

3. President Koury then introduced Doris and Floyd Mumm who do layout and mechanicals for the THEATRE ORGAN Journal.

4. **Roll Call of Chapters.** **Alabama.** Aloha: Lou Underhill said that the chapter was now back working in the Hawaii Theatre on the Robert-Morton organ there and looking for funds to purchase and relocate a 2/6 Wurlitzer Style D, the first in Hawaii. **Atlanta:** David Tuck reported that the chapter has had a good year and is growing and holding regular meetings using two organs, one in a restaurant and the Atlanta Fox Miller. He related that the chapter is experimenting with "Yellow Pages" advertising. The chapter complimented the direct dues collection procedure. **Australia Felix. Beehive. Bluegrass. Buffalo Area:** Allen Miller, an honorary member of the chapter, announced that membership has grown to 42 with four concerts during the past year, a Young Organists Competition, and that the 4/23 Wurlitzer at Shea's is being used before shows and for tours; four concerts are planned for the coming year, and they expect to release a compact disc recording soon. **Cedar Rapids:** George Baldwin reported that regular concerts are being presented, and the chapter uses the Paramount organ before shows and has programs at a second theatre as well. **Central Florida:** Sandra Shook reported that six to eight members were present at the convention, and that the chapter is involved in installing a chapter organ; most meetings are held in homes and music stores, but the chapter is growing. **Central Indiana. Central Ohio. Chattanooga. Chicago Area:** Jim West, Vice Chairman, related that the chapter has presented several shows this past year including one at the Arcadia Theatre, but needed to slow their concert series to make time for organ maintenance for this convention; West registered a complaint that convention guidelines had been changed regarding organist fees when the fee was increased to \$500, and alleged that the fee was increasing registration fees making conventions unaffordable. President Koury explained the ATOS position with regard to the organist fee, explaining that the Board feels the fee is at an adequate and appropriate level. **Connecticut Valley:** Cog Briggs told the group of problems with the fire code causing the closing of the 101-year-old Thomaston Opera House; he is in charge of the \$1 million fund-raising effort to restore the house and bring it up to current codes; he asked for help from other chapters as to how best to raise the money, and related that the chapter continues to install a 3/15 Austin and hopes to have concerts on that organ while Thomaston is closed. **Dairyland. Delaware Valley:** Harry Linn said that the chapter was relocating the Sedgewick Theatre Müller to the Keswick Theatre and hopes to have it playing in six months; they are also working on the Philadelphia Civic Center Müller. **Eastern Massachusetts:** Dick Johnson, Chapter President, extended his greetings, and said that the Babson College Wurlitzer, Stoneham Town Hall, and John Hancock Town Hall organs are all chapter projects, and that the group is celebrating their 30th year. **Egyptian. Foothills:** Tim Johnson reported that the chapter works along with the non-affiliated group, Theatre Organ Society of Tennessee, on the 3/14 Wurlitzer at the Tennessee Theatre, and he hopes soon to have all TOST members as chapter members. **Garden State:** Mike Cipolletti said that the chapter re-opened the Broadway Theatre, now a church, with a Robert-Morton organ; has a full series of five concerts at the Trenton War Memorial, and with profits held a free concert for patrons; they have given care to the 3/8 Kilgen in the Asbury Music Hall which they hope will receive more use; they are also working on a 2/8 at the Pasack Theatre, and are looking for an organ for Harms Plaza to replace the long-removed Welte. **Gulf Coast. Hudson-Mohawk Valley. Joliet Area:** Jan Challenger reported that the chapter uses mostly the Barton at the Rialto Square for performances, but that many meetings are held in homes; they have installed a new combination action at the Rialto which rents the organ from the chapter when they use it. **Kingston:** Walter Vos reported that the chapter has had several well-attended concerts and fund-raisers on their organ, the largest theatre organ in Canada, and that they plan to continue their series. **Kiwi. Land O' Lakes:** Don Johnson announced that the World Theatre 3/21 Wurlitzer would be featured on "A Prairie Home Companion," an American Public Radio Network show with national distribution; the chapter has a 2/5 Robert-Morton organ. **Land of Lincoln. London and South of England:** Lowell Ayars read a portion of their written report which told of their continuing concert series and club nights, and of their healthy balance sheet despite an unfavorable dollar/Sterling exchange rate; the chapter has a youth program in place, a continuing maintenance program for their own organs as well as others; the chapter requested that better means of communications be developed, especially timely advice of American organists' touring schedules. **Los Angeles:** Ralph Beaudry said the chapter likes the membership brochure and hopes it can be made available to chapters without charge, said the chapter misses *The Console* and hopes funds can be located for publishing an ATOS monthly newsletter; he reported that L.A. will host the 1987 convention and plans to present six new organs at that time. **Mid-Florida. Motor City:** Dorothy Van Steenkiste reported that the chapter has a bi-weekly movie series which pays the bills, as well as monthly concerts at the Redford and Royal Oak Theatres, (the future of the Punch 'n' Judy Theatre is uncertain at this time); she reported that their Young Organists Competition was well-received and that young people are one of the chapter's primary interests; they have written to all their

