

# 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 a 9c postcard to get it to VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can afford a 13c stamp, why not include a black and white photo which need not be returned.*

What does a baseball stadium organist do after playing the final note of the season? Go on a cruise? Spend a long vacation in Hawaii? Not if the person in question is the Dodgers' Helen Dell. First, between assignments, she supervised the complete renovation of her Hollywood home which has taken several months. Then came some busy sessions filming segments of TV shows *Phyllis* and *Barnaby Jones*. In November, she appeared in concert at the Kirk in Dunedin, Fla. In December she played at Dodger Stadium for the annual underprivileged children's Christmas Party. In March, her firm, Malar Productions, released a new recording featuring Gaylord Carter at the San Gabriel Auditorium Wurlitzer. The 1977 season at Dodger Stadium arrived in early April with its 81 league games.

While we are discussing Helen Dell, we can add that she has sold her 3/17 Marr & Colton. The instrument went into storage 9 years ago when then owner Bob Read's playing

stint at the Phoenix "Beefeater" restaurant ended. Helen and the late Robert Carson purchased it in hope of installing it in a projected home in Granada Hills, Calif. With the death of her husband, Helen abandoned the plan. It is now destined for a private home in Manistee, Michigan. Dave Junchen is handling the moving and the new installation.

Yes, that is Helen Dell shown briefly at a piano during an upcoming *Barnaby Jones* tube episode, but she's not doing the playing. All she had to do to earn scale this time was to look pretty and finger silent keys to a prerecorded sound track.



Until March 17, Lee Erwin was cueing silent movies at the New York Carnegie Hall Cinema on a Baldwin electronic. As of St. Patrick's day he was on pipes. A press release advises that the late Ben Hall's "Little Mother" 2/5 Wurlitzer, enlarged to ten ranks, is installed and will be used henceforth for silent film shows, organ concerts and intermissions.

The opening show's film fare consisted of three versions of Alexander Dumas' famous love story, *Camille*, two silent ones and a "talkie." The 1912 version stars Sarah Bernhardt, while Norma Talmadge plays the title role in the 1927 version. Greta Garbo plays the ill-fated gal in the 1937 sound film.

The organ was leased to the Carnegie Hall Cinema by ATOS, thus putting regular silent film screenings with pipe accompaniment in New York for the first time since the '30s.

*Editors note: A story about this installation will be printed in a future issue.*



One thing we can say about Korla Pandit, he maintains a low profile. One can never foretell where the mysterious East Indian will turn up. Recently he made two west coast TV appearances. One was a 50th anniversary program by a Los Angeles broadcaster (counting both radio and TV years), station KTLA where Korla's jewelled turban was first exposed to an audience which took him to its collective heart. Ancient film clips were aired, showing Korla at his trusty Hammond, then a segue to Korla today, in person. Darned if he hasn't resisted aging; he looks



Korla

about the same "in person" as he did in those 1950's film clips. About the same time he did another TV stint, playing "Song of India," for an arthritis marathon. He also filled Organ Power No. 2 in San Diego with enthusiastic ATOSers, then a stint at Old Town Music Hall, the Coffman & Field organ stronghold in El Segundo, near LA. Wherever he plays, he draws record crowds, partly because of memories of those long ago TV programs, partly because he puts on a good show today.



Our esteemed music reviewer, Dr. Walter Beaupre, finally got a taste of what the silent film accompanist is up against — although by remote control. Called on for advice by a Providence, R.I., TV station which was planning to show a recently discovered Doug Fairbanks Sr. silent, Walt got conned into doing the scoring. The film was to be shown by Channel 10 in five segments on a noon news program (there's a switch). Walt set up a videotape monitor by the family Rodgers, and went about improvising scores for the four minute segments. The music was taped by Beaupre's son, Laurier, and delivered to the station in time for each day's telecast.

Although Fairbanks' 1916 *American Aristocracy* isn't considered one of his greatest, there was much local

interest because the film was shot in southern New England. Dr. Beaupre says the venture was "great fun and very exciting," but adds ruefully, "If I had to do it again, I would not cue my first silent movie before such a large audience." No comeback from the audience so far.



It could hardly have come as a surprise to any well-informed student of romance in the organ hobby. We predicted it, then encouraged it, for what seemed like ages. So, they finally did it. On January 29, organist Carol Jones and Conn "Veep" Robert Zadel entered the holy state of matrimony. We just hope that Bob will keep his promise to Carol about selling her Conn organs wholesale now that they have entered the blissful state. One rumor that we can put a stop to is the fallacy that the couple are now living in a Conn-diminium.



