

Dear Sir:

I noticed the letter from Donald Steadman in which he called the showing of *Robin Hood* "unrelated" to the purpose and activities of the ATOS.

What could be more related to the use of the theatre pipe organ and its past glory than that presentation of *Robin Hood*, as it would have been presented back in those days of organ accompanying a silent film?

I have done the same thing back in the '20s, as did Harry Rodgers, Lloyd Del Castillo, Leo Weber, Francis Cronin and Edith Lane, just to mention the Boston area theatre organists.

That Mr. Steadman did not notice the organ accompaniment to that silent film — the transitions so smoothly accomplished from organ to orchestra and back to organ — or the

brilliant work of the organist, is in reality a tribute to his playing for the picture. If the theatre organist did his job correctly, the audience was never supposed to be really conscious of the organist and what he was doing. The blend between the organ/orchestra music and the picture should have made the combination as of one, the presentation of the story perfectly welded, so nothing stood out from the other.

I can only guess that Mr. Steadman is a young man and did not realize how completely related that presentation really was.

Dropping attendance, I believe, is more attributable to skyrocketing hotel/motel room prices, transportation costs, and the inflated economy in general.

Yours sincerely,  
Col. Harry J. Jenkins

years), Gaylord pleased the devotees of this idiom by providing spirited music for a newsreel-type sequence, which showed personalities at the turn of the century; a chase sequence with W. C. Fields; clips from *Ben Hur* and *Intolerance*; and a zany episode, *One Week*, with the master silent comedian, Buster Keaton.

What surprised Carter followers were his delightful renditions of some Irving Berlin melodies, three themes from *Gone With the Wind*, and selections from *Chariots of Fire*, *For Your Eyes Only* and *Evita*. In all these the master organist employed the full resources of the organ, and for the quiet numbers, the beautiful Harp, Chrysoglott and strings. Simply breathtakingly beautiful!

A special plaque was presented to the organist at intermission, a salute from RTOS for his longevity as a professional entertainer, with the hope of another plaque on occasion of his 70th year in show business. Knowing the effervescence of his man, he will have no trouble in achieving this goal.

LLOYDE E. KLOS

*News from the*

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*Groups*

*Lloyd E. Klos*



*Lockport  
Theatre  
Organ  
Society*

(LTOS) — Lockport, New York  
716/439-6643

The Society's fourth concert of the season was held at the Senior Citizens Center on December 12. The artist was Greg Curtner from Amherst, New York. He is quite familiar with the 2/6 Wurlitzer, having contributed many weekends as part of the work party which installed the organ. His program included works by Romberg and Debussy, plus singable-danceable numbers. A sing-along of Christmas music was a part of the well-received

event before a full house.

The Society, according to its energetic president, Harold Le Valley, reports that the search for a larger blower was successful, and once a bad bearing has been replaced, two ranks as called for in the original specs will be added. When this has been accomplished the organ will be officially dedicated early in the year.

LLOYDE E. KLOS

## RTOS



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

**Rochester Theater Organ Society  
(RTOS) — Rochester, New York  
716/ 266-8251**

Gaylord Carter and rare vintage wines have one great thing in common — they improve with age. This was most evident during his fifth RTOS appearance on October 23. The 77-year-old organist, who looks younger than 60 and acts as a fellow of 20, was in rare form as he put the 4/22 Wurlitzer through its paces at the Auditorium Theatre. Noted for his expertise in accompanying silent films (he's been at it for over 60

## Empire State

*theatre and musical instrument museum*

(ESTMIM) — Syracuse, New York  
315/492-0465

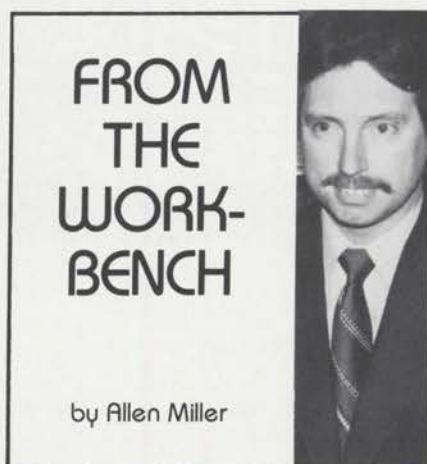
Our own Craig Stevens returned from Toronto to play the November concert. Once on our organ crew, he became a member of the organ staff of Toronto's "Organ Grinder" in January 1980. We had a full house, the first in some time. Craig played a very fine program, including some novelty numbers with puppet Kermit the Frog singing from Craig's shoulder, "Sugar Blues" arranged for kazoo and pipe organ, "Cocktails for Two" with the assistance of a young man from the audience, and dancer Tammy Trach in "All That Jazz" as Craig played and sang. It was a very entertaining program and enjoyed by everyone.

