

# 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.*

Organ buffs tend to be sneaky and devious when it comes to landing converts to the hobby. Take, for example, CATOE's Arthur Tedesco. He started working on the Sykora family about four years ago by taking them to CATOE concerts. When they responded favorably he made the supreme bid; he married daughter Carol. Now thoroughly hooked, mama and papa Sykora thought it would be nice to learn to play a little. Arthur was right there with the solution; he sold them his plug-in. He didn't need it anymore because he and bride Carol had acquired an old Estey pipe job and were embarked on a restoration and enlargement project. If this sounds like a soap opera plot, blame mama, Lillian Sykora, who reported as to how the world turns.



The Allen model 620 electronic console is certainly a step in the right direction. For some time there have been rumors of an Allen theatre

organ in the air and the first photo of the horseshoe console is most encouraging. It's a two manual, double stoprail job with lots of between-manual combo buttons. But the best thing is the avoidance of all those confusing little rocker switches on the side jambs as practiced by so many electronic organ builders. The 620's voices and other controls are located on the double stoprail and switching is accomplished by means of stopkeys — as it should be. We sincerely hope the instrument sounds as good as it looks.



Another organist who played the New York Paramount in the days of Jesse Crawford has made himself known, Jack Skelly of Rye, N.Y. He was associate organist, mainly spelling Fred Feibel. Egon Putz was also on the staff, but Sigmund Krungold had gone to Paramount's Hollywood Studios. Skelly also played at the Rialto, substituted at the Brooklyn Paramount, and played on the "Paramount on Parade" CBS Monday radio show. He says that most of his pipe organ playing is now done on the 4-manual Aeolian at the Westchester County Center in White Plains, N.Y.



Here's a case where a pipe installation brought together a couple of musicians who found out their music meshed for duets. When pianist Tony Galtera heard that the 4/28 Wurlitzer from the Paterson, New Jersey, Fabian Theatre was being installed in the Casa Italiano, it brought back memories of the days when he was the pianist with the Fabian Theatre orchestra. He dropped in to the Casa to see the organ played in the theatre by Warren Yates so long ago. In the process he met Bill Gage, current house organist at the Casa, who plays a plug-in until the pipe installation is complete. Tony and Bill tried out a few organ/piano duets and learned their music pleased listeners, reports Bill.



As readers already know, we love to include pictures of pretty girls in this column, and we don't need much of an excuse. But this time we are on solid ground; one of our fa-



Donna Parker. She'll combine matrimony with music. (Stufoto)

vorite photo subjects announced her engagement. Donna Parker had been going to school in Phoenix, Arizona, and naturally gravitated toward that incubator of romance and aromatic pasta with pipe organ flavoring, the Organ Stop pizzeria. There she met Bob MacNeur. Both being organists, they had something in common from the start. Under the spell of that Mighty Wurlitzer, the die was cast. Although this item went to press weeks before the announced Sept. 20 wedding, we trust the knot was tied without anyone in the back of the church yelling "Stop!" when the preacher asked the usual question. Our overriding wish is for the best of fortune to the newlyweds.



Eddie May, Miami Beach's favorite organist, is "back to my usual disagreeable self," after recuperation following medical treatment for an ulcer which almost caused his "cashing in." To prove it, Eddie offers the following comment: "We have plenty of topless and bottomless attractions in Miami, not to mention the empty heads who run

them and patronize them. You may place writers and players of 'modern' music in the same category as far as I'm concerned; this includes the so-called 'serious new music' with nothing but incongruous chord accompaniments. The finest of food-stuffs, given enough time, turns to garbage and must be recycled via Mother Earth. So it is with the tastes of the average human. My preferences are the old musical comedy tunes and lighter classics. If that dates me, so be it, but there seems to be quite a few listeners willing to pay good money to hear same."

Jim Leaffe, the 27-year-old house organist of Long Island University (ex-Brooklyn Paramount), describes the 4/26 Wurlitzer he plays in the converted theatre as producing the "original quadraphonic sound," due to the four chambers in which the pipes and effects are stacked, surrounding the proscenium arch. In an interview for the New York Times not long ago, he continued: "But it is not used as a nostalgia machine. The main problem with theatre organs anyplace else but LIU is they are used as nostalgia instruments of the twenties and thirties. It never caught on with young people because it was never presented as a 'today' sound." Which leaves us to wonder why so many young people attend ATOS conventions and chapter concerts. There are a lot of them who are enthusiastic over the big sound, nostalgia or not, including those who buy nostalgia recorded by others on the LIU organ.

