

grating to Australia in 1974. He returned to England briefly in 1977 and toured his native land again in 1983, but apart from that he put down firm roots in his new home.

It came as no surprise to me to learn that he was soon regarded as the best music teacher in Western Australia. The first time I met him, I went away glowing since he had somehow managed to find something nice to say about my playing and I was encouraged to continue.

And in those last ten years of his life he soon found himself in demand for concerts and TV. He leaves behind him four good commercial LPs (and highlights of his 1983 concert at Worthing are scheduled to be released in that form) and private tapes in many collections.

They show him to have been, in the words of COS Chairman Douglas Badham, one who "played with great style, frequently emulating Jesse Crawford and Harold Ramsay, whether it be a lively march or a smoochy ballad and was equally at home with the light classics."

Many theatre organ buffs are also Gilbert and Sullivan fans and will be familiar with the

ditty about the "very model of a modern Major-General": Hubert Selby was the very model of a British cinema organist who set out to entertain — and succeeded.

He is survived by his wife, Jill, and daughter Mandy.

TONY BERNARD SMITH

Kenneth Rosenboom, 66, died November 21, 1985, in Chatsworth, Illinois. He was a native and lifelong resident of Chatsworth, and had been a plumbing and heating contractor for 34 years before retiring in 1980. In addition to his work as a contractor he worked with the Shaklee organization for the past 13 years.

He installed a 27-rank organ in his home many years ago, and helped rebuild and restore 12 organs, including those in the Chicago and Oriental theatres in Chicago and the Rialto Theatre in Joliet. He also installed a larger organ from Wilmette in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chatsworth.

He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Arlene, by one son, two daughters, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. □

nay Film Co. stock company. So many familiar faces from the past. I noticed small white numbers by each one. There must have been an index at one time.

No. 25 looks familiar, but cannot name him. No. 17 is Bryant Washburn, a handsome dimple-chinned actor who played fine parts in light comedy — the type of story we seldom see today. The girl on the right, No. 11 in the high back chair, looks very familiar — Bessie Love? The children interested me most for they are possibly alive today. I think Swanson was not there, for she would have dominated the entire photo if she were. Unmistakable beauty and personality.

It was a very fine article by Eddy Ethwell Hanson and a real treasure. I remember back as far as Mr. and Mrs. John Drew's comedy playlets.

I wonder if No. 22 is Warren Kerrigan or Bronco Billy Anderson? No. 35 has the Swanson nose, but a more mature look than Gloria. My favorite stars were Alice Brady and Clara Kimball Young.

Thank you for the happy memories the photo gave me.

Sincerely,
Esther Higgins
Collingwood, New Jersey

Letters to the Editors

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.

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

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.

Dear Editor:

Regarding Rosemary Bailey's comments via CATOE's activity report concerning more involvement of youth with our organization, I have to take issue.

Yes, in order to preserve our organization and its goals, we do need very much to bring in newer, younger members constantly. Every organization must to continue to exist. Theatre organ groups have a particular need, as there is an awful lot of physical labor and energy involved in installing and maintaining pipe organs and putting on programs with them.

However, the philosophy expressed by Ms. Bailey insofar as changing the traditional musical styling associated with theatre organ playing to attract younger people to the organization stinks, quite frankly. It doesn't show a very good understanding of today's youth and what determines their musical tastes and social habits. The rest of our American culture is already suffering from too much youth worship, to the point where we barely have any real culture left. Our infatuation with being "in," i.e. youthful goes hand in hand with the "newer is better" and "old must go," has been the cause of countless theatres and theatre organs being destroyed in the name of

"progress." ATOS, by its very nature, is never going to attract young people in mass, nor should it try to. Let's continue to strive for quality, not quantity, in our membership as well as our projects. We have had enough problems over the years with our professional and artistic standards and should not be lowering our standards just to try to gain a few young members.

As a step in the right direction, perhaps Ms. Bailey should do a little reading about what Jesse Crawford said about maintaining the clarity of the melody line!

Lastly, a big pat on the back to the Valley of the Sun Chapter convention organizers for putting on one of the best-ever conventions last November and for their generous donation to the Young Organist fund. Phoenix showed a lot of folks that a convention doesn't have to be long or complex to be good.

