

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.

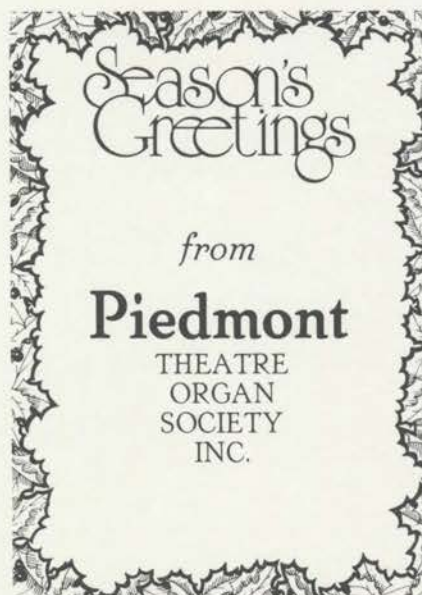
Dr. Walter Beaupre tells us that the great organ accompanist of silent films, Sigmund Krumgold, is alive and well in Florida. Krumgold, it will be remembered, appeared at the New York Paramount at the same time as Helen and Jesse Crawford were offering their solo and duet presentations in the late twenties. It was said by some that they went primarily to hear Krumgold play the film, and not to hear the Crawfords. At any rate, efforts are being made for the 80-year-old Krumgold to supply material for a THEATRE ORGAN feature.

Henry Yocum of Chestnut Hill, Pa. informs us that the Carter Memorial Organ which was dedicated two years ago is going strong in the Cinnaminson, N.J. High School. Last word we had on the project was in June 1977 when installation work was nearing completion. The organ is a 3/17 Wurlitzer, and its nucleus is

the style 235, originally in the Royal Theatre in Bloomfield, N.J. James Carter augmented the organ after its purchase with a Posthorn, French Horn, Kimball Violin, Gottfried Tibia Plena, toy counter, and a complete set of percussions. When Carter died, his will stipulated that the organ be in charge of organist Larry Ferrari. As a result, the Carter Arts Council was formed, and installation of the instrument in the high school was completed. Dedication was in October 1978.

Col. Harry Jenkins submitted a clipping telling about Tom Souder of Millville, New Jersey, a sign painter whose hobby is public domain movies. His basement is full of film copying equipment he fabricated. He standardizes on 16mm prints. Of course old movies need music so he built an electronic organ. He could have had the organ from the Levoy theatre in Millville but reasoned "it would blow the roof off, it's so big." So he settled for the percussions from the pipe organ which he is wiring into the manuals of his home-grown electronic, all of which is contained in the basement of his home.

The George Wright seminar on organ stylings, scheduled for three days in October '80, was postponed to an as yet undetermined April '81 date, according to Bob Zadell, manager of the symposium. The reason



George. Stymied by late promo.

(Stufoto)

given was that the publications Zaddell depended on to get the word around were delayed in their releases e.g. this publication's August/September issue was held for the inclusion of coverage of the ATOS Convention in Britain. Other organ publications which carried the seminar adv. were delayed in their summer releases for various reasons. The goal of 50 registrants was realized but many of the applications arrived after the deadline Zaddell had set for the reservation of an LA hotel meeting room, the bus to transport attendees to San Gabriel and reservation of the San Gabriel Civic Auditorium where George would use the 3/16 Wurlitzer for illustrations. Zaddell reports that all monies were returned to applicants but most came back to him marked "keep me on the list for April '81."

The New York Chapter's "Horseshoe" newsletter reveals that the club has been looking for a new project. An organ search team consisting of members Mel Robinson, "Horseshoe" editor Bob Godfrey and Levy Elzy, Jr. was formed and one of their first visits was to Manhattan's First Corinthian Baptist Church, which was once the RKO Regent Theatre. It is being given a \$175,000 facelift now nearing completion. After a two-story climb up a metal ladder, two of the group found a chamber full of pipework. It proved to be a Welte-Mignon theatre

organ with all the usual tonal and non-tonal percussions plus toy counter. It's a one-chamber 10-ranker plus 2-rank echo installation. Only the 3-deck console is missing. The church people are interested in a restoration, so a restoration committee was formed of the inspecting trio plus organist Frank Cimmino. Church members have volunteered to assist.



