



# Music Review

by Walter J. Beaupre, Ph.D.

**WHILE WE'RE YOUNG, Arrangements for Organ by Dave Coleman (\$1.25) and George Wright (\$1.50), Dave Coleman Music, 1958 (available in music stores or from Dave Coleman Music, Inc., P.O. Box 230, Montesano, Washington 98563; postage 75 cents).**

If George Wright has influenced the art of theatre organ playing through his superb public and recorded performances, it can also be claimed that the late Dave Coleman has influenced the same art form through his elegant published arrangements of popular songs. The only currently available G. W. publication known to this reviewer is an arrangement of "While We're Young" — issued during the same year and by the same publisher as the D. C. treatment of the same Alec Wilder tune. Both are available. Consequently, the temptation to compare "notes" was too strong to resist.

The Wright version is supposedly "simplified" while the Coleman offering is aimed at the "intermediate/advanced" player. Actually this

reviewer found very little difference in the level of expertise required. Both begin in the key of C, but Coleman modulates to F for his final chorus while Wright modulates to E-flat. George suggests a basically slow tempo; Dave, moderately fast. The Coleman 8-bar intro is a bit more sophisticated, but the Wright intro is equally catchy.

Treatment of the first sixteen measures of the waltz by both arrangers is surprisingly similar. The obligato which Coleman uses above the melody line is almost identical to the countermelody pattern below the song line of Wright. Coleman uses more second inversions of chords in the left hand; Wright, more third inversions. Chord progressions of G. W. are slightly more complex.

With the second theme each artist goes his separate way. Coleman relies on sustained block chords with the melody reinforced by the left hand; Wright keeps the waltz rhythm in the left hand and states the melody in thirds with countermelody fills.

Dave repeats the opening theme of "While We're Young" with pretty

much the same notes; George restates the first theme an octave lower and now employs an obligato fill. George modulates into E-flat in one bold measure; Coleman spends a leisurely eight measures to make the transition from C to F.

For the final chorus Coleman uses close harmony in block chords (both hands on the same manual); Wright uses open harmony with countermelody thirds adding variety and rhythmic pulse. George regularly uses pedal notes on the first two beats of each measure; Dave alternates between the first two beats and last two beats of each measure.

Overall, the Wright arrangement is more dreamy and introspective; the Coleman treatment is broader and more expansive — slightly longer by ten measures! Coleman repeats many of his musical ideas for effect; Wright consistently introduces variety of ideas. G. W.'s registration suggestions are Spartan; D. C. suggests tibia plus kinura. Printed measures are more crowded in the G. W. edition; page turning is more of a problem in the D. C. edition.

Now, for the 32' question: Which is the better arrangement? You've probably guessed that it's strictly a matter of personal taste. But if this reviewer has been moderately successful in describing the similarities and differences, each individual music buyer should have an answer. □



## Closing Chord



"I can't remember exactly when I became a musician, but I recall playing the piano when I was seven. That was in Daventry, where I was born," **Reginald Foort** once told the writer. A few years later, the Foorts moved to Rugby and young Reggie (he hated being called "Reg.") discovered the organ and thus began a lifelong association. Encouraged by his teacher, Sir Walter Parratt, 17-year-old Reginald took the examination for admittance to the Royal College of Organists. He made it.

His developing career was interrupted by World War I. Seaman Foort literally "called the shots" during the historic naval battle of Jutland. From his vantage point high

in the rigging of a British battleship, Reggie phoned range corrections to the ship's batteries so they could polish off a larger German fleet. "We British simply out-manoeuvred the Germans" boasted Foort years later. He always minimized his contribution. After the war, he had decisions to make.

At first he had hopes of becoming a concert pianist. Audiences didn't materialize so Foort turned to the theatre organ at a time when the silent film industry had caught the imagination of the British public. After a brief apprenticeship, he hit the "big time" at London's New Gallery Kinema on Regent Street. Came "talkies" and Foort joined the BBC

staff of radio organists. This made his name a household word throughout Britain and he was soon that country's top entertainment organist. After about five years of broadcasting, mostly on the BBC's 4/23 studio Compton, Foort made a bold stroke. Noting that many British theatres had no organs, he conceived the idea of a portable pipe organ which could be moved about in vans. He commissioned the Moller Company, an American firm, to build it after British builders turned him down.

