

# All Through the Night

By Norman Fowler

In the "Golden Days" of the Theatre Organ the tuner was in a very exalted position. The instrument in his care would be visited at least once a month and he would be treated as the craftsman he was.

Today the position is vastly different. Only when a major event takes place is the tuner summoned and then perhaps it is his first visit to that instrument for two years.

In a flight of fancy I have tried to give some impression of the present day situation. I might add that everything mentioned in actual fact happened.

Let us imagine that the B.B.C. has started a series in which all the famous organs that used to Broadcast are to be aired once again in the Light Programme. (This is the flight of fancy bit.) The organist concerned, a certain Mr. Tibia Clausa is using the Wurlompton at the Odium Cinema, Little Twittering, for this 10 a.m. broadcast, Thursday next.

Curtain up! Fanfare—Tubas, 16', 8' and 4'.

## Wednesday Night

8.10 p.m. Arrive by train from Town, raining hard.

8.30 p.m. Arrive at the Odium Theatre with apprentice to be met by manager who tells us that Mr. Clausa came in that morning to try the organ and has left a list of faults on the console. The manager also asks us to be careful in the organ chambers as he has his bulbs potted up for Spring and they do better there than in his hall cupboard at home. We are further told that the Police know all about us. After slight heart failure on my part the manager qualifies his statement by telling us that they have been told that someone will be working on the organ all night. We are then invited to see the show.

10.30 p.m. Am awakened by the door man shaking me saying: "You'll have to get out now, the organ men are waiting to start."

10.35 p.m. Have made my way to the console and picked up Mr. Clausa's list of faults—Shudder!

10.45 p.m. Overalls on, tools unpacked and resolution made to work steadily through the list of faults.

(1) Tremulants will not work. Am not surprised as the Crescendo Pedal has been left slightly open, just enough to "knock off" the Tremulants. Close the Crescendo Pedal.

(2) Bass Drum not working.—Vanished! Subsequent enquiry seemed to point to one of the junior operators borrowing it for a church fete. The lad in question has since left the district, presumably with the drum.

(3) Chimes not working.—Like the drum they have vanished but have been filched by the head organist of the circuit and installed on his organ that only possessed electronic chimes. This will give Mr. Clausa something to howl at! ! !

(4) Solo Swell Shutters not working.—Find that the manager in his horticultural activities has trodden on and squashed the wind trunk supplying the shutter action. Re-make and re-solder trunk.

(5) Piston No. 1 on Great not working. Set at neutral for some unknown reason. Re-set with a combination that Mr. Clausa will have to think twice about before using.

(6) Multitude of notes "off" due to dirty contacts and general disuse of instrument. All eventually traced and rectified.

## Thursday Morning

2.30 a.m. Decide to stop for a tea break. Go up to staff room but cannot find any milk in the jug that the manager said would be there for us. All we see is an empty jug and the Theatre cat washing her whiskers. Send apprentice down to the Police Station to cadge some milk. Lad returns with constable who is one of the "nuts on the organ and always wanted to have a bash" type. Let him "bash" until we have finished tea then turn him out and tell him to join the C.O.S.

3.30 a.m. Start to tune. A major task as the instrument has had no attention for over a year. Many dead moths and butterflies in the pipes but at last get the job up to standard.

6.30 a.m. Play the job for a quarter of an hour and am pleased to find that it is behaving as well as can be hoped. Decide to get some sleep until the cleaners come in at 8 a.m. Choose the ladies' powder room owing to very comfortable settee there.

8.03 a.m. Awakened by screams of lady cleaner who found me asleep and thought I was a "body." Eventually all is settled. I have a wash and shave and go out for something to eat.

9.00 a.m. Return to find the B.B.C. "boys" fitting up their mikes to the equipment that they brought in yesterday. Mr. Clausa is running through his programme.

9.15 a.m. B.B.C. boys tell Mr. Clausa that two of his registrations are not any good. Tactfully withdraw from scene that follows.

9.30 a.m. Note ciphers—rush to the organ chamber and find that a magnet is stuck. Get the note working and decide to stay with the apprentice in the organ chambers during the broadcast in case any more notes stick in which case we will take out the offending pipe.

9.45 a.m. Slip out with apprentice for quick cup of coffee. Far too hot to drink but manage to get it down in time.

9.55 a.m. Take up positions in organ chambers. Note the shutters are opening and shutting and wonder if Mr. Clausa with all his broadcasting experience is suffering from nerves while waiting for the red light.

10.15 a.m. Broadcast well under way without hitch so far apart from fact that it proved unwise to give the apprentice a cup of coffee just before the broadcast. Wish I had some cotton wool.

10.25 a.m. One of the 16' pedal pipes is tending to cipher. Get ready to heave it out if necessary. It would have to be one of the big ones!

10.30 a.m. Broadcast over. Pedal note did not cipher, praise be, so go down to console and find Mr. Clausa very pleased with himself. He asks me if I heard his snappy Tuba "breaks" in the pops selection. Remind him that I was pretty well sitting on top of said Tuba.

10.40 a.m. Get ready to leave. Mr. Clausa shows his gratitude to us by slipping the apprentice half-a-crown. Must think I am above accepting a tip—how wrong he is. Manager comes up and hopes that the broadcast did not disturb his hyacinths and wonders if he will ever see us again.

10.45 a.m. Set out for the station feeling rather tired now it is all over to catch the 11 a.m. stopping train to town. Ah well! Another job crossed off the tuning list.