

EASTMAN, FRANCIS (Frank)

Organist of the Columbia Theatre in Longview, Washington
in the middle 1920's.

F

EBEN, EDDIE

Organist in the Los Angeles area who broadcast from the Warner Brothers studio Wurlitzer over Radio Station KFWB. The organ was known as the Warner Brothers Vitaphone Recording Organ. This instrument has been known more recently as the Joe Kearns organ or the Robert S. Carson organ.

NOVEMBER 9, 1991 PERFORMANCE AT THE RTOS 4-MANUAL, 22-RANK WURLITZER

Tonight's Artist- RTOS welcomes a young and dynamic theater organist to his first appearance at our Mighty Wurlitzer. Jelani Eddington was born in Muncie, Indiana in 1974. He began studying the piano at the age of four and a half, mostly under the guidance of his grandmother, Florence Arnold. In 1990 he began studying piano under Dr. Ron Stone of Taylor University, Upland, Illinois. His classical organ studies began at the age of nine with several Muncie organists. Theater organ studies have been with John Ferguson of Indianapolis since 1987.

He was the American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS) Young Organist Competition winner for 1988, winning both the Junior Age division and the Overall competitions. Jelani has performed at the 1988, 1989 and 1990 ATOS National Conventions as well as appearing at concerts not only in the Midwest area but also in Trenton, NJ and Houston, TX. He has scheduled many more concerts for the near future.

Jelani Eddington is a senior honors student at Muncie Southside High School, where he maintains an "A" average. Future plans include pursuing history, political science and foreign language at Indiana University, with the goal of becoming an international lawyer. The musical performing career will continue as time and opportunities allow.

Jelani is active in his church youth group and enjoys computer programming as a hobby. He is the son of Louise Eddington and the late Robert Eddington. Tonight we have the opportunity of enjoying this young man's fresh approach to theater organ.

The Organ-The Mighty Wurlitzer console has four 61-note keyboards and a full pedalboard. The stop tablets control the 1558 pipes, tuned percussions, piano, untuned percussions and "toy" counter located in the chambers on both sides of the proscenium arch. A switch-board located under the stage relays the organists commands to the chambers. This instrument originally came from Rocheater's RKO Palace Theatre where it resided from 1928 to 1964.

As a Courtesy to All-Please do not take flash pictures during this concert. Tape recording of RTOS events is NEVER permitted in the theater's seating area. Taping of this concert by RTOS members is permitted only in the Top Balcony Foyer, using the facilities provided.



The Rochester Theater Organ Society, Incorporated is dedicated to the preservation of theater organs and the presentation of music on theater pipe organs. RTOS preserves and produces musical events on two fine theater organs: this Auditorium Center 4-manual, 22-rank Wurlitzer and the RMSC Eisenhart Auditorium 3-manual, 11-rank Wurlitzer. This Society and its two Mighty Wurlitzers have a world-wide reputation for excellence.

RTOS Membership is Open to All. Membership information is available in the Main Lobby, or by writing to RTOS, PO Box 17114, Rochester, NY 14617. The telephone number is (716) 544-6595. You will find that the \$20 annual RTOS Membership Card is your affordable Passport to many evenings of great family entertainment. Ask about our free December concert bonus for new members.

Dick Smith Returns to Mighty Wurlitzer on Saturday, December 14

A long-time RTOS favorite, Dick Smith will return for his fifth performance on Saturday, December 14 at 8:15 PM. The doors will open at 7:30 PM.

This Public Event Concert will offer FREE admission to 1991 and 1992 RTOS members. All others may purchase their tickets for \$5.50 each at the Auditorium Center Box Office during the evening of the concert.

EDDY, CLARENCE

**Organist of the Empire Theatre in San Antonio, Texas in
1915. (See appendix listings of organ rolls.)**

At the Empire Theatre he billed himself as, "The World's Greatest
Organist."

EDDY, CLARENCE

**Organist of the State Fair Auditorium (4 manual/20 rank
Barton).**

*add to
the sheet?*

EDWARDS, MICHAEL

Edwards was born in Hazelton, Pennsylvania in 1893. He played theatre organ professionally in the Pennsylvania area. He composed and published a number of songs. Edwards died in 1962.

EDWARDS, MICHAEL

EDWARDS, LOUELLA

Organist of the Rivoli Theatre in Syracuse, New York from the early through the late 1920's. In August 1927 he played at the Strand Theatre in Syracuse, New York.

EDWARDS, WILLIAM

Organist of Loew's 116th Street Theatre in New York City in July 1927.

EGGER, VI (MRS.)

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 1, 1906. Began piano training at six years and began organ lessons at age 14 from her cousin Thelma Delmar, who was organist of the Capitol Theatre in Philadelphia. Also studied under Otto Beck, who was senior organist for the Great Northern Theatre where Egger was assistant organist at 16 years of age. Later she studied from Viola Klaiss, who was a theatre organist in the Philadelphia area. These lessons were given at the Aldine Theatre. In 1921 Egger began as assistant organist of the Great Northern Theatre in Philadelphia working with Otto Beck and Minerva Crabtree. She also was on the staff with Firmin Swinnen and Rollo Maitland while they substituted as organists there for one summer. Later she worked as chief organist of the Embassy

EGGER, VI (MRS.)

2.

Theatre in Jenkentown, the Bell Theatre, the Ritz Theatre, the Elite Theatre, the Wayne Theatre, all in Philadelphia, the Richmond Theatre, the Iris Theatre, the Sedgwick Theatre, the Bluebird Theatre, the Chestnut Hill Theatre, the Savoy Theatre, all in the Philadelphia area. She also played the relief organist shift at the Palace Theatre on Market Street in Philadelphia. She did a considerable amount of nightclub work, spent 18 years as an organist for roller skaing rinks including the "Crystal", the "Great Leapord", and "Concord" rinks in Philadelphia. Worked selling organs for Gimbel's Brothers, and played "Footlighter Shows" for three years, and "Buyers Coffee Clatches." She moved to the Warner Piano Company, selling, demonstrating, and teaching. Played _{for} organ clubs, silent movie presentations, concerts.

EGGER, VI (MRS.)

3.

fashion shows, "Leisure Town," silent movies, banks, Senior Citizens
Action, and the Alliance Convention Hall organ in Philadelphia.

performed at

Died Oct- 21, 1999.

Obituaries

Wm. Eichenlaub, longtime theater, church organist

By Doug Bradford
News Staff Writer

They called him "Bill" and when he died a little piece of Detroit died with him.

William Eichenlaub, 73, was the man who played the carillon tape before noon mass at St. Mary's Church in Greektown. It was a tape of his own playing, and its mellow tones swept majestically over the area to become part of the Greektown atmosphere.

Mr. Eichenlaub, a man known to be consumed by the beauty of music, played the organ for the noon mass after the tape of bells ended.

He died Dec. 29 in Veterans Hospital, Allen Park, about six weeks after being admitted. For the two months before his death, the carillon tape was played mainly on Friday and Saturday nights only because Mr. Eichenlaub's absence created a void, according to church organist Alan Botsford.

"It was strictly voluntary on his part, the tape was his," Botsford said. "He was a good organist, too; excellent, in fact. He was here years and years, and had gotten a little arthritic of late. So he played fewer advanced

pieces. But he was well able to handle the noon mass."

A niece, Ellen Krease, recalled Mr. Eichenlaub playing the organ "years and years ago" in downtown Detroit movie houses, then branching out to churches, such as St. Patrick. She said he had been at St. Mary's "about 15 or 20 years" and that playing the organ was what he seemed to care about.

Mr. Eichenlaub never married and is survived by two brothers and a sister. He worked a long time as a security guard, much of it at Smith, Hinchman and Grylle, a Detroit architectural firm.

Employees there knew him as "Ike," a friendly, outgoing man who knew everyone in the building and who liked to talk about his music.

He taped thousands of symphonies off the radio, and spent many hours in his room listening to them over and over again. His tape collection has been donated to the University of Michigan.

The body was cremated. A memorial mass arranged by Verheyden Funeral Home of Grosse Pointe Park will be at 12:15 p.m. Saturday in St. Mary's Church in Greektown.

the next five years this is a subject you may investigate with some hope of discovering the answer. It matters but little. Mr. Frank Van Dusen seems to be the first professional organist and teacher to announce himself publicly and achieve success in the new field. Some years ago before it was permissible



MARMADUKE EIDE

Pupil of Mr. Van Dusen, native of La Crosse, Wisconsin, began professional organ work in 1915 in St. Paul, stationed at the Hampton Roads naval base during the war and played the opening of the new auditorium there, going to Asbury Park, N. J., to open the new Moller organ in the Main Street Theater; at present with Majestic Theater, Shamokin, Pa., where he plays a new four-manual Moller; married in 1918 and the father of a three-year-old daughter. As an example of his originality and keen interest in theater work, for a scene where a hero hears his sweetheart's voice over the radio, Mr. Eide worked up a special number, using a Victrola record just behind the scenes and accompanying the Victrola solo with soft organ — producing an artistic and realistic impression that was remarkably appropriate to the scene. Mr. Eide plays entirely from memory and makes a specialty of his lyric and popular playing — which he does beautifully and artistically.

for a dignified organist — he has given himself the title of legitimate — to play in a theater, Mr. Van Dusen had a vision of the great field open for theater organists who should develop a school of theater organ playing thoroughly in keeping with the needs of the theater and in equal good

A. J. H. the Dead of the Department of

EIDE, MARMADUKE

**Organist of the Majestic Theatre in Shamokin, Pennsylvania in
1930.**

EIGENSCHENK, EDWARD

**Organist of the Woodlawn Theatre in Chicago, Illinois in early
1923. Played the Fulco Lithal Model Theatre in Chicago and the
Michigan Theatre in Chicago both in July 1923. Remained on the
staff of the Michigan Theatre in Chicago for a number of years
through the middle and late 20's. In 1927 gave a recital at Kimball Hall
in Chicago with Marion Setaro.**

EIGENSCHENK, EDWARD

In the mid-twenties Eigenschenk was organist of the Roosevelt Theatre in Chicago, Illinois.

Eigenschenk produced a course in 20 parts of jazz idioms for the organ which was published by the Forster Music Publishing Company in Chicago in 1927 entitled, "Organ Jazz"--a work widely used by theatre organists.

This may have been the first published book of instruction for the playing of jazz on the organ. It was used in conjunction with courses taught at the American Conservatory of Music, School of Motion Picture Organ Playing back in the 1920's. Financial proceeds from this publication enabled Eigenschenk to study in Paris with Joseph Bonnet and Louis Vierne.

EIGENSCHENK, EDWARD

2.

Eigenschenk taught at the American Conservatory of Music beginning in the 1920's, during which time he taught particularly in the School of Motion Picture Organ Playing. He trained a considerable number of theatre organists during those years.

In the years following the theatre organ era, Dr. Eigenschenk continued a distinguished career as concert organist and teacher at the American Conservatory of Music. He made annual concert tours throughout the United States. Appeared in recitals in London, England; Paris, France; Edinburgh, Scotland; and other European music centers. Has appeared as soloist for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Recorded "French Music for Organ." Served

as organist and director of music in Chicago's Second Presbyterian Church for a period of four years.

Trained many other organ teachers, including Robert Lodine, Jack C. Goode, both of whom were teaching at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago in the early 1970's.

Eigenschenk retired after suffering a massive stroke in 1970. He died December 4, 1977 in Chicago.

organ playing and the standards of mentality and musicianship. And this latter should of necessity be higher than the already accepted standard of mentality and musicianship, for certainly standards were not high at that time and are not high even yet when a recital has for its highest aim



EDWARD EIGENSCHENK

Pupil of and first assistant to Mr. Van Dusen, a native of Chicago, won the American Conservatory's first prize gold medal for organ playing, devoted himself entirely to theater work with occasional appearances in recital in Kimball Hall, Orchestral Hall, and elsewhere; at the age of seventeen he became first organist of the Stratford, Chicago; he plays from memory a repertoire of a thousand standard works. "His talent is exceptional, his poise and balance unusual for a young man, and his power of concentration rarely equalled — add to this a strong personality, marked originality, and untiring devotion to work, and you can explain the phenomenal advance.....and a salary the majority of long established musicians would be proud to record." Mr. Eigenschenk plays all the larger works of Bach and the complete sonatas of Guilment, Widor, and Vierne

the stodgy plodding through with a fugue or sonata of however dry inspiration which is not a recital at all, not an entertainment at all, but only an exhibition of what one can train one's fingers to do and no more interesting as such than an exhibition of what an animal trainer can train a pack of monkeys to do.

