

Pipes & Personalities

The Railroad and Movie Nostalgia Program in Sacramento

by Ed Mullins

"Engineer" Bob Vaughn got *The Great K & A Train Robbery* back on the tracks Sunday, March 24, in Sacramento, California. The silent film, starring Tom Mix, was de-railed January 20 when a massive power failure in Sacramento cancelled the show. The railroad and movie nostalgia program was sponsored by the California State Railroad Museum Foundation; Pacific Coast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society and the Sierra Chapter ATOS. The proceeds were split three ways to support the groups' various projects. Vaughn, in keeping with the mood of the program, was dressed as a locomotive engineer complete with a long-spouted locomotive oil can. Bob played *Railroadin'*, an Our Gang Comedy and *Sailors Beware*, featuring scenes on Los Angeles streetcars, before the main feature. The auditorium of Sacramento's Grant Union High School is equipped with a 4/20 Wurlitzer, with a Balcom & Vaughan console. Dave Moreno had the organ in top playing condition, with some last-minute tuning before the show. George Wright is a graduate of the high school and installed the organ when he was a student there. The Tom Mix film was shot in Colorado's Royal Gorge and had many exciting steam locomotive sequences.

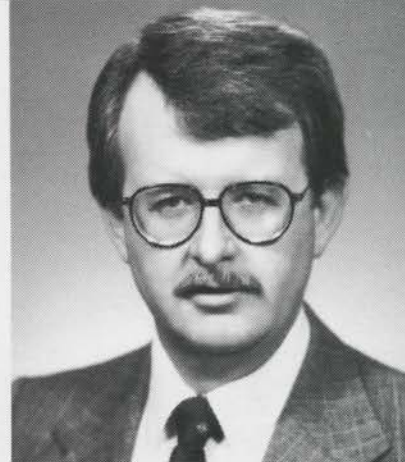
Bob Vaughn oils up the 4/20 Wurlitzer console prior to the Railroad & Movie Nostalgia program. Antique oil can was from the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad.



Simon Gledhill in the Green Room of Paramount Theatre, Oakland, California, before his concert at the 4/27 Wurlitzer. Ed Mullins photo

Gledhill At Oakland

British organist Simon Gledhill returned to the console of the 4/27 Wurlitzer at the Paramount Theatre, Oakland, California, on Saturday March 23. His console raiser was Bronislaw Kaper's "San Francisco" coupled with "California, Here I Come" complete with fog-horn effect. He played pieces from *Hans Christian Andersen* and tunes by Eric Coates and Ray Noble, concluding with a note-perfect "Dance of the Hours." Simon's boyish charm and English accent captivated the audience. The second half opened with "Stein Song" and contained tunes by Jerome Kern, Louis Mor-dish, Cole Porter and a selection from Sigmund Romberg's *Student Prince*. His final number was Richard Rodgers' "Slaughter on 10th Avenue," which was terrific. For an encore he played a rousing "Tiger Rag." Gledhill departed the next day for Sydney, Australia, where he played for the Theatre Organ Society of Australia National Convention during Easter weekend. Simon and Phil Kelsall, "The Best of British" played the 3/17 Wurlitzer at the Orion Centre, Campsie. Ed Mullins



Dan Hall

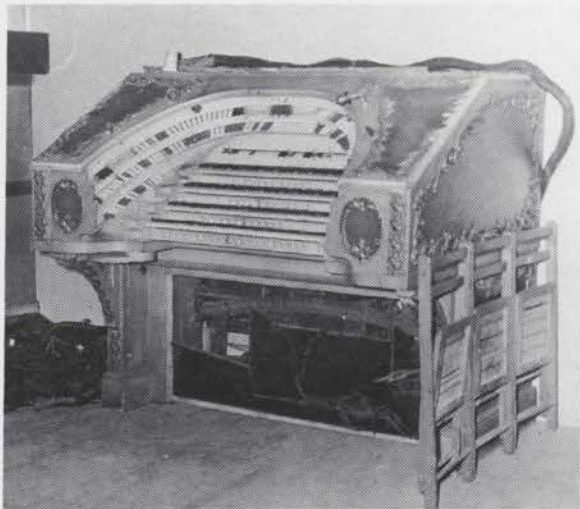
Customer Service Manager Named at Rodgers

Robert Ulery, President of Rodgers Instrument Corporation, recently announced Dan Hall's promotion to the newly created position of Customer Service Department Manager. Dan has been credit manager at Rodgers since 1984. He has done an excellent job managing Rodgers receivables and, for the past eighteen months, he has incorporated the customer relations job as part of his duties, which include order processing.

