

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 Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.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.

Page 178. — Landon avers that Crawford preferred the Wurlitzer organ (which was certainly his privilege) to any other make “for the vividness of its tone colors, the speed of its action and its incomparable dynamic range. He felt that no other instrument had its capabilities”. The fact that Jesse Crawford preferred the Wurlitzer organ does not mean that it necessarily was the best theatre organ as Dr. Landon implies here and elsewhere in his book. Both other organists and other organ enthusiasts had (or have) different preferences. In this regard it is often claimed that the five “Wonder Mortons” installed in Loew’s Theatres in New York City at the very end of the theatre organ era were technically superior to and more advanced than most Wurlitzers. This last, of course, is purely a matter of personal opinion and taste but historians and biographers are supposed to be objective in such matters.

Finally, it appears to me that in Dr. Landon’s treatment of the theatre organ in general he does not always show the proper perspective. The theatre organ as we know it, the Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra, was developed and marketed primarily to provide musical accompaniment for silent movies and to save the theatre owner the cost of maintaining a large orchestra of live musicians to accompany the films. The idea of using the organ as a solo instrument came much later and was, in fact, a direct outgrowth of the organ’s use as the accompaniment for silent films. Thus, two distinct types of organists evolved — those who played films and those who did solo work. Jesse Crawford belonged to the latter group. But it was the hundreds of Sigmund Krungolds around the country who by adding so much to the entertainment value of silent films through their masterful accompaniment to this great art form of another age, became the real heroes of the era of the theatre organ.

Sincerely yours,
Charles W. Stein

Dear Mr. Editor:

I am prompted to write as a result of the excellent article appearing in the October issue 1974 of THEATRE ORGAN entitled, The Marr & Colton Symphonic Registrator Organ. I was delightfully surprised to see a technical article again appearing within the pages of this excellent magazine.



Nominations are requested now for the Board of Directors to be elected this spring to serve a two year term.

If you are interested in having your name placed on the ballot, send a black and white photo and a short resume to National Headquarters by April 1, 1975.

The following are current board members whose terms expire in 1975: Dick Simonton, Tiny James, Judd Walton and Jean Lautzenheiser.

Mail to . . .
ATOS
NATIONAL
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MUST BE POSTMARKED BY MARCH 31, 1975.

Certainly the text explaining the patent drawings was invaluable, as these give as clear and concise a word picture as is possible.

While I recognize that the social aspects of ATOS are extremely important to many people, and that technical articles might only appeal to a few, it is gratifying to find that there is a response to those of us who appreciate this type of feature.

I take this opportunity to appeal to others to take pen to paper and put down their technical and work experiences and the findings that result therefrom, for the benefit of all of us. Certainly we need articles on tremelo operation and adjustment; the correct procedure for adding components to existing organs and a multitude of other subjects.

My compliments to all of you for your efforts in producing this excellent magazine.

Sincerely yours,
Judd Walton

Dear George,

Some of those letters to the editor are quite interesting and informative. I enjoyed Al Bollington’s letter in the October issue; some of these union rulings seemed rather ludicrous.

The John S. Carroll letter rather

irked me, his casual dismissal of Jesse Crawford as “not a very great musician.” I heard Lew White at the Roxy Organ many times, and he certainly was a good organist, but to say he was at least the equal of Crawford simply contravenes the facts. When I went to New York in 1929, I had hoped to find that Lew White was top organist, as we were selling Brunswick records in my father’s store at this time, and in spite of the competition of the RCA Victor dealer next door, had sold a lot of Lew’s discs. I had discussed this with him at his Broadway studio, as he was quite interested to know which of his recordings had the best public acceptance.

However, it took only a couple of visits to the Paramount to convince me that Jesse Crawford was indisputably the leader in his field. Of course he had a much superior organ installation to work with, but I have the feeling that Crawford could have made the Roxy Kimball sound great. Dr. C.A.J. Parmentier was able to achieve some splendid effects there. The attitude as expressed in this letter is very reminiscent, and typical of the comments prevalent when Jesse was at the peak of his career, made by many jealous organists of the day. I must say I am not impressed with Mr Carroll’s musi-

cal ability if he was fortunate enough to hear Jesse Crawford at the Paramount, and failed to realize he was hearing the greatest theatre organist of all time.

Sincerely,
H. Clealan Blakely

Dear Sir:

With regards to the letter from John S. Carroll in the October 1974 THEATRE ORGAN, he and other members might be interested in the following information about Thomas "Fats" Waller, organist.

I was brought up on Waller the pianist as my father was a fan of his from away back and could play credible imitations of his style on any piano at the mere mention of his name. But it was not until recently that I was even aware of Waller the organist. I came across an ancient 12" Camden LP which contained a dozen or so of his 78rpm cuts, and on it was one organ piece, with band and vocal, titled *I Believe in Miracles*. I have no idea what the name or number of the album was as it has long since vanished, but thankfully I rescued that one cut on tape.

