

# Detroit's Fox Gets Ready For Hector

by James Hammann

Every Sunday evening a group of 12 to 18 men and women arrive, one or two at a time, and disappear into an old darkened and closed theatre in the heart of downtown Detroit. They will not emerge again until well after midnight. Is this a secret government group designing a special nuclear weapon, or some subversive element plotting the overthrow of the nation? No, they are a dedicated group of volunteers who have been captivated by the charm and beauty of one of the six surviving "super theatres" in the United States, and are working diligently to return it to its former beauty.

According to Greg Bellamy, the leader of this band of handy persons who do everything from patch the roof to repair stage equipment, the group originally was attracted by the wonderful 4/36 Wurlitzer organ that is housed in the theatre, but have now expanded their scope to the entire building. Last Sunday evening, when I stopped by for a few minutes, was typical. One person had just returned from the roof, with a can of what he called "bear grease." It was raining and he had been able to trace a few leaks and spread this gooeey stuff in the holes and persuade the water to run off the building instead of into it. Another person had just performed maintenance on the band cart motor, which propels a platform large enough for the Glen Miller Band from the rear of the stage to the front and then back again.

Recent projects include replacing glass in the showcases of the foyer to the main lobby, stripping and polish-



Detroit Theatre Enthusiasts hard at work restoring the shine to the Detroit Fox.



ing the two dozen large brass doors at the main entrance, cleaning out and organizing the several large electrical rooms, and re-wiring the main lighting cove which has not worked properly since the 1940's. That project alone required 512 forty-watt light bulbs to reach around the 512-foot circular cove. Now that it is working, it consumes 20,480 watts of power! Needless to say, it is only turned on for special occasions.

The organ, too, has been getting its share of attention. One entire side stop rail was missing from the console when I saw it, making it look like a lion with half its teeth missing. This was being re-leathered along with all of the combination action relays. Wind leaks are being repaired and, of course, the tuning is endless.

The pace is quickening, for on Sunday, November 6, at 3:30 p.m. to be exact, the theatre will be open for a very special concert. Theatre organ virtuoso Hector Olivera will present one of his fantastic organ programs on the Fox Theatre Wurlitzer. This concert is being sponsored by a neighbor of the Fox Theatre, Central Methodist Church's "Friends of Central," as a means of maintaining that institution's outreach program to the city. Tickets will be available at the door, or by contacting Central Methodist Church, 23 East Adams Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48226.

Hopes and plans for this great theatre are still a little uncertain. Greg Bellamy and his group of "Downtown Theatre Enthusiasts" hope that the Fox will have a restoration and rebirth as an entertainment center, like its sister theatre, the Fox in St. Louis. Meanwhile though, the old grandeur remains, and shines forth better than ever thanks to the labors of love of this dedicated band of theatre enthusiasts. Be sure to join the thousands of others who will hear Hector Olivera on November 6, when the Fox in Detroit comes out of retirement for a grand celebration.

*Jim Hammann is organist at Central Methodist Church, Detroit, where he plays a 4/72 Skinner/Möller. He is active in the Organ Historical Society. Word has it that he is practicing Lemare's transcription of the Prelude to Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, for the Sunday morning prelude before Hector's concert.* □

# Martha Greene

versatile  
musician  
and  
entertainer

by Lloyd E. Klos

Among the many organists who furthered their careers in radio and television after their days in the theatre is Martha Greene Krug. In the final five years of "One Man's Family," for example, it was she who played the theme, "Patricia," for the show which was "dedicated to the mothers and fathers of the younger generation and to their bewildering offspring."

Martha Greene was born in Portland, Oregon. "Many girls wanted to

become movie stars, but when I was a youngster, I spent my Saturday afternoons at the movie theatre, seated in the first row near the organ console, watching the organist and listening to the music and effects he coaxed from it. When I left the theatre, I'd dash to the stage door to see him again. I knew then that I wanted to become a theatre organist.

"While still in high school, our family moved to Los Angeles. I attended Alhambra High School there,

Martha Green at the Wurlitzer Console in the Boulevard Theatre, Los Angeles. She is wearing the official "uniform" required by Fox West Coast. She was assistant to Ann Leaf at this theatre. (Greene collection)

