

# 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.

Verne Langdon is a man of many talents — composer, organist, calliapist, pianist, humorist, makeup artist and "Honkeychordist" (we'll explain that presently). He has been on the commercial record scene for less than two years, yet he has seven current record releases that are selling well.



"Erik." He plays fresh sewer music.

Our *For the Records* column has reviewed his *Music for Magicians* (pipe organ) and *Circus Clown Calliope - No. 1* (played on a 43-whistle Tangley). We also reviewed a record played on a ghostly pipe organ credited to "Erik" the "Phantom of the Organ" (with no apologies to Lon Chaney and his quivering, uninsurable 1-ton chandelier), and we strongly suspect the 103-year-old Erik just might be 32-year-old Verne Langdon. Now Verne has taken off in another direction, one which his participation as a makeup artist on the recent *Planet of the Apes* TV series would well equip him. A few months ago, we drove by the Mayfair Music Hall in Santa Monica and noted the marquee was hawking the "Annual Farewell Debut of Johann Sebastian Bork" at the "Honkeychord". A live stage show!



"Bork" plucks strings with goose quills — in a Bavarian accent.

Intrigued, we paid our 20 cents and went in. The show was a gas, and the featured attraction was "Bork" playing jazz and pops on a very special harpsichord. "Bork" appeared in the powdered wig and elegant costume of an 18th century court musician and his makeup was strictly Cyrano de Bergerac — yes, with nose. Bork's musings between numbers in an absentminded teutonic brogue brought the house down and we departed with determination to watch "Bork."

Next day we got a call from Verne Langdon. "Saw you in the baldhead row and wondered what you thought of my — er — Bork's show." That was months ago.

In mid-January 1975, Bork struck again with a bigger and better show. It was again held at the Mayfair Music Hall and Bork wowed a full house with his comic Germanic musings and up-to-the-minute "Honkeychord" jazz. Next would be an appearance on the Dinah Shore TV show and perhaps a gig at the September Home Organ Festival at Asilomar, Calif. It would seem that Verne is on his way in the fickle entertainment biz. For a gander at what he really looks like, turn to the *For the Records* column.



When the officials of Christ Lutheran Church in Rochester, N.Y. decided to replace their 1927 3/15 non-unified Hilgreen-Lane pipe organ (including a modified horseshoe console) with a plug-in, they offered it to the Rochester Theatre Organ Society. Had the society not accepted, the organ would have gone the way of a lot of pipe organs in the forties — to the scrap heap. For a couple of autumn weeks in 1974, eight members of the RTOS "bull gang" known as the "Filthy Fifteen" removed the instrument and placed it in storage. It is in good condition with only some tuning damage, and is the fourth organ to come under RTOS ownership. The others are the 4/22 Wurlitzer in the Auditorium Theatre, the 3/8 Wurlitzer being readied for installation in the new Eisenhart Auditorium, and the ex-Regent 9-rank Hope-Jones Wurlitzer in storage.



Organist Anson Jacobs sent along a clip about Hector Olivera performing on an electronic in Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh. When Heinz Hall was known as the William Penn Theatre, Anson held down the keys while his friend, Charles Werkley, tuned the Style B Wurlitzer, Opus 1314, for the opening of the house in 1926.



Another first is Rex Koury's just released stereo recording miked in Death Valley, Calif. Entitled *Rex Koury Plays the Famous Scotty's Castle Organ*, it's the first recording

made at the desert outpost by a live organist (the 3/15 Welte is also a roll player). Tunes have a western flavor but it's the ordering address which intrigues us — Box 197, Steamboat, Nevada.

A steamboat in the Nevada desert?!

Incidentally, Rex returns to Wichita for a concert on the "Dowager Empress" on May 9. He played the opening concert on the 4/36 ex-Times Square Paramount Wurlitzer re-installed in the Century II civic hall awhile back.



From Springfield, Mo. Bert Buhrman writes that the 216 Wurlitzer in the Gillioz Theatre, on which he spent considerable money a few years ago to restore, is up for sale. Mann Theatres bought out the National General chain, and that organ is the last in that part of the country in a theatre. There have been several bids, including that of a dentist. "If the organ is to play again, it must be reworked completely," says Bert.



