

# TORONTO SPLURGES

by Clealan Blakely

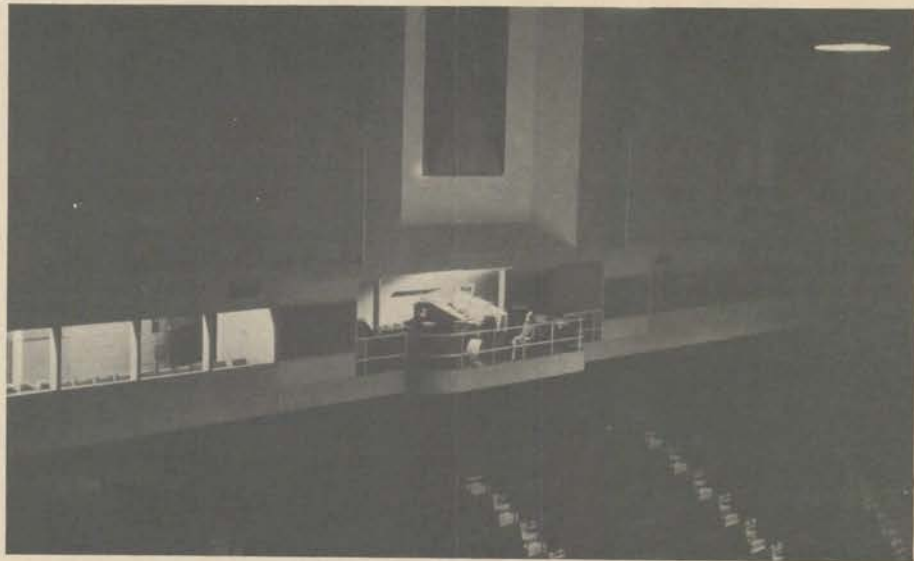
Three live organ concerts and a tape session of the late Quentin Maclean's recordings were the features of an excellent ATOE meeting in Toronto last November 16 and 17.

On the 16th both American and Canadian ATOE members converged on the city and first thing that afternoon made a pilgrimage to the home of Annette Maclean in Leaside to hear tapes made by her late husband. Included were those of the memorial broadcast which was presented on the Canadian network a few days after his death, and selections on the famous Trocadero WurliTzer in London, as well as the Shepherd's Bush Pavilion and Regal Marble Arch. His amazing versatility was evident in this group of selections ranging from popular to classical. In several numbers the left hand unison-off techniques perfected by Jesse Crawford was used most effectively.

Some classical numbers, played on the 2m/24r Casavant in Holy Rosary Church, were included, as well as excerpts from his famous "Nocturne" broadcasts.

After dinner at "The Inn in the Park," there was a great rush to get to the Northern Secondary School auditorium to hear Don Baker play the new Conn Theatre Organ. Introduced by Kathleen Stokes, well known Toronto theatre and broadcasting organist, Don quickly demonstrated Conn tonal capabilities.

Following the concert a large group of members drove to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Clare Snelgrove, where an hour of electronic contentment was spent listening to impromptu solos and duets on the Hammond and Kinsman organs.



Console of the Maple Leaf Gardens WurliTzer is high above main floor, as shown above, in special niche below a large portrait of England's Queen Elizabeth.

Next morning at 10 we assembled at Maple Leaf Gardens to hear Ronnie Padgett at the 5m/21r WurliTzer. This vast auditorium puts the organist at a disadvantage — the console is about half way up the south wall, with the organ above, and the audience a couple of hundred feet away. However, with the public address system, Ronnie was able to M.C. his program, which proved most enjoyable.

His opener, "Orpheus in the Underworld," and then "Granada," built up to a thrilling full ensemble; then the solo voices came into their own for an Irving Berlin medley. The piquant Kinura gave just the right touch to his arrangement of "Greensleeves," then the Tubas took over for "76 Trombones" building up again to full ensemble into "You'll Never Walk Alone."

One of Ronnie's most amazing numbers was his arrangement of "Tico, Tico." After introducing it at regular tempo, he told us he would do one chorus at half the speed, one octave lower; one chorus at double speed, one octave lower; one chorus at double speed, one octave higher; then finish with a high speed chorus at normal pitch. This proved to be a real show stopper; the high octave chorus was done on the eight-foot ranks only.

Padgett later complimented Stu Duncan on the lightening speed of the action, which made possible his unusual presentation of the selection.

A very effective medley of Al Jolson favorites, making full use of the Strings and Solo Tibia, and a final thriller in Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor" provided a fitting climax. The 32-foot Diaphones had been connected for the occasion and added to the effect.

Following this excellent event, it was only a few steps west on Carlton to the Odeon Theatre, where, even though we

were early, we were greeted by a six-foot high sho card reading "The Odeon Carlton Welcomes the Niagara Frontier Chapter, American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts." Victor Nowe, genial manager of the Carlton, was responsible for the poster.

Organist Colin Corbett opened his concert with "Intermezzo," a Tuba solo, string and flute accompaniment, then adding orchestra bells for "Getting To Know You." A predominantly Tibia ensemble was effective for "The Boy Next Door" followed by a sprightly arrangement of "Dancing Tambourine," with Strings, Reeds and Xylophone.

Not by any means the least effective



Theatre Organist Colin Corbett Stands Beside Big Poster Put Up By Management.



Ronnie Padgett at Maple Leaf WurliTzer Console.



Colin Corbett at Carlton Hillgreen-Lane.

part of this Odeon concert was the assistance from the staff in the presentation of the organ. The beautiful contour curtain, softly lighted in subtly changing colors, made a perfect frame for the blond console, and Colin's white jacket picked up the changing colors of the arc spot from the projection booth.

