

The New World Revisited

By Keith Phillipson

In May 1962, organist Jeffrey Barker and I paid a visit by charter flight to New York, intent in the main on visiting as many organ spots as we could in the time available.

This initial "trail blazing" seems to have started something of a regular stream of visitors, for Mike Candy followed in October 1962 (though that first visit was initiated before he knew of our first visit), and then Jeff and I, with Reg Mander and Ivor Holland, again met Mike in New York in May 1963!

This year we arrived in New York in the early hours of Friday, May 17, just over a week after Mike Candy had arrived, and who by this time was in the Buffalo area and well on his travels. We renewed acquaintance with Ben Hall at his office the same day, and on Saturday met Jack Ward again at the Radio City Music Hall, and witnessed the stage show from the wings of the stage. Following this, we had an hour or more on the Radio City Music Hall Studio organ, in which the playing members of our party, Jeff and Reg, were able to enjoy themselves at the console. Ivor and I are strictly listeners, though Jeff and Reg refer to us as "critics," amongst other things!

Sunday, May 19, was the day of the ATOE Delaware Valley Chapter meeting at the 19th Street Theatre, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and the fact that we were able to get there was due to the hospitality of Tom Borroughs of Brooklyn, who hired a car for the day and drove us over. The organ here is a 3/7 Moller, saved some years ago by local enthusiasts who moved the console to the right of the theatre when the stage was extended over the orchestra pit to accommodate stage shows..

BLUE NOTES (concluded)

isn't an organist, per se. He just wants to restore the Wurlitzer and own it because he loves it. Of course he will make his own music, too.

"I can hardly wait to touch that comparatively small Wurlitzer. (It has little in common with the Fox organ.) Its ivories at my fingertips again after 36 years will throw me for sure. But I am certain that I've forgotten nothing. I couldn't. All I know now is that I've been dead ever since theatre organs were junked from theatres. I feel as if I were to be given another chance at life. Even though I have to go all the way to Los Altos to taste it again . . . briefly.

"All right. So I'm nuts. 'Scuse it, please."

EDITOR'S NOTE: We'll be bearing more from this little lady.

The next item on the ATOE agenda that day was a visit to the Allen Organ Company's factory in Macungie, Pennsylvania. After a most excellent "country style" meal at the Village Inn, Tom took us over to the John Reidel residence in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Reidels own a fabulous 3/32 Wurlitzer which was terrific to hear and which incorporated an effective artificial echo device. All good things must come to an end, however, and it was all too soon time to return to New York, which we eventually did, despite running out of gas in the Lincoln Tunnel!

Last year we were most impressed with Reg Watson's 3/17 Wurlitzer in his home in Manhasset, Long Island, and on Monday evening we were again made most welcome by Mr. and Mrs. Watson,

and the Wurlitzer sounded just as impressive as we remembered it. Reg Watson was the designer of the Five Manual Moller Concert Organ built to Reginald Foort's desires, now the B.B.C. Theatre Organ in London and, alas, for sale.

Prior to leaving for New York, Reg Mander had been in contact with Captain Erwin Young, the ATOE Eastern Region Vice-President, and the following afternoon we travelled by train to Philadelphia to meet him. This was the start of a pretty hectic three days. That evening we visited the Sedgwick Theatre, Germantown Avenue, Mount Airy, a suburb of Philadelphia. The 3/19 Moller, a most excellent instrument, was in the last stages of rehabilitation by members of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the



Lem Keller residence Organ, 3/12, Frederick, Maryland. Left to right are Kick Kline, Ivor Holland, Reg Mander, Keith Phillipson. Lem Keller at console.



Wanamaker Store, Philadelphia. Left to right: Keith Phillipson, Reg Mander, William Ruff (organ maintenance engineer), Jeffrey Barker, Ivor Holland, and Organist Mary Vogt.

ATOE, and preparations were being made for a public concert, which was given on June 5 by Leonard MacClain. We were indeed thrilled to meet MacClain, who came down to the theatre whilst we were there to see how things were progressing. I must make mention here of Leonard's wife, Dottie, who made us welcome at both Allentown and the Sedgwick.

Before leaving Philadelphia, we just had to see one of the sights of the area, organ-wise of course. This was the six manual Concert Organ in the John Wanamaker store in the city centre. Much has been written and said about this huge instrument but not enough, I feel, about the little lady who plays it! This is Miss Mary Vogt, who has been playing there, almost daily, since 1917.

