

panist — but we are dreaming a pleasant fantasy. Such is the Vlasak magic.

"Bill," from *Showboat*, is a lovely ballad which becomes even more entrancing in Bill's able hands. There are broad hints of Jesse Crawford styling and registration but no direct imitation. One just knows that somewhere along the line Bill has heard the Crawford version. As the most effective line in the jacket notes states, "Bill firmly believes the world revolves at 78 rpm." The Tibia and Vox often dominate and Bill occasionally uses "stings" on the pizzicato effect (or crescendo). He likes the high-pitched mixtures, too.

Leroy Anderson's "Buglers Holiday" is one of the best of that composer's lighthearted tunes, inspired by such fantasies as a "Waltzing Cat" and "The Typewriter" (with a real four-manual Royal plinking in the orchestra's percussion section.) This selection calls for precision triple-tonguing by three trumpeters. Although electronic organs are reputed to have a faster response than pipe action, this particular instrument is honed to provide action fast enough for triple-tongue effects. It's in fast tempo and the bugle calls are everywhere.

"I'll See You in C-U-B-A" was popular when Lucy's husband, Desi, was better known as a symbol of Cuba than a certain scruffy dictator today. So it sounds old-fashioned and very delightful. Again the Vlasak way with an oldie dominates. Bill is not averse to using re-iterating percussions (as some "modern" players are), and here we have a chorus featuring Marimba and later the Xylophone. The charms of these "woodpiles" is fully realized.

"Concerto No. 1" (Tchaikowsky) is limited to the popular excerpt from the concerto first brought to public notice as the theme of Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre radio series in the late '30s. Later, dance band leader Freddy Martin popularized the theme with his three-minute dance music version with Jack Fina on piano. It was a smash hit and may have helped inspire the no-merit song, "Everybody's Making Money but Tchaikowsky" during the period when all ASCAP music was banned from the networks (Tchaikowsky had long been in the public domain).

So much for ancient history. Bill's version starts "straight," that is, he recreates the symphonic orchestral voices on the organ, then, two Bills perform by the magic of double track recording. He's heard soloing on the concert grand piano accompanied by a very orchestral organ.

Then Bill switches to a chorus of the Freddy Martin pop version. He did so well playing pure Tchaikowsky the listener may feel short-changed by the contrast; we wish he had continued with the concerto. Yet, he performs the pop version faultlessly so we can't complain too much. He's gotta play "popular" and the end result is an effective closer.

The technical end of this recording is very high in quality. An excellent pickup (microphone positioning) coupled with a glassy-smooth surface and precision centering of that all-important hole, add up to a fine overall production. Highly recommended. □



BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF THEATRE ORGANISTS

by Dr. John W. Landon

BLOOD, J. J.

Organist of the Queen Theatre, Muscatine, Iowa, in 1913.

BLUE, ALICE

Organist of the Palace Theatre in Hilo, Hawaii. Became organist of the Princess Theatre, Honolulu, Hawaii, following the tenure of Edwin Sawtelle, famous Hawaiian theatre organist of the 1920s and 1930s. She continued in this position until the early 1930s.

BLUM, FLORENCE (Miss)

Organist at the Strand Theatre in Schenectady, New York, in 1923, and of the Prospect Theatre, Flushing, Long Island, New York, in 1927. Organist on the Reid Circuit of theatres in New Jersey in 1928.

BLUNK, BILL (John William Blunk)

Professional organist in the northwestern United States. Played occasionally at the Paramount Theatre in Anderson, Indiana. Was organist of the Alexandria Roller Rink in Alexandria, Indiana. Leader of a dance combo which held a five-year engagement at a popular Oregon coast dinner club. Staff organist at Portland International Airport's famous Port West Dining Room. Teaches piano and organ at the Day Music Center in Portland, Oregon, and owns the giant 5/24 Marr & Colton theatre pipe organ that was originally installed in Loew's Rochester Theatre in Rochester, New York, in 1927.

