

are just off the Galeria. The Galeria is one of the most beautiful areas in the Biltmore with a coffered ceiling and three-dimensional sculptures as well as large surfaces covered with oil paintings set in a wheel mosaic and interspersed with bronze filigrees.

The Crystal Ballroom, which will be the scene of our banquet, has the most elaborate ceiling in the Biltmore. Mounted in its concave, domed surface is a single canvas of great proportion decorated with goddesses, cupids, satyrs and other mythical figures. Two mammoth crystal lighting fixtures, imported from Europe, are suspended from the ceiling to add a truly glittering effect.

Although these public spaces are designed after the palaces and cathedrals of Europe, the more than 700 guest rooms are newly decorated in bright colors with plants and hanging artwork (many by Jim Dine who is famous for his stylized depictions of hearts).

Yes, "LA's the Place," and the Biltmore is the perfect setting for the headquarters of our 1987 Convention. □



The Biltmore Crystal Ballroom where the Convention banquet will be held.

## Theatre Organ News From Australia



by  
*Bruce  
Ardley*



On August 17 an exciting event occurred when the 3/9 Compton was opened by Tony Fenelon at the Albert Hall in Canberra. This is the first theatre organ to have been installed in the capital city of Australia. This organ was installed in the Gaumont Palace Cinema, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, U.K. Purchased by the owners of the Dendy Cinema, Brighton, Melbourne, it was intended for installation in a new cinema, but the cinema was never built, and they sold it to the up-and-coming TOSA Society in Canberra. It was an appalling mess when purchased, and seven labourious years were spent on its restoration. The top manual is a coupler one, and the aim is to bring this to the requirements of a full "solo" manual. The instrument is controlled from a handsome white and gold console which looks stunning against the red velvet of the stage curtain.

Prior to the opening, the final regulation and voicing was carried out by organ consultant and builder George Stephens. George has a sympathetic approach to theatre organs and manages to obtain the best from them. Canberra's organ proved to be no exception.

The grand opening provided a wonderful

reward to all those who worked so hard and freely gave their time to the restoration and installation. The affair was very professionally organised, and it was obviously heartening to see the Albert Hall packed with people eager to listen. Quite a change for Australia's capital city which, for some time, has been famous mainly for its politicians spreading the gloomy message of our troubled economy. Featured artist Tony Fenelon provided the usual deft performance that we have come to expect and delighted his audience with an attractive and well-chosen programme. An attractive souvenir booklet of the Inaugural Concert, which includes a splendid colour photograph of the console, is available for the Australian equivalent of U.S. \$4.50, which includes postage. Order from: Theatre Organ Society of Australia, (A.C.T. Division) Inc., P.O. Box 367, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608, Australia.

We move to the Western Australia TOSA Division with its headquarters in Perth. The membership there has purchased the 3/10 Compton installed at present in the Purvisonic Sound Studios. This organ was first installed in the Plaza Cinema, Worthing,

Sussex, U.K., and migrated to Australia in the 1970s. The acquisition follows the death of the former owner who was a TOSA member.

Organist Tony Fenelon travelled from his home in Melbourne to Adelaide recently to give two theatre organ concerts in two days to appreciative audiences. The first took place on the 2/12 Wurlitzer (ex-Plaza Melbourne) installed in Wyatt Hall, Adelaide. The organ was in top condition, and it gave many of the audience great pleasure to hear it again. It had received fairly low profile whilst so much interest and activity was diverted to the Capri Theatre project.

The Capri Theatre provided the second venue for Tony to play the 4/16 hybrid instrument so interestingly installed there. Tony played many of the selections he had featured on his early LP recordings — particularly those made on the 4/19 Wurlitzer when it resided in Melbourne's elegant Regent Theatre. The South Australian TOSA, proud owners of the Capri Theatre, is having the console placed on a lift — quite an expensive undertaking, but the results will justify the cost. The first public concert using the lift will be by organists Tony Fenelon and Ray Thornley in November.

