

# Ad Lib Convention in New York City

Log of Events  
by Donald Schwing  
Custodian of ATOS Wurlitzer  
in Carnegie Hall Cinema

## Thursday, March 2.

**8:00 a.m.** — Adjusted special lighting for today's shows at Carnegie Hall Cinema, Tuned Clarinet and French Horn.

**9:30** — Lee Erwin and Lance Luce arrive to begin rehearsals.

**1:50 p.m.** — 1st show: Lance plays short program before film; Lee plays his score for *Broken Blossoms*.

**5:10** — 2nd show. (good crowd).

**8:30** — 3rd show. (full house).

## Friday, March 3.

**10:00 a.m.** — Invited guests arrive at Carnegie Hall Cinema. Mostly New York Chapter people. "Open console" . . . Theatre management serves free coffee and pastries in the French restaurant in the lobby.

**11:00 a.m.** — Lance plays first half of scheduled short concert; Lee plays 2nd half of concert and continues until show starts. Organ now has 8 ranks playing, and this is the first formal concert since the "debut" almost a year ago.

**2:30 p.m.** — All invited to Rev. Ike's United Palace (former Loew's 175th Street.) Everyone has a turn at the console of the 4/23 Robert Morton. Lee arranged for Rev. Ike's building superintendent to give us the "\$2.00 tour" of the theatre, including the projection booth and the catwalks above the ceiling. Quite an establishment!

**11:30 p.m.** — Invited by Claud Beckham to sit in on rehearsal of Don Baker and Lee Erwin's twin console number for concert at Radio City Music Hall Sunday morning.



Lance Luce at the console of "Little Mother."

**11:54 p.m.** — House closes and we all go down to stage level. Big crisis! Organ seat of second console occupied by a "dummy."

Note: the second console has a mannequin rigged to organ bench to give the impression of two organists playing during first scene of Easter show. Lee was informed that "dummy" could not be removed because of union regulations. He suggested that he could easily knock the dummy off the bench by accident and then put it back after the rehearsal. He was told that no one except a

property man could touch it. They solved the problem, when Claud Beckham arrived, by removing the entire organ bench (with dummy attached), so Lee and Don rehearsed with Lee standing up in front of the console. For the performance on Sunday morning, a special property man was hired to remove the "dummy".)

## Saturday, March 4.

**10:00 a.m.** — Carnegie Hall Cinema, Open House with lots of out of town guests and a few New York Chapter members. During open console everyone took tour of organ chamber located at stage level behind the picture screen, and, the relay/workshop room.

**11:15** — Lee and Lance play short concert for ATOS guests and cinema patrons who begin to arrive for first show. Everyone seemed to like the sound of the organ. We do have more work to do with the voicing, regulating, etc., and the plan is to add one more rank and a harp. It will then be "complete" as outlined by everyone.

## Sunday, March 5.

**8:00 a.m.** — Back stage at Radio City Music Hall, Don and Lee had a "talk-through" rehearsal. There is much activity, getting everything ready for the program.

**8:10** — The audience begins to arrive; people are lined up all the way around the block. At exactly 8:45 the concert begins with Claud Beckham acting as master of ceremonies. The show included Mr. Beckham's demonstration of all the stage facilities. What an experience! Met all the Music Hall people, including

Lee and the problem "dummy."



Don Schwing listens attentively as Lee Erwin stresses a point backstage at Radio City Music Hall.



John Jackson and the executive vice president, Charles Hacker.

About 2000 people attended the concert. Then there was an intermission of about one hour while the regular audience came in and filled the house to capacity. We all stayed for the first stage show which started about 12 o'clock. It was a big day — and one that no one who was there will ever forget. □

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE

by Lance Johnson

Do you have any questions?

