

b) With key held down, work gang switch by hand and watch the action of that contact wire on the switch block to be sure it snaps back each time as you roll the switch to off position.

c) Check all solder connections and reheat them all if necessary. A hair line crack in a joint may not be visible.

d) If all else fails, try jumping your note at the relay block to a spare contact if scraping the chopper and contact wire don't produce results. If your relay blocks do not have any spares, unsolder one of the feed contacts and make it a spare for your stubborn note. □

VOX POPS



Conducted by Stu Green

Stu Hinchliffe writes in his Eastern Massachusetts Chapter's *Eastern Pipes* newsletter that veteran organ-builder and chapter member Jim Rankin, now relocated in Kingston, New Hampshire, is up to his old tricks. Jim observed that the United Church of Christ in Kingston needed an organ. About that time he located a 2/5 mostly Robert Morton which had seen service in several theatres and a Masonic lodge. Jim acquired the organ in June, 1975. With the help of church members, the pastor organist, and Mrs. (Peg) Rankin, the organ was moved to the church and installed in time to start making music by October of the same year. Jim added relay capabilities to permit the addition of five more ranks. Another one saved!

Jim Rankin first came to our attention while he lived in Reading,

Mass. There he built a pipe-electronic hybrid which boasted seven ranks of Wurlitzer pipes, long before Ruffatti and Rodgers picked up the pipe-plus-electronics idea commercially. Wonder if he has it playing in his Kingston home?



Cathy Koenig from Niles, Ill. writes "Harry and I meet the nicest people when we travel by the book — the ATOS Membership Roster." After their active participation in the Chicago Convention (Harry was the lobby pianist at the Muri concert) they decided that they needed a vacation so they flew to Denver, rented a car, and drove through Colorado, Wyoming and Utah.

While in Estes Park, Colorado they contacted Don Wick, chairman of the Rocky Mountain ATOS Chapter. Don took them to a get-together at the home of Jack Walden who has a 2/12 Kimball perking. We learned the organ's history. It was installed in the Teatro del Lago, Wilmette, Illinois, in 1927. In 1965 it was moved to a private home in Chicago when the theatre was torn down to make room for a supermarket. In 1966 it was transported to Kansas City by Randy Charles and in 1968 he moved it to Estes Park. In 1974 it was installed in the home of Jack Walden in Loveland, Colo. Since acquiring the organ Jack has added a Wurlitzer relay; also replaced missing percussions, Glockenspiel and Chrysoglott.

Harry was invited to play and gave an impromptu concert which lasted



Harry Koenig. Always on the move. (Shown here at Downers Grove High School Wurlitzer.)

(Carl Anderson Photo)

an hour. Judging from the audience reaction, the favorite numbers were "Ave Maria", "Vesti la Giubba" (Pagliacci), "Desert Song" and the "Washington Post March", which is Harry's usual closer, reports Cathy.



Bill Wright. The astounded fans wouldn't let him go. (Stufoto)

On October 16, a multi-store electronic organ retailer in southern California staged his 4th annual Organ Festival in the San Gabriel Civic Auditorium. The Gould Music Co. sells four brands, and late models of these organs and their associated speaker equipment were spread across the stage. Because there is an excellent 3/16 Wurlitzer pipe organ in the hall, young Bob Gould made a venturesome decision; he would include the Wurlitzer pipes on a program designed to promote plug-ins, knowing that comparisons would be made. In short, he gambled; would the extra pizzazz offered by the huge pipe organ be balanced by possible critical tonal comparisons?

The pipe organist selected was veteran Bill Wright, another who never quit when "talkies" took over. The electronic organs were played by Ralph Wolf (Thomas), Carol Jones (Conn), Jerry Nagano (Allen) and 15-year-old Bob Speaker (Wurlitzer spinet).

Most of them played energetically and very well, but the pipe organ stole the show. The big sound and the very size of the raised console astounded those who thought in terms of parlor-size spinets, those too young to know about the ances-

tor of their spinets.