This year marks the 105th anniversary of the M.P. Moller Co. of Hagerstown, Md. One of the first organs the firm built was for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, and since then the company has built over 11,500 instruments for churches, theatres, homes and community buildings. Included are those in all three service academy chapels. According to vice president, Peter Daniels, direct descendant of the founder, average size church instruments can be built for \$40,000 to \$60,000, with the smallest model going for about \$13,950. The firm of 220 employees can turn out 110 to 120 organs a year, depending on their size, and as many as 30 can be developing in various stages at once. Of course, the firm is also capable of producing sets of pipes for theatre organs. The Moller Posthorn, now a part of RTOS' 4/22 Wurlitzer, was built by the firm two years ago, and it has complemented the instrument perfectly. Moller is one of only a half dozen major organ builders in the country.



The magnetism and artistry of Gerald Nagano combined to draw 1,532 concertgoers to the Auditorium Theatre in Rochester on September 26, kicking off RTOS' 17th concert season at that house. The young artist, making his first appearance in Kodakville, was in complete command of the 4/22 Wurlitzer and he ran the spectrum of music which aficionados have come to appreciate in this city. A number of Gerry's followers and relatives came from California for the event, while Harry and Kay Steege arrived from St. Paul, Minn. to hear the artist and to observe the RTOS operations. Harry is hopeful of soon adding another theatre organ to the circuit thru the



Gerald Nagano. A solid hit in Rochester.

installation of a 3/19 Wurlitzer in St. Paul, and with it, a new club to sponsor events with exciting artists.



We're a little late with this one but the 3/20 composite Wurlitzer donated to the Salinas, Calif. First Bap-



Tom Hazleton. No one knew his wind supply wasn't up to snuff. (Claude Neuffer Photo)

tist Church, was dedicated on June 29 last with a concert of music by Bach, Richard Purvis, Fred Bock, Handel, Rodgers & Hammerstein and hymns by Bill and Gloria Gaither, played by Tom Hazleton. The instrument was donated to the church by organ hobbyist Francis Aebi, Jr. It was built up over the years by Aebi using components from at least four Wurlitzers, including the historic Denver Isis Theatre instrument.

The concert listeners never knew that Tom was "playing around" an inadequate wind supply; the 7½ hp Spencer blower has since been replaced with a 15 hp Spencer so there is now "CFM" to spare.



From New York, Lee Erwin reports that the Carnegie "Little Mother" organ now has 12 ranks, and one more will be added. Then, a second console will be installed which along with the Music Hall 4/58, will give Manhattan two twin console organs in theatres. Lee adds that the Carnegie cinema is "getting people who have never heard a theatre organ (with silent movies) interested, young people who never knew such an instrument exists. To say they like it is an understatement."

When Lee accepts a gig elsewhere, he gets Radio City's Dave Massineo to play the "Little Mother" which has really grown since it started life as a 2/5 Wurli. Don Schwing is in charge of maintenance — and growth.



A note from Betty Foort thanks us for "the wonderful obituary of Reggie (Aug./Sept. '80 issue). "He would have been most honored at all the kind things you said about him . . . I am glad now that Reggie was able to make the trip to California (to attend the opening concert. Ed.); I am sure it as one of the highlights of his whole life. He told me that the friendship and kindness shown him while there was heartwarming, and he was delighted that 'his organ' had found a permanent home."

The tributes to the legendary organist continue. One of the finest was produced by Don Robinson, whose weekly "Organ Loft" radio-cast is now in its 18th year. On Sept.

18, Central New York State listeners heard a 60-minute musical tribute, highlights from his long life (86 years), his many fine recordings and the genesis and finest installation of his Moller concert organ.



For years, in Arcadia, Calif. that 4-story tower by the Annunciation Catholic Church bugged the church's organist, Bill Wright. Every Sunday he came to play the little 6-ranker inside, but from the tower



Bill Wright transformed this column into a bell tower with his gift of a Verdin Electronic Carillon. It was installed by Justin Kramer, well-known organ hobbyist and inventor of a tuned bottle carillon.



The donor, Bill Wright, shown here at the 5/28 Foort Moller console in Pasadena Civic Auditorium during a practice session.

— silence. "Carillon Committees" were formed, but nothing happened. Then tragedy struck the Wright family; their youngest son, Jack, who had survived 10 years of U.S. Air Force service, and had become a police officer, died of cancer. That was in 1965. Over the years, Bill and Irene Wright sought a way to keep Jack's name alive.

Says Bill, "Being a slow-thinking Englishman, the idea was a long time hatching, then POW! — a carillon for the tower!" The Wrights donated the equipment and installation.

