

ting the mood of his audience.

In addition to his work as a sales analyst at the Ford Motor Company Tractor and Implementation Division for 30 years, Lou was a regular church organist in Wyandotte, Michigan, where he lived. He was a member of the Masons, of Wolverine and Motor City ATOS chapters, the Detroit Theater Organ Club and, for 52 years, of the Detroit Federation of Musicians.

Lou will be sadly missed by all his friends.
DOROTHY VAN STEENKISTE

ROBERT C. JACOBUS

Robert C. Jacobus died suddenly at his home in Pollock Pines, California, on February 26 at the age of 71. He was the son of Leland Jacobus who, together with his brother, Niles (Babe), and cousin, Guy, founded the American Photo Player Company which later became the Robert-Morton Organ Company.



Robert C. Jacobus

Bob was born and raised in the San Jose, California, area and was a graduate of San Jose State University where he minored in music — his instrument was the trombone.

He worked with his father, starting at an early age, installing and servicing pipe organs in theatres and churches. He learned pipe voicing from his father and was an excellent tonal finisher, demonstrating exquisite patience and perseverance. He and his partner of 40 years, Judd Walton, maintained the 4/36 Wurlitzer in the San Francisco Fox Theatre for 18 years as a labor of love. He was also affiliated with the Wicks Organ Company for 25 years as their Northern California sales representative.

Bob was a charter member of ATOS and was present at the founding meeting of the organization. He loved the out-of-doors and engaged in hiking in the high mountain country and rafting on the mountain streams.

He is survived by his wife, Lucille; two sons, Bob and Tom, and five grandchildren. He leaves a host of friends and will be sorely missed as a good-natured, generous and devoted friend.

JUDD WALTON □

Theatre Organ News From Australia



by
*Bruce
Ardley*



WHO was the youngest person ever to play a theatre pipe organ in public as an integral part of the theatre's program for a season?

My vote goes to four-year-old Moya McCrackett who, in September, 1938, was featured playing the grand piano and 4/21 Wurlitzer in the largest theatre in the Southern Hemisphere, Melbourne's State, during the four-week run of the Deanna Durbin/Herbert Marshall film, *Mad About Music*.

Several weeks earlier, Moya had created a sensation by playing piano on the nationwide Shell Show, which led to her State Theatre engagement with Bert Howell and his band. After playing a group of piano pieces, Bert would take tiny Moya in his arms to the front of the band for her "perfect pitch" demonstration where she would correctly name the notes struck at random by the band's pianist. Moya would then run around the apron stage to the front of the band to the Wurlitzer console where organist Arnold Coleman would assist her to the bench. She would then play

two short pieces, both hands on the Great manual. The great stretch for her closing chord on the third manual brought laughter and thunderous applause.

Let us now go back ten years to 1928. At that time Walter Burley Griffin's magnificent futuristic Capitol Theatre was Melbourne's major film showhouse — but three great new cinemas were planned — the superbly elegant Regent, the neo-Spanish Plaza and the State. A rivalry developed between the two major theatre chains — Hoyts with the Regency and Union with the State — as to which would have its masterpiece completed first. A large team of building tradesmen working around the clock, seven days a week, saw the State grow at a staggering rate. The entire building was completed, ready for opening, in seven months — a wonderful example of detailed planning and integration of trades without the supposed advantage of modern technology and computers.

A 4,000-seat house, the State had the

The ornate facade of the State Theatre. Still standing in 1987, very little has changed. (From Ian Hanson collection)





This one says it all. Taken in 1938 when Bert Howell and His Band re-introduced stage shows at the State. Note the apron stage which was subsequently removed. (From Ian Hanson collection)

largest capacity of any cinema ever built in this country. In 1938 the seating was reduced to 3638 when an apron stage was built around the front of the orchestra and organ pits to ac-

commodate the stage presentations with roaming conductors and singers with roving mikes.

The State opened on February 23, 1929,

just prior to its rival, Regent. The press went into raptures about the interior: "The stage itself — a mass of splendid color — the vivid, everchanging face of the auditorium — heads moved and turned — the starry sky transporting the impressionable from a mere theatre. Here is a grove such as Aristophanes might have played in, a garden in which Dante might have dreamed of his Beatrice. A garden of the deeper emotions — that was the State on Saturday night." On stage was a lavish presentation; the State Unit Orchestra of 30 musicians conducted by Leon Rosebrook, the State Stage Band, specialty acts, the State Corps de Ballet and, for good measure, two organists. American Frank Lanterman at the main console and Miss Renee Lees at the second console presented "The Battle of Music." The organ had, in fact, been opened to the public earlier in the day by Sydney organist Arnold Coleman, who played an overture and accompaniment to the films for the morning session, including Clara Bow's *The Fleet's In*.