The theater organist had to avoid this nit-



11-10-20-1-10-1
Theater org
MISS' Connor At

The following item was found in the June 1927 issue of The Diapason by Lloyd E. Klos:

EDWARD EIGENSCHENK

Just as the inevitable process of nature robs us of those who have been the great performers of the past generation, much to our sorrow, so it compensates our art by developing new giants to take the places of those who pass into history. Usually, the growth of the new ones is so quiet that it is not noticed generally.

Occasionally, a youth comes into the light of publicity who shows a progress toward greatness which can hardly be halted except by some calamity. One of this class appears to be a young Chicago man who, while having some time to go before finishing his twenties, is rapidly making a reputation as an excellent player. And that he is a versatile youth is shown by the fact that, while primarily a movie organist, the career in which he started, he also holds a good church position and is in demand for concert work and performances with orchestras.

Edward Eigenschenk, the youth in question, began playing the motion pictures at 16. He has held positions at the Broadway Strand, the Stratford and Archer's Metropolitan, and for the last five years, has been organist at Lubliner & Trinz's Michigan Theater, all in Chicago. Last November, he was appointed organist of the Universalist Church of the North Shore. He is the first assistant to Frank Van Dusen at the American Conservatory of Music, where he

teaches a large class of pupils, besides conducting special classes before the screen at the Fulco Little Model Theater, which he and Mr. Van Dusen established in connection with the school for motion picture organ playing at the conservatory.

The secret of Mr. Eigenschenk's rapid rise as stated by his closest friends, not to lie mainly in rare talent but more largely in application--the hard work which accomplishes more of the big tasks in the world.

Mr. Eigenschenk's first honor was won when he captured the American Conservatory's gold medal for excellence in organ playing in 1922. In 1925, he won first place in the organ contest of the Society of American Musicians and gained the distinction of an appearance as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In April 1926, he was selected to play at the premier performance of Eric De Lamarter's "Weaver of Tales," composed for the organ festival of the Illinois chapter of the National Association of Organists.

Mr. Eigenschenk's latest honor was won May 5, when he took the first prize of \$250, offered by William H. Barnes in the organ contest conducted by the Illinois Federation of Music Clubs.

EKMAN, JOSEPH

Organist of the Orpheum Theatre in Kenosha, Wisconsin in 1924.

ELDRIDGE, FRANK

Theatre organist in the Boston area in the 1920's. At one time he was assistant manager of the Keith Memorial Theatre there.

ELLASSER, RICHARD

World renowned organist Richard Ellasser started his musical career at a very early age, and was able to play any hymn or ballad from memory at the age of three. He was believed to be the youngest person up to his time in history to have memorized and performed the 250 organ works of Bach, including the monumental "Liturgy." It was estimated that during his life he was heard annually by more than 200,000 people and by countless thousands more through radio and television. He won various highly coveted awards for his compositions and was especially remembered in professional circles for his remarkable improvisations. On one occasion the Toronto Telegram described him as "The Paganini Of The Concert Organ."

ELLERY, LEILA

Organist of the California Theatre in Alhambra, California
in 1925.

CHRIS ELLIOTT - Biography

Chris Elliott first heard a theatre organ in concert with world famous Gaylord Carter at the console. Carter's program featured silent films from the 1920's as well as popular music from that era. Elliott was so impressed with this "new" musical machine that he decided while learning to play the theatre organ he would also learn to accompany silent films, a technique mastered quite successfully under the tutelage of Gaylord Carter. Elliott is one of the few artists of today who has learned this skill, thus preserving an art form for another generation to enjoy.

In 1980, at age 16, Elliott made his professional debut at the California Theatre in San Diego, California. Audience support ~~has been~~ ^{was} so great that the show's producers have had him back for two return performances.

Early in 1982, Lyn Larsen, one of the nation's foremost theatre organists, heard Chris and invited the young artist to perform with him at the National Convention of the American Theatre Organ Society held in Detroit, Michigan, in July 1982. With Larsen at the piano and Elliott at the organ, their transcription of Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz brought the entire convention audience to their feet. This was followed by a January 1983 solo concert engagement at the Senate Theatre's "mighty Wurlitzer" for the prestigious Detroit Theatre Organ Club.

By no means limited only to popular organ presentations, Elliott feels equally comfortable with the classical organ. Actually, initial organ instruction was a solid foundation in classical organ. He is presently coaching with famed American organist Frederick Swann while attending Southern California College in Costa Mesa. These assignments, plus burgeoning concert engagements, keep the young man busy.

Those who hear Chris Elliott are witnessing the emergence of a new and youthful talent, one which encompasses both popular and classical music with a dynamic drive not often encountered in this day and age.

Chris Elliott first heard a theatre organ in concert with world famous Daylord Carter at the console. Carter's program featured classic film tunes from the 1920's as well as popular music from that era. Elliott was so impressed with this "new" musical machine that he decided while learning to play the theatre organ he would also learn to play the console. He learned quite successfully under the tutelage of Daylord Carter. Elliott is one of the few artists of today who has learned this skill, thus

Chris Elliott's debut recording has received high

praise from both THE CONSOLE and THEATRE ORGAN magazines.

In 1980, at age 16, Elliott made his professional debut at the California Theatre in San Diego, California. Audience support was excellent.

C. Simonton Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ where the late

Jesse Crawford made his final recordings.

Early in 1982, Lyn Larsen, one of the nation's foremost theatre organists, invited Elliott to perform with her at the National Convention of the American Theatre Organ Society in Detroit, Michigan, in July 1982. With Larsen at the organ and Elliott at the console, their transcription of Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz brought the entire convention audience to their feet. This was followed by a January 1983 solo concert engagement at the Regent Theatre's "mighty Wurlitzer" for the prestigious Detroit Theatre Organ Club.

This is the "debut" recording of the organ since its tonal work completed in early 1982.

By no means limited only to popular organ presentations, Elliott feels equally comfortable with the classical organ. Actually, initial organ instruction was a solid foundation in classical organ. He is presently coaching with famed American organist Frederick Swann while attending Southern California College in Costa Mesa. These assignments, plus burgeoning concert engagements, keep the young man busy.

Those who hear Chris Elliott are witnessing the emergence of a new and youthful talent, one which encompasses both popular and classical music with a dynamic drive not often encountered in this day and age.

Christian P. Elliott
P.O. Box 11571
Santa Ana, California 92711-1571

ELLIOTT, CHRIS

January 8, 1985

Dr. John W. Landon
809 Celia Lane
Lexington, KY 40504

Dear Dr. Landon:

Thank you for asking me to be a part of your feature in THEATRE ORGAN magazine. It is truly an honor and I do appreciate your interest.

I am enclosing as much information as I can including some copies of articles that have been written about me at the start of my theatre organ career. As to some of your questions:

1. I was born in Santa Ana, California in 1964
2. Teachers: Del Castillo, Gaylord Carter (silent film accompaniment), Gordon Kibbee. Lyn Larsen has influenced me a great deal and has coached me but no real "lessons" took place. Classical organ studies: Marvel Jensen (local church organist in Santa Ana), Dr. Ronald Huntington (Chapman College, Orange, Calif.), Charles Shaffer (currently studying with him). Have coached with Frederick Swann.
3. The enclosed material will, I think, fairly well document the places I have played. After I debuted at the California Theatre in 1980, I played concerts there once each year for two years. (3 concerts total played there). My biography lists only major concert appearances and I think these are probably the ones you would be interested in (DTCO, Rochester T.O.S., Dickinson T.O.S. in Wilmington, etc.).
4. As to other music experience, I have been a church organist since the age of 11 or 12. This aspect of my musical abilities has been very important to me. I am proud of the knowledge gained from my church music experience and am considered a good service organist in the southern California area. As mentioned in the biography, I have for several years played noon organ concerts at the Crystal Cathedral on the new Ruffatti, but even before there was a Crystal Cathedral I played concerts in the old building on the 5/116 Ruffatti.

I hope this is of use to you and that I hav'nt sounded like I am bragging! If you have any questions about the material I've sent please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address or by telephone to (714) 953-5127. Thank you again for the honor of being included in your feature.

All best,

Chris Elliott

Am having new photos made --

Chris Elliott -- Biography

Chris Elliott was first exposed to the theatre organ by hearing world famous Gaylord Carter's accompaniment of silent films and playing of popular music of the 1920's era. Elliott already had much musical training behind him but this was something new. Impressed with this new musical vehicle, the theatre organ, he was determined to master the playing of the instrument and learn silent film accompaniment.

In 1980, at age 16, Elliott made his professional debut at the California Theatre in San Diego, California. Since then his concert career has bloomed, with appearances from coast to coast.

Early in 1982, Lyn Larsen, one of the nation's foremost theatre organists, heard Chris and invited the young artist to perform with him at the American Theatre Organ Society's National Convention in Detroit that summer. For his well received performance, Elliott was rewarded with a solo concert engagement for the prestigious Detroit Theater Organ Club in 1983. May 1984 saw him make a successful East Coast tour with concerts in Toronto, Wilmington, Delaware and Rochester, New York. In addition, he was a featured artist at the 1984 American Theatre Organ Society National Convention in Indianapolis.

Not confined to popular organ interpretation, Chris Elliott is equally comfortable with the classical organ, his initial organ instruction being in that area. He has coached with famed American organist Frederick Swann, and attends Southern California College in Costa Mesa. Elliott is organist for the First Baptist Church of Van Nuys, the largest Baptist church in Southern California. He has also given noon concerts at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, performing on the 236 rank Ruffatti Pipe Organ installed there.

Chris Elliott's debut album, released in July 1983, was recorded on the refurbished Richard Simonton Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ in California -- the same location where Jesse Crawford made his final recordings.

CHRIS ELLIOTT

Carter Student To Continue Silent Photoplay Artistry

In the field of theatre organ music the most prominent form today is the concert presentation. The instrument got its start primarily for one purpose, as all organ buffs know—the accompaniment of silent films.

It is almost possible today to count on the fingers of both hands the expert organists who still devote time and energy—and the requirement for both is heavy—to scoring and cueing silent films for presentation in public.

The art of silent film accompaniment requires not only the ability to properly register an organ to create the type of musical mood that best allies itself with the particular scene or action, but it demands the organist be able to select the proper music to fit the immediate portrayal being projected on the screen. Classical training is a must for any good silent film player using a piano or an organ. The ability to bring out moods is usually through the use of classical selections, especially in heavy drama motion pictures; comedy accompaniment relies more on the lighter type of music found in music that was used during the era of the silent film which included ragtime and pop tunes of the day.

But there still remains another facet to silent film playing that equals the need to be able to perform—the enthusiasm to do it. The successful silent film organist constantly accepts a challenge every time he or she takes on the chore of cueing and, if there is no score, scoring each film. It isn't an easy task since rehearsals are all-important to coordinate musical segments, and proper sound effects to each scene. A well-rehearsed presentation produces the ultimate pleasure for the patron. And that remains the total reason for "playing the pictures."

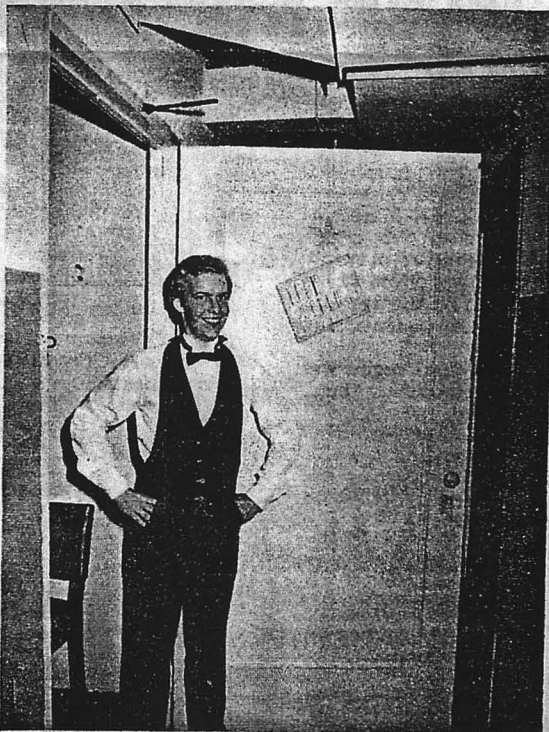
A final test of any good silent film artist is the ability to put the patron into the screen action without the patron being aware there is musical background. "If I can do this... if you are not aware I am here at the console, then I am doing my job right," Gaylord Carter, one of the leading silent film accompanists, has explained to his audiences numerous times.

Understanding the rigors of riding the console bench through a photoplay, comedy, newsreel and possibly other short subjects did not daunt a newcomer organist who has just recently made his debut before an audience in a theatre. The fact that he is still a young teenager is somewhat surprising, but should elate those organ fans who enjoy attending silent film presentations. And to qualify that statement, it must be added—fans who enjoy attending silent film presentations played with full and complete accompaniment. That is robust, rousing music in heavy action, humorous, light music for comedy segments, and the sobbing (some say "slobbering") music for sad scenes. Sixteen-year-old Chris Elliott is the one who now does this.

