

## MAKE RESERVATIONS NOW!!

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The management of the Fox Theatre desires that the balcony not be used for insurance reasons.

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Orders for brochures and ash trays are beginning to come in from those who are unable to attend the convention. These will be mailed as soon as possible at the close of the convention.

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The Detroit Theater Organ Club will conduct tours of the chambers at the Senate Theater—probably after Saturday night's concert. This is an interesting and revealing sight.

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For those who can not attend the entire convention but want to attend one or more concerts, there will be a charge of \$2.00. This only applies to the Fox, Redford and Skating Rink. The seating capacity eliminates this possibility at the Senate or the church.

## ST. LOUIS THEATRE KIMBALL 4M-19R

When the St. Louis Theatre opened on November 25, 1925, a grand theatre was born. When the patrons entered the Grand Lobby, they were treated to Rapp and Rapp's version of a European palace. The floor was terrazzo. On the left was the Grand Staircase. Large columns supported a vaulted ceiling from which hung ornate crystal chandeliers. The mirrored walls reflected a scene of grandeur.

When they reached their seats they saw a huge dome finely carved and covered with gold leaf as was the proscenium and side wall alcoves. Emblazoned on the main curtain was the emblem of the city—the statue of St. Louis astride his horse with sword held high. Below the stage was the orchestra pit and at the left of the pit on its elevator was the majestic organ console.

The featured organist for most of the four years that the 4 manual/ 19 rank Kimball was used was Julius K. Johnson. He was a straight spot-light type organist; never using song slides or having community sing programs.

Johnson was a good musician, but a story is told that he was uneasy about crowds. On occasion he would take a bit of liquid tranquilizer before mounting the organ bench. After playing at the St. Louis for two years, he returned to California, where he played in a restaurant.

During Johnson's absence Earl Estes was the organist. After his return to St. Louis, he had an assistant, a St. Louisan named Wagner. Wagner played the afternoon show and during it he also did a radio broadcast on station WIL. For this he wore headphones to get his cues from the station. During the broadcast he completely ignored the action on the screen and played for the listeners at home.

Early in the Spring of 1929 the St. Louis Theatre contracted for the installation of RCA Photophone "talkie" equipment. Johnson then left St. Louis.

The last nine months that the Kimball was used were filled by a talented musician from Granite City, Illinois, W. A. Brummer.

Brummer was trained as a classical organist, but was also experienced as a theatre organist. He had played at a theatre in Granite City and later was assistant to Stuart Barrie at the Ambassador in downtown St. Louis.

He recalls the first time he heard the St. Louis Kimball and wondered at the loud raucous solo stop. When he first played the instrument he was executing a soft passage and set up the Krumet. Expecting the Baroque stop that is a cross between a Cromorne and a Clarinet he was startled to discover that mysterious loud stop. It turned out to be the Post Horn.

Mr. Brummer later became an organ builder and service man. He and his organization are known throughout the Midwest. He is the representative of M. P. Moller and also installs instruments of his own design. He still retains his interest in theatre organ also and is a charter member of St. Louis Chapter, ATOE:

After the Photophone was installed just before Christmas 1929, the organ was never officially played again.

The Kimball spoke from five chambers. There were two chambers on the organist's left designated Solo and on the right were the two Main chambers with the Percussion chamber on the bottom. The relay was also on the right side opening behind a fire extinguisher and hose compartment. The blower and the lift mechanism were in the basement below the stage. The interconnecting cables of the organ contained approximately 500,000 feet of single wires.

Opus 6852 was a large scale instrument operating at 10, 15, and 20 inches pressure. The large scales and high pressure were necessary for this house of almost 3900 seats.

In the upper Main chamber were the Kinura, Orchestral Oboe, Clarinet, Oboe Horn, and Concert Flute. The middle Main chamber held an Open Diapason, Viole d'Orchestra, Viole Celeste, Dulciana, and Vox Humana (II). The 49 note Deagan Chrysoglot was also in this chamber. The lower chamber held the percussions and a fine Kimball Piano which is still in passable tune today.

The upper Solo chamber contained the Diaphone and Post Horn (masquerading under the misnomer of Krumet) on 15 inches and the Tuba and Trumpet on 20 inches pressure. The lower left chamber held the Solo Vox Humana (I), Quintadena, Saxophone (really a Basset Horn), Solo String (excellent String Bass extension), and of course, the highly important Tibia. The Solo Marimba was also in this chamber.

The St. Louis Theatre Kimball organ is now the possession of St. Louis Chapter ATOE, Inc. The events leading to the Chapter acquiring it go back considerably before the founding of the group in 1962.

When wide screen movies came into popularity the St. Louis Theatre installed a new screen. At the same time they built an extension of the stage over the orchestra pit and organ console. Sometime in the ensuing years the organ sustained severe water damage in the upper main chamber. There was also extensive damage to the pipes in the middle main chamber from vandalism. The door to this chamber was unlocked and all the keys had been lost.