From Genny Whitting are gleaned the following tid-bits from the Pacific Northwest: The 2/11 Wurlitzer in



Him (Sinfoto)



Her (Bob Hill Photo)

the Liberty Theatre in Wenatchee, Wash. is unplayable. One of the new owners has plans for it, either in the theatre or elsewhere. The 2/8 Wurlitzer in the Liberty Theatre in Mt. Vernon, Wash. is still in the theatre and the new ownership, while appreciating the instrument, has no definite plans for it. In Bremerton,

Wash., some ATOS members are installing a hybrid in a small playhouse. The organ parts belonged to the late Dan Adamson. Work on the Kimball destined for the new Alaska state office building in Juneau is progressing. It was scheduled to be shipped up north in February for a March installation. It will be the

## SUPER '77 REGIONAL CONVENTION Western Reserve Theatre Organ Society

FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY  
NOVEMBER 25, 26, 27, 1977

### CLEVELAND, OHIO

#### FRIDAY — NOVEMBER 25th

- 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. — Cleveland Plaza Hotel Registration
- 5:30 p.m. — Cocktail Party, Mezzanine of Cleveland Plaza Hotel
- 8:00 p.m. — John Muri at Grays Armory, in Concert with Silent Film
- 11:00 p.m. — Youth Organ Playing Competition Exams (Closed to Public)

#### SATURDAY — NOVEMBER 26th

- 9:00 a.m. — Tour of Playhouse Square Theatres: Palace, State, Ohio, Allen, plus Hippodrome
- 12: noon — Buffet Luncheon at Cleveland Plaza
- 2:00 p.m. — Keith Chapman, Cleveland Convention Center, 5/167 Skinner
- ???
- Open Church tours — you're on your own
- 5:30 p.m. — Cocktail Party, Mezzanine of Cleveland Plaza Hotel
- 8:00 p.m. — Dennis & Heidi James, Public Concert at Grays Armory
- 11:00 p.m. — 'til? — Grays Armory, Open Console

#### SUNDAY — NOVEMBER 27th

- 8:00 a.m. — Breakfast, Cleveland Plaza Hotel
- 10:30 a.m. — Tom Hazleton at the Masonic Temple 4 40 Austin
- 12:00 noon — Lunch, Masonic Temple Restaurant
- 2:00 p.m. — Richard Fettkether at the First Methodist Church
- 4:00 p.m. — Lowell Ayars at Grays Armory, in Concert



second recent installation to play publicly in our largest state. Steve's *Gay Nineties* in Tacoma, which was a stopping place for 1971 ATOS Conventioneers, is no more. The 3/10 Wurlitzer, which now belongs to Brian Ingoldsby, is in storage.



In the hoopla relative to all the attention justifiably paid to the three Organ Power pizzeries in the San Diego, Calif. area, another opening, more modest but no less important, got scant attention. For several years pop organist Tommy Stark had a 3/15 Wurlitzer stashed while he worked hard to establish the music store in nearby Lemon Grove, whose ownership he shares with classical organist Jim Hansen.

The Southland Music Center is ideal for the installation of a theatre organ because it was once a theatre. Late last year Tommy had enough of the 3/15 going for a "preview" so a "Wurlitzer Costume Party" was staged at the store. It attracted the normal quota of weirdo getups but also enough scantily-clad lovelies to generate "ohs" and "ahs." Tommy stopped drooling long enough for a demonstration of the Wurlitzer's facilities. The Wurlitzer will apparently be a valuable asset in merchandising the electronics which are Tommy and Jim's bread and butter. They admit to getting several leads for plug-in sales resulting from the Wurli's drawing power.



Veteran ATOS members probably remember when circa 18 years ago the 2/10 Wurlitzer in the Mt. Baker Theatre in Bellingham, Wash. was the focal point of early activities of the Puget Sound Chapter. The theatre observed its 50th anniversary in April. For some time Gunnar Anderson has been featured at the console nightly during intermissions and has a weekly radio program direct from the theatre. Scheduled for the anniversary observance were silent movies and sing-alongs with Gunnar at the organ.



The Old Prospector once said, "Show me the theatre organist who isn't a bench-bouncer or torso twist-



Tommy Stark's caption: 'It's me — with my dream come true!'



One of Tommy's Bunnies



The participants lined up early.



