

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 requires only a 10¢ postcard to get the message to the VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can spare a 15¢ stamp, please include a contrasty black and white photo which need not be returned.

Where was the first organ to be broadcast located? According to Betty Bowman's *Silent Newsreel* Newsletter, it was the instrument in Pittsburgh's Calvary Church. The station was KDKA "the pioneer broadcasting station of the world." Why the Calvary Church? Because no other church in Pittsburgh would have anything to do with radio. How times have changed! Unfortunately, the date of the pioneer broadcast was not given, but it had to be in the very early '20s.

M. Lee Green of Nashville, Tenn. informs us that the Wurlitzer in Knoxville's Tennessee Theatre is in playing condition and used for special presentations at least twice a month. The 1984-seat theatre at Gay St. and Clinch Ave., and owned by the Simpson Theatre organization, is decorated in an Arabesque fashion with organ console in red with gold highlights. Above the balcony is a dome ceiling, which has four-foot

golden water vases circling the top of a narrow ledge. Mr. Green says he recently was in Knoxville and knows the theatre is operating. "I have not played the Wurlitzer since May 1978, but at that time, it was very well maintained." It is played at all intermissions by Bill Snyder.



A brand new album of Buddy Cole organ stylings, played on his famed North Hollywood studio 3/26 Wurlitzer, is about ready for release by Doric Records. It is the result of an exhaustive search among the stereo tapes that Buddy left, and consists of about five Cole originals plus some pop standards, all hitherto unreleased renditions, mostly ballads in the distinctive Cole style. Buddy's widow, Clare, was most cooperative in digging out the tapes for Ken Rosen to audition, says Doric's Dick Penberthy.

We lost Buddy on Nov. 5, 1964. In the interim his Capitol, Columbia and Warner Bros. records, long out of print, have become collector's items. The new release should be a welcome addition.



Buddy Cole fans (and they are legion) who are also late night TV addicts, can catch a glimpse of Buddy accompanying Doris Day in the 1951



Buddy Cole and admirer. Buddy's enthusiasm for the theatre organ was boundless. (Stufoto)

showbiz flicker, *I'll See You in my Dreams*. He is seen at the piano, just to the right of Doris as she rehearses a standard ballad.



Billy Nalle wants to set the record straight on the size of the Wichita Century II Center's Wurlitzer. Some time ago enlargement of the organ was planned, and so Billy reported to us. "However," the resident organist says, "to be both accurate and responsible, the number of ranks playing totals 37, rather than 42 as reported in the *Pipe Piper*. The larger figure is still a goal here, but the WTO Board sensibly deferred



Historic 1957 photo of Billy Nalle made during a rehearsal for his "Swingin' Pipe Organ" record album. It's the original New York Times Square Paramount 4/36 console, later destroyed in a fire. Billy now plays an exact replacement with provision for possible additions. (Ben Hall Photo)

adding the five soft ranks for other items of priority. The organ is complete as far as tonal spectrum is concerned."

Speaking of Billy Nalle, he's set for a May 8, 1981 concert on the 4/37 "Dowager Empress," this time duetting with percussionist J.C. Combs, skinbeater for the Wichita Symphony. It wouldn't be the first time Nalle has performed with a drummer; his fondly remembered RCA record "Swingin' Pipe Organ," made in the mid-'50s on the same instrument (then in the Times Square Paramount), included "skins."



Tommy Stark. Big plans.

Tommy Stark is one of those upbeat guys who refuse to allow temporary setbacks to get them down. For the past several years he has been a partner in a music store in Lemon Grove, near San Diego. While the product for sale is electronic organs, Tommy is completely sold on pipes. He purchased a 10-rank Wurlitzer and after much difficulty with inept technicians, managed to get the organ installed. We covered the gala opening concert in a previous issue.

Then Tommy learned of a fabulous organ which was available, the 4/28 Wurlitzer originally in Chicago's gigantic Uptown Theatre. It had been acquired by Bob Montgomery who planned to install it in the Hoosier theatre in Whiting, Indiana. Bob already had a 3/11 hybrid installed with chambers in the balcony of the Hoosier, and for years the 4/28 was neglected. Finally, it was decided to sell the 4/28 and Tommy Stark was

first in line. Meanwhile he had acquired the Mesa Organ Power, the last of Sandy Fleet's three organ-equipped pizzerias in the San Diego area, but like the others, it was in a poor location, this time because of a deteriorating neighborhood. He closed it reluctantly, but with a vow to reopen elsewhere.

