

attle Elks Club and the popular Seahorse Nightclub in Mukilteo. After living in the Puget Sound region for 50 years, he moved to Soap Lake, in eastern Washington, where his wife died in 1980. In addition to membership in fraternal organizations, he belonged to the Musicians' Association, was on the board of directors of the Ephrata Senior Center and was a planning commissioner for the city of Soap Lake.

DIANE WHIPPLE

**Leonard Salvo**, 86, a pioneer Chicago radio organist, died July 23 in his Las Vegas home. Mr. Salvo, known as "The

Weaver of Romantic Dreams," was staff organist at radio station WGN, and later for NBC in Hollywood. He provided the background music for many of radio's early soap operas and dramatic programs, including "Painted Dreams"; "Little Orphan Annie"; "Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy"; "Lightning Jim"; "Lum and Abner"; "Dreft Star Playhouse"; "Cisco Kid"; "Billy Burke Show"; "Mystery Is My Hobby"; "Danger Is My Business"; and "Dr. Paul." Mr. Salvo is survived by two sons, Leonard Jr. and Paul; a daughter, Donna McNeilly, who was also a WGN organist; seven grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. □



## BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF THEATRE ORGANISTS

by Dr. John W. Landon

Correction to previous listing.

### BAXTER, EDDIE

Born in Colorado, Eddie Baxter was playing piano for dancing classes by the age of ten. He moved with his family to Los Angeles when he was 13, and music continued to be his hobby.

He began pre-med studies at UCLA which were interrupted by a stint in the Army Air Force in World War II. Follow-

Eddie Baxter



ing his discharge he joined Glen Gray's Casa Loma Orchestra, and later worked as pianist-arranger with the Frankie Masters Orchestra. Baxter married Marty Baldwin, a member of Masters' vocal quartet, and they eventually settled in the San Fernando Valley.

Eddie Baxter began playing organ in addition to piano, and his career branched out in many directions. He wrote material for night club acts, composed and arranged a concerto for a motion picture, played organ for numerous radio shows, and worked with Henry Mancini in the picture, *Experiment in Terror*. He became staff organist at NBC in Hollywood, where he played for variety shows, a space series, audience participation and game shows, and awards presentations. His organ music was the "soul" of Renzo Cesana's *The Continental*, and he recorded with Cesana for Capitol Records.

While at NBC, Baxter organized a trio which subsequently played supper clubs such as the Ambassador Hotel. Between engagements he went on tour for Western Airlines and did TV appearances, including the Johnny Carson Show. He then toured the country as a concert artist for the Lowrey Organ Company before becoming Lowrey's representative in Southern California.

Baxter has recorded eight albums for Dot Records, one, "Super Organ" for Concert Recordings, and six albums for

Rendezvous Records, including "Holiday for Pipes." Another pipe organ album, "Wedding Bells," was recorded for Imperial Records.

Baxter is the father of four sons, and he and his wife live in Sherman Oaks, California.

### BENEDICT, EDWARD

Began his musical career as a church organist but also held positions as a director of musical comedy, hotel orchestra leader, chorus man in grand opera, tenor soloist in a prominent New York church, popular singer, musical director and business manager of Jesse Lasky's "Birdland." Accompanied silent pictures on piano, leader of a vaudeville orchestra, composer of several pieces of music, and eventually a motion picture organist. In the fall of 1914 he was offered the position of organist in the Pitt Theatre in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at a salary of \$60 per week. The following season he went to the Broadway-Strand in Detroit, Michigan, (Hope-Jones 3/15 instrument) at \$75 per week. He played at the Rialto Theatre in Tacoma, Washington, in 1919, the California Theatre in San Francisco, the Capitol Theatre in Chicago in 1923, and the Chicago Theatre in Chicago in 1925. He opened a theatre in Coral Gables, Florida, in 1926 and in October 1926 he was broadcasting over Radio Station WGN in Chicago. In 1927

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Jim Benzmiller

he became staff organist for the Kimball Company and opened the 2/8 Kimball in the new Hilliard Square Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio, in April. (The Hilliard Square Theatre was an atmospheric house.) A part of his presentation on that occasion was "A Trip Through Kimballville" — a demonstration of the organ. In April 1928 he played the State Theatre in Youngstown, Ohio, and May 1928 found him in the Capitol Theatre in Jackson, Michigan.

Appeared with his son, Gardner Benedict, as a piano-organ team at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, playing classical and popular music. In 1930, they broadcast a 15-minute program direct from the Edgewater Beach Hotel several nights a week.

In addition to his work as accompanist of silent pictures and featured organ soloist, Benedict also taught theatre pipe organ.

**BENEDICT, GARDNER**

See Edward Benedict.

