

# Europe Calling America

. . . by Ralph Bartlett

**Y**OUTH HAS COME to the fore in the British theatre organ world, although from this I do not want you to assume that the established organists have lost their popularity. Unless, by any chance, you have been a member of the American forces in Europe in recent times, it is probable that many of the names will be new to you, so perhaps these notes about some of them may be of interest.

Foremost is George Blackmore an F.R.C.O., who airs from the most Northerly cinema in the British Isles—the Astoria, Aberdeen. In 1939 George was just commencing his career, way down South in Kent, but this was interrupted for service in the R.A.F. Upon demob he went to Birmingham, and thence to Aberdeen. Another up and coming star—in fact most would say he has arrived—is Bryan Rodwell, also an F.R.C.O., but in this case he happens to be my own local organist, at the Granada in East Ham. Bryan was introduced to the theatre organ by Charles Saxby in Leeds, and by 1945 was resident at the Forum, Southampton, going to the Ritz, Hereford, after completing his service with the R.A.F. Bryan, like George Blackmore, is a seasoned broadcaster and has given some excellent dates on the Granada, Clapham Junction, and Tooting Wurlitzers.

Next on the list is Charles Smitton, who plays at the Spa Royal Hall, Bridlington. Charles commenced at the Curzon, Liverpool, before he was sixteen, then to the Gaumont, Manchester, and after a spot of freelancing landed at Bridlington. Charlie is well known to English theatre organ enthusiasts as a very capable player, and his recent broadcasts from the Odeon in Leeds have proved this point. Eric Easton, at present with an electronic firm in the South of England as demonstrator, started at the Plaza, Crosby, Liverpool, then had an extensive tour with Odeon Theatres. A spot of residency at the Associated British Cinemas' Ritz, Hastings, came next, followed by a couple of seasons at Southend with a Hammond. Eric is a

very fine player, but regrettably he does not broadcast at the present moment.

Our two final youthful players are Jerry Allen and Tony Fenton. Jerry became interested in the theatre organ some years ago, while living at Margate. He turned to the Hammond at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London, where a war-time show called 'Strike a New Note' was to earn a long and successful run. He has since that time continued on the variety halls with a team called 'Jerry Allen and his Trio,' which recently made a successful debut on Decca records. Tony Fenton is the youngest of the lot, and whether this is an advantage or not, he may well go far. He actually commenced under the able eyes of Joseph Seal at the Regal, Kingston, prior to touring for Associated British Cinemas. Leaving them to freelance, he has of recent times been Hammond organist for ice skating at the Harringay Arena, London, with spots on the coasts during the summer season.

On the continent, Gilbert le Roy is the only young performer to be found—and France is the source. Gilbert, after extensive tuition by Mme. Andre-Chastel, Paul Silva Herard, and Edouard Commette, was assisted by Tommy Dessere to obtain a position at the Olympia, Paris. There he recorded for Pacific and Typic, and during a visit to London in 1952 he recorded for Saturne at the Gaumont State in Kilburn. He later joined Dereux Electric Organs, and toured Gaumont with one of their instruments. He is at the present time appearing in cabaret in Paris, and also recording for Philips.

It would appear that England is still the last hope as regards future theatre organists, though it would seem that eager newcomers have little chance compared with those who commenced just after the most recent war. Television instead of the theatre might well be a medium for the future, but if that means electronics instead of pipes, then let us keep our organs for as long as possible in the ever changing cinema world!

## Foundation Chamber—4 Tremulants

Foundation (All 10" and 15" wind)  
Vox Humana  
Tibia Clausa

## Main Chamber—4 Tremulants

Main (All 10" wind)  
Vox Humana  
Tuba Horn

## SWELL COUPLERS

Percussion Open  
Orchestral  
Solo  
Foundation  
Main  
Percussion enclosed  
General

## SOSTENUTO ACTION

Accompaniment  
Great

## COMBINATION PISTONS

Pedal 10 (under Accomp. manual)  
Accomp. 15 (Double Touch)  
Great\* 15 (Double Touch)  
Solo 15 (Double Touch)  
Bombarde 15 (Double Touch)

\* Great pistons are second touch and operate all pistons of same number, i.e., Great piston #1 when pushed to double touch, operates each #1 piston on each manual.

## Solo Chamber—4 Tremulants

Solo (All 10" wind)  
Vox Humana  
Tibia Clausa

## EFFECTS (Operated by pushbuttons)

6 Door Bell  
6 Telephone Bell  
6 Surf  
6 Fire Gong  
Auto Horn  
6 Loud Bell  
6 Soft Bell  
Birds (one for each chamber)  
6 Horses Hoofs  
6 Wind Whistle  
6 Boat Whistle  
6 Locomotive Whistle  
6 Chinese Gong

Stage Console cut-out

## BLOWERS

Two 50 H.P. Spencer Orgblo's with direct mounted 50 amp. generators. Blowers rated at 4,000 CFM at 15" and 2,500 CFM at 25" wind. Only one blower used at a time. Second blower is stand-by.

## SWELL PEDALS

Percussion  
Orchestral  
Main  
Foundation  
Solo  
General  
Crescendo