Ashley Miller

er, who doesn't employ palm schmears and other gimmicks, and doesn't talk endlessly with the audience, and I'll show you an organist who has made several steps up the ladder to the Hall of Fame." Such a person is the Master of Modulation, Ashley Miller, and he gave ample proof to his RTOS audience on January 20 that he is destined for the Hall with a program of very listenable music, accentuated by his superb technique and tasteful registration. Cold weather reduced the size of the Rochester, N.Y. Auditorium Theatre audience, but those who braved the elements were rewarded with one of the finest programs of recent memory. A medley of tunes which suggested the adverse weather, followed by the inevitable spring, plus Ashley's "chasing rainbows" arrangement of Chopin's "Fantasie Impromptu" were two of the highlights which sent concert-goers home happy.



From Clearwater, Florida, we learn that Terry Charles Christmas program at the Kirk of Dunedin ran four sold out performances, which is a record for Charles and the 4/22 theatre organ. Plans are already underway to extend the "Christmas Fantasy" to perhaps six performances next yuletide.



Remember in the thirties when theatres resorted to such gimmicks as "china nights" and bingo to fill

empty seats? History has a way of repeating, and in the world-famed Radio City Music Hall, at that. As an incentive to spur lagging business on Tuesday evenings after six, the Hall is giving free New York State lottery tickets. This action marks the first give-away of lottery tickets in a theatre in the state.

Meantime, use of the Music Hall's Wurlitzer has been cut, according to those who witnessed the early morning show during the Christmas season. There was no half-hour concert preceeding the show, but the organ was played with the orchestra and in solo spots.



The San Francisco Orpheum theatre's 4/22 Robert Morton organ has been rescued by J.B. Nethercutt, who is well known to organ aficionados through his musical instrument and vintage auto museum at Sylmar, Calif. The price was not disclosed but San Francisco Chronicle columnist Herb Caen said it "has to be worth \$75,000." Nethercutt has donated the organ to Piedmont High School for installation in the Oakland school's auditorium. He previously donated a theatre organ to the civic group which operates the former Oakland Paramount, but they seem to have cooled about installing it. So, another big one has been saved. To show appreciation, gals, use some Merle Norman cosmetics. That's Nethercutt's firm.



From Honolulu, Dr. E.J. Mullens reports that organist John DeMello is slowly recovering from several celebrations — some involving the Robert Morton in the Waikiki theatre, such as his more than half a century as a theatre organist. For the Bicentennial celebration last July 4th, his salute to the film *Midway* included "Remember Pearl Harbor" and "Anchors Aweigh." At the same time, John and wife, Olga, were celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary. For the Christmas showing of *A Star is Born*, John's selection on the Morton included "When You Wish Upon a Star," complete with blinking Christmas tree lights in the proscenium and a Brenographed



John DeMello

star projected on the curtain.

"After 55 years as a theatre organist, John DeMello is still a showman," says Dr. Mullen.



Organist Rose Diamond finally met the LA Elks Building 4/61 Robert Morton organ — head on. She was invited, with little warning, to play a half hour of organ music for a city-sponsored senior citizens' party which attracted over 1000 oldsters. But notice was so short, Rose felt she needed some help in absorbing the layout of the somewhat offbeat console. She called on an old friend, Bob Mitchell, who used to broadcast the Morton. Bob had Rose acclimated in a few minutes and all went well. The audience loved her music.

Standing in the doorway, shaking



Rose Diamond (Stutolo)

hands was LA's Mayor, Tom Bradley. Rose stopped to ask the mayor the name of his favorite tune.

Bradley paused a moment and replied, "I think it would be 'The Impossible Dream'."



Robin Richmond (John D. Sharpe Photo)

British organist Robin Richmond is so happy with the results of his 4-city US tour last year, that he's planning to storm the bastions of "the colonies" again later this year. Richmond, who continues to conduct the long-running (8 years) BBC radio-cast *The Organist Entertains*, played pipe concerts in Toronto, No. Tonawanda, Syracuse and Detroit in '76. His just-released record, "The Hollywood Years," played on a 3/19 Wurlitzer installed in a British auto showroom, should help clinch the '77 tour.



When organist Johnny Winters received his October issue of *THEATRE ORGAN*, he took it, unopened, to the hospital and loaned it to fellow organist, Dr. C.A.J. Parmentier to read while recuperating from an ailment. "Imagine my surprise when 'Cass' phoned me about my biography which appeared in that issue! Doc is home now and feeling better. But I sure appreciate the plug."