Because of Dan's background and having worked intensely with Rodgers' planned order system, he is uniquely qualified to fill this position. His immediate task is to focus on planned processes and procedures to give Rodgers dealers/distributors and end users the best service possible to ensure Rodgers is the most successful and sought after organ manufacturer in the world.

Rodgers Instrument Corporation of Hillsboro, Oregon, is noted as one of the world's largest builders of pipe organs and also as a world leader in the manufacture of electronic classical organs.





Wurlitzer console as it came from the theatre. The original finish — plywood, plaster and red lacquer.

*At right: Arcadia console after refinishing.
Phil Eng photo*



The Ten-Year Gap

by O.H. "Bill" Holleman

Whenever I read about the Oakland Paramount organ that was once in Detroit's Broadway Capital Theatre, I am distressed that some of its history is omitted, the "chapter" about the ten years when the organ was part of my life. First, a bit about myself; I was operator/organist at the Arcadia Roller Rink from 1950 to 1967 and Northland Roller Rink from 1967 to 1989, both in Detroit, Michigan. I used to sit in the center of the Arcadia skating floor and listen to George Wright Hi-Fi records on Voice of Theatre speakers that sat up on the stage, and I would dream about having a pipe organ there. The Arcadia had been built and used as a ballroom (circa 1930). Its acoustics were ideal for pipe organ sound as the ornate plaster ceiling was about 60 feet high and the skating surface approximately 75' x 165'.

I also played several stints at the Fox and Fisher theatres in Detroit. We originated Reel Rhythms Recording Company, a monthly service providing Hammond organ taped music to skating rinks.

Now, for the lost ten years of the 4/20 from the Broadway Capital Theatre. I purchased the organ in 1957. It took 19

