

With the
Unaffiliated
Clubs
Lloyd E. Klos

Southeastern New England Theatre Organ Society (SENETOS) — Providence, Rhode Island

The Southeastern New England Theatre Organ Society is becoming one of the most active of the new clubs. This is attributable to a couple of installation projects which show much promise.

The first is our 2/8 Marr & Colton with Symphonic Registrator being readied in the Jane Pickens Theatre in Newport, Rhode Island. Formerly in the Capitol Theatre in New London, Connecticut, all 40 SR stops are functioning. We were able to trace the factory wiring to accomplish this. In over 400 wiring connections there was only one broken wire, which is most remarkable as the device had not been used for almost 50 years. Many of the stops are unique but very beautiful.

The SR was a device to help inept organists more easily register for varying moods in the silent films. Not many were built and as far as we know, this is the only one with original wiring still intact. We hope to have Rosa Rio play the dedicatory program, as she was one of those who played it in its initial location in New London.

In February, I was fortunate to be invited by Lincoln Pratt, Bill Hansen and Gary Hanson to see the progress on the 5/21 Wurlitzer installation in the Ocean State Performing Arts Center in Providence, Rhode Island. The console is in place on an elevator, relays are in a room off the left chamber, blower in place in the basement and both chambers replastered and repainted — a truly beautiful job. Bill Hansen, who hopes to have the instrument playing in May, is very

knowledgeable in the Wurlitzer art. He was chosen to work on the Chicago Theatre's 4/29 Wurlitzer for George Wright's direct-to-disc recordings a few years ago.

The February 14 meeting of the Society was held at the Pickens Theatre. Following the business meeting and a raffle of prizes, open console featured the artistry of Herb Worters, Carmine Broccoli, Jack Moody, Arthur Beauchemine, Linn Murdoch, John Pallini and the writer. John really surprised and pleased with his interpretations of "How High the Moon" and a *Fiddler on the Roof* medley. His studies with his Connecticut organ teacher are proving very beneficial to his stylings.

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RTOS



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Rochester Theatre Organ Society (RTOS) — Rochester, New York

Making his first RTOS appearance, Father Jim Miller performed at the Auditorium Theatre's Wurlitzer on February 19. He describes himself as a "Homiletic Windbag," and one who labeled him an "Ecclesiastical Clown," simply because of his penchant for constantly laughing at his own jokes and comments. However, he does render some listenable music, and the silence of the house was deafening when Father Jim played touching religious themes. A standing ovation at the end was his reward.

On March 19 Lew Williams played his initial RTOS concert. Fortified by a considerable background in classical music, the young man's program was largely of the soft, slow variety with some classical selections infused. His fine rendition of the Crawford 1926 recording of "Valencia" brought back memories of when practically every home had a copy on record or sheet music. It was the first instrumental recording which sold

over a million copies.

Continuing its "Weekend With Two Wurlitzers," the club's Third Annual Silent Film Festival was held on March 20 and 21 at the Eisenhart Auditorium, with veteran theatre organists Doc Bebko and Dean Robinson doing the honors on the 3/8 Wurlitzer for two silent comedy programs. Doc was in rare form as he accompanied films of W. C. Fields and Harry Langdon, plus the 1960 classic *When Comedy Was King*, a kaleidoscope of clips containing the antics of over 20 comedians from 1914 to 1928. On the following afternoon, Dean accompanied films of Laurel & Hardy, Charlie Chase, Ben Turpin, Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton. The audience included a liberal sprinkling of youngsters. Though no longer employed as a restaurant organist, Dean Robinson still can work up a storm, and his audience enthusiastically responded.

On April 17 we heard the artistry of John Seng at the Auditorium. Noted for his modern stylings, the high point was reached in the second half with his rendition of the "1812 Overture." Cannon and bell sounds were fed into the public-address system for a most effective background. The program was a credit to John, as the bulk of his time is involved with arranging for TV movies and the composing of TV commercials.

At intermission, the 1981 Honorary Member plaque was presented to former RTOS Board member Donald S. Hall, by RTOS prexy Stuart Moffatt. Don served several years as program chairman and on the RTOS Board, and it was he who laid the groundwork prior to the installation of the Wurlitzer in Eisenhart Auditorium.

