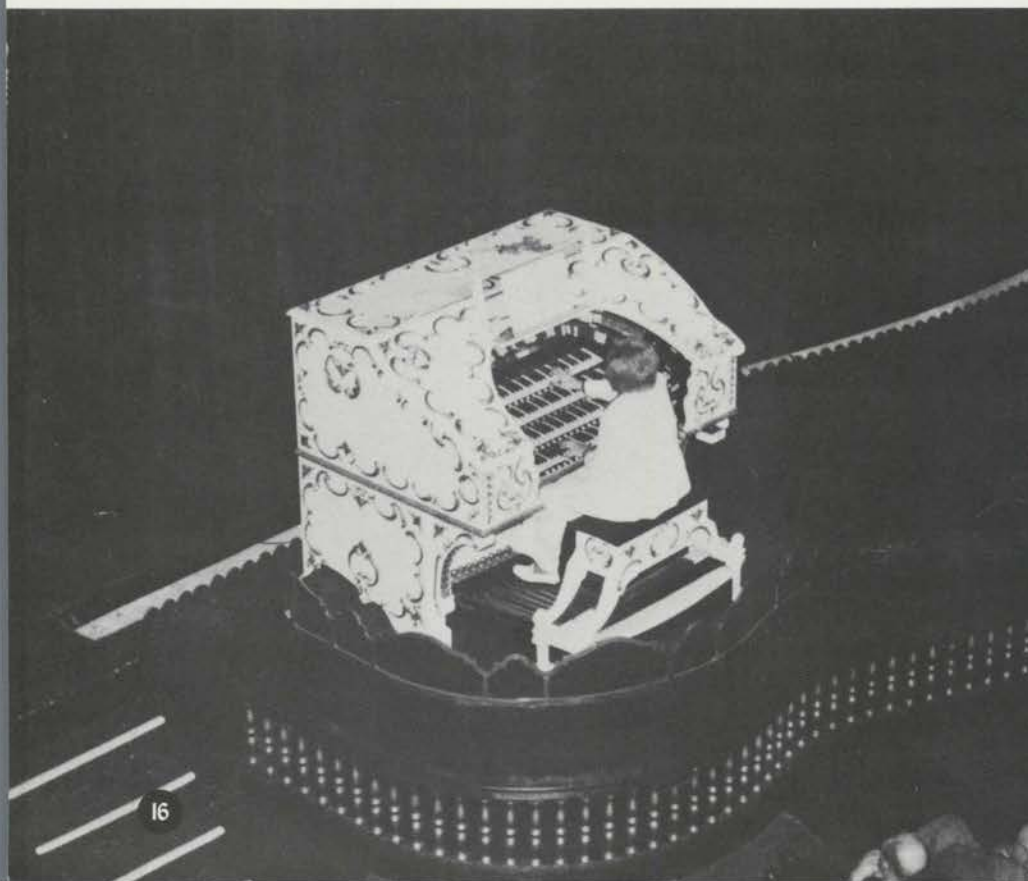




BARBARA GOES “PIPES”

by Elmer Fubb
Photos: Roy Soughan



On January 31, 1981, a new theatre organ career was launched. Barbara Sellers, who has earned a very comfortable living playing a plug-in in snazzy cocktail bars in the Chicago area, decided there had to be something more and approached CATOE member Dick Sklenar regarding pipe organ practice possibilities. Dick arranged for her to have a go at several area instruments, including the now safe Chicago Theatre 4/29 Wurlitzer. She liked what she heard and wondered whether there might not be room for one more gal organist in the concert spotlight. Barbara is a “doer” and the possibility of a side career on pipes wouldn’t go away. So she gave in to it. Not fully confident yet, she decided against a possible “bomb” in her own backyard, and sought an engagement out of town. She visited Fort Wayne and got permission to try the carefully nurtured 4/15 Page in the Embassy Theatre. She liked it immediately. What a place to start her pipe organ career! She found the Embassy Theatre Foundation and organ crew amenable, and a concert was set up for late January. Barbara returned to her home near Chicago figuring she could have a nice quiet premiere pipe concert. But no! Being a bit new to and naive about pipe hobby matters, Barbara didn’t realize she had ventured into a nest of the most fanatic pipe enthusiasts outside of ATOS. This would be no easy, remote concert. When she did learn, it was too late to back out, so she plunged in, determined to do her darndest.

There were a number of practice sessions and then came concert night. Everything was in readiness; the theatre was immaculate and the organ in top shape. She read her name in big letters on the marquee. Just before showtime she received an encouraging phone call from Billy Nalle. Dick Sklenar was there to introduce her. Costumed in a stunning white pants suit, she mounted the bench and pushed the lift button and went up into the spotlight in a burst of energetic music.

Later she said she had better control of those opening night nerves than she had counted on, especially after she discovered that she had not

◀ The 4/15 Page console and Barbara make a pretty picture in the spotlight.



switched the swell pedals to "General" and the Solo Chamber wasn't swelling. A few numbers into the program she was fully at ease and her monitor in the audience was making encouraging signals. Incidentally, that monitor was none other than 81-year-old Edna Sellers, Barbara's organist mom.

How did she do on her initial TO excursion before an audience of 600?

Bob Goldstine, who often speaks for the Embassy Theatre Foundation, the parent organization, said, "... she played very well. She was a little ill-at-ease at first but she relaxed after the first few numbers. I think she sounds very much like Buddy Cole — exceptionally fine harmony."

From the first, Barbara Sellers had little chance of realizing the "remote" concert she had anticipated. For example, fans came from as far as Connecticut and Pennsylvania. A busload of 50 munched in from Chicago, and more than 20 from Indian-



Tired but happy, Barbara poses with her severest critic, her mother Edna, who was a prominent theatre and radio organist during the "Golden Era."

apolis. She's just too well known on account of her club work.

As we went to press Barbara still hadn't heard her tapes of the concert, so she hasn't been able to evaluate her initial effort. But as she plays requests for her fans at the Glenview Country Club on her trusty X66, we'll wager she's thinking about her next one — on pipes! □

◀ Barbara pauses briefly to accommodate photographer Roy Soughan. By now any "butterflies" had departed and she was at ease at the console.

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- October 29, 1980 Taylor University, Upland, Indiana
- October 30, 1980 Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
- October 31, 1980 Ohio Theatre, Columbus, Ohio
- November 3-17, 1980 EUROPEAN CONCERT TOUR
- November 29, 1980 Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
- November 30, 1980 ATOS CONVENTION — Chicago Theatre, Illinois
- December 2, 1980 Keyboard Concerts, Laguna Hills, California
- December 6, 1980 California Theatre, San Diego, California
- December 14, 1980 Golden Bear Playhouse, Sacramento, California
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- February 6, 1981 United Christian Center, Columbus, Ohio
- February 14, 1981 Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
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