Immediately after hearing this colossal instrument, we travelled by car with Erwin to meet Dick Kline at the Tivoli Theatre, Frederick, Maryland. The organ here is a 2/8 Wurlitzer, watched over by Dick, and our arrival coincided with the break between the afternoon and evening film performances, which allowed us access to the instrument. After an excellent meal at Dick's parents' home, we returned to the Tivoli for Jeff to play the show-break and then we visited the Lem Keller residence for a session on his impressive, home-built, 3/12 unit organ. Dick then invited us to his own home for a record session before we eventually returned to his parents' home to spend the night. At the present time Dick is having a new home built to house the Wurlitzer organ he has recently bought from a cinema in Washington.

The next morning Dick drove us through Washington to Alexandria, and to Erwin Young's home, Erwin having returned from Frederick the night before. Erwin's own 2/7 Wurlitzer was in beautiful voice and Reg and Jeff were able to have a go before it was time, reluctantly, to bid farewell to Dick Kline. We were now joined by Frank Myers, and Erwin drove us further South, this time to Richmond, Virginia, where two of the most fabulous Wurlitzers in the World are to be found. These are the 3/17 at the famous Mosque Civic Centre and the 4/17 at the Byrd Theatre.

Tommy Landrum and Dick Barlow were waiting to meet us at the Mosque and for the next two hours or so, the organ was ours. I cannot properly describe in print the tremendous thrill I felt on hearing this truly amazing organ in this magnificent five thousand-plus seater auditorium. The near perfect acoustics were ideal for the sound and it was a hard job to get Jeff away from the console.

In the evening we were privileged to meet Eddie Weaver and hear his interlude at the Byrd Theatre. Eddie has been resident organist for nearly two years now, following almost twenty-five years at the now silent 3/13 Wurlitzer in Loew's Theatre, Richmond. After the

Fall 1963



Stanton Theatre, Baltimore, 3/31 Kimball. Jeffrey Barker at the console.

Byrd Theatre had closed for the night, we returned there, by the kind permission of Bob Coulter, manager of the beautifully kept theatre. This session lasted well into the early hours of the morning and again, as at the Mosque, it was nearly impossible to get Jeff off the console!

However, time was getting on and we had a long journey in front of us. It was farewell to Tommy Landrum, chief custodian of both organs, and Dick Barlow, as we commenced our journey back to Alexandria.

Friday, the 24th of May, was just about the busiest, and certainly the longest, of the holiday. Actually I think it lasted into the following Monday! At the Alexandria Roller Skating Arena, Alexandria, Virginia, Jimmy Boyce, the organist, is installing the former Center Theatre, New York, 4/34 Wurlitzer. The pipework is being placed on a shallow balcony across one end of the hall, with the console to the right hand side. At the time of our visit 21 ranks and the traps and percussions were installed, un-enclosed, although only 9 ranks were playing. However, even with only the 9 ranks in operation, the sound was pretty fantastic, and the end product should certainly be well worth seeing and hearing.

Returning to Erwin's for a meal, we had a brief farewell session on his Wurlitzer before continuing on our journey and making for the Wendell Hill residence in Silver Spring, Maryland, to hear their 2/5 Marr & Colton organ. Here Ray Brubacher was waiting to greet us with Mrs. Hill, and later Mr. Hill arrived too. Unfortunately we did not have long enough here before we had to make our way to Baltimore, and the Stanton Theatre.

The Stanton possesses a fine 3/31 Kimball organ, at present being restored by a host of workers led by Dick Haffer. Outside the theatre is displayed an interesting notice, which, I feel, is worth quoting in full:

"AFTER A DECADE THE STANTON THEATRE AGAIN RESOUNDS WITH THE VIBRANT TONES OF THE GIANT STANTON ORGAN Every Friday and Saturday nights and Sunday Afternoons BOB PIERCE AT THE CONSOLE"

We were in good time to meet Bob Pierce and hear the first of his two interludes -- and the poster was right, the theatre did resound!

Afterwards, we made for the State Theatre, Baltimore, where, within minutes of our arrival, Jeff found himself on the console doing the show-break! The manager had cut out a portion of the film program to enable the organ to be fitted in. This organ has been restored in recent times by Ray Brubacher and sounds in excellent trim. Following this unexpected highlight, we returned to the Stanton Theatre to hear Bob Pierce again.

It was now, alas, time to say goodbye to Erwin Young, who had gone out of his way to arrange a fabulous three days for us and to drive us several hundred miles in the process. After Erwin left, we remained at the Stanton until the early hours of the morning, sampling further the delights of the beautiful Kimball before we had to catch the 3:30 a.m. train to New York, which eventually left 45 minutes late!