Large groups came forward to examine the Wurlitzer console during intermission, and they returned after the show. Bill Wright gave them an impromptu demonstration of the "mighty Wurlitzer's" resources and capabilities. They didn't want to leave.

In the end, the experiment paid off in good will for the Gould Music Co. Potential customers left the auditorium with a better understanding of the whole organ scene. Here was an electronics merchandiser who wasn't afraid to pit his products against the grand daddy of them all.



ATOS Vice President and Treasurer, Capt. Erwin A. Young, Jr. is now playing the part of a full time gentleman farmer at his Middleburg, Va. digs. A veteran United Airlines pilot for many years, Cap turned off the jet engines after his last flight on July 31, his retirement effective October 1. In his words, "the pay is not quite as good, but you cannot beat the working conditions." At least one other ATOS member still files the "Friendly Skies," however. Capt. Duane Searle, former ATOS Vice President and Director, operates from his home base in Denver.



From Ft. Lauderdale Helen Kiley encloses some encouraging clips from Florida newspapers. One describes a 25-hour "Bach-a-thon" staged by organ students at troubled Kent State University to raise funds to buy the college a new pipe organ. As one student tired, another slid onto the bench to continue the all-Bach bash. Another clip describes the happy predicament of Delta Airlines pilot John C. Kamper of Islamorada, Fla. Ever since he, as a boy, performed the Saturday morning ritual of dropping his quarter in the slot for an hour of pipe organ practice at Chicago's old Kimball Hall, he's wanted his own organ. But there wasn't room on his Florida Keys property for pipe chambers so he built his house to accommodate a suitable electronic classical model, and finally selected a Rodgers model 990 "Heritage." The organ was delivered and installed in July '77, with

Rodgers' Jonas Nordwall making the final adjustments.

Now free to enjoy his instrument (his flying schedule allows him four days at a stretch at home), the pilot says, "First thing, I'm going to take music lessons."



For several years we've been hearing about that "red devil" theatre organ visitors report seeing and playing at the Moller factory in Hagerstown, Md. The firm seemed to be reluctant to admit they could still build an entertainment instrument, so mum was the word. No more. Moller's So. Calif. rep, Les Pepiot, offers this photo of the "red devil." It's a 2-chamber, well-unified (plus 5 couplers) organ, complete with theatre accoutrements: a full set of traps and 10 silent movie sound effects. The voices are: Flute (85 pipes), Tibia (97 pipes), Diapason (61 pipes),

Violin (61 pipes), Vox Humana (61 pipes), Viol Celeste (37 pipes), Trumpet (61 pipes), plus Diaphone and Bourdon 16' 12-pipe pedal extensions. Forty-nine metal bars, with two sets of hammers, provide Chryso-glott, Glockenspiel and re-iterating Orch. Bells sounds. Wind pressure is 10" except for the 5½" Vox. There are separate tremors for Tibia, Vox and Main, and 5 combination buttons for each manual. Swell shutters are glass.

Reports on the Moller's tonal qualities by those who have played this instrument average "not Wurlitzer, but very good." It's been marked down to \$39,000 for a quick sale. The next one ordered will be back at the pre-sale price of \$45,000.



What did a theatre organist do when he had free time from the con-



Moller's 'Red Devil.' Marked down for a quick sale.

sole? Well, when he was playing the Daly Theatre (Kramer organ) in the Bronx in the summer and fall of 1928, Doc Bebko got paid partly in passes to the nearby Starlight Amusement Park. There he swam in the pool, and rode the roller coaster. Fifty years later he still is a great lover of the surf, visiting Jones Beach and Fire Island with his brothers Ted, George and Gene when in the Big Town. And he still loves roller coaster rides.



Pianner-playin' dancehall gal, Heidi, and straight-shootin' dude.

The "James gang" has a flair for showmanship which goes far beyond the skilled performance of music. If they had existed in vaudeville days, it is likely that they would have been headliners in the medium, with their musical talents contributing. Dennis and Heidi love to include skits, in costume and makeup, to sharpen the impact of their music. One such occasion was the presentation of William S. Hart's *Tumbleweeds* at the Ohio Theatre (Columbus). As a prelude, the theatre staff staged a western bar scene, complete with dance hall girls and a shoot-out.

