

PIPES & Personalities

Oakland Paramount Announces 1985-86 Season

After three seasons of sell-outs, the Paramount Organ Pops Series has been expanded to four concerts, and the Mothers' Day afternoon program has been dropped in favor of all 8:00 p.m. Saturday night affairs.

George Wright will open the season on November 16, 1985. On January 25, 1986, Gaylord Carter will return to accompany silent film comedies of Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton. Billy Nalle makes his first appearance at the Paramount on March 15. Closing the series on May 31 will be organist Lyn Larsen with Jack Bethards and the Royal Society Jazz Orchestra.

Ticket information can be obtained from the Box Office, Paramount Theatre of the Arts, 2025 Broadway, Oakland, California 94612, or by phone at 415/465-6400.

Music Theatre of Wichita, a professional stage production company, celebrated its coming season with a gala party in Century II Center, Saturday, May 25 this year. The purpose was to promote information on and ticket sales to the five coming productions: *The Wizard of Oz*; *Carnival*; *The Most Happy Fella*; *Promises, Promises* and *Hello Dolly!*. Billy Nalle was engaged to present five solo periods during the course of the afternoon, each one devoted to the music of one of the five musicals. Television coverage and audience response indicated that this type of party promotion was a resounding success.

Bob Maes, Kansas City (Kansas) organ/theatre buff, has purchased the former Uptown Theatre (Chicago) Style 285 4/28 Wurlitzer from Tommy Stark, and the former New York City Picadilly Theatre/Warner Hollywood Theatre 4/28 Marr & Colton. The latter instrument, donated to Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society, was scheduled to be installed in Pasadena Civic Auditorium until J. B. Nethercutt offered to donate and erect the famed five-manual Foort Möller.

LATOS subsequently gave the Marr & Colton to Valley of the Sun Chapter ATOS in Phoenix. The group was unable to find a suitable home for the organ and decided to let Maes have it.

In partnership with Bill Brown, former operator of the Organ Stop pizza parlors in Phoenix and Mesa, Maes also purchased the organ parts offered by Dennis Hedberg in Portland. This package included the Style 260 Wurlitzer from B. F. Keith's Memorial Theatre, Boston. (The theatre was also known as the Savoy, and is now Sara Caldwell's Opera House.)

Much of this purchase was sold to Rudy Frey and Dick Taylor in San Francisco. Taylor bought a 32' Diaphone to add to his Castro Theatre Wurlitzer.

The Organ Grinder

May 21 marked a memorable event at the Portland Organ Grinder when Dennis and Judy Hedberg and their son, Jay, hosted a champagne and pizza party in celebration of their recent acquisition of the restaurant. The festive mood in the nearly full dining rooms was enhanced by music from the 4/44 Wurlitzer played by Andy Crow, Dan Bellomy, Jonas Nordwall, Russ Chilson and Paul Quarino. There was a special significance to this occasion for all those who look upon the Organ Grinder as the Mecca of Northwest organ lovers and who are elated that it is now in the capable hands of the man who installed and thoroughly understands its magnificent music machine.

The organ has, in fact, been the focus of Dennis' long association with the company which built the Organ Grinders in both Portland and Denver. At the 1966 ATOS National Convention in Portland, Dennis was cited for his excellent maintenance of the 3/13 Wurlitzer in the Oriental Theatre, the Publix #1 in the Paramount Theatre and the then 4/33 in the Vollum residence, all convention concert venues. Dennis subsequently acquired the Oriental Wurlitzer and, by the 1973 Convention, was installing it in the still unfinished Portland Organ Grinder. Conventioneers were, however, treated to concerts by Jonas Nordwall and Lyn Larsen in a "preview" of what was to come.