Chris has stated that he did not become a theatre organ enthusiast until he checked out a Billy Nalle record album from his local library and took it home to listen to Nalle put a Wurlitzer through its paces.

He started his musical training, which was classical piano, at a very early age. Both of his parents are musicians. His father teaches college music theory and harmony; his mother teaches piano. At age 12 he

BECAME A THEATRE ORGAN ENTHUSIAST AFTER HEARING A NALLE ALBUM



STAR—Young Chris Elliott—he's 16—stands in front of dressing room door September 13th, the night he made his public debut in San Diego, Calif., at the California Theatre. He definitely proved he is ready and fully able to take up the art of silent film playing.

With Del he had acquired the thrilling experience of theatre organ. And somewhere along the way he also acquired the desire to play silent films, which he had witnessed Carter doing several years previous.

The next year, 1979 brought many changes. He was going to be able to study with Gaylord Carter the art of silent film accompaniment. He had decided that if he was going to play theatre organ, he would also play silent films as well. Tying in with his theatre organ studies, he met Bob Trousdale who lives in Santa Ana and has a large three-manual theatre organ in his studio home. Bob agreed to let Chris practice, and he also has motion picture projection equipment so that the young artist can rehearse silent moves.

In '79 Chris returned to study further with Del Castillo. He again entered the professional organist competition and came out one of the winners on the classical side. During this year he also participated in two noon organ recitals at the Garden Grove Community Church, playing the 5/116 Ruffatti installed there.

In December, 1979 he played his first silent film for an audience composed of his peers—he played the show for the Orange County Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, at the Trousdale residence studio. Since then the young artist has started (continued)



October 1980

CHRIS ELLIOTT

—continued

molding his silent film career. During this present year he has played a private show at the Trousdale Studio; in March he was featured in a mini-concert for the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society at their business meeting held in the Bell Friends Church on the Wurlitzer installed there; in May he returned to the same church to play a silent movie for members of Valley of the Sun Chapter ATOS during their tour of theatre organs in Southern California; and last June he accompanied Harold Lloyd's "The Kid Brother". This showing was done at the Simonton Bijou Theatre in North Hollywood for Author Tom Dardis, who recently published a large volume on the life of Buster Keaton and is now working on another book about Harold Lloyd. Dardis flew to Los Angeles to see the film. Elliott, who had never played the Simonton Wurlitzer, or viewed the Lloyd film, went to his teacher, who is an expert, of course, on accompanying films of this great comedian, gave the young organist pointers and the show went off without a hitch. It was bound to finish up like that since Elliott is a most perceptive student and Carter an excellent instructor.

Curiously, there was a recurring thought about why Elliott had not taken silent film instruction from Del Castillo. When asked about this he replied, "Del explained that he did not have projection equipment, nor silent film subjects to use for instructing and therefore could not do a complete job." It will be recalled that Del operated his own theatre organschool in the east during the silent film era.

"Gaylord, on the other hand, is fully prepared to teach this art form since he has a sizeable film library and projection equipment," Elliott added.

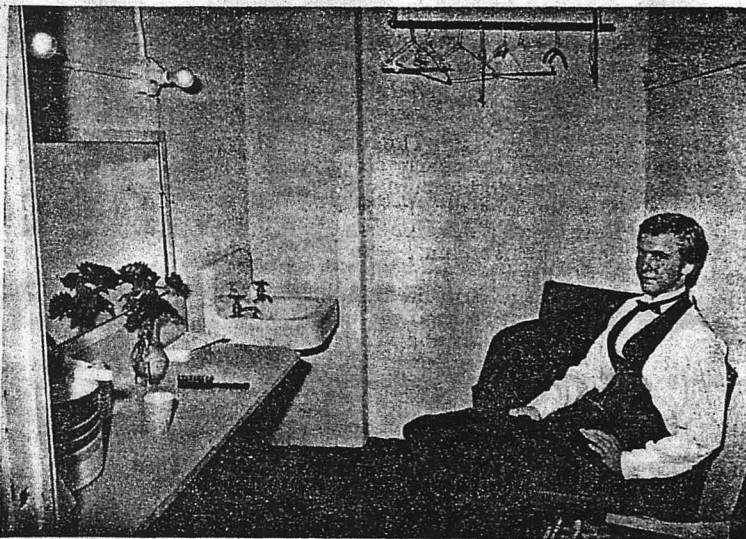
While Elliott has said he does not want to be known as a Carter copyist, there is no doubt but what he has been taught by this master of silent film accompaniment. And it is not to his disadvantage to be able to produce a musical background to silent photoplays in the manner established by his mentor. It is also true that as time goes on, Chris will develop his own style, and may even improve on Carter's highly entertaining technique. In fact, Elliott already seems to play at Carter's established level. This seemed apparent one evening at Trousdale's. Arriving too late to be admitted because the screen had to be mounted in the doorway, it was necessary to stand outside during the screening of a comedy film. If it had not been known that Elliott was at the console, there would not have been the slightest doubt that it was Gaylord instead. The second comparison was Chris' professional debut at the California Theatre, San Diego. His short concert, and then cueing and accompanying the silent films selected for the evening could not have been more in the Carter style if Gaylord had been seated at the console himself.

At his show Chris displayed the aplomb of a well-established veteran. He lacked only one Carter ingredient—the effusive conviviality of his teacher. But that, too, is really not a point to consider since he will develop his own rapport with his audiences of the future. And there will definitely be a future for this young artist. Silent film accompaniment offers him an excellent avocation that is associated with his chosen life work in music.

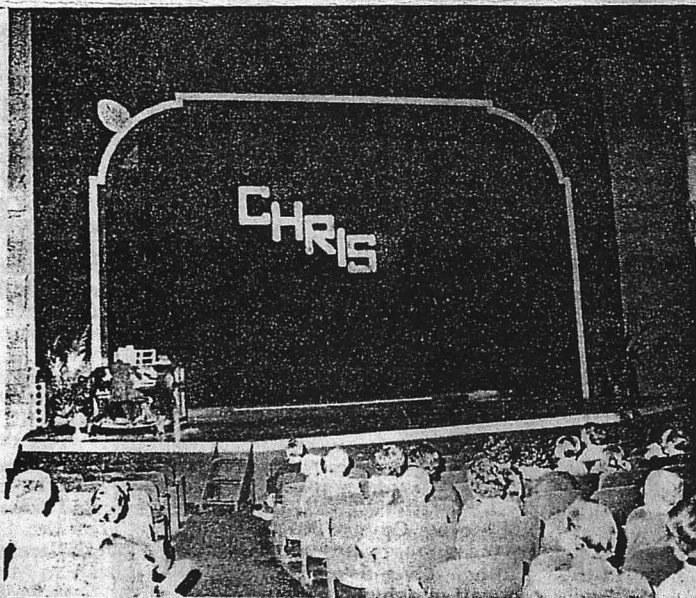
In the evening at San Diego he established what promises to become his second career. Not only will it afford him much pleasure (and work, too), it will help perpetuate the art of silent film presentation. And with the number of theatres that are becoming performing art centers, the installation of theatre organs in community centers and auditoriums, he can take his art to many parts of the United States, and, for that matter, to foreign lands such as England, Australia and New Zealand.

Theatre organ must have renewed vigor if it is to continue to be a recognized musical art form. Chris Elliott and other young organists are the ones who are supplying the renewed vigor.

With Chris it is a matter of enjoying to the fullest being able to seat himself at an organ console, create the musical setting for silver screen action to bring to his audience the greatest entertainment experience of a great era. It may be nostalgic, but it also points out the fact that this medium still holds fascination and has its own kind of fantasy in the world. Young Elliott will provide future audiences with many evenings of musical and visual delight through his own enthusiasm. And who knows, when it's time for him to leave the scene, he will likely find another youngster to train.



RELAXING—Following lengthy run-through of his evening show, Chris Elliott relaxes in his "Star" dressing room at the California Theatre in San Diego.



IDENTIFIED—San Diego Chapter ATOS members rigged up "CHRIS" in glitter coated letters and hung it against a black velvet drop on stage at the California Theatre the night of his public debut.

AOAI CANCELS PHOENIX MEET

Amateur Organists Association International has cancelled its announced winter show the Phoenix Extravaganza, which was scheduled for February, 1981. Negotiations could not be finalized with the hotel. A new location search is underway, it is reported in "Hurdy Gurdy," Sept/Oct issue and it is expected new details will be available to be reported during November.

ATLANTA FOX MEDALLIONS

Medallions commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Atlanta Fox Theatre, designed by Atlanta sculptor Julian Harris, which includes 4/42 Moller organ, are available from Atlanta Landmarks, Inc., 660 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Ga. 30365. The cost for single medallions is \$40 each, plus \$2.50 for sales tax, postage and handling.

WILLIAM BARNES, ORGAN DESIGNER, DEAD AT 87

William Harrison Barnes, noted organ designer and builder, died Saturday, Oct. 11th in a Chicago hospital. In addition to his organ work he was a philanthropist, recital organist, a banker and printing company owner. He built his first organ at age 15 and had designed or built more than 400 instruments throughout the United States. He also authored numerous articles and books on organs, including his "The Contemporary American Organ" which was revised through nine printings and is considered a definitive textbook.

According to Brother Andrew Corsini, of the Theatre Historical Society, Barnes was the designer of the super-special Geneva organ in the Varsity Theatre, Evanston, Ill. "For a long time he tried to hide his 'theatre organ contacts' but later on I believe he freely admitted them," Bro. Corsini said.

"The Geneva organ was truly a Special and I only wish I had heard it at sometime. It had floating brass and string divisions that could be put on any manual via coupler stops. The console was a wild one—maybe the reason he never wanted to be associated with it—in the form of a small cottage with windows and a tile roof.

"I discovered his part in the instrument by checking through local papers at the time of the opening of this house, which took place on December 24, 1926," Bro. Corsini added.

Barnes is survived by his wife, a daughter, stepson and five grandchildren.



October 1980

ELLIOTT, DOROTHY (MRS.)

Organist of Loew's Brevort Theatre in New York City in the
mid to late 1920's.

ELLIOTT, MARIE

Organist of the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham at one time.

ELLIOTT, MRS. FRANK W.

Organist of Radio Station WOC, Davenport, Iowa in 1924

ELLIS, A. E.

Organist of the Franklin Park Theatre, Dorchester, Massachusetts
in the late 1920's.

ELTERMAN, JOHN

Organist of the Century Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland in 1923.

ELLIS, FRANK A.

Born October 31, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois. He began his training on piano at an early age. He later took lessons from Sydney Silver, Dean of the Conservatory, the Sherwood School of Music, Chicago, Illinois. Took private instruction on the organ from Howard Peterson, organist of the Geneva Theatre, Geneva, Illinois and from organist Ambrose (Larry) Larson at the Wurlitzer Building, Chicago, Illinois.

Ellis began his career playing piano for silent films at the Princess Theatre in DeKalb, Illinois from 1925 to 1928. He was organist for the Magestic Theatre in Rochelle, Illinois from 1928 until 1930. He played for the opening of the Hub Theatre in Rochelle, Illinois in 1930.

Other theatres where Ellis served as solo organist were the

ELLIS, FRANK A.

2.

Sycamore Theatre in Sycamore, Illinois and the Fargo Theatre in DeKalb, Illinois.

ELLOTSON, SAMUEL

Broadcast over Radio Station KOKA, Pittsburgh, in the mid 1920's

ELLSWORTH, RICHARD

Organist of St. Helen's Theatre in Chehalis, Washington in
1928.

BOARDWALK PIPES

Sousa-Elmore THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER
 Kreisler-Elmore STARS IN MY EYES,
 CAPRICE VIENNOIS, OLD REFRAIN, LIEBESFREUD
 Elmore FANTASY ON NURSERY THEMES
 Kramer EKLOG
 Weaver SQUIRREL
 Boex MARCHE CHAMPÊTRE
 Clarke TRUMPET VOLUNTARY

ROBERT ELMORE playing the ATLANTIC CITY BALLROOM ORGAN

ATLANTIC CITY is famous for its beaches, salt water taffy, fine restaurants and spacious boardwalk. It is also the home of the largest convention hall, the largest concert organ, and the largest theatre-type organ in the world. A veritable Palace of Knossos in its mammoth proportions, the Convention Hall Auditorium alone occupies four city blocks, a thirteen-story building could be set upon the floor and not touch the roof, and even a Mickey Mantle could not bat a ball from the stage into the rear gallery. Of heroic power and dimensions, the Auditorium organ easily fills the five and one half million cubic feet of space in a room seating 42,000 people. In another part of the huge structure is a lofty, rectangular hall containing the Ballroom organ which, along with its Auditorium companion, was designed by Senator Emerson Richards who supervised its installation.

