

PIPES &

Personalities

Seminar For Sports Stadium Organists

In July, tentatively at All-Star Baseball Game time, Rochester's Eastman School of Music will hold the first-ever seminar for sports stadium organists. The school's director, Robert Freeman, is an avid baseball fan, which probably accounts for the revolutionary venture. Those already signed up include Nancy Faust of Chicago's White Sox and Vince Lascheid of Pittsburgh's Pirates. Some sessions will be held at Red Wing Silver Stadium, others at the Eastman School.

Wibbels Is Head Organist Of Pipe Organ Place

In early July, Mark and Ed Huffman of the Pipe Organ Place in Elkhart, Indiana, named Tom Wibbels as their Head Organist and Music Director. Since his appointment Tom and a technical crew have been busy reworking the 3/10 Barton organ in the restaurant.

The organ was first installed in 1929 at the Orpheum Theatre in

Green Bay, Wisconsin. In 1940 it was purchased by the Zion Lutheran Church in Monroe, Michigan. At the church the Kinura and theatrical percussions were removed and a Dulciana rank was added. In 1971, two Fort Wayne, Indiana, men bought the organ and it sat in storage until 1975 when the Village Inn Pizza Parlor purchased the Barton. Unfortunately, a month after opening, a car crashed into the restaurant and destroyed the pneumatic relay. The old system was then replaced by a solid-state system. In May of 1980 the organ was sold to the Huffmans for the Pipe Organ Place. They plan to enlarge the Barton to 24 ranks.

In addition to Wibbels' duties at the restaurant, he has been travelling and playing on the theatre organ circuit.

Don Thompson Retires From Toronto Organ Grinder

After seven years of playing five hours a night, five nights a week at Toronto's Organ Grinder restaurant, Don Thompson retired at the end of November and left for a lengthy period of sailing in the Caribbean. He plans to return to Toronto in the spring and by then will probably be itching to get back to work.

Not only has organist-researcher-writer, Dr. John Landon moved back to his Lexington, Kentucky, home, but he has also been reinstated as house organist at the Anderson (Indiana) Paramount. For a number of

weeks, management had discontinued organludes as part of its Saturday night programs. It was feared that the house might even go into the X-rated business. The ownership, however, had second thoughts and is continuing a family-oriented policy. Dr. Landon, the "Prince of the Page," has been playing the 3/7 instrument for 28 years. Incidentally, John has acquired a 3/7 Page from a theatre in Fremont, Ohio. It is identical to the one in the Anderson Paramount, and will replace the hybrid Wurlitzer which he has had for a number of years.

* * *

For 17 years the 3/8 Kimball in the Lansdowne (Pennsylvania) Theatre had been played weekly and for special concerts. According to Bill Greenwood, it hasn't been played for some time, because of water damage. The future of the theatre is dim. Bill has purchased and removed the organ, and says he has a good chance to install it in another theatre where it will again be heard by the public.

An American First — Enthusiasts Resist Temptation To Form Organization

For some months several members of the Organ Historical Society had thought of forming a Northern California-based chapter, but several O.H.S. old hands counseled going slowly — not making it official until real interest was proved. So, as the first issue of their newsletter puts it, a non-organization of friends mutually concerned with the preservation and appreciation of historic pipe organs (both classical and theatre) was formed.

There are no dues, no officers, no membership cards and no bylaws. Modest funds for printing and mailing the newsletter were donated by several non-patrons just for the fun of it. The anonymous non-president stated: "Let us try, first of all, to gain some pleasure from working together to promote preservation of treasures from the past. After all, there are only two reasons to get together: (1) enjoy sharing each other's knowledge; and (2) magnify our power to influence recognition and preservation of endangered instruments. Without lots of goodwill and good fun we will

L to R: Ed Huffman, Tom Wibbels, Mark Huffman.



never do much of anything."

The name of the non-organization is The Central Pacific Organ Preservationists, and the address is 3101 Twentieth Street, San Francisco, California 94110. Their phone is 415/647-5132. *Swell to Great* is the title of the newsletter to be published occasionally.

* * *

Ever hear of a theatre pipe organ whose sound came into the auditorium through a grille beneath the pedals? There was such an instrument, according to Doc Bebko who played it. It was a three-manual Wurlitzer-Morton in the studios of WWRL in Woodside, Long Island. "It was utterly fantastic to actually feel the vibrations as it was played. A fellow named Sampson from the Robert-Morton Co. installed it about 1935. He also worked on the five 'Wonder Mortons' in Loew's theatres in the New York-New Jersey area."

* * *

The status of the Shea's Buffalo Theatre and its 4/28 Wurlitzer has been hanging on lean times of late. High operating costs, including a \$20,000 heating bill, winter storm effects, etc., have helped produce a pessimistic outlook. We're told that things may be easing toward the optimistic side. Buffalo spokesmen say that the organ will definitely be playing in January 1983. A total of \$140,000 has been spent on the Wurlitzer's refurbishing, mostly tax money.

