

# PIPES & Personalities

## Lee Erwin To Play Fabulous St. Louis Fox August 15

Gloria Swanson's legendary film, *Queen Kelly*, with Lee Erwin at the console of the 4/36 Wurlitzer, will be shown at the St. Louis Fox on August 15.

The only previous theatre showing of the film in this country was in 1967 at the Beacon Theatre in New York. At that time the New York Chapter of ATOS commissioned Lee Erwin to compose an organ score for the Swanson film and to perform it on the Beacon Wurlitzer.

Erwin's score was the first movie music written specifically for theatre organ. During the silent film era organists used either a piano or conductor part for films that had an original music score, or they used transcriptions of orchestral music, or piano pieces — or they improvised.

Shea's Buffalo Theatre Wurlitzer console, recently unveiled at a surprise party for the theatre's Organ Committee, whose members have volunteered their time for more than five years to completely restore the instrument. The organ is Opus 1206A, a Model 285 Special, one of only seven such models built.

(Photo by Ronald J. Collier, The Buffalo News)



The St. Louis Fox was purchased in June, 1981, by owner-managers Leon and Mary Strauss. They made a special trip to New York in May of this year to see a private screening of *Queen Kelly*, with Lee Erwin playing his score on the Carnegie Hall Cinema organ. Mary and Leon were so impressed that they immediately engaged Lee to bring the show to the Fabulous Fox. The performance will include a two-reel Swanson short and the infamous North African footage from *Queen Kelly* which very few people have ever seen.

The big St. Louis Fox Wurlitzer, rebuilt under the supervision of Marlin Mackley, will be the center of attraction for the gala occasion. Lee was in St. Louis for two weeks in April playing a festival of silent film shows at the St. Louis Art Museum. During that time he had an opportunity to get re-acquainted with the big Wurlitzer. His report: "FABULOUS!"

## Ashley Miller Honored in England

According to recent word from England, the Board of Trustees of the Southern Music Training Centre recently conferred upon ATOS Director Ashley Miller an Honorary Fellowship Diploma. The award was made "in recognition of his outstand-

ing contribution to the advancement of the organ as an entertainment medium through his playing, his published musical arrangements and for his work as an organ teacher."

The Southern Music Training Centre is an old and respected musical institution in England, and awards an Honorary Fellowship on an annual basis to individuals who have contributed much to the organ world. Prior recipients of this honor have been Kenneth Baker, the leading organ music arranger in England and Albert Gillett of New Zealand, who is one of the leading organists in that country. To give some idea of the standards achieved by pupils of the Centre, three of the last six winners of the London Chapter's Young Theatre Organist of the Year competitions belong to its Alumni.

Manny Motashaw of the London and South of England Chapter, who sent us this news, said, "I feel that this is something of which both Mr. Miller and the ATOS can be proud . . . Indeed, as long as there are organists of Mr. Miller's calibre around, we may yet see a resurgence of interest in the instrument."

## Bob Hess Still Playing

Earl Venstrom of Ormond Beach, Florida, reports that Bob Hess was pleased to see his life story in a recent issue (Jan./Feb. '83). Bob and Earl and seven other retired men are members of an organ club which meets every other week in members' homes. All play the organ, but no one is fortunate enough to have a pipe organ.

Bob was 80 on March 31. He would like to hear from old friends and former theatre organists. His address is: Bob Hess, 22 Coachlight Court, Daytona Beach, Florida 32019. Phone: 904/767-5263.

## Move Over, Mendelssohn!

When organist-composer Lee Erwin's good friends Nina Casadei and Joel Ackerman were making plans for their wedding last April, the bride wanted something out of the ordinary for a wedding march. It must be said right away that this was no ordinary wedding. Both the wedding service and the reception took place in a very elegant Broadway catering hall, starting at 4:30 in the afternoon. With potted palms, Tiffany lamps and hand-

picked waiters in tuxedos, it looked like something out of *The Great Gatsby*. The reception began the moment you arrived at the door and were served champagne — while a string ensemble serenaded from a balcony. Another orchestra stood by, ready for the dancing to come later. All this set the tone of the occasion, and clearly, “Here Comes the Bride” would not do. Nina had already turned to Lee for help. He had composed a new wedding march — and he played it as the beaming bride came down the aisle.

