

# Snippets from England

TONY BERNARD SMITH

A provincial newspaper came out with it this spring: "Organist's dark secret is out."

This lurid headline revealed publicly the fact that the legendary *Reginald Porter-Brown* (known admiringly to many as "the man with three hands") is now a registered blind person.

In fact, he has been struggling with worsening vision for 14 years and his handicap is such that he cannot read more than a few notes of music at a time and then only by looking directly at them.

"For a long time I have been having

to play mainly by touch and memory," he says.

"It is very difficult, particularly for an organist, because every organ is different and because of the size of the instrument — it takes some time to find where everything is on a four manual organ.

"What has helped me is the fact that, as a child, I played for hours and hours in the dark, extemporising and improvising."

He has suffered much from ill-health in his time but has built up a formidable second-touch technique which enable him to broadcast twice

using left hand and pedals only, his right wrist being broken!

STACCATO SNIPPETS — Going the rounds is a lengthy documentary film, *An Acre of Seats in a Garden of Dreams*, which tells the story of movies in Britain and features pedal-pushers *Douglas Reeve*, *John Stewart* and *Ena Baga* (though Ena confines herself to piano backing for silents on this occasion) . . . Over in Holland, the Passage Theatre, Schiedam, closed May 1, 1974. It will re-open as a community arts centre May 2, 1975 (all being well) with the Standaard 3/10 fully overhauled. Scheduled soloist will be *Cor Standaard*, son of the original builder . . . *Joseph Seal* has retired from his desk job with a cinema circuit. He has another LP due soon on a commercial label . . . Cameo/Poly, Regent Street, London has reverted to live theatre presentations. The Compton 2/6 stays . . . Six years after his retirement, veteran Dutch tabmerchant *Johan Jong* returned to the air waves to give a recital on the AVRO studio's Compton 4/22. He was formerly staff organist for the VARA radio company, who presented the recital but whose Standaard 3/13 was awaiting major overhaul . . . Regal, Edmonton, London celebrated 40 years with the famous Christie 4/14 well to the fore in the hands of several players. After a spell as The Sundown, the theatre has reverted to its original name. □



REGINALD PORTER-BROWN — his sight handicap has been revealed.

(J.D. Sharp Photo)

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