Naturally, the dude in the white hat won, then strode to the faithful Robert Morton and mounted the bench for his concert. But that isn't all. "Dude" Dennis went later to Rochester, N.Y. for a Halloween concert and underwent quite a physical metamorphosis. He came on as a "Phantom" which would warm the cockles of Lon Chaney's heart.

Observed one wag. "Gad, what marriage will do to a guy!" Heidi!



Aloha Chapter member Joseph Anthony, visiting California, discovered the "Pizza Machine" in Pleasant Hill and its 2/7 Wicks (1975 ATOS conventioners visited the installation). Joe reports that the room is being renovated to better accommodate the sound of the organ; the ceiling is being raised 5 feet to provide more spaciousness. Joe is most favorably impressed by the playing of organist Jim Branco, who may be heard evenings, Thursday through Sunday. He says "Jim plays the organ very well — correction, exceptionally well, anything from "Three Blind Mice" to "Rhapsody in Blue," from rock to classics, all kinds of requests." Joe adds that improvements on the organ are in the works. We trust he'll keep us advised, unless the call of the islands lures him home too soon.



For the first time since the disastrous fire on March 6, the Kirk of Dunedin, Fla. opened its doors for church services in September. Services had been held in the fellowship hall for six months, and though the sanctuary needed more work, the faithful wanted to return to that area as soon as possible. Damage to the structure, excluding the famed pipe organ, was more than \$100,000.

Rev. Ted Wehling, pastor, hoped that the organ would be ready by Thanksgiving, but much remains to be done on it. Organist-designer Terry Charles is working diligently every day but progress is slow. Considerable soldering and wiring remain. The Kirk organ is well known, nationally, and the yearly concert series entices visitors from Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Some of the biggest names on the circuit have entertained the patrons in that theatre organ's unique setting.



Over 100 years ago, Thomas Alva Edison recited "Mary Had a Little Lamb" into a machine he had invented. His voice vibrations, spoken into a horn, caused a stylus to etch sound-bearing grooves into the surface of a piece of tinfoil wrapped around a rotating cylinder. He named it "phonograph."

Since that first crude machine, the science of recording sound has undergone many refinements. Too many, say some recordists who point



Same dude later. Was marriage the cause — or those drawknobs?



George Wright's November 5 concert at the San Gabriel Auditorium Wurlitzer, an excursion into '30s music, was felt by many present to be one his best. Next day he was off to Chicago to record a beloved organ by an old process. (Stufoto)

to the low distortion 78 rpms made in the late '30s and early '40s, before tape made recording so easy — and increased the distortion, dampened performer spontaneity and brought in an unwanted factor called "tape hiss."

The answer, according to the newly formed Great American Gramophone Co., is to return to the days before tape and cut records directly on acetate recording blanks to obtain the "masters", "mothers" and "stampers." The performer is required to play a whole side (circa 18 minutes) without error and without stopping, else he must re-cut from the beginning. The pressings will also be limited editions, and will retail for around \$10.00.

When George Wright went to Chicago in mid-November to cut perhaps three releases on the Chicago theatre 4/29 Wurlitzer, the Hollywood-based Gramophone company's van was waiting outside to take down the music by the direct-to-disc process. Time will tell whether the method is an example of regression or a case of that old proverb about "the more things change" etc.

Several months ago in these pages, it was announced that the future of the Auditorium Theatre in Rochester, N.Y., home of the RTOS' 4/22 Wurlitzer, was in doubt, due to rising taxes, operating costs, and a decreas-

ing Masonic membership which owns the building. According to RTOS Secretary, Lloyd Klos, the theatre's manager has been given the go-ahead by the Masonic Board to book programs through the 1978 season. Thus, the new Moller Posthorn which has been promised a delivery date in March 1978 will have at least six months to sound forth in concerts. Either Jonas Nordwall or Lyn Larsen will be the first artist to use the new stop.