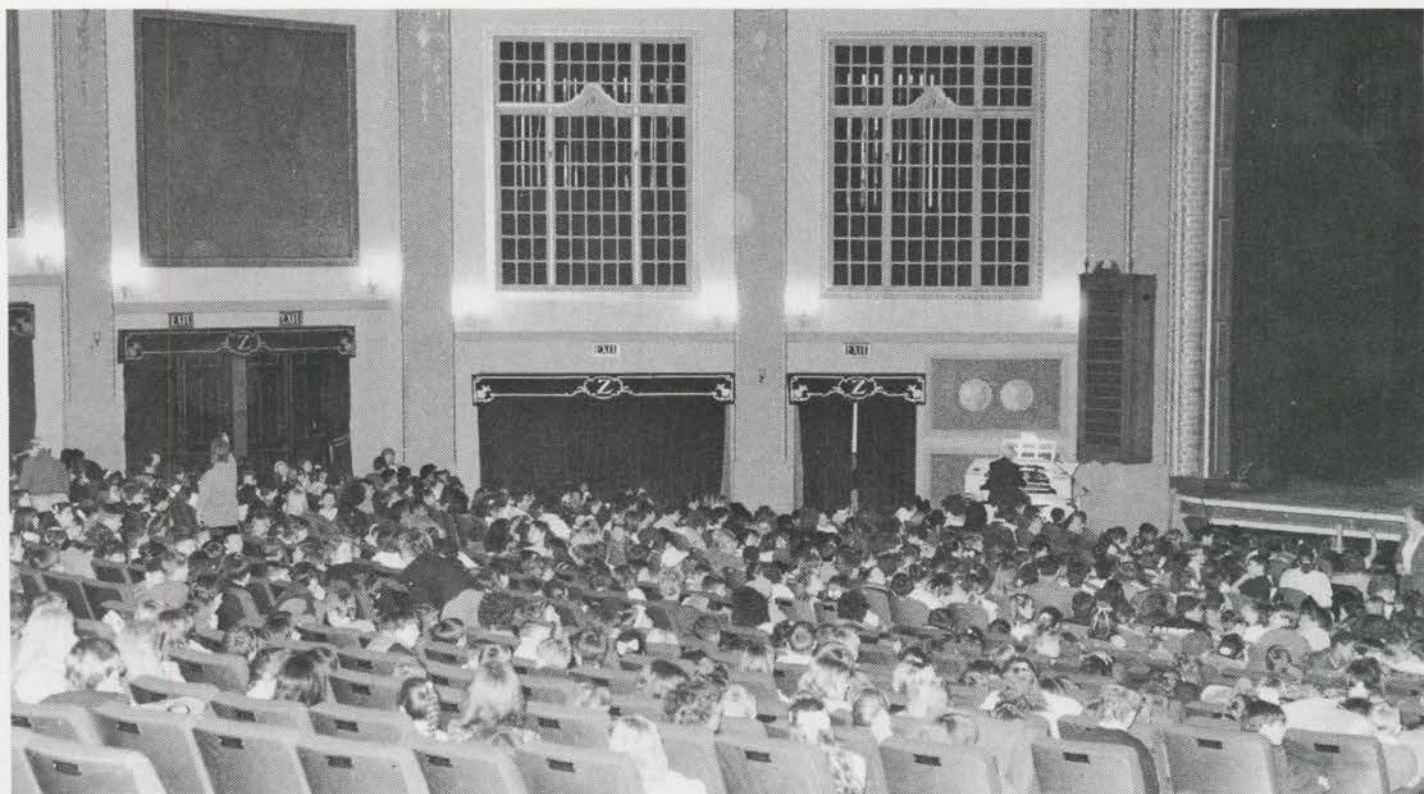
days to remove it from the theatre and nine months to re-leather all the chests and reinstall it in the chambers on the stage of the rink. The stage was at the far end of the skating floor and an ideal location for the pipe chambers which were directly above the central steam pipes. Incidentally, a heavy rug pad covered the right chamber while the organ sat deteriorating in the theatre. It probably had not been used regularly for a good 15 years, since the mid-1940s. Surprisingly, very little had to be done to the relays. The 15 hp, AC motor was driven by a 20 hp, DC motor until the Detroit Edison Company converted our building to alternating current (the last such project done in Detroit at Edison's expense). The console was stripped of its plywood and plaster cover to reveal a cream-colored console. After many gallons of paint remover, we refinished it to a beautiful cherry mahogany. Some job!

Through a friend, we contacted Jim Walsh, the Moller salesman, and purchased the English Horn from the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City. We substituted one Vox for the horn. We later traded the Brass Saxophone to Roger

Mumbrue for his Marr & Colton English Horn which was more suitable for rink music.

At Arcadia we hosted several Michigan State Roller Skating Meets and several regional meets, plus a spot in the ATOS Convention in 1957. Organ buffs Clare Dunham and Ed Lansing helped with all the installation as did many other dedicated friends without whose help it would not have been possible. And for all the memorable times that followed, it was more than worth all of the time, energy and expense. The sound was absolutely phenomenal! It served the Arcadia skaters for ten happy years. There was something truly magical about skating to the sound of theatre pipes — nothing quite like it anywhere on earth.

The partners with whom I joined to form Northland Roller Rink in 1967 did not share my love for pipe organ music. Consequently, the 4/20 Publix was put up for sale. The organ was sold to Dave Junchen; he, in turn, sold it to several persons and it was finally purchased by Mr. Nethercutt of California who subsequently gave it to the Oakland Paramount Theatre which has been its home ever since.



Zeiterion Theatre.

Zeiterion

The 2/8 Wurlitzer reinstalled two years ago in the Zeiterion Theatre in New Bedford, Massachusetts, is now used several times a month for educational presentations for area school children. A half-hour concert is presented prior to the stage show and is usually attended by 800-1000 school children. They enjoy the music, often singing along with the organ. Teachers report that the children ask many questions about the theatre organ when they return to the classroom.