As if that were not enough, at another recent wedding attended by Lee, at Webster College in St. Louis, another bride-to-be desperately wanted something other than the traditional Mendelssohn or Wagner wedding march. At the last minute she appealed to Lee for help. There was not enough time to compose one, so Lee improvised and played another new wedding march on the spot, thus saving time, and the day, and making people happy. What else are friends for?

TED CREECH

*P.S. Copies of the New Wedding March are available to ATOS brides upon request. Address: Lee Erwin, 306 East 15th Street, New York, NY 10003.*

### Segur's Music Goes to the Dogs

ATOS President Lois Segur tries her hand at Bob McGillivray's Conn 652, while three of Bob's six dogs listen.



### WTO and Stokowski a Hit

Wichita Theatre Organ, Inc. recently had quite a surprise and then reciprocated by giving one. The story began at one of the three fine arts FM radio stations in the Wichita area, KSOE, of Friends University. Its program director, Bill Brant, wanted to present a musical tribute in April to the late conductor and musical giant, Leopold Stokowski. He checked the membership roster of the international Leopold Stokowski Society and discovered that two WTO men are members, Michael Coup and Bill Pearce. Brant inquired of both men for any information as would lead to locating special recordings and tapes for broadcast in a celebration of the conductor's 101st birth year. He was greatly surprised to learn the two had much special material of early broadcasts and concerts, plus rehearsals, not publicly available. Brant then invited the two to prepare a musical tribute and the challenge was taken. The result was a remarkable seven-hour period of Stokowski conducting a variety of orchestras from the '20s to his last period in the late '70s in London. Some material never previously had been broadcast anywhere, including rehearsals with “Stokey” talking to the musicians. Also included were tributes to the maestro from several world famous people contacted by WTO. These included Igor Kipnis, harpsichordist, Oliver Daniel, CBS producer, Abram Chasins, pianist and director of WQXR in New York, and others.

Audience response continued for days afterward and attention was drawn to WTO in terms completely unexpected. Brant and his university colleagues were so impressed by the program and response that they now are submitting the entire broadcast to several radio award panels to be judged in national competition. Perhaps the end of the story and the surprises are yet to come.

### Organ Artist Who Doesn't Make Music

One day, after classes at the Ohio Visual Arts Institute in downtown Cincinnati, Larry Klug walked to the Emery Theatre to hear the 3/26 Wurlitzer owned by the Ohio Valley Chapter of ATOS. Thus began his fascination with theatre pipe organs. E. S. “Tote” Pratt of OVC helped

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Cover illustration for a book on which Larry is working, titled “Famous Cincinnati Organ Builders of the 19th Century.” The book will feature German organ builders Matthias Schwab, Johann Koehnken and Gallus Grimm, who came to Cincinnati in the early 1800's.

him learn something about the instrument, and Larry soon became a member of OVC.

It wasn't long before he began to express his interest in pipe organs through his art training, by building models and painting illustrations. Larry has had several exhibits of his work, including two at the Emery Theatre, one at the Cincinnati Public Library, another at Hyde Park Meth-

Larry Klug's first organ rendering, depicting the history of the RKO Albee/Emery Theatre Wurlitzer.



odist Church and a special exhibit at Calvary Episcopal Church for the Cincinnati Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

### New Organ Radio Program

Fresno, California, now has a pipe organ radio program which Ron Musselman is hosting at the request of KFCF program director Randy Stover. He had thought of airing a program combining theatre organ and classical organ for some time, and after finding out that Ron was a member of ATOS with an extensive library of organ music and several contacts in organ circles as well as having experience in producing broadcast material, Randy asked him if he would like to host a three-hour show every month. The answer was "Yes!" The program, "Pipe Organ Showtime," airs once a month on a Sunday evening from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m., and is divided about equally between theatre organ performances and classical organ (mostly romantic organs) with the theatre organ half leading off each program. A broad spectrum of both styles will be covered. Several special features are planned, including interviews with organists and technicians to give the lay audience a better understanding of the pipe organ and its capabilities. The first program began with George Wright's first HI-FI RECORD re-

lease to start off with "the best foot forward." In the future, there will be some on-location live broadcasts, including some home installations. KFCF's listeners are generally well educated, quite loyal to their station and are open to new musical experiences, so a good deal of interest in the theatre pipe organ may be generated by this program. And as the Fresno area has no real organized organ enthusiast group currently active, it's likely that a lot of isolated organ "nuts" will be flushed out of the woodwork when word of the program gets around.

