

form?

Those interested in pursuing this subject must get a copy of Irving Bazelon's *Knowing the Score* (Van Nostrand-Reinhold Company, \$12.50) in which several of the ideas expressed above are discussed. Mr. Bazelon, like Bernard Hermann (*Psycho*) feels that film music is often part of the current ear pollution. He does not seem to care for the romantic style of composing (e.g. Tiomkin), but he enjoys innovative sounds and effects, with subtle relationships between scene and music, and more complicated forms. Despite his prejudices, his book should inspire those who want to improve their movie-playing.

It is fun listening to newcomers try their darndest to copy old-fashioned theatre organ style, whatever they think that was. In the early twenties we had the relatively new works of Ravel, Debussy, Grieg, and Rachmaninoff to draw upon. Such composers gave us interesting harmonies for new pop tunes and accompaniments. Since then there hasn't been much worth copying or adapting. This may be the prejudice of age, but we had all better remember that everybody has to move along with the times one way or another or get left. Steadily increasing audiences will prove that a correct formula is operating; shrinking ones warn us that something is not right, that what we are doing is obsolete, poorly done, or improperly promoted.

Our scoring and presentation need constant evaluation. One watchword in show business is *novelty*. We can't go on doing the same things forever. Although good music can help bad films, it takes a lot of bad music to hurt a good film. Good films inspire an organist to do his best, because their scenes are long enough for sustained musical development. With such films, scores can become worthy of permanent recording, but few scores reach that point. Those of us who have no opportunity to produce classic scores, particularly those of us whose work can be labeled no higher than mediocre, may take heart from Jerry Goldsmith (*Planet of the Apes*) who said that "No music has ever saved a bad picture, but a lot of good pictures have saved a lot of bad music." Thanks to the powers that be, good pictures have saved a lot of bad organists. □



## the letters to the editors

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 Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.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

George Thompson  
Editor  
P.O. Box 1314  
Salinas, Calif. 93901

Dear Sirs:

Recently, the NBC-TV Network presented its "50th Anniversary Party" purporting to present radio and TV broadcasting for the past fifty years — but not a mention of theatre organ or organists.

How could they fail to give credit to the people who not only presented daily concerts for several years, but also played background for practically all of the "soap operas?" These organists deserved at least a few minutes of recognition on the program.

I hope, as I did, that many organists and organ enthusiasts wrote a letter of protest to NBC. Such an oversight is unexcusable. It seems to be a common practice in presenting the "old days of radio" to disregard the contributions of the theatre organists.

Sincerely,  
Robert V. Longfield

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I am happy to respond to member Needler's request for financial statements to be published in THEATRE ORGAN. Personally, I would regret the inclusion of any more than a

small summary capsule — surely not the five pages required for the full rendition given to the National Board and Chapter Representatives annually.

We have elected a Board whose responsibilities include being our watchdog on fiscal matters, and I believe we should let them fulfill that role without heckling from the membership. There is today an increasing trend to carry "consumerism" too far, and it may come to the time when able candidates will be unwilling to serve on positions of leadership for fear of the harrassment which accompanies the office.

Although a Certified Public Accountant myself, I have no desire to receive detailed financial statements because I am quite happy with the bargain I receive for my \$15. It is a wonder to me that we can publish such a splendid magazine to a limited circulation for such a low cost, and when you add the cost of other administrative services necessary for an organization like ours, we surely get our money's worth. Let's get on with the enjoyment of the music.

Sincerely,  
John M. Gogle

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I am writing in response to your request for comment from members on the letter from Mr. Timothy Needler which appears in the Dec. 76-Jan. 77 issue of THEATRE ORGAN. I believe Mr. Needler's comments are well taken and I support the disclosure of financial information in the Society's journal. It is consistent with good accounting and business practices that any organization, regardless of size or tax status, prepare a detailed financial statement at least annually. This, of course, is a minimum requirement of

### EDITOR'S NOTE

A financial statement of National ATOS funds will be printed in the April-May issue of THEATRE ORGAN.



the Internal Revenue Service. There should be, and I take it from your editorial comments is, *no objection* to the publishing of such information for the clarification and understanding of all of the Society's membership. It is an act in keeping with openness and candor which exemplifies our entire organization.

I do agree, however, that a five-page report would present problems of space in the magazine. May I suggest that a summary report be prepared and published each year consisting of no more than one page. A complete, detailed report could be kept for those requesting the information and a copy sent to each chapter. In this way, the space in our journal could be kept at a minimum and the full report would be available to those members who have an interest and so request.