Alaska is known as America's last frontier. Which is probably why news of theatre organ activity up there is so slow. However, Connie Stewart, administrative assistant at the Governor's House in Juneau, informs us that the 2/8 Kimball which once graced the Coliseum and Twentieth Century theatres in the capital, and was reshipped by Seattle's Ballcom and Vaughn Organ Co., was dedicated on May 2 in the State Office Building's cavernous lobby. Doing the honors was the lady who played the instrument in 1928 in the Coliseum, Carol Beery Davis. A crowd of 1,000 attended the event.

The San Gabriel Civic Auditorium is fast becoming the hub of organ concert activity in the Los Angeles area. This is possible because of the well-maintained 3/16 Wurlitzer organ installed by the LA ATOS chapter a few years back. Within the past couple of months the hall has witnessed two ATOS concerts, the "Kompleat Silent Movie Show" described elsewhere in this issue, a



Organ concerts, operas, musical shows and ballet make for a busy theatre. (Stufoto)

plug-in festival which included the pipe organ and a George Wright concert. In addition, young Greg Rister cut an album on the pipes. Not bad for a 50-year-old veteran of silent movie days.

After two months to the day when over 1,000 ATOS conventioners trooped into Chicago's Oriental Theatre, the M & R Amusement Co., which operated the 3,078-seat house under lease, announced that it would close its doors on September 29. But, according to photographer Bill Lamb, the end of this movie palace is not here yet! On the evening of its supposed demise, a group of CATOE members gathered at the Palmer House, exchanged pleasantries, saw pictures of the convention, then trooped to the Oriental where an English organist, Dave Hamilton, played for over an hour, followed by open console. The good news was announced that a new lessee had been found, that he'll continue to run the house and CATOE will have access to the Wurlitzer and run concerts there. The instrument is not for sale.

The 3/9 Wurlitzer which was once housed in Milwaukee's Schnitzelhaus Restaurant (June 1973 THEATRE ORGAN) is no longer there. Milwaukee's loss is Texas' gain. According to David Olson, the owners of Dallas' Landmark Pipes and Pizza acquired the instrument for a new pizza emporium. Installation was scheduled for a September start, with completion hoped for before 1978. The departure of the Wurlitzer, however, still leaves Milwaukee with five theatre organ installations: three in theatres and two in pizza parlors, and all being played. Sounds like a good locale for a convention!

We haven't heard from "Mr. Theatre Organ Enthusiast of Central New York State" in quite a while, but rest assured, Don Robinson keeps busy. First, his famed *Organ Loft* program on WLFH, Utica, is in its 15th year. Second, Don is now listed with suitable biographical



Don Robinson. He keeps busy.

sketch in "Who's Who In the East." Third, he was re-elected Dean of the Central N.Y. Chapter, AGO, for 1977-78. But, that isn't all. Don is organist-musical director at Sts. Joseph & Patrick Church in Utica, minister of music and organist at St. Paul's Baptist Church in Utica, and organist for the Knights of Columbus' Utica Council. His regular occupation is reliability engineering at General Electric. "I just wish to say, despite the demanding schedule which keeps me going seven days a week, I enjoy every moment of it, especially in those areas where I serve others. Everywhere possible, I spread the fine work of ATOS, particularly thru the broadcast media."



When Hector Olivera "signed on" the staff of the M/S Southward for a recent weeklong Caribbean electronic organ dealer-sponsored cruise, little did he know that pipes were in store. 70 "safari sailors" from Mountain View, Calif., embarked from Miami, on the first cruise sponsored by a dealer, the Yamaha-Conn Music Centers in Mt. View. Aboard were Carol Jones (Conn) and instructor Dick Bailey, plus recitalist Hector.

Photographer-publicist John Tyner describes Hector's shore leave adventure:

"Upon leaving the dock at Ocho Rios (Jamaica), Olivera and some friends found a well-worn six-rank Discus pipe organ, complete with Crescendo Pedal, in a church. Hector got the blower going and with the

ancient pedals clacking, filled the church with some highly respectable Bach. He noted, on drawing the 3-rank mixture, that one rank was so out of tune it formed a calliope-like celeste!"