Designed in 1929, the Ballroom organ is not, strictly speaking, a theatre organ. Partly "straight" and partly "unit," it is a compromise between the radical theatre organ and the normal concert instrument. Besides the percussions and special effects, it has 19 straight and 23 unit voices and 55 ranks of pipes; controlled by 357 stop keys from a four-manual (Accompaniment, Orchestral, Solo and Bombard) console, and a total of 4,139 pipes, all of which makes for an extraordinarily versatile instrument.

The Ballroom organ is housed in two chambers, one on each side of the stage, speaking directly into the room through open grills. The console is in a small gallery over the main entrance. Each chamber contains a complete diapason chorus; the right played from the Bombard (top) manual, the left from the Accompanimental (lower) manual. Minor choruses are obtained by a judicious combination of the straight and unit ranks. The shape and dimensions of the Ballroom (181 feet long, 128 feet wide, a ceiling height of 75 feet, and a capacity of 5,000), combined with its hard maple dance floor provide maximum exploitation of the organ's multicolored personality.

Robert Elmore, distinguished organist, choirmaster and composer, is making his recording debut on Mercury's Olympian series and is thoroughly at home on the horseshoe console of the Ballroom organ. This is not surprising in view of the fact that he has concertized extensively throughout the United States and Europe since the Thirties and has performed on countless varieties of organs ranging from the Baroque to the latest electro-pneumatically controlled instruments. Born in Ramapatnam, India, of missionary parents, Elmore started his musical education at the age of six in Lincoln, Nebraska; three years later, he began his study of the organ. Between 1926-1933 he studied piano, organ and composition with Pietro Yon, the renowned Italian composer and concert organist. He subsequently entered the University of Pennsylvania where he received the degree of Bachelor of Music. His scho-

lastic achievements also include a pair of coveted English degrees: the Licentiate of the London Royal Academy of Music in organ, concert piano and piano accompaniment; and Associate of the Royal College of Organists.

Although he has composed abundantly for his instrument, Elmore's output extends into other forms and media not ordinarily associated with organist-composers. His opera, *It Began at Breakfast*, has the distinction of being the first American opera to be televised, his symphonic and choral works have been performed by major orchestras under such conductors as Leopold Stokowski and Frank Black. Elmore is presently organist and choirmaster of the Central Moravian Church of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, having formerly been organist and director of music at Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia for seventeen years. He also heads the organ department at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music.

A varied program has been chosen by Robert Elmore to expose the resources of the remarkable Ballroom organ. The program begins with Elmore's effective "orchestration" of John Philip Sousa's stirring march *Stars and Stripes Forever*. Side 1 continues with a Kreisler group containing four of the composer's most familiar and best loved melodies: *Liebesfreud*, *Old Refrain*, *Caprice Viennois* and *Stars in My Eyes* (bands 2-5). Mr. Elmore's own *Fantasy on Nursery Themes* (Side 2, band 1) is an effective opening piece with its mixture of nostalgia and playful virtuosity. Walter Kramer's serenely introspective *EKlog* (band 2) demonstrates the instrument's use in a placid mood, unencumbered by its mighty size. The bushy-tailed rodent with the twitching nose is vividly depicted in Powell Weaver's *Squirrel* (band 3). *Marche Champêtre* by Andrew J. Boex (band 4) is a delightful evocation of French march rhythms of the eighteenth century; the middle section, with its droning pipes and drum effects, makes a novel use of percussions. Side 2 concludes with Elmore's arrangement of a work generally attributed to Henry Purcell, the majestic *Trumpet Voluntary* of Jeremiah Clarke. Pieces like *Caprice Viennois*, *Liebesfreud*, *Squirrel* and *Fantasy on Nursery Themes* illustrate the astonishing clarity with which rapid attacks and pizzicato effects are projected by the Ballroom organ.

ANALYSIS OF BALLROOM ORGAN

1. 32' BOMBARD. (97-25" -15") PED. 32-16-8-4; ORCH. 8-4; SOLO 16-8-4; BOM. 16
2. 16' TROMBONE-Tuba. (97-25"-11-1/2" x 11-1/2") PED. 16-8; BOM. 8-4
3. 16' *DIAPHONE Diapason Phon. (85-15" -14x14) PED. 32(3-7) -16-8; ORCH. 8; SOLO. 16-8-4
4. 16' *TRUMPET. (85-15"-7-1/2") PED. 16-8-4; ACCP. 8; ORCH. 16-8-4; SOLO. 16-8-4
5. 16' POST HORN. (85-15"-5-1/2") PED. 16; ORCH. 16-8; SOLO. 16-8
6. 16' *FAGOTTO-Oboe Horn. (85-10"-5-1/2") PED. 16-8; ACCP. 8; ORCH. 16-8-4; SOLO. 16-8-4
7. 16' *CONTRA-BASS-Tuba. (97-10"-11-1/2" x 9-1/2") PED. 16-8-4; ACCP. 8-4; ORCH. 16-8-4
8. 16' *BOURDON-Stopped Flute. (101-10"-7-1/8" x 6") PED. 16-8; ACCP. 16-8-4-2-2/3-1-3/5; ORCH. 8-4-2-2/3-1-2/3
9. 16' VIOLA DIAPASON. (85-10"-36) PED. 16-8; ACCP. 16-8-4; ORCH.

10. 16' *BASS VIOL-Viola. (97-10"-48") PED. 16-8-8(10-21)-4-4 (10-21)-3; ACCP. 8-8 (10-21); 4-4 (10-21); ORCH. 16-8-8 (10-21)-4-4 (10-21)-2; SOLO. 16-16 (10-21) 8-8 (10-21)-4-4 (10-21)
11. 8' OPEN DIAPASON. (85-15"-41"); PED. 8-4; ACCP. 8; ACCP. tc. 16-8-4; ORCH. 8-4-2; BOM. 8
12. 8' *CLARABELLA. (85-10"-6-1/2" x 6-3/4); PED. 8-4; ACCP. 8-4; ORCH. tc. 16-8-4-2-2/3-2; SOLO. 8-4
13. 8' FLOTO DOLCE. (85-10"-47"); ORCH. 8-4-2-2/3; SOLO. 8-4; BOM. 8-4-2-2/3-1-3/5-1
14. 8' *CEMBAÏONE. (85-10"-46); ACCP. tc. 16-8-4-2-2/3-2-1; ORCH. 8-4; SOLO. 8-4-2; BOM. 8-4
15. 8' CLARINET. (73-10"-1 15/16"); ACCP. 8; ORCH. tc. 16-8-4; SOLO. tc. 16-8
16. 8' *ENGLISH HORN. (61-10"-5"); ACCP. 8; ORCH. tc. 16-8; SOLO. tc. 16-8
17. 8' *KINURA. (61-10"-large); ACCP. 8; ORCH. 8; SOLO. 8
18. 8' *VOX HUMANA. (73-10"-large); ACCP. 8-4; ORCH. tc. 16-8-4; SOLO. tc. 16-8-4
19. 8' *CELLO CELEST. (73-10"-53"); ORCH. tc. 16-8-8 (19-20) -4-4 (19-20); SOLO. tc. 16-16 (19-20) -8-8 (19-20) -4-4 (19-20); BOM. 8-8 (19-20)
20. 8' CELLO CELEST. (73-10"-53"); 8-4; tc. 16-8-4; 8-8
21. 8' *VIOLIN CELEST. (73-10"-60"); 8-4; 8-4 tc. 16-8-4
22. 8' *VIOLA. (85-10"-55-59); ACCP. tc. 16-8-8 (22-23) -4-4 (22-23)-2; ORCH. 8-8 (22-23) -4-4 (22-23)-2
23. 8' *VIOLA CELEST. (73-10"-55-59); 8-4-8-4
24. 8' DIAPASON MAJOR BOM. (73-10"-39)
25. 8' *ENGLISH DIAPASON ACCP. (73-10"-43)
26. 8' *MUTED DIAPASON. (apered) ACCP. (73-10"-40)
27. 8' *MELOPHONE ACCP. (73-10"-6 5/8" x 7 5/8")
28. 8' FLUTE OUVERTE BOM. (73-10"-40)
29. 8' FLUTE CELEST. (with #18) BOM. (73-10"-47)
30. 8' *CORN HORN CELEST. (with #14) ACCP. (73-10"-45)
31. 8' BRASS TRUMPET. (open brass bells) SOLO. (73-15"-6-1/2")
32. 8' SAXOPHONE SOLO. (73-15"-2-1/2")
33. 8' FRENCH HORN SOLO. (73-15"-7-1/2")
34. 8' ORCHESTRAL OBOE. SOLO. (73-15"-2-1/2")
35. 8' *ORCHESTRAL STRINGS I. 2 ranks. ORCH. (134-10"-63)
36. 8' *ORCHESTRAL STRINGS II. 2 ranks. ORCH. (143-10"-66)
37. 8' *MUTED STRINGS. 2 ranks ACCP. (134-10"-60-76)
38. 4' MAJOR OCTAVE. BOM. (73-10"-52)
39. 4' *OCTAVE DIAPASON. ACCP. (73-10"-53)
40. 2' MAJOR FIFTEENTH. BOM. (73-10"-65)
41. VII GRAND MIXTURE. 7 ranks BOM. (12-15-17-19-22-26-29) (511-10")
42. V *MIXTURE. 5 ranks ACCP. (15-19-22-26-29) (305-10")

*Indicates voices in left chamber (number of pipes, wind, scale)
 CONSOLE Couplers
 BOMBARD Manual IV Ped. Ac-8, Or-8, So-8, Bo-8
 SOLO " III ACCP. Or-8, So-8, Bo-8, Ac-4
 ORCHESTRAL " II ORCH. Ac-8, Or-16, So-8, Bo-8
 ACCOMPANIMENTAL I SOLO. So-4
 PEDAL BOM. Ac-16-8-4, Or-8-4, So-8-4, Bo-4

Adjustable combination pistons—48; 8 generals—8 each manual—8 pedal on second touch of manual pistons—tutti, tremulant, trapp, cancella, right, left, crescendo, shooer.

NOTES ABOUT SENATOR EMERSON RICHARDS, DESIGNER OF THE BALLROOM ORGAN

A member of the American Guild of Organists and Vice-President of the Organ Club of London, England, Senator Emerson Richards has achieved an international reputation as a designer of pipe organs. Senator Richards has found time to devote to organs and organ repertoire since he was first attracted to the instrument in his early teens, despite the fact that he has led an active life in both politics and engineering. A lawyer by profession, he was first elected to the New Jersey Assembly in 1910, served five terms in the Senate and was Governor of the State for a period of four months in 1933. He was also active in the construction of the Holland Tunnel and the Delaware River Bridge. He has designed scores of pipe organs for churches, halls and private homes all over the world and is an expert on Baroque organs and organists. Besides designing the world's largest concert organ, and theatre-type organ, he possesses in his home off the Boardwalk, the largest residence organ in America with over 100 ranks of pipes.

NOTES ABOUT THIS RECORDING

The special recording truck used for all Mercury Living Presence recording sessions held outside New York City was driven to Atlantic City for this session which took place on November 24, 1956. Elaborate tests were undertaken to determine the precise aural focal point of the Ballroom, the point at which the greatest degree of "presence" could be achieved while at the same time capturing the "live" qualities of the room. A microphone of extreme sensitivity was suspended from the ceiling and placed near the center of the room, somewhere between the two organ chambers. The placement was especially critical since a forward move involved losing proper focus, that is, being out of phase with the chambers. On the other hand, a too distant pickup resulted in inadequate definition and excessive reverberation. With its huge dynamic range and tonal span, the Ballroom organ provided an exceptional challenge for the Mercury Living Presence single-microphone recording technique. The result is a faithful reproduction of the sound of the world's largest theatre type organ in all its stunning clarity and impressive sonority. C. R. Fine was the engineer and technical supervisor for this recording; Wilma Cozart the recording director; and Harold Lawrence the musical supervisor. Tape to disc transfer was by George Piro.

EMERSON, ELSIE MAE LOOK

Wife of organist Ralph Waldo Emerson. Taught at the Ralph Waldo Emerson School in Chicago and broadcast over Radio Station WLS, Chicago, in the middle to late 1920's. One of the first organists to play at the Chicago Stadium in 1929.

EMERSON, RALPH WALDO

Well known theatre organist who spent most of his professional career in the Chicago area. Organist in 1922 of the Palace Theatre in Los Angeles, California. Organist of the Long Beach Theatre in Long Beach, California in 1923. In June of 1924 he broadcast from the Barton Studio organ over Radio Station WDAP, Chicago. In December of the same year he was broadcasting from the Mallers Building over Radio Station WLS in Chicago. From there on, Emerson broadcast regularly over WLS and when the Barton Organ Company installed a new organ in the WLS Station on Washington Boulevard, Emerson followed Al Melgarde as first organist and remained there until about 1937 when he left for Radio Station KOY in Phoenix, Arizona.

