



## BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF THEATRE ORGANISTS

by Dr. John W. Landon

### **BARRIE, EUGENE STUART**

Born October 26, 1899, in Louis-berg, Nova Scotia, Canada. Barrie was educated in Paris, Berlin, London and Berkeley, California. He attended the Royal Academy of Music in London, England, and was an honor student at the Beyer-Royal Conservatory at Kassel, Germany. Later he studied under Dr. Max Reger in Leipzig. Barrie earned the following degrees: Graduate Doctor of Music and Bachelor of Science in Musicology at the Berlin High School of Music; Ph.D. in Comparative Philosophy at the College of Higher Technology, Berlin. He emigrated to the United States and spent seven years as a theatre organist with the Paramount-Public chain, followed by five years as organist for Warner Brothers. In the late 1930s Barrie moved to England and toured for the Granada Theatre chain, broadcasting and recording. He left the console to lecture in philosophy and musical science but returned briefly to record a long playing disc and at least two 78 rpm discs at the Granada, Tooting, England. His signature tune was "La Paloma."

### **BARRY, EMMA L.**

Organist of the Royal Theatre, Seattle, Washington, in 1927.

### **BARRETT, RUTH**

Organist in the New York City area in the 1920s. Among the other positions held, she played at the Colony Theatre in New York in 1926 on a four-manual Skinner organ (the Colony Theatre was located at 53rd Street and Broadway, and John Priest was chief organist there). Two years later in 1928, Barrett went on to the Cameo Theatre in New York which also had a smaller Skinner theatre organ, one of

the first theatre instruments built by Skinner. The building itself was considerably smaller than the Colony Theatre. The Cameo Theatre had also been served by John Priest as chief organist. Ruth Barrett also gave some concerts of classical organ music in Aeolian Hall in New York City and in later years went on to become organist of the Mother Church of Christian Science at Boston, Massachusetts. There she played the Aeolian Skinner church organ, broadcast from it, and made recordings from it, all under the name of Ruth Barrett Phelps.

### **BARTLETT, FREDERICK J.**

Organist of the Isis Theatre in Boulder, Colorado, in 1925.

### **BATH, LEO**

Organist of the Grand Theatre in Fairbault, Minnesota, in 1922.

### **BAUCOM, MISS**

Miss Baucom was a native of the Cincinnati area and received her musical education at the Cincinnati College of Music. She started playing the piano in a small neighborhood theatre when she was just out of high school to help earn college money. She played there about two years. At that time, Wurlitzer was beginning to install organs in theatres and she practiced theatre organ music at the Wurlitzer store in Cincinnati. One day Wurlitzer called her and asked her to fill in immediately at the Orpheum Theatre where the organist had suddenly become ill. He was subsequently unable to return to the job so it was given to Baucom, who remained there for five years playing four shows a day, seven days a week. These years were approximately 1916 to 1921. In 1921 when the new Capitol Theatre opened, she moved there and stayed

for seven years until the advent of sound pictures when live music was discontinued at the Capitol. She then went to the Albee Theatre, Cincinnati's largest and finest picture palace. She was at the Albee Theatre from 1929 until 1932 when live music was discontinued there also. For seven years during the Depression, she was in charge of the Federal Music Project for the area. When that project ended she became secretary to Ike Lisbon, a Cincinnati theatre owner. In 1943 she became Assistant Registrar at the Ohio College of Applied Science.

Her theatre organ career spanned about 14 years, the prime years of the first theatre organ era.

### **BAXTER, EDDIE**

Theatre organist who recorded a long playing record of theatre organ music at the Lorin Whitney Studio (4/24 Robert-Morton) in Glendale, California, in 1958. Believed to be a pseudonym.

### **BEASLEY, BESSIE**

Organist of the Bijou Theatre in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1928.

### **BAYLOR, GEORGE W.**

A graduate of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Baylor also studied at the American Conservatory of Music and Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois. He played piano and organ including the accompaniment of silent movies, comedy shows, and for hotel audiences in the Indianapolis, Indiana, area for many years. He moved to Chicago, Illinois, and became organist of the Hollywood Roller Rink and at the North Avenue Rollaway for 18 years. He

Stuart Barrie





taught music privately, served as the organist of several churches and wrote a number of organ compositions.