Enthusiastic Randy Piazza, long time booster/chairman/party whip for the Niagara Frontiersmen, is justifiably proud of the chandelier chapter members have recently installed in the Riviera theatre, North Tonawanda, their mecca and home of the ever growing 3-manual Wurlitzer (it had swelled to 17 ranks last we heard). The 14½-foot tall, 8½-foot diameter decoration, affectionately called "the

Lantern" by chapterites, was imported from France for installation in the then new Genesee theatre in Buffalo, N.Y. in 1926. Its lead crystals and 18-karat gold plated frame were given a thorough renovation and cleaning by a work crew before it was hung in the Riviera in 1974. Illumination is provided by blue, white, red and gold bulbs, with each color on a separate circuit and dimmer. It cost \$16,000 in 1926. It weighs 3/4 ton, just right for that certain scene in a new version of *Phantom of the Opera*.



Another message from Niagara Frontier reports that house organist Greg Gurtner is "packing 'em in" at the Riviera during the week. Greg seems to have a talent for arousing curiosity about the organ among theatre goers. When he plays they gather around the console and view the black-lighted percussions in the pit while asking questions which Greg answers.



New York's Beacon Theatre is undergoing a massive renovation at a cost of \$250,000. Two entrepreneurs, Barry R. Kerr and Steven Singer, leased the Beacon last March, convinced that the residents of the area would be drawn to a refurbished theatre, provided the attractions were family entertainment. Their theory has been rewarded with success. *The Three Musketeers*, for example, made \$26,000 the first week. Plans call for other attractions as well as movies,

however. Children's theatre, ballet, rock shows and concerts using the 4/19 Wurlitzer are in the works. So, the 2700-seat Beacon, labeled "a Bit of Bagdad on Upper Broadway" when it was opened in 1929, has obtained a well deserved lease on life.



Rembert Wurlitzer Inc., world's leading dealer in antique stringed instruments, has gone out of business. Mrs. Wurlitzer, who took over operation of the firm in 1963 after her husband's death, said the decision was reached after expiration of the lease of the company's New York headquarters. Negotiations have been under way with several firms to sell the collection in large lots. Mrs. Wurlitzer stated that she would never auction the collection, insured for \$1 million, or sell it off to collectors. Many famous violins, cellos, violas and bows are included, among them the Hellier Stradivarius violin valued at \$300,000, and the Francesca "Strad" at "not less than \$125,000". Rembert Wurlitzer was a grandson of Rudolph Wurlitzer, who founded the firm in 1842, famous for its pipe organs, band organs, pianos, accordions and — Ulp! — juke boxes.



It's amazing what one can find by attending sales of used merchandise. Take Warsaw, N.Y.'s Irv Toner, a theatre organist and one of the house organists at the Riviera in North Tonawanda. Irv attended a flea market in Bergen, N.Y., and spotted a stack of music books. Thumbing through, a cue sheet fell out, and on further search, he found scores and cue sheets to such films as *The Eagle*, *Eve's Leaves*, *Shivering Spooks*, *Three Bad Men* and others. Theme music by Zamecnik was a part of the collection. The price Irv paid for the whole business? a magnificent \$4.00! The music was once owned by an organist by the name of E.H. Burchell who played at an "Allen Theatre". Can anyone shed light on this organist?



When Jim Lahay informed Kathleen Stokes that she was inducted into the Theatre Organists *Hall of Fame*, she was overjoyed to be added to the charmed list which includes Jesse Crawford, Henry B. Murtagh, Eddie Dunstedter, Paul H. Forster and many



Crystals hang high in North Tonawanda.

more. "She is such a wonderful person", says Jim "and theatre organ fans across Canada should be thankful to the ATOS for according her this honor. The Toronto Theatre Organ Society has conferred upon Kay a lifetime membership to show our gratitude."



The friendly discussion which arose in these pages recently as to who played the premier concert on Toronto's Casa Loma organ, is ended. In 1972, Al Bollington, while playing for the Canadian National Exhibition, visited the Casa Loma organ before it was half installed. Although he posed at the console for pictures, he did not play a concert. Someone used the pictures for advertising, about which the Toronto Theatre Organ Society members are not too happy. "So", according to Bernie Venus, "Dennis James holds the honor of dedicating the instrument."