young chapter members and competition participants to organize Young Organists Night at the Redford, which is a show put on entirely by the young people of the chapter; restoration work is coming along well at the Redford, and the chapter offers their help to other groups who need it. **Mountain State:** Betty Walls said that the chapter is restoring the old Capitol Theatre and hopes to replace the original organ; they have been given an organ by the Potomac Valley Chapter. **New York:** Tom Stehle reported that their major project is installing a Wurlitzer at the Middletown Theatre; the chapter has had several concerts over the year, maintains the LIU and Beacon Theatre Wurlitzers; membership is up, and they are upgrading their newsletter. **Nor-Cal:** Lowell Wendell related the chapter's experience in applying for tax exemption and in getting their own theatre; they now have the Berkeley Community Theatre and a 3/19 Wurlitzer has been donated; they are looking toward possibly installing a four-manual organ there, and are looking forward to presenting their own organ at the 1990 convention. **North Texas:** Irving Light reported that the chapter uses the Scottish Rite Temple Wicks, but is installing a 3/8 Robert-Morton in a neighborhood movie house and expects to have it playing by September. **Ohio Valley:** Claire Lawrence said that the chapter is celebrating its 25th anniversary and their eighth year of a successful movie series. **Oregon. Piedmont. Pikes Peak. Pine Tree:** Bob Legon reported that the chapter has a greatly renewed interest among young people and is moving forward; they have two organs available for concerts, have found that classical organ listeners are some of their best converts; they have a new newsletter, more activities, better attendance, new projects, have had television coverage, a mini-convention, and in general a much happier group than last year. **Potomac Valley. Puget Sound:** Thelma Barclay said that the chapter continues to be very active and related their good fortune in having a great crew, and many good organs to play both in theatres and restaurants. **Quad Cities. Red River:** Sonia Carlson reported that the chapter has been operating the Fargo Theatre since July 1982, and now has bought the theatre. **River City:** Jack Moelmann advised that this new chapter now has 45 members and is preparing for their first major organ program in August at the Orpheum Theatre. **Rocky Mountain:** Dorothy Retalack reported that the Denver Paramount has been under wraps while being restored for almost a year, but is due to return to use in October; the chapter has at least 60 members at every meeting, many of which are held in homes with excellent instruments. **San Diego:** Wayne Seppala reported on the chapter's successful film series, Young Organists Competition, and other activities. **Sequoia:** Tom Delay reported that the chapter remains quite active and involved in many projects. **Sierra:** Dale Mendenhall advised that the chapter is installing an electronic relay at the Fair Oaks Community Clubhouse. **Sooner State. Southeast Texas. South Florida:** Hal Henry brought greetings and compliments to the Board for new ideas, including the membership brochure; he suggested that ATOS relay information to chapters on how volunteers can work better with other volunteers; the chapter appreciated the series on program planning and would like to have the materials readily available; the chapter is alive and well and now owns its own organ which is played regularly. **Southwest Michigan:** Diana Haskins told of the chapter's growth and of their hopes to have their own organ. **St. Louis. Toledo Area:** Helen Sherman said the chapter has grown and will be dedicating a new organ soon. **Valley of the Sun:** Bill Danford reported that the chapter is well represented at the convention, has doubled their meeting attendance, and is busy working on a regional convention for November 29-December 1, 1985. **Virginia:** Sharolyn Heatwole reported that the group is very busy preparing for the 1986 convention in Richmond; the chapter has printed a new membership brochure which includes information about local organs as well as the chapter, has sponsored several silent film presentations, and maintains the 4/17 Wurlitzer at the Byrd Theatre, and that members are working with the crew on the 3/21 Carpenter Center Wurlitzer. **Western Reserve. Wolverine:** Homer Warren said that the chapter is a strictly social group that holds meetings in churches, homes and pizza parlors, and that the group occasionally attends functions of other chapters.

