

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.

From San Diego, Calif. we learn that Sandy Fleet, who owns five organs we know about (four operating) has purchased another one, the 2/7 Wurlitzer (original installation) in the northern California theatre in Santa Rosa. He has moved it to San Diego where six ranks will be added. Then, with the assistance of the local ATOS chapter, it will be installed in San Diego's California Theatre, in existing chambers, for the use of the San Diego chapter. There's another one for the San Diego-Los Angeles convention coming up.

Yuma, Arizona's gift to the theatre organ cause, Ann Montgomery, already an established organist, is now a "certified calliapist" after her four-day cruise on the "Delta Queen" following the ATOS Convention. A certificate, awarded her for playing "Whispering" (on a calliope!), says that she "has demonstrated tolerable ability and technique at the keyboard, hot or cold, exhibiting re-

quired stamina and fortitude to withstand deluges of boiling water, blasts of live steam, precipitation, soot, cinders and blazing embers, and has been known to remain reasonably sober while performing without benefit of goggles and asbestos gloves." Her "diploma" was signed by the Queen's captain, Jim Lum.



A series of weekly two-hour radio programs, entitled "The Mighty Memory Mobile" has been running for several months. The program salutes a year each week, and the one for 1929 had a sequence on the late "Fats" Waller. Co-host Gary Moore remembered the time when a New York theatre installed a pipe organ, "a huge instrument they called a Mighty Wurlitzer with about 47 keyboards." Fats was invited to try it out, and he played some of his compositions such as "Ain't Misbehavin'." But after awhile, he gave up, got off the bench and said, "Can't get to jive out of a God box." But the records he left us still prove that Waller could play a pipe organ with a good amount of "jive." Jesse Crawford thought so, too. Thus came Waller's guest shots at the New York Paramount organ.



It's a long time from July 31, 1916 to June 4, 1977, but that's how long Van Nuys, (Calif.) high school has had a pipe organ. Edwin Lemare played the opening concert in 1916; Gaylord Carter played the rededication concert on the latter date. It



Gaylord Carter at the newly fabricated console.

(Stufoto)

was moved once in 1937 to a new hall, the original one having been damaged by the 1933 earthquake. The Lemare opener was strictly classical, and included Bach's "Great A Minor Fugue," Boccherini's "Minuet," Mendelssohn's "Sonata No. 6" and the organist's own "Andantino in D flat" (only because of many requests), a tune Lemare thoroughly detested because it had become a popular hit as "Moonlight and Roses." Gaylord's tunelist was more the "Hooray for Hollywood" type, including an Irving Berlin medley, some brief Bach and Bizet selections and the inevitable silent movie (*One Week*, starring Buster Keaton).

The program was well attended despite the heat in the non-air conditioned hall. How could it all happen? In previous issues we provided



Hugh Rouse (left), the man who spearheaded the drive to refurbish the vintage Morton, poses with school principal Walker Brown.

(Stufoto)

some hints, starting with an early '70s Randy Sauls concert held in the auditorium, but using an electronic.

As always, there's one person who tackles such massive problems as the reconditioning of an organ which time and neglect have silenced. In this case it was the school librarian, Mr. Hugh Rouse. He aroused the students interest, got organizations and individuals to donate funds for the building of a new console, the most urgent need.

So, June 4th was the payoff. The heat had affected the tuning slightly but otherwise the circa 10-rank straight Robert Morton must have sounded much as it had for Edwin Lemare — an orthodox instrument which is most effective accompanying, for example, Mozart's "Alleluja" as sung by high school senior Sandy Chong as her contribution to the dedication concert. No one is happier than Hugh Rouse; the repair of the organ will now make possible a course in pipe organ instruction.



Bert Buhrman at the School of the Ozarks' 3/15 Wurlitzer.

From the School of the Ozarks (Lookout Point, Mo.), ex-NBC- New York organist Bert Buhrman recalled a long ago duet with himself in Kansas City. Because the theatre organ he then broadcast was not available in the afternoon, he recorded the organ in the morning on

16" acetate blanks, then added the piano parts "live" during the afternoon broadcast. It worked fine but the competing stations turned him in to the Federal Radio Commission (pre-FCC) for "unfair competition" and that august body made him stop the one man duets.

Attitudes have changed considerably with regard to multiple recording since the '30s, so Bert is now free to videotape the piano parts when needed to embellish his concerts on the School's 3/15 Wurlitzer. He introduced the video pianist as his "twin brother" during a recent concert. He didn't fool anyone but his audience appreciated Bert's "tall Ozark yarn" as well as his music. Proceeds from Bert's concerts go into the School's scholarship fund.