Send them direct to:

QUIZ MASTER  
And Organ Builder

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**Q.** I have a 2/6 Robert Morton with the following ranks: Chamber I: Toy Counter, Xylophone, Orchestra Bells, Diapason, Tuba, Tibia. Chamber II: Tibia 1-12, Violin, Flute, Vox Humana, Chimes and Chrysoglott, I have heard that the Vox and Tibia must be in the same chamber. If I switch these ranks, the Diapason and Vox Humana, I will be in a very great deal of work opening the cables behind the console, cutting wires and using spares. Would a Flute-Vox registration sound different enough to merit the change? Also, what shall I call these chambers?

**A.** I can assume that your friends are trying to get you to arrange your

organ like Wurlitzers style D where the two chambers were laid out as follows: Main: Violin, Diapason, Concert Flute and, Solo: Vox Humana, Trumpet (or Tuba) and Tibia. This arrangement, although perhaps arbitrary at first, has worked out to be extremely successful. Of course Robert Morton arranged their pipework differently. You will have to decide whether or not you want a Wurlitzer style D arrangement with a great deal of hard work or to keep it strictly Morton. To exchange merely the Diapason for the Vox would not really accomplish anything unless you want a Wurlitzer effect. The small Wurlitzer organs divided their organ into two styles with respect to chamber layout; The Main chamber was the "church" side and the Solo became the "Theatre" side. In Wurlitzer Main chambers you would find mostly pipework that would be found in a typical 1920's church organ Swell division. The Church side held the Harp or Chrysoglott and the "Theatre" side would naturally have all the other tonal percussions and toy counter.

**Q.** On my Wurlitzer, I have two notes that speak only for an instant, like a pizzicato note. I tried testing the secondary pneumatic for leaks but could find none. I pushed the primary valve wire up manually and the note still goes "plup." What is wrong?

**A.** Sounds like a stripped leather nut on the valve wire. As the valve wire travels up it carries the valve part way due to the friction between the wire threads and the valve disc. When the wire hits the top position the valve does not completely exhaust the secondary pneumatic because of high pressure air still leaking into the exhaust channel. It will be necessary to remove the valve wire retaining strip and replace the leather nut. With the strip removed, it will be possible to check for proper valve travel and for any debris caught in the valve seat. Measure the diameter of the valve wire and order replacement leather nuts from Klann, Durst, or Reisner.

**Q.** I have an unusually noisy blower. I have installed a baffel between the blower and main conductor feed but still have motor and fan

**noise which is intolerable. Can my Spencer blower be made quieter?**

**A.** I would remove the hair felt pads and install springs under the blower mounts. Go to a truck parts dealer and pick up four heavy-duty valve springs and drill them into the mounts. You will have to experiment to get just the right tension so the blower will be off the floor. Then build a particle board box around the blower with a one square foot or larger intake flap which will open only when air is required. Line the box with 4" fiberglass blanket insulation. Make the box so that one side will hinge or slip off easily for motor service, this should cut out your motor and fan noise by 90 percent. Make sure that your motor noise is not due to worn bearings!

**Q.** Our church has a three-manual, 38 rank pipe organ that is untuneable, the blower is located in a furnace room where winter temperatures get up to 100 degrees. If the air is static in the wind lines when the organ is not playing why do the individual pipes being tuned go sharp?

**A.** Since the blower is located in a hot furnace area the conductor coming off the blower discharge will act like a radiator in reverse. The hot air around the conductor will heat the air within the conductor which will supplement the heat within the conductor caused by the air being in compression. Even though very little air is moving in and out of the system while you are tuning one pipe the hot air will rise through the conductors and the heat will quickly diffuse through the entire organ chamber. Since all conductors within the chamber are now filled with warm compressed air the organ chamber air will also heat up and compound your tuning problems. The only solution in your case is to move the blower out of the furnace room and place it in a normally heated room with an adequate fresh air supply. Some organ blowers located in furnace rooms have special intakes vented to another room which is normally heated if you were to only do this, you would only solve half the problem. The main conductor must pass through normal temperature zones so that the metal pipe can help cool the compressed air. □