

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 12¢ postcard to get the message to the VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can spare a 18¢ stamp, please include a contrasty black and white photo which need not be returned.

On a recent boat trip down the Mississippi, ATOSer Frank Killinger went to the wheelhouse to do some "Mark Twaining" with the Delta Queen's pilot. He discovered the pilot to be a 6' 2" gal named Lexie Palmore, who turned out to be a theatre organ buff despite that roaring steam calliope aboard. Incidentally, Frank has moved his Doric Records operation to Vacaville, Calif. 95696. Box 877, should you want to write Doric.

Old timers in radio will recall the daily schedule listing an "organ fill" to avoid silence when nothing else was scheduled, or to fill with music should transmission lines fail. For example, for years (during the '30s) CBS radio in New York had an organist on duty at strategic hours just to play "organ fills." The term had been almost forgotten when Los Angeles a.m. comics Lohman and Barkley revived it on their KFI wakeup show, but with a difference. They in-

vented a personality they call "Organ Phil" who they awake from deep slumber to amble over to the imaginary console and play while they prepare their next bit. Trouble is, "Phil" is never fully awake and his playing doesn't just leave something to be desired, it's plain awful, loaded with goofs and fumbled by hands that just won't keep in sync. Invariably, the comics stop "Phil" in mid tune so they can remove their hands from their ears.

"Organ Phil" is, in reality, George Wright via tape, doing his worst.

The artistry and personal magnetism which surround Mr. Flicker Fingers, Gaylord Carter, combined to insure a most successful second annual silent film festival, sponsored by the Rochester Theatre Organ Society March 20th-22nd. The event was held in the 400-seat Eisenhart Auditorium, home of the Society's 3/8 Wurlitzer. A different program was presented each day with films of Laurel & Hardy, Harold Lloyd, Larry Semon, W.C. Fields, Monty Banks, and winding up with a Colleen Moore feature, *Ella Cinders*. Interspersed was a workshop in which Gaylord explained the intricacies of silent movie organ accompaniment, using the Matt Sennett one-reeler *Lizzies of the Field*.

Gaylord has been getting exposure in his home area, too. On April 26th, KFAC radio (the Los Angeles classical music station) devoted an unprecedented one hour show to Gaylord and his recordings. Heard were excerpts from Gaylord's scores for *Old*



Gaylord as Wotan during the screening of a Wagnerian film classic. (Tony Francis Photo)

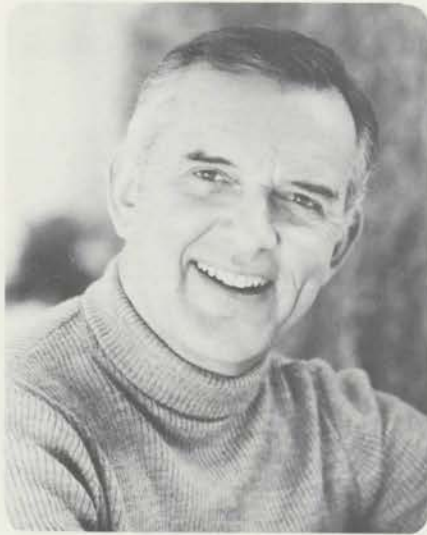
Ironsides, Ben Hur and The Covered Wagon, all Carter staples. During the interview he mentioned that he had started playing for silents at the Saville Theatre in Inglewood (near L.A.) and that somehow comedian Harold Lloyd had gotten wind of the Carter skills and had recommended him to Frank Newman, manager of the swank downtown Los Angeles Million Dollar Theatre. Naturally, Gaylord passed the audition with flying colors, but had second thoughts when he was required to play overtures with the house orchestra.

He said, "Leo Forbestein was an exacting conductor, and I was worried about my lack of academic training." But manager Newman was more easily satisfied. He advised Gaylord. "Don't annoy anyone — just perfume the air with music." Gaylord has been doing just that ever since.

Update: Latest word from the Lockport (N.Y.) Theatre Organ Society is that work is progressing steadily on the pipe organ being installed in the Senior Citizens Center there. The original 2/6 relay has been replaced by one able to handle a 10-rank instrument. A pedal relay will be an added plus. Meanwhile Greg Gurtner, who has performed at consoles along the Niagara Frontier, provides programs on electronics.