BODE, FRANCES

Organist of the Clemmer Theatre in Spokane, Washington, in 1926.

BOCK, SYBIL

Radio organist who played the pipe organ theme for the "Lum and Abner" radio broadcast during a portion of the several years' successful run of this popular radio show.

BODYCOMBE, ANEURIN ("RED")

Perhaps the best known of the organists of Pittsburgh radio station KDKA. Born in the little village of Pontandawe, Wales, in 1899, Bodycombe's childhood was filled with the rich Welsh heritage of music and resulted in his decision to begin to study piano. After serving in the British Navy in World War I he emigrated to Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania,

where his grandfather lived. Upon his arrival in 1922 he found a job as an organist accompanying silent movies, but he didn't enjoy the work because the management wanted him to play popular music of the day. As a recent immigrant he didn't know many tunes popular in the United States.

Bodycombe turned toward the field of church music. In 1923 he became organist of the First Presbyterian Church in Wilkesburg and before long he accompanied some singers from the church on KDKA. It was his first taste of radio and he liked it. In 1929 he joined the KDKA music staff. He played the organ and piano and accompanied singers and groups. The next year he married a Wilkesburg girl, Esther Bothwell. In 1935 he became Musical Director for the station and for nearly 30 years he served the station in various capacities. In 1961 Bodycombe celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary as organist and choir master of the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. During his years there his sacred compositions sold thousands upon thousands of copies. He retired from KDKA in 1964, spending the last few years with the sales department after the dropping of live shows in the mid-1950s.

One of the greatest honors Bodycombe ever received was an honorary Doctor of Music degree awarded him in 1954 by Waynesburg College. For several years he played a series of weekly broadcasts for the Dairyman's Cooperative Sales Association entitled, "DCSA Organ Melodies" and featuring Bill Nesbitt as announcer. These broadcasts demonstrated his sterling musicianship and were typical of the format of organ broadcasts across the country.

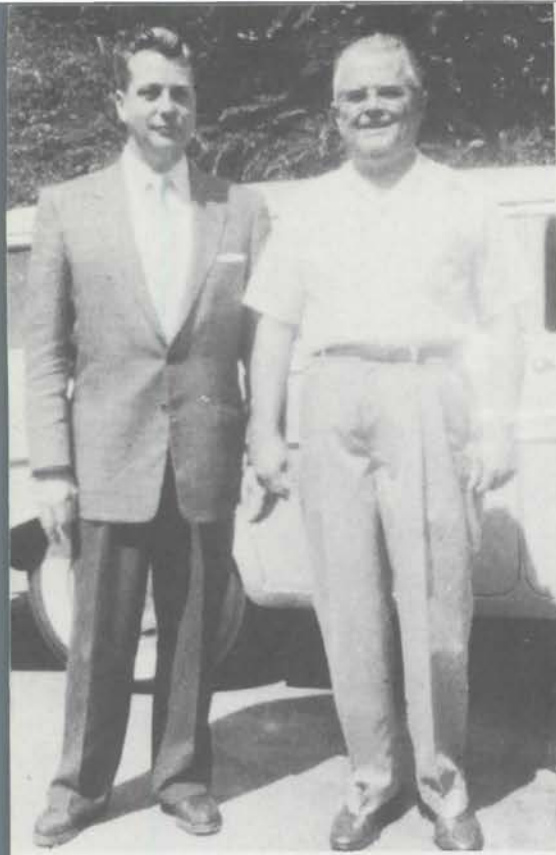
BOEHMER, LOUIS M.

Resident organist of the Hilliard Square Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio, in the mid-1920s (2/8 Kimball organ).

BOHR, RAY

Ray Bohr assumed the position of chief organist at Radio City Music Hall following the retirement of Dick Leibert. He served more years on the staff than anyone other than Leibert.

Bohr was born in Nyack, New York, November 2, 1919. He began studying piano at age six, and although he never took a degree



Ray Bohr (left) with Jesse Crawford, 1956.

in music, he was fortunate in having some excellent private teachers. Before World War II he studied with Robert Morse at St. John's Church in Greenwich Village, New York City. After the war he studied with Harold Friedell at Calvary Episcopal Church, New York City.