Today when Bill arrives early for his Sunday stint, the tower bell sounds greet him, and there's the plaque: "In memory of John E. Wright." Now the tower sings.



Patronage at the Wurlitzer-equipped Suburban Restaurant in Wanaque, N.J. continues handsomely, according to Doc Bebko who visited there in September. "The place was packed to the rafters, and the owner had to set up a special table near the console to accommodate our party." Frank Cimmino is in his 10th year as organist, and extends an invitation to every ATOS member to drop in and hear the 3/17 Wurlitzer when he's in the area.



Dave Junchen, who was prominent in the installation of the Foort Moller in its permanent Pasadena, Calif. home, reports that a 3/14

(built up from a Style F Wurlitzer) has been shipped to his Pasadena shop from Florida for enlargement to a 3/18, after which it will be returned to owner Calvin Jureit for installation in his Coral Gables home.



Barbara Sellers, organist-daughter of Hall of Famers Preston and Edna, informs us that she has moved her X-66 from the Bismarck Hotel Lounge in Chicago to the Good Table, a beautifully spacious restaurant and lounge in Harwood Heights, Ill. The lounge, where Barbara is performing evenings from Tuesday thru Saturday, seats 104 persons. Barbara cordially invites ATOS members to drop in at the Good Table whenever they are in Chicago. It is at 5050 N. Harlem Ave.



From Prescott, Wisconsin, ATOSer Roger Dalziel writes that theatre organ music got a big boost in northwest Wisconsin with the Labor Day weekend dedication of the Evelyn Schmidt Music Room at Indian Hills Resort on Long Lake. The 3-day event featured nightly concerts and silent film accompaniments by Rob Calcaterra of Indianapolis, as well as appearances by area organists Bill Eden and Mike Erie. The instrument was a Rogers custom 340. The days were filled with seminars on subjects such as American musical styles and cueing the silent film, conducted by Rob Calcaterra. After hours jam sessions by Don Taft continued through the wee hours. The event attracted ATOS members from Chicago, Rockford and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Resort owner Bobby Schmidt plans such weekends each Memorial Day and Labor day.



Pittsford, N.Y.'s John Roblin exemplified his two greatest hobby interests in October when he and wife Fanny spent a weekend in the New York City Metropolitan area. He visited an operating steam railroad museum in New Jersey to satisfy one interest. Then, he visited Radio City Music Hall where he observed much greater use of the 4/58 Wurlitzer than ever before. Besides the pre-show music, the organ was featured

with the orchestra and for a sing-along during the stage show, "Manhattan Showboat." John says the organ sounds even better than before, thanks to Ron Bishop and the Schantz Organ Co. "The pedals were terrific."

On the way home, the Roblins stopped in Utica, N.Y. where they once lived, and John phoned George Davis who played the Uptown (3-manual Marr & Colton) and the Stanley (3/12 Wurlitzer) theatres in the great days there. George is 79, and got a kick out of talking about the old days. He says the management of the Stanley Performing Arts Center would like to get the organ back. However, it is in Proctor High School, and this may not be likely. Davis, who also played over WIBX in Utica, is now a church organist.



In Garden Grove, Cal., stands the new Crystal Cathedral, a \$16 million edifice for worship. Dr. Robert Schuller raised the money and oversaw construction. It is large enough to house the Cathedral of Notre Dame and have space left over. Of interest to pipe organ buffs is that the Cathedral will have what will probably be one of the world's great pipe organs. It will be called the Hazel Wright Organ for the woman who donated \$1 million for its installation. It will actually be three organs in one. Purchased was the organ from Avery Fisher Hall in New York's Lincoln Center. A second instrument will be a new one from Ruffatti, Italy, while a third is the church's old organ. Dr. Schuller calls the building "The little glass shack," simply because of the 12,000 panes of glass which allow one to look outside, but not in. Styrofoam washers are designed to make the building withstand a 8.2 earthquake on the Richter.



An undated but recent newspaper clipping from Buddy Nolan tells of the gala re-opening afforded the refurbished Embassy (nee Emboyd) Theatre in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The 3,000 seat house, glittering like new, got the searchlight treatment as a thousand friends, many of them members of the Embassy Theatre Foundation, filed into the reborn auditorium to see movie shorts, hear a



Buddy Nolan at the Embassy Page. His support was recognized.

speech by the mayor, a tribute to Robert Goldstine who served seven years as the Foundation president (besides spearheading restoration and maintenance of the 3/15 Page organ), witness some vaudeville, a Buddy Nolan slide-studded sing-along and a pit orchestra drawn from the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, whose director conducted. Buddy Nolan was presented with a plaque recognizing him for his commitment to saving the organ and theatre.