I have immense pride in our organization and I feel the THEATRE ORGAN publication to be the finest of its kind. In *no* way should the request for more complete financial information be construed to indicate dissatisfaction or suspicion of any kind. It is no more information than should be available to the membership in keeping with good business practice. Thank you for your attention and concern.

Musically,  
Donald I. Craig Jr.

Dear George:

Here's a question for your columns.

Who played the Wurlitzer in the old Liberty Theatre on 1st Avenue during World War II when it was a sailor's dance hall? There were booths along the sides for dancers, and tables in the bare tile floor in the former foyer for those who just wanted to listen to the organ. It was good! (Orchestra styling).

Sincerely,  
Mildred M. Raines

Dear Editor:

I'm sorry to say that minor health problems have stopped me sending you any Snippets From England for quite a while, but I've been admiring your efforts from afar and I wonder whether you'll let me make a couple of comments arising from the August-September '76 issue.

Your record reviewer has some nice things to say about Don Thompson's *The Best of Two Worlds* LP and remarks that one item, recorded on the 5/17 Compton of London's Leicester Square Odeon, "features a pleasant solo passage on the Compton's rarely heard Melotone 'Tibias'."

That's fair enough as descriptive writing, but it doesn't do justice to the Melotone unit. This particular Compton has a perfectly good Tibia (a Wurlitzer one transplanted to it many moons ago) and what the Melotone offers is something extra. In addition to Vibraphone at two pitches on the solo manual, the units own stop tabs read: Schalmey 16, Melotone 8, 4, 2 2/3 and 2, Tierce 1 3/5, Krumhorn 8, Cor Anglais 8 and Musette 8, plus Chimes and Carillon, Octave and Sub-Octave, etc.

The thing to remember is that most Comptons were installed in British cinemas in the 30's, after the advent of talkies. With no import duty, they were cheaper than Wurlitzers and their basic job was to provide sing-alongs. Many were only six-rankers and the addition of a Melotone unit gave a bit of much-needed lushness to an ensemble which (as your reviewer notes) can sometimes sound a little coarse.

That's explanation. Where I take issue with him is in his parting shot. He notes the jacket features a photo of Don "seated at the console of the Compton which is hemmed in by a huge plastic 'surround', a vulgarism which thankfully never caught on in the USA."

Come, come sir! It's glass, not plastic — poly-vinyl-'ow's-yer-father wasn't around in 1937. Anyway, opinions differ about "jelly-moulds" even on this side of the water. As a musician I have often wished the money had been spent on an extra rank of pipes, but I can well remember my first experience of theatre organ, which was seeing Reg. Foort riding the Conacher of the Regal, Margate, aloft with all the lights aglow and changing inside that glass surround. This was showmanship pure and simple; Virgil Fox's light show 40 years ahead of its time. Like I said, these were interlude attractions, not organs for cueing the silents, and that rosy glow surrounding the console truly complemented

the blazing sound of a good signature tune. I caught an organ concert on one of the surviving jelly-mould installations only last Sunday, and believe me, the magic was still there.

Anyway, keep up the good work, and best wishes to my many American friends.

Sincerely,  
Tony Bernard Smith  
Rayleigh, Essex, England

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I was quite impressed with your October/November issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

The one article and photograph that interested me the most was the picture taken down in Luray Caverns. It might interest you to know the console, solenoids that strike the Stalactite and the roll player were manufactured by Klann, Inc. approximately 25 to 30 years ago.

I have been down into the Caverns on numerous occasions and was surprised to see how well the console is holding up in the damp climate of the Caverns.

I have been very pleased with the quality of the editorials, photographs, and the entire magazine as a whole.

Thanks again for a job well done!

Yours very truly,  
Clarence Roggmann  
General Sales Mgr.  
Klann, Inc.

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Dear Mr. Thompson:

I wish to answer publicly Mr. Swanson's letter which appeared in your column of the Dec.-Jan. issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

Mr. Swanson criticized my article about "Organ Flue Pipes" (Aug.-Sept. issue), claiming that it was too technical, contained too many useless formulas which would confuse the reader and would never be used by an organ builder.

My article was not intended for the casual reader. It was directed toward those interested in the future of the pipe organ, and to give suggestions as to how that future might be assured.

Anyone with a scientific background will find the given formulas relatively simple, being problems of basic algebra, which could be computed quite easily on any scientific pocket calculator.