From New Hampshire, Ralph Hookway writes about a memory-tweaking tune heard on Harry Koenig's current "At the Mighty Wurlitzer" recording. One tune our reviewer couldn't place was the "Frat March," which just happens to be a Hookway favorite: "I have a bit of love for, and a little information about the old march. It was written by John F. Barth and copyrighted in 1910 by the Sam Fox Publishing Co. of Cleveland "Frat" was heard by moviegoers as the fast-paced background to the football clips seen in many an old Fox Movietone News reel. Usually the Trio was used. The march can still be heard on occasion, should you be driving through our town (Mirror Lake) while I'm trying to imitate the sound of that newsreel!"

We can empathize with Mr. Hookway. We, too, have a "thing" for an



Tom Hatten. He upset a former cowboy star.

old railroad march, "The Midnight Flyer," which rests in oblivion despite an arrangement by E.T. Paull. And what ever became of Paull's "A Signal From Mars?"



A clipping from the Tampa Tribune reveals that a hitch has developed in city plans to re-install the 1700-pipe Wurlitzer back in the Tampa Theatre from which it was removed to storage in 1956. Sparkers of the project are former theatre organist Ewell Stanford, his son, Charles, and Seth Evers, of the 40-member Central Florida Theatre Organ Society. They have donated over 3,000 hours toward restoring the Wurlt to date. It has been almost completely rebuilt but the city's tightened budget doesn't allow further expenditures for the installation plus some new parts (PVC conductor, console cable and switches). They need 10 grand to complete the job. Any donors? It could be a tax write off.



Update: Gordon Madison, ATOS member from California, reports that he and his wife are now the owners of the 1000-seat Capitol Theatre in Chambersburg, Pa. Recently he spent a week inspecting his newly acquired property, and with the help of Bob Eyer, a local organist and technician, heard a respectable sound coming from the 3/15 Moller (original installation). Eyer, with the help of Peter Daniels of the Moller Organ Co., had partially restored the

instrument in 1973. Plans call for the organ's full restoration this summer, after which it will be played nightly before and after movies, as well as for special shows and concerts. The Madisons will relocate in Chambersburg as soon as suitable employment is found.



Would you believe that a nice gal like Helen Dell got a guy in trouble? The man was KTLA-TV's classic movie jockey, Tom Hatten. Tom interviewed Helen on the Los Angeles station which is owned by cowboy star-turned-industrialist, Gene Autry. As fate would have it, Gene also owns the Angels baseball team, and Tom was interviewing the rival Dodgers organist on boss Gene's station! There were deep rumblings but an explosion was averted when Tom hastily set up an interview with Angels' announcer, Dick Enberg and his son.

Hatten uses pipe organ recordings frequently on the air between stanzas of "Popeye" and "Betty Boop." He admits that he's a big fan of the theatre organ, and adds, "I'm sorry I wasn't old enough to be a moviegoer in its heyday."



Jack Skelly, ex-New York Paramount organist, notes that "all organists who opened the Paramount, Roxy and Radio City Music Hall are in the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame, except Egon Putz. Probably because he was never billed. Yet, he was on the Paramount staff for almost eight years. Occasionally, there was an organ concert there at 5:15 p.m. if the show were short. I once heard him do a beautiful rendition of "Liebestraum" during one of these concerts. Putz was initially a pianist before his organ career. So much for the "forgotten organist."



From South Africa, Chairman Arthur Hovis, of the T.O. Society of Johannesburg, tells about the first theatre organ in South Africa. It was a 2/6 Estey installed in 1930 in Durban's 800-seat Prince's Theatre. It was opened by the late Willi Böhm, an Austro-Hungarian professor who had once been music tutor to the House of Hapsburg royalty. The Estey wasn't in the Prince's theatre



Helen Dell. A Dodger on the Angels' radio station.

very long; its conservative tonalities couldn't compete with the new Wurlitzer in the nearby Metro Theatre, so it was sold.

It's rather strange that South Africa, then a part of the British Empire, imported all of its theatre organs from the USA. Most were Wurlitzers.



