

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 □



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-

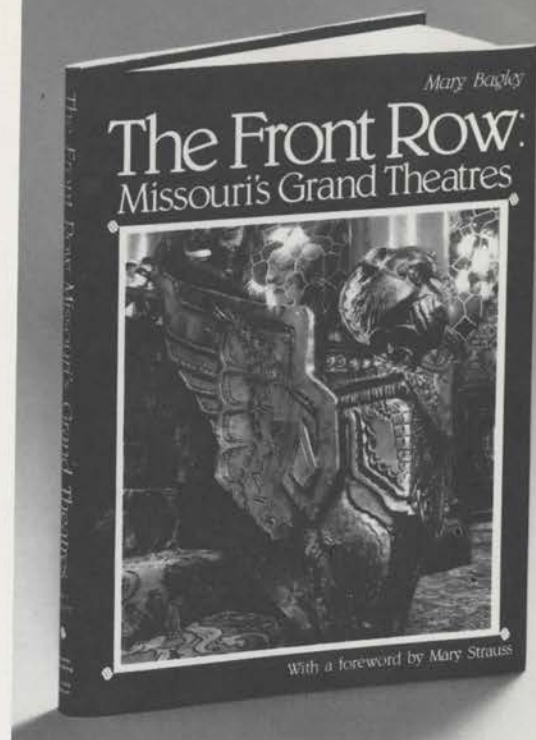
ested in theatres will find the book a delight.

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 □

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