Virgil Fox is fast becoming the Leonard Bernstein of the pipe organ. One of a consortium of four, but the principal financier of the project to develop the Hammond Castle in Gloucester, Mass. as a school for concert organists, the 62-year-old musician is entertaining his audiences with his concerts and demonstrations there. Tours of the pipe chambers are a part of the act.

Doc and Mrs. Bebko attended one of these affairs in July. A \$2.00 admission was charged but "this superb musician outdid himself in one of the finest concert organ recitals I have ever heard. He has about \$300,

000 invested in this venture, indeed putting his money where his mouth is. He plans to add the 8,000-pipe Harvard organ to the Castle's instrument, making it the largest private organ in the world. One must be there to appreciate it because it staggers the imagination. He is doing alone exactly what the ATOS is doing collectively."

Frank Lyboldt, Norfolk, Va. organist who performed at the 1972 ATOS Convention, reports that not long ago he and two companions visited some theatres on Long Island, N.Y. At the 1600-seat Cove Theatre in Glen Cove, he asked the manager if the house has a pipe organ. "Oh yes, the console is backstage. I'll show you." So, the quartet walked to the stage, the lights were turned on, and lo — the console was gone! The manager was speechless, and when it was suggested an examination of the chambers was on order, they did just that. The vandalism there was disheartening. Practically every pipe was broken, bent, or pulled from its chest. Only the big diaphones along the wall weren't touched. The vandals probably thought they were a part of the structure. The only encouraging angle here is that perhaps "Midnight Organ Supply" latched onto

the console and maybe it's having an illicit affair with some pipes somewhere.

Anyone in the St. Paul, Minn. area interested in a theatre organ rehabilitation project? In a recent New York Times, an item mentioned the visit to a theatre by Norman Foss, in which he installed a 7,000-(sic) pipe organ in 1922. Visiting the Twin Cities with his wife who attended a teachers' meeting, Foss took the opportunity to visit the old organ in a St. Paul theatre.

It has been silent for 15 years because the motor is inoperative. Mr. Foss, owner of an organ company in Edgewater, N.J., estimated that installing an organ of similar size would cost \$800,000 today. Although the make and model of the instrument were not given in the writeup, here is a chance for talented, responsible enthusiasts in the area to investigate and perhaps bring the organ back to playing condition.

Bob Boettcher reports that Oklahoma City is proud of its "new baby," a 3/11 Wurlitzer installed in the Showplace Restaurant, located in Aeromerdian Plaza, the first theatre organ in a public place since Ken Wright played the 4/14 Kilgen formerly in the WKY-TV studios



The Showplace console



Ken Wright. Back in the limelight again.

and now lying neglected in a civic hall.

The Wurli is a 1926 model removed from Loew's Palace theatre in Memphis, Tenn. Bob reports that it's a "visual" installation, where visitors can ogle the pipes, traps and other parts while the organist plays. The organist? Ken Wright, naturally. He opened it on June 23.



Harold Jolles, teacher and ex-theatre organist, having seen a number of the great organists perform in the twenties (Crawford, Murtagh, Malotte, Gutow, Keates etc), has become quite philosophical about today's scene. "It's just not the same now when you go to a theatre organ concert. In the golden days, the house was packed, there was a hush in expectation as lights played on the curtain, a spot hit the console, and a most glorious sound filled the place. There was something you just don't get today. And, the organist never talked — he let his musicianship do this for him."



New Yorker Dick Loderhose reveals that he is in the process of purchasing the 650-seat Bay Theatre in Seal Beach, Calif. (near Los Angeles). For the past three years Dick has been conducting an intensive search for a west-coast home for the circa 42-rank monster now housed in his Jamaica Estates, Long Island studio. The instrument is an enlargement of the original 4/21 recording and broadcasting Wurlitzer in-

stalled in the New York Paramount building organ studio for Jesse Crawford in the late '20s. To accommodate the huge instrument, Dick plans to enlarge the stage of the 1933 movie house by removing a couple of rows of front seats (the



Dick Loderhose. California, here he comes!  
(Stufoto)

present stage is only 12 feet deep and there are no chamber provisions). Dick and wife Jane plan to move to the area shortly. The Bay Theatre has one big advantage; it's only three blocks from the sea, which is important to Dick. The nearby Marina will provide a place to dock his yacht, a converted WW II rescue vessel. Current plans call for a continuation of the house's film policy with organ concerts and a rental policy for concert staggers in the offing. No completion date has been set for the installation pending finality of the purchase.



George Stucker, who edits the North Texas ATOS Chapter's newsletter, the *Keraulophone*, was somewhat shaken when we pointed out to him that the name "Keraulophone" has connotations he may not have considered when it was selected. For example, an ancient copy of Wedgwood's *Dictionary of Organ Stops*, describes the sound: "The Keraulophone emits a peculiar soft and muffled tone. It is one of the few stops legitimately 'horney' in character."