#### **BEAUCLAIR, STEVEN**

Opened 3/28 Kimball pipe organ in the Warner Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in May of 1931.

#### **BEAZLEY, KATHERINE**

Theatre organist in the Seattle, Washington, area in the 1920s. Played the Grey Goose Theatre in Seattle in 1926 and the Liberty Theatre in Seattle in 1927.

#### **BEAVER, PAUL**

Born in Ohio of musically skilled parents. He received his first instruction in music at home, beginning with piano. At the age of ten he began to play the organ and to compose his own music. By the time he was 13 he was holding a position as church organist. Moving to California he became a student at the University of California at Los Angeles, where his studies concentrated in psychology, physics and mathematics. During this time he held the post of organist at the First Unitarian Church.

He served as an Entertainment Specialist in the Army and upon his release from service he started a successful career as featured soloist in hotels and nightclubs. He played the organ and percussion with various jazz groups. In addition to composing and publishing arrangements for organ, he was active in recording, television and motion picture studio work. Special musical instruments of his own invention and construction have been featured in films such as *Dr. Zhivago*, *The Slender Thread*, *Our Man Flint*, *Around the World under the Sea*, *Hawaii*, *Walk Don't Run*, *In Harm's Way*, *An American Dream* and *The Professionals*.

He created special effects for such television shows as *The Munsters*, *Bewitched*, *My Favorite Martian* and *Run for Your Life*.

Beaver won acclaim as an organist of concert caliber and made a number of appearances, particularly in the Los Angeles area, including appearances at the four-manual Kimball organ in the Wiltern Theatre.

Beaver died January 16, 1975. He is remembered for his one theatre organ album, "Perchance to Dream," recorded on the Carson/Kearns Wurlit-

zer in Hollywood.

#### **BEACHAM, DWIGHT**

Born in California, Beacham began his musical studies on the piano at the age of seven. Four years later he took his first organ lessons. He completed his bachelor's degree in music at Chapman College in California, where he studied under Norman Thompson. Beacham did additional study with Lloyd Del Castillo on the theatre organ technique.

Beacham's first theatre organ appearance was in June of 1968 when he played for the Los Angeles Chapter of ATOS on the Wiltern Kimball. In July of the same year he was a featured artist at the National ATOS Convention. He has been featured at other ATOS conventions since that time.

Beacham has installed a two-manual Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ in his home in Huntington Beach, California. He has toured and demonstrated organs for several electronic firms. □

## Questions and Answers on the Technical Side

by Lance Johnson



#### **Do you have any questions?**

*Send them direct to:*

**QUIZMASTER  
and Organbuilder**

**LANCE JOHNSON  
Box 1228  
Fargo, North Dakota 58102**

*Please include name, address  
and telephone number (with  
area code).*

**Q.** I recently replaced the leather on the primaries and secondaries on my Wurlitzer Tibia offset. After about two months of playing, the notes in this chest began to go dead. I now have four out of 12 that refuse to play, even though the primary works fine. I have tightened up the bung and loosened the pallet spring, all to no avail. I also reviewed your troubleshooting guide but could not find this symptom. Any suggestions?

**A.** It sounds to me like you got hold of some porous leather. With a high pressure system, it is vital that the leather be air tight in order to overcome the tremendous air pressure holding the pallet closed. I would suggest applying some vaseline to the leather to make it air tight. Some old

Wurlitzer men used egg white, which apparently did the trick, too. It should not be necessary to remove the secondaries to perform this procedure.

**Q.** I have a switch bar in my Wurlitzer switch board which refuses to come down far enough to depress the contact wires. As a result, I have intermittent dead notes. I have tried shortening the pulldown wire but it doesn't help. What can I do next?

**A.** The cause of your problem is the arm which protrudes from the bar, which likely is hitting the switch board wall. You will have to take out the entire switch bar, unscrew the arm and bend it slightly inward. This will allow the bar to deflect farther downward when the pneumatic is exhausted, thereby depressing the contact wires. With your bar out of the switch board, check to see that none of the contact wires are binding on the switch bar. If the organ was once in a sooty chamber, the wire may become coated with a sticky soot which will eventually increase the wire size and cause it to bind in the groove.

**Q.** Recently I have noticed a lot of side slop in my manual keys. I don't understand why these keys should have worn so much, as I bought my