With the arrival of the 4/28, Tommy envisioned a whole new setup. He would relocate the 4/28 and open a brand new pizzeria in his Lemon Grove location, so he and partner Jim Hansen would have a pizzeria, theatre auditorium with the 4/28 Wurlitzer, retail store and teaching facilities at one location. Despite some initial setbacks in the refurbishing of the 4/28, which has been in storage for many years, things started looking up when Bills Coffman and Field were entrusted with the task of getting the former Chicago Uptown organ ready for installation in the new complex. Tommy Stark marches on!



John Landon is a stickler for authenticity. Long ago he determined that the 3/7 Page in the Anderson Paramount must remain a pristine example of that builder's art, not to be cluttered with extra controls filling blank spaces on the console stop-rail or backboard. The console looks the same as on opening day 51 years ago. But now the sale of John's records is totting up a kitty which will soon permit the installation of a long-anticipated piano. Where to place the perhaps seven manual and two pedal stopkeys the piano may require?

To solve the problem a panel will be fitted to swing out from beneath the left console side jamb. This will mount all the piano controls and will remain out of sight when the piano is not in use. Thus the profile will be maintained as it has over the 25 years John has been playing weekend presentations on the Page.



Encouraged by the enthusiastic reception of the one-night seminar he conducted at San Gabriel Civic Auditorium parallel to the 1979 ATOS convention in Los Angeles, George Wright is putting together a three-day package session (October

13, 14, 15) which will illustrate the musical techniques which have served him so well during his remarkable career.

Plans have not jelled completely at this writing, but to date George plans three six-hour sessions, two of them in a hotel meeting room and one at the San Gabriel hall where the 3/16 Wurlitzer will be on hand for musical illustrations. The first day will cover such subjects as open harmony, chromatic glissandos, and such single note effects as grace notes, fingered slurs and mordents. Second day subjects will include left-hand and pedal rhythms, use of percussions, second touch, adding fills and



Jim Hansen, a talented classical organist.

nasty brass effects. Day three (at San Gabriel) will cover registration, arranging, concert repertoire, stage presence and a question session.

Surrounding these sessions will be breakfasts, lunches, a private GW concert and a closing cocktail hour and dinner party, all covered by the tuition fee. Registration will be limited to 50 applicants.

This group of seminars would seem best suited to the advanced student or professional who wants to upgrade his performance. For further details write to the Academy of Artistic Organ Performance, 26375 Nacome Drive, Mission Viejo, Calif. 92691.



Dennis James informs us of his recent personal appearance tour with legendary silent film star, Lillian Gish. "We played the Oriental Theatre in Milwaukee, the Chicago Thea-



Dennis James and Lillian Gish. Lillian is still going strong at 83.

tre and the Ohio Theatre in Columbus" says Dennis. "We showed clips from several of Miss Gish's starring films and complete showings of *La Boheme* and *Broken Blossoms*. Dennis, of course, supplied the organ accompaniments while Miss Gish told about the craft of acting in silent films. The program, under the auspices of the American Film Institute, will continue in the fall in Michigan and Indiana.

In Columbus, Miss Gish was deeply impressed by the restoration work at the Ohio Theatre. "It's the prettiest theatre in America," she said. She started her career in Ohio as a child actress.

Haven't heard from Miami's veteran organist Eddie May recently, until today. Eddie reports that his health "has quite improved and I'm



Eddie May and daughter Carol. He's on a march kick.

back teaching and playing, as of old. Daughter Carol and I are playing as a two-organ team, and it is working very nicely. As far as church work is concerned, I'm doing only substitute work, not caring to do a full schedule. Carol and I have a rather full calendar, both of us teaching in a couple of local music stores. My latest compositions are "Victory Song," "Marching Song," and "Installation March." I seem to have gravitated to marches of late."

David Messineo, who has been organist at Radio City Music Hall for the past few months, contributes some news concerning two notable pipe organs in his area which figured in past ATOS conventions. "The Hope-Jones organ in the Ocean Grove, N.J. Auditorium has been in-

creased in size from 30 to 71 ranks, and will probably grow larger by the end of the summer (It initially had 14 ranks. Ed.). It is played constantly from June to September. There are recitals on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, Sunday services, and special concerts. The organ sounds fantastic, thanks to the careful work of maintenance chief Ronald C. Bishop and organist Gordon Turk.