In fact, this is the first time on record that a group dedicated to preserving an organ inspired others, including the city fathers, to save the entire theatre.

Incidentally, Buddy played his Holiday concert on the Page on Dec. 13.



"Foreclosure Auction, Two Antique Theatre Pipe Organs" roared the auction notice in huge type. The instruments, the 3/13 and 3/20 organs which once sang out in Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah, pizzerias were sold on September 16. According to Beehive Chapters' Clarence Briggs, the buyer was Henry Hunt of Michigan. 'Fess up, Henry. What are you going to do with two?



From middle California we are informed that Ken Simmons is now chief organist at the Concord Bella Roma pizzeria, assisted by Harvey Blanchard and Aura Edwards (who

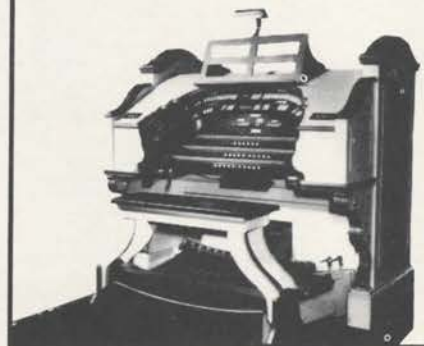
has a 3/17 Wurli at home). Ken replaced David Reese who went home to Salt Lake City. Rick de Rose is playing at the Bella Roma in Martinez while Don Reynolds presides at the console at Pizza Junction in Rheem. All of which covers a lot of pasta going over the counter.



Silent movie activity was resumed by the California Institute of Technology over the summer and fall with classic films accompanied by Gaylord Carter, Del Castillo, Carter student Robert Israel, and Ann Leaf, presented on four dates between August 26 and October 14. A Baldwin electronic was featured because Caltech's Beckman Auditorium in

SEASON'S GREETINGS

from
WESTERN RESERVE
Cleveland, Ohio



Pasadena lacks theatre pipes. The site has been a drawing card for silent movie buffs since Chauncey Haines led the way years ago.



An event we nearly failed to note was the July 4th parade and first annual picnic staged by the "Great American Calliope and Cacophony Society" by ATOSer Dan Lovett and others on that patriotic date in Danville, Calif. The highlight was a spectacular float drawn by an enormous red fire engine. On the float was a Tangley Circus Calliope which dom-



Dan Lovett tickles the Tangley.

inated the ear drums of both parade watchers and picnic attendees throughout the day. The instrument was played mostly by symphony conductor Dietrich Erbelding, who mixed Bach fugues in with such more traditional entries as "Billboard March" and "Entry of the Gladiators." The float won the parade's Special Entry Award, so "the big noise was worth the effort" says Lovett, whose ears are still tingling from the Tangley.



Another event reported by Dan Lovett was a 50th wedding anniversary party staged recently in Los Altos and Monte Sereno, Calif., for famed organist Porter Heaps and wife Dorothy. The Heaps children and grandchildren had been preparing for the party for months and had amassed three huge scrapbooks of photos and letters from the Heaps' friends over the years.

More than 120 relatives and friends gathered at the Monte Sereno home of one of the Heaps progeny, after which Porter and Dorothy arrived in a white chauffeured 1956 Rolls Royce, sipping champagne from silver goblets. A red carpet was unrolled before the honored couple as they debarked. The Heaps were appropriately garbed in white and gold. After a delicious buffet, skits staged by their numerous progeny traced the Heaps 50 years of wedded bliss.

"Well," Porter was heard to say,

Season's Greetings



Central Florida Theatre Organ Society

"at least 49 of those years were blissful. Not a bad average."



From Portsmouth, Ohio, Tom Dressler sends in a clipping from the "Dear Abby" column submitted by a church organist:

"Frequently I am asked to play for weddings of people I don't know. They pay me . . . but am I obliged to send a gift?"

Abby's Solomon-like reply suggests a gift only if the key plunker attends the reception and dinner.



From Wichita we learn that the Metropolitan Arts Council, an umbrella organization for all categories of Wichita arts groups, this year



The prize-winning float in the Danville July 4th parade.