### T.O. Goofs (Again!)

Not being acquainted with the lady, we trusted our usually trustworthy source and called her Doris Hendricksen, when her name is really *Marguerite* Hendricksen. She was pictured in the lower left-hand corner of page 28, March/April 1983 issue.

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Once Rochester's most beautiful neighborhood theatre, the 1600-seat Riviera was hit with the wrecker's ball in January. An X-rated house for a number of years, property taxes were unpaid since 1977. The city took it over, and after months of vacillation, padlocked it last year. The Communication Workers Local bought the front part which includes offices and stores.

Organist Rob Calcaterra is shown at New York's Beacon Theatre 4/19 Wurlitzer, which he recently played for a group touring the movie palace. The tour, arranged by the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in conjunction with the "American Picture Palaces" exhibit, was led by THS Director Michael Miller and visited Radio City Music Hall, the Regent, and the newly-restored Metro.

(Alfred J. Buttler photo)



China nights, bank nights and bango (as it was called in the thirties) vied with stage acts and screen presentations in the Riviera. A 3/11 Marr & Colton was installed when the house opened in 1926. Those who played it included Frank "Gus" Clement, Halburton Clough, Hugh Dodge, Harold Geschwind, Edward Graef, Tom Grierson, Rose Harloff, Ruth Meyer and colorful Edward C. May. Eddie also managed the house until he left the city in 1936 for Kentucky and other points. Ironically, his death came the week prior to the announcement of the theatre's demise.

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Logan, Utah's Charles Fletcher has fond memories of the five Loew's theatres in the Metropolitan New York area, and their 4/23 "Wonder" Morton organs. "Loew's Valencia in Jamaica, Long Island, was where I first heard John Gart play. I lived in Flushing then and often went to shows in Jamaica. As was my wont, I attended every "Wonder" theatre, either on opening day or opening week: the Paradise, the Pitkin (in the wilds of Brooklyn) and the Kings. Shortly after, I attended Loew's Jersey City. This one must have been a favorite of the Loew's people, because a picture of the house adorned their stock certificates.

Other big Loew's neighborhood theatres were the Triboro in Astoria, and the 175th Street which is now Rev. Ike's United Palace, kept in good condition, the organ being used weekly.

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Buffalo theatre aficionados were shocked to learn in January that the guiding genius behind the saving and restoration of Shea's Buffalo Theatre, Curt Mangel, had resigned his position as managing director of the theatre to accept the executive directorship of Denver's Paramount Theatre.

The 31-year-old native of Bradford, Pennsylvania, served as resident engineer of the Riviera Theatre in North Tonawanda in 1973, helping restore the house and the Wurlitzer therein. A year later, he moved to the 3400-seat Buffalo, establishing residency in a dressing room apartment. For eight years, he worked on the

physical plant and the 4/28 Wurlitzer, first with the "Friends of the Buffalo," and later with officials of the City of Buffalo which owns the property. He was indeed "Mr. Shea's Buffalo," having known every square foot, every mechanical apparatus and every facet of the building.

For six months in 1982, officials of the Denver Paramount had been after Mangel to join their organization. Several contracts were dangled before the talented fellow until he agreed to one which gives him carte blanche on policy. The Denver Paramount is a 1930 structure of about 2100 seats with an Art Deco interior. It has a 4/20 Wurlitzer with twin consoles, and we're certain that Curt will see that the instrument is restored to top condition. Buffalo's great loss will become Denver's great gain.

LLOYD E. KLOS

\* \* \*

Word comes from Bob Ayrton of Pizza, Pipes & Pandemonium in Groton, Connecticut, that with the passing of each week, the 3/11 Wurlitzer in that establishment sounds better. "As we filled the chambers and emptied the checkbook, doubts existed whether the job would be completed, but we finally opened.

"Our organists, Don Wallin and Steve Schlessing, are doing a great job, playing around stops not yet working. Some theatre organists have taken a turn at the console: Rosa Rio,

Jim Hauserman dimming stage lighting for the artist's next number.



Ginny Vanore and Jeff Barker, among others. Fill-in organists are locals Jim Arsenault, Alden Mitchell and Lyn Murdock.