In February Helen Dell did a two-a-day stint on a Rodgers Trio for nine performances of the Aid to Zoos national horse show held at the Phoenix Coliseum. She found it stimulating but "two-a-day" sometimes tiring. When she overheard an observer saying how remarkable the horses were for keeping in step with the organ music, she replied that when she got too tired the horses seemed to get out of step.



That *Earthquake* film we reported on in the February issue has had some repercussions in Los Angeles. Apparently the undulations caused by "Sensurround" stirred up the local quake conscious politicians and now they are calling for the "earthquake proofing" (or demolition) of all theatres in the area. There are about 160 theatres operating and at least eighty of them were built before the sometimes vague safety regulations went into effect years ago, and among the 80 are the old, large historic relics of the Golden Age — including Grauman's Chinese theatre famed for its footprints of stars in cement. Because it would cost more than a theatre is worth to bring it up to the unenforced ordinances, the theatres will be doomed if the matter is pursued. A few, including the Wiltern and Los Angeles theatres, house organs.



Our friend Irma.

Noted organist Irma Glen, who was a big name in Chicago during the first big swing of the theatre organ, says she's "having a ball with so many ATOS members in the area of my home in Ojai, California. To acquaint them with my past, I have used the August 1971 THEATRE ORGAN story about me."



Sandy Fleet, sparkler of the "Organ Power" pizzeria project in San Diego, reports that the former BBC Moller has been moved from the Moller Hagerstown (Md.) factory to a warehouse in San Diego where it is undergoing further alterations. It has been enlarged to 28 ranks. The Doppelflute has been removed and replaced with a new 61-note Saxophone. A Trumpet has replaced the Tuba to provide more "bite" for pizza parlor work. Along the same line of thought, the Posthorn has been extended down to a 16-foot CCC, and a 32-foot Bombarde has been added. Also, the percussion de-



Sandy Fleet

(Stufoto)

partment has been bolstered by the addition of a Piano and the Tuned Tympani from the Brooklyn Fox Wurlitzer. All the percussions in the chambers have been duplicated outside the swell shutters. Now all that's needed is a suitable building in a good pasta merchandising area.



Harold Jolles, overjoyed at seeing his life story in the December issue of THEATRE ORGAN, nevertheless took a dim view of the letters whose writers relegated Hall of Famer Jesse Crawford to second-rate status. "The critics just don't realize that during the early recording sessions, the organist just couldn't play his regular way; in those days, certain voices of the organ did not record well. I, too, heard Crawford at Shea's Buffalo and was frankly disappointed. I never thought that Shea's 4/28 Wurlitzer was too beautiful; the Lafayette's 260 was the best sounding Wurlitzer in Buffalo. But to hear Crawford on his home organ in the Chicago Theatre (now being restored by CATOE) was really something! I get disgusted when I hear some of these young squirts say he wasn't much of an organist. Baloney!"