For over a year, a crew under Ken Veneron has labored assiduously to restore the 4/70 Aeolian organ in the George Eastman House, now a world-renowned museum of photography. On April 19, with the entire RTOS Board as guests, a special program was presented to show the progress on the organ's rehabilitation. Eastman School student Dave Peckham presented a short recital. First selection was Gounod's "March Romaine," reputed to be Mr. Eastman's favorite composition and selected by him as his funeral march. The industrialist died in 1932.

LLOYD E. KLOS

DTOS

DICKINSON THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

(DTOS) — Wilmington, Delaware

February brought the annual banquet which featured Father Bill Biebel at our 3/28 Kimball. Only partly a formal concert, the artist had people literally dancing in the aisles in the last half. DTOS, in accordance with custom, recognized two "Members of the Year" who have given outstanding service. For 1982, they are Paul and Aggie Pringle, who have served as ticket chairmen for the past four years.

The club had a "happening" with Dick Smith on March 13. Returning for his tenth visit, Dick is one of our most requested artists, and regardless of one's musical tastes, there is always a "pleaser" in his program as reflected by the standing ovation he inevitably receives here. As customary, Dick returned to the console after the concert, playing his favorites and requests. Breakfast was served for over 200 starting at 1:30 a.m. When the affair ended at 4 a.m., 65 persons still remained!

CONNIE MEAD

Niagara Frontier Theatre Organ Society

(NFTOS) — Buffalo, NY

On February 18 the 1200-seat Riviera Theatre in North Tonawanda, New York, was purchased by Buffalo theatre impresario Edward H. Bebko. If the last name sounds familiar, he is the son of the area's leading theatre organist, Doc Bebko (Eddie Baker). The Riviera boasts a 3/20 Wurlitzer and it is Edward's aim to encourage use of the instrument in as many programs as are practicable. It is played on Friday and Saturday evenings as a lead-in to the movies, with Doc Bebko one of those displaying their musical talents. Live entertainment, stage shows, etc., will be a part of the house's new policy.

NFTOS president Randy Piazza and the new theatre owner are in hearty agreement on the use of the Wurlitzer, and the Society will continue its one-a-month program featuring organists on the circuit.

LLOYD E. KLOS

Empire State

theatre and musical instrument museum

Syracuse, New York

Our February program was played by Rob Calcaterra, featured at Radio City Music Hall. In addition to his solo work, he presented a short silent movie and sing-along. In March, we presented Andy Kasparian, organist at Albany's Market Street Music Hall. Both played fine programs and attendance was good, considering the shortage of parking because of other events on the nearby State Fairgrounds.

Our 3/11 Wurlitzer gets a good share of compliments from artists and audiences, owing to the tender loving care it gets from Ray Linnertz and Dave Soergel. During the past winter, our Wednesday night crew was augmented by Fred Vaeth, Carl Shea and the writer. We hope with the advent of spring, the crew will be larger.

It has become necessary to raise our dues to \$20 per couple, and for those living more than 35 miles from Syracuse, \$12. Membership runs one year from the date of joining. At-the-door ticket price is \$3.50 for adults, chil-

dren \$1.

Our Wurlitzer (formerly in RKO Keith's Theatre) is the only theatre pipe organ playing in a public location in the Syracuse area. The Landmark Theatre (formerly Loew's State and now a performing arts center) had a 4/20 Wurlitzer which was removed in 1965 by an organ broker and sold to a pizza parlor owner in California. It is still in storage. The Landmark people have never given up hope that someday a pipe organ will again grace the house. Meanwhile, when a silent movie is run, Ron Squires, Director of Operations, lends his three-manual Allen. The speakers are located in the chambers, with the console on the old Wurlitzer's elevator.

During the four-day run of *Napoleon*, the Allen was played by Elizabeth Chalupka, with the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra. In another program, George Decker played an excellent accompaniment to *Phantom of the Opera*.

Syracuse's well-known veteran theatre organist, Luella Wickham (Wicky), who played hundreds of silent movies and concerts, was a guest of the Landmark at one of the "Phantom" shows. Also interviewed by a TV news team, she had a most enjoyable evening. Many members of ATOS will remember Luella, as she attended most of the National Conventions through 1977.

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