"Groton, being the submarine capital of the world, has a strong economy, and this has brought us through the first winter with brisk business. We seat 500 and have had capacity crowds on weekends. I invite readers and theatre organ enthusiasts to join in the fun if they are in the Groton area. We are located in the Groton Shoppers' Mart on U.S. Route 1."

\* \* \*

Chester E. Klee, who played organs in five Rochester theatres in the great era, announced his retirement as organist of St. Mary of the Angels Church in Olean, New York, after 40 years in the position. Mr. Klee played the Eastman (4/15 Austin), Madison (2/7 Wurlitzer), Monroe (3-manual Kohl), Piccadilly (3/13 Wurlitzer) and the Regent (3/11 Hope-Jones Wurlitzer). He was a 1932 graduate of the Eastman School of Music before settling in Olean to teach at St. Bonaventure University. When the college's glee club performed at the Radio City Music Hall with Milton Cross as announcer, Klee was the accompanist. His other endeavors in Olean included playing organ for the Kiwanis Club, school board membership, columnist for the *Olean Times-Herald*, and organizer and president of the Olean Civic Music Association. Mr. Klee was feted by his friends and neighbors at the Bartlett Country Club on April 17.

### Behind The Scenes

This is a picture story of three high school lads who became stagecraft experts through their association with the San Diego Chapter of ATOS.

We who sit in the audience do not realize the backstage work entailed in producing a theatre pipe organ concert — especially in a real theatre. Someone has to pull that curtain, monitor that PA system, man that spotlight, etc. San Diego Chapter is very appreciative of David Irwin, Jim Hauserman and Burke Stuchlik, who make our concerts a little more attractive to our audiences. We are very fortunate that our 3/14 Wurlitzer is installed in a downtown old movie palace — the California Theatre. Under the professional guidance of one of

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Burke Stuchlik placing a "gel" in the border lights for curtain color effects during the organ concert.

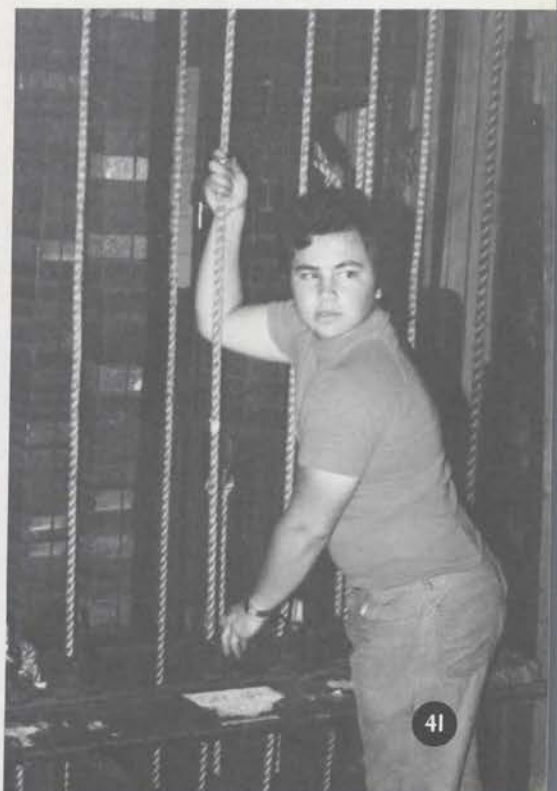
our members, these three young men put a lot of "pizzazz" and flare into our concert productions. Two of them take theatre organ lessons.

An example of their showmanship was when a 19x24-foot U.S. flag was used, waving under special lighting, while flashes and stage-smoke explosions were synchronized to recorded cannon sound effects (excerpted from the 1812 Overture), as Gaylord Carter beautifully played "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." This brought the audience to their feet with thunderous applause.

It is through the efforts of the experienced that the young and eager to carry on are brought into our chapters.