EMERSON, RALPH WALDO

2.

An interesting story is told in regard to Emerson's work on Radio Station KOY in Phoenix (told by L. R. Clarke in "Pipe Dreams, Chicago, U.S.A." Theatre Organ Bombarde, August 1969, pp. 15-18.) Emerson said he planned to return to Radio Station WLS as soon as his wife's health improved. Considerable friction developed in the KOY studio between Ralph Waldo Emerson and his employers. Emerson announced his own programs as usual and one day at the end of his program, he told his listening audience that he enjoyed playing for them and also how nice it had been, then he added, "for my associates here in the studio," and he produced a tremendous crescendo on the organ, mouthed an equally hearty Bronx cheer, closed the show. The Studio did not take this lightly and he was given

notice. Whether he had actually planned to return to Chicago is not known, but Stations KOY and WLS were owned by the same group and he found that his old job was no longer available.

Emerson established his own School of Theatre Organ in Chicago, and taught there from 1927 until about 1930. He also played at the Chicago Stadium at the time of its opening in 1929.

In 1927 Emerson wrote an interesting article entitled "Looking Back on Four Years of Radio Broadcasting," which is published in the Musical Scrapbook Magazine (p. 7). In it he dealt with the problem of the organist who was accustomed to playing in the theatre but who now finds himself broadcasting over the air and uncertain as to how to adjust to this new very different situation.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's Organ School was known at its peak as the world's largest organ school. Located in a large studio 16 stories above Chicago's Loop, in Suite 1607, the Masonic Temple Building, 32 West Randolph Street, where there were 14 of the latest type Estey unit organs installed, each in a separate soundproof room with a special ventilating system. Each organ had all the percussions, traps, second touch, and other mechanical devices to be found on good theatre organs. Here they were given thorough training by Mr. Emerson and his wife.

Emerson also offered an extension course to enable organists living some distance away from Chicago to improve their organ playing and perhaps improve their own position professionally.

Emerson was remembered as an excellent teacher and his most enthusiastic boosters were his pupils. He was able to help place

many of his students upon their graduation from his school in good theatre organ positions because of his knowledge of the field and his personal acquaintance with many people within it.

Emerson made several recordings on the WLS Studio Barton around 1927. These appeared on the Sears Roebuck Silvertone label and the Gennett label owned by the Starr Piano Company of Richmond, Indiana. The 1927 Sears Roebuck catalog lists three such recordings on the Silvertone label and includes a serious pose of organist Ralph Waldo Emerson in dark horn rimmed glasses seated at the console of the WLS Barton organ.

The following item was found in the October 1926 issue of Jacobs Orchestral Magazine by Lloyd E. Klos:

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Yes, this gentleman's real name is Ralph Waldo Emerson and he seems to be sittin' on top of the world. There is a reason. Here is Ralph's story:

A few years ago, he came to Chicago, practically unknown. It wasn't long, however, until the folks in the Windy City were sitting up and taking serious notice of this energetic young man. He was affiliated with the Barton Organ Company as their official organist, and soon after, became organist for radio station WLS. For several years, through his brilliant radio organ concerts, he enjoyed possibly the most widespread popularity which an organist can ever hope to attain.

During this time, he also conducted classes in Motion Picture Pipe Organ Playing, with which he was very successful. His classes were always filled to overflowing, and there was also a waiting list, fully a mile long, so you can see that Mr. Emerson was about the busiest organist in the city at the time. He was a glutton for work and I think he always had plenty to do.

From all this hard labor evolved the thing which was to make the name of Ralph Waldo Emerson an important one in the world of organ playing. With his valuable knowledge of what the public demands, gleaned through his many thousands of requests and his experience

as motion picture theater organist, it is no wonder that he was more than qualified to become the founder of a very unique institution, the World's largest organ school. That sounds big, and it certainly is.

Imagine walking into a studio, 16 stories above the din and roar of Chicago's famous Loop, and into a place where there are 14 of the latest type Estey unit organs installed. Each organ is in a separate sound-proof room with a special ventilating system; and each organ has all the manual traps, second touches, percussions, and in fact, everything which makes a good theater organ. It is here that newcomers, who wish to become theater organists, are given experienced and through training. This is Mr. Emerson's studio and he is justified in being very proud of possessing such excellent teaching facilities.

Mr. Emerson has an auxiliary to his teaching course which he is also very proud of. This he calls his Extension Course, and it is an original idea with him, in every detail. The Extension Course enables the organist in the small town to not only improve his position, but at the same time, it keeps him from getting into a rut. Mr. Emerson also features a Beginner's Extension Course which helps to qualify the pianist in the smaller/~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ community who is not adequately equipped for theater organ work.

Ralph Emerson has personality, too, and lots of it. His pupils are always his best boosters and his finest references. He's a bear at remembering names and faces; he would certainly have to be, with 14 pipe organs and scores of pupils to look after. He is the composer of many popular songs, and is constantly in demand as guest organist for dedications and civic music activities.

EMMONS, GEORGE

Organist of the Avenue Grand Theatre in Washington, D. C. in 1925.
Organist of the Colony Theatre in 1926. Organist of the Tivoli Theatre
in Washington, D. C. in 1927, and the Tivoli Theatre in Frederick,
Maryland in later 1927.

ENGELL, PAUL

A teacher of organ at Washington State in 1926.



1928

WENDELL ENGLISH

Wendell English, solo organist, featured at the State Theatre in Toledo, Ohio, does his own arranging and originates his own novel ideas. English features solos, slides, and novelties. He broadcasts over WSPD. He is the only solo organist in Toledo.



Wendell English
Solo Organist
AT
STATE THEATRE
TOLEDO, OHIO

1928

ENGLISH, WENDELL

Organist of the State Theatre in Toledo, Ohio in 1929.

EPSTEIN, GEORGE

Epstein was born in New York City in 1900 and studied organ under organist John Hammond and piano and music theory at the Damrosch Music Institute. At age 16 he began his theatre organ career and played at several theatres in Brooklyn and on Broadway. He broadcast over Radio Station WSOM, New York and was organist at the Roxy Theatre for over five years, just previous to discontinuance of the organ solo feature at the Roxy Theatre. Epstein recorded in the Roxy Theatre rotunda in approximately 1926 for Banner, Romeo, and other affiliated labels.

GEORGE EPSTEIN (Bayside W. Vic-
tory), with the able assistance of Mr. Fred
Weiler, manager of the house and a former
organist, presented an unusual organ and
piano duet this past week. "Eppy," as he
is popularly known in the neighborhood, is
in the habit of offering community song-
fests. To many in the audience, the idea
of "Eppy" and Mr. Weiler being accom-
plished pianists came as a distinct surprise.
Their concert opened with a piano duet of
the opera, "Poet and Peasant," beautifully
played and very well received.

Mr. Weiler further surprised them by
playing on the organ the Intermezzo from
"Cavalleria Rusticana" as Mr. Epstein ac-
companied him at the grand piano. Very
good applause greeted them at the finish of
this entertaining presentation.

1932



EPSTEIN, N.

Organist of Loew's Bedford Theatre in New York City in July
1927.

ERICKSON, OLIVER

Organist of the State Theatre in Eau Claire, Wisconsin,
September 1927.

ERICKSON, JAMIE

Played the opening week at the San Francisco Fox Theatre
(Wurlitzer) beginning June 28, 1929.

ERNEST, HELEN

Organist of the Egyptian Theatre in Portland, Oregon in early 1927, moving mid-year to the Pantages Theatre in Portland, Oregon, where she remained for some time.

[Note---Jeff Fox mentions this organist at the Bagdad Theatre in Portland, Oregon. Could this be one and the same as the PANTAGES THEATRE ?]

ERWIN, LEE

See pp. _____ to _____.

LEE ERWIN

America's most listened-to organist landed his first job playing in a movie house at the age of 12. Today he is "most listened-to" by virtue of the prodigious number of performances he gives each year. As house organist at New York's Carnegie Hall Cinema, Lee Erwin plays to audiences on a regular basis, giving mini-concerts between shows and, for silent films, playing his own original musical scores during the showing of each film. This alone would qualify Lee Erwin as today's theatre organist with the most public exposure. But he also covers the theatre organ circuit from coast to coast wherever the great organs still play, and he is much listened-to in homes around the world via record albums on the Angel, Concert, Serenac, Win-Mil, and ATOS-OVC labels. He was much heard in the major cities of Australia during his 1978 tour "down under," and he has provided sound tracks for many classic non-talking films now being distributed around the world.

When Lee Erwin plays a silent film the music - with few exceptions - is of his own original composition. He does not use familiar tunes or familiar music of any kind because, he says, it distracts the viewer's attention from the motion picture story. In the following quote he explains the irony of why he - unlike most performing artists in this respect - sometimes prefers not to be listened-to:

"It's really quite nice when people come up to me after a show and say they forgot I was playing. That's exactly what I want. Musical accompaniment should be so integrated that it enhances the movie instead of speaking for itself. Whenever it does speak for itself it detracts from the visual story on the screen."

(Incidentally, according to Mr Erwin, many present-day film fans are not aware that the theatre organ was very widely used in the silent area. It was developed to replace the symphony orchestra - thereby making it possible to produce all the sounds of a full orchestra, at the cost of just one salaried organist - while the piano, so often heard today in silent film revivals, was used only in small houses which could not afford a pipe organ.)

In contrast to his film shows, Lee Erwin's concert programs always feature the best of today's - and yesterday's pop tunes. His unique arrangements make the best possible use of both the subtlety and the grandeur of the theatre organ.

Lee Erwin's success with audiences today is the culmination of a lifelong dedication to professional excellence in his chosen field. His formal study began early with piano and organ lessons. When he graduated from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music he went to Europe to study with, among other luminaries, Andre' Marchal and Nadia Boulanger. While studying in Paris he apprenticed as assistant organist in the city's American Cathedral. Returning to the U.S. he held down the job of staff organist at Cincinnati's powerful W.L.W radio station and was organist for 11 years on the now legendary Moon River late show.

Moving to New York City in the 40s he joined the staff at CBS Radio and TV; and for 22 years was organist, arranger, and composer for the Arthur Godfrey shows.

When Lee Erwin was commissioned a few years ago to compose an original musical score for one of Gloria Swanson's silent films, Queen Kelly (previously unreleased and kept in the can for 4 decades), he welcomed the opportunity to return full-circle to his original childhood love: silent, but not-so-silent films.

Lee Erwin continues to write new scores for silent films and performs them regularly in New York and other cities nationwide. To date they include films of Keaton and Langdon, Douglas Fairbanks, Lon Chaney and many others. Excerpts from many of these organ scores are published by E.B. Marks Music Corporation, Bradley Publications, and are available in several record albums.

#

Lee Erwin at the Ohio

Crowds flock to see, hear master of theatre organ

By ROSEMARY
CURTIN HITE

Citizen-Journal Music Critic

The line started in the outer lobby of the Ohio Theatre, wound around four times, trailed out to the street, continued on down State Street, and ended up on Fourth Street.

What is this? A description of an opening day during the heyday of the movie era? The Columbus premier of "Mutiny on the Bounty" in 1933, perhaps?

NOPE, THIS IS 1973, Friday night, to be exact. And these were 3,000 (or part of 3,000) movie-goers and organ music lovers flocking out to see the original 1925 "Phantom of the Opera."

These were theatre-goers of all ages, types, interests and tastes who somehow hadn't heard that "nobody will go downtown to the movies." They were indisputably demonstrating that theatre-goers will go downtown, or anywhere else, to see what they want to see.

AND WHAT THEY wanted to see Friday night was this classic film, a gem of its period, a triumph in the career of its star, Lon Chaney.

And they wanted to hear Lee Erwin, a master of silent film accompaniment, recreate the mood and style of the great silent era at the Mighty Morton organ.

AND DID THEY get what they came for? They certainly did in respect to organist Erwin. On the first half of the program, Erwin gave a thorough representation of the artistry that has made his name a legend in the field of theatre organ.

A delightful medley of old favorites: tunes like "Sidewalks of New York," "Bill Bailey," "Londonderry Air;" then a dreamy version of his famous "Moon River" radio show, long a favorite in this area; a wonderfully heart-warming sing-along; and finally two contemporary tunes: "Look of Love" and "Aqua."

ERWIN RECEIVED excellent support from the Miami-Trace Singers from Washington Court House in the "Moon River" sequence.

BILL HAMILTON handled the "radio" announcements and poetry reading with superb poise and charm. He has the most mellifluous speaking voice in the emcee business!