**BENGER, LELAND F.**

Played the Park Theatre in Rockaway, Long Island, in 1922.

**BENNETT, EVA**

Played the Hollywood Theatre in Potosky, Michigan, in 1926.

**BENNETT, MABEL**

Played the theatre organ in Boston, Massachusetts area, in 1924.

**BENNETT, PAUL**

Organist of the Delft Theatre in Muin-  
sigen, Michigan, in 1926.

**BENNETT, WILLIAM J.**

Born in Marinette, Wisconsin, in 1900, Bennett attended Beloit College and the University of Wisconsin. He studied under R. W. Pellow, Frank Van Dusen and Arthur Dunham. He appeared as a solo organist in the Chicago area for Balaban & Katz theatres in 1922. He accompanied Carrie Jacobs Bond (composer of "The End of a Perfect Day," "Just A-Wearying for You" and other songs) on concert tour in 1924. He appeared at other theatres in

the midwest before joining the Hammond Organ Company as a demonstrator. In the early 1940s he appeared at the Interstate Glass House Restaurant in Chicago.

**BENTON, PAUL**

Organist of the Cleburne Theatre in Fort Worth, Texas.

**BENTZ, CECIL**

Organist on the staff of Radio City Music Hall from 1950 to 1973. Standby organist at Radio City Music Hall in the 1970s.

**BENWAY, ANTOINETTE**

Played the Empire Theatre in Glens Falls, New York, in 1926.

**BENZMILLER, JIM**

Benzmiller began playing the organ at age ten. Four years later he was appointed organist at St. Stanislaus Church, Stevens Point, Wisconsin. He was later appointed choir director and director of music for this church. In 1964, Benzmiller was granted permission to tonally redesign the church's 1930-vintage Möller pipe organ. The result was a more theatrical sound which Benzmiller captured on a stereo disc recording, "Bold, Brassy, Brilliant."

Benzmiller has played organ intermissions at the Grand Theatre, Wausau, Wisconsin, and broadcast on radio over a period of years. He was one of the featured artists at the 1977 ATOS National Convention. He has given theatre organ concerts in a number of eastern and midwestern cities.

In 1982, Benzmiller accepted the position of organist at St. Stephen's Catholic Church in Stevens Point. He continues to serve on the Music Committee of the Diocese of La Crosse. Benzmiller has appeared in recitals with University of Wisconsin (Stevens Point) soloists, ensembles and choirs.

Music is an avocation with Benzmiller. His full time employment is that of president of a family-owned manufacturing concern.

**BERENTSEN, ROBERT J.**

Born in Chicago of Norwegian descent. He studied music in Minneapolis and later in Europe. While overseas, he was the only organist to participate in the choral celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Norwegian Constitution.

Berentsen returned to the United States and located in New York City, serving as organist in the New Atlantic Theatre, Brooklyn, the Academy of Music, the Broadway Theatre and the Capitol Theatre. In 1923, he served as president of the New York Society of Theatre Organists.

George Eastman appointed him to the post of organist at the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, New York, in 1923, succeeding Deszo Von D'Antalfy, who resigned to

return to New York City. Harold Osborn Smith shared the bench at the 4/155 Austin pipe organ in the Eastman Theatre. Berentsen taught the motion picture organ course at the Eastman School of Music, using a completely equipped studio and a 2/7 Wurlitzer pipe organ on the fifth floor. He also broadcast from the Eastman School over Radio Station WHAM in Rochester.

In 1929, with the beginning demise of silent pictures, Berentsen left the theatre organ profession to enter business as a broker. For 14 years, however, he served as organist and pianist of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and for 24 years he was organist and choir director of the Central Presbyterian Church.

Berentsen was elected three times to the post of Dean of the Rochester Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. In 1954, he became Assistant Medical Aide Coordinator for Monroe County Civil Defense. In April of 1955 he retired and moved to Florida, where he died in 1962.

**BERGH, INGA**

Organist of the Arcadia Theatre in Winber, Pennsylvania, in 1926.

**BERGMAN, MARION (Miss)**

Organist at Loew's Victoria Theatre in New York City in 1927.

**BERKY, ETTA HAHN**

Theatre organist in the Denver, Colorado, area. Mother of theatre organist Eunice Berky. Etta Hahn Berky, and her sisters Grace and Ida May, ran the Western Conservatory of Music in North Denver. A number of Denver area theatre organists were trained there in the silent picture days.

**BERKY, EUNICE**

Played the new Isis Theatre in Denver, Colorado, which opened in 1913. This Wurlitzer instrument was billed as the world's largest organ when installed in 1915. Berky also played the Rialto Theatre in Denver.

Robert Berentsen







Leon Berry

**BERNOUR, "KATIE"**

Organist of the Colonial Theatre, the Strand Theatre and the Palace Theatre in Akron, Ohio.