GALEN PIEPENBURG

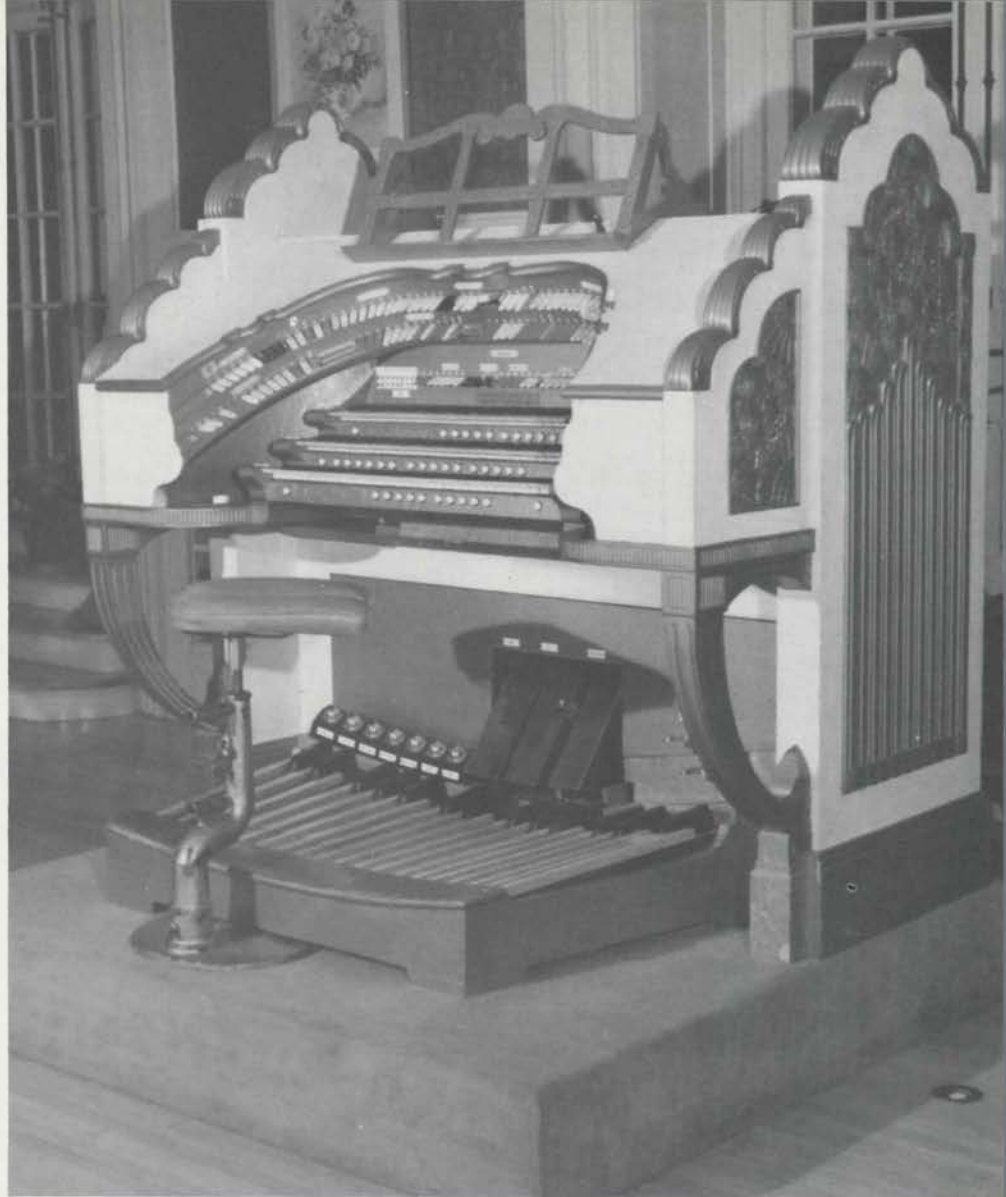
David Irwin stands by to lower the curtain on cue, nearing the end of a silent movie sequence.



Organist Rosa Rio, "Queen of the Soaps," continues to entertain audiences, whether the instrument be a pipe organ or an electronic. On May 1, the artist gave a benefit concert at St. Michael's Church in Beacon Falls, Connecticut. The organ was a new Allen and the musical program ran the gamut from Saint-Saëns' "My Heart At Thy Sweet Voice," to "Memory" from the current Broadway hit, *Cats*. Rosa was ably assisted by her husband, Bill, who served as MC and contributed some interesting remarks alluding to Rosa's life and music career.