What-was-to-come was the console from the 4/26 Wurlitzer in the Metropolitan Theatre in Boston and additional pipes to bring it to its present 44 ranks. The company also purchased the 3/20 Keith's Memorial Wurlitzer from Boston, the Portland Paramount's Publix #1 and the former Portland Liberty Theatre's Wurlitzer from the Granada Organ Loft Club in Seattle. By 1978 the Organ Grinder was ready to create another restaurant, and Denver was the chosen site. Dennis used the Publix #1 as the nucleus of the new installation, and when the restaurant opened in 1979, the 4/37 there became a "must-



Dennis and Jay Hedberg, new owners of the Portland Organ Grinder. (Claude Neuffer photo)

hear" for all organ buffs traveling cross-country.

The adverse economic trend of the 1980s affected the pizza business to such an extent that the Denver Organ Grinder was sold, and Oregon organ devotees began to worry about the fate of their favorite 4/44. It was, therefore, with a genuinely delighted sense of optimism that they received the news that Dennis Hedberg had assumed ownership of the Portland Organ Grinder and that the voice of the Mighty Wurlitzer will continue to be heard on 82nd Avenue.

GRACE E. MCGINNIS

San Antonio Pipe Organ Society is currently searching for a suitable instrument as a replacement for the 3/24 Möller pipe organ that was destroyed when a severe fire levelled the Municipal Auditorium several years ago. City officials have indicated to the Society that if a suitable organ can be found and donated to the City of San Antonio, Texas, the city would help to pay shipping cost as well as installation and tuning costs.

The Möller was used on a regular basis for popular music as well as for classical organ recitals. An instrument of similar design would make it possible once again to present all types of organ programs.

A bond issue has provided funds to rebuild and refurbish the auditorium. However, there was not enough money to purchase an organ to replace the one lost in the fire. P. Myron Iverson, society treasurer, has announced that the donation of an organ would be classified as a bona fide tax-deductible gift. He also noted the organ would be maintained and used regu-

larly, and its beauty of sight and sound would be enjoyed by tens of thousands of people in the years to come. Replacement of the organ would also open another venue for concert artists in the theatre organ field.

The society offices are located at 134 West Agarita, San Antonio, Texas 78212, and the telephone number is 512/734-6746.

A Great Night at the Ballarat Memorial Theatre

As a feature of the 1985 Ballarat Begonia Festival on March 14, 1985, an enthusiastic audience which nearly filled the theatre was treated to a night of choral music by six junior choirs, interspersed with selections played by Tony Fenelon at the Compton theatre organ.

It was a very hot night, but the audience of some 500 children and about the same number of adults maintained interest throughout the evening. At the end of each segment by a choir, Tony brought the Compton up to stage level and played music for the children, and waltzes, marches and musical comedy tunes for everybody. The finale featured the combined choirs accompanied by the organ.

The Royal South Street Society, owners of the Memorial Theatre (opened in 1875 as an opera house), and the Ballarat Theatre Organ Society, which owns the

Compton organ, have collaborated successfully on a number of presentations featuring the organ. These have drawn the interest of the general public, as well as organ buffs.

For years, veteran organist Jack Skelly played the Aeolian-Skinner which graces the Westchester (New York) County Center. The place was closed down some time ago and Jack was out of a job. In the November election, a proposition for enlarging and modernizing the building appeared on the voting machines. Though the cost was estimated at about \$50 million, the proposal passed. Plans are to remove the organ, which has been in the Center for 55 years, and replace it with an electronic. The work is slated for completion in 1986.

Barbara Sellers, who will play the Wurlitzer in the WGN studios (also played by both her parents, ATOS Hall of Fame members Preston and Edna Sellers) during the ATOS National Convention in Chicago in August, is continuing her full time graduate studies at the Chicago Musical College division of Roosevelt University. Following a visit to UCLA last August, she has decided to do her Master's thesis