The story of Foort's success with the Moller in England is well-documented. World War II stopped the travel, but the Moller became the BBC studio organ and was some-



Reginald Foort at the console of his beloved Moller. (Stufoto)

thing of a war hero, helping build morale for English service personnel throughout the war years.

After the Moller years Foort continued concertizing and entertaining in England. Long before that there were a couple of visits to the U.S.A. During one of these, Foort had a brief engagement at the New York Times Square Paramount (1935). He was amazed at the enthusiasm shown by Paramount audiences for his organ stylings, and remembering the applause years later, he wondered whether his future might not be in the U.S.A. He came to the states to represent a Dutch pipe organ company, but their product didn't sell. Foort moved to Chicago and was hired by the Baldwin Organ Company to plug their electronics. He became a U.S. citizen. The Baldwin deal continued for 15 years, his last "regular" job. Then he retired with wife, Betty, in Florida. But, there were frequent appearances at ATOS events, church jobs and one gala

event was his concert celebrating the installation of his beloved Moller in a San Diego pizzeria in the mid-'70s. While there he made the last records to reflect the celebrated ability of the great Reginald Foort for Doric. He was in his early 80s.

There would be one more moment of glory. Hearing that his treasured Moller would be dedicated in its new home, the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, in April, 1980, Foort travelled from his Florida home to attend the Tom Hazleton concert. When the notables of the audience were announced, Foort's name was called. He stood up and waved to the applauding audience, a happy moment for a veteran organist. It would be his final acclaim by a worshipping public. A few weeks after his return to his home in Florida, on May 22nd, the valiant heart stopped and we lost one of the most remarkable and innovative masters of the console.

Reginald Foort was 86. He is survived by his wife, Betty, two children and four grandchildren.

— Stu Green

**Lois Seamands** was always a go-getter. Coming to Tucson from her native Urbana, Illinois, in 1927, she enrolled in the University of Arizona and earned both Bachelor and Master degrees, with emphasis on mathematics. Years later those degrees would be useful. Widowed, Lois secured a position as a high school math teacher at Tucson High School, a job she held for 30 years. Somewhere along the line she was bitten by the theatre organ bug. In 1972, she and Robert High founded



Lois Seamands.

(Stufoto)

the Southern Arizona Chapter of ATOS.

Lois was blessed by a gentle demeanor but the go-getter in her never subsided. For years, ably abetted by Bob High, she was the hub around which chapter activities revolved. There being a paucity of theatre organs in the Tucson area, Lois held meetings around electronics, but she never wavered from her aim of securing a pipe organ for her chapter. Finally, a short while ago, an organ for the club became a reality. But Lois Seamands will not be there to experience it, she died on June 19th of an apparent heart attack. She was 70.

Members of the chapter she founded are desolate but they will go on with the organ project in memory of a valiant lady.

— Stu Green

When the idea of putting organ consoles on elevators developed, the Wurlitzer Co. approached The Warsaw (N.Y.) Elevator Co. They found the young proprietor, **D. Burney French**, most cooperative and he soon had blueprints ready. His first installation was in Buffalo's Lafayette, possibly the first elevated console in a theatre, in the early '20s. Lafayette management was pleased at the audience acceptance of opener C. Sharp Minor in the spotlight and Wurlitzer saw the novelty of a moving console as a hype for their products. Soon orders for "lifts" were pouring in. Then French designed a system which would elevate entire orchestras. Shea's Buffalo has one. Warsaw elevators were installed in theatres across the land in the '20s, until the death of live music in theatres. The Warsaw elevator was by then well-established.



Foort and Sue Hill. One of Reginald's last photos, shot by Bob Hill. Foort stayed with the Hills during his last trip west in April, 1980.

One organ enthusiast in the Central New York area, Irv Toner, says:

"I don't know whether these builders used Warsaw elevators exclusively, but I have never seen other than Warsaw lifts under either Wurlitzer or Marr & Colton consoles."