Sincerely,
D. Story
Tucson, Arizona

Dear Sir:

I was intrigued and delighted to see in the November/December 1985 THEATRE ORGAN the large group photograph of the Essa-

Dear Bob:

I'd like to comment on an important event that deserves attention: George Wright has released the first theatre organ compact disc (CD), "Red, Hot & Blue." For a number of reasons, every theatre organ fan who either has or is considering getting a CD player needs to buy this disc.

First, the sound quality is incredible. There's no surface noise, no pops — only music, along with an occasional panting trem in the background. In fact, you'll hear all sorts of subtle sounds that would normally be drowned out by tape hiss. This CD is your ticket to a private concert in George's home, a concert you can reprise thousands of times with no loss in sound quality.

Second, George's CD has five songs not included on the album, and they're not to be missed. Even if you have the album, you'll find the CD well worth the price just for these added goodies. In case you thought George might be beginning to slow down, spin this disc and hear a great musician at the height of his power, a man obviously having fun.

Finally, and most important, we need to support George's gutsy and risky decision to release a CD without knowing how many people would buy it. If we send a message that we want 21st-century reproduction of theatre organ music, we'll see more CDs. And believe me, once you hear the first one, you'll be anxiously awaiting the second.

Sincerely,
Gary Konas
Davis, California

Greetings:

Several times I have put pen to paper in response to Mr. Weisenberger's provocative articles. I have been able to restrain myself and

not mail my "two-cents worth" until this, my response to the dialogue between Mr. Berry and Mr. Weisenberger in the September/October 1984 issue.

First, I have no doubt that one can take a given whistle (or organ pipe) of some dimension, apply a slide rule, and have it wail over a wide range of wind pressure and decibel levels. I am confident that any organ man will tell you that tone, timbre and speech transients are a product of careful balance between scale, pressure, cut up, mouth width, material, shape, etc. Are we to believe that any given baroque organ can be carted to the largest outdoor arena, have a slide rule and larger blower applied, and have it sound exactly like it did in the studio?

Now, regarding Mr. Berry and the Hub Rink organ. I think a lot of credit is due to Mr. Berry here, credit which is at least 20 years past due. Mr. Berry and his recordings have exposed the non-organ-oriented layman to "popular" organ in greater numbers than anyone else, to the best of my knowledge. My blood boils when a person with limited knowledge (or limited taste) dismisses Mr. Berry by stating "He doesn't sound like George Wright," and dismisses the Hub Rink organ by stating "It doesn't sound like the — Pizza Parlor." Mr. Berry actually *created* a new kind of organ at the Hub, it just happened to have pipes. Am I alone in this observation? If more people would open their minds (and ears) they would know that Mr. Berry and his organ designing are so unique and refreshing that he, in fact, has no peers; he was and is a pioneer in this respect. Mr. Berry proved (with the Hub Rink organ) that an organ with a relatively few number of pipes playing at a high decibel level sounds nothing like an organ with a large number of pipes (pizza-style) at a similar decibel level.

Another person who is consistently overlooked by the theatre organ world is Hall-of-Famer John T. Muri. His high level of competence and professionalism is beyond reproach!

His style is probably the finest example of authentic pre-talkie theatre style remaining in the world today. While the ATOS professes to preserve history, traditions, etc., of the theatre organ, how can we ignore this living history in preference for the flashy or fleeting? Let us not forget that these beloved instruments were a part of the "show," they were never intended to *be* the show. Mr. Muri is a living remnant of the golden days of Crawford et al. I feel we should assess our direction; it is becoming more and more difficult to find anyone who will concede that Crawford was a talented musician.

I would like to comment on a subject which seems to surface periodically. Do people really think that if "Michael Jackson's Greatest Hits" are played on the local Wurlitzer significant numbers of the younger generation will suddenly be interested in theatre organ? I read this periodically in your journal. I feel that the youngsters who are truly interested in theatre organ also like the "old" music — theatre organ-era music. I feel this is why the theatre organ will live on — because there will always be

those who enjoy this type of music — not the "Top 40," ill-adapted to the theatre organ.

Now that I have probably alienated the great majority of my fellow theatre organ lovers, I can only state that my intent is solely to give credit where it is due, and to remember our roots; they are we.