When Bob Libbin married organist Marilyn, he sensed a touch of *deja vu*. Something about her interests and playing style struck a long ago chord. Was she actually a reincarnation? No, she in no way resembled his grandfather, Abraham, yet there was a connection. As he recalled, Abe was a peddler who worked out of a truck. What did he sell? Bob did more digging and suddenly recalled that grandpa Abe sold musical instruments. What kind? Slowly the truth struck him like a flash in the pan; Abe sold pipe organs. He was a salesman for the Wurlitzer Co., then headquartered in Cincinnati. Pipe organs sold from a truck? Yes, older residents recalled that Abe had a truck with a small pipe organ in it which he drove around to serenade prospective customers. When Wurlitzer moved to North Tonawanda, Abe aimed his musical vehicle in that direction and Cincinnatians were no longer serenaded with the dulcet wheeps of Abe's whistle-bearing van.

Marilyn thinks about this as she goes to work each morning — to the Wurlitzer Music Store in Cincinnati, which is just down the street from Station WKRP.

"Gee, I married a mobile organ salesman's grandson. Is there some *deja vu* involved?" she mumbles in her bubbly style, then disappears through a door with "Wurlitzer" in large letters above it.



In the Feb./March column we were trying to track down an organ in a restaurant in the Scranton/Wilke-Barre area. ATOSer L.C. Merrifield thinks it may be a large Kimball in a Duryea, Pa. private club. Merrifield visited the place but reports it's no longer a restaurant and the organ is playable but not used. The building is now known as The Cinema Club.



Fate sometimes works in strange ways. In fact, the principals did not meet until 30 years after the coincidence. The scene is occupied Vienna, Austria, during the "quadripartite" division of the city in the mid-'40s into U.S., British, French and Russian-controlled "zones." A British Army organ buff sought out pipes as soon as his duties permitted. The Apollo theatre was in the British Zone but the 2/8 Christie, complete with console lift, was in terrible shape, although played solo by Alfred Severin for Austrian shows. Then Bill Tippers learned about a



Bill Tippers plays the Vienna Scala Theatre Kilgen (1947).

better unit organ, a 3/13 Kilgen, in the Scala Theatre in the Russian Zone. Bill got permission to play it and had a great time until he became an international incident; the Russians wanted him to play the Red National Anthem at a show for the Red Zone brass, and dressed as a civilian. "No way" exploded Bill's commanding Colonel. Stalemate! Bill was told to keep away from the Scala, and that was that.

At the same time, in the U.S. Zone an army sergeant also sought pipes. Your Vox Popper yearned for the feel of a theatre organ to relieve dull occupation army duties. He found a 3/11 Welte, well-maintained, on the scoring stage of the Wienfilm Studios, Austria's Hollywood. A



Vox Popper Stu Green at the Wienfilm scoring stage Welte in 1946.

broadcast series was open to the sergeant if the organ would be available. The Studio people were willing but there was one catch — the studio building was about 200 feet into the Russian Zone. But the broadcasts materialized anyway; by taping during the wee hours. The Russians never caught on. The Welte had no Tibia but the other voices were about the same as on U.S. organs, and well-unified.

The Yank and Britisher with similar interests were entirely unaware of one another's parallel Austrian adventures until they met in Chicago during the 1977 ATOS Convention.



Update: Recently we passed on a story about an Atlanta radio station and the ATOS Chapter combining efforts toward getting an organ program on the ether. Jesse Waller Jr. informs us that our item has netted the proposed program several organ recordings. The plan is to present both commercial recordings and tapings made locally on a 4/17 Page organ. Although the project is momentarily in low gear, the principals are readying a sample program and outlines for 13 additional half hour presentations, according to Waller.



Welcome back to the organ hobby Sylvan Ketterman, organ dealer, innovator and gadgeteer, of Muncie, Indiana. Sylvan dropped out of the hobby a few years ago but he's back now and has been catching up on things organwise by reading several years of back issues of THEATRE ORGAN magazine. He's amazed at the many developments. He has some stories to tell, too, and you readers will be first to know.