5. **Theatre Organ Clearing House.** Allen Miller reported that he has developed a database for use in exchanging information about theatres needing organs and organs needing placement (explained in detail in Directors Meeting minutes).

6. **Newsletter.** President Koury mentioned that the Board is considering publishing a monthly newsletter but needs to find the money to do so (further details are in the Directors Meeting minutes).

7. **Young Organists Competition.** President Koury thanked the chapters for their enthusiastic participation in the 1985 competition, and encouraged their active participation in next year's program.

8. **Adjournment.** President Koury asked that any other business be brought up, and there being none, he adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
David M. Barnett, National Secretary

## Letters to the Editors

Opinions expressed in this column are those of the correspondents, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN.

Letters concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are welcome. Unless clearly marked "not for publication" letters may be published in whole or in part.

Address:

Editor, THEATRE ORGAN  
3448 Cowper Court  
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Dear Bob:

I had a very pleasant surprise recently, when I jokingly asked the doorman at the Midwood Theatre in the heart of Brooklyn, New York, "What time will the organ be featured this evening?" This theatre had lost its pipe organ to disuse eons of years ago. You can imagine my amazement when he replied, "He'll be playing as you enter the auditorium!" Well, the organist proved to be none other than Lee Erwin, playing a Capitol Theatre Wurlitzer pipe organ rendition of D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* and *Birth of a Nation*. This was accomplished by a tiny cassette in a mammoth sound system, during intermission.

As I was born in Brooklyn in 1919, and no longer live there, I felt I'd come home as I sat in this once-lavish theatre, thrilled to the core!

With sincerest best wishes, I remain,  
Respectfully,  
Nathan H. Wechter  
Rockaway Beach, New York

Dear Bob:

I read with more than passing interest the article in the May/June issue of THEATRE ORGAN which pertained to my old "amour," the "not so Wurlitzer" organ at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary. As I was the prime mover in gaining both local and national attention for the instrument in the '60s and early '70s and was responsible for its tonal balances, unique features and most performances, I feel privileged to share this additional information which was either unknown or omitted from the CATOE article.

I had been aware of the organ's existence since 1953, when one of our local parish priests made reference to it saying, "the old organ from the Chicago Theatre

is out at the seminary." I didn't actually see the instrument until June of 1960. In September of that year, a mutual agreement between the Procurator, Monsignor Raymond Vonesh, the Music Director, Father Richard Wojcik, and myself was put together whereby, in return for playing the organ, I'd see what could be done about fixing it up.

Physically the organ was intact, although portions of the ceilings in both upper chambers had fallen in and were replaced with Masonite structures. Prior to 1963 when the console was rebuilt, the swell shades were removed from the percussion chamber; the percussion instruments which I retained were repositioned; a new Vibraharp was installed; and, a metal Harp discarded from the chapel organ replaced an ancient 37-note Wurlitzer Chrysoflott. The Bass Drum was removed because of limited space; a Kimball Crash and Roll action, along with several rather exotic custom-built Cymbal actions were installed.

Over the years, after rebuilding all obvious components, many additions and changes were made. Additions included a Brass Trumpet, Kimball Sax, three Strings, a two-rank metal Flute Celeste, a 16' String extension, an Orchestral Oboe, a Diapason and a Concert Grand Piano which I removed in 1974. The Clarinet, Tuba, portions of both Tibias and two Strings were replaced. The peculiar distribution of the ranks was dictated by terribly limited chamber space, but worked musically. As an example, the Krumet Horn, actually a foil to the Post Horn, was positioned in the Main Chamber. Having a Wurlitzer-type Krumet in such a position would spell musical disaster. Six flue ranks ran only to tenor C. The organ was 13 ranks when I first saw it and 23 when I left. (The second Vox, while wired, was never installed.) I would suspect that today it is somewhat under 20 ranks.

The Mundelein organ was filled with innovation for its time. Original setterboards, along with some from the Chicago Granada Theatre Wurlitzer, were controlled by diode relays to accommodate a console specification that was 30 stops larger than the original. It was the second organ in the country to have electronic bass generators which Dick Peterson built and I personally voiced. It was the first instrument to have an electronic flip-flop device which sequentially controlled the playing of drums and cymbals. Other "firsts" included extensive intramanual harmonic couplers, the first practical expression pedal-activated Sostenuuto device and an electronic expression "override" which was used on my recordings.