Former theatre organist Irma Glen recently spent several months in Hawaii. Therefore, her season's greetings to friends were in the form of an attractive Hawaiian card which said: "Mele Kalikimaka, Me Ka

Hauoli Makahiki Hou." Her general delivery address was from Maui and she was scheduled back to the mainland in February.



What well known ATOS member has a punch in the nose coming from a certain organist because of a mini review of one of his concerts in these pages? The fact that the reviewer even gave a compliment to this artist because of his ability to change his style, didn't make points with the offended pedal thumper. Wet noodles at 20 paces!



Longtime organ buff and 1975 ATOS convention bus captain, Elbert Dawson, moved a step closer to having a theatre organ in his home — he moved in next door to one by buying a house on the back side of the Bella Roma Pizza at Martines, Calif., where David Reese plays the 3/15 Wurlitzer. Now David has a "retreat" during rest breaks and Elbert has a "direct wire" to the place. The biggest advantage is that when visiting organ buffs are at the Bella Roma, a phone call can bring him over in two minutes for a visit without unexpectedly disturbing the wife or taking the car away from her. Elbert enjoys meeting and talking to other theatre organ and railroad buffs from around the country and



Elbert Dawson

encourages them to phone if they stop at Bella Roma. Elbert's number is in the book.



From Fresno, Calif., Tom Delay reports a case of a theatre organ coming to the aid of a church organ installation there. The University Presbyterian Church acquired a 3/55 slightly post-Harrison (1956) Aeolian-Skinner organ. Needing bread for the installation, organists Dick Cencibaugh and Tom Hazleton staged an organ concert at the recently restored Warnor (yes, Warnor) theatre with its top-condition 4/14



The Warnor's theatre 3/14 Robert Morton console. (Delavento)



Tom Hazleton (Stufoto)

Robert Morton organ. The \$3.50 tickets sold well and attendees were treated to Tom's accompaniment for the ubiquitous *Phantom*, in addition to concert selections by both organists. It was old home night for Cenci-baugh, who was the house organist for the Cinerama run there a few years back. It was the first time in years the theatre had put on an "organ only" show, and results were so satisfying that plans are underway for more shows featuring the newly restored Morton.



In September, Rosa Rio will play the ConValChap's annual Mildred Rice Memorial concert, using the Thomaston Opera House's 3/13 Marr & Colton. Incidentally, one of Rosa's students, 16-year-old Ronnie Fabry of Shelton, Conn., was the winner of the \$100 prize in an arranging contest sponsored by Conn Valley. The judges included Lowell Ayars, Don Baker, Bill Irwin and John Muri. The selection was "Lovely Lady."



Whenever Doc & Mrs. Bebko visit Salt Lake City to see their daughter, he inevitably seeks out pipe organs playing in the area. Such was the case during Christmas week. "The big moment was Sunday at the Mormon Tabernacle. The organist was Alexander Schreiner (former theatre organist), who at age 78 is as erect, stately and thin as a 21-year-old. The 375-voice choir and the organist made music which was heaven itself. It moved me both emotionally and spiritually in a way that I can only associate with the 1926 Sesqui-

Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia when Alfred Riemenschneider played.

"On Monday, I got to Larry Bray's 'Organ Loft,' and that 5-manual organ is a dream to play! It is lush in sound, rich and well-voiced for the size of the place. Larry was most gracious in letting me play for 45 minutes. The place is spotless and indeed a citadel for a reconstructed theatre organ. Two organists play for dancing every Saturday evening. Was informed that the 2/10 Wurlitzer in the Capitol Theatre is out of this world to play, but it is temporarily out of action for service work.



Organist Eddie May in Miami, Fla. says he has altered his playing schedule somewhat. "We have given up playing steady engagements in hotels, night clubs and dining rooms because it is a bit tiring to play six nights a week. Have changed to individual club dates as it is less demanding. It is also very pleasant, and we can pick and choose. We notice a definite trend to a return of tuneful music. Never did rock anyway, preferring to perform the solid music." Still a teacher, Ed is in his 15th year as organist at the Unity Center of Miami. "I do not feel I want to slow down. As always, I'm enjoying my life style."



John Landon (Stufoto)

Dr. John Landon is still hitting the lecture circuit with his great slide-talk show on Jesse Crawford. In January he spent "four terrific days as guest of the North Texas Chapter of ATOS. They are an enthusiastic group, and publish one of the best chapter newsletters in the country — the *Keraulophone*." John used many slides not shown at the 1974 ATOS Convention, and it went over very well. Landon's lectures provide a golden opportunity to review the life of the "King of the Theatre Organists," the one who blazed the trails.