* * *

Those who will be visiting the New England area and desire a little organ music should check in at the Hammond Castle Museum in Gloucester, Massachusetts, to hear the 4/144 hybrid. Once-a-month silent films are shown on Friday evenings. According to ex-Boston Paramount organist Bob Legon, there are some Hope-Jones voices, such as Tibias and Tuba Sonora, with portions of the pedal semi-expressive. Choir, Great, Swell, Solo and floating reed chorus are expressive.

A portion of the admission charge goes toward organ repair and restoration. A combination of salt air and long usage have made releathering necessary. "The beautiful organ sounds blend in with the mystery and massiveness of the castle, large cliffs,

crashing surf, and chirping sea birds. It has all the characteristics of a genuine movie palace, yet in a Gothic setting."

On the way to the Hammond Castle stop at the Ocean State Performing Arts Center in Providence, Rhode Island. The former Loew's Providence Theatre on Weybosset Street is being likened to the New York Paramount by some. With crowds of over 2800, there is still good reverberation. The 5/21 ex-Marbro Chicago console is kept in the up position in the event of another hurricane. Several times hurricanes have struck the area in the past 45 years. The city also has a hurricane

barrier as protection against the tides of Narragansett Bay.

Unique Greeting for Robin Richmond

Robin Richmond, one of the finest British theatre organists and creator of the famed BBC radio series "The Organist Entertains," and his wife, Renee, landed at J.F.K. Airport in September to begin a series of concerts in the United States. The first concert was scheduled at the Trenton War Memorial, where he was to play the 3/16 Moller.

Pushing their way through Customs and the milling masses, Robin

peterson

SOLID STATE SYSTEMS FOR PIPE ORGAN

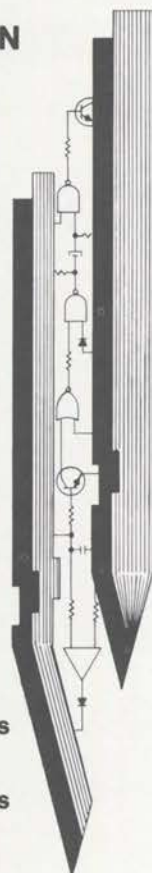
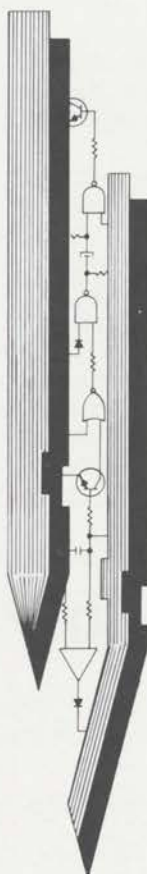
PRODUCTS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

- Digital Pipe Organ Player
- Solid State Swell Shade Operator
- Electronic Tuners
- Stop Action Magnets
- Electronic Pipe Valves
- Engraved Stop Tablets
- Chest Magnets
- Solid State Chime Relay
- Electronic Console Clock
- Solid State Switching System
- Console Cables & Main Cables
- Duo-Set Single & Quad Memory Combination Actions & Reversibles
- Electronic Low Note Reed and Flute Tone Generators
- Electronic Harp
- Organ Rectifier
- Dynatrem™ - Tremolo

Peterson Solid State Systems are the choice of major pipe organ builders across the U.S.

peterson

ELECTRO-MUSICAL PRODUCTS / WORTH, ILLINOIS 60482 312 / 388-3311





Robin Richmond at the 7/455 Midmer-Losh, Atlantic City Convention Hall, New Jersey.



Frank Olsen at the Odeon Leicester Square five-manual "Duchess" Compton organ. (John D. Sharp photo)

could only hope that the Garden State members would be able to find them. Suddenly his eyes lit up, followed by an enormous smile as he saw Michael Cipolletti and Joe Vanore standing there each holding up a large Tibia pipe.

Greetings were exchanged and travelling bags stowed away. The traffic was wall-to-wall and realizing that their train schedule could never be met, Joe suggested a side trip to the Beacon Theatre at 74th and Broadway where he is a crew member maintaining the 4/19 Wurlitzer. Robin delighted in playing the beautiful "Princess." Then he and Renee caught the next train to Trenton.

Robin had made one major request. He expressed the desire to play the world's largest pipe organ, the 7/455 Midmer-Losh in the Atlantic City Convention Hall. Bill Smith, crew chief of the Trenton War Memorial organ, made arrangements. The day after a most successful concert, Robin played the 7/455 monster and the 4/55 Kimball in the Grand Ballroom. The remainder of the day was spent touring the "Playboy" Casino and other attractions on the famous boardwalk of Atlantic City.