At age 14 Bohr took a job with M. A. Clark and Sons, who built and maintained pipe organs. He convinced the manager of the Rockland Theatre near his home that the 2/7 Wurlitzer in the theatre needed restoration. Bohr did most of the work himself, and once his ability as a musician became evident, the theatre manager hired him as regular organist.

Bohr also held church organ posts in Haverstraw and Pearl River, New York, before going into the army in World War II. The only time he touched an organ during the war years was when he played a memorial service at Iwo Jima for the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After World War II Ray Bohr took a position as organ demonstrator for Wurlitzer and continued his classical organ studies. He became associate organist at Radio City Music Hall in 1947 while continuing to demonstrate for Wurlitzer. He began playing the pipe organ in the Rainbow Room at the top of the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center. During these years he also became organist for the television show "Bride and Groom," a post he was to hold for a year. He continued as associate organist at the Music Hall until he was advanced to chief organist in 1973, a position he held until the Music Hall closed and reorganized in 1978.

BOISCLAIRE, STEPHEN C.

Organist of the Leland Theatre in Albany, New York, in 1922. Organist of the Ritz The-

atre in Albany, New York, in 1927. Broadcast over WGY, Schenectady, in 1924.

BOLTON, ISABEL

Organist at the Windermere Theatre in East Cleveland, Ohio.

BOLTON, LAWRENCE

The Hippodrome Theatre in Dallas, Texas, had a 2/19 Pilcher. Bolton was organist of this theatre sometime in the decade before the 1920s. He also served as organist of an Episcopal church during the same period.

Owner George Walker opened the Ronile Theatre, located on Knox Street in North Dallas, Texas, early in 1920 using a Steinway Grand piano to accompany the picture. A 2/4 Hillgreen-Lane was installed shortly after the opening and Lawrence Bolton was engaged to play the organ. When he arrived to prepare for the opening the janitors started up their cleaning equipment which irritated him and he walked off the job, refusing to play there any further. Bolton was a regular organist of the Hope (Melba-Capri) Theatre on Elm Street in Dallas in the early- to mid-1920s. He did some radio broadcasting over Station WRR in Dallas. Bolton was a fine classical musician. He did play some radio broadcasts also over Station KRLD, but he never was a staff member at that station. He also taught piano and organ in the Dallas area. He died in the late 1960s.

BONAWITZ, KARL

Theatre organist in the Philadelphia area during the days of silent pictures. Played the Germantown Theatre in Philadelphia in 1924 and was vice president of the Theatre Organists' Society in Philadelphia that year. In mid-1925 he went to the Stanley Theatre on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City and in November of 1925 he was back in Philadelphia at the Stanley Theatre. In 1929 he was back at the Germantown Theatre in Philadelphia and broadcasting over Station WIP. He opened the Möller organ at the Metropolitan Theatre in Philadelphia.

Bonawitz died in August 1977.

BOND, EARLE

Organist of the Princess Theatre in Honolulu, Hawaii, with Virginia Smith, with whom he alternated for a time beginning in 1942 after organist Don George left to become musical director of USO shows during World War II. In 1942 organist John Demello came to the Princess Theatre. Bond remained for a time as his assistant.

BOND, WEBB

He was born November 30, 1913, at St. Johns, Michigan. His interest in music was only a hobby until after World War II when he studied music at Hope College at Holland, Michigan. He played the organ at a number of restaurants in the Grand Rapids-Muskegon area in the late 1940s. He was staff organist at the Majestic Theatre, Grand Rapids, from 1949 to 1952, where he played for such special functions as the Miss Michigan Pageant. About this time he met the manager of

the Michigan Theatre in Muskegon, who was instrumental in getting the organ renovated for the first time after many years of silence. He played at the Michigan Theatre as well as for the "Twilight Melodies" program on WKBZ, Muskegon. He played at a number of restaurants in Michigan before moving to Cincinnati in 1956. He has played many Cincinnati area restaurants, some special shows at the Paramount Theatre in Cincinnati, and in 1961 was organist for the Cincinnati Reds.