I featured the organ in two memorable concerts at the 1965 and 1969 ATOE conventions. The seminarians and I instigated organ-accompanied musicals in the fall of 1965. *My Fair Lady*, 1965; *Oliver*, 1966;

**All inquiries regarding membership matters should be addressed to . . .**

Douglas C. Fisk  
Executive Director of ATOS  
P.O. Box 420490  
Sacramento, California 95842

and *The Roar of the Greasepaint*, 1967, were presented. Rosemary Bailey subbed for us on the last musical, *The Music Man*, in the spring of 1969. Tom Hazleton played a CATOE-funded program on the instrument in the spring of 1972, while I played two concerts for this organization (one was their first concert venture) in the '60s.

The whole project was a very expensive undertaking, as all of the work between 1960 and 1973, while laid out by me, was done either by paid professionals or by several seminarians and myself working under their guidance. In 1967, there was a "change of management" at the seminary and, save for a \$200 per year maintenance stipend, I picked up the tab. It was all great fun.

Sincerely,  
John Seng  
San Francisco, California

Dear ATOS:

Many thanks for the opportunity to perform at "Pipes Alive in 85," the 1985 Convention held in Chicago.

It was great fun to perform for all of you, and I especially enjoyed meeting many wonderful people.

Although I always did love to sit down and play pop and theatre-type music, I came away very inspired to play (and practice) more of this music. (I am basically a classical and church organist.)

Thanks again, ATOS.

Sincerely,  
Sally A. Daley  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Editor:

After seeing Dinny's Colyum in the February/March 1981 issue, wherein the narrow canyons between black keys get a less than honorable mention, I'd like to share a thought with fellow members of our distinguished Orgel Society.

I'm a newcomer to both organ and society — have had to learn in old age (perish the word) the 350-year-old keyboard invented by Cristofori, and still foisted on us. Since he lived in less opulent times, fleshless fingertips could reach the bottom of the canyon between two black keys without taking the walls down, too. Today's well-padded fingertips have trouble staying clear of those walls.

And therefore, with Dinny, I feel it 2 be

my dooty 2 do sumthn about it. On my recently acquired Baldwin I have filled up aforesaid canyons to the level of the black keys. Wata difference, both in looks and technical possibilities. Sky blue rods for the G, A and D gulches, and clear ones for the BC and EF pairs. A small drop of water-based glue allows easy future removal or exchange with inserts of another color. It's quite essential that tops be rounded. Suddenly, anybody can whizz through the semitone scale with the speed of light (almost). Moritz Rosenthal should have seen this. He is reported to have been able to run in octaves glissando through the black keys. As a further bonus, certain triad inversions, hitherto untouchable, can now be reached. I'm a little scared of being blasted for heresy, but as a confessed non-conformist, I've lost my former respect for traditions which remain hallowed but not useful.

Coming back to the word "Orgel" above, I spent hours in vain searching in back issues for the author of "our orgel club." Methinks the term is singularly appropriate. Because "organ" stands for a multitude of non-musical things: a company newspaper is a house organ; heart, lungs and kidneys are internal organs; and to top it off, we have sex organs. There is room for an unambiguous name for our oh-so-precious instruments. Will a little shove from ATOS succeed in overcoming hallowed tradition? Where in the world is any agency better fitted than our ORGEL club?

Yours cordially,  
Oskar Heim  
New York, New York

Sir:

By coincidence, the July/August issue of THEATRE ORGAN, containing an article on the large Curtis organ at the University of Pennsylvania, and a letter from the president of that university both arrived today.

The president's letter stated that "there is strong sentiment for preserving the Curtis Organ intact as a functioning instrument." It did not say, however, that it would remain in 2300-seat Irvine Auditorium, which has become something of a "white elephant" because of deterioration, lack of airconditioning and obsolete facilities. Dr. Sheldon Hackney also wrote, "it should be apparent that no decision about Irvine Auditorium will be forthcoming for some time."

Correspondence in the university's alumni magazine, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, has shown considerable interest among alumni for preservation of the auditorium and the organ. Perhaps much of it is nostalgia. Unfortunately, at least one prominent organist, familiar with the instrument, wrote to suggest that destruction of the organ would be a good thing.

Whatever is done with the auditorium

and the organ will be costly, and the University of Pennsylvania may not choose to use its limited resources to save them. In my opinion, that would be unfortunate.

Respectfully,  
Robert C. Gebhardt  
Hopatcong, New Jersey

Dear Editor:

The writer of the article about Ken Griffin in the May/June issue of THEATRE ORGAN must be in error when he states that Ken Griffin never recorded a theatre pipe organ.