Saturday evening saw us at an informal gathering in Ben Hall's apartment, where we met Mike Candy, who had, by that time, returned to New York from his own "organ crawl." We were also delighted to meet Raymond Shelley and Bob Foley from Kansas, who were at the start of a three month holiday tour to Europe. After sampling Ben's two manual Estey Reed Organ (electronically blown) and several records and tapes, and dining out, we made our way to the Beacon Theatre, New York, which possesses a beautiful 4/19 Wurlitzer, at present undergoing restoration by a local enthusiast, Bon Smith, who is on

the staff of the Aeolian-Skinner organization.

This session was in the "late" early hours of the morning and only left us a few hours sleep before the next event began. This was at the old Paramount Theatre, Brooklyn, now part of Long Island University. The auditorium was in the process of being stripped and altered to serve as both a gymnasium and assembly hall. The stage and its facilities are being retained, and, what is more, so is the Mighty Wurlitzer! It is a magnificent instrument of four manuals and twenty-four ranks of pipes with two consoles. The second console is disconnected and pushed backstage, but is expected to be overhauled, with the rest of the instrument, and placed on a trolley, instead of a lift, at the right side of the pit where it was formerly to be found. The main console remains in its original position on a lift at the left side of the pit, but as the stalls floor has been raised to stage level, and covers the pit, provision has been made for a section of the floor to be movable, in order to allow the console to be brought into view. The grilles and drapes in front of the four chambers on either side of the proscenium have been removed, revealing the swell shutters and now, we understand, the organ sounds better than it has ever done in the past.

Bob Mack had arranged an informal meeting for local enthusiasts and we were treated to a far-too-short session of his own excellent playing which showed the organ off to advantage. However, there were many other players present and Raymond Shelley, Bob Foley, Jeff and Reg were able to have a go.

From here, we visited Peter Schaeble's residence in Rosedale, Long Island, where with the help of his two friends, Johnny de Paris and Johnny Francini, he was installing a 3/13 Robert Morton in a specially built extension to his home. The installation is progressing well and the work done so far on the chests and pipes is so immaculate one could be deceived into thinking it was a brand new organ they were building!

At Ben's instigation, the next event resulted in our travelling to Summit, New Jersey, to meet well known Jay Quinby of "Orgiphone" and river boat fame. At his residence he has a three manual straight organ with four ranks of Wurlitzer pipes. He also has on display a fine looking four manual straight organ console, its sole use at the moment being that of a reading lamp!

A musical evening by the local Musical Appreciation Society was in progress when we arrived, and later, as their own organist was unable to be there, Bob Foley volunteered to accompany a soloist playing, appropriately, the "Trumpet Voluntary." This led to Jeff being prevailed upon to play (I'll never know why) the Toccata in D Minor by Bach. It opened in a legitimate manner but, with tongue in cheek, it

soon became something entirely different and "Barker's Toccata Rock" would, I think, have been a more suitable title! I'm not really sure how much the Musical Appreciation Society appreciated this, but one could imagine some of the dear ladies picking up their 'cellos and leaving! Thereafter the evening took on a somewhat lighter nature!

The following day it was time to say goodbye to Mike Candy who had come to the end of his holiday and was returning to England and home. However, Jeff, Ivor, Reg and I had a few more days and

we next visited Carl Weiss who is installing a pipe organ in his home to be played from a Link three manual console. After showing us the developments so far, he took us to the Pitkin Theatre in Brooklyn to try the 3/13 Robert Morton organ he has recently put into playing condition. The Pitkin Theatre is built in the "atmospheric" style with Spanish villages and carvings around the walls and proscenium. The theatre is in excel-

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RECORD REVIEWS

"MASTERS OF THE CONSOLE NO. 1"
Featuring Eddie Weaver at the Wurlitzer in the Richmond Mosque, No. 1 of a Series. Produced by Tibia Records.

This recording is the first offering of a new company whose goal it is to provide the finest in recorded theatre organ music. In kicking off the enterprise with this particular recording, the company is off and running in good shape.

One could put this disc on the turntable without looking at the label, and upon hearing the first chorus make two obvious conclusions. First, the organist is a real "pro" who knows his way around a Wurlitzer, and second, the organ used is in the Richmond Mosque.

The organist, Eddie Weaver, is one of the select few who has been able to make a profession out of playing theatre organ in theatres within the past few years. In fact, Eddie was featured for over 20 years in Loew's Theatre, Richmond, Va. He is currently playing at the famous Byrd Theatre, scene of the 1961 ATOE Annual Meeting in Richmond, Va.