Most of the concert was done in ensemble style, and as far as I could see, on the Great and Solo manuals only — the Orchestral perhaps still had a cipher, as it did the last time I played the instrument.

However, this concert certainly gave the younger members a good idea how organ presentations were done in the theatre organ era in the luxurious comfort of a beautiful movie palace.

#### Future of Organs Questioned

At this writing the fate of the 3m/19r Hillgreen-Lane is rather uncertain, since the Odeon is being converted to Cinerama. The screen will not cover the chambers, but will hide the present console alcove.

Unfortunately the future of the 5m/21r Wurlitzer in Maple Leaf Gardens is also in doubt pending a decision on the extension of the north and south walls to project over Wood and Carlton streets, making possible the installation of 4,000 additional seats. If this happens the organ has to come out or be moved — something of an extensive project that might be too costly.

After dinner the party split up, most leaving for home, others attending the Tivoli Odeon or Imperial Theatres to see the shows as guests of the management. The party arrangements had been under direction of Fred Trebilcock and John Holleywell, and the two men received extensive praise for their efforts.

Some of us still hadn't had enough, so we met John Holleywell downtown at the Imperial Theatre to inspect the rebuilding of the 4m/28r Warren which is now underway. John led us up a vertical iron ladder that seemed to me to be 100 feet high. We ultimately arrived at the high level blower room and got a look at the Solo and Orchestral organs. Chests and pipes have been cleaned and appear to

Spring '64

## Younger Set Plays Silents

Southern California now has two "cinema" organists — famed Gaylord Carter, who is known far and wide for his Flicker Fingers presentations, and lately, one of his pupils, Bob Alder, Jr., of La Canada, Calif., who has mastered the tricks of the master and manages to turn in creditable performances accompanying silent films.

Young Alder, a member of Los Angeles Chapter ATOE, early in April played the organ accompaniment for the Lon Chaney film "Phantom of the Opera" in the large Saxon Auditorium at Pasadena City College. He was schooled in picture cuing by Carter as a part of his regular lessons and played the same film at the Pasadena John Muir High School last year. His silent film training was learned at the console of the South Pasadena Rialto Theatre 216 Wurlitzer.

It is interesting to note the Alder family is completely "organ-ized": Bob's father, an electrical engineer, is head of LA ATOE's Wiltern Theatre Kimball maintenance program; his mother, an AGO member, is assistant organist to Gaylord Carter at the Church of the Lighted Window, in La Canada.

be in excellent condition. The old DC-powered blower, bulky and obsolete, is being replaced with an Orgoblow from the Tivoli. The relay is hopeless and will require complete replacement.

We climbed on over the procenium to a catwalk over the main ceiling; it was a bit scary on this swaying catwalk, past the huge dome in demi-darkness, but we safely completed the journey to the Echo organ. This unit speaks into a large tone chute opening into the dome. It is in bad condition with many pipes flattened, broken and missing.

The console is completely dismantled and is being rebuilt. When I saw the panels it brought back a vivid recollection of Kay Stokes at this console back in the early thirties — it had a lacy fretwork finish in tow-tone green with ivory trim and was on a lift on the left side of the pit.

There is much work to be done before this organ can play again — the Toronto boys are hoping it will be possible to complete it by convention time next summer.

On the way home I stopped by Holleywell's and heard Quentin Maclean tapes that were made on the Ray Lawson Wurlitzer in Montreal. These were quite fabulous and demonstrated Mac's remarkable talent for registration. Everyone who heard his arrangement of "Teddy Bear's Picnic" on the Gardens' Wurlitzer two years ago thought it was great — but this version was still greater. Some of the bizarre effects he achieved were quite new to me.

It has been most unfortunate that a recording of these tapes has not been made available for sale. I am sure any Theatre Organ fan would like it.

## ATOE Man Gets Tacoma Morton

Removal of the 3m/10r Robert Morton pipe organ from the Roxy Theatre, Tacoma, Washington, has been made by ATOE'r Bill Morrison, of the same city, it is reported by Lt. Col. Sam Dickerson, Theatre Organ's roving reporter. The instrument, which was installed in chambers under the stage, was removed earlier this year. It is believed the theatre was originally a Pantages house because of the manner of installation of the Morton.

#### Hall Morton Still In Place

Dickerson reported that the Seattle Music Hall Morton is still in the theatre and removal for shipment to Sacramento, California, has not started. Another organ still in playing condition in Seattle is the 3m/15r Wurlitzer in the Orpheum Theatre. "Most everything works except that the organ sounds a bit muffled behind the new gold curtain masking the big Cinemascope screen and chambers," Dickerson said.

## DEATH TAKES

### S. S. DAUGHERTY

Samuel S. Daugherty, vice chairman of Delaware Valley Chapter, died of a heart attack at his home last December 21st. A member of the unit for four years, he had served in the vice chairmanship since 1962 and was held in high esteem by the membership.

Speaking of his service to the chapter, John Armstrong, Jr., chairman said, "His sincere effort and good judgement on behalf of the chapter and its individual members has been appreciated by all of us. I believe this man's loss will be strongly felt by many and that his memory will remain in each one of our hearts forever."

## FINDS PHOTOPLAYER

Herb Shriner, TV comedian and ATOE member, recently found an old American Photoplayer under wraps in an Indiana barn. It had been used in a theatre, then stored out in the country. He plans to bring it to his new home in Beverly Hills, Calif.



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