Frank Olsen from Canada and Scotland was at our console for the December program. A great musician, he has appeared here four times. In addition to a Christmas sing-along, he played some numbers which had never been aired here, and some which hadn't been heard in some time. He always gives a great performance, and he received a standing ovation.



Charlie Schubert has been back with the Wednesday Night Gang during the past year, working on the museum's player piano and nickelodeon. Charlie was in charge of the moving, rebuilding and installation when our Wurlitzer was moved from RKO Keith's to the Fairgrounds in 1967. Bruce Carter has been printing a little sheet called the "Olio" which is passed out at each program. In it he introduces an active member and his functions in the club, tells about the artist, reveals coming events, and gives memberships a plug. Bruce deserves credit for giving us something new and different.

CHARLIE RICH □



## Technical Tips

This is the first in a series of short technical columns in which I hope to address common technical problems, giving commonly accepted solutions. Some subjects may seem to be very simple, while others will be quite involved. The author welcomes comments and alternate solutions from other technicians.

### Tremulant Rebuilding

The one piece of apparatus in a theatre organ which can quickly make or break the entire sound of the organ is also, perhaps, the least understood. The tremulant has taken on a certain mystique, only because so many factors affect its operation. Often when a tremulant fails to function properly, or won't accept adjustment, the blame is placed on something else in the system. In some cases, this is justified, but very often, the tremulant itself can be the culprit.

I can almost guarantee that a

50-year-old tremulant won't work right, and will be improved by being properly rebuilt. Two maladies seem to be common today. First of all, the original rubber cloth has become hard, or even brittle, sometimes even leaking at the folds. Just stop and think about how many times that pneumatic and pallet valve have worked over the years. One manifestation of stiff rubber cloth is that the trem speed will change greatly with changes in temperature. (Some change is normal because the density of the air in the system affects the tremulant tuning.) A stiff tremulant also requires more pressure to work reliably.

Another problem common to original-condition tremulants is that the leather on the pallet valve facing has usually come unglued from the felt backing. This is caused primarily by the fact that hot glue gets brittle with age, and all that beating doesn't help matters. When gluing felt and leather together, you try to use glue thicker than normal, and to spread it thinly so that it doesn't soak into the felt and become hard. This, of course, compounds the problem.

Loose leather on the pallet causes some weird problems which tend to act like windline length disorders. Usually, the trem will either run at only one speed, or may decide to run either very slowly or at double speed, jumping from one to the other as you try to adjust it.

You can detect stiff rubber cloth usually by sticking your fingers down the inside of the muffler (if there is one) and feeling it. Sometimes you can even hear the rubber crackle inside the cloth as you bend it. Loose pallet leather can be seen, as it blows up, trying to keep the pallet hole sealed as the pallet drops. During operation, the leather blows up like a balloon and flops up and down in the valve hole.

*Allen Miller, formerly Assistant Vice President of Austin Organs, Inc., now owns his own business installing theatre pipe organs, building replica pipework, doing tonal finishing and consulting, and designing and producing related electronic organ systems.*

It is easy to get the impression that the pallet valve was designed this way to give a gradual opening to the valve, but this is not the case. The leather was originally glued down. Some builders even fasten a thin wood plate slightly smaller than the valve hole to the top of the pallet leather to hold it together, and this is one way to quickly remedy the problem. However, such a "fix" is not complete because the leather still will not be glued at the edges where it seats.

The pallet is easy to fix. The correct "fix" is to replace both the felt and leather with identical material. This is usually a soft red felt 3/16" to 1/4" thick, with white alum-tanned gusset or valve leather glued smooth side up. Often, the leather is glued down the sides and partially under the pallet valve and tacked at the corners. If the original valve surface was not done this way, this is one area where deviation from the original method is usually recommended. I recommend using thick plastic-type glue, such as PVC-E or air-thickened Elmer's Glue-All.

While I normally recommend duplicating original materials, I have found that a lighter weight cloth on the tremulant bellows gives better results and less tendency for the speed to change with temperature changes. I highly recommend WINE MOTOR CLOTH, currently called No. 1052 AEOLIUS MOTOR CLOTH, .0125" thick, available from Player Piano Co., Inc., 704 East Douglas, Wichita, Kansas 67202. This rubber cloth is also excellent for covering outside blow pneumatics, such as those found on percussions and traps.

Be careful to exactly duplicate the original bellows opening height when recovering it.

When rebuilding a tremulant, don't overlook the primary box and stop pneumatic, and give the inside of the tremulant a good cleaning. Inspect the gasket leather. If there is evidence of leaking (black soot streaks) or if the leather is powdery, replace it with soft gasket leather (packing leather). Organ Supply Industries carries an excellent double-buffed packing leather.

While rebuilding a tremulant may not solve all of your tremulant problems, it is the obvious place to start if it has never been done, or if inspection indicates it is time to do it over. □