In 1950 Stan Kann started playing the "Crawford Special" Wurlitzer at the Fox

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## ST. LOUIS THEATRE KIMBALL, *continued*

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Theatre on a regular basis. He started looking for an organ to install in a restaurant and in 1954 bought the 13 rank 3 manual Wurlitzer from Loew's State in St. Louis. He and some friends removed it and Stan then persuaded W. A. "Gus" Brummer to rebuild it and install it in Ruggeri's Restaurant.

In 1961 another seemingly unrelated event was the gift to the St. Louis Symphony of a half-million dollars for purchase of a permanent hall. The donor Oscar Johnson stipulated that they must raise a similar amount of money.



The Kimball console, with from left to right: Mayor Reim, Doc Kloepfner, Mrs. Dunn, George Swett, Edith Lustig, Gerry Marian, Milton Marian, and Joe Dallavalle.

*Photo by Francis Scheidegger*

In 1962 St. Louis Chapter ATOE was chartered. In the spring of 1964 the Chapter took on a refurbishing job on the Fox organ and the work culminated with the presentation of Gaylord Carter. The artistic if not financial success of this venture started chapter members to thinking of having their own organ.



Doc Kloepfner and Joe Dallavalle stand beside the long entombed Kimball console.

*Photo by Francis Scheidegger*

With the news that the city of Kirkwood was building a new auditorium, Chapter Chairman George Swett proposed the installation of a theatre organ. Negotiations produced a contract for the Chapter to install a theatre organ. The Chapter also made an agreement to purchase the now 17 rank organ in the aforementioned restaurant.

The St. Louis Symphony announced in late 1966 that they had received a million dollar gift from Mrs. Helen Lamb Powell to purchase the St. Louis Theatre. It will be renamed "Powell Symphony Hall" in memory of her husband Walter S. Powell. The Ford Foundation also has given a grant for refurbishing the hall and for the endowment fund of the Symphony.

St. Louis Chapter members had for some time been discussing the possibility of obtaining the console from the St. Louis Theatre but had not approached the owners—Arthur Enterprises, also the owners of the Fox. The Symphony indicated that they were interested in having the entire organ and associated equipment removed.

At the January 15, 1967 meeting of the Chapter, the discussion seemed to indicate that the inability to raise funds for the Kirkwood project and the apparent unavailability of the Kimball console would cause a collapse of two years of planning and dreaming about an organ of their own. The next day, Gus Brummer was discussing the possibility of a classical organ for the hall with the Symphony. He was told that the Symphony would like to have a proposal from ATOE for removal and subsequent use of the Kimball. On Tuesday we received word that we could have the instrument if we removed everything.

Chairman John "Doc" Kloepfner set the telephone committee in action and an emergency meeting was called for Wednesday night. Unanimous passage of enabling resolutions and the subscription of a guarantee fund for expenses started things moving. Committees were appointed and on Friday the 20th the legal committee met with the St. Louis Symphony officials.

On Monday evening, exactly one week from our first indication of any possibility of getting the Kimball two crews were at work in the theatre. One group made a survey and inventory of the organ while the other started removing the stage flooring covering the console.

Thirty-eight years of non-use had taken its toll. The lift was inoperative; ivories missing from keys; water damage to the top right chamber; vandalism to a horrible extent in the middle right chamber; and most of the drums and cymbals were missing when our locksmith member Joe Dallavalle opened the percussion chamber. There were some bright spots, however. The console being buried beneath the stage had saved it from any major indignities. All the Solo side of the organ was intact. The Xylophone, Marimba, Chrysoglot, and Tuned Sleigh Bells are all in excellent condition. As it turned out, the water damage was more to the top boards than to the chests and even the concert flute had only a few pipes with minor damage.

During the third day of work, Al Baum a former electrician, got the lift motor wired up, the mechanism unstuck and raised the console to stage level. Ned Lustig, a former stagehand taught us how to tie lines for hoisting parts from the chambers. Milt Marian, an ex-organ-service man who had helped to install and even remove many of the theatre organs in the area demonstrated the art of handling pipes; the String Bass in particular. Former Chairman George Swett seemed to always be there when work was going on and took movies too. In fact the 40 members, friends, and families who helped did most of the work in the first three weeks. In slightly more than a month the job was done.

The job was dirty, difficult, and demanding, but was accomplished with much enthusiasm, some griping, and many sore muscles. Our professional organ builder estimated we would need 750 man-hours and professional hoisting and moving help, at a cost of \$800 to \$1000. Our members worked so hard that we needed only 800 man-hours to do much more work than was anticipated and used the professional help only for the piano, console and relay, and a few of the biggest pipes and chests; at a fraction of the cost.

In April we also started the removal of the organ from Ruggeri's Restaurant. Stan Kann still plays there for diners, but now uses an electronic organ, if you will pardon the expression, even though it has a famous theatre organ name on it.

In May we started work on the rebuilding of the console and relay for the future installation in Kirkwood. We have much long hard work ahead, but St. Louis members have shown they can do it. Now, if we only had a little more money . . .

