

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)





Martha poses with recuperating servicemen in the home of Max Factor in Beverly Hills. She says, "I played nearly every veterans hospital in the U.S." (Greene collection)

and immediately began organ lessons. Since I was an accomplished pianist, my goal of working in a theatre was soon realized.

"My first job, in a small neighborhood house, was short-lived. I played badly because of no previous experience, and was fired. Later, with some fast talking, the manager gave me a second chance. Things improved for me thereafter.

"After a few months, Fox West Coast Theatres gave me the opportunity to be assistant organist at the 2164-seat Boulevard Theatre at Washington and Vermont Streets, and the 1402-seat Ritz Theatre at LaBrea and Wilshire, both in Los Angeles. My father served as chauffeur, driving me to and from theatres, and waiting for me until the last show was over. The 'flunky' always played the last show, but they were called 'relief organists' in those days.

"At the Boulevard, I assisted Herb Kern, Hal Curtis, Iris Vining and Ann Leaf. At the Ritz, I subbed for Rudy Schragger. While assistant to Ann Leaf, I failed to show for a matinee one day, and the manager called her. She not only filled my spot, but also took the blame for my absence, because she knew I'd be fired. She was under contract. Had she not done this, my career would probably have ended right there. I saw Ann recently (1979) and upon mentioning this incident, we had quite a laugh over it.

Ann was always a great gal, and still is.

"When she left for New York where she became an instant success at the Paramount Theatre and over CBS, I was given the job as top organist at the Boulevard. Being very young, I received a lot of recognition and publicity. The public relations department billed me as 'Martha Greene, the California Orange Girl,' and I still have their memo which made it official. The 'uniform' which I wore at all performances was an orange smock, with an artist's tam trimmed with brilliants.

"I stayed at the Boulevard for a few years, during which time I auditioned other organists for the Fox West Coast organization. All Fanchon & Marco stage show 'ideas' originated in that house. We had a pit orchestra which played the pictures, the organist 'changing off' with the band. There were times when I scored the music for the orchestra, as well as for myself. I sang while playing and used slides for community singing.

"The Boulevard also had a stage orchestra. There were many show business celebrities who appeared there in the Fanchon & Marco revues. I wasn't overly impressed then because I was so busy being an organist. I worked with many of those same personalities during World War II. It all seems so long ago!

"From the Boulevard, I went to the

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1800-seat Uptown at Tenth and Western where Abe Lyman's orchestra was the stage attraction. Ciphers? I experienced many, most at inopportune moments while playing the silent pictures, especially during love scenes. Away I'd go, climb the stairs and into the chamber to get rid of them.

"Then talking pictures took over in the late twenties, and need I tell you what happened to many organists? When there were no organ jobs, I got an agent and sang with a few dance bands. Among the spots where I appeared were the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood and the St. Catherine Hotel on Catalina Island.

"Still able to play the piano quite well, I created an act and played some top supper clubs in Los Angeles and San Francisco. I sang with Gene Austin ('My Blue Heaven') and Candy & Coco while they were at the El Rey Club in Los Angeles, the only gal he ever had with the group.

"I stayed at El Rey for two years after Austin left, and then went to KNX, Los Angeles, for some time, singing with an orchestra, playing piano and singing as a solo. I also sang with Salvatore Sanaella's orchestra at KMTR, Hollywood, and over KMPC in Beverly Hills.

"In 1936, I married Milton A. Krug, an attorney, and in 1939, World War II began. I entertained the Armed Forces as a single, playing and singing special material. I was a part of USO units and Victory Committee Shows, playing the Hollywood Canteen and the Purple Heart circuit. I also played and sang at Victory House in downtown Los Angeles, selling War Bonds. Being able to play piano in accompanying others, I was sent around the country with numerous stage and screen stars, earning many citations for this work.

"One interesting thing occurred during the early days of the war. Entertainment acts were sent up into the hills to what I believe were coast defense installations. Gene Lockhart, the actor (and father of June of 'Lassie' fame), came up one time with an organist by the name of Albert Hay Malotte. Gene said, 'I'm going to sing a song which Mr. Malotte wrote. See how you like it.' Needless to say, it was 'The Lord's Prayer,' the one composition with which the organist gained universal fame. I shall always remember that incident. Red Skelton

was another who entertained the boys at these installations.

"I did a tour with Danny Thomas, did a few shows with Danny Kaye at Camp MacArthur, and several tours with Wally Brown and Allen Carney.

"After the war, I bought a Hammond for my home. I met Sybil Chism Boch who had also been a theatre organist during the silent picture era. We worked up a 'double,' using one Hammond, calling ourselves 'The Keynoters.' We played a few TV shows in Los Angeles and then went to Honolulu and did more TV there.

"While there, I one day endured a tense situation. Prior to a program, the zipper on my dress broke! I was scheduled to sing in front of the console while Sybil played. Fortunately, the hotel was not far from the studio, so I sent someone to get another dress. Can you imagine my anxiety in the meantime?

"We had a fine tenure in the islands until Sybil decided to move to Hawaii permanently, thereby ending our act. She had been the organist for the 'Lum and Abner' show for many years, and at the time of her leaving for Hawaii, was in her third year on 'One Man's Family' at NBC. I inherited that show, playing it until it went off the air in 1959. I also played 'throw-away' music at the movie studios. This music was recorded, but the music department had composed it to my tempo, and my recording was destroyed."

Martha sent us a resumé of organizations of which she has been a member, plus offices she's held in the past 30 years or so. Among others, she is a life member of Lawyer's Wives of Los Angeles, a member of Lawyer's Wives of California, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, United Way, Women's Committee of Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Art of USC, and Freedoms Foundation. She has been cited by the City of Los Angeles as an outstanding volunteer.

In the entertainment area, she is a charter member of Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, a life member of American Federation of Musicians Local 47, and a member of ATOS.

One organization of which Martha is a member and which utilizes her musical talents, practically on a weekly basis, is the Assistance League of Southern California. "This is a very prestigious organization which main-



At home, playing her Hammond in 1970.

(Greene collection)

tains a very beautiful clubhouse and tea room. As their official pianist, I play 10 to 15 fashion shows each year for them, as well as their Christmas and Easter programs.

"I also go out on Sundays with other pros — ventriloquists, magicians, singers, dancers, etc. — and entertain senior citizens at rest homes. I have my own act, and accompany others. At Christmas, I do the annual show at Juvenile Hall."

Martha serves as musical director of the organizations to which she belongs. She also engages orchestras and talented artists for their events, all a volunteer effort.

We have seen that because of her talent as singer-pianist-organist, Martha Greene was able to successfully bridge the era of the great days of the theatre organ, to the era of radio, TV and stage entertainment. Her training and experience as a theatre musician were major factors in achieving the versatility so vitally necessary in her later musical endeavors. □

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