A couple of letter writers want to know whether organist Eddie Dunstedter and composer-arranger Ferde Grofé scored any films. Eddie scored several with original music, notably the sci-fi flick, *Donovan's Brain* which starred Lew Ayres. Perhaps his best remembered film work was as a performer with the Selznick studio orchestra which played Franz Waxman's *Rebecca* score (1939). Eddie soloed the eerie "Rebecca" theme on a Novachord. Ferde Grofé,



Eddie Dunstedter.

famous for his descriptive suites picturing Americana ("Tabloid," "Metropolis," "Mississippi," "Knut Rockne" and "Grand Canyon"), scored the 1950s sci-fi thriller, *Rocket Ship X-M*, with Lloyd Bridges, Osa Massen and Noah Beery. Music for the scenes on Mars is spine tingling. It's currently being seen on late night television.



Speaking of TV, a familiar name appeared among the credits for the TV movie, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. The script was credited to — are you ready? — Rudolph Wurlitzer.



Organist Bill Wright likes to trace the movement of organs he has

known over the years. His latest detective work concerns a 2/4 Robert Morton originally installed in the Los Angeles Ambassador Hotel during the '20s. He lost track of it after its removal from the hotel in the '30s, but learned later that it had gone through several owners. It surfaced next when purchased by Bob Olson, a night club entertainer, who installed it in the Hillcrest restaurant in Pasadena. Bill recalls the installation very well. Olson was an experimenter and decided to bottle up the pipework in a chamber with no swell shutters. Instead he "miked" the music and fed it to the club area by loudspeakers. Bill, who used to sub for Olson one night a week, recalls that the musical results left much to be desired. By then the little Morton was in a beat condition. But help was to come in the form of two organ experts, Eddie Cleveland and Peter Crotty. We are happy to report that the completely refurbished organ has now found a good home in the residence of one of Bill's students, Jo Anne Albrecht in San Marino, Calif. (near L.A.) Another one saved!



The *Gazette Marion* (Cedar Rapids Section) ran an April 5th story about organ buff Howard Burton doing something he loves to do — putting an organ into a theatre. It's a 2/10 horseshoe Kilgen which Burton bought from a church. He made a deal with a friend who owns the Garden Theatre; he would install the organ in the theatre if he could play intermissions and concerts.

They decided that the best spot for the organ would be the balcony, 79-year-old Burton, working with his wife, Dorothy, got the instrument playing in 15 months, with time off to recover from an illness.

Howard Burton is no stranger to these pages; we have run many articles about the man with so much energy when it comes to organs. He has undertaken seven such installation projects over the years. He started playing for silent movies in 1923, and still likes nothing better than to play his favorites on pipes. The *Gazette* photos show a trim 1928 horseshoe console with not too much unification (Kilgen often used couplers instead), and two shots of the chamber. The installation is neat and orderly. The article didn't state whether the Kilgen was designed originally as a church or theatre organ, but with Howard Burton in charge we'll wager it sounds theatrical now.



Here and There: Billy Nalle, whose excursion featuring organ and drums was on May 9th, informs us that the Wichita Wurlitzer is acquiring a 32' Bourdon, thus upping the size to a 4/38 . . . Ashley Miller, after a round of concerts in the eastern USA, took off for some April/May recitals "down under." Billy Wright vacationed with wife, Irene, in Hawaii taking time off from his Paramount (Calif.) ice skating rink job at the Wurlitzer . . . From Canada, Jim Lahay informs us that the Toronto Theatre Organ Society cele-



Jo Anne's organ chamber. The removed panel reveals the regulators beneath the pipework.



Jo Anne Albrecht at her much traveled 2/4 Robert Morton.

DINNY'S COLYUM

as
transcribed
by
Del Castillo



Organs has been round for more than 2 thousands of years, yet it seems like they is always gettin there teeth kicked in like. Maybe thats because they is so many different kinds. One of the first ones back in BC was called a Discobolus or some such name on account it was a water organ that got power from a water tank. Then a lot later they was the great big pipe organs in the churches, but in the little churches they was little organs that had to be pumped by hand pervided the pumper dint fall asleep in the sermon. And then later