South Australia will be host for the next annual National TOSA Convention in Adelaide next Easter, commencing on Friday, April 17 and concluding on Tuesday, April 21. With currency rates as they now stand between the U.S. dollar and the Australian dollar, a trip to this country around convention time could be an attractive proposition. We hope that we can welcome great numbers of you people. For information about the convention, write to:

The Convention Secretary,  
Mrs. Bernice Larritt,  
Theatre Organ Society of Australia  
G.P.O. Box 595,  
Adelaide, 5001. South Australia

In June Dennis James again toured. This time with his associate, Thom Gall. As on



Father James Miller talks to his audience from the console of the 3/8 Style F Wurlitzer during his excellent concert at St. Michael's School Hall, Hobart, Tasmania. (Eric Wicks Photo)

previous occasions, Dennis impressed all with the quality of his musicianship and his entertaining presentation. Dennis and Thom played several concerts on this tour, and in Victoria, the concert was held at the Memorial Theatre, Ballarat. The 3/9 Compton there is a gem, and Dennis certainly knows how to use it. His accompaniments to Thom's singing provided a good lesson in what the art of accompaniment is all about. Please return and give us more great music, Dennis.

During August, the exuberant Father James Miller made a nationwide tour of Australia, including tiny Norfolk Island and then New Zealand. In all states, he wowed his audiences with his music and brand of humor.



Dennis James and Thom Gall relax after their concert at the Historical Memorial Theatre at Ballarat, Victoria. (Warrick Kittson Photo)

In Melbourne, he played the 2/9 Blackett and Howden at Village Cinema, Reservoir, and the 4/22 Wurlitzer in the Moorabbin Town Hall. Both different programmes and a very good number of people who attended the first concert turned up for the second, and loved it! Father Jim has the ability to involve his au-

dience in what he is playing. Apart from the concerts, he did at least one radio interview in each concert location, except in Hobart, Tasmania, where he had a quarter-page feature article in the daily newspaper. An extremely full tour, and we look forward to the next.

Another favorite organist is Australia's

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own David Johnston, who recently made the journey from Melbourne to Perth to play a silent movie and concert for the Western Australian Division of TOSA. From reports received, David obviously gave the audience a great time with his thoughtful arrangements and outgoing style of presentation.

Theatre organ has found its place back on radio in Sydney, New South Wales. TOSA Vice President Frank Ellis is presenting a weekly half-hour featuring tracks from overseas organists as well as our own. It is probably 30 years since a regular programme of theatre organ music has been broadcast in Australia. In Perth, past TOSA President Val McInnis is also presenting a half-hour show on FM radio with a similar format including current and coming events in the theatre organ world. Both men put a great effort into ensuring that there is a good spread of different playing styles.

That's all for now. □

## NUGGETS from the GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected  
by  
Lloyd  
E.  
Klos



This time, we incorporate items about well-known theatre organists from the pages of *Diapason* (D), *Metronome* (M) and local press (LP).

*August 1923 (M).* ALBERT HAY MALOTTE was born in Philadelphia and went to the Pacific coast several years ago, where he rapidly rose to the fore as one of California's leading organists. After playing in the large picture houses and receiving numerous offers from eastern houses, he came east where he is now featured at Shea's Hippodrome in Buffalo, New York.

Mr. Malotte is one of the few singing organists in the United States. For a number of years, the featuring of popular songs through slides has been in vogue in the west. It has only recently been introduced in the larger cities in the east, Mr. Malotte being a pioneer in this field. He is not only an authority on the organ, but a well-known teacher and songwriter of merit as well. Two of his recent successes were "After Every Party," and "I Cried For You," both published by Sherman & Co. We predict a great future for him.

*March 1925 (M).* C. SHARPE MINOR, the well-known feature organist, has been at the Rialto and Rivoli theatres in New York for four weeks. His original and interesting offerings were very well received and his demon-

stration of the organ was not only a complete exposition of the possibilities of that instrument, but it was also a practical lesson in music for the audience.

In this feature, which was called "The Organ," very well written and lucid slides defined what was meant by melody, accompaniment, bass and counterpoint, "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" being played.

Each of the stops was then displayed and the voices of the instruments were heard in characteristic music. The titles are very humorous. Of the clarinet, the following was said: "Lots of clarinetists, hearing how their instruments sound to an audience, have given it up and taken up bootlegging." The oboe was described as "an instrument which sounds like a motorman's glove tastes." The usual effects which a modern organ can create and a laugh-provoking series of tricks, imitations and dialogues completed the act.

Another feature was "Little Old New York." This treated of changes in fashions and customs, showed the development of the picture theatre, the passing of the horse, and the coming of the automobile. In telling this story with the organ, old melodies of years gone by were used and very vivid effects were secured.