Another well-known organist who discovered treasure in the Caribbean is Don Thompson. He writes that during a visit to Cuba he located an Aeolian pipe organ in an old house, now a restaurant, at Veradera. The house, reports Don, once belonged to the Dupont family (before Castro). The date on the Aeolian's console is 1932. The organ is small (1300 pipes) but the management claims it's the largest in the hemisphere, reports Don, who adds that the organ needs servicing and that a qualified organ man could probably exchange his labor for a free holiday on the Caribbean beach.

Incidentally, Don Thompson

joined the ranks of us "cover boys" with the August 20 edition of *Star Week*, a newspaper entertainment supplement. It's an excellent Harold Barkley color photo of Don at the Toronto "Organ Grinder" console.



Once a theatre organist, always a theatre organist, even if the musician gravitated into other fields of endeavor after the Great Era. Take San Francisco's Vern Gregory, for example. Vern is known for his activities at the Avenue Theatre there. The July 1977 issue of *Inland Printer*, devoted to those laboring with ink and printing press, ran a color picture of Vern at a 3-manual horseshoe keydesk, and described the organist thusly:

"In the silent movie era, he was the unseen organist who added thunder supreme and melodrama to the escapades of Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and John Barrymore. When sound was added to the fury, Vern turned



Hector throws the Discus. An unexpected pleasure during shore leave.

(John Tyner Photo)

his talents to printing, but is still a major collector, mender and authority on the grand organs which once replaced words, sound effects and sometimes talent. Today, he oversees the operation of Gregory and Falk, a major California trade shop."



Phoenix ATOSer Dave Broskowski reports that Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is well "organized" from the pizzery standpoint. Jim and Mario's "Pipe Organ Pizza" has been operating for a year now with Walter Strony at the 4/16 "Mollitzer" hybrid. It is given regular maintenance by Gary Hanson, Bill James, and Dave, the latter two having been in the installation crew. On the West Side (Greenfield) it's Jim Bringe's "Organ Piper Pizza," featuring Gary Sette at the console of the 3/28 Moller.

Says Dave, "Each organ has a characteristic sound, and both are well worth hearing. They contribute much to Milwaukee's theatre organ-rich tradition." Dave is preparing a study of the theatres and organs of Milwaukee for next year presentation in these pages.



The 3/10 Robert Morton organ in Beaumont's Jefferson Theatre is one of three instruments in playing condition in Texas theatres. The house belongs to the Jefferson Theatre Preservation Society, and devoted to the performing arts, according to Al Sacker, the organist who has played the Morton for many years. The Southeast Texas Arts Council, of which the Southeast Texas Chapter, ATOS is a member, has its offices in the Jefferson. "We would be delighted to entertain tourists visiting Beaumont," says Al, "and we urge that this information be passed on to all ATOS members as well as the general public. The director of the theatre is there, usually seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. I'm in and out of the office daily most of the week."



From Grand Rapids, Mich., Barbara Gedris tells of the impact made by the opening of an organ-equipped pizzery.

"The hottest new place in Grand



Donna Parker. A hit for this Miss — er — Mrs. (Bob Hill Photo)

Rapids is the Roaring '20s Pizza, featuring the 3/33 Wurlitzer organ. The decor is reminiscent of a '20s theatre, with large photos of silent film stars on the walls. Capacity is 450. It's located on 28th Street, the second busiest road in Michigan. Grand Rapids has always been known as a music lovers' town but the crowds at the Roaring '20s are unbelievable. At times traffic is backed up a quarter mile with cars waiting to get into the parking lot. Inside, the organ is visible everywhere, with pipe offsets,

tuned and untuned percussions mounted on walls and ceiling. A Trompette en Chamade thrusts its resonators from the back wall.

"Organists are Charley Balogh and Donna Parker (and sometimes Ron Walls). Requests range from "William Tell Overture" to the "Star Wars" and "Rocky" themes.