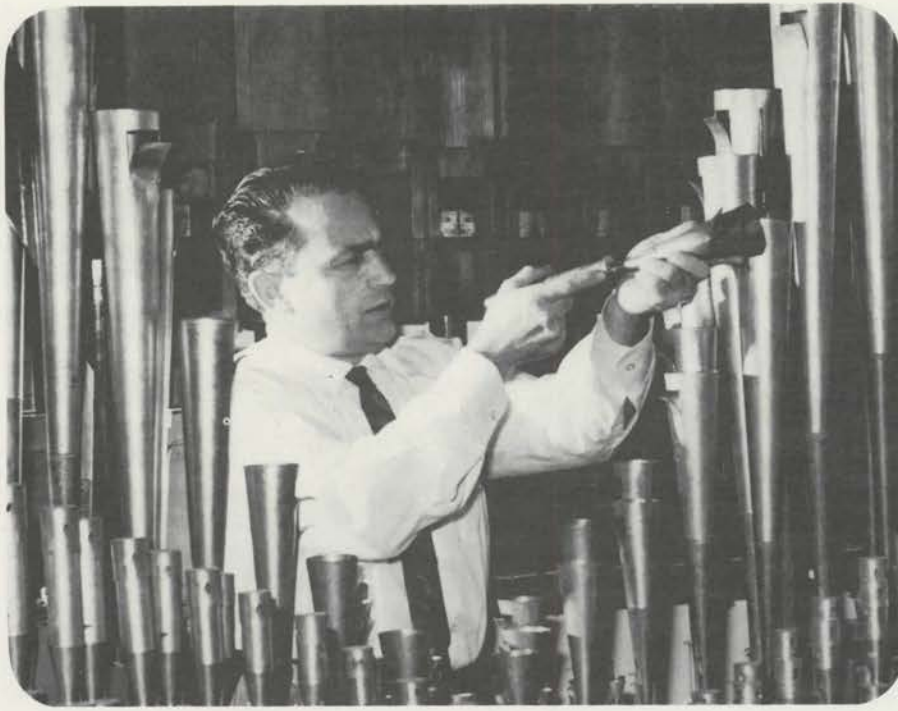


The Harold Jolles biography brought fond memories for Kokomo, Indiana ATOS member Frank D. May. "I was born and raised in Elkhart, Ind.," he says, "and spent many high school noon hours watching construction of the Lerner Theatre and installation of its Kimball pipe organ. I never knew Mr. Jolles personally, but was thrilled with his music, and inspired to study organ because of his performances. Incidentally, the Kimball had been used regularly for FM radio broadcasts, and only recently gave up the ghost because it's in need of extensive repairs." There must be an ATOS chapter in the vicinity which could refurbish this fine 2/11 instrument.



For the fourth consecutive year, Rochester's WEZO-FM station presented its 28-hour Holiday musical gift to the community which included organ music. Prominent organists featured were Alexander Schreiner, E. Power Biggs, Eddie Dunstedter, Dick Leibert, Virgil Fox, Bob Ralston and George Wright.





Bernie Venus. He was there.

The lads who maintain the Casa Loma Wurlitzer in Toronto really had their hands full a week prior to Stan Kann's concerts. According to Bernie Venus, the blower "packed it in," due to a blade breaking loose. A rush ensued to replace it with the 30 HP blower which was used in the Maple Leaf Gardens, previous location of the organ. "The voltage was cut from 550 to 208, but we pulled it off and the concerts went ahead as planned", Bernie says.



The New York Times recently gave mention to the Red River Chapter ATOS. "A Relic of the Old Days Returns to the Theatre," headed the item and told of the group's restoration of the Wurlitzer in a Fargo, N.D. theatre. Quoted was the group's spokesman, Lance Johnson: "We've plans to bring back some silent films and have the organ accompany them." He further stated that the group wants to make the instrument a weekend attraction, and are considering inviting established theatre organists to Fargo for guest appearances. Also being considered are stage shows to augment the programs.



Another movie palace is the subject of an intense campaign to be saved. The 3249-seat Loew's Buffalo Theatre was put up for tax sale recently by the

city because of non-payment of taxes for five years. In the meantime, a group of about 50, known as "Friends of the Buffalo," have organized and are working under theatre superintendent Curt Mangel to refurbish both the theatre and the 4/28 Wurlitzer. The house is now on the New York State list of accredited historical places, and its placement on the Federal list is expected. Greg Gurtner played the organ for the city council, Landmark Society and Arts Development Services during their surveys. All this effort involved nine months of paperwork, says Curt, but the little band is determined to save the theatre. ATOS wishes every success in this venture.



Bob Goldstine informs us that the Embassy Theatre Foundation in Fort Wayne, Indiana received an extension of time to raise funds to purchase the property, including the Page organ until June 1, 1975. A meeting was held on December 9 with over 100 present, and the Board of Directors of the Foundation was enlarged to 21. A concerted drive is now being readied to raise \$500,000 to purchase and refurbish. A new heating system is being installed as a first order of business.