Organbuilder Melvin Robinson (Don's brother) informs us that our recent wailing and teeth gnashing over the apparent approaching demise of the New York Beacon Theatre and its 4/19 Wurli was totally unnecessary. Mel reports that the Wurli is alive, well and about to undergo further restoration by himself and Phys. Ed. teacher Joe Vanore.

The theatre's new owner, Kazuko Hillyer, has refurbished the house and stages her cultural productions there and rents the house out for similar productions. Mel reports that the Wurli was used during a recent Leonard Raver concert series, at one performance teamed with Rodgers' 5-manual "Black Beauty" touring organ for a duet of Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever." Mel didn't reveal which instrument carried the famous Piccolo frosting. No matter, it's good news either way.



Leo Bolbecker is obviously an Andy Kasparian fan. From his home in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Leo writes glowingly of his recent visit to the Old St. Louis Noodle and Pizza Co. establishment in St. Louis, Mo.

"While Andy can whip up a storm for those who enjoy hearing a loud organ, he can quickly change the mood for those who prefer the lush and subtle sound of the 3-manual Barton. The pizzeria encourages waiters and waitresses to assist in the fun by getting the customers in-



Andy Kasparian

to a hand clapping and singing frenzy when the tune calls for them.

"Andy has the ability to coax from the majestic instrument all of its grandeur. His choice of beguiling registration, rhythms and inventive harmonies soothe the heart."



Dynamic Vic Hyde, the fellow who played six trumpets simultaneously during the 1974 Detroit ATOS Convention, says he has been "running my legs off with bookings. In trying to keep up with the trends in show biz, I have concocted a super money-maker. I acquired a three-wheel German Tempo truck, and made it into a cute circus parade band car by putting a 4500-watt light plant in it and adding a Cozatt calliope. Have booked it for parades, celebrations, ball games and amusement parks. I haul it from place to place in a 32-foot Wells Cargo concession trailer which can be transformed into a stage. So, I'm totally self-contained."



Though we haven't reported the activities of organist Karl Cole recently, the "handsome devil" has been busy. He had an emergency appendectomy on June 25 which precluded his attending the Chicago ATOS Convention. He has sold his interest in the Medley Restaurant in the Fort Lauderdale, Fla. area, and up to July 1, divided time between rehabilitation of his Coral Ridge home and teaching. In July, he returned to Syracuse, N.Y. for the summer and early fall, playing the New York State Fair, Hilton Inn,



Karl Cole. Back on home ground once more.

and concerts in Rochester and Toronto.

In October, Karl opens the Banyan Room of the Pompano Beach, Fla. Surf Rider. He and Dick Planer will be installing a Wurlitzer pipe organ in a Ft. Lauderdale restaurant. The eatery will have legal beverages and feature a fast-food operation. A full-time theatre organist will be employed and Karl will play occasional guest spots.



Rick Edwards (Richard Veague) at the now gone Clearwater Orpheum restaurant hybrid 3/27 Wurlitzer.

Organist Ashley Miller was prominent in the early September jazz festival at Memphis, Tenn., entitled *A Mile of Music from Beale Street*. Ashley did a "two-a-day" at the Orpheum Theatre on September 3 and 4, but he failed to inform us what kind of instrument he played. We'll wager it wasn't a Sackbutt.



ATOSer and veteran broadcaster Bob McRaney, of West Point, Mississippi, recently took on NBC's *Today Show* in behalf of the theatre organ. Bob aimed at the musical interlude behind temperature announcements for a starter.

"I would like to request that the producers utilize some of the very fine theatre organ recordings or tapes as the background," wrote Bob to NBC.



We sometimes unknowingly commit the sin of omission when covering a story. While reporting the closing of the Orpheum restaurant in Clearwater, Florida, we somehow neglected to mention that Dick Veague, who plays as Rick Edwards, was the resident organist for circa five months prior to the closing, accompanying such entertainers as song and dance man Harry Harris, magician Bob Logan and falsetto vocalist/personality Tiny Tim.

Dick says, "The Orpheum restaurant was the first of its kind on

Florida's Sun Coast. It's truly a shame it had to close. The 3/27 Wurlitzer was such a lush-sounding installation."



Maria Kumagai, Tokyo's gift to the art of theatre organ playing, made quite a splash "down under" if a front page report in the south Australian *TOSA News* is indicative. The Australian Theatre Organ Society reporter attended Maria's concert in Adelaide's Wyatt Hall which boasts a 2/12 Wurlitzer maintained by the club. Her review was rife with such phrases as "... a welcome freshness in her arrangements ... combined with orchestral sounds rarely heard on a theatre organ ... "Night and Day" and "Deep Purple" ... really brought out the goose bumps ... the sensitive and captivating style Maria possesses ... descriptions tend to verge on the poetic ... The Toccata ... a fitting climax to a wonderful evening's concert."