BOOMHOWER, CHARLES (C. D.)

Alternated with Robert Gordon Clarke as organist of the Capital Theatre in Detroit (three-manual Hillgreen-Lane) in 1925. In 1927 an advertisement showed him "At the Golden-Voiced Barton at Detroit's Oriental Theatre."

BOREA, CEAZAR

Organist of the Hope-Melba Theatre in Dallas, Texas, in the 1920s.

BORONE, VERA

Played the Grove Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, in 1928.

BORSA, THOMAS S.

Organist of the Rialto Theatre, New York City, in 1927.

BOSSERT, LUCILLE

Theatre organist in the Seattle, Washington, area in the 1920s. Played the Ridgmont Theatre in Seattle in 1926 and early 1927. Played the Woodland Theatre in Seattle beginning in mid-1927.

BOUCHARD, GEORGE ALBERT

Theatre organist in the Buffalo, New York, area. Played the Strand Theatre in Niagara Falls, New York, in 1922. In 1923 he played the Statler Hotel in Buffalo. In 1925 he played at Shea's Hippodrome Theatre in Buffalo, New York.

Ray Bohr at Radio City Music Hall, July 4, 1974.





Bill Blunk with his five-manual Marr & Colton console.

BOWEN, CHARLES

Assistant to Chester W. Walton at the American Theatre, Bellingham, Washington, in the early 1920s (Robert-Morton organ). He was later a teacher of classical piano and maintained a studio in the Fine Arts Building on Holly Street in Bellingham. Bowen was organist Gunnar Anderson's first music teacher.

BOYCE, JIMMY (James F.)

Boyce began piano study at age five and organ study at age 12. At 15 he was organist and choirmaster in a church and upon graduation from Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore he was granted a degree. While a teenager he was enraptured by the sound of the theatre organ by listening to Art Brown and Milton Slosser at Loew's Capital Theatre in Washington, D.C. In 1949 he was appointed organist at the America-On-Wheels Roller Skating Rink in Alexandria, Virginia, a cavernous building which resembles a National Guard Armory. It is a full city block long and 65 feet high.

Boyce believed that the theatre pipe organ was the answer to proper music in the arena. In 1956 with the approval of doubtful owners, a 2/6 Wurlitzer was installed. By 1960 a larger organ was desired and a 4/34 Wurlitzer organ originally in the Center Theatre in New York was purchased. It took several years before the new installation was playing, and the resulting installation more than adequately filled the arena with big sound, as all pipes, percussions and traps were installed without chambers. Boyce played his particular brand

of skating rink music for over 25 years.

He also played a 3/11 Barton at the Virginia Theatre, which was only a few blocks away from the roller rink. On Sundays he served as organist and choir director at St. Christopher's Church in Springfield, Virginia. The rest of his time was devoted to teaching, recording sessions and concert appearances. He performed for the American Theatre Organ Society's convention in 1972.

Boyce became one of a few theatre organists to appear in a motion picture. It was *Scorpio*, starring Burt Lancaster.

Boyce died December 31, 1980, at the age of 52 years.

BOYER, JAMES H.

Born September 10, 1909, in Elwood, Indiana. Boyer began learning piano at age seven. His first teacher was his mother. A year later he began taking from his mother's teacher, Claude Wright. Boyer's mother passed away in 1920 and his father remarried. His father was ordained to the ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1921. During the time that his father served a church in Bedford, Indiana, from 1923 to 1926 Boyer studied piano, organ and harmony with Roma Owen Martin. He also had two years of harmony in high school. He attended his senior year and graduated from the Martinsville, Indiana, High School, in 1927. That same year he studied piano at the Metropolitan School in Indianapolis (later merged with the Indiana College of Music to form the Jordan Conservatory) with artist-teacher Willard MacGregor. During those four years Boyer was church

organist first in Bedford, Indiana, and then in Martinsville, Indiana.