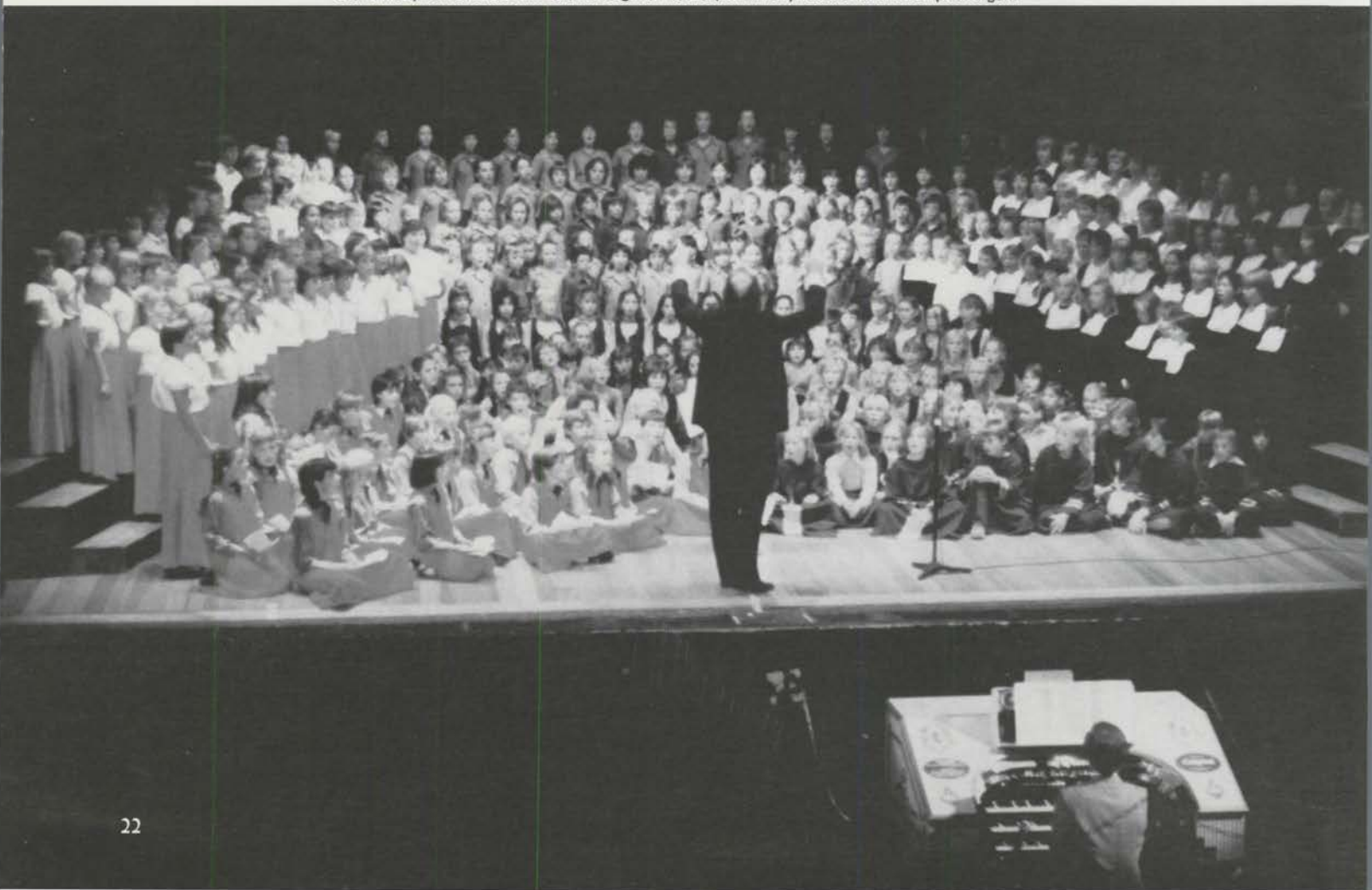
on film scoring, something she was able to do herself when she accompanied *Wings* at the restored Music Box Theatre in Chicago. In doing research, Barbara discovered the existence of The Society for the Preservation of Film Music. This group publishes a newsletter and journal, and has started an archive. Its interests include scores for silent films. The Society may be reached at 10850 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 770, Los Angeles, California 90024.

