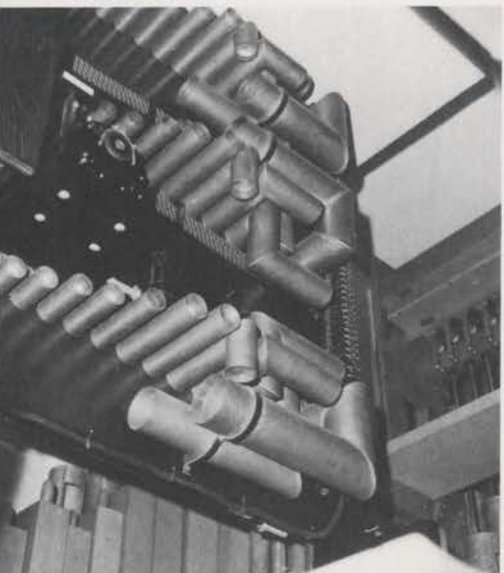


Echo chamber. Name tags clearly identify each rank.



Automatic player actions for both Kilgen and Duo-Art player rolls.

A view of the unusual Deagan "Super Sostenuto" Vibra-Harp, located in Great chamber.



dous help in this project.

The estate is now owned by a prominent Peninsula industrialist who has restored the property to its original condition. The mansion and the organ suffered under several owners who were not able to maintain them. It has been very satisfying to see the estate fall into ownership of a family who appreciates it.

This interesting instrument will probably be on the agenda for the 1975 San Francisco ATOS convention. □

Closing Chord

Vic Hammett was very special. No one who came in contact with him is likely to forget his forceful conversational prowess or his sharp wit. Victor Hammett was born in Windsor Berks, England, 57 years ago. Early musical education included some terms at Eton College Choir School "until my voice changed." He first played theatre organ at 15 at the



VIC HAMMETT (shown here at the Harvey Heck Wurlitzer). (Stufoto)

Palace Cinema, Slough. At 19 he joined first the Gaumont British theatre circuit then the Shipman and King circuit "doing the rounds" with brief engagements at many theatres, which was then the practice in Britain. Then Vic organized *The Wonder Five*, an accordion band, and played vaudeville houses. His first BBC radiocast was from the Regal Cinema in Edmonton. Thereafter he was heard via radio playing theatre organs all over the United Kingdom.

His assignment at the Regal was indicative of both Vic's musical acumen and his adaptability. He was hired to follow the volatile Sidney Torch, the man who had practically invented organ jazz in Britain. Torch had succeeded in approximating the voices and rhythmic patterns of the "swing bands" on the organ, not to mention his expertise in the New Orleans and Chicago jazz styles. Sidney Torch was the toast of Britain in the '30s, and a very hard man to follow. To Vic Hammett fell that task. When he realized that audiences still expected to hear the frenetic Torch jazz at the Regal, he played such a close approximation that his future was assured. But Hammett rarely stressed his skills as a copyist. He had his own style as heard on his recordings. He also became known as a dance band pianist, orchestral arranger and conductor.

Fate hit Vic Hammett a low blow in 1939 when, during a tour of the continent with a travelling show, World War II broke out. The Germans arrested the entire British troupe and interned them until advancing allied armies liberated them in 1945. Vic never talked much about those lost years but it required many months of recuperation before he regained his normal weight.

In recent years Vic Hammett was one of Britain's most active organists, at home and abroad. His frequent tours took him to New Zealand, Australia, Hongkong, Tokyo, San Francisco (Avenue theatre), Los Angeles (Wiltern theatre) and Chicago (the NAMM trade show). He was very active on the organ scene in Britain, with frequent concerts played on the instruments maintained by England's organ clubs, among them the 3/10 Wurlitzer in Buckingham Town Hall. He made many recordings, some released in the USA on the Concert and Doric labels. One recording made in

the US was played on the Redwood City Capn's Galley 4/18 Wurlitzer (*Pipin' Hot*).

Vic Hammett died on December 29, 1974, in a hospital near his home in Maldon, Essex, after a lengthy battle with peritonitis. He leaves his wife, Ivy.

Doric Records plans a memorial album.

Stu Green

Herman L. Schlicker, 72, third-generation organ builder who founded the Schlicker Organ Co. in 1932 in Tonawanda, N.Y., died on December 4. Born in Germany, and after working with organ builders in Germany, Denmark and France, came to America in 1924 and joined Wurlitzer. During the height of the depression, he formed his own firm which has built organs for churches and colleges all over the United States as well as Japan. Mr. Schlicker trained many men who later joined other organ builders.