GINNY VANORE

* * *

Bill Floyd, busy as a bee, reports on two things in which he's interested. First is an updating on Richmond's Virginia Center for the Performing Arts (ex-Loew's). "There was much gloom and doom about the loss of sky in this atmospheric house. We are fortunate that the theatre has been saved with a \$6 million budget for renovation. When the lighting is retracted, the sky is intact; one can hardly distinguish the outlines. The retractable

light bay runs the entire width of the auditorium and is a marvel of engineering, as are the retractable speakers far above the proscenium. The computers which will control the pre-sets are installed backstage, making the system one of the most up-to-date in the theatre field.

"The organ lift is under construction, the orchestra lift is in. There will be a basement banquet-cafeteria as well as studios. The painters are in, and it is apparent that this will be a most flexible and functional theatre. The new swell shades are ready for installation and twelve regulators have been re-covered."

Between phases of work as described, Bill has concertized. The weekend of October 2 found him at Penn State Prison, playing a concert in the chapel. "The inmates were wonderful — and very appreciative. One said 'it's worth coming to prison, just to know these wonderful people,' meaning the superintendent and warden. The whole weekend was one Marge and I will never forget, and I'm

doing much thinking about prison situations. I firmly believe that music and the arts can contribute much in the way of true therapy."

* * *

Frank Olsen, Dean of Canadian cinema organists, spent the summer at his residence in Glasgow, Scotland. He had a whirlwind concert tour during September when he played organ concerts in Blackpool, Odeon Leicester Square, Bolton, Gosport (South Coast) and Louth. Olsen also played a concert at the Wurlitzer in East Kilbride, Scotland, on October 3 before returning to his home in Port Colborne, Ontario.

Organists Invited To Play In England

In a recent letter we were told that Turner's Musical Merry-Go-Round in Northampton (about 75 miles northwest of London) is extending an invitation to American artists to play the 3/19 Wurlitzer installed in the restaurant.

ATOS 1983 San Francisco National Convention

RECORD & BOOK SHOP

Are you interested in having your records or other items sold for you by ATOS at the 1983 convention?

For further information, write to:

Bill Reed, Manager
ATOS RECORD & BOOK SHOP
 2833 Enea Way
 Antioch, California 94509

The organ was originally in the Paramount, Newcastle upon Tyne. After removal from the theatre it was installed in the Kitchen Brothers auto showrooms at Diss, Norfolk, where it was recorded by Frank Olsen. It was completely overhauled prior to its installation at Turner's.

Any American professional organist who plans to be in England after April, and would like an engagement for a mid-week or weekend concert at Turner's is invited to write at once to Alan A. Ashton, 58 Lever House Lane, Leyland, Preston PR5/2XN, Lancashire, England. The letter should include a breakdown of the organist's fee and expenses.

Junchen Writing Project Expands

Early this year Dave Junchen began writing a book on "The Care and Feeding of Theatre Organs," to be published by Vestal Press. He planned to include some interesting previously unpublished historical material in the primarily technical book. After a little digging he came up with more historical material than could be included in the planned book. So, Junchen has broadened his writing project to include a two-volume work, "The Encyclopedia of American Theatre Organs."

The encyclopedia is to contain an historical sketch and opus list for each of the builders of organs for theatres — some 100 builders and a total of about 6800 organs in theatres. Of great help in making the opus lists complete was the cooperation of the makers of Spencer and Kinetic blowers, who allowed complete access to their files.

A major source of material was the archives of the Wurlitzer company. There he found a treasure trove — hundreds of rare photographs, many never before published; 1100 pages of correspondence between Robert Hope-Jones and Farney Wurlitzer; original drawings of organ parts, chamber layouts, pipe scales, and much more. He was allowed to break open locked ledger books, the keys for which had been lost for decades.

Junchen expects to have Volume I of the work ready by the time of the '83 convention. Volume II will be available about six months later, and the "Care and Feeding" book will follow soon thereafter.



Dave Junchen looks over some old Wurlitzer ledger books.

John Ledwon Plays for West Coast RCHM Christmas Show

A West Coast duplicate of the famous Radio City Music Hall "Christmas Spectacular" was presented during the holiday season in the huge (5800 seats) Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

ATOS Director John Ledwon was chosen to play the 4/73 Moller organ during the run of the show (59 performances). The organ was used alone before and after each show, and with the 35-piece orchestra during the overture and Nativity scene. John says that, although the organ is not unified, the overall sound is magnificent and quite theatrical, but the organ is extremely difficult to play because of the great distances between the console and the chambers located on both sides of one of the largest stages in the country.

Before and after each show crowds gathered around the console to examine it and ask questions about the instrument.