The two organs in the Atlantic City Convention Center received considerable publicity in these pages about 25 years ago, when enthusiasts of the Garden State Chapter ATOS held meetings there with noted buff Senator Emerson Richards in attendance. In recent years, use of the instruments has declined.

According to Howard Persina, executive director of the Atlantic City Convention Center Authority, "the organs are not played on a regular, scheduled basis. They are used only during conventions and special events when requested by show managers or promoters. We do not have a permanent staff organist, but we employ one when needed.

"The (7/455) Midmer-Losh is not being fully restored (in answer to rumors), but our staff technician, Dennis McGurk, works daily on maintaining and repair of the instrument. As for the (4/42) Kimball

Combined youth choirs at the Ballarat Begonia Festival, with Tony Fenelon at the Compton organ.





Cleaning is a continuous process for the Wurlitzer, and willing students are always available for the work. Here (behind the console) Mike Brooks and Paul Girouard, seniors at Berlin High School, assist eighth-grader Scott Gallant, teacher Nancy Joy and student Randy Grondin. Randy took the responsibility for replacing the backrail pneumatics, and Scott did most of those on the console. Mike and Paul have been instrumental in training the younger students to be organ "technicians." Jim Martin is justifiably proud of this Wurlitzer and of the work his students have done to restore it to concert condition.



Former Berlin Middle School students (L to R) Dave Laroche and Corey Fortier, now in high school, return to help teacher Jim Martin locate some dead notes on the Vox Humana of the school's 2/10 Style H Special Wurlitzer. These two boys also helped drill and dowel all of the stripped screw holes in the sideboards of the tuned percussions. Jim's restoration project has been an integral part of the school's activities since 1981 (THEATRE ORGAN, May/June 1984).

in the ballroom, this is under constant maintenance and repair. Presently (February) it is out of service, due to renovation of the ballroom. When this work is completed, we expect the Kimball to be used more frequently."

Ludwig Industries Donates Drums to Shea's Wurlitzer

According to Maureen Wilks of Shea's Buffalo Theater, Ludwig Industries, manufacturers of percussion instruments, has donated \$600 worth of equipment toward the renovation of Shea's Wurlitzer pipe organ.

William F. Ludwig, Jr., President of Ludwig Industries, donated two 40" bass drum heads and accompanying equipment for their installation, bringing the organ one stop closer to its complete refurbishment, which was begun in the mid-1970s. Installation work was donated by local music shop owner Art Kubera.

Also recently donated was a set of sleighbells, by Rudolph Frey, a former Buffalonian now living in California. Remaining to be replaced are several cymbals, one smaller drum, and a grand piano.

Ever since 1972, Bert Buhrman has presented annual concerts on the School of the Ozarks' 3/15 Wurlitzer at Point Lookout, Missouri. Proceeds were for the benefit of the school's scholarship fund, and the Jones Auditorium was generally sold out considerably in advance of the events. This year, the new president of the college felt that it was too much trouble for the school to give Bert the cooperation and people necessary for promoting and putting on the shows. Therefore, no concerts

in 1985 and possibly in the future. "It has caused a lot of bad feeling from people who have been contacting me," says Bert. "They wanted to arrange their vacations to coincide with the events. I don't want to make too many waves, but at the same time, I feel our loyal supporters should know the reason why the 'no show' sign was hung this year."

The last mention in these pages of the 3/27 Wurlitzer which graced the El Bombarde Lounge of the Panama City Hilton Hotel was in June 1974, following its removal. It took our peripatetic organist, Doc Bebko, to discover where it is enjoying a new life, while he was on a tour of

Colombia and Panama. The ex-Atlantic City Warner Theatre's organ was purchased in 1977 by hotel chain owner and organ buff, Ildefonso Rionde Pena, and after an expenditure of over \$500,000, was installed in the Continental Hotel, across the street from the Panama Hilton.