**BERNSTEIN, BEATRICE (Miss)**

Organist of Loew's Elsmere Theatre in New York City in 1927.

**BERNSTEIN, EDNA**

Organist of the Central Park Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, in 1928.

**BERRY, GRACE**

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

**BERRY, LEON C.**

A well-known recording artist, for many years organist of the Hub Rink, Chicago, Berry was born July 2, 1914, at Selma, Alabama. His early musical training was at the hands of local teachers. By the time he became a teenager the "talkies" had taken over, but Berry did play some organ solo spots on the 2/6 Robert-Morton organ in Selma's Wilby Theatre. His growing interest in pipe organs led him to become apprenticed to Kimball's southeastern representative where he learned many valuable lessons about organ building.

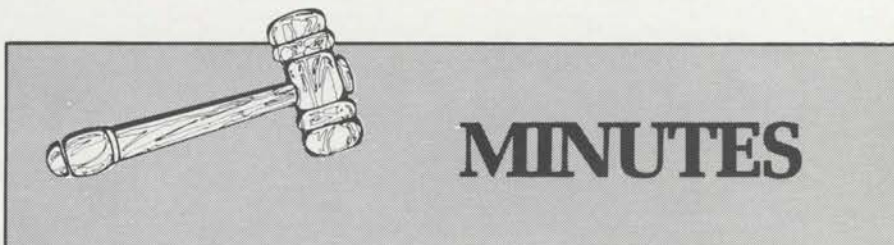
Berry moved to Chicago and studied for a number of years under Dr. Frank Van Dusen at the American Conservatory of Music. His musical education was interrupted by a four-year stint in the U.S. Coast Guard engaged in anti-submarine warfare. His professional organ playing experience began earlier, dating back to 1936 when he was working for the Hammond Clock Company. The company which had just begun manufacturing Hammond Organs had installed one in the Arcadia Rink in Chicago. Berry was hired to play it at \$80 a week (three hours per day). He decided, as a result, to make or-

gan playing his profession.

Following his stint at the Arcadia, Berry moved to the Trianon Ballroom, Chicago, and later spent 18 years as organist of the Hub Rink. In 1956, Berry installed a two-manual Wurlitzer (from the Lake Theatre, Crystal Lake, Illinois) in the basement of his Chicago home. There followed a series of recordings on the instrument the first of which was entitled, "Beast in the Basement." Berry also made a number of recordings on the Hub Rink Wurlitzer, mak-

ing a total of 15 albums so far.

Berry met his wife, Mildred, at a restaurant where he played an electronic organ. On his second wedding anniversary in 1972 he had a stroke and suffered paralysis on his left side. Through the heroic efforts of his wife and his own "never-say-die" spirit, he underwent an intensive period of physical therapy and in 1983 gave his first organ concert since his illness. Berry is one of the artists who was heard at the 1985 National ATOS Convention in Chicago. □



(not official until approved at subsequent meeting.)

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL MEETING  
August 1, 1985 — The Palmer House  
Chicago, Illinois**

1. Present were President Rex Koury and Executive Committee members David Barnett, Dale Mendenhall, Allen Miller and Jack Moelmann, and Executive Director Douglas Fisk was also in attendance (Mendenhall and Fisk arrived late because of their flight schedules). The meeting was called to order at 9:45 p.m. by President Koury.
2. The Committee developed an agenda for the Board meeting scheduled to commence on August 2, 1985.
3. **Chapter Territories.** It was agreed that existing policy should not be changed, but that overlap situations should be resolved within that policy with any territory changes made part of the permanent records.
4. **National Membership Meeting.** There was discussion of the scheduling problem regarding the 1985 meeting, and it was agreed that the meeting must be held as scheduled at the Bismarck Hotel, Chicago, on August 3, 1985, as previously announced.
5. **Technical Awards.** After discussion it was agreed that no set number of technical awards need be given in any given year.
6. **Ben Hall Memorial Organ.** Allen Miller read parts of the committee's report that he planned to give to the full Board. It was suggested that it be determined if there is interest in founding a Ben Hall Memorial Organ Foundation to which the instrument could be donated.
7. **Young Organists Award.** The suggestion was made that we have two or three award categories based on age with a monetary award to each category winner, but with only the overall winner to be brought to appear at the annual Convention. It was also suggested that we solicit funds to support the competition awards and expenses. Further, it was suggested that we be consistent in calling the program the "Young Organists Competition."
8. **Executive Director.** The Committee discussed items relative to renewing the Executive Director's contract.
9. **THEATRE ORGAN Journal.** Editor Bob Gilbert's request to address the full Board was mentioned; Grace E. McGinnis is to be present. The Editor wishes the Board to ad-

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