With the use of high quality test equipment these formulas have been proven correct in over two years of extensive research on flue pipes, built over a wide range of scales and pitches. My article also lists any exceptions to the rules of the formulas.

Mr. Swanson suggests reading George Audsley's *The Art of Organ Building* to obtain practical information on flue pipes.

In the period of Dr. Audsley's writings (1905-1925), technology had not advanced so that objective sound measurements could be obtained. Therefore, he dealt in vague, subjective generalities, and he borrowed examples from various organ builders of that period, instead of stating unbiased proven facts. He left unanswered such questions as: What degree of cause will produce a given degree of effect? Why? How? Under what conditions?

My article answers these questions and, in my opinion, these answers would be a definite advantage to the organ builder. Through the use of the formulas given in my article, the builder could predetermine for each organ the most suitable pipe scales, mouth cuts, pressures, number of ranks, etc. for any installation, ranging from such extremes as one intended for a private home, to one for use in the Superdome. He could compute precisely the pressure best suited for a certain scale of pipe

(with any given mouth cut), and its relative contribution to the overall sound. He could maintain with greater accuracy the tonality throughout a rank. Also, he could use this technology to experiment and possibly discover new solo stops, producing tonalities of pipes never before explored — leading to a new generation of pipe organs.

I agree with Mr. Swanson's claim that pipe organ building is primarily an art, not a science. But I fear that, unless greater emphasis is placed on the technical aspects of organ building, it might become a dead art — a great loss to all.

No major new material has been written on the subject of pipe building in the past 50 years, and nothing at all has been written of a technical or scientific nature. In the meantime through the use of technology, the electronic organs have progressed and improved to the point that they are in serious competition with pipe organs. Electronic organs are replacing pipe organs in churches and in concert halls. Citing a few examples: the 5-manual Rodgers installed in Carnegie Hall and the 3-manual Baldwin installed in Cincinnati's Music Hall, both replacing deteriorated pipe organs. Also the Mormon's decree that all remaining pipe organs in their churches, rather than being refurbished, will be replaced with electronic organs.

Technology — used in the manufacture of electronic organs has led to their present popularity and has been the cause of decline of interest in pipe organs. Therefore builders of pipe organs must not let their art remain static. They must have the courage to change with an ever-changing world and to take advantage of all technical aids available to them in order to improve their instrument and bring about its rebirth.

If Hope-Jones had not persisted in his ideas and innovations, and had not had the courage to overcome the ridicule and criticism of organ builders of his day, the beautiful theatre organ with its Tibias, Diaphones, and higher operating pressures might not ever have developed.

For those who fear that technology would erase the distinctive character of the builder, let me assure them that each organ would reflect the builder's individuality and personality through his choice and selection

of stops, pitches, scales, pressures, and the design of the swell chambers.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Weisenberger

Dear Editor:

I'm several issues and about 20 months late in commenting on an article which appeared on page 11 in the February, 1975 THEATRE ORGAN. Defending the restaurant installations, this fine article concluded as follows:

"That this traditional association should preclude other usage is unrealistic, for except in those rare instances where an in-theatre organ is still a regularly employed instrument of policy, the unit orchestra is realizing its entertainment potential best in the setting of a restaurant; and through this exposure is acquainting an ever-expanding audience with the musical marvel of a half-century ago.

We are proud here of having been the birthplace of this phenomenon, and we are even prouder to be able to show you both the quantity and quality of our numerous installations come July, etc."

Here some of our California friends have revealed their endeavors in reporting a successful result from 15 years of their untiring efforts in collecting up theatre pipe-organs from around the country, mostly the mid-west, and taking them to California. How smoothly they (the Californians) carted away, in semi-trailers, some fine Wurlitzers from Indianapolis theatres. I suspect these admirers of the theatre pipe-organ were acting in our negligence, which was not unlike their negligence in letting one of the greatest palaces of all — the San Francisco Fox, get away from them. Realizing too late the wonderful sound they had lost at the Fox, these courageous Californians still merit credit where it is due. They sought to get this sound back by scattering theatre pipe-organs all over the state in Pizza restaurants. Captivating the mighty Wurlitzer — yes, but too much so, for these installations, regardless of how elaborate or large the pipe-organ might be, can re-create only a semblance of the sound which we could hear in the great theatres like



the palatial S.F. Fox. Why? Because like many others, the Californians failed to heed the late Ben Hall's advice: "As we are saving the great theatre pipe-organs, let us strive to save the magnificent theatres in which they were meant to be."