Doc inquired about the organ and found the Continental's doorman most sympathetic. "He contacted the right 'open sesame' for us, and there, in the most elaborate setting imaginable, the El Sotano Lounge ('nightclub' is the better word), the console is the centerpiece with glass-enclosed chambers for viewing, and a piano which is near the dance floor, controlled from the console.

"The installation took one year and is

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The force of public action in 1980 prevented the swinging of the wrecking ball

The Rodgers Glasgow 740B organ. The Essex 605 and 640 models are similar in appearance, but with a single row of stops, no toe studs and one expression pedal.

against Los Angeles' Wilshire Theatre. The monument to Art Deco is undergoing rehabilitation, and it is anticipated that the 53-year old landmark at Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue will reopen in 1985 as a performing arts center.

The project had several strikes against it. Local banks refused financing, and the developer had to go to Chicago for it. The 12-story office tower on the property was renovated first, and the building is almost fully leased. In June 1984, work on the theatre began, at an estimated \$4 million. The effects of vandalism were serious throughout, necessitating top-to-bottom refurbishing. The original 2756 seats will be replaced with 2400 new seats. New building codes, adopted through the years, have to be observed, but progress is continuing and the owners are a determined lot. Now, if a pipe organ could be found to replace the original Kimball . . . Or perhaps that instrument could be re-installed.

New Rodgers Models Announced

In recent months, the Essex Series 605 and 640 and the Glasgow 740B two-manual organs have been announced by Rodgers Organ Company. The Essex models are in the \$6500 to \$10,000 price range, intended for smaller church and home in-

stallations, while the Glasgow is in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 classical organ category.

The new instruments feature individual note pitch generation, microprocessor control systems, programmable combination actions, microprocessor self-diagnostics and total elimination of stop control contacts through the use of "Hall Effect" technology.

The Glasgow 740B model offers, in addition, separate microprocessor controlled individual note pitch generation for celeste voices, a full reed chorus with the addition of a Festival Trumpet and Oboe in the Swell division, and a 32' Contre Bourdon and 16' Contre Trompette in the complete Pedal division. The instrument's 40 speaking voices are heard through a three-channel, 300-watt speaker system. Rodgers' LED stop tablet system used in the Glasgow is totally silent when actuated by the combination action. Two other notable features of the Glasgow are the microprocessor Continuo and Solo Couplers, which allow a less experienced player to create proper pedal bass and/or solo melody along with an accompaniment from a single organ keyboard.

Included with Rodgers organs this year is a copy of Sonos Music's "Artists' Performance Collection, Volume One." The book includes 15 organ compositions in the classical vein, written by noted concert artists who own, or concertize with, Rodgers instruments. It is the first book in the *Rodgers Organ Company Library of Music*, a joint effort with Sonos Music Resources. It is available from Rodgers dealers and music stores at \$12.95, or directly from Rodgers Organ Company, 1300 NE 25th Avenue, Hillsboro, Oregon 97124, at \$12.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling.

A very interesting 24-page full color booklet, "The Rodgers Pipe Heritage," has recently been received by THEATRE ORGAN. It describes and pictures the facilities and people in the company responsible for Rodgers' growth in pipe organs.

Lee Erwin a Hit at Chaminade

On April 12 and 13, at 8:24 p.m. "on the dot," the Nassau Mid-Island Chapter of the S.P.E.B.S.Q.A. presented "New York . . . it's a wonderful town!" at Chaminade High School, Mineola, Long Island, New York. The barbershop quartet variety show had a unique touch — Lee Erwin at the Chaminade 3/15 Morton-Austin theatre organ.

ATOS member Bob Atkins reports that the 1200-seat auditorium was packed both nights, and the audience went wild over Lee's sing-alongs. Bob says the organ performed and sounded terrific, and is getting plenty of use. An article with photos on the organ is promised. □

