

News from the

Unaffiliated

Groups

Lloyd E. Klos

**CAPITAL DISTRICT
THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY
(CDTOS)**

Albany-Schenectady, New York, Area

Sandy Murdoch sends us word that organist Allen Mills has been named artist-in-residence at the rededicated Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady. Proctor's executive director, Dennis Madden, in announcing the appointment in October, said that Mills "will be in charge of developing the greatest possible use of the 3/18 Wurlitzer. The organ will not be a pretty museum piece, but a functioning part of the theatre." Besides performing some concerts, Mills will oversee maintenance of the instrument, and will advise the programming committee in setting artistic policies and standards regarding presentation of the organ to the public. Also, there will be educational demonstrations for schools and organizations, recording sessions, shows of organ with orchestra, and guest artists' appearances.

The management wants to feature the organ in 19 annual performances. These will include a ten-program silent film series in the summer, three concerts with guest artists, and three special events such as an old-fashioned Christmas program. Ticket prices will average \$5.00, to appeal to the family trade.

Mills spent 12 years on the theatre organ circuit before becoming organist and director of music at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany. He was introduced to the theatre pipe organ when he worked at the House of Harmony Music Store in Schenectady. The ex-Loew's Rochester 5/24 Marr & Colton was a feature there before it went west in the early sixties,

becoming the property of Bill Blunk in Oregon.

LLOYDE E. KLOS



*Lockport
Theatre
Organ
Society*

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

Tom Wibbels returned to the Senior Citizens Center on September 12 to open our new season and the resulting program, according to local reviewer, Wally Soderholm, "was an utter delight. His accompaniment for the Harry Langdon silent classic *The Sea Squawk*, was perfection itself. His youthful exuberance and humor complemented his artistry as he performed an outstanding program of solid favorites and sing-along goodies." Highlight was a great rendition of "Twelfth Street Rag," and on the final chorus, he was traveling about 50 miles an hour on the keys. His closer was a great rendition of "How Great Thou Art."

On September 9, a number of our members carpoled to the Riviera Theatre in North Tonawanda to take in the Open House there. A youth vs. age program featured Kevin Saky (23) and the old pro, Doc Bebko (73) on the 3/19 Wurlitzer. Doc accompanied a side-splitting Buster Keaton fare, *The Taming of the Snood*. Doc's son, Edward, manages the Riviera and presents monthly theatre organ concerts every third Wednesday, aided and abetted by Randy Piazza.

On October 10, Western New York's "Mr. Theatre Organ," Doc Bebko, performed his first LTOS show. The sizeable audience, some coming from Rochester, was given a few flashbacks of Doc's early days as a silent film artist in his native New York area. Tunes of the twenties and a demonstration of the Wurlitzer's resources preceded the showing of a silent comedy short, *The Blacksmith* with Buster Keaton. The second half was devoted to the film classic *The Phantom of the Opera*, starring Lon Chaney. Here is where the accompanist has to withstand the true test, providing changes of volume, pace and atmosphere, and the 73-year-old

organist proved more than equal to the task. His audience thought he did, and rewarded him with a standing ovation at the end. It was film accompaniment at its best, and it is hoped that Doc will appear before LTOS again, soon.

LLOYDE E. KLOS



We started our fall program on September 23 with David Reese at our 3/11 Wurlitzer, his second appearance here. Dave played a very enjoyable program, and at intermission so many requests were sent backstage that he cancelled his planned second half and played all requests instead. Heard lots of good comments about his concert.

Lew Williams was the artist on October 18. He played a real nice program with lots of variety and great registrations. His program included a sing-along and other audience-participation fun numbers which were enjoyed by all. We hope Lew will return when he is playing in the East again.

In the January/February 1983 issue, I mentioned our Syracuse-built W.J. Staub 2/9 tracker organ which we gave to the Korean Presbyterian Church. We are happy to announce that a church group has it reinstalled and playing. The church was the original home of the tracker, when it was known as the Geddes United Church of Christ. It was reported to Carl Shea that the organ would be dedicated in November.