"The Radio City Studio is now owned and operated by the Radio City Entertainment Center Corp. The studio's 3/14 Wurlitzer, very seldom used, is in terrible repair, which we hope will change shortly. I occasionally practice on it, but there is no ivory left on the keys, and there are many dead notes. We have done some 'minor surgery' on it."

A story bound to please Brother Andrew Corsini, mentor of the Theatre Historical Society, appeared in the May 5 issue of *Time*. Sandwiched among accounts of Pres. Carter's "desert debacle," candidate Anderson's declaration of independence, and the Cuban refugee invasion, was a two-page spread about movie palaces that have been rescued from the wrecker's ball for use as performing arts centers, mostly through local grass roots efforts. The story, generated by a Milwaukee symposium on the "American Movie Palace," brought both good and bad news: (1) federal support for theatre preservation is drying up, but (2) tax reform has made it possible for those who back renovation of buildings on the National Register of Historic Places to write off contributions in only five years. Even without tax incentives, about fifty former cinema palaces have been saved by community effort.

Of special interest to organ buffs were the three color photos of restored auditoriums. Two of them, the Columbus Ohio and the Atlanta Fox, were shown with their organ consoles elevated.

Gordon Belt, program director for the San Sylmar, Cal. "Tower of Beauty" Museum, reports that what was a 3/32 Wurlitzer in the Music Room is now a 4/35 instrument. "We have again increased the size of



Gordon Belt, curator and program director for the Nethercutt 'Tower of Beauty.'

the organ and after the purchase of the ex-Denver Civic Auditorium 4-manual console, which we rebuilt, it has been installed to control the ranks of the enlarged instrument." Los Angeles conventioners remember hearing that organ at last year's affair.



NorCalChap's *Windsheet* reports the Oakland's Piedmont School District is offering for sale the former San Francisco Orpheum 4/22 Robert Morton which was donated to the school by philanthropist J.B. Nethercutt of San Sylmar museum fame. Offers are to be made by sealed bid, NorCalChap's Rudy Frey is investigating the possibility of purchasing this excellent instrument by the Chapter. We can't help but wonder why the school cooled.



David Scrimenti, 16-year-old blind student of Rosa Rio, has achieved another honor. In April, the youth was the recipient of a \$100 award and certificate symbolic of a special achievement prize, in the Performers of Connecticut Inc. Competition. At a winners' concert on June 8, David played the "Nocturne" by Field, and was presented his awards. His latent talent was first unearthed a few years ago when he won a prize in Connecticut Valley ATOS Chapter's Scholarship competition, playing the 3/15 Marr & Colton at Thomaston.



Warren Lubich is looking forward to his fourth annual engagement at Boise, Idaho's Egyptian Theatre

(formerly the Ada). "Last year, the house underwent a complete renovation, including restoration of its original name. It is a nice theatre, the Boise residents are very proud of it, and it will be a pleasure to return there." The Egyptian sports a 2/8 Robert Morton.



Rochester Theatre Organ Society rang down the curtain on its 16th season on May 9 when Maria Kumagai entertained 948 concertgoers at the Auditorium Theatre's Wurlitzer. Playing mostly classics, semi-classics and show tunes, the little artist acquitted herself nobly. Among the selections were tunes from *My Fair Lady*. The inevitable standing ova-



Maria Kumagai. They like her in Rochester. (Bill Nakahara Photo)

tion was her reward, and she thanked the audience in her inimitable way by playing "One Fine Day" from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. Maria is scheduled for playing trips to Europe and Japan later this year.



Ever hear of the "Awesome Austin?" Most folks haven't, but by the time this item appears in print, a 3/11 Austin will be playing in the Chaminade High School in Mineola, N.Y. One of the school's faculty members, Bro. Bob Lahey, tells us that a couple of years ago, the father of one of the students, Bob Atkins, contacted the school in the hopes of installing a theatre pipe organ in the 1100-seat auditorium. For years, Bro. Lahey had contemplated that very thing! There was an Austin, once restored by Atkins and a crew,

in the Beacon Theatre in Port Washington, but the owner refused to sell it and when the house was triplexed the organ was lost forever. Atkins next found an Austin in the Queens Village Theatre which he purchased for \$700.

The school auditorium's balcony was altered to accommodate two chambers and percussions. The unification was re-designed to match Wurlitzer specs, thanks to Ken Ladner. A Peterson relay was purchased. The console is not a horseshoe model but the crew hopes to get one in due course. The 11 ranks are on 10 inches of wind, and there are about 18 percussive effects.