R.E. Reilly

A Trip To Frankfurt

by Len Rawle

The Frankfurt National Film Theatre caters to those interested in established vintage films. A basement theatre seating 140, it is fully equipped with every type of projection equipment from way-back-when to six-track digital sound-around systems . . . yes, the Germans always do things with great attention to detail. The six-rank Wurlitzer (Tibia, Diapason, Flute, Salicional, Vox Humana and Style D Trumpet) is a sweet sounding vintage instrument installed in one chamber on the right of the stage. The neat, two-manual console is on the left, and as you enter you can take in the atmosphere of movie presentations as they used to be.

The organ, opus 1920, was destined for the Union Theatre, Munchen, Gladbach, but was repossessed and found its way to

the Lido, Hove, until it went into a holiday camp on the South Coast, and from there to Frankfurt. It has been well-installed by Walkers, with the exception that the blower is far too small making careful stop registrations necessary to avoid an embarrassing loss of tone, pitch and tremulation.

The dedicated team of the small KOC (Kinema Organ Club) are improving the organ each time they can gain access for a show. Following the fitting of an American electronically controlled tremulant which does not waste too much air, things are now much improved. At my suggestion, an octave coupler and a 16' Trumpet have been added, and it is now a very presentable instrument.

At the film theatre a video of the organ's construction was shown to area organists. I then followed with a public concert. There is something special about the genuine enthusiasm of the German public who have heard so little traditional theatre organ technique.

I also had the pleasure of visiting an amazing home-built, three-rank organ (console, pipes and listening area) in a four-metre square basement room. Unbelievable! Sven Wortmann is the young man responsible for this amazing achievement. He has copied Wurlitzer regulators and tremulants and used old church organ chests plus a few doctored ranks (Tibia, String and stopped Flute) fully extended at all pitches and all mutations. It sounds quite superb, and bears out my belief that the right size organ in the right size room

can always sound magnificent. It has a MIDI connection, and a Yamaha tone module effectively provides subtle reed tones from a speaker within the tiny chamber. So here we have a young man who, by his own efforts, is now an acknowledged expert in organ construction and finishing — a very real asset to Germany.

A second surprise was found in the home of Ralf Krampen, his parents and grandparents, in the mountain village of Brey. Housed in a magnificent studio at the rear of the house is the former three-manual Regal, Putney, Compton of seven perfectly regulated ranks (Tibia, Diapason, Flute, String, Vox Humana, Muted Trumpet, Tuba) and a recently added Wurlitzer Chrysoglott. In all my travels I have never seen such attention to both technical detail and presentation — a quality installation. The Krampens are a plumbing family, so perhaps I should not have been so surprised at the total absence of wind leaks in the chamber . . . I really did not believe they had turned the organ on. I take my hat off to Ralf and his father and thank them for hanging the Union Jack out to greet my arrival. The 30 guests were very appreciative of both my efforts and the opportunity to view such a quality installation.

The KOC is a small group at present, but they are steadily popularizing the theatre organ in Germany and deserve all possible success and support. Perhaps one day they will have their own installation that they will invite the world to see.

LATOS Rode The Rails To Oakland!

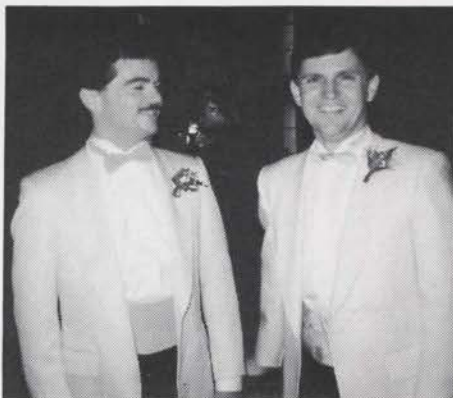
*"This was so much fun!
Let's do it again next year!"*

That's what each of the 25 LATOS members said as they left their private car in Los Angeles at the end of their three-day, 1,000-mile rail trip to Oakland for the April 27 Ron Rhode/Clark Wilson concert at the Paramount.

The private car, Colonial Crafts, was built for the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1949, one of eight buffet-lounge cars used in their deluxe service between New York and Chicago. Rod and Ellen Fishburn bought the car in 1985 and had it completely refurbished inside and out so once again it sparkles in its gold and tuscan red colors.