And we always figured it was the Tibias!



Billy Nalle likes to get there first, and he's at it again. One of his

"firsts" was convincing the AGO it should include theatre organ programs as part of its otherwise "straight" organ conventions a few years back. He seems to enjoy getting classical organ music consumers to listen to TO music, especially as concerns radio shows. Two eastern radio outlets have violated their classical organ program formats to spotlight music from Billy's TO albums. Last year, WTIC, Hartford did it on their normally solemn



Billy Nalle. More 'firsts'.

*Organ Showcase* series, Now WGMS, Washington DC, has scheduled a similar pop session on the usually baroque-heavy *Royal Instrument* program, using tunes from Billy's albums as well as a couple of selections he taped on the 4/37 "Dowager Empress" Wurlitzer in Wichita's Century II civic hall, now one of the Nalle bases of operations. With that same ex-NY Paramount lovely involved, Billy has plans for another "first" next June when he will play a "concert/dance" on the Wichita Wurlitzer.



With the exception of 1974, the School of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Mo. has held a series of Sunday concerts in July, featuring Bert Buhrman at the 3/15 Wurlitzer, using vocalists and others. This year, a new approach, a benefit series for the scholarship fund, was held on July 13 and 20. A \$5.00 admission was charged and with Denise Buhrman handling tickets to forestall "freebies," TV and radio media giving much publicity, the series was again a success, and receipts

exceeded school officials' fondest dreams. A Laurel & Hardy short, *Criminals At Large*, was included in the first program, and an Arbuckle-Keaton short, *Coney Island* was in the second. The Buhrmans were then off to England for a couple of weeks in London and Yorkshire.

The Rochester Theater Organ Society sponsored a July 12 concert as an experiment, but it is exceedingly doubtful that it will do so again during the summer off season. George Blackmore, enroute to the ATOS San Francisco Convention, was the organist and did a most creditable job at the console as soloist, and as accompanist for his wife, a talented vocalist. The



George Blackmore

(Stufoto)

organ had to be tuned several times the preceding week due to muggy temperatures (86° in the chambers at concert time). The Auditorium Theatre Wurlitzer ciphered five times during the concert, and a comparatively sparse crowd of 550 manned handkerchiefs in the sweaty atmosphere. A tip of the fedora to the cipher chasers who really got a workout!

Ralph O. Hookway of 4960 Lakeshore Drive in Littleton, Colorado, 80123, is eager to gather information concerning Herbert Sisson, an organist who played the Mark Strand Theatre in New York City, and the Alhambra Theatre in Cleveland. Sisson, who studied with Alexander Guilmont in France, shared the or-

gan bench with Mr. Hookway's father in Cleveland. Any information on Mr. Sisson would be much appreciated by Mr. Hookway.

Looking up from his intense concentration on the playing of the LA Dodgers in Dodgers' Stadium, visitor Lloyd "Panamint" Klos, couldn't believe his eyes. There in huge letters on the message board was:

DODGER WELCOME TO LLOYD KLOS,  
AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY,  
ROCHESTER, N.Y.

"Old Prospector" Klos was visiting southern California and being organ and baseball oriented, gravitated to Chavez Ravine where he could sample both. At the Conn 651 was Dodgers' darling Helen Dell who had met Lloyd at the airport and presumably arranged for the screened greeting. Helen also played the tune Klos wrote to encourage his favorite team during the game, "Let's Go, Dodgers!"

"I was stupefied with all that attention," admitted a delighted Klos, "Too bad the Dodgers lost."



Helen Dell. She's Lily Tomlin's organ prowess.

(Stufoto)

The saloon organ music which listeners heard on the "Lilly Tomlin Special" on the ABC TV network on July 25, was played by offstage Helen Dell. There had been some talk during the show's preparation that piano music be used instead of organ music for her final scene, but wiser heads prevailed and Helen's name was listed in the credits afterward as organist. She played about a half dozen numbers to sync Lily as the bar organ philosopher, including

"As Time Goes By," "Raindrops" and "Colonel Bogey March," and also wrote a script for the sequence. Helen recently put out a book on polka arrangements, including her own composition, "Polka Dot."