In 1959, I purchased an album, *Ken Griffin at the Great Organ*, Rondo-lette A30. There is no mention made as to the organ being pipe or electronic, nor any indication as to the make, size, and place of installation. The use of the words "The Great Organ" leads me to believe that it is a pipe organ.

If this recording is of an electronic instrument, the organ manufacturer, organist, and engineer have fooled me because it has the sound of a pipe organ. Although I am not an organist, I have many theatre pipe organ and electronic organ records. I have been listening to theatre pipe organs since 1920. I even wanted to be a theatre organist, but the general acceptance of sound in motion pictures made me choose another vocation. I think I am qualified to make the statement that the organ is pipe. However, I could be wrong.

I'm curious to know if any THEATRE ORGAN readers have this album and what their thinking is.

Yours truly,  
George Lufkin  
Shelton, Washington

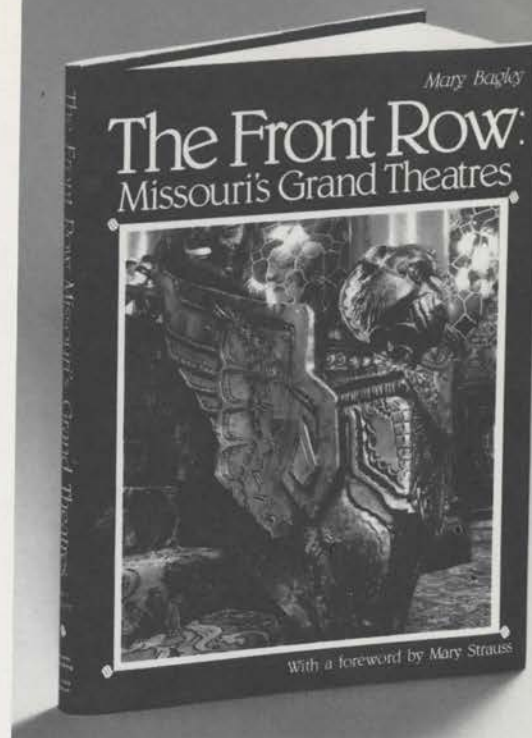
ested in theatres will find the book a delight.

The photographs are probably the book's outstanding feature. The 15-page section of color pictures includes some exceptionally fine views of the magnificent St. Louis Fox Theatre and its famous Wurlitzer organ.

Historical anecdotes add flavor to what might otherwise be textbook material, and the author has incorporated enough lively stories about the performers and productions in Missouri's theatres to make the book a pleasure. Concerning the American Theatre in St. Louis, for example, she says, "Actress Maude Adams asked that the upper balcony be closed for fear someone would fall on her. Other idiosyncracies of the stars included Raymond Hitchcock, who performed for a ticket taker who couldn't see the show and Gertrude Lawrence, who asked that the rear mirrors be covered." (pps. 19-20).

There is information about riverboats, amphitheatres and a real mule barn, which at one time housed over 200 mules and is now a theatre on the campus of Tarkio College. However, not all of the theatres in this volume still exist today, and a careful reading may be required to learn which have been destroyed and which are still in operation. One theatre that is now a parking lot was the New Grand Central in St. Louis, an amazing showhouse which, according to Ms. Bagley, was "Built by the Skouras brothers on March 13, 1913 . . ." (p. 19).

Theatre organs are sometimes mentioned, but little information is offered about their disposition. The Ambassador Wurlitzer is referred to as a "beautiful but monstrous" organ (p. 35), and the Wurlitzer in the Fox Theatre as a "massive con-



glomeration of nearly 4000 pipes, 360 stops and a 50-horsepower electric motor [which] is the only one left that has a quality sound and rises from the floor in a blaze of light." (p. 41). Given that a true theatre organ buff may have a slightly biased reaction, one would still wish for more detailed accounts of this particular facet of the theatres in Missouri.

Mary Bagley is a former journalist who teaches composition and writing at several St. Louis colleges. This book is the culmination of five years of research by Mary and her brother, Bob, who is also a theatre expert.

PAUL J. QUARINO □



## BOOK REVIEW

**The Front Row: Missouri's Grand Theatres**, by Mary Bagley. Published by Gateway Publishing, 4121 Forest Park Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri 63108. \$26.95.

Author Mary Bagley has combined an impressive collection of photographs and an encyclopedic text for this compendium of Missouri theatres. Theatre organ historians may wish for more information about the instruments in some of these old movie palaces, but those primarily inter-

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