If Ben Hall were here today, he would probably say "Like seeing the prima donna disrobed by the villain in the middle of the aria, so does the theatre pipe organ lose its mystifying effectiveness with its workings (intricate craftsmanship notwithstanding) sitting around on shelves surrounding the restaurant installation." But alas, California, hang-in-there! far better to have them out there playing, than dying at the bottom of a pit in some darkened theatre. Take good care of them, for we may need to come and get them back. Hopefully, we will respond to Ben Hall's advice and turn the tables when we have captured and renovated the remaining and recreated some of the other great theatres. Then once again, with the future cinema back in a palace, we will see only the golden consoles with their

Announcing . . .

## NEW ROSTER

A new membership roster is now being prepared. If you do **NOT** wish to have your name included, write to National Headquarters indicating your desire not to be listed.

Write: ATOS  
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commanding artists making the auditorium walls in all their marble and rocco terra-cotta splendor, come to life as they bring music to thousands, all of this, as the spot lights bathe in blushing hews, the towering grille work which conceals not only the very shutters but all of that which brings forth the inspiring crescendos of the mighty Wurlitzer. Could the chapter news in your latest THE-

ATRE ORGAN, Oct.-Nov. issue reflect the beginning of the turning of the tables? News from the Magnolia Chapter — restoration of the New Orleans Saenger Theatre. The Western Reserve Chapter — a theatre pipe-organ going back into a downtown Cleveland theatre. The Wolverine Chapter — Wurlitzer renovation underway at the Detroit Fox and hopefully, a program to capture the Atlanta, Ga. Fox.

More beautiful than the song of a thousand canaries or a cathedral choir, the mighty theatre pipe-organ brings us music from it's own cathedral (from which it should never be removed) THE THEATRE.

John Mecklenburg

To the Editor:

Permit me, if you will, as a relative newcomer to the world of theatre organ, to add my "two cents worth" to the popular debate between what I'll call the traditionalists versus the modernists, as to the role of theatre organ music.

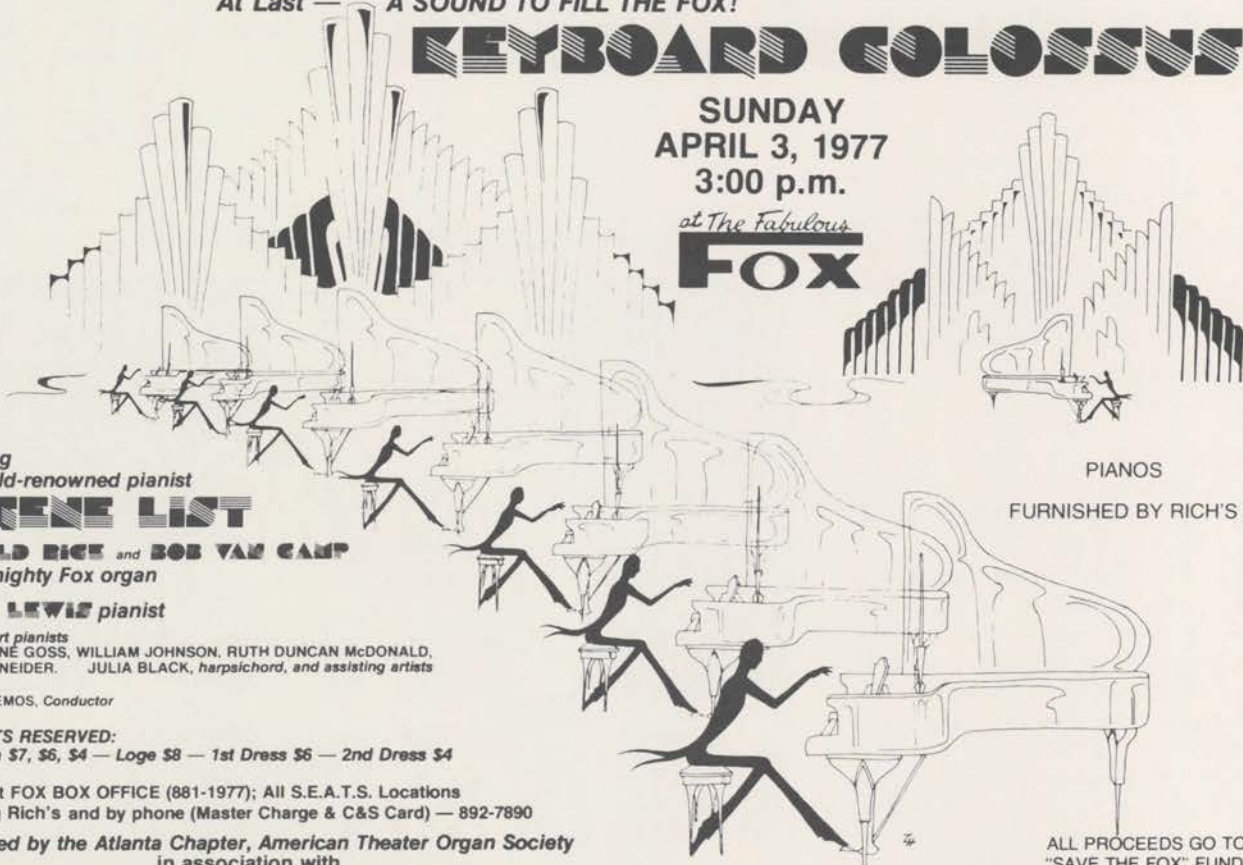
Recently, I attended one of the regularly scheduled monthly con-

