

A BOMBARDE CONCERT REVIEW



George "Crowned" in Pasadena

Pasadena--June 7 -- They started gathering late in the afternoon and by 7:30 (an hour before show time) the line was a block long. Before the evening was over better than 1600 were listening to George Wright play the newly rebuilt style 235 Special (3-11) Wurlit in the Crown theatre tonight. The organist was in rare form and his MC'ing was better than ever. He was in a happy, expansive mood as he chatted with members of the audience (with the aid of a good PA system), tossed off friendly insults, kissed a girl who came too close to the console and generally made good his promise to "give you one heiluva concert tonight!" He appeared at 8:35 and tossed the "15-cent-a-yard" gold throw cloth from the console revealing an overlay of red burlap on the top and jambs.

The console is now in the center of the pit on a raised platform (there is no lift). It's a proscenium installation which is okay for the front rows but which tends to muffle the sound in the balcony (a huge one) and toward the rear of the main floor, especially under the balcony. For some reason, chambers prepared for the pipework in the usual spots in front of the arch were not used when the organ was installed in the early '20s.

George was generous in crediting his co-workers in repairing the organ, the Les Pepiots, Peter and Mary Crotty and especially John Curry for whom he demanded and got a standing ovation. John has been rehabilitating the instrument for nearly two years. This was his night, too. The console was decorated with a huge spray of flowers sent by Mrs. Don Leslie (yes, Leslie speakers for plug-ins).

For a veteran of so many years the organ behaved remarkably well. It suffered a couple of ciphers which were quickly repaired.

BOMBARDE columnist Lyle Nash commented that it was a superb GW performance, that George was in an especially happy frame of mind. He pointed out that the Crown organ had been played for 20 years by Billy Wright (no relation) "until it literally fell apart" and in that time drew many organ fans

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from all over the San Gabriel Valley, many of whom were present and happy to see the organ back in operation.

Changes In The Crown Wurlitzer

The three badly damaged "pencil" strings were removed and two replaced with "fatter" strings. The Kinura was moved over to the remaining string chest and the former Kinura chest was equipped with a brand new Trumpet built to George's specification by Durst. The small Tibia was replaced with a larger scale Tibia (from a style 210).

We can't hope to cover all the tunes George played but here are a few observations on memorable ones. His opener, "When You're Smiling," was done as a typical pop overture, mostly in earlier GW style. "Shadow of Your Smile" featured the new Tibia (a sweet one) and the Vox (just a mite out of tune) which George played for his mom who was in the audience. He reminded her after the tune that she could "go home now--and iron my other shirt." George's version of the "Batman" theme stirred up a lot of foot stamping and also organist Helen Dell who marched down to the console afterward and received a buss from the maestro. He filled a request he couldn't play at his recent concert at the Rialto theatre with a bird-spiked "Ebb Tide" which was also full of surfy string ripples plus Tibia "waves." After intermission George was joined by percussionist Jack Berger (on the stage) who added his beat to the entire second half of the show.



This billboard is exemplary of the high-powered publicity campaign conducted by the Crown theatre. One flaw: no news cameras were permitted inside the theatre -- and the "official" pix had not been received as this issue went to press -- more than 10 days later.

Organ builder Lee Haggart, who was in the audience, describes this portion of the show as "pure C Sharpe Minor" clowning so far as the MC'ing was concerned and complained only that George "stepped on" his own lines by failing to wait for applause and laughter to die out before going on with his witty palaver. As for the organ, Lee is no fan of proscenium installations, perhaps because they discriminate volumewise against certain areas of a house. It's true that the organ was never over loud and on the balcony it was only adequate in volume, never really big.

Berger's contribution was effective for the rhythm tunes and in the "sound gag" department. For "Fahia" (played in the "Quiet Village" style) Berger added to the amusement with some bird calls performed on what sounded more like

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KIMBAR SPRING CONCERT FEATURES MURI & McABEE



Kay McAbee



John Muri

Joliet, Ill. - April 28 -- The 4-22 Kimball-Barton, pride of night as the club presented a well-attended evening concert at the local Rialto theatre with the artistry of veteran silent movie cuer John Muri and pop-concert organist Kay McAbee much in evidence. The 1958 Fox release, "The Golden Age of Comedy," was run with the dubbed-in sound track turned off and the skillful organ accompaniment of John Muri turned on to score the antics of the Keystone Kops, Laurel and Hardy and a whole raft of early day movie comics. With a resourcefulness reminiscent of his outstanding accompaniment of a group of films for the 1965 ATOE conventioners (playing Fred Hermes 5-28 Wurlitzer home installation near Chicago), Muri and the flicker generated "thrills and laughter" as one witness described the scene.