IN ALL OF THESE groups Erwin played the Morton with brilliant skill and incisive command of its potential. "Aqua" is a particularly attractive and imaginative use of the instrument.

Columbus
Citizen-Journal

Lee Erwin has consistently won the highest praise from critics and audiences across the country for his film shows and organ concerts.

"The line started in the outer lobby of the Ohio Theatre, wound around four times, trailed out to the street, continued on down State Street, and ended up on Fourth... and did they get what they came for? They certainly did. Lee Erwin gave a thorough representation of the artistry that has made his name a legend in the field of theatre organ."

—Citizen-Journal, Columbus, Ohio

"Lee Erwin treated an audience the other night to the best fun that's been had at the Atlanta Film Festival."

—Atlanta Constitution

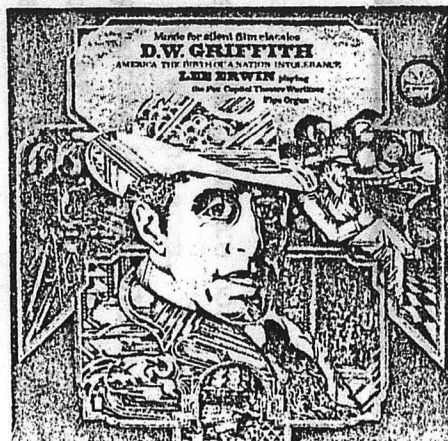
"The STANDING ROOM ONLY sign went up in the box office before the start of the show featuring Lee Erwin at the organ in the Redford Theatre."

—Detroit

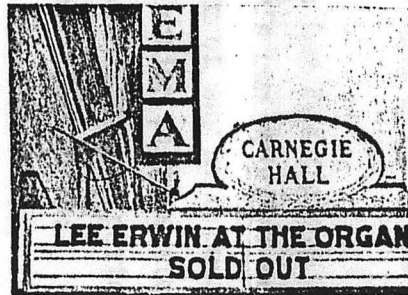
"Lee Erwin came to Davenport just a year ago to play the newly restored organ at the Capitol Theatre.

...Thursday night he was back again much to the delight of music lovers who bought every last ticket in the house."

—Times-Democrat, Davenport, Iowa



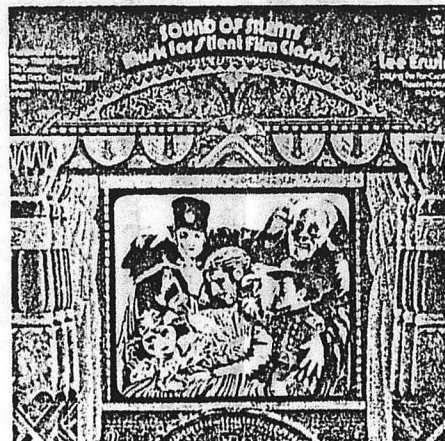
Lee Erwin



"Waves of magnificent sound rolled through the Academy of Music Theater on 14th Street last night... Lee Erwin, organist with the 'Arthur Godfrey Show' for 22 years and of the 'Moon River' radio program on Cincinnati's WLW for 11 years before that, was the performer, and he was excellent."

The New York Times

AMERICA'S FOREMOST THEATRE ORGANIST



LEE ERWIN enjoys the unique distinction of being the First organist elected to the Theatre Organ Hall of Fame. His many concerts each season are usually sell outs, with enough demand in New York City to merit 43 performances during the 1978/79 season.

"The orchestra seats, the back seats, the balcony seats—all were filled... It was an evening in which the Michigan Theatre's mighty organ came to life again with Lee Erwin, of New York, at the console... The huge audience erupted in thunderous applause and continued to enjoy each moment throughout the following 2½ hours of the show."

Muskegon Chronicle

"The show opened Wednesday night for a one-week engagement and judging by the enthusiasm of the audience, they really liked it. This is a show for everyone. The generation gap seems to close as the entire audience falls under the spell of Lee Erwin's superb musicianship."

Alexandria Gazette

"THERE LEE ERWIN sat last week at the Oriental Theater's 'mighty Wurlitzer'... Mr. Erwin knows his stuff. I think it is high time we acknowledged that there is a lot more than nostalgia behind the reviving interests in the theater organs... The silent movie and its accompanying organist are as necessary a blend of fantasy, sight, sound, machine, and participating public as any we have today."

Chicago Tribune

"For this new sound we are grateful to Lee Erwin, a consummate artist and musician."

Huntsville, Ala. Times

we hear the best of the Theatre Music of Today.



Musicians pump up interest

City convention brings together old guard

By JAY JERDE
STAR STAFF WRITER — 8/6/90

Like their craft, they span the ages. The two musicians, one old, one young, both love to play the pipe organ. Lee Erwin, 82, has seen the popularity of the instrument rise, fall and rise again. And 16-year-old Jelani Eddington is part of that new wave.

Both were in Indianapolis for the American Theatre Organ Society convention, which runs through Thursday in the Hyatt Regency.

At the hotel Saturday, organists from as far away as Australia and Great Britain heard the sounds that once accompanied silent black and white movies seen on the large screen more than 60 years ago.

Sunday, in Lafayette, Erwin recreated the magic of that earlier time when he accompanied the movie *Our Hospitality*, starring Buster Keaton. Conventioneerers traveled to Lafayette for the presentation.

Erwin of New York City started his career playing in theaters in Birmingham, Ala. He later studied at a conservatory in Cincinnati. But by 1930, his services were not needed — talking pictures took over the cinemas.

He played organ music for CBS radio and TV programs for many years. In 1967, he returned to his teen-age job, though many people remained uninterested in his art. Now, he said, the old movies are again popular and, with them, the organ accompaniment.

"Ten years ago if you asked a 15- or 18-year-old person, 'What do you think of silent films?' they'd immediately say, 'Why'd you want to see those old black and white films anyway?'" Erwin said.

Now, when he performs for New York's summer silent film festival, three-fourths of the people in the audiences might be college students, Erwin said.

Jelani, a Muncie high school student, is part of that growing interest in the theater organ. In 1988, he won a national competition for young organists. He plans to continue performing while in college. He hopes eventually to obtain a law degree at Indiana University.

He grew up in a family of musicians. His mother taught music in elementary school and his grandmother, Florence Arnold, taught him to play the piano, Jelani said.

"He always did well. But with your grand

classrooms, faculty center. The building anniversary of students.

MUNCIE CANO
Sunday on a canal in northeastern Indiana. Authorities were having difficulty and the canoe capsized and resurfaced. Huggins' boat in 15 feet of water.

BEERING SPEAKS
national cooperation. Steven C. Beerling's up their families at of Music in West.

"If you've been there is trouble. I never been total believe the conflict avoided."

Beerling said means free enterprise the United States enough to confront political oppression. More than ceremony, Purdum

ist in artistry of theater organs rd and new wave

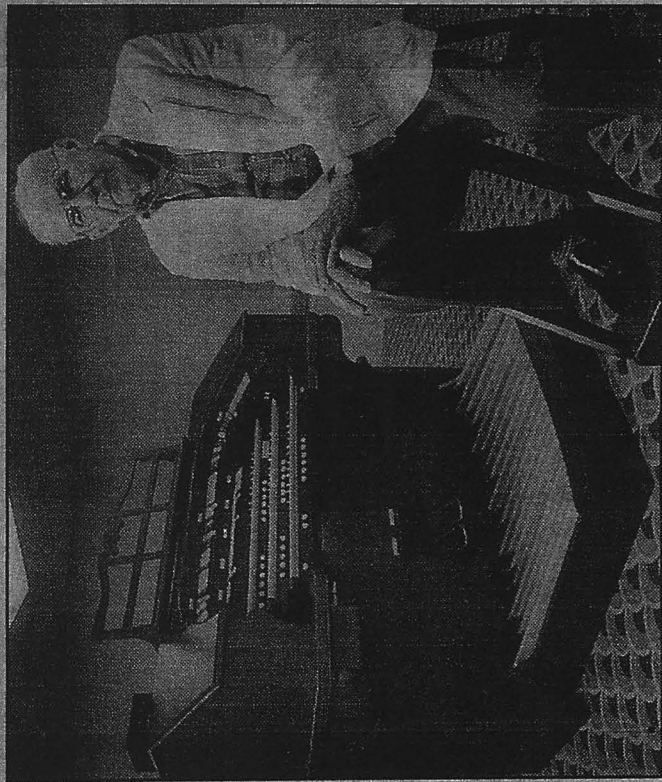
children you always think they're good," Arnold said. But Jelani, she said, had rhythm and learned quickly.

Jelani maintains straight A's at Muncie Southside High School while practicing the piano and organ and occasionally performing in concerts, said his mother, Louise Eddington.

He has performed nationwide, including at organ society national conventions in Portland and Detroit. In Indiana, he has played at First Baptist Church in Muncie, and at the Paramount Music Palace in Indianapolis, where Sunday night he and three other organists performed a concert on the Eastside pizza parlor's theater organ.

For Jelani, the concert was a return to the place where he fell in love with the instrument. As a third grader, he saw in action the intricate workings of the pipes on the monstrous instrument, built into the restaurant 11 years ago. Soon, the boy, who had played the piano since he was 4, started taking lessons.

Now, the energetic youngster is part of a new generation of organists who are helping revive an art.



STAR STAFF PHOTO/JON HAMILL

Organist Lee Erwin takes moviegoers back to the "silent" film era, when soundtracks were totally musical.

The American Theatre Organ Society Organist Profile

Lee Erwin

For more than a decade it was organist Lee Erwin who "took listeners nightly down the valley of a thousand yesterdays, to the bright waters of Moon River - that lazy stream of dreams - where nothing is - but sleep." This was the spoken introduction to one of the most famous radio broadcasts in the Midwest, "Moon River" (WLW, Cincinnati), and while these words were being read by an announcer with a mellifluous voice, Erwin played the haunting melody by Fritz Kreisler "Caprice Vennois."

Erwin began his musical career in Huntsville, Alabama, his birth place, at the age of twelve. His instrument was the piano. Awarded a scholarship to the Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, he left piano for organ, which was to be his first love. He supported himself in part by playing the organ in a theatre nearby seven nights a week, for twenty dollars weekly. After completing his degree in organ, he went on to France for study with Andre Marchal, famed organist. Erwin spent several years studying in Europe, becoming assistant organist at the American Cathedral in Paris. In 1932 he returned home and became full-time organist at the Alabama Theatre, Birmingham. The next year he returned to Cincinnati as organist of the RKO Albee Theatre. Shortly thereafter, in 1933, he became staff organist at WLW (Cincinnati) and began an eleven-year association with the "Moon River" radio broadcast.

In 1944 he left Cincinnati for New York where he became organist for Arthur Godfrey's top-rated radio show on CBS - a position Erwin was to hold for twenty years.

He has since played for literally thousands of radio and television shows and is considered one of the best-trained and most experienced broadcasting artists available. He has written original scores for a number of silent films including "The Eagle" starring Rudolph Valentino, "Queen Kelley" starring Gloria Swanson, "My Best Girl" starring Mary Pickford, and "Irene" starring Colleen Moore, and has toured the country with them. Erwin has taught at New York's Lehman College, has spent much time composing and arranging music for the theatre organ, and still found time to concertize across the country each year. In more recent years he has continued silent film accompaniment and spotlight solos as chief organist of the Carnegie Hall Cinema, New York.

[Return to Famous Artists](#)
[Return to ATOS Home Page](#)

Lee Erwin died Sept. 21, 2000 at the age of 92.

1985 LENTEN MUSIC SERIES SUNDAYS AT 5:00 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 17 at 5:00 pm -- DAVID GARTH WORTH

DAVID GARTH WORTH was Organist and Choirmaster of All Saints Church from 1973-76. He is currently the Organist and Choir-Director of Old South Church, Boston. For his program next Sunday, Mr. Worth and a group of singers from Old South Church will perform the Bach Jesu, meine Freude motet and Mr. Worth will play organ works of Bach and César Franck.

.....

SUNDAY, MARCH 24 at 5:00 pm -- RONALD STALFORD

RONALD STALFORD has been the Organist and Choirmaster of All Saints Church since January, 1979. He came to Worcester from a similar post at Christ Church, Georgetown, Washington D.C. Mr. Stalford will play a program of Franck, Durufle' and Schumann.

.....

Palm Sunday, March 31 at 6:00 p.m.
Silent Motion Picture "The King of Kings"
with Lee Erwin, Organist

ONE OF THE "ALL-TIME GREAT" MOTION PICTURES!



THE ORIGINAL CECIL B. DEMILLE'S

KING OF KINGS

Produced and Directed by Cecil B. DeMille

WITH AN OUTSTANDING
CAST OF HUNDREDS!