Future operations of RTOS are hanging in the balance following the announcement on February 11 that

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## A JUNE PRELUDE

# Rosa by Starlight

ROSA RIO AT THE GOLDEN-VOICED  
4/17 BARTON

Cameo Performance by Chad Weirick

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and return for dinner in Chicago.



the Temple Civic Center in Rochester, N.Y. is up for sale. The complex, which is owned by the Masons and includes the 2574-seat Auditorium Theatre (housing RTOS' 4/22 Wurlitzer), has an annual operating and tax budget of close to \$300,000. The membership of the order has been decreasing at the rate of 5% a year for some time, and they cannot afford to underwrite this bill. Scarcity of traveling legitimate shows and other attractions has been a prime factor in the decision to sell the property.

RTOS will have a 3/8 Wurlitzer operating in the Eisenhart Auditorium in a few months, but this facility seats only 401. Average RTOS attendance per concert this season has been about 1100. Artists have been booked by RTOS into next fall. More on this as events develop.

"The big surprise was 'Pizza & Pipes,' and at 7 p.m. Monday nite, the place was standing-room only. The people in Salt Lake City are like those in Brooklyn in the early twenties; all families, no cuss words, clean, respectful and well-mannered. Mike Ohman, chief organist, is also president of the corporation which owns and runs the place and a similar one in Provo, Utha, where the ex-Rochester, N.Y. Piccadilly 3/13 Wurlitzer is operating. Ohman is one of the best. What technique! And only 32. The outfit has plans for other pizza parlors which will give employment to more young organists. There are five who alternate at the Salt Lake City place."

**moving?**

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From Toronto, TTOS club president Jim Lahay reports a cipher to end all ciphers. It happened during a concert by Frank Olsen, who was doing a steam engine "chug" effect on a manual when eight of the 3/19 Wurlitzer's pedal Tibia's ciphered simultaneously. There were some anxious moments as the thunderous sound beat on ear drums.

"It sounded like an earthquake," says Jim. But Jim wants it know that the organ is usually very reliable and was just feeling its oats this one time. During the past five months such talent as Karl Cole, Robin Richmond, Larry Ferrari, the James family, Ron Rhode and Rex Koury have found it to be a worthy facility for their Toronto concerts.

In an interview with Jim Davis which appeared in the Ft. Lauderdale (Florida) News recently, organist Reginald Foort made a sage observation:

"People adore the organ," he said, "but organists should go easy on the Bach."

Robert Legon reports good and bad news from the Boston area. For some time he played organludes in that city's 1800-seat Paramount Theatre. The house is now closed and Bob says there is practically no local support to save the 3/15 Wurlitzer, Opus 2173, the last remaining in-house installation in Boston. There have been bids submitted to buy it and take it west, however.

On the brighter side, Bob has eight of nine ranks playing in the Lakeview Congregational Church in Waltham. This is the Opus 4007 Kilgen which was formerly in the 2000-seat Embassy Theatre in that city. "I haven't had 10 ciphers, due to one-piece construction of the pallets on the bottom boards. The only thing which needs improvement is the relay, which is internally wired. Yipe! The organ has been modified to play as a church instrument, a compromise being made between church and theatre stops so that I can teach theatre style on a real cinema organ."

Peter deYoung reports that work on the 2/10 Kimball in the Elkhart,

Ind. Elco Theatre (formerly Lerner) is progressing slowly but surely. In fact, enough rehabilitation work allowed the organ to be used for the Christmas show. Remaining to be done are the reeds, and the inside of the console which must be completely refurbished. Theatre owner Bill Miller, convinced that the organ has a place in the future of his theatre, is going to bring in proper equipment to move the console backstage where Pete and crew can work on it evenings. Of necessity, the cable will have to be cut, but the restorers will employ the same type equipment used by the telephone company for splicing. Meanwhile, chambers are kept locked, there are no leaks in the roof, and all concerned are looking to the day when the organ will be re-dedicated.

Wherever Rosa Rio is scheduled for a concert, you can be sure Clealan Blakely will exert every effort to be present in the first row! When she performed at the John Dickinson High School in Wilmington, Del. on December 4, he flew down for the occasion. "She was great as usual," he says. "She played Laurel & Hardy's *Big Business* with the console down (elevator is now controlled from the projection booth, and there was no intercom). She couldn't see the screen, due to a row of potted palms around the console, but she still did it without missing a cue. She even resisted the temptation for a chorus of "Behind the Sheltering Palms."

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