He is survived by his wife, Alice; two daughters and four sisters. Burial was in Elmlawn Cemetery where another organ builder, Robert Hope-Jones, reposes. □



Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

*Address: P.O. Box 1314
Salinas, Calif. 93901*

Dear Sir:

At the November 10 concert celebrating Ray Bohr's 27th year as organist at the Radio City Music Hall, Claud Beckham, the Master of Ceremonies, in introducing me to an audience of nearly 2,000 stated that when I left the New York Capitol Theatre in 1923

I said that Eugene Ormandy was a lousy conductor. What I actually said was that Ormandy was Associate Concert Master and an excellent violinist.

At the time, Ormandy, in his first try at conducting was a bit clumsy handling the baton, but when I saw him conduct a few months later he had become a fine conductor and he handled the baton with precision and superb elegance.

Eugene Ormandy is a friend of mine and I don't want to be so badly misquoted and quoted out of context.

I will thank you for printing this in the next issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. C.A.J. (Cas) Parmentier

Dear Sir:

I have just read with great interest the biography of Jesse Crawford written by John W. Landon as well as the review of it which appeared in the October issue of THEATRE ORGAN. I should like to commend Dr. Landon for his prodigious efforts in seeking to ferret out what is obviously very elusive and obscure factual material regarding the life of this prominent theatre organist of a by-gone era.

However, I cannot agree with the THEATRE ORGAN'S reviewer when he says that Dr. Landon's "painstaking research" has produced "a superb finished product... a most fantastic new book." Although the reviewer writes that "each chapter is documented extensively," much of this so-called documentation is in the form of personal interviews. How can we be certain of the accuracy of the facts revealed in these interviews when so many of the respondents were speaking from memory of incidents and individuals in some cases dating back fifty or sixty years? The human memory is not always reliable especially in those of us who are getting on in years. I am sure that Dr. Landon is well aware of the pitfalls and problems involved in depending too heavily on the use of oral history. A tape recorder or a notebook do not always guarantee historical accuracy. One must go direct to the printed sources, both primary and secondary, whenever and wherever one can; this I do not think Dr. Landon has done as fully as he might have. The result is a multitude of factual errors that have prevented his book from achieving its full measure of historical validity. To wit: A random sampling (and I refrain from

including the many typographical errors!):

Page 2. — Landon states that in 1932 "the great depression was not yet at its height" and that the effect of sound films "thus far had scarcely been felt in the deluxe houses across the country". The facts do not support these statements. By 1932 the Great Depression had reached its crest with one-quarter of the American working population unemployed. By 1931 virtually every motion picture theatre in America had converted to sound films (or closed its doors!); by 1932 the situation was so bad that organists were being dropped right and left — in small theatres and deluxe houses as well. The film product that Hollywood was turning out was one hundred percent sound and by 1932 organists were no longer necessary. In most situations they were not even economically feasible!

Page 11. — C. Sharpe-Minor is referred to as Charlie Minor when his name was really Charlie Sharpe.

Page 125. — Landon writes of Jesse and Helen Crawford's appearance at "the twin consoles of Mike Shea's Buffalo Theatre in Buffalo, New York... in mid-1937". First of all, Crawford's appearance was the week of January 29, 1937, a far cry from "mid-1937." More importantly, Shea's Buffalo's Wurlitzer never had twin consoles; its one console was done over in white for the occasion and Crawford played it alone — solo. On Page 239, in his section "Notes on Sources", Landon writes of having interviewed Fanny Wurlitzer on June 5, 1971 in the latter's home in Kenmore, New York, a suburb of Buffalo. Obviously, Mr. Landon was in the Buffalo area at that time. All he had to do to verify his facts on the 1937 Crawford appearance at Shea's Buffalo was to check either the BUFFALO EVENING NEWS or the BUFFALO COURIER-EXPRESS, the complete files of both of which are on microfilm in the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library and in the Buffalo Historical Society as well. A biographer is supposed to exhaust his sources; obviously Dr. Landon has not done so.

Page 177. — Landon states that the Wurlitzer Company "constructed more than three thousand organs over the years". The Wurlitzer Factory List which has recently been published indicates that a figure closer to 2300 organs would be more accurate.