All Saints welcomes you to join in
our year-long 150th Anniversary Celebration

"THE KING OF KINGS"

A Motion Picture
to be shown at All Saints Church
Palm Sunday, March 31 - 6 p.m.

Beginning with the redemption of Mary Magdalene, the film "The King of Kings" presents selected dramatic episodes from the life of Jesus, the first part dealing with the events of his ministry — notably the casting out of the seven deadly sins from Mary Magdalene, the raising of Lazarus, the driving of the moneychangers from the Temple, and the instruction of the Lord's Prayer. The second half deals with the Passion: The Last Supper, the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the trial before Pilate, the bearing of the Cross to Calvary, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.

Lee Erwin, the composer of numerous scores for many of Hollywood's masterpieces of the silent era, will play his own score for this silent film. This 1927 Cecil B. DeMille landmark film, one of the "all-time great" motion pictures, will be shown in the sanctuary of All Saints Church. Free and open to the public as part of All Saints Church 150th Anniversary celebration.

LEE ERWIN
306 EAST 15TH STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10003

May 15, 1985

Dr. John W Landon
809 Celia Lane
Lexington, Kentucky 40504

Dear John:

Please forgive me for not sending the information you requested before now. Excuse #1 is that your letter got filed in the wrong folder. Excuse #2 is that I have been extremely busy scoring music for a new series of silent films, in addition to the usual concert and silent film programs.

Theatre organ activity here in New York has been at an all time low for the past couple of years, but things are beginning to look up. The Metro theatre, an old art deco house on upper Broadway (recently restored), has been having much success with silent film programs. I start a new 10 day series there next week. And the Beacon Theatre (under new management) is very interested to get the organ back into playing condition. I have had three meetings with the new management this past week, and it almost certain that we will be able to get an on-going series of films started early this summer.

Reading a review of your record on the Page in the Anderson Paramount, in the March/April issue of T.O. Magazine, reminded me that I should search for your letter. So.....

Hope all goes well out your way. Kindest regards.

Sincerely,

Lee Erwin

LEE ERWIN

Lee Erwin began his career as a professional musician at the age of 12, playing the organ for silent films at the Lyric Theatre in his home town of Huntsville, Alabama.

When he was a student at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, he landed his first job as a radio musician at WLW, one of the most popular stations in the mid-est in the 1930's. He played the organ on the famous MOON RIVER program for 10 years. MOON RIVER was a midnight show, 7 nights a week, featuring organ music, vocalists and poetry. It not only launched Lee Erwin's career as a radio organist. Doris Day, Andy Williams, Rosemary Clooney, the DeVore Sister and many others began their singing careers on MOON RIVER.

In 1944 Lee Erwin moved to New York and joined the music staff at CBS, playing a variety of programs, including several of the early "Soap Operas." When the Arthur Godfrey program got under way, Lee became the organist and arranger for the various Godfrey shows: The 1½ hour daily radio and TV morning programs, the Talent Scout show, and the Wednesday night Special.

When live music on TV and Radio became a thing of the past, Lee Erwin's career turned full circle: He was playing Silent Films once again! His first show was at the Beacon Theatre, on Broadway in 1967. Lee was commissioned to write a music score for the legendary Gloria Swanson film, QUEEN KELLY. Swanson made a personal appearance, the show was a sellout, and SILENT FILMS were suddenly back to life in New York.

Other theatres got on the bandwagon. Lee began playing films at the old Academy of Music on 14th Street, Loew's Kings theatre in Brooklyn, Loew's 175th Street (now Rev. Ike's Church), The Brooklyn Paramount (now L.I.U.). The D.W. Griffith Theatre opened with a 10 day series of Griffith films. The 8th Street Playhouse and the Bleeker Street Cinema ran extensive Silent Film series.

Finally, Radio City Music Hall was the big one: METROPOLIS, with live organ music. Lee Erwin wrote a music score, specifically for the big Radio City Music Hall organ, the first time the organ was used for what it was originally designed: Playing silent films.

Following the Radio City Music Hall show, Lee began playing silent film programs all over the United States, Canada and Australia. In 1955, Carnegie Hall Cinema installed a Baldwin Electronic Organ and a regular silent film series began at the movie house. In 1977 the Carnegie installed a theatre pipe organ and Lee Erwin became the featured organist playing films and short organ concerts for special occasions.

During the past 13 years, Lee Erwin has composed and recorded music tracks for more than 80 films. Those films, with Lee's music, are being shown all over the world today (including China!). The first films were recorded at Radio City Music Hall on the 'studio organ'---others were recorded at the Redford Theatre, Detroit; the Rivoli Theatre, Indianapolis; Long Island University; Loew's 175th Street; Loew's Kings; the Beacon Theatre; the 8th Street Playhouse; Bleeker Street Cinema, and Carnegie Hall Cinema. (The big organ at Carnegie Cinema was removed early this year.)

The most recent addition to "silent films with live organ accompaniment" is the Metro Theatre on Broadway at 99th Street. Beginning December 14, Lee Erwin will be playing (4 shows a day!) at the METRO, furnishing the proper music for a new Laurel and Hardy Series.

(November 29, 1984)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1980

Pipe Organ Reresounds At Movies

By ALLEN HUGHES

Things are different on weekends now at the Carnegie Hall Cinema, the movie theater in the basement of Carnegie Hall. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, the screen entertainment is supplemented thrice daily with brief concerts played by Lee Erwin on a genuine theater organ. Not on an electronic imitation, but on a real theater organ with pipes, just like the ones they used to have in the days of silent films and flamboyant movie palaces.

The console from which the instrument is played is in front of the theater for everyone to see, and the pipes, wind chests, shutters and other working parts fill every inch of stage space behind the movie screen.

For the over-50 generation the theater organ is remembered as a source of vigorous accompaniments to the adventures, amours and antics of Rudolph Valentino, Mary Pickford, John Gilbert, Gloria Swanson, Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd. Theater-organ thoughts may also lead to memories of songs like "Tiptoe Through the Tulips," of sing-alongs with word cards flashed on screens, and of glamorous organists presiding at glittering consoles — beautiful young women in flowing blue dresses or handsome young men in crisp white jackets.

In the best movie palaces, the console rose majestically on an elevator from somewhere deep in the basement. And as it ascended, the brilliantly spotlighted organist heroically gave his or her all to the thundering music, seemingly required to lift console and player into visibility. Everything in the bijou world in those days seemed bigger and better than life, and to many a youthful moviegoer the theater organ was the best of all.

Began in High School in Alabama

Lee Erwin began playing in a movie house more than 50 years ago, when he was a high-school student in Huntsville, Ala. He later played at the Paramount in Cincinnati while a student at the Cincinnati Conservatory and, finally, put in a full year at the Albee in Cincinnati before joining radio station WLW. Over WLW, he was heard by thousands as the organist for "Moon River" from 1933 to 1944. "Moon River" was a late-night program that served up an extraordinary mix of moody poetry, romantic song and — most important of all — lush organ music played on one of WLW's three Wurlitzer organs.



The New York Times/Don Hogan Charles

Lee Erwin, the organist now playing downstairs at the Carnegie Hall Cinema

Wurlitzer was the biggest name in theater organs in their heyday. "Wurlitzer turned out organs like Fords," Mr. Erwin says. "They had a regular assembly line and did one a day for years." The Wurlitzer he is playing at the Carnegie Cinema was originally installed in a movie house in Greenfield, Mass., in 1930. In 1967 it was brought to New York and put into the residence of Ben Hall, a movie-palace and theater-organ historian. After Mr. Hall's death a few years later, the organ was sent to the Harold Lloyd estate in Hollywood for installation in a theater to be built for it. But that project did not materialize, and in the mid-1970's the instrument was returned to New York for installation at the Carnegie Hall Cinema. The organ is owned by the American Theater Organ Society and is leased to the theater for \$1 a year.

The console is very modest in appearance — no glitter or glamour here — but the backstage music-producing elements are imposing. Donald Schwing, a 24-year-old theater-organ enthusiast from the Bronx, has added several ranks of pipes to the original layout, and he keeps the instrument in excellent playing condition. Mr. Schwing owns what is left of the organ from the old Loew's Kings Theater in Brooklyn that was given to Town Hall some years ago. Never installed there, it was heavily vandalized while in storage. Someday, Mr. Schwing says, it will play again.

Midwest and Coast Revival

The return of the theater organ, which has been under way for some years, has made big strides in the Middle West and on the West Coast, and there are now many cities in which theater organ can be heard more or less regularly. Dennis James, a 30-year-old concert performer and silent-movie player who has toured in Europe and Australia as well as coast to coast in this country, is organist in residence of the Ohio Theater in Columbus.

Billy Nalle is resident organist at the Century II Center in Wichita, Kan., where the Wurlitzer from the old Paramount Theater in Times Square has been installed, with a \$53,000 console. In Detroit, the Theater Organ Club owns the Senate Theater, which it bought primarily to preserve the instrument formerly in Detroit's Fisher Theater. In Cincinnati, the University of Cincinnati owns the Emery Theater, where the organ Lee Erwin used to play at the Albee is preserved and used every weekend for movie showings.

In Indianapolis, a large pizza restaurant has people standing in line up to an hour to get in to hear theater-organ performances. The instrument there is installed with the console on an elevator that goes up and down at the beginning and end of every show, and the pipes are visible through clear plastic shutters that line one wall. With elaborate lighting thrown in for good measure, the spectacle is dazzling.

Continued on Page B2

Pipe Organ Reresounds At Movies

Continued From Page B1

Pizza parlors with theater organs — and resident organists — are also strong in Phoenix and California. Lyn Larsen, who tours extensively, Ron Rhodes and Walter Strony are three organists who can be heard in Phoenix. California claims George Wright, a master of the classic theater-organ style, who used to play at the Paramount in Times Square. All of these organists, including Mr. Erwin, have made recordings that sell well.

Biggest Wurlitzer of Them All

The theater organ at Radio City Music Hall — the biggest Wurlitzer of them all — has never been silenced. The young musician playing it now is David Messineo.

"New York was never really much of an organ town," Mr. Erwin says. By that, he means that even though the late Jesse Crawford — historically, the greatest theater organist of them all — played at the Paramount, the instrument never quite achieved the importance in this city that it had in other areas. Perhaps it had too much competition from other sources of musical delight.

Mr. Erwin himself came to New York in the 1940's as a staff organist for CBS. His return to the theater may be said to have begun in 1967 with a revival of Gloria Swanson's "Queen Kelly" at the Beacon Theater. Mr. Erwin composed and played the score for it. Since then he has done many silent movies, among them Mary Pickford's "My Best Girl," Rudolph Valentino's "The Eagle," all the Harry Langdon films and all of the Buster Keaton films.

He did Keaton's "The General" for the BBC in London last year and has recorded his scores for the Keaton films and a number of others. Since these recorded organ scores are now being attached to the film prints, it will mean that the old-time silents can now be shown with appropriate music on television and at theaters lacking organs and organists.

New Audience for Silent Films

"Young people take silent films seriously," Mr. Erwin said, "and one shouldn't poke fun at them."

Although the Carnegie Hall Cinema is not sponsoring any silent-film series at present, it has done so in the past and will very likely do so again. Meanwhile, the theater remains interested in the theater organ and is enthusiastic about having it played. "If somebody good comes to town," Mr. Erwin said, "they want him or her to play there."

"Young people are finally hearing it," he observes with satisfaction, adding that frequently after he has played one of his 12-to-15 minute programs of current Broadway show tunes, plus a sprinkling of old favorites, a young person comes up to ask something like, "What's this crazy synthesizer you've got there making all these wild sounds?"

Lee Erwin will be playing at the Carnegie Hall Cinema today at approximately 3:30, 5:40 and 7:15 P.M., tomorrow at approximately 3:40, 6:35 and 9:30 P.M. and Sunday at approximately 2:55, 5:30 and 7:35 P.M. The Carnegie Hall Cinema admission charge is \$4.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SILENT

Larry Copeland

Do people want to see silent films anymore?

"They don't — until they've seen one," says Lee Erwin.

"Take anyone, sit them down to watch a silent — especially a Keaton — and they'll be hooked. Silent films are good films and a special art form. That comes across."

Erwin's ideas about silent films stem from his career as organ accompanist to them. The special quality of silents is that they rely almost wholly on visual images to tell stories.

A "sophisticated" film viewer may argue that contemporary films do the same thing and are better only because of their soundtracks. So Erwin likes to tell the story of a time he was on a cross-country flight and watched a recently released movie without headphones, to see what the movie "said" visually.

"I had no idea what was going on in that movie," he says. "It hardly utilized the visual dimension of film. And the actors were unable to convey their messages. Modern actors who try out silent roles have a difficult time being effective. They've come to rely on words to convey feelings instead of their bodies."