"We expect to dedicate the instrument at the ceremony which will observe the school's 50 years. Then we will be using the organ several times a month for programs. We also hope to get students interested in playing it. The more it's used, the better it will stay in shape," says Bro. Lahey.



From Starkville, Mississippi, barrister/organist Dolton McAlpin reports sadly that the Baton Rouge Paramount site is now a parking lot, and the fine 2/6 Robert Morton which Dolton recorded for the Concert label is, for all practical purposes, a wreck.

It was carefully removed by the able organ technician, Don May, who so expertly restored it years ago, and put in storage with great care. But the owners decided to move it to another warehouse without the help of Don May. A moving company was hired and apparently the movers assigned were reincarnations of the Three Stooges. A chest was piled on



Don May. He lost a friend. (Sid Bordelon Photo)

top of string pipes, flattening them but not for celeste use. So much destruction was accomplished during that second move, says Dolton, that a recent purchaser will have difficulty getting even one rank playing if he tries to install it in a planned pizza location. As might be expected, Dolton McAlpin, who played intermissions on the Morton during his undergraduate days, and Don May, who maintained it through the years, are brokenhearted over the needless destruction. Some of the blame must fall on the city fathers of Baton Rouge for letting a priceless landmark slip through their fingers with so little resistance.



Occasionally we get such a raft of encouraging reports about an emerging theatre organist that we investigate further. We often learn that the subject is able in many areas in addition to playing in good theatre organ style. For the past year a young man named Rob Calcaterra has been getting "rave" reviews wherever he has played (mostly in the eastern USA). This report by the Marty Irwins of Indianapolis is revealing.

"Rob Calcaterra possesses several talents worth sharing with ATOS readers. Besides being a highly polished theatre organist, Rob has earned a degree in classical organ from Indiana University. Currently residing in Indianapolis, Rob teaches at North Central High School (rated number one in the state) where he is in charge of several choirs, the teaching of music theory, keyboard, music literature and history classes,



Rob Calcaterra. Multi-talented. (Bill Lamb Photo)

as well as directing and conducting musicals.

"Rob has recently collaborated with a television animator, and they have several commercials currently being aired. During his off-hours, Rob is the musical activities director at a large nursing home as well as organist and choirmaster at a sizeable Indianapolis church.

"Rob won the Liberace Keyboard Entertainer Search for the Indianapolis area and went on to the regionals, held in Chicago, to receive the Outstanding Performer's Award. Shortly afterward, he was off to concertize on the east coast — specifically Toronto, Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester, N.Y. After his performance in Rochester, he was asked to cut an album on the 4/22 Wurlitzer. The tapes were made during the Memorial Day weekend. The record should be released shortly.

"Rob spends his summers in Europe where he is a tour guide. He speaks seven languages fluently and knows most of the continent intimately. Besides having been the president and Man of the Year of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity, Rob is also a gourmet cook."

Rob, you are beginning to sound like Tom Helms!



A few issues back we wondered how organist Tom Helms found time



Tom Helms. The gals with the money caught up with him.

for so many playing engagements. He's still in there pitching reports Dorothy Standley from Tom's home area in Florida. Although he's overseeing the revitalization of a Robert Morton for the Gulf Coast ATOS Chapter, Tom managed to get to New York recently where he was able to give the big straight organ in the St. John the Divine Cathedral a brief workout. Returning home he found some girls waiting for him — with money, yet. It seems the gals in Beta Sigma Phi sorority had staged a vaudeville show and had opted to donate the proceeds to the chapter's organ fund. Rough life, Tom. □

THE ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT

ACOUSTIQUIZ

by R. J. Weisenberger

Answer true or false to each of the following statements (answers appear on page 47)

- 1.) Raising mouth cut-ups at a given pressure will raise the harmonic development. True False
- 2.) Pipes with high cut-ups are capable of greater acoustical output. True False
- 3.) Small scale pipes have higher degrees of harmonic development as compared to larger scales. True False
- 4.) Operating pressure has no relationship to acoustical output. True False
- 5.) The greatest output occurs along the axis of nonharmonic open pipework. True False
- 6.) High pressure pipework is powerful, but lacks the clarity and smoothness of low pressure designs. True False
- 7.) Cut-ups have little or no effect on pitch. True False
- 8.) Closed pipes are used primarily to save space since they are only half the length of open pipes for a given note. True False