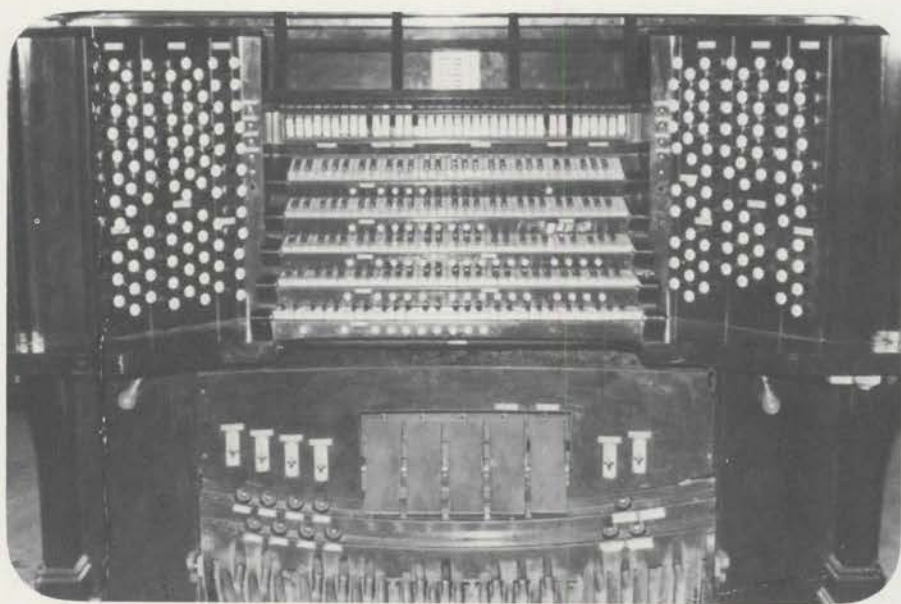


In the 1920's, Wurlitzer built half a dozen huge automatic music boxes known as Concert Band Organs. Each weighed a couple tons, was 19 feet long, 10 feet high, and 5 feet wide, contained 480 pipes, 30 uniphone bells, plus assorted effects. In June, one of these monsters was sold at auction in Houston for \$31,000. Its 1926 price was \$8,000, with rolls costing \$50 apiece. It was one item in a collection of 35 musical instruments and 60 antique autos owned by the creator of Houston's Astrodome, Astrohall and Astroworld, Roy M. Hofheinz. Other items auctioned included a Wurlitzer type 150 Military Band Organ for \$7,300, and a 1914 Wurlitzer Orchestra for \$16,500.

Meanwhile, back at Wurlitzer's North Tonawanda plant, a new line of electronic organs is being turned out, 80 a week, and plans are under way to double the capacity in a year. Prices of the instruments, introduced last October, range from \$150 to \$1,000.



Al Winslow, retired New England theatre organist remembers playing Loew's Providence Robert Morton whose decorative console was a victim of the 1954 hurricane. When installed about 1928, it was played by Joe Stoves, "a terrific organist". Al also remembers playing the Providence Rialto when it had a 2/20 straight Hook & Hastings, adapted for theatre use but without percussions. "One of the best theatre organs in the Providence area was a 4/75 straight Moller in the 3,000-seat Strand Theatre. Paramount took the house over in 1929 and sent the organ to the State Penal and Mental Institution at Howard, R.I. It may still be there. It was replaced in the theatre in 1930 by a horribly



Five manual Kimball in the Memphis Municipal Auditorium North Hall. It can play 110 ranks of two organs.

raucous 3/13 Wurlitzer which went out in the 1937 hurricane. A friend of mine has the very ornate console."



Rose Diamond is critical of organists who talk too much between tunes while concertizing. "Some of the fault lies with audiences who play into their hands by laughing at every silly joke the artists uses. One organist I know plays beautifully, but as soon as he opens his mouth, there is a grand rush for the lobby." Perhaps the younger organists should take a leaf from the book of Hall of Famers Jesse Crawford, Albert Hay Malotte, Henry B. Murtagh, Eddie Dunstedter and Don Baker. Rarely did they engage in banter with the audiences; they let their playing speak for them.



A few seasons ago we ran an article about the adventures of a circus organist named Colonel Harry Jenkins (the rank is for real - AAF, retired). His Hammond was the whole band for a one-ring circus playing mostly west coast one-day engagements. From time to time we get inquiries about Harry, who before he became involved with circus duties, ran a silent movie music column in this publication.

Occasionally Harry checks in with a note describing his latest adventures, because he's been with the circus each summer since long before our story was published. His latest communique



Herb Head's miniature circus was a hit with the Colonel. Herb and the callopie are life size.

is dated August 7. The Strong Circus was playing Detroit and Colonel Harry headed straight for Herb Head's home to take in Herb's miniature circus which was such a hit with '74 conventioners. In fact, Herb loaned Harry his tiger cage model wagon which Harry displayed during a show atop his Hammond, complete with moving tigers behind the bars. Obviously, ex-theatre organist Harry is having a wonderful circus season.



Alexander Schreiner is now in his 66th year as organist for the Mormon Church, and in his 51st year as organist at the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt

Lake City. Did you know he was a theatre organist in his youth? He shared the Kimball console in the American Theatre in Salt Lake City with the late Esther Stayner. Mr. Schreiner played the Kimball as an adjunct to the orchestra, which was led by John J. McClellan, a teacher of organ, and a mentor of Schreiner. He also took a six-month leave of absence from his Tabernacle duties to play for silent movies at the Los Angeles Metropolitan theatre. Its console now controls the Old Town Music Hall 4/25 Wurlitzer in El Segundo, Calif.



Theatres have figured in noteworthy disasters thru the years. Fire destroyed the Brooklyn Theatre in 1876 with 295 lives lost; the Ring Theatre in Vienna in 1881 with 850 lost; the Exeter in England in 1887 with 200 lost; and the most destructive in America, the Iroquois Theatre in Chicago in 1903 which claimed 602. Then there was the disaster which befell a theatre, supposedly caused by the vibration of sound traced to its pipe organ? Yes, that was alleged to have been the cause in the collapse of the Knickerbocker Theatre's roof in Washington in 1922, causing 98 deaths, injuries to 133, and ultimately the suicides of architect and owner. Following the disaster, the BUFFALO EVENING NEWS ran a thoroughly-researched article entitled "When Death Played the Pipe Organ" in which strange deaths of numerous church organists were described.



Offside to reader C.J.S., our search is ended, and the answer is yes, there was a tune titled *I've Never Seen a Straight Banana*. It was written in 1926 by Ted Waite and published first in England. As to its quality, it doesn't measure up to other banana songs, its melody being as vapid as its lyrics. Thanks to Doc Bebko for the use of his peeled Tune-Dex card. We hope this straightens out the banana tangle.



Colonel Harry. Having a ball.

(Stufoto)

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