The sophisticated film viewer might retort that silents weren't really silent but had musical accompaniments that were the equivalent of soundtracks.

Erwin will tell you differently:

"Actually, it's really quite nice when people come up to me after a show and say they forgot I was playing," he says. "That's exactly what I want. Musical accompaniment should be so integrated that it enhances the movie instead of speaking for itself. Whenever it does speak for itself it detracts from the visual story on the screen."

According to Erwin, there are two problems that arise with most musical accompaniment to silent film — and unfortunately, it's the kind of accompaniment many people know from watching shoddy retrospectives like *When Comedy Was King*. The first problem is created by playing familiar music.

"You can't play familiar music," Erwin

says. "For reasons of experience and imagination people have acquired strong images in their minds that they associate with familiar tunes. When you play familiar music as accompaniment, those acquired images come to people's minds and conflict with the image on the screen. In some garish instances, accompanists have played music whose familiar title matches the scene of the film, however unrelated the actual character of the music may be, totally undermining the visual image."

The second problem arises from injecting sound effects. Some distributors — notably Time-Life, which monkeyed with Harold Lloyd's feature films — have desecrated silents by tacking on obnoxious soundtracks (shattering noises when windows smash, bangs when guns go off, sugary-sweet smacks when lovers kiss) that usually end up poking fun at the film and distort the silent dimension of the film.

"In *The General*, Buster Keaton uses battle scenes as comic props; viewers shouldn't sense blood and death," explains Erwin. "If you start putting in gunshots you ruin his prop; you destroy the dimension and particular impact Keaton wanted."

How, then, does Erwin propose that these evils be avoided in accompaniment while still enhancing the film? By composing original scores whose tempos complement the tempos of the visual images of the film.

Erwin is a soft-spoken man with a light complexion, slight of build and somewhat thin of hair. He settles comfortably at the organ; as he plays his body sways with the gusts of music from the pipe chamber at the Carnegie Hall Cinema, where he appears regularly.

Erwin's career began at the age of 12 in Huntsville, Ala., in the late 1920s when he substituted for the organist at a local theater. He points out that by the '20s theater organs were used far more frequently than pianos or orchestras to accompany film, providing the musical versatility of orchestras for the cost of only one salary. He is one of the few remaining virtuoso accompanists on theater organs, whose numbers are dwindling.

Continued on page 40

The Soho News November 5, 1980



IMPORTANCE *Continued from page 38*

Erwin's career underwent a 37-year hiatus when talkies captured the movie market in the '30s. He studied classical organ in France for three years and returned to the U.S. to work in radio, where theater organ had found a new home. For 11 years he played for 500,000-watt WLW in Cincinnati. In 1946 he went to work for CBS in New York, where he became chief composer and organist for the Arthur Godfrey show on radio and television, and numerous CBS soaps.

Erwin was instrumental in launching the revival of interest in silent film in 1967 when the Theater Organ Society of America commissioned him to write an original score for a Beacon Theater showing of *Queen Kelly*, an Eric von Stroheim film starring Gloria Swanson that had never been shown in the U.S. before. The success of *Queen Kelly* led to further composing and Erwin began touring the country with silent film festivals. Last year he toured with a silent film comedy festival that began at the Eighth Street Playhouse.

Erwin still composes in his East 15th Street apartment and has written scores for nearly 100 silent films, including all the works of Keaton, D.W. Griffith and Harry Langdon. He says Keaton is easiest to write for because of his sense of rhythm. With a technical assistant, Donald Schwing, he is recording these scores so they can be tacked onto silents as permanent soundtracks.

Despite the art of silent movies and the spice an accompanist like Erwin can add to them, they need one more ingredient to be successful: an audience.

"Silent movies, especially comedy, do need an audience," Erwin said. "It's audience reaction and electricity that make a silent successful. A silent comedy shown to only a few people is not funny. People will be afraid to laugh. But shown to a large audience, electrified in the way audiences electrify themselves, it becomes uproarious."

"The same silent film can be a completely different film in front of different audiences."

LEE ERWIN

CONCERTS & SILENT FILM SHOWS
SPRING-1985

- March 2: Oakland, California, Paramount Theatre: Concert/Silent Film
Mary Pickford, Buddy Rogers, "My Best Girl"
March 16: Boston, Mass. Babson College: Concert Program
March 22: Frederick, Maryland, Tivoli Theatre; Silent Film Program
" 23 " " " " " " " " "
April 7: Worcester, Mass. All Saints Church: "King of Kings" (Film)
April 12: Mineola, N.Y. Chaminade H.S. Concert Program
" 13: " " " " " " " " "
May 3: Westchester Community College: Film Program
May 5: Mineola, N.Y. Chaminade H.S. Program for AGO.
May 24: New York City, Metro Theatre: Buster Keaton Film Series
" 25: " " " " " " " " "
" 26: " " " " " " " " "
" 27: " " " " " " " " "
May 28: Greensboro, N.C. Carolina Theatre: Film: "Way Down East"
May 29: New York City, Metro Theatre: Buster Keaton Film Series
" 30: " " " " " " " " "
" 31: " " " " " " " " "
June 1: " " " " " " " " "
" 2: " " " " " " " " "
June 11: Greensboro, N.C. Carolina Theatre: Film: "The Eagle"
" 4; New York City, All Saint's Church: Special Program, "Celebration
in Harlem" Benefit for the Children's Storefront.

Lee Erwin
306 East 15th Street
New York, N.Y. 10003
(212) 777-5643

February 15, 1985

LEE ERWIN

CONCERTS & SILENT FILM SHOWS

1984-1985

LEE ERWIN

Revised July 10, 1984

July 14, 1984: Atlanta, Ga. Fox Theatre: Silent Film, "Thief of Bagdad"
" 15 " " " " " " " " " "
August 2: Schenectady, N.Y. Proctor's Theatre: Film, "Diary of a Lost Girl"
" 24: Groton, Conn. PP&P: Silent Film Show
" 25: : " " " " " "
" 30: Schenectady, N.Y. Proctor's Theatre: Film, "Steamboat Bill, Jr."
September 6: Schenectady, N.Y. Proctor's Theatre: Film, "Son of the Sheik"
" 9: New York City: All Saint's Church: Concert Program
" 11: Greensboro, N.C. Carolina Theatre: Film, "Thief of Bagdad"
" 16: New York City. All Saint's Church: Record Dick Hyman Program
October 3: New York City: Concert/Silent Film Program for NYTOS
" 26: Groton, Conn. PP&P: Film, "Phantom of the Opera"
" 27 Mineola, N.Y. Chaminade H.S. Concert/Silent Film Program
" 30: Greensboro, N.C. Carolina Theatre: Film "Phantom of the Opera"
November 9: Westchester Community College: Film, "City Lights"
December 7: New York City: Metro Theatre: Laurel & Hardy Film Festival
8: " " " (Same)
9: " " " "
10: " " " "
11: " " " "
12: " " " "
13: " " " "
January 18: 1985: Kingston, Ontario. KTOS: Film Show & Concert
" 20: Wineman, Indiana. Film, "College"
March 2: Oakland, California. Paramount Theatre: Concert/Silent Film Program
April 7: Worcester, Mass. Film, "King of Kings"
" 12: Mineola, N.Y. Chaminade H.S. Concert/ Silent Film Program
" 13 " " " " " " " " "
May: 28: Greensboro, N.C. Carolina Theatre: Film: "Way Down East"
" (Date to be decided) Program for Long Island AGO
June 11: Greensboro, N.C. Carolina Theatre: Film, "The Eagle"

(A revised list, with additions, on September 30)

*Late September/Early October, Lee Erwin will record a program of Theatre Organ Music on the 1892 Roosevelt Pipe Organ in All Saint's Church, N.Y.C.

...extreme of the pendu-
...and being carried too far by
...and elementary music which is
...the heritage of the theater, and per-
...will remain so. Today we have, gen-
...erally, three classes of organists in the
...theater: the class that has gone headlong



PAUL D. ESTERLY

Pupil of Mr. Van Dusen, native of Reading, Pa.; began organ study seriously with Mr. Henry F. Seibert — studied piano ten years, organ five years; began organ work in United Evangelical Church of Reading, now playing in Capitol Theater, Reading. Mr. Esterly plays his recitals from memory and is an advocate of using as much actual organ literature in the theater as can be adapted with good effect — a wholesome step in the right direction for the good of the theater organist's profession. He is an example of the serious concert organist turning to the theater field

theater-wards in favor of the cheapest possible organ music, the class that has stood like Gibraltar and the boy on the burning deck in favor of music that has no more frequent place in the theater than red paint has on the tip of one's nose, and the creditable class who can play jazz like a jazz-hound and Bach like a Bach-fiend but who play a little of both on occasion and not too much of either, confining themselves to the middle run of popular music of the day such as is heard continuously in our opera houses from the Metropolitan on down to Main Street.

It is for this sensible class of organists
...of the periodical department...

ESHERT, WALTER

Organist of the Tuxedo Theatre, New York City in 1927.

ESTERLIT, PAUL

Theatre organist in the Chicago, Illinois area in the late 1920's.

ESTES, Earl (J. Earl Estes)

Organist of the Harding Theatre in Chicago, Illinois in 1930.

Opened the 3/13 Wurlitzer, Omaha, Nebraska Orpheum Theatre, October 9, 1927)
(a 3,000 seat house).

EVANS, ADOLPHE (Adolphus C.)

Born in Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 1895. Parents--Elizabeth H. and Adolphus C. Evans. Evans received his education at Chicago Musical College. Married Mary Binas. Began playing theatre organ professionally in 1919. Featured at a number of theatres in the Chicago area.

EVANS, CHARLES D.

Born in Bobville, Texas, November 25, 1919. Began studying piano at 9 years of age. Studied music at Oklahoma ^{City} ~~State~~ University and Southern Methodist University under Dora Poteet Barclay. Organist of the Tower Theatre in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1940. Organist of the Palace Theatre in Dallas, Texas from 1951 to 1954. Served as staff organist for Radio Station KRLD. His first professional job was organist for the Black Hotel and for the Oklahoma Network Radio in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He played leading hotels and restaurants in the midwestern states and in the South. Presently teaches organ in Dallas, Texas.

EVANS, GIL

Organist of the 4/16 Page pipe organ at the Casino Theatre,
Catalina Island, California in the 1930's. Recorded a series
of four 78 rpm discs on this organ produced privately by Casino
Records, Avalon, California.

EVANS, GIL -

Organist of the 4/16 Page pipe organ at the Casino Theatre,
Catalina Island, California in the 1930's. Recorded a series
of four rpm discs on this organ produced privately by Casino
Records, Avalon, California.

EVANS, JACK

John Evans, of East Grinstead, wrote just as we were going to press for the September issue to advise us of the death of his father: "It is with deep regret I advise you of the death of my father, and member of the Cinema Organ Society, JACK EVANS, on 26th July 1985 in Majorca, after some month's illness.

I know my father was a long time member of the Society and regularly supplied pieces of editorial. He valued his association with the Society very highly.

My father, as you know, was a professional organist for some years, and I know that this was the most significant influence of his life and he had many years of happy memories. He was almost, to me, a walking encyclopaedia on the history of his profession."

JACK EVANS is best known for his association with Gaumont-British in the Midlands. He was resident from 1942 to 1943 at the Gaumont (ex-city Cinema) Leicester; playing a Wurlitzer 2/9 originally destined for the Marlborough, Hollaway, and now doing good service at Dormston House, Sedgley, the home of Allan Hickling. From there he went to the Gaumont Palace Birmingham and a 3/10 Compton, until 1946 when he transferred to the Rink/Gaumont Smethwick and a slightly smaller Compton, his place at Birmingham being taken by FRANK NEWMAN. He remained at Smethwick for many years, transferring to the management side of the business at the Odeon, Sutton Coldfield. He then became a restaurateur at Sutton Coldfield and, later, Harborne, before emigrating to Majorca to become Mine Host at the Granada Bar, C/an Pastilla, Playa de Palma. As John Evans says, he was a regular contributor to these columns and we shall miss his cheery notes. We extend our sympathy to his widow, and to John and his family.

EVANS, JOE

Organist in the Dallas, Fort Worth area in the 1920's. Played the Capitol Theatre in Dallas, Texas and the Strand Theatre in Waco, Texas.

EVANS, (MRS.)

Organist of Loew's Rio Theatre in New York City in July 1927.

EVANS, TOM

Organist of the Strand Theatre in Scranton, Pennsylvania in
the spring of 1927.

EVANS, WILLIAM

Organist of the Capitol Theatre in Seattle, Washington in 1924.

EVISTON, GOLDEN .

Organist of Loew's Midland Theatre, Kansas City (Robert Morton organ) along with Billy Wright in 1928.