We'd venture to suggest the uncredited writer could have a very successful career in the public relations business.

Yet, the "you've come a long way, baby" slogan applies very appropriately to Maria Kumagai. In a very short period of time she mastered both concert and theatre organs (circa 3 years). After that she tackled the English language and today she is easy to communicate with (she spoke no English when she arrived in USA in 1969).

Recently, we asked what her next endeavor would be — perhaps romance?

In her dead serious little girl's voice she replied, "Well, there's a young man who seems interested. He calls me on the telephone — from England."

Maria, it's time for a tour in Britain!



The long dormant but complete Wurlitzer in Pasadena's Crown theatre is being heard frequently since the theatre's reopening after a face-lift completed by new owner Bruce Barkins, who is willing to present as many organ concerts as the public will support. The Wurlitzer, now sporting 14 ranks, is said to sound



It's really 'his organ.' Bill Wright protected the Pasadena Crown Wurlitzer for so long, his name is solidly identified with it.

more brilliant than ever after the removal of perhaps 40 years accumulation of dust and other residue from the area in front of the swell shutters (it's an overhead proscenium installation, although side chamber areas were provided for).

So far, the ATOS *Stars of Tomorrow* show, concerts by Bob Ralston and Bill Wright, and a film series by Gaylord Carter have been booked.

But more than to anyone else, the resurgence of the Crown as a major southern Calif. showplace is a matter of great pride and interest to organist Bill Wright. It was Bill who fought off the prospective buyers and "parts merchants" while he was assistant manager at the Crown in the '50s and early '60s, during which he played nightly intermissions on the Wurlitzer. Now retired from theatre management, Bill Wright is now free to devote full time to music — and he will.

Another item we goofed on was our dour account of the misfortunes of Shea's Buffalo Theatre in Buffalo, N.Y. over the past winter. True, there were some rental cancellations due to inclement weather (cold and snow, that is) but the Friends of the Buffalo inform us that our hanging

a crepe on the theatre's door is indeed premature. In fact they tell us, things are looking up, even to the extent that the Buffalo's friends may be ready to found an ATOS chapter around the 4/28 Wurlitzer they have been trying so hard to get back in top shape. More recent theatre rentals have made up some of the earlier losses, which is good news.

Jim Lahay, past prexy of the Toronto TOS, informs us that we omitted the name of Dick Smith when listing organists who have played the Castle Wurlitzer in concert recently. He added that Dick was quite upset because his name was not included. It wasn't Jim's fault but our oversight. Jim says that they had to run three Dick Smith concerts instead of the normal two to meet ticket sales.

Jim adds, "When an artist works as hard as Dick does to please a crowd, I feel he should get recognition for his work."

Are we copesthetic now, Dick?

From Tampa, Florida, Ewell Stanford describes the 3/25 organ assembled by the Lakeland firm of Klug and Schumacker for the J.

Burns Pizza Shoppe in Tampa. Pipes and parts from the New York Roxy Kimball and from the Apollo Theatre in Rochester, New York, are controlled by an expanded version of the Apollo console. solid state switching was fabricated by Suffax (England), says Stanford. The instrument was under construction for more than a year.

Don Baker is the chief organist and he is assisted by Tom Hoehn and Ewell Stanford Jr., a local music store owner. It's a "visual" installation, with glass windows permitting a view of the two chambers. The swell shutters are above the windows.

Stanford believes this to be the only pizza organ now operating in Florida.

From Whiteville, North Carolina, Marion Martin reports that he has formed a partnership with Douglas Spivey, resulting in the formation of the Spivey Organ Co. They deal with many rebuilds. One is a rare Pilcher, one of many donated to churches many years ago by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. Silent for more than 15 years, the 17-rank Pilcher has been rebuilt and installed in a Wilmington church. Martin describes it as a "beautiful orchestral instrument." Hm, we've never run an in-depth story about Pilcher organs . . . Mr. Martin!