Boyer spent nine months' travel as a singing evangelist, ending up in Indianapolis, and it was here that he got his first real taste of theatre organ music and decided to become a theatre organist. He studied organ with Ruth Noller for nine months, well-known Indianapolis organist Dessa Byrd for two years, one year's study of piano with Roger Cushman, and seven and a half years of voice with B. F. Swarthout. In 1949 Boyer matriculated in Columbia University in New York City, and while there studied piano for four years with Harold Triggs.

Beginning March 1928 until September 1928 Boyer played for the Roy Bair Corporation Neighborhood Theatres. From September 1928 to December 1929 he played at the Circle Theatre and then the Indiana Theatre in Indianapolis. From January 1930 to May 1931 he was staff organist of Station WFBM (then a CBS affiliate). From May 1931 to May 1933 he was staff organist of the Indiana Broadcasting Corporation and Station WKBF (now station WIRE, Indianapolis), and Station WGBF in Evansville, Indiana. From May 1933 to July 1941 he broadcast over WIRE, and from January 1936 to July 1941 he was staff organist and vocalist with Shirley Brothers Morticians. From March of 1936 to April 1942 he organized and conducted his own band around the Hammond or-



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Alice Blue at the Palace Theatre, Hilo, Hawaii.
(Roger Angell photo)

gan. From July 1941 to September 1949 he was musical director of Station WISH, Indianapolis, and did solo club work with time out for World War II. September 1949 found Boyer at Columbia University in New York City. From March 1950 to May 1951 he played in a trio at the Shelton Hotel and broadcast over Station WOR, New York City, three nights weekly. From June 1951 until November 1951 he did solo club work on the organ at the House of McAray. From June of 1952 until July of 1959 he was organist of Budd's Restaurant in Jackson Heights, New York. During these working years, Boyer attended Columbia University and was graduated in 1955. In February 1959 he taught for the Baldwin Company in New York. In March 1959 he became organist and choir director of the Valley Stream, Long Island, Presbyterian Church and spent 12 years in that position. From January 1962 to November 1970 he taught in Hackensack, New Jersey, for a Baldwin-Gulbransen organ dealer. In November 1970 he retired and returned to Indiana. Boyer died in February of 1976. □

NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by
Lloyd
E.
Klos



February is here again, so we again devote Valentine's month to the lady organists who participated in the great era. References were *Melody (M)*, *Local Press (LP)*, and *Variety (V)*.

May, 1926 (M) While we are inclined to think of the photoplay musician's profession as being a typically American one, it is actually as cosmopolitan a profession as any, and

numbering among its ranks are musicians of every musically civilized country under the sun. The Strand Theatre at Seaside, Oregon, has for its organist Mrs. JEAN COCKS-DYCHE, who certainly reminds us in a most interesting way that photoplay theatre musicianship is international in its scope. She comes from the Antipodes. Her musical education was received in Australia, and a great part of her professional life has been spent in concert and musical work in Australia and New Zealand.

Mrs. Cocks-Dyche has some very interesting information on the music of the native Fijians, as well as that of Australia and New Zealand. Australia is a very musical country; we know that from the many successful tours booked for that country by internationally famous artists. Especially interesting is her account of the Christmas pantomimes produced during the holiday season in the theatres and concert halls of Sydney.

Many of the Australian theatres are so built that their roofs can be opened, and as Christmas in that country comes in the middle of their summertime, these pantomimes are often staged under the star-studded tropical skies with the Southern Cross as one of the spotlights. These pantomimes are of the old English variety and include "Mother Goose," "Jack, the Giant Killer," etc., staged in a very lavish and spectacular manner and running for weeks after the holidays.

Mrs. Cocks-Dyche is not only a capable organist; she also plays the piano and the violin, and has been very successful as a singer. She came to this country some time ago for a vaudeville tour, under the professional name of "Adi Viti," a native Fijian name meaning "Princess of Fiji."