Best wishes,
Gary Rickert
Oak Forest, Illinois

Dear Mr. Gilbert:

A friend here in the city subscribed to THEATRE ORGAN for me. The November/December issue arrived two weeks ago. I would think that it had been printed exclusively for me with all the interesting items in that one issue.

I live at the Flushing YMCA, directly across the street from Flushing High School. From the front steps here one can see two long blocks down to the RKO Theatre at Northern and Main, where Bernie Cowham performed. In my younger days (I was 75 on March 18) and from a neighboring town I would come to hear Bernie play. I did not know him, but I am acquainted with Lee Erwin and have met and corresponded with Don Baker.

Now think of this: Don Baker in a letter told me of beginning as a pianist at the original Flushing Silent Movie House on Main Street just two blocks from the RKO. Don Baker was here and gone by 1924 and Bernie Cowham came later in 1928 with the opening of the RKO. They did in time know each other but did not overlap while playing here.

Less than a mile further south on Main Street is the former Loew's Prospect, which had a three-manual Austin in the 1930s. Just over five years ago I went in to see what remained and the console looked like something from the *Phantom of the Opera*. The pipes were still there and Bob Atkins and Ken Ladner removed the console and what else they could and took it to Port Washington, Long Island. Later they used what they could and with another Austin console started to build the organ in Chaminade High School in Mineola, which you show on page 46 as an Austin-Morton console.

There were a lot of those Austins in smaller theatres, but they could never be completely removed because as I am told the windchests were built right into the theatre chambers. At Port Washington's Beacon Theatre the Austin was restored briefly by Atkins, Ladner and others, and Mrs. Atkins would play on it briefly Saturday nights between movies. She could never play very long because the projectionist would demand overtime if the second show went beyond midnight. In time the Beacon was "triplexed" and the Austin boarded up completely, never to be heard again.

Flushing High School across the street has a 3/34 Möller concert organ which I saw being installed in 1926 when I was a school kid and stayed after school to watch the erectors work. It had a stop tab engraved "Resultant 32." It has gone to wrack and ruin by this time, but the open console is still there, visible through the auditorium doors. Also the pipes.

Who else but me would know that in by-gone days the New York Board of Education had the money to install 21 pipe organs in the city's high schools? There were Möllers, Esseys, Wurlitzers, Skinners and others, and not one remains playable.

In "Nuggets from the Golden Days" there is a reference to Bernie Cowham. The daughter of George Harvey, Queens Borough President, was in my English class. Dr. Janes (not James) was principal and I remember him. Just two days ago I showed the magazine to Mr. Laurence Halleran, a bank vice president whose deceased uncle is mentioned as requesting a song from Bernie Cowham. That Mr. Halleran was in his time Mr. Real Estate of Flushing, New York.

Now Officer 1492, whom we all saw on the corner and knew was, of course, called "Chris Columbus." Mr. Arnold Gessner, a retired Flushing jeweler, told me that "Chris" probably saved Gessner's life many years ago by grabbing a runaway horse and stopping him as he was about to corner young Gessner. "Chris" was Italian and lived in Whitestone. He died about ten years ago. I saw the obituary, but don't remember his name.

You mention theatre organists named Baker. I knew or met two other Bakers but they were AGO members. Walter Baker who gave recitals on the relatively new Möller 4/72 at St. Paul the Apostle Church at West 59th Street and Columbus Avenue, near Lincoln Center. Dr. Robert Baker, formerly of Union Theological Seminary and now head of the School of Sacred Music at Yale in New Haven, gives recitals on the great Aeolian-Skinner in Woolsey Hall.

Of course, we know these great organs have mixtures and several ranks each, metal and wood that are genuine 32' stops and are giants by comparison with the theatre organ, but are they as much fun to play?

Has anyone mentioned that the present world's three largest organs are within 200 miles of each other? John Wanamaker's in Philadelphia, Atlantic City Convention Hall and West Point Chapel. West Point has in recent years exceeded the great organ at Passau, Germany.

Yours very truly,
George O. Smith
Flushing, New York □

Lance Johnson's Troubleshooting Guide Quiz Question

You find that you have a dead note on all stops on the middle F of the Accompaniment manual. Where would you look for the cause of this dead note?

Answer on page 56.

Questions and Answers

Lance Johnson will answer readers' technical questions by telephone. He can be reached at 701/237-0477 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time Monday through Friday, or in the evening from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at 218/287-2671. □