Our car was attached to Amtrak's Coast Starlight for the trip — 14 cars pulled by two diesel engines. Highlights of the trip were the more than 100-mile stretch along the Pacific's shore, passing close to the space launch pads at Vandenberg Air Force Base, climbing 1,000 feet up the twisting Cuesta Grade north of San Luis Obispo, the run through the lush Salinas Valley, "going to sea" on the Milford cut-off between San Jose and Oakland (with the Bay on both sides of the train) and the run down the center of the street through Jack London Square as we entered Oakland.

Of course, not to be omitted was the highlight of the trip — Ron Rhode and Clark Wilson at the dual consoles of the 4/27 Wurlitzer in the magnificent Paramount Theatre.



Clark Wilson and Ron Rhode greet their fans following the concert. *Maria Olivier photo*



Ralph Beaudry relaxes from videotaping the trains program. *Maria Olivier photos*



Don't Ask At The Box Office

On a recent visit to New York, as always, I made time for the Music Hall. Also (as always) while at the box office, I asked if and at what time the organ might be featured that day. I found you can no longer do that. From the cashier, a stock answer "we have no schedule on the organ." Hesitating at the lobby door, I overheard the couple following me (obviously tourists) get the same answer. It is reported that when they did give out a schedule, there were too many disappointments due to no-show by the organist, maintenance problems, union regulations concerning conditions under which the organ should be played and a maze of other reasons. Undaunted, I thought when I get to the lobby I might find a doorman who might know about the organ. However, once in the huge lobby where three-story-tall golden drapes subdue the reflections of light from the skyscrapers across the avenue, and a grand staircase at the opposite end seemed to go all the way to heaven, one is busy enough deciding at which level to enter the auditorium.

On the main, just under the second row of the second balcony (best place to hear the organ in this hall) I might get lucky. I did! At the end of the production the screen was lowered reflecting a varied array of coming attractions and the fact the theatre would be closed to the public on a certain day due to the Grammy Awards show being staged there. Then, an amber spotlight found the organ console and turned it to gold as it came into view from an alcove at overture level, stage left. For almost 12 minutes from a parabolic ceiling finished in a terra cotta simulated sunburst cascading from the proscenium all the way to the rear of this 5000-seat theatre — a sound, more beautiful than a cathedral choir or a thousand canaries — The Wurlitzer. The organist? Who knows? Would he play "Hello, Young Lovers" again at the next intermission? I didn't even ask.

Leaving the theatre with the blazing neon on its glittering marquee overtaking the Manhattan twilight, I had a feeling of conquest. These days, theatre productions come on stage, have their stay and go away to another theatre, taking their music with them. On this day, I was lucky again. I was able to hear the sound of this great theatre, a sound which, as long as there is an ATOS should never go away. But don't ask at the box office . . .

John Mecklenburg



Group shot of LATOS members alongside Colonial Crafts. Owners Rod and Ellen Fishburn are at the left.

Balfour Blasts Belt

Upon reading a Critic-at-Large column in the Newark, New Jersey, *Star Ledger*, by Music Critic Byron Belt, Garden State member Bob Balfour was stunned by the man's opening statement:

"The pipe organ remains the supreme king of instruments, and all but one electronic organ are mere attempts to imitate the authentic instrument of Bach, Vierne and Dupre. That single non-pipe instrument worthy of admiration is the Mighty Wurlitzer of movie palace fame."

There was more to the column, but by this time Balfour was incensed. His reply, in part, reads:

"Dear Mr. Belt:

I am sure your mailbox is somewhat overflowing with indignant response to your feature, 'Organ comes (back) into its own as concert instrument.' And I am sure that you know by now that the Mighty Wurlitzer PIPE organ does, indeed, have pipes just like its classical counterpart. It might be of further interest to you that the man responsible for the theatre pipe organ, Robert Hope-Jones, was a telephone engineer and was the inventor of a host of technological breakthroughs that have not been equalled to this day, such as remote electrically controlled consoles, unification (extending or borrowing) to expand the ranks and get more organ for less cost, etc.