The launching of the Lee Erwin-Gloria Swanson Show at the Rivoli

Theatre in Indianapolis, was witnessed by Doc and Mrs. Bebko. "I'd advise any organ chapter or club to avail itself of this presentation. It's nostalgic, well done, even though the movie *Queen Kelly* drags. Miss Swanson was superb and received two standing ovations. About 700 braved a raging snowstorm to plunk down \$5 apiece, a real tribute to her. I was impressed by the professionalism of both Jim Card's (George Eastman House Curator of Films) assemblage of the clips and Miss Swanson's dynamic, humorous and pointed comments. Lee played three solos and provided background and accompaniment for the three-hour program. The 3/17 Uniphone was in perfect tune."



That show of course, was before the Rivoli in Indianapolis was hit by financial ills. Tom Ferree put the 3/17 Uniphone up for sale and gloom was thick. Then something wonderful happened; the Central Indiana ATOS Chapter, led by Tim Needler, went to bat and made a valiant effort to raise the funds necessary to make a down payment on the theatre. But it was just too much money on short notice and despite generous donations the effort failed. Yet the fact that Mr. Needler and the Chapter did their best to save an organ-equipped theatre was in the best ATOS tradition and will remain a feather in their collective cap. Meanwhile the theatre has been purchased by a Mr. Bush who continues to run movies. Tom is negotiating with him regarding the future of the organ.



"Mr. Sing-along of Central New York's" 82nd year has been marked, so far, by two notable events. One was a Christmas present from son, Bob Forster, an engraved metal placque commemorating Paul H. Forster's election to the ATOS Hall of Fame which reads in part "... for his contribution to background music for silent movies and perfection of the sing-along." All who witnessed Forster's immense popularity at the Syracuse, N.Y. Empire, Eckel and Lowe's during the '20s and '30s will agree with the wording. The other event was Paul's decision to quit driving after two minor traffic accidents. "I decided I was too old to drive and should get myself off the road - so I sold my car."



Paul Forster at the Allen.

But he can still play up a storm on the organ, as Fort Worthers (Texas) discovered a couple of years ago when Paul played a one-nighter at the dedication concert of the Worth theatre organ re-installed in the Fort Worth Casa Manana theatre, sharing the console with Rex Koury. Now living in St. Petersburg, Florida, he occasionally visits son Bob at the latter's home on the Isle of Palms, off the Atlantic coast. That's when Bob's Allen theatre model gets a real workout.



From Connecticut, ex-ATOS national president Stillman Rice reports that the fund being raised in memory of his late wife, Mildred (who was ATOS National's secretary concurrent with Stillman's presidency) is growing. The proceeds from special concerts are the chief means of swelling the fund, although contributions are welcome. The first benefit concert was played by Eddie Weaver, and a 1975 fall concert will be played by Rosa Rio. The goal: a memorial theatre, complete with theatre organ.



Dave Whitmore reports from Underhill Center, Vermont, that after one of his "Heavy Organ" concerts in Burlington, Virgil Fox announced that he had purchased the Hammond Museum in Gloucester, Mass., which include the huge concert organ made famous via records by the late Richard Ellsasser. It was stated that Fox plans to add pipework from the Harvard Chapel Organ to make the Museum "the second largest organ in the world". All of which explains reports received

from other sources to the effect that the Museum had been hastily closed, the long-time manager fired summarily and organists who had agreed to play concerts at the Hammond Castle being informed that their services were not needed. We wish Mr. Fox good fortune in his new venture.



We goofed last issue. Don Baker's re-union with the ex-N.Y. Paramount now Wichita Century II civic auditorium 4/37 Wurlitzer was not in March. Instead it's on April 19, so there's still time.



Bob Ralston has been skipping a few Lawrence Welk rehearsals to keep a series of concerts with the Burbank-San Fernando Valley Youth Symphony Orchestra. For this engagement Bob deserted the organ for his other love, the piano. It was an ambitious undertaking for the 55 high school and college kids, with orchestral works by Edward MacDowell (*Indian Suite*) and Aaron Copland (*Hoe Down* from *Rodeo Ballet*) surrounding the *piece-de-resistance*, Gershwin's *Concerto in F*, with Ralston performing the digital fireworks on the 88. We fully expected Bob to give a good account of himself, and he did. But what surprised us most was the professional quality of the orchestral playing by the boys and girls. We caught the performance played at the LA Wilshire-Ebell theatre, the last of a series of one-night stands. Ralston and the kids were tops.