I have managed to keep a 12" Capitol LP from 1961 titled *Fats Waller in London*, which re-issued a dozen of his 1938 HMV cuts. Six of these are organ solos of spirituals, and two are organ with orchestra and Waller on vocal, including a rare *Ain't Misbehavin'* take. The organ here, of course, is the 3/8 Compton with Melotone in the EMI-HMV-Parlophone-Columbia-what-have-you Studio on Abbey Road, which has also been recorded by such greats as Torch, Foort, Dixon, Cleaver, Ramsay and a host of others. I believe this record is long out of print.

But the best thing to come along in years is a project by RCA-Victor in France (of all places) which has undertaken to re-issue the complete recordings of Waller on 12" LP, eight cuts to a side. Apparently they are issuing everything he ever did for Victor that is still around, issued or unissued previously, as there are sometimes two or three takes of each tune included. All of Waller's Victor organ discs, to the best of my knowledge, were recorded in their Trinity Church Studio in Camden, N.J., which I understand had a 2-manual Estey straight organ (hence all the Diapasons and strings, and no Tibias or Posthorn). This,

anyway, is the only organ credited on these albums.

Waller was no "theatre organist" in the traditional sense — he was a jazz organist; in fact it has been said that the entire history of jazz pipe organ began and ended with Waller. Despite the somewhat subdued playing of his later years, he was good, and he was original — doing things on organ that had never been done before and would never be done again. A true organ fan would really be knocked out by some of his earlier stuff.

I hope this information is helpful to people looking for Waller's recordings. The search, for me, has been worth it.

Sincerely,
Geoffrey Paterson

Dear Mr. Editor:

In the October 1974 issue of THEATRE ORGAN, I read with interest the letter by John S. Carroll concerning the music of the late Thomas "Fats" Waller at the organ. First, let me state this. Trying to draw a comparison between the music and stylings of Mr. Crawford and Mr. Waller is folly. Crawford was *the* innovator in the "conventional" style of organ playing, commonly heard in theatres of the period. Although "Fats" did play the Apollo and Lincoln Theatres in the Harlem district of New York, he was a jazz musician of the James P. Johnson school, not a "theatre organist" in the typical sense.

The gentleman mentioned all his discs were made on a Wurlitzer, or so he thought. Fats made all his domestic pipe organ discs in Studio No. 2, Church Building, Camden, New Jersey, the old Trinity Church used by Victor Talking Machine (later RCA Victor) as a recording studio. The organ in the Trinity Church Studios was a 3/21 Estey. The organ along with the church studio is gone. A photograph of this organ showing the 3 manual console and swell shutters may be seen on page 184 of John Landon's biography of Jesse Crawford. A photo of the front entry of the church studio may be seen on the preceding page. Mr. Waller's only recordings on a true "theatre" or unit organ were done on the 3/8 Compton plus Melotone in the EMI studios in London in 1938. His Hammond cuts originally appeared on Bluebird label and on the V-Discs made for the Armed Forces during WWII.

As for the statement "irregular

sources" concerning his recordings, Fats was an exclusive Victor artist from 1926 until 1943 except for a short period between 1931-1934 when he appeared on Columbia and Brunswick. He made no organ records on these to my knowledge. The Bluebird label and the V-Discs were both products of RCA Victor. Both were quite good in quality, as I have some of these. The V-Discs were made of the same vinyl material as were the electrical transcriptions, being low in surface noise and high in playback quality.

French RCA, on their "Black and White" jazz series, has been re-issuing the complete recordings of Fats Waller, including all organ items. They are excellently mastered mono discs, with *no* added reverb or "simulated stereo" to detract from their musical and historic value. I highly recommend this set of re-releases.

Sincerely,
Kenneth M. Rettberg

Dear Mr. Thompson:

In reference to THEATRE ORGAN issue of October 1974 — and to page 29 particularly. The article by Randy Sauls and Stu Green was just great — the title: Zamecnik, Forgotten Composer of the "Silent" Era. You can tell from the enclosed* that music for the silent film is primarily my "cup of tea," and this is really the first I've read in THEATRE ORGAN which really does justice to recollections of former silent film composers. Truly, I enjoyed it so much.

It is my happy privilege to have in my library a very representative collection of the Zamecnik music — and I use it all the time. His works were "great" because they were useful — he aimed for the emotions. There were others that perhaps some researcher might bring to light — Domenico Savino — William Axt — Erno Rapee — and some lesser known men whose music was published and was supremely useful. I'm grateful that my library after all these years contains their works — some a bit tattered — but in there pitching.

But for now — Thank you.

Sincerely,
Robert F. (Bob) Vaughn
Organist for the movies
at San Francisco "Avenue"

*The enclosure listed silent movies to be presented at the Avenue Theatre, San Francisco which will be played by Bob Vaughn. □