### Proctor's Theatre Acquires Organ

Proctor's Theatre has agreed to purchase the 3/18 Wurlitzer organ owned by Mr. Claude Newman of Minneapolis, Minnesota, to replace the original organ which was removed in the early 1960's. The 2750-seat house is now run by Art Center Theater, a non-profit organization which operates the theatre as a performing arts center. Currently, the theatre is being used about 300 days a year for a wide variety of events such as Broadway shows, symphony orchestra concerts, and special theatrical and musical presentations. A film series has been in place for the last two summers, and has proved to be a popular event. It is planned to feature the or-



Console of the 3/18 Wurlitzer purchased by Proctor's Theatre from Claude Newman of Minneapolis.

Interior of Proctor's Theatre, Schenectady.

(Carl Steubing photo)



gan in future years for the film series. A capital fund drive is underway which shows every indication of providing the needed funds for major renovation and refurbishing projects, the organ installation being a high priority effort.

The organ was acquired by Mr. Newman from the Aurora, Illinois, Paramount and enlarged from its original 14 ranks to 18, with the addition of a second Tibia and Vox, a Salicional Celeste bringing the string complement to a total of four ranks, and a new Post Horn made by Möller. The three-manual waterfall console was water damaged several years ago, and when it was rebuilt the stop complement was enlarged and a Peterson computer capture combination action was installed. Plans include changing to a solid-state relay when the organ is installed in Proctor's, as there is not room for the Wurlitzer relay and switch stack.



This cartoon appeared on the editorial page of the April 23, 1983 edition of *The Detroit News* and is reprinted with permission.

new paint, stop tablets and combination action really does shine! Rehearsals and performances in the Center slowed us down into June, but we hope to have the bulk of the remaining work finished by late October."

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Del Castillo enjoyed a couple weeks of festivities in connection with his 90th birthday. On March 27, he received a certificate of appreciation at his mini-concert at San Gabriel, California. At this event, Del's numerous compositions were featured. On April 2, twenty of his relatives gathered to honor the organist-writer-humorist. This happening was generated by a granddaughter. Del has three great grandchildren, too. Finally, on April 10, Del played a concert at the Koons' Motorcycle Shop in Anaheim. Happy birthday, Del, from all your ATOS friends and admirers!

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Jack Skelly, veteran theatre organist, and always the source for rich memorabilia, hasn't disappointed us this time, either.

"Winters & Weber did a stint at the New York Paramount, but it wasn't very long. When Weber was at the Music Hall, he would stop to visit Harry Blair, friend of all the organists, who had his office on the Sixth Avenue side of the building. When

Plans are now being made for the installation work to be done over the summer months, and we look forward to having the organ playing during the fall season. A dedicatory concert will be scheduled, probably for early 1984, and further details should be available soon. Meanwhile, local ATOSers Sandy Murdoch, Allan Plunkett and John VanLaak have been volunteering their efforts in getting the chambers ready for the organ — painting, plastering, and installing fluorescent lighting and modern electric heating units. We look forward to an active concert series, and both the local organ group and the theatre management are enthusiastic in their support of the project.

SANDY MURDOCH

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Since November 1981, when Bill Floyd and his two sons moved the Wurlitzer from an RKO theatre in New York to Richmond, a dedicated crew has been steadily installing and restoring the instrument in the Virginia Center for the Performing Arts (ex-Loew's Richmond). "I have a wonderful team of men working on it, mostly from the phone utility here,

and very knowledgeable, organ-wise," says Bill. "We are not trying to meet any deadline because this adds up to sloppy work, and we've done pretty well so far. The console with its

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Five Manual Kimball Roxy Theatre Console with 28 ranks now owned by Phil Maloof.

Harry introduced us one day, Weber said, 'Oh, you're the one who plays like Fred Feibel.' Quite a compliment!

"One reason for small attendance at the Long Island Paramount (ex-Brooklyn Paramount) is its bad location. Though the DeKalb Avenue subway station is across the street, people are afraid to ride the subways. When Rudy Vallee played the New York Paramount, he also played the Brooklyn Paramount the same week. Finishing a show at the former, he'd dash across the street and take the subway to the latter. It was faster than by taxi, and for cost-conscious Rudy, fare was but a nickel. Of course, he was hidden behind smoked glasses. This was but a mere 50 years ago."