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certs sponsored by our local society. The artist was a well-known supper club and concert performer who I would estimate to be in his mid-thirties. However, when the evening had ended, I was wondering if instead he was a well-preserved sixty!

Why? Simply because this gentleman's repertoire virtually excluded anything written within the past twenty years. One could almost conclude that he felt it would be a desecration to the noble instrument to "defile" it with so-called "pop" music.

This is, to me, regrettable. Too many theatre organists today insist on pretending this is still the 1920's. It is one thing to revere the majestic achievements and standards of integrity bequeathed by legendary greats such as Jesse Crawford (the first name which invariably springs to mind) but am I guilty of sacrilege when I submit the view that too many of today's theatre-type performers are wallowing in the glories of the past? Surely, we must awaken to the unique versatility of this instrument, which to me is an open invitation, nay — a plea! — to interpret as only a theatre organ can — the sensitive, expressive and sometimes powerful ballads and other musical modes which have become popular in recent times. Just as Crawford was regarded as a trailblazer in his day, so should enterprising organists consider themselves today (Take heart Jim Leaffe, John Seng, and others!). Just as surely the way to win new converts, i.e. younger people, to theatre organ (and it strikes me they are badly needed) is not to forever dwell on the "good ol' days."

To reiterate the sentiments of a reader who, in a letter to the editor after last years' John Seng ATOS "mod" concert, quoted from the late Ben Hall. "We aren't in the nostalgia business any longer."

The Roxy and the Paramount are gone; Jesse Crawford is no longer with us; silent movies (Mel Brooks notwithstanding) are a curiosity of the past. Alone, the theatre pipe organ has survived, for it is bound not by time, nor by tradition, but only by the regrettable limitations imposed upon it by some of its inflexible, unimaginative masters.

Sincerely,  
J.B. Sherk  
Toronto, Canada



### Let us know what's happening in YOUR Chapter!

Send Photos and News to:

GEORGE THOMPSON  
P.O. BOX 1314  
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA 93901

Deadline for all material is the FIRST of the month PRECEDING Publication.

*Copy for April — May issue must be in by March 1*

### BEEHIVE

While the members of the chapter enjoyed breakfast at their November meeting, they enjoyed the "live" music of Jesse Crawford. This was accomplished through the magic of an organ player attached to the Wurlitzer in the Organ Loft in Salt Lake City. Lawrence Bray, owner and builder, had been working for some time on this player, built in

the early 1900's. During the meeting that followed, members discussed at great length what could be done to recruit younger members into the group; then once recruited, what needed to be done to keep their interest. The progress of "saving the Capitol Theatre organ" became a very important issue. With the closing of the meeting, members were invited to play the Wurlitzer.

With the passing of a bond election a year ago to develop the Capitol Theatre in Salt Lake City into a performing arts center for the City and County of Salt Lake, there was some concern about the fate of the 2/10 Wurlitzer organ that was installed there in 1927. Since this is one of very few remaining original theatre installations left in the U.S., the chapter was very concerned as to the role it would play in the renovation and use of the theatre as a performing arts theatre by the Utah Symphony, Ballet West and various



County jail trustees move Capitol Theatre console out through the lobby.

(Vern Malstrom Photo)