This charming lady confesses to an overpowering fondness for the Pacific Ocean. During her residence in Sydney and also when she lived in New Zealand and on various other smaller islands of Australasia, the Pacific Ocean was always within visiting distance, and consequently when she located in the States as an organist, it was within sight and sound of this old friend.

Seaside is more a summer resort town than otherwise, and at first, Mrs. Cocks-Dyche was only there in the summer season, spending the winter in vaudeville and concert work. The Strand Theatre, however, has installed a new two-manual Robert-Morton unit organ, and during the past winter, Mrs. Cocks-Dyche has had charge of its console. She uses her vocal ability to advantage on the musical program of the theatre, presenting both concert numbers and semi-popular songs with slides. It is undoubtedly fortunate for Seaside and the Strand Theatre that they are located on the Pacific Ocean; otherwise, it is doubtful if the lady could have been induced to locate there.

October 30, 1926 (LP) WBZ in Springfield, Massachusetts, is presenting "The Home Folks Hour," a program of organ music by EDITH LANG, originating from the Boston City Club, starting at 6:30 p.m.

December 1927 (M) (By Henry Francis Parks) BASEL CRISTOL, organist, is one of

Chicago's most entertaining musicians. She comes of Irish stock, having been born in Dublin. As a pianist, she has appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, playing a concerto.

Her theatre organ experience has covered a period of over five years in some of the city's leading houses, including the Chicago, Uptown, Tivoli, Riviera, Central Park and Roosevelt theatres. She has appeared with great success at several of the Sunday morning recitals held at the Chicago Theatre and has, for the past five months, given the same sort of concert at the Tivoli on the south side. She is opposite Milton Charles on the Tivoli-Uptown rotation, usually going on the bill with Benny Kreuger, while Charles appears on the program with Ulderico Marcelli.

She is a capable improvisator and also presents slide novelties very effectively. But, aside from Mrs. Jesse Crawford of course, women organists do not seem to get as far as they should with the "firm" (as Balaban & Katz are familiarly known here), and Miss Cristol is no exception.

There is, of course, no reason why a woman cannot be as efficient an organist as a man. It is only a question of time until all producers recognize this; some of them do now, for that matter. But until that time comes, Miss Cristol and many other really fine women organists will not likely have the recognition and the opportunities their ability deserves.

1926-1930 Period (V) On the organ, the Crawfords sent in a great plug for *Hit the Deck*, now playing at the Belasco, a new musical hit with Vincent Youmans' compositions. Mrs. HELEN CRAWFORD was at the stage console and joined with her husband in playing "Hallelujah." How she can jazz on the organ! Mrs. Crawford should go in heavily on that. Her husband may have deferred in this, although it was an organ duet. Previously, he had played the show's theme song.

If the Crawfords ever played the organ such as the Paramount has, in Madison Square Gardens, for instance, and with the raggedy touch Mrs. Jesse can send across, it would put out of commission every dance hall in New York City. It's safe to say that such jazzing organ music as this would fill any place every night, if the organists could stand the strain. There is no better popular dance music.

GOLD DUST: The gals broadcasted too: 3/25 DOROTHY HAWLEY on KLX, Oakland, California . . . 7/25 JOHANNA GROSSE, WLW, Cincinnati . . . 10/25 PHYLLIS GRISWOLD, WOAW, Omaha . . . 11/25 JEAN WEINER, WPG, Atlantic City; HELEN WHEELER, WTIC, Hartford . . . 2/26 ESTHER NELSON, WTIC, Hartford . . . 8/26 MARY VOGT, WOO, Philadelphia . . . 9/26 ELAINE BAIR, WSUI, Iowa City . . . 11/26 MARGARET TIGHE, WBZ, Springfield, Massachusetts.

That should do it until next time when we will present another "pot luck" column with items from all over the lode.

So long, sourdoughs!
Jason & the Old Prospector □