We are happy to have Craig Stevens back on our organ crew. Though very busy with his studies, he comes in with the Wednesday night gang, whenever he can find the time.

CHARLIE RICH

RTOS



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

**Rochester Theater Organ Society
(RTOS) — Rochester, New York
716/544-6595**

The club kicked off its twenty-first concert season on September 22 at the Auditorium Theatre, with David Reese at the 4/22 Wurlitzer. The 1456 concertgoers saw a pizza parlor organist who specializes in rhythmic numbers to get the crowd tapping its feet. Among those of noteworthy interest were "Puttin' on the Ritz,"

"Hot Dog" and "Hot Peppers," the last a novelty number which was popular in the accordion era of the thirties. To accentuate the piano, the artist performed sprightly numbers led by "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Chloe," "It All Depends on You," and the famous "I Wanna Be Loved by You," immortalized by Helen 'Boop-a-Doop' Kane, were interspersed. Three California numbers wound up the regular program, with "In the Mood" given as an encore.

On October 20, pizza parlor organist, Dan Bellomy, made his first appearance before 1247 at the Auditorium. The program was larded with "progressive jazz" treatments of numbers from the forties and later. Highlights were "Cosi-Cosa" which is remembered from the Marx Brothers' film *A Night at the Opera*, the Eddie Dunstetter signature tune, "Open Your Eyes," and a cute limerick on Billy Rose and Sally Rand.

LLOYD E. KLOS □

play and look past our faults is not the easiest thing to do.

"There was a tendency to get wrapped up in the Posthorn, but at the console you couldn't hear what we heard in the back of the auditorium (I played it myself at John Cook's request). The balance of their programs were well presented and it got better toward the end.

"Certainly the next areas to improve on are orchestration, combination piston timing, tonal identification, song authenticity and other areas that will come in time.

"Most important is getting to an instrument and listening. That is where our concerts, chapter meetings and organs to play on and recordings and practice become a must, not a privilege.

"Theatre organ **cannot** be preserved in a museum mentality and it is therefore the foresight of the national officers, and those of us at the local level, who saw to it that an event like this took place, that need to be applauded in this case.

"My only suggestion is that from here on in, it become a MAJOR EVENT, NOT an option.

"That feeling of truly being supported is so necessary, against the chemical (drug) world our young people are being sold. When you don't feel that inside it makes the job we organists do that much harder."

I know from my own experience that being supported by a tremendous organization and my folks gave me much more determination to play well and live an honest life on top of it all.

I agree that there could have been many things that would have made the young artists concert better. But, for the first time, at least they got a good instrument to help them, one that didn't quit on anyone, and a real chance to show what they could do. We owe the theatre organ a bright future.

I'm sure future young artists concerts will improve as suggestions like this are given. It would be nice to have a "lesser-known artists" concert at the conventions, too. There are many of us who would choose to play a short program who are not as well known as others. Yet we do our work unsung on theatre organs all across the country.

The theatre pipe organ was a hundred years ahead of its time. The full potential of the instrument has yet to



Letters to the Editors

Letters concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are welcome. Unless clearly marked "not for publication" letters may be published in whole or in part.

Address:
Editor, THEATRE ORGAN
3448 Cowper Court
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Opinions expressed in this column are those of the correspondents, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN.

Dear Sir:

I fully agree with Lowell Ayars in his comments about the young artists concert at Indy '84. Here was a good opportunity to change the all-historic image of the theatre pipe organ into an instrument dealing with the present and the future, as with other musical instruments.

But it was an option and thus the bulk of the members never got a chance to hear the new artistry that awaits their ears.

Of course, the artists also lost out on possibly being heard by chapters looking for new talent to bring to their instruments.

I am not putting down the history. It has given us much talent and know-how to those who carry on. But we must teach new people to carry on theatre pipe organ as an everyday instrument, not one of just the past. If we make the same mistake as some of our classical people do, we will send theatre organ the same way as the movie palaces we threw away.

I'd like to repeat a report I gave for the *Eastern Pipes* of Eastern Massachusetts Chapter, September 1984. This is a portion of what I wrote: "It would be very unfair to say that one of the players was better than the others. To have the courage to get up and