Arnold Coleman was assistant organist until Lanterman returned to the States after 18 months. Coleman held the post of chief organist until February 1940. Except for a day off now and then during that time, Coleman did not take a holiday for the eleven years. In the early 1930s he began a regular half-hour

GREATER UNION'S

STATE

THEATRE

Direction:
Greater Union Theatres Pty. Ltd.
Norman Bede Rydge
Chairman of Directors
H. A. Snelling - General Manager
E. Lawrence - House Manager
D. Jewell - Advertising Manager

PROGRAMME

1. Arnold Colman entertains at the Wurlitzer Grand Organ.
2. The National Anthem.
3. Herald-Cinesound News Review.
4. The State presents its Associate Feature:
"THE MAN WHO CRIED WOLF"
A Universal Picture, with
LEWIS STONE ■ BARBARA READ ■ TOM BROWN
(Approved by the Censor as Not Suitable for General Exhibition)

INTERMISSION

5. Arnold Colman entertains at the Wurlitzer Organ.



Arnold Colman watches Moya McCrckett playing the State Wurlitzer.
Edwin G. Adamson, photo.

6. An Exclusive Preview of Our Next Attraction:
DANIELLE DARRIEUX in "THE RAGE OF PARIS"
7. **BERT HOWELL AND HIS BAND** presents:
"MILLIONS IN NOTES"
Introducing on stage—
(a) Afternoon Sessions Only—
BABY MOYA McCRAKETT
Four years old, yet she plays the Piano and Organ;
(b) Evening Sessions Only—
SAMMY FIELDS, "Shell Show" Comedian
8. The State Theatre and Universal Pictures present:
DEANNA DURBIN
in
"MAD ABOUT MUSIC"
with Herbert Marshall, Gail Patrick, Arthur Treacher
(For General Exhibition)



Bert Howell,
Conductor of
Australia's
"Ace" Theatre
and
Broadcasting
Band.





Arnold
Colman,
Chief Organist
and National
broadcasting
favourite.

ARE YOU LISTENING TO SUZ AT 7.15 P.M.
EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY
FOR MACK'S "DEANNA DURBIN" QUEST?

Centre spread of The State Theatre program for Friday 23 September 1938.