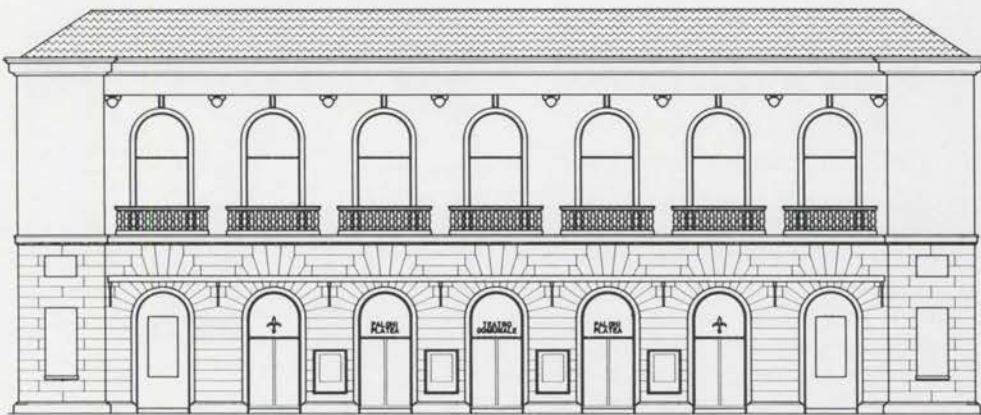
If you are so moved, the American Theatre Organ Society is holding its annual convention in San Francisco this July. We have been convening in cities across the country for one week out of every year for the past 36 years to celebrate and enjoy the only true American musical instrument, the theatre pipe organ, and its music and to further its continuing place in American music.

The theatre pipe organ is the first stereo sound system, the first computer, the fruition of the one-man band, and the father of today's synthesizer.

We invite you to join us, and we would be most happy to show you inside a theatre pipe organ that you might see for yourself that there are no loudspeakers!"

Banda Records announces two new CDs to be released this fall:

One is a new recording by George Wright on his studio organ. The second is a digital remastering to laser disc of the original recording done by George Wright on the Chicago Theatre Wurlitzer.



The Allen Organ Company has installed a large three-manual organ in the Teatro Comunale in Florence, Italy.

Allen Installs Large Organ in Italian Opera House

The Allen Organ Company has installed a three-manual instrument of 79 ranks in the Teatro Comunale in Florence, Italy. Florence has been a European cultural mecca since the city's emergence as the center of humanism in the 15th century. The Teatro Comunale is the center of opera in Florence, where the genre originated in the late 16th century.

The organ in the Teatro Comunale was designed to meet many requirements specific to its use. It had to be portable, and it had to fit in minimal storage space. It had to be designed so that stage hands could set it up and take it down with ease. The console nomenclature had to be in Italian. In addition, it had to have three special sound effects for use in operatic productions: wind, thunder, and cannon.

Allen's engineers designed a three-manual organ with an Italian console on a dolly. The speakers were grouped in two hinged columns mounted on their own permanent dollies with attached chocks. The console was outfitted with plug-in connectors, so that set-up could be accomplished in a matter of minutes. The *pieces de resistance* of the organ, however, are the wind, thunder, and cannon stops, which offer frighteningly realistic digital representations of these effects.

The organ was dedicated by Claudia Termini, Professor of Organ and Composition at the Conservatory of Parma, known for her performances throughout Eastern and Western Europe, South America, and Japan. The dedicatory program included works by Bruhns, Bohm, Clerambault, J.S. Bach, and Mendelssohn.

For further information on this and other Allen installations, contact the Allen Organ Company; Macungie, PA 18062-0036; tel. 215/966-2202.

Allen Mills

A Musician of Remarkable Talent

Theatre Organ Shows

Classical Recitals

Silent Film Accompaniment



THEATRE ORGAN FEATURES

Theatre Organ Pops

The Theatre Organ Goes Hollywood

The Theatre Organ on Broadway

The Magic of Make Believe

*The Phantom Strikes Again
...And Again*

Christmas with Allen Mills

Christmas Show Consultation

On the West Coast:
Allen Mills
#28A, 245 West Colorado Blvd.
Arcadia, CA 91007
(818) 445-4174

On the East Coast:
Jacqueline E. Mosher
30 Cypress Drive
Scotia, NY 12302
(518) 399-7681