The second half of the program was a concert played on the Kimbar organ by the musician whose name is most closely associated with it, recording organist Kay McAbee, whose originality, skills and approach to the theatre organ have been compared with those of George Wright. Kay played a concert of pops and standards lasting 90 minutes. The only sore note was the threat of the steel ball which looms from time to time over the Rialto as it does over nearly all similar large, ornate relics of the "golden age." Kimbar members, a number of whom are also ATOErs, performed restoration miracles on the organ which has had a majority of damaged Barton parts replaced, with pipework now being mostly Kimball.

-G. Bandini

Juliette Rediscovered

Chicago--While the lads who comprise Chi's "Theatre Organ Productions" were doing their stuff, cueing a silent movie and generally making that bundle of tone generators make like a theatre organ, little did they know they were sharing the bill with a celebrity.

Dick Sklenar, Pat Chambers and Mark Noller noted that members of the audience kept looking toward the back of the hall and they soon discovered the reason; in the audience was one-time theatre organist Juliette Hatchette who once played the Balaban & Katz Chicago, the NY Paramount and other big ones. Later she was Ethel Smith's teacher. Juliette says she's awaiting the return of pipes to the Chicago area.

WRIGHT CONCERT REVIEW

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a hunter's moose call. He was effective too when George played "Tangerine" as a bossa nova. George's closer was a surprising non-Ethel "Tico Tico" and--wonder of wonders--he played an encore! He explained that it was based on an old



An hour before show time the crowd was over a block long. This shows a very small portion of the mob.

church theme he'd unearthed and gave the Latin name--a tongue twister--so we'll list it by its alternate title, "The Ecumenical Rag."

As might be expected, George received a heart-warming ovation. He remained in the theatre for an hour afterwards, chatting with fans, signing autographs and hugging girls. About 11:30 he drove out of the parking lot in his Jaguar, alone. We noticed that someone had put a fresh flower in the little posey-holder which George rescued from an ancient limousine to grace his Jag a few years ago. No one would deny that he had earned it--and then some.

Stu Green, Hollywood

MARYLAND ORGAN

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Maryland, the technicians have releathered pneumatics, replaced thousands of wires, and rewound and replaced magnets.

"This has been a dream of mine ever since I sat in the darkened theaters in Washington and Richmond, Virginia before and during the 1940's", explained Mr. Bailey. "but I still find it hard to believe it is actually here."

-L. Klos

BILLE NALLE

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musical "All The Things You Are" done in the perfect contrapuntal style of a J. S. Bach Trio Sonata. The audience chuckled and laughed at the elaborate ornamentation as the Jerome Kern theme wove its way from manual to pedal to manual and back, and nearly applauded the building down at its conclusion!

Throughout, Billy's registration was reserved and well chosen, showing that he had done his homework carefully, and Mighty Mo couldn't have sounded better, from its lush strings to its most acid post horn. The blower just a few weeks ago had literally blown up and chief surgeon Joe Patten, in addition to his usual tasks, had his hands full installing new parts.

Though this was the first Theatre Organ Concert officially listed as a daytime event, we fell certain that it is bound to be included in subsequent Guild programs.

Incense and Saris Conjure Oriental Atmosphere For LA Chapter's Korla Pandit Show

Los Angeles - May 10 -- Beturbanned Korla Pandit, under sponsorship of the LA Chapter, attracted 1150 music lovers to the Wiltern theatre tonight for a concert of pops, semi-classics and the Hollywood-style oriental music on which the tall, dark Easterner built a huge TV audience a few years ago.

For some reason the audience seemed to prefer the reserved seats at \$3.00 rather than the generals at \$2.00. Most of the

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