"This new place in town is responsible for a least one new social more here; teenagers tell me that if a boy takes a girl to the 20s, it means they are going steady." Thanks, Barbara.

The Wurlitzer originally saw service in the Jersey City, N.J., Stanley theatre in 1928. It was rebuilt and enlarged on being installed in the Roaring '20s.



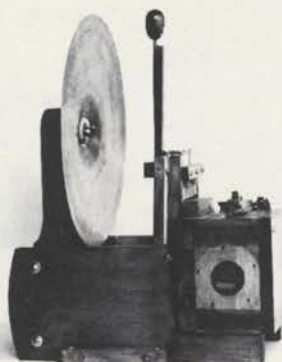
The Rochester Theatre Organ Society opened its 14th season on September 23 when it presented a return engagement of Karl Cole. The crowd of 1787, largest opening nite assemblage since 1974, kept the organist at the console for several encores. Dressed in a flashy sequined black suit, which could compete favorably with one of Virgil Fox's, Karl presented a varied program which ran from baroque to "The Beer Barrel Polka" and "Alley Cat." For several months, Karl had been playing engagements in his native Syracuse area, including a week as New York State Fair Organist on the 3/11 Wur-

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litzer. An appendectomy prevented his attending the 1977 Chicago convention.



Tennessee organ owners oiled their blower motors early in October in



preparation for Roy Davis' annual "Mid-Tennessee Organ Bash," his 7th. This year they converged at 9:30 a.m. of a Saturday at the Henry McKinney residence (2/6 Wurli) in Chattanooga for an open organ session. Then to the one-time Union RR Station for lunch at the "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" restaurant. At 1:30 p.m. they met at the Tivoli theatre for a Wurlitzer concert played by staffer Bill Barger. Another stop was at the McMinnville Pipe Organ Warehouse of Roy Davis for a look-see at Roy's many goodies. Then came a visit to the Cumberland Caverns for underground food and organ music. The last stop was the Davis pad on the Cavern grounds for a session of mainlining the Davis 2/9 Wurlitzer and Duo-Art Steinway 88. All on one Saturday!



Taking a cue from George Wright, who threw oranges to members of his audience, on dedicating "The Boy Next Door" to Anita Bryant during a recent concert, Ken Rosen decided he needed a similar gimmick to introduce his "Fiddler on the Roof" medley during his October concert, played on a Rodgers (the 2/7 Wurli isn't set up yet) in The Music Room, a prominent Sepulveda, Calif. sheet music retail outlet. He gave the problem much thought and on concert night his audience was delighted when he tossed them the contents of a bag of bagels.



Bob Pereda sends us the good news from Vero Beach, Florida, that Hall of Famer Fred Feibel, is slowly



Ken Rosen relaxes after his concert while Stan and Jesse ignore him.

(Stufoto)

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.

but surely regaining his health, following two operations. Fred and wife Leonore exchanged visits with Bob, following the ATOS Convention, and had the opportunity to hear, via cassette recorder, some of the artists who performed in Chicago. Fred was prevented by illness from attending.



After years of stop and go, and many disappointments, John Beck's 3/15 Wurlitzer (from the El Paso, Texas, Plaza Theatre) seems now to have become an operating entity, if a Dallas TV reporter is giving it to us straight (John hasn't verified).

John bought the Plaza organ about six years ago. He already had built a high-domed chapel type building for a smaller organ on his grounds in Dallas, so he was ready. But obstacle after obstacle caused delays.

The TV feature indicated that the Wurli is now in fine playing shape. At the console, demonstrating the goodies, was young Lew Williams.



Dr. John Landon has announced that his *History of the Theatre Pipe Organ*, has been accepted for publication by the *University of Kentucky Press*. John was highly elated over this, as it has been over a year since completion of the book and he'd been searching for a publisher in the interim. One of the reasons *UK Press* decided on the project was the success enjoyed by *Indiana University Press* with Dr. Orpha Oche's book, *The History of the Organ in the United States*. "I have corresponded with her and she told me that the book has sold very well," says John. "*UK Press* hopes my text will be a big selling item and hope they are not wrong." □