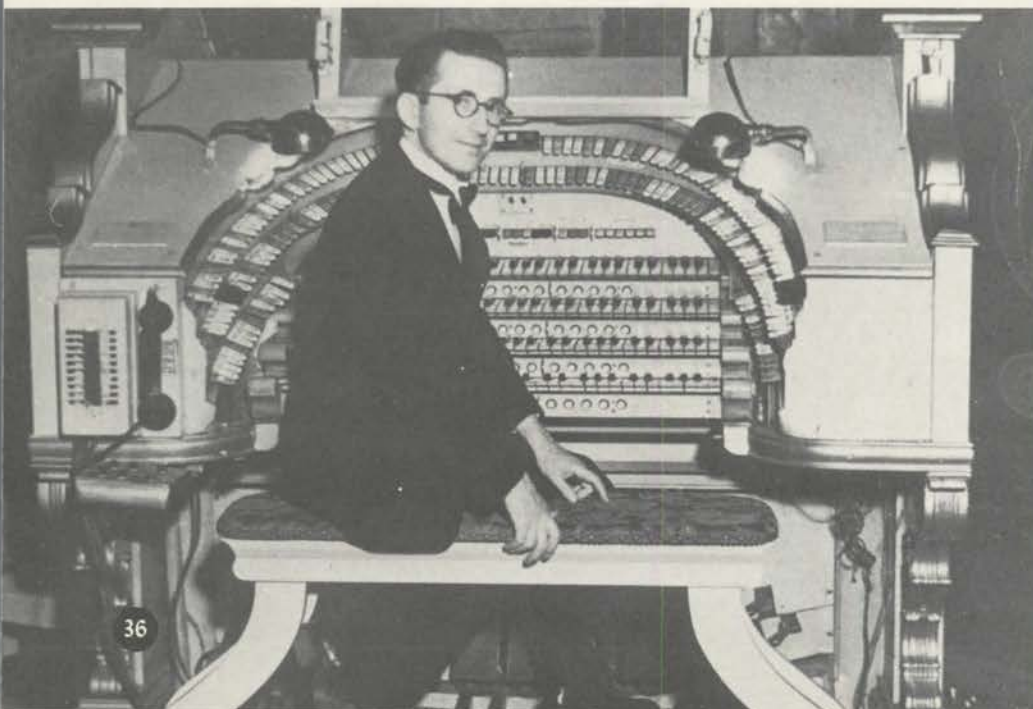


Australian Arnold Coleman was assistant Frank Lanterman at the State. Coleman remained until 1940.



Frank Lanterman from the USA was chief organist at the opening of the State and remained there for 18 months.

Aubrey Whelan followed Arnold Coleman with a sixteen-year residency at the State. Small shelf below intercom unit contained controls for elevator and turntable.



radio broadcast every Sunday afternoon, and he and the State organ built up a huge following throughout Australia during the many years it aired.

The State struggled on through the Depression, but in 1933 the orchestra was disbanded, leaving Arnold Coleman to play solo for the next five years until Bert Howell and His Band were pirated from Hoyt's Capitol by Union Theatres in 1938 and stage presentations were reintroduced to the State. At the same time, organist John Barrett from the (by then) Greater Union's nearby Majestic Theatre, manned the second Wurlitzer console to play organ duets with Coleman for the season of the long-running *100 Men and A Girl* and the following season.

One interesting happening occurred during Coleman's residency. He arranged with Plaza Theatre organist Victor Riley to exchange the State's Oboe Horn rank for the Plaza's Krumet. Even though this was only one rank of the 21, the frequency with which this distinctive stop came to be used gave the State organ its own identifiable "sound."

Aubrey Whelan, who succeeded Coleman, remained until 1956. During WWII the State, like many other entertainment centers, played its part in maintaining morale with spectacular stage presentations often featuring artists of international renown. Attendance remained good, and the organ continued to be broadcast, although not as frequently, until the mid-fifties when the first drive-in cinemas and television started the first decline. The State, a vast building to maintain, was starting to look tired. Many of the stars which had twinkled over the multitudes for so many years ceased to do so when they blew a bulb, and the cloud machine no longer sent its magical images across the expanse of sky.

The management hired New Zealand organist Iris Norgrove to succeed Aubrey Whelan in 1956, but television had arrived and the super cinema, like many other houses, suffered a tremendous jolt. The Wurlitzer descended into the pit one night in 1957 and stayed there. In 28 years there had been only four resident organists. Occasionally the organ was used when a religious group hired the theatre for a rally, but otherwise it languished in silence.

The organ was advertised for sale in 1963, shortly after the State was twinned and re-named Forum and Rapallo. Gordon Hamilton, then president of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia, Victorian Division, was the successful tenderer and removed it with the help of members. In 1968 he sold it to the City of Moorabin, a Melbourne suburb, for installation in its town hall. TOSA Victorian Division undertook the task of re-installing the organ, and since the official opening concert by Lyn Larsen in 1970, the organ has been heard in numerous concerts by leading Australian, English, American and New Zealand organists. It has made a major contribution to

THEATRE ORGAN WANT ADS
GET RESULTS!

many civic functions and has been used successfully to provide the music for TOSAVIC's annual Balls for fifteen years. After April 1987 it will be used monthly for ballroom dancing on lines similar to those of the Blackpool Tower.

The State closed its doors as a cinema on June 29, 1986, when it was bought by the Revivalist Church. When the building was twinned, the smaller cinema was entirely enclosed in the balcony area, leaving the stalls almost intact. The original proscenium remains as it was in 1929, and the organ and orchestra elevators still sit at the bottom of their respective pits. It is understood that the church has no plans to alter the property.