*May 1926 (M).* An organist of the very first rank, and a pioneer in motion picture house music, is HENRY B. MURTAGH, who took command of the organ at the Rivoli Theatre, 49th Street and Broadway in New York, on Sunday, April 18.

Murtagh studied the piano under Godowsky, and in Springfield, Massachusetts, did concert work and conducted his own school of music. In the early days of motion picture houses, he realized the possibilities of the organ and was assigned to play the first large organ installed on the West Coast back in 1914, in Jensen & Von Herberg's Liberty Theatre in Seattle.

After two years in Seattle, Murtagh played for three years at the Isis Theatre in Denver. Sid Grauman engaged him in 1919 to open his new Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles and serve as assistant conductor. When Grauman opened his Metropolitan Theatre there, Murtagh was at the console. Murtagh's first vacation in 10 years was during the Metropolitan engagement, enforced by the fracture of his skull in a YMCA handball court.

From Los Angeles, Murtagh went to Buffalo where he was firmly entrenched for the past two years, endearing himself to patrons of the Lafayette Theatre by his novel entertainment on the 3/15 Wurlitzer organ.

Gifted with a keen sense of humor and knowing the public tastes enables him to create innovations which find ready listeners. Murtagh, moreover, is a believer of psychology, studying his auditors' moods, and continually striving to produce such entertainment from the organ as will synchronize with their attitude and with the screen presentations.

*June 1926 (M).* LLOYD G. DEL CASTILLO, organist of the Rialto Theatre in New York, received his musical education at Harvard from which he was graduated with hon-

ors in 1914. In his undergraduate days, he was conductor of the 50-piece Pierian Sodality Orchestra, secretary and co-founder of the Harvard Musical Review, and musical director and composer of one of the annual musical comedy productions of the Pi Eta Club. A "Fantasy on Harvard Airs" was written and conducted by him at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's pop concerts.

After graduation, he wrote the incidental music for a Biblical pageant, "The Chosen King," with which he toured two seasons as musical director. He was connected with eastern picture theatres as organist and musical director, but for the most part, in Boston where he was organist at the Fenway Theatre. During the war, he saw service overseas as bandmaster with the 302nd Field Artillery. In January, 1926, he went to Shea's Buffalo Theatre to open the largest Wurlitzer in the east, a 4-manual, 210-stop instrument. There he remained until called to New York for his present engagement at the Rialto.

He has written various short numbers, published by Belwin, Inc. and Jacobs, Inc., and two years ago conducted his own concert overture "Gonzalo de Cordoba," with the People's Symphony Orchestra of Boston, of which he was the organist. This overture was afterwards played at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's pop concerts.

*November 1930 (LP).* The Paramount Theatre in Lynn, Massachusetts, is showing Jackie Coogan, Mitzi Green and Junior Durkin in Mark Twain's classic *Tom Sawyer*. For his spotlight solo on the 3/22 Wurlitzer, ARTHUR MARTEL is presenting "A Wee Bit O'Scotch."

*August 1931 (LP).* BOB WEST is playing the 4/36 Wurlitzer in the Brooklyn Fox. Sam Jack Kaufman and his Band are featured in the pit.

*December 15, 1931 (LP).* The stage play *Once In a Lifetime* is being presented at Rochester's Auditorium Theatre. Organist ROBERT J. BERENTSEN plays "Hits From Hollywood" in a pre-show recital. (In January, the stage hit *Stella Dallas* was presented and Berentsen in the pre-show organlude played the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.)

*December 11, 1934 (LP).* The Laugh Clinic, supervised by Russell Pratt and Ransom Miles Sherman (later of "Club Matinee" fame from Chicago), known to thousands as the two doctors, will introduce their program from origination point, KMOX, "The Voice of St. Louis," from 10:30 to 11 a.m. They will be assisted by organist EDDIE DUNSTEDTER and Al Roth's orchestra.

*December 1934 (D).* PIETRO YON played a recital on the Möller organ for an audience of over 1800 in the Larkin Administration Building in Buffalo.

*GOLD DUST: 2/27 AL MELGARD* teaching at Barton Organ School, Chicago ... *5/27 ARSENE F. SIEGEL*, Chicago and Uptown theatres ... *6/27 LLOYD G. DEL CASTILLO* opens his organ school in Boston ... *7/27 Dr. MELCHIORRE MAURO-COTTONE*, New York's Capitol ... *9/27*