Billy Nalle

Billy Nalle reports from Gotham that his concert at the Kirk of Dunedin (Florida) was a sell-out and 125 had to be turned away muttering dire incantations over the disappointment. But Billy was cheered greatly at the later reception when the Kirk governing board sent word through Terry Charles of their appreciation for one of the Clearwater Kirk's finest concerts to date. At the same reception Billy met some old friends: (1) Judson Laire, who played "papa" during the seven year run of CBS-TV's *I Remember Mama* which Billy scored with music, (2) Clealan Blakely and family; they had safari'd from their home in Ontario Canada, timing the visit to catch Billy's concert, (3) Dick and Audrey Weber, owners of the Strand theatre in Plattsburgh, N.Y. Billy has recorded two albums on their 3/25 Wurlitzer. They, too, timed their



Bob Ralston



Clealan Blakely

(Stufoto)

Florida visit to include Clearwater at the right time. "Surprise me? Seeing all those folks so important to me actually stunned me!" exclaimed a delighted Billy.

He'd better recover fast because his next move is from New York, his home for so long, to a new adventure in Wichita. He might even get to play the "Dowager Empress" — again, if he plays his cards right.



Herbert Lee reports from Atlanta that massive efforts are being made from several directions toward saving the Fox theatre. Herb sends revealing clips from Atlanta newspapers. One

clip from the Atlanta constitution reveals efforts of Atlanta Landmarks Inc., with our own Joe Patton serving as chairman of the group's "Save the Fox" committee, to get some Arab "oil money" invested in the project. The Landmarks bunch has turned over a package of information to potential investors from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. An item in the Atlanta Journal tells of another organization formed by nightclub entertainer Paul LaRue called "FosSAFE" which plans to raise three hundred grand as a down payment by May 1 for the purpose of purchasing, restoring, and maintaining the Fox as a historical site and as a center for the performing arts. Even visiting pianist Liberace offered his support. During a visit to the theatre



Bob Van Camp

(Stufoto)

and hearing former Fox staff organist Bob Van Camp play the huge Moller organ, "old pearly teeth" was asked if he'd be willing to play the 88 for a benefit performance to help save the theatre. He replied "Yes, I would be glad to get the ball rolling, if it would get some of your rich people in town to do something." Two competing rescue groups plus Liberace should keep the pot boiling.



Let's spike a rumor — the one rampant on the west coast which has a Japanese firm owning a controlling amount of Hammond Organ Co. stock. We checked with stockholder Len Clarke and he assures us that the giant Nipponese manufacturing firm known as Mitsubishi Ltd has not bought into Hammond. On the contrary, Hammond has purchased a Japanese firm now named Nihon Hammond, reports Len, and 49 percent of the Hammond company's stock is owned by the Pritzker family, a name which certainly doesn't sound very Japanese. We'd have hated to see Mitsubishi and Yamaha thrash it out on U.S. soil.



Rose Diamond has a million of 'em — tales of her organ career, that is. Once she was playing a restaurant gig on an electronic when the place was held up by some gunmen who demanded the contents of the cash register, which wasn't far from the console where Rose was playing *Man With a Horn*. One of the bandits told her to "keep playing, girlie," Rose never missed a beat and she was strongly tempted to segue into *Pistol Packin' Mama*, with its admonition to "lay that pistol down." But she thought better of it, and she's still alive.



Can one latch onto the ATOS spirit when one lives in a small town, away from the mainstrems of organ hobby activity? Yes, says Pattie Morrison of Washington, Iowa (near Cedar Rapids). Pattie has been an ATOS member for only a year, yet the indications are that not only has she been smitten by the spirit, but she's taken positive action to make her fellow townspeople aware of the theatre instrument. Her first step was to join the Cedar Rapids ATOS chapter. Next, she enlisted the

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support of local theatre manager Ted Howell. Together they explored the town's theatre, called the Opera House, and discovered vacant organ chambers. That indicated that the town had once known theatre organ music. Pattie's next step was to move her Wurlitzer plug-in to the Opera House and start playing intermission music. The audience approval heartened her and now she and Howell are in the market for a pipe organ to fill those gaping chambers. Yes, Pattie's caught the spirit — and it's contagious.