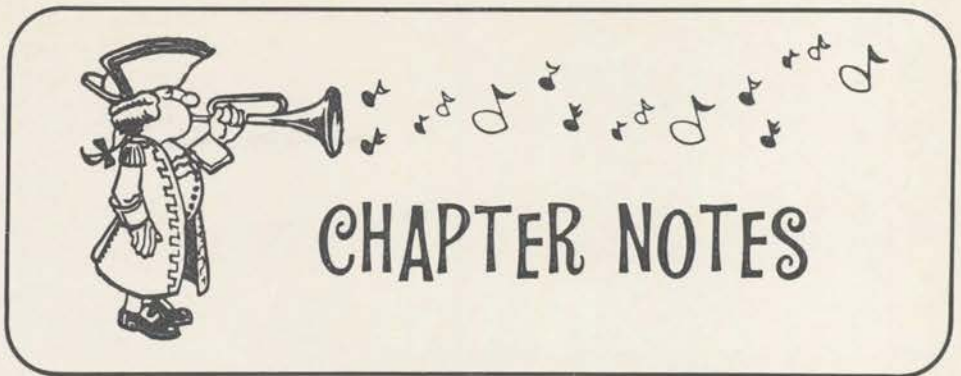
A bit of good news is the recent re-opening of the 3/15 Wurlitzer formerly installed in Hoyt's Regent in Sydney. John Atkinson purchased the organ in 1968, and for eighteen years has worked, with the assistance of friends, to restore this fine instrument to its former glory. The organ is installed in a 22 x 48 music room in John's specially constructed home in the Sydney suburb of Hurstville. The room has been decorated in theatrical style and will seat about eighty people. Restoration and regulation of the instrument have been carefully carried out with the idea of retaining the original sound that so delighted audiences at the Regent.

The sad news is the recent closure as a cinema of the great State Theatre in Sydney. There is a National Trust classification restricting any proposed alterations or redevelopment of the area, and the present owners are using it as a convention center. The 4/21 Wurlitzer, the only one left in Australia in its original setting, may be used on occasion. Alan Tranter, a fine organist, has been featuring and maintaining the instrument for the past five years, but much of the organ does not work because it has lacked professional care for the past twenty years and there has been much water damage to the Solo chamber.

Currently in Victoria, Bill Glasson and his team of dedicated volunteers maintain and are constantly adding to the organ in the Dallas Brookes Hall. A hybrid instrument, it is controlled from a three-manual Compton theatre console and has 14 ranks of theatre pipework. The latest addition is a set of Compton metal Tibias, which sound great. Much work has to be done before the organ can be considered complete, including a section of "straight" pipework. Dallas Brookes Hall, one of Australia's major concert auditoriums, was built as part of Melbourne's Masonic Centre. No effort was spared to ensure that the acoustics were as near perfect as possible. When completed, the organ should prove to be one of the most effective in the country.

At the Brighton Twin (formerly Dendy) Cinema, the famous 3/15 Wurlitzer is playing again in its new home. The organ switching was made solid-state during the renovation, and this is now working 100 percent. The only major job to be done is the regulation, to be started the end of February.

Goodbye, until next time. □



ALABAMA Birmingham

205/942-5611 or 205/664-3606

February and March gave our chapter members an opportunity to relax and enjoy some very nice music amidst all the work going on in Birmingham.

February's meeting gathered us to hear local member (and new father!) Mark Landers at the Alabama Theatre's Wurlitzer. His jazzy styling and fresh arrangements brought life into some familiar tunes. Mark borrowed one of his infant son's newest toys and played several nursery rhymes and children's songs accompanying a musical "duck" on the Wurlitzer.

March brought one of our crew's long-time favorites, Rick McGee from Atlanta, back to the Alabama. An enthusiastic and relatively large crowd enjoyed Rick's fourth program in as many years as he played favorites and some requests of the audience.

GARY W. JONES



ALOHA Honolulu

808/696-4533 or 808/523-9079

Through the efforts of our capable program director, Raphael Ai, January 25 found guest artist Tom Sheen bringin' down the house at the Hawaii Theatre. Always a favorite with our chapter, Tom played an inspired concert which began with his console-up number, "Another Op'nin', Another Show," from Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*, which has become somewhat of a signature tune for him. Tom's style and arrangements keep the listener on his toes wondering just how many chord progressions his left hand will infuse into the accompaniment of a relatively simple melody; his rendition of the jazz ballad, "Angel Eyes," demonstrated this to a point. At a reception in the club room following the show, he gave away a few secrets about his



Alabama Chapter member Mark Landers at the console of the "Red and Gold." (Gary W. Jones photo)



Rick McGee at the finale of his March performance in Birmingham. (Gary W. Jones photo)