brated its seventh anniversary with a concert played by Craig Stevens, 21-year-old Syracuse, N.Y. organist, at the Casa Loma Castle 4/19 Wurli . . . Organist Shirley Hannum, in Los Angeles with hubby Alan Keiter, visited the Koons' Motorcycle Shop for an open console session and received one of the few standing ovations available in that informal atmosphere. We don't know whether she knew "How Great Thou Art" was the late Joe Koons' favorite hymn but her performance of it brought the audience to a standing position accompanied by vigorous palm beating. Shirley sure looked surprised, recalls Bob Hill . . . On April 11th, Mike Ohman deserted his very successful Reseda, Calif. pizza operation for one night to play a shared concert at San Gabriel auditorium. The alternate feature was a male chorus. Consensus was that the audience preferred Mike at the 3/16 . . . Glen Hough is playing intermissions and accompanying classic silents on the 3/37 hybrid at the Marietta (Pa.) Theatre, reports Bob Wilkinson . . . The *Motor City Blower* reports that the chapter's March "4th Sunday" concert was

on they was the theayter organs wich was called Mitey Wurlitzers with a lot of added noises like drums and simbols and like that there. And of course they was the little parlor organs that was pumped by the feet. And then finely they was the home electric organs that we got today with more gimmicks on them than you can shake a stick at as they say.

So the pipe organ peepul they look down on the electric organ peepul and so do the musick criticks. And whenever they is a organ part called for in a simfony concert in a place they is no pipe organ, why then they bring in a electric organ and the criticks they always say what a monstrussity it is. We got a critick here in LA name of Marvin Boonhammer who is on Mrs. Chandler's paper the LA Times, and he gets almost as mad about electric organs as he use to about Mr. Zoobin Meyta. It got so bad that Mr. Meyta he finally moved to NY to be the leader of the Fill Harmonic orchestra there because Mr. Boonhammer was always needlin him here when he was the leader of the LA Fill Harmonic in the Pavillion at the Musick Center. Only Mr.

played on the Royal Oak Theatre's Barton by Scott Smith, who displayed a distinctive "big band" style . . . Frank Cimmino played for New York Chapterites at the Beacon Theatre's 4/19 Wurlitzer on March 29th . . . A few years ago a 2/9 Wurli, installed in a steel tubing warehouse near Los Angeles, was often heard in concert. After the death of owner Chuck Baker it was sold to Bonnie Carette who has it perking in her Palm Springs, Calif., home. Bonnie stages concerts for audiences of invited guests. A recent one was played by Candi Carley. Bonnie also owns the 4/15 Robert Morton removed from the Carl Greer Inn, Sacramento, but it's too large for her home . . . Famed Sigmund Krumbold, who cued the silent films while Crawford played the spotlight solos at the Times Square Paramount, is alive and well and living in retirement in Florida . . . 16-year-old Chris Elliott informs us that he won the \$300 LA Chapter Scholarship on May 3rd. Judges were Ann Leaf, Gordon Kibbee and Bob Trousedale. The competition instrument was Marguerite Henderson's 2/11 residence Wurlitzer. □

Boonhammer always had to call it the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on account he worked for the LA Times.

Of course they reely aint many orchestra peaces that use the organ on account a organ is pretty much an orchestra all by itself. Did you ever think that the organ like the piano is the only orchestra instrooment that you cant carry around by yourself. I always thought if I was good enough to be a orchestra player I would pick out the piccolo wich you can just put in your brest pocket and forget about it. Why even base players and harp players they can carry there instrooments in a station wagon like. Violin players can just put there violins in a neat little case to carry by hand unless they is gangsters who carry machine guns in them. I know they do that because I seen it in movies about the mob as they say.

Somethin else I bet you never thought of is that the organ soloist and the conductor is the only performers that play with there backs to the audience. A guy may not be good lookin but its better to look at his face than the back of his head. Of course it aint quite that bad becuse if you are lookin at a organ soloist on the stage youre probibly lookin mostly at his feet and wonderin how he can hit all them right notes with both feet when you cant even hit a couple of notes with just your left foot. But of course if you are just playin for the fun of it why you dont care if you hit the rite notes or not.

Well I guess that is about all I know about the organ. Maybe if I played better I could tell you more about it but until I find out what all them stops are with the funny names why I better shut up. □

Closing Chord

Don B. Cole, age 63, passed away at his home in Hudson, Florida, on December 28, 1980, following a heart attack.

Don, along with his wife, Alleen, Riedel West and Jay Mitchell were the founders of the Alabama Chapter. Don was very active in the chapter, and served on the work crew to restore the Alabama Wurlitzer until their move to Florida in July, 1979. □