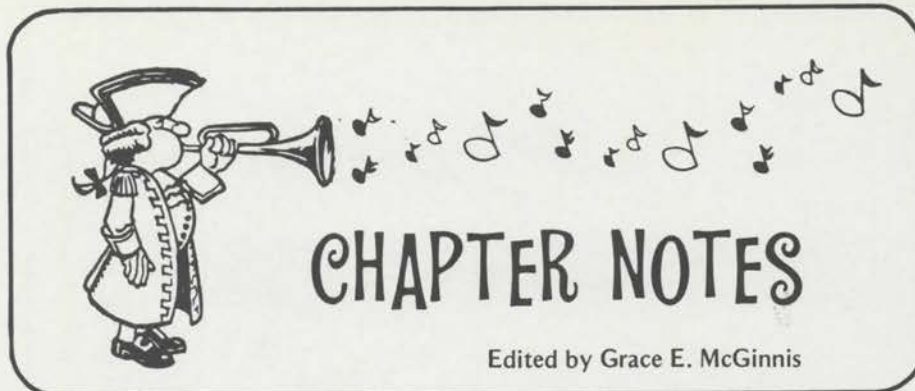
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From time to time, due to apathy and indifference in getting news to the Pipe Piper, the list carries an installation which has long been abandoned. Such is the case of the Village Inn Pizza in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The place went out of business two years ago, and the organ is now in the Pipe Organ Palace in Elkhart, Indiana, according to Mrs. Marilyn Ambrose, one of the two organists who played the 3/12 Barton.

However, Fort Wayne has a new installation, the Cardinal Music Palace, at 911 West Washington Center Road, boasting a 4/42 Wurlitzer. The beautiful console came from a New York theatre, the pipework from Grauman's Chinese Theatre of Los Angeles. Don Springer and Buddy Nolan are the organists, and the restaurant is open daily except Monday.

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Ex-New York Paramount organist Jack Skelly, on seeing references to colleagues in the various publications, contributes thoughts of his own: "Fred Feibel was always concerned about his premature baldness, but he was certainly tops as an organist. Egon Putz was a concert pianist in his pre-organ days. He showed me copies of programs he did at New York's Town Hall. The white-haired gentleman who played the piano in the lobby of the Paramount was Hans Hanke. I recall these things about the great theatre and its musicians because it was only 50 years ago." □



Edited by Grace E. McGinnis

### DELAWARE VALLEY Philadelphia 215/566-1764 or 215/626-2456

On Saturday, October 23, 40 members and friends of the Delaware Valley Chapter traveled by bus to the home of Dick Kline in Thurmont, Maryland. They made the journey to hear a concert played by Frank Lybolt on Dick's beautiful 4/28 Wurlitzer, acquired from the Capitol Theatre in Washington, D.C. A detailed description of this organ was published in THEATRE ORGAN, June 1970.

Mr. Lybolt, who admits to being more than 70, is the organist-choirmaster of the Portsmouth, Virginia, historic Trinity Episcopal Church. There, he carries on a full program of liturgical services, especially during the Church's most important holy days. In addition to being an accomplished musician, Frank is an outstanding calligrapher. Many of the church bulletins for these services are enhanced by his handiwork.

In earlier days, Frank Lybolt was a theatre organist in the New York City area, as well as a church musician. It was in the former role that we were introduced to him at Dick Kline's home.

He played a program that lasted about an hour-and-a-half, broken into two segments. The first section of approximately one hour was followed by a period of open console for members of the chapter. Frank then returned to the bench to entertain us for another half-hour or so, playing not only numbers of his own choosing, but also audience requests.

Although Frank maintains that he has almost no opportunities nowadays to play theatre organ, there was no evidence that his skills have dulled from disuse. He played in a variety of styles, offering pieces that spanned

the period from the early 1900's through the fifties. There were hit tunes from musical shows of bygone years, sentimental ballads and ever-popular jazz. From time to time, he changed the mood by playing semi-classical favorites.

For this writer, Mr. Lybolt's approach to his selections was both interesting and unusual. Very often he would begin with a simple statement of the theme or tune, frequently announced on a solo rank, using a simple second manual and pedal accompaniment. Then he would gradually develop the melody line adding more color to the registration and more voices to the theme. Along with this kind of treatment he would add very interesting, and sometimes intricate, countermelodies on the second manual. The pedal line was rarely a simple "ump-pa" or "ump-pa-pa" bass, but often gave forth with tricky and appropriate rhythms. Mr. Lybolt's playing was never flamboyant, but handsomely brilliant when the character of the piece suggested it. He



Frank Lybolt at Dick Kline's Wurlitzer October 23, 1982.