Don't tell the Internal Revenue people, please, but Dr. Walter Beaupre reports that business trips, Rhode Island to Columbus, Ohio, can become pure pleasure if one is lucky enough to catch Dennis James at the Ohio Theatre. One hot day in late July the Ohio happened to be dark, but a call to Dennis and Heidi resulted in a flashlight tour of the magnificent movie palace and a private concert. Heidi (now it can be told) was not about to relax in her favorite loge seat until she had figured out a way to rescue a baby bird that had toppled from its nest high up on a theatre fire escape. Those who know Heidi won't doubt for a moment that she succeeded! She returned in triumph from what must have been a hair-raising climb just in time to hear Dennis play his incredible organ transcription of "Victory At Sea." After hearing the mini-concert on the 4/20 Robert Morton, Beaupre observed, "On the organ bench Dennis James impressed me as a major talent in many directions. Besides being a first class performer, he celebrates while playing. During the simplest improvisation on a pop tune Dennis explores counter melodies on many



Heidi and Dennis. From bird rescuing to an amphibious victory.

(Stufoto)

levels. For the moment you can almost believe that the tune being played has a life and personality of its own. Dennis also has an uncanny ear for perceiving the essence of an orchestral arrangement and then translating it to pipes and percussions. Off the bench Dennis James has a keen intelligence and a boundless enthusiasm for other musicians — a rare quality.!"

In brief, Doc Beaupre appreciates Dennis.



Dennis James reports a new phenomenon; people approaching him after concerts with the gall to ask him to autograph their pirated cassettes of the James recordings! Some people!



Stann Kann

(Stufoto)

Following his MC chores at the ATOS Convention, Stan Kann made another of his many appearances on the Johnny Carson TV show on July 21. On the same bill were two performers who were scheduled for an Oakland Paramount appearance (remember that session, conventioners?) Subbing for Carson was Joey Bishop, and Stan exhibited and demonstrated such hand-operated gadgets as an orange-juice squeezer-outer, a grapefruit-core remover, an egg-top remover and a "drink deliverer" which rolled the leopard sweat container from bar to recipient. Following this fun sequence, Stan mentioned that he was an organist, "the kind who plays the instruments which were developed for movie accompaniment," and men-

tioned that he had just come back from "a big organ convention." A sequence on the Mike Douglas show is in the offing.



Rex Koury. Old 'oaters' and their theme tunes never die. (Stufoto)

Organist Rex Koury was happy to learn that his royalties for the *Gunsmoke* TV series theme will not cease when the 20-year-old oater leaves the small screen shortly. Independent stations have indulged in such a scramble for re-run rights that the years of TV episodes are being syndicated for showing wherever they are wanted. That means that Rex will be collecting royalty checks on the distinctive theme for years to come. Columbus mini-convention attendees will hear him play the Ohio Theatre Robert Morton in late November.



Being a hard working advocate of theatre pipes does have its fringe benefits as Dr. Alan Goodnow, a Warren, Rhode Island dentist, can testify. Twenty-five Southeastern New England TOS fans showed up for Alan's August birthday party (complete with cake and assorted goodies) beneath the stage work light in the Columbus Theatre, Providence. There was just enough light to see the beautiful Italian Opera House decor, but not enough to recognize who was getting the lush

sounds from the six rank, two manual Wurlitzer. It turned out to be Harry Jacques, a fine local organist and long time friend. All this was a prelude to the arrival of vacationing Dr. C.A.J. Parmentier who had promised an impromptu concert. With ATOS Hall-of Fame Parmentier testing the limits of the little Wurler (which held up nobly under the pyrotechnics), those present agreed that young Doc Goodnow could well afford to ignore the calendar and have birthdays more often.

Incidentally, if birthdays of theatre organ buffs can be way out, so can the vacation activities of great organists. The story goes that "Cass" and "Topy" Parmentier planned one day at the seashore only to stop off at the University of Rhode Island to explore the 44-rank Austin-Moller. The organ proved to be in top shape, thanks to Art Fraites, and it was a rare vintage Parmentier who put the four manuals through the paces of "Finlandia," "Nell Gwynne Suite," "S'wonderful" and "Improvisation on Nursery Tunes." In no time he found the elegant reeds, strings and horns which give this four chamber concert organ its unique "spaced out" sound. The far too exclusive audience privileged to witness this fabulous "summit meeting" (Parmentier vs. Austin-Moller) began plotting a "public confrontation" for '76.



Youthful Chicago organist Walter Strony had a great time playing for the Tommy Bartlett Water Show in Okinawa over the summer months. The island, whose name will perhaps strike a minor chord in the minds of WW II vets on both sides, is being promoted as a vacation resort by the Japanese, who hate to see Hawaii getting all those yen. Walt reports that the place is beautiful but he misses USA-style "Johns" which are scarce where he is. He added that the instrument he plays to accompany the swan dives is a Yamaha GX-1, "the same instrument John Seng played at the ATOS convention."

He says, "Although chopsticks are hard to eat with, I'm learning fast." Should we mail him a knife and fork? Or a portable John? □