

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
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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-

richs and M. Winkler, was a bad piece of work. I played from that score which came with the film when I played for it at the Medford Theatre, Medford, Ma., in 1926. I substituted some mood music from my own library after the second showing, and stuck with my own idea of the score during its lengthy run.

About two years ago I borrowed the score from the ATOS library for reference, so I must differ with Mr. Muri about the lack of use of Gounod's music from *Faust*. According to my personally-made copies of that score, Cue #5, Action "Conductor beats time" has "Faust Ballet #1" for the cued-in piece. Hinrichs and Winkler scored the picture but did not use *entirely* their own compositions from what I saw in that score two years ago. (It was a Xerox copy of the original with the unusually long pages.)

Cue for Title (T. "Who Occupies that Box?") is one of Winkler's old mood pieces which was extensively used in scoring movies, and seemed apropos. It was "Dramatic Suspense" by Winkler, published by Belwin. Incidentally the entire score was issued under the Belwin trademark.

Other Faust pieces in the score included "Holy Angel;" "Ballet Waltz," used during the dancing just before the crash of the chandelier to the floor of the opera house; the "Marguerite Waltz" with cue T. "The ballet girls danced . . ."

Oh yes, while I am at it, I must comment on the popular conception of what the Phantom was playing when he was seated at the organ. My print of the film does not show the music claimed by some to have been on the music rack. Observing the Phantom's actions I feel sure he was *not* playing the famous Bach composition used in a talking picture version. The music cue score called for "Pastel Minuet" by Paradis. That piece seemed more suited to the motions of the Phantom at the organ, so that is what I used — as scored by Hinrichs/Winkler.

I repeat that I agree with John Muri. The musical score originally assembled, predominately their own compositions, but with a few Faust pieces and a very few other composers' pieces, was a bad score.

Mr. Muri's touching on the final scene in "Pandora's Box" with

Louise Brooks was of interest to me as Mr. Robert Brooks, son of the late Louise Brooks (Martin), who lost her life in the crash of a PSA plane at San Diego in 1978, is a member of our San Diego Chapter ATOS.

Now I approach the scoring for the Paramount film, *Wings* which I played for a total of five weeks in 1927-28 when I was with Paramount-Publix Theatres. That film had a double interest to me as my avocation of flying and aviation had brought me into the Army Air Service (it was the "Service" in those years). I enjoyed the picture each time I played it.

I do not recall the theme piece for Clara Bow, who was known as the "It" girl then. The piece cued seemed very appropriate descriptively so I stayed with it. I am not familiar with Mr. Muri's selected piece.

As I played from the piano/conductor part book of the score (about the size of a typical "fake book"), I enjoyed the several variations of the "My Buddy" theme for the Buddy Rogers and Richard Arlen scenes where this was appropriate for the action. I meet Buddy from time to time at meetings of the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters Association, and from my meetings with him, I am not sure he would welcome the use of "Seventeenth Variation on a Theme by Pagannini" when a more suitable piece, and timely, calendar wise might have better served.

I disagree with Mr. Muri's selection of the memory tune of the "Seventeenth Variation" for the scene when the parents are informed of the death of their son by his returned-from-war pal. What was wrong with playing the scored "Songs My Mother Taught Me" by Dvorak? That tune can become a very sad tune — a tear provoking one when properly played to accompany such a sad scene. I can attest that it was very effective as I could hear the many sniffles and blowing of noses back in the audience every time that scene played. Perhaps the one Mr. Muri favors does the same thing but I saw no reason to deviate from the score.

Regarding those earlier scenes of "letting loose" in Paris, the score as I recall included one of the several variations of the "My Buddy" theme, played very lively and almost raggy, plus "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles"

which to my mind was more appropriate time-wise (the year) and with those words "— pretty bubbles in the wine." I would feel that a 1918-19 piece was more fitting than one of 1924 vintage.

Incidentally, one of the variations of the "My Buddy" theme was so pathetic or "tear jerking," as used in the scene where Buddy finds that he has brought down his own pal by error, that it impressed me. I made a copy, for my file, of the arrangement and still have it in my library. It is very effective.

The idea of cueing a picture with pieces whose title alludes to what is going on in the film I feel does not always work. If the music of the tune does not seem to fit the action on the screen, I would not use a tune just because the title might fit. After all the audience, I believe, usually reacts to the musical mood rather than the musical title.

Occasionally the unusual occurs, and the title and its musical melody fit the action being screened.

I started playing for silents at a young age back in 1916 and was very active in that work from 1924 through 1928. Sound pictures then took this phase of our work away and we became soloists, mostly with the bouncing ball or song slides. To me the art was to play for a silent picture and have your music supplement and complement the action on the screen; be noticed, but never predominate. That was the art of playing for a silent film. I recognize there are different opinions on this, for I can still recall one organist in the Boston area who actually believed in and extolled the virtues of playing "Furicos" with bells, xylophone and drums added.

Col. Harry J. Jenkins
San Diego, Calif. □

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