Many years ago we published items from Dave Teeter concerning the circa 20-rank Marr and Colton in the Elmira Theatre, Elmira, N.Y. Now word reaches us that the Elmira Theatre is no more; it has become the Samuel L. Clemens Performing Arts Center. A flood destroyed the console and damaged the elevator and blowers in 1972. Lauren Peckham, Dave Teeter and Monty Spencer are once more in the vanguard of the organ repair crew, and now some of their offspring are helping. So far they have repaired the blowers and console elevator. And they have secured a 4-manual Wurlitzer console. The pipework remains as before, M & C, but they plan to add a Post Horn and a Wurlitzer Trumpet, totalling 22 ranks. Meanwhile, the entire theatre is getting a facelift

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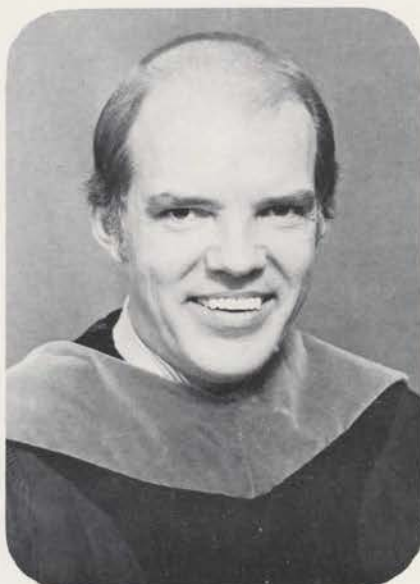
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for the Center's grand opening on October 22. Peckham says they'll have the organ perking for the big event. Another one saved!



John Landon gets around. If he looks different it's because the hirsute chin adornment is gone.

By now, everyone knows about the energetic activities of Dr. John Landon. His illustrated lectures, installation of a pipe organ in his home, record-collecting, record releases,

writing and organist activities are all well known. On June 10, he opened his home in Lexington, Kentucky, to a band of theatre organ enthusiasts in forming a chapter of ATOS. The resulting meeting was responsible for the organizing of the Blue Grass Chapter. Though the group is in its infancy, Dr. Landon believes "it will grow rapidly as people become aware of our existence, aims and purposes."



Don Thompson reports that the pizza business with organ accompaniment is bigger than ever at Toronto's Organ Grinder. Don seems to be slowly getting rich because he owns a piece of the action and his employer tells him he's got to be the world's highest paid organist. The Organ Grinder (not part of the Portland firm with that name) continues to attract organist visitors, says Don. Recent ones have been Carlo Curley, Walter Strony, Dennis and Heidi, Bob Van Camp, Karl Cole, Roy Bingham (from Britain), Warren Lubich and Syracuse's "sweetheart of the organ," Luella Wickham, who knocked off a few tunes on the pizza organ to show Don how it was done before he was born.



Don Thompson points out the wonders of unenclosed percussions to a bevy of young pizza chompers.



John Spalding's 'Marr & Colton workbench.'

John R. Spalding, who lives near Coudersport, Penna., has a genuine organ artifact — a Marr and Colton workbench. It was to be a console for an organ to go into David Marr's home in Warsaw, N.Y., but the M&C factory failed and was closed before it could be finished. Marr took it home anyway. It never had manuals or a horseshoe, so it remained just an empty shell. But it

did have a roll player designed to use piano rolls, from which it obtained the input to play two manuals, pedals and operate the swell shutters. John has what he believes to be the only player ever attached to a Marr & Colton wired into the 3/9 M&C (with a Wurlitzer custom console) in his home and reports that it is quite satisfactory.

Meanwhile the M&C "bench" has become a valuable addition to his home workshop.



From Lafayette, Calif., Bob McDonald reports that the 3/17 Wurlitzer, which once sounded forth in Keith's Theatre, Cincinnati, Ohio, is now entertaining pizza chompers in Bella Roma II pizzeria in Concord, Calif., an adjunct to Bella Roma I in Martinez, Calif., which 1975 ATOS conventioners heard played by Dave Reese. In fact, Dave has moved over to the new location, Wednesday through Sunday, while Buddy Kurz holds down the Howard seat on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The installation is a two chamber



Dave Reese

(Stufoto)

affair with a foot high ceiling. Re-lays are solid state.

There is a plan to add 10 ranks of Casavant classical pipework, says Bob.



Joseph Fernandez submits a clipping from *National Review* in which critic William Rickenbacker describes a concert held in St. Paul's cathedral in Pittsburgh, the instrument being the famed Beckerath organ. The artist; Hector Olivera. Rickenbacker seems very interested in Hector's concert attire (he arrived in bluejeans and changed to an all white costume). The critic hurries through his comments on the classical program, he can hardly wait to get to the piece-de-resistance, an improvisation on a submitted melody. The critic absorbs the improvisation with gusto — 10 minutes of variations on the Alka-Seltzer jingle, "Plop, Plop, Fizz, Fizz," which apparently left Rickenbacker in throbbing ecstasy. Hector sure knows how to "wow 'em." He also plays music well. □

Publisher's Note:

Our apologies to our editor, George Thompson, for omitting his name from the caption above the picture of the Board of Directors in the last issue. Because of illness, George was unable to attend the meeting in Chicago.

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