His playing features those smooth glissandos so pleasing to the ear of a theatre organ enthusiast, and his registrations which bring out the sonorous solo voices of the theatre organ are a real joy to hear.

There is no way to disguise the tone of the famous Mosque Wurlitzer. The peculiar acoustics of the Mosque give this installation a tone that is different from all others. The engineers on this recording took advantage of the "house" echo to give the recording liveness so often missing in studio recordings. To this reviewer, there is almost too much of the "house" in one or two places. Incidentally, this recording was made with an audience of 5000 present, acoustically enhancing the performance.

Selections included are: Overture, Poet and Peasant; Fascination and Tales from the Vienna Woods; Waltz in C-Sharp Minor (Chopin); A lovely French medley - I Love Paris, Mimi, C'est Magnifique, Moulin Rouge, Can Can; improvisation on The Sailor's Hornpipe; and a medley of Tenderly, Diane, Char-

maine; Waltz and Angel's Chorus (Faust); The Typewriter Song; and You'll Never Walk Alone.

Mechanically this is an excellent disc, with the pressing being done by RCA of Canada. It was recorded on Ampex PR-10-2 equipment using two Altec M-30's, one Sony C-37A and two Altec 1567A mixers. This reviewer listened to the recording in monaural form and found it excellent. It is also available in Stereo, and as a stereo release of any record is generally superior to the mono version, this disc should meet the demands of almost any listener.

The record is presently available only by mail from TIBIA RECORDS, Box 668 Ladner, B.C., Canada. Mono - \$4.40; Stereo - \$5.40. Prices include postage and customs duty.

FAREWELL TO THE FOX, Vols. I & II, Tiny James & Everett Nourse, organists. Fantasy Records, stereo 85013 & 85014, mono 5013 & 5014, \$4.98 each.

On hand are two Fantasy releases providing true accounts of the majestic sounds which originated from the four chambers of the now demolished San Francisco Fox Theatre. Up to now, the public has been offered records which suggest what the four manual Wurlitzer might have sounded like. At long last the organ lover can buy two albums which combine fine playing and faithful reproduction of the Fox organ. Nothing seemed to have mattered except to capture the organ itself. Tiny James and Everett Nourse are always in full command of this giant instrument; it never escapes them. Add to all this a full color photo, seven other photos, four pages of commentary, and you come up with the most handsome album jacket ever to grace one's collection. While this reviewer would desire more bass response to do complete justice, the fact remains that these albums are by far the best to be issued in many a year. One listening will entertainingly demonstrate why these albums have met instant success. The record collection lacking these recordings is missing an important chapter in theatre organ history.

theatre organ

console is carried to the middle of the platform when a recital is to be given, and removed out of the way when the platform is wanted for other purposes.

As all the old mechanism—the backfalls, roller-boards and trackers—is now swept away, it is possible by placing the bellows in the cellar to utilize the inside of the organ for a choir-vestry, as was indeed done with the pioneer Hope-Jones organ at St. John's Church, Birkenhead.

The perfecting of tubular pneumatic and especially of electro-pneumatic action has lent wonderful flexibility to the organ and has allowed of instruments being introduced in buildings where it would otherwise have been impossible to locate an organ. Almost all leading builders have done work of this kind, but the Aeolian Company has been quickest to seize the advantage of division in adapting the pipe organ for use in private residences.

SOUND REFLECTORS

Sound reflectors have recently been introduced, and it seems likely that these will play an important part in organ construction in the future. So far, they appear to be employed only by Hope-Jones and the firms with which he was associated. It has been

discovered that sound waves may be collected, focussed or directed, much in the same way that light waves can. In the case of the Hope-Jones organ at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, the greatest part of the instrument has been placed in a basement constructed outside the original auditorium. The sound waves are thrown upward and are directed into the auditorium by means of parabolic reflectors constructed of cement, lined with wood. The effect is entirely satisfactory. In Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio, Hope-Jones arranged for the Tuba to stand in the basement at the distant end of the nave. Its tone is projected through a metal grid set in the floor, till, striking the roof of the nave, it is spread and fills the entire building with tone. In St. Luke's Church, Montclair, N.J., he adopted a somewhat similar plan in connection with the open 32-foot pedal pipes which are laid horizontally in the basement. We believe that the first time this principle was employed was in the case of the organ rebuilt by Hope-Jones in 1892 at the residence of J. Martin White, Balruddery, Dundee, Scotland.

COUPLERS

In the days of mechanical action, couplers of any kind provided a source of trouble, and

added greatly to the weight of the touch. The natural result was that anything further than unison coupling was seldom attempted. In some organs, hardly any couplers at all were present.