Acknowledgements: Photographs are by Francis Scheidegger. The St. Louis Chapter, ATOE, Inc. wishes to extend thanks to everyone who helped, to the St. Louis Symphony Society for the gift of the organ, and to the Symphony's assistant business manager, Mr. George Carpenter for his co-operation; the St. Louis Theatre's building engineer, Dave Authenrieth and his staff; to the City of Kirkwood, its Mayor Robert G. Reim, and Recreation Department Director, Mrs. Permelia Dunn.

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### Send In Chapter News Mail To

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# "EXACTLY THE WRIGHT WAY"

—or Moment of Truth

Whether you've ever met him or not, you still refer to him as *George*. Through the media of records he has endeared himself to the Theatre Organ world, and on Sunday, May 21, he endeared himself to Northwest enthusiasts for all time.

George Wright accomplished an artistic triumph at the Oriental Theatre, Portland, Oregon, on the fabulous 3-13 Wurlitzer affectionately known as the *Baby Fox* (S. F.). At the end of the concert George was accorded what he openly and emotionally acknowledged the first standing ovation of his career.



## ST. LOUIS THEATRE, continued from page 12

RANK	PEDAL	ACCOMP.	GREAT	BOMBARD	SOLO
Diaphone	16-8	8-2t8	16-8	16-8	8
Tuba	16-8	8-2d t8	16-8-4 2nd t 8	16-8-4 2nd t 16-8	16-8
Post Horn	16	8-2nd t8	16-8	8	8
Trumpet			8	8	8
Open Diapason	8	8	8	8	8
Tibia	16-8	8-2nd t 8-4	16-8-4- 2nd t 8	16-8-4	8-4
Concert Flute	16-8-4	16-8-4-22/3- 2	16-8-4-2 2 2/3-1 3/5	16-8-4	8-2
Solo String	16-8- Pizz 16	8-4-2nd t 8	8-4-2nd t 8	16-8	8
Viole D' Orchestra	8	16-8-4-2- 2nd t 8	16-8-4-2	8	8
Viole Celeste		8-4-2nd t 8	8-4	8	8
Saxophone	8	8-2nd t8	16-8 2nd t 8	16-8	8
Quintadena		8-2nd t 8	8-2nd t 8		8
Vox Humana I		16-8-4	16-8-4	16-8	8-4
Vox Humana II		8-4	16-8-4	16-8	8-4
Orchestral Oboe			8		8
Oboe Horn		8	8		8
Dulciana		8-4	8-4		8
Kinura			8	8	8
Clarinet	8	8-2nd t 8	16-8		8
Piano	16	8-4	16-8-4	16-8-4	
Xylophone		2nd T.	4-2	4	4
Marimba		8	8		8
Harp		8-4	8-4	8	8
Chrysoglot		4	4		
Glock/ Orch. Bells			2	2	2 2
Sleigh Bells			2		2
Cathedral Chime		2nd T.	x		x

Rising with great authority to a sensational *Married I Can Always Get* on the freshly refurbished gold'n white console, he launched into an unusual middle-east arrangement of *Hindustan* dedicated to the late Oliver Wallace as the original fire curtain descended, depicting a camel train trekking by a distant city. Immediately following was another new tune, *Green Eyes*. This was punctuated by George pointing at the large Oriental mask over the proscenium, shouting *Zap*, magically lighting the large green eyes. After a Summer Samba-Tico Tico-ish *After You've Gone* and Neal Hefti's *Li'l Darlin'*, George proved that we all have something in common. Even he has to read music. This was the title tune from a brand-new show, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, followed by part of the complete score featuring such brand-new tunes as *Poor Butterfly*, *Japanese Sandman*, *Charmaine*, *Stumbling*, etc.

Other high points of the first half were *I've Got You Under My Skin*, *Winchester Cathedral*, *How Am I To Know* au Crawford, *Satin Doll* featuring the "Dirty Piston," and ending with a Gershwin Medley in the best tradition.

The second half started with Guy Meleney's romp-stomping arrangement of *Back Bay Shuffle*, followed by Brubeck's *Take Five* featuring the pit piano. *Nacht Und Tag* (Night & Day) by Beethoven-Porter followed, supplemented by Carrie Jacobs Bond's *Just A-Wearyin' For You* (Will the real Jesse Crawford stand up?). An electrifying Duke Ellington medley was followed by the three famous Noel Coward Waltzes, *Zigeuner*, *I'll Follow My Secret Heart* and *I'll See You Again*. Then, after a touching verbal tribute to the late, great, Jesse Crawford, George meticulously and effectively played Crawford's *High Hat*. This was the real Oriental Wurlitzer showpiece.

George then dedicated the medley from Kern's *Showboat* to Dennis Hedberg who, with Bill Peterson, completely restored and improved the organ and helped make the show possible. This was supposed to be the end, but George was so touched by the crowd's reaction that he presented us with *The Whistler and His Dog*, another new (1911) pleaser.

There were many luminaries from the organ world present, from all over the Northwest and a few from San Francisco. All agreed that George was at his best. — MARTHA LAKE