Mighty-Disney Deal Off

Ever since the rumor that the "mightiest Wurlitzer" might be sold by the mother company, ATOSers have been concerned about the future of the instrument assembled by the Wurlitzer Organ Company in a specially-built studio in De Kalb, Illinois, to exemplify the firm's historical best. Changing economic conditions have apparently forced a change of plan, which means that the 65-rank assembled pipe organ is endangered.

The rumor started that the Walt Disney organization might be inter-

ested in the representative instrument for installation in one of the Disney Epcot Center exhibits in Orlando, Florida, the new complex which deals with the future as well as with the past.

Several ATOSers attempted to promote the idea by sending prospectuses and copies of THEATRE ORGAN which dealt with the assembly of the instrument, along with offers to help in any way possible. These overtures resulted in requests for further information by the Disney Company, and the interested ATOSers held their collective breath.

Alas, to no avail. In a memo dated December 2, 1982, John Thompson, who handles talent selection as well as PR for Disney, stated "Unfortunately, the Disney Company is not able to acquire the Mightiest Wurlitzer." End of dream.

John Ledwon at the 4/73 Moller in the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium.





Organ console is backstage at the Granada Slough, and was projected by CCTV for members in the theatre. Byron Jones at the console and Dave Ross behind the camera.



Compere Norman Barfield chatting with Byron Jones prior to the concert at the Granada Slough.

London Chapter Uses Closed Circuit TV For Concert

Sunday, October 24 saw a unique experiment taking place when the London and South of England Chapter presented Byron Jones in concert on the 3/8 Wurlitzer at the Granada Cinema, Slough. It might seem that neither the word unique nor experiment would apply to such a venture, until one realizes that the console of this very fine organ is completely hidden behind the screen of the tripled cinema and it has not been heard in public for eleven years.

With the enthusiastic cooperation of the Granada management and particularly of the manager of the theatre, Mr. Simpson, and his staff, a system of closed circuit TV was installed, enabling the large audience in the cinema to see Byron's features and fingers at the console while reveling in the sounds of the instrument lovingly brought to tuneful excellence by Les and Len Rawle and their dedicated band of helpers.

Doubts about the feasibility of presenting a concert in such conditions were very soon resolved as the cinema resounded to the sounds of the mighty Wurlitzer once more. Byron says he found it strange at first playing to the beady eye of a TV camera, but soon settled to producing music which was enthusiastically acclaimed by the audience. The twin monitors of the closed circuit TV expertly operated by Dave Ross showed the console remarkably clearly, more clearly in fact than would normally be the case

watching a concert on stage from circle seats. There is no doubt that this idea has tremendous potential even with concerts under more usual conditions.

At the end of the concert the audience gave vociferous assent to the suggestion that another such event be

staged soon. The ATOS Chapter can be justifiably proud of its faith in putting on this concert. Thanks are due to Byron, to Granada, to Dave Ross and to all those who worked so hard to see that this beautiful instrument can be heard again in public.

NORMAN BARFIELD □

ATOS Committee Reports

YOUNG ORGANIST'S AWARD COMMITTEE REPORT

We are glad to report that the Young Organist's Award Committee is alive and working, and hopes to have a young organist to present at a future convention.

Committee members include: Walter Beaupre of Kingston, Rhode Island; Art Cox of Maplewood, New Jersey; Erle Renwick of Sudbury, Massachusetts; and Roy Sharp of Florham Park, New Jersey. National Director Allen Miller is also serving on the committee as liaison with the National Board. It would have been nice to have representation from a broader geographical area, but the ability to get interaction between committee members, to meet together and bounce ideas off each other and arrive at decisions which represent pooled judgment — this seemed to outweigh any advantages in having different geograph-

ical areas represented; a stance with which both Allen Miller and President Lois Segur concurred.

The committee has already come up with two major decisions: First, that a "young" organist for purposes of our competition is one who is not over 21 at the time of first appearance as winner at a national convention; second, that the way a chapter chooses a candidate is entirely up to the chapter. The only requirement for entry in the national competition is that a tape recording containing the specified music played by an organist within the age limitation and certified by the chapter to be a true and accurate recording be submitted by the specified date. Provision is also being made for submission of entries by ATOS members who do not belong to chapters, or who wish to sponsor a candidate independent of any chapter.

The committee is obtaining input from three full-time professional artists who are National directors, namely Lowell Ayars, Rex Koury and Ashley Miller. By the next issue, we expect to publish full details, and will also mail them as soon as available to Chapter Chairmen.

To assist chapters that might like to start planning for a chapter competition, see the article in this issue entitled "About Theatre Organ Competitions," which I hope will be of help to those chapters that have never staged one. Anyone requesting further information on this, or on any facet of our planning, is invited to write to me at 664 Litchfield Turnpike, Bethany, Connecticut 06525.

We hope that chapters and individual members will back this effort to bring young organists to know and love the mighty theatre pipe organ as we do, and to give deserving young organists a national forum in which to be heard.

Eleanor D. Weaver, *Chairman* □