Porter and Dorothy Heaps get a refill from their chauffeur after alighting from the Rolls Royce.

pulled a notable switch; it replaced its October annual meeting with an organ concert played by Billy Nalle on the "Dowager Empress."



Lyn Larsen. "Handsome, charismatic and talented" says our Man of the Year. (Bill Lamb Photo)

Our Man of the Year, Lowell Ayars reports going to the Dickinson High School in Wilmington, Del. to hear George Wright on October 5th, only to learn that George was hospitalized with pneumonia. His pinch hitter was Lyn Larsen and it was announced that anyone wanting their money back could go to the box office. Of the large audience, only two couples left, and Lowell says they really missed some fine playing: "I have never heard Lyn play better. Oh, to be young, handsome, charismatic and talented."

We know what you mean, Lowell. Besides, Lyn plays pretty good, too. □

Season's Greetings

to all our
A.T.O.S. FRIENDS



The Rochester
Theater Organ Society

Dedicated to preserving the sound
of the "King of Instruments"

THE ORGAN CONCERT

by Billy Nalle

Complaints from some concert situations about lack of attendance have brought me to some observations born of research and experience since ATOS was founded twenty-five years ago. The fundamentals essential to presenting successful theatre organ concerts are exactly the same as apply in other major music fields. Unfortunately, coming to appreciate and honor these fundamentals has been a far slower process than known where the other major musical instruments are concerned. No person deeply believing in and caring for the welfare of theatre organ has escaped encountering an isolationist mentality which wants everything to remain static. The resulting slow suffocation now is showing its effects in several locales at both ends of the concert hall, at the console and at the box office.

To return theatre organ to the entertainment mainstream, *everything* on both sides of the footlights must be totally professional. Now, individual and group activities on a hobby basis provoke from this chile of God a "Yeaaa Team!" However, standards in every field are defined by the highest quality of a commodity presented in highest quality terms. Unfailingly, the highest professional standards in planning and performance are the best and strongest insurance for the continuance and strengthening of the hobby groups. Some of them still have not learned this after a quarter century.

A successful theatre organ concert series, or occasional concert, draws the public directly relative to the *appreciation* of adult musical fare by the sponsor, *professionalism* in planning, promotion and production, and the *musicianship* of the artist. That these fundamentals still are on the firing line after many years makes plain that too many concert sponsors and players in this field are not teachable. Further, no group which harps constantly on giving the public history lessons will draw serious support. Today, people have available in quantity and variety the finest musical fare presented in finest terms, with no nonsense. Right here is the crux of the matter, the blind spot shared by too many sponsors and players alike: The instrument is put *before* the music, which is the proverbial cart before the horse.

Support is built on what the theatre organ was created to *do*, make *MUSIC!* When all efforts are invested in presenting the finest *music* in the finest *musical* terms, support will follow and the instrument will take care of itself. Only we theatre organ buffs can love the instrument for itself and endure the wallowing in throbbing cascades of ill-tremulated sounds accompanied by breastbeating. The public has no interest in all that! Either it is irritated by such, or, at best, considers it quaint. *What* the theatre organ can provide uniquely and magnificently, *Music*, if it is top drawer, will move and win and draw those in the "outside world."

There are some places setting a good example on the international scene. One of the best is found in mid America, in Wichita. Here, in a city of 275,000 and far from the largest metropolitan areas, Wichita Theatre Organ, Inc., from its initial concert eight years ago, has put the chief emphasis on *musical* product in professional terms. Pricing of tickets, promotion, production, selection of artists and avoidance of too frequent public presentations are in accord with the standards which obtain in the other music fields. Even when competing events or/and bad weather have occurred on concert evenings, the audience never has been less than 1,200. The high majority of concerts through the years have drawn from 1,500 to 2,000 plus. WTO retains ownership of the organ while operating via a businesslike contract with Century II Center. All concerts for the public are in the evening, usually Saturday, giving people at a distance sufficient time for travel. That people drive and fly various distances to the concerts every year, in itself, speaks for itself. Early and late, alpha and omega, *Music* is the paramount consideration.

Appreciation of, and insistence on, adult musical fare by the sponsor.

Professionalism in planning, promotion and production.

Musicianship of the artists selected.

Wherever these are honored, no one needs to worry about theatre organ. You win the world to a musical instrument by its *music* . . . and by nothing less than, nothing other than, its music! □