In the pioneer organ built by Hope-Jones in Birkenhead about 1887, a sudden advance was made. That organ contains no less than 19 couplers. Not only did he provide sub-octave and super-octave couplers freely, but he even added a Swell Sub-quint to Great coupler.

Hope-Jones appears to have led in adding extra pipes to the wind chest, which were acted upon by the top octave of the octave couplers, thus giving the organist a complete scale to the full extent of the key-boards. He made the practice common in England, and the Austin Company adopted it up on his joining them in this country.

STOP KEYS

We believe that the idea of employing keys to bring the stops in and out of action, instead of the draw-stop knobs, originated with Horatio Clark of Reading, Mass. He applied for a patent covering the invention in the year 1877. Hope-Jones, however, is generally credited with introducing the first practical stop keys. He invented the forms most largely used today, and led their adoption in England, in this country, and indeed throughout the world.

On a modern Hope-Jones console, the stop keys are arranged in an inclined semi-circle overhanging, and just above the keyboards.

There is much controversy as to whether stop keys will eventually displace the older fashioned draw knobs. A few organists are strongly opposed to the new method of control, but the majority, especially the rising generation of organists, warmly welcome the change. It is significant that whereas Hope-Jones was for years the only advocate of the system, 4 or 5 of the builders in this country, and a dozen foreign organ-builders, are now supplying stop keys either exclusively or for a considerable number of their organs.

PEDAL BOARDS

In most American organs built 20 years ago, the compass of the pedal board was only two octaves and two notes, from CCC to D. Sometimes, two octaves only. Later, it was extended to F, 30 notes, which is the compass generally found in England. Following Hope-Jones' lead, all the best builders have now extended their boards to G, 32 notes, this range being called for by some of Bach's organ music and certain pieces of the French school where a melody is played by the right foot and the bass by the left. The chief reason is that G is the top note of the string bass, and is called for in orchestral transcriptions.

PEDAL STOP CONTROL (Suitable Bass)

For a long time, no means whatever of controlling the Pedal stops and couplers was provided, but in course of time, it became the fashion to cause the combination pedals or pistons on the Great organ (and subsequently on the other departments also)

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lent condition, as in our experience was so often the case -- only the organ having really been neglected.

Again, this was an early-hours-of-the-morning visit, but we were still fit enough to visit Mr. and Mrs. Reg Watson in Manhasset the following evening for another session on their lovely WurliTzer.

Our second "return visit" of the holiday was to the fantastic Radio City Music Hall, this time to see the whole show from the third mezzanine. With a lavish stage spectacle, full length feature film, fifty piece symphony orchestra, Jack Ward at the Grand Organ, no advertisements, no sales interval and no records -- what more could you want? There are still three organists on the Music Hall staff, Dick Leibert, Raymond Bohr, and Jack Ward, with John Detroy as deputy.


On our last day, Friday the 31st of May, we paid a visit to a theatre which Jeff and I had twice visited on our previous holiday. This was the stately Loew's Kings Theatre in Brooklyn, with its magnificent 4/26 "Wonder Morton," still in pretty good order, though seldom used. The ATOE actually had had a meeting here only a month before our visit. On the last day of our 1962 holiday, Jeff opened the show in public and, in fact, he can now rightly say that, in a period of twelve months, he has played

theatre pipe organs in America, in public, on three occasions!

And so a truly memorable holiday came to an end. Peter Schaeble drove us to Idlewild Airport, but not until he had treated us to a meal on the way. Jeff was presented with the most enormous ice-cream any of us had ever seen -- surely enough for a dozen people, but then he had displayed a liking, and gained a reputation, for the stuff quite early in the holiday, and I suppose it just served him right!

I would like to express on behalf of my colleagues and myself our appreciation to everyone we met over there for making us so welcome and, by their untiring efforts, ensuring that we had a really wonderful time. It is impossible to put into cold print just how we feel, but the feeling is there just the same. Thank you all.

As a postscript, I would like to add that, during the few days Raymond Shelley and Bob Foley were in England, they were able to play quite a few organs in the London area. On the 12th of June, when they visited Manchester, we were able to arrange for them to play the Publix No. 1, 4/20 WurliTzer at the Odeon (Paramount) Theatre, the 4/14 WurliTzer at the Gaumont Theatre, the 3c/9 Christie at the Carlton, Salford, and, two days later, the 3/19 WurliTzer at the Odeon (Paramount) Theatre, Leeds.



REAL STEAM CALLIOPE RECORDINGS

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