In his early years, Burney French was a talented vocalist. He sang in the New York Metropolitan Opera chorus, and could boast that he had sung with Enrico Caruso, adding, "Of course, Caruso sang the leads."

When the demand for elevators in theatres diminished, French turned his talents to the more usual "people mover" and industrial elevators. During World War II he was a project engineer for the Buffalo branch of Curtiss-Wright.

Although his business kept him in Buffalo, he always maintained his home in Warsaw. French died there on June 15th at the age of 94. He is survived by his wife, Brunnhilda, a former theatre musician.

**Robert M. Ziegler** was primarily a concert pianist who turned to theatre organ, playing houses in the Northwest in the '20s. He was the father of ATOSer Dottie (MacClain) Whitcomb, who learned many of her playing techniques from her dad. Moving south to Los Angeles in later years, Ziegler was prominent in the affairs of AFM Local 47 in Los Angeles. He died on May 13th.

Funeral services for **Mrs. Helen Riddell Huffman**, Springfield, Illinois, were held on June 11th. Interment was in Oak Ridge Cemetery. Mrs. Huffman was born in McLean, Illinois, September 8, 1920. She attended grade school in San Jose and Delhi, graduating from the Jerseyville Township High School with the class of 1938. She was united in marriage with Raymond P. Huffman of San Jose, Illinois, at the first Christian Church in Springfield on October 8, 1943.

She was a member of the West Side Christian Church, Teamsters Local No. 916 and was secretary of the Auxiliary of the Springfield Theatre Organ Club. Mrs. Huffman was chosen Volunteer of the Year by the Lincoln Land Lung Association for the Christmas Seal season of 1977-78 and was selected State Vol-

unteer of the Year at the awards banquet in Peoria.

Her husband has been a member of ATOS for several years and is president of the Springfield Theatre Organ Club which restored and maintains the 3/11 Barton at Springfield High School. Helen was very interested in the project and assisted all she could. Although she had played a Hammond for years, she would never attempt to play the Barton — but she enjoyed listening to it.

In addition to her husband, she is survived by a son, Philip Ray Huffman of Springfield, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Riddell of Mason City, two brothers and a sister. □



## 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. 93902

Dear Editor,

A Hillgreen-Lane theatre pipe organ may indeed be rare (see April/May 1980 issue, page 33, Rex Koury, Vox Pop). A friend and I were fortunate enough to locate one in the now-defunct Manos Theatre, Toronto, Ohio. We removed it (December, 1978) to a private residence in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and here it is being rebuilt and reinstalled.

I'm glad to hear of Mr. Koury's

enthusiasm for Hillgreen-Lanes. Ours is a 2/12 complete with toys. We plan additions, of course, and have set aside at least three rooms of our home to accommodate the completed installation. Work is underway . . . and what an undertaking! The unit was in deplorable shape due to the carelessness in partial removal and storage by the previous owner and the poor condition of the theatre chambers in which most of the organ was left for many years, after it was no longer a theatre. Since the theatre probably closed in the mid-30s, the building has been, among other things, an auto body shop and a roller rink. Sad to say, the organ was not utilized for the rink.

At any rate, Hillgreen-Lane lovers may rest assured another of these fine instruments has been saved to grace a hundred-year-old home, itself in the process of restoration in downtown Pittsburgh.

Ralph L. Bacha  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Editor:

After reading and rereading the article "Art or Artlessness?" by John Muri in the February/March issue of THEATRE ORGAN, I finally decided that the other side of the coin should be presented.

From all sides, my training and experience tended to prove that organ accompaniment (or orchestral) to a silent movie should blend with and become an integral part of the picture. I feel that the audience should be aware of the musical score but *ONLY mildly so*. They should be vaguely conscious of the fact that the music was also conveying the mood acted out on the screen — that it supplemented and complemented the picture. The audience should never become so aware of the musical accompaniment that it takes precedence over the screened story. If it does, then the music selected for the score is faulty.

I believe the TV and movie film scorers will agree on this point, as some of them have produced very good film scores. I cannot feel that the scoring of *BJ and the Bear* or *Misadventures of Sheriff Lobo* are examples of that art.

I do agree with Mr. Muri, that the original published score of *The Phantom of the Opera*, by G. Hin-