On New Year's Day in Great Britain, statesmen, musicians and professional people who have served the crown are honored. One of those recognized this year was Henry James, 86, who received the British Empire medal. He has tuned the Westminster Abbey organ for a half-century. That's a lot of shouts of "Next!"



Omaha's Orpheum Theatre reopened as a performing arts center on January 16 before a full house. Eddie Butler rose with the Wurlitzer console from the pit, Red Skelton performed on the stage, and old-time movies were shown. The project for restoring the house to its early splendor cost the city \$2 million, a steal at today's prices. To build a similar facility would cost many times that sum. George Rice, who was in charge of restoration of the Wurlitzer, says that the console can now be spotted on the elevator or moved onto the stage through the use of plugs for the cable.



Our roving circus reporter, Harry Jenkins, had a pleasant experience in connection with his work of supplying music for the entire performance of the Strong Bros. circus. Normally he cues the acts with a Hammond, but late in the 1974 season when the weather got too cold for the tent show, many of the acts went indoors and played in theatres, which often put Colonel Harry back at the console of a theatre pipe organ. Thus at Akron and several other midwestern cities, he again enjoyed the sensation of playing a pipe organ for an enthusiastic audience. By early spring 1975 Harry had offers from three circuses to be their



Colonel Harry Jenkins. On the road again.

"one man band," this coming season, but he's remaining with the Strong Bros. Circus. "They pitch their tents in more areas where I can get a crack at a theatre organ" explains the ex-AAF officer.



Central New York organist Karl Cole sure made a plus impression in Toronto, both musically and personally, when he played concerts at the Casa Loma in January. Toronto Theatre Organ Society President Jim Lahay writes that Karl played "a most spectacular concert on the 4/19 rebuilt Shea's Theatre Wurlitzer. 'Raves' received at the door afterward were terrific. Not only a fine artist, Karl is a perfect gentleman, and so easy to work with. The audience especially



Karl Cole. Score one north of the border. (Dick Harold Photo)

liked his pedal melodies on a couple of numbers. You're welcome back anytime, Karl."

Karl is even recognized in his home area (Syracuse, N.Y.). Needing identification when paying by check for some Christmas presents at a local store and having left his bulging wallet at home, Karl went out to his car and returned with one of the albums recorded by him on the ESTMIM Wurlitzer. He showed it to the clerk to identify himself. It worked.



Check up another "first" for Lee Erwin. On January 28 Lee accompanied the first silent feature film ever presented at N.Y. Radio City Music Hall as part of the local Art Deco Exposition. Better yet, he composed an original score for director Fritz Lang's 1926 sci-fi thriller, *Metropolis*. We recall the first run of the German-made film at the N.Y. Hippodrome. It was accompanied by a large orchestra with a score composed by conductor David Mendoza. That score left no lasting impression but the film did. Hindsight finds its simplistic capital-versus-labor theme less memorable than its colossal sets, catastrophes, mob action and a metallic female robot whose sexy dance makes Salome's seven veils sequence seem like a Sunday school gavotte. Twenty-five years after that first run, we met and talked with the male star of *Metropolis* in Vienna. Gustav Froelich was disappointed by the cool reception the film got in the USA (in many US towns its first run was in a second-run theatre). Froelich said he anticipated the lukewarm attitude because Americans then expected some comic developments in their film fare, and *Metropolis* was completely devoid of even humor — although it has an upbeat ending. He said he mentioned this to Lang at the time but without effect. Froelich, a long-time star in European films, credited *Metropolis* with getting him his start at UFA Studios in Berlin. To him it was a fondly remembered prestige film. Time has vindicated *Metropolis* and it is now considered a work of art. Which brings up the question as to whether Americans are now ready to accept more somber film fare than in 1926. Although we haven't heard the Lee Erwin organ score, we'll wager it does something good for the durable film classic. □