

KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES



by Cheryl Seppala



SCALES

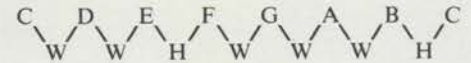
One of the first questions an organ teacher can expect from an aspiring new adult student is "You won't make me practice scales, chords and exercises, will you? I only want to play for my own enjoyment." If the teacher dare reply "Yes, you should learn these," he is likely to hear a ten-minute dissertation on how such busy-work was the cause of the student quitting piano lessons 50 years ago, never to play again. And besides, the organ is supposed to be easier — no elementary theory or harmony is essential. Right? WRONG!

First, practicing scales is an excellent way to loosen up our stiff fingers and improve our technique. Second, understanding what you are playing harmonically makes practicing easier and more interesting. Third, if you

learn a few simple mathematical-type formulas based on the major scale, you can figure out and play *any* chord in *any* key. This is so much more fulfilling than buying a \$1.98 chord chart.

But, before we leap into a study of chords, let's first make sure we understand the construction of the major scale, from which all chords are formed. A major scale is a series of eight notes, played in succession, following a particular order of whole and half steps. There are many other types of scales — minor, whole-tone and pentatonic to name a few useful ones. But for now, let's confine our interest to the major scale. Playing the C scale, comprised of all the white keys from C to C, is one of the first accomplishments of the begin-

ning keyboardist. Analyze the distances between the notes of the C scale: (W = Whole-Step, H = Half-Step)



Notice the distance between any two notes is a whole-step, except between 3 and 4 and 7 and 8, where we find half-steps. All major scales conform to this pattern, no matter on which note they begin. That is the beauty of scale and chord harmony — there are no exceptions. If it works in one key, it must work in all 11 others.

To lay a strong foundation for a study of chords, you should learn all major scales. The following chart illustrates all the major scales with the correct fingering for each hand. Practice each scale up and down at least two octaves hands separately, then hands together. It is from the knowledge of these scales, that we will begin our study of chords in the next issue. □



BOOK REVIEW

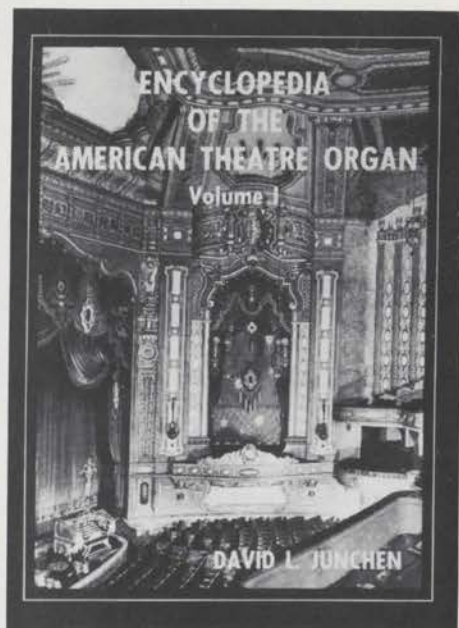
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN: VOL. 1, by David L. Junchen. Published by Showcase Publications, P.O. Box 40165, Pasadena, California 91104. \$45.00 plus \$3.50 per copy for shipping (overseas and Canadian orders, \$5.00). California residents add 6-1/2% sales tax.

An encyclopedia, to most people, is a collection of facts, often dry and dusty, which one reads for needed information. Author Dave Junchen, however, has disarmed this stereotype with an encyclopedia of fascinating anecdotes, excerpts from personal correspondence, documents and photographs, and it is totally absorbing from cover to cover. It is a book for historians, for organists and for everyone with an interest in theatre organs.

In this volume (the first of three), Mr. Junchen has included 52 organ companies, from the Aeolian to the M. P. Möller, some of which are famous and others which are virtually unknown. He has documented even the smallest companies, whether it is with an ad or a picture of one of their organs. The opus lists, shipping lists, ads and photographs of the larger companies reflect the meticulous research that the author has undertaken. It will be of interest to many that the Barton story is, for the most part, told by Dan Barton, him-

MAJOR SCALES WITH FINGERING

RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1	RH 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1
C C D E F G A B C	F F G A B \flat C D E F
LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1	LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1
RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1	RH 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 4
G G A B C D E F# G	B \flat B \flat C D E \flat F G A B \flat
LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1	LH 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3
RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1	RH 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3
D D E F# G A B C# D	E \flat E \flat F G A \flat B \flat C D E \flat
LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1	LH 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3
RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1	RH 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3
A A B C# D E F# G# A	A \flat A \flat B \flat C D \flat E \flat F G A \flat
LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1	LH 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3
RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1	RH 2 3 1 2 3 4 1 2
E E F# G# A B C# D# E	D \flat D \flat E \flat F G \flat A \flat B \flat C D \flat
LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1	LH 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3
RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1	RH 2 3 4 1 2 3 1 2
B B C# D# E F# G# A# B	G \flat G \flat A \flat B \flat C \flat D \flat E \flat F G \flat
LH 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1	LH 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4



self, and is fascinating reading. It was fun to learn that when the author counted the ranks in the Chicago Stadium 6/62 Barton, he found that there are 51 ranks in this organ (see frontispiece). One wonders what surprises await us in the next volume!

The task of selecting and compiling such a vast amount of information might have overwhelmed some writers, but the conversational style and personal comments of Mr. Junchen would indicate that this has been a "labor of love." There are 23 pages alone containing information and photographs of the giant 7/452 Midmer-Losh organ in Atlantic City's Convention Hall. This is one of the most intriguing stories in the book. Perhaps the saddest note in the entire volume is the picture, on page 249, of the demolition of the Earle Theatre in Philadelphia in 1953.

This is a book which cannot be set aside after one or two readings. It needs to be kept handy for frequent reference. Professional organists will enjoy the stories of organs they have played during their concert tours; historians can check on the organs in their vicinities, and theatre organ lovers will enjoy encountering the men who made it all happen in the first half of this century. The only flaws in this edition are some unfortunate spelling errors and some "typos" which are minor distractions when weighed against the overall value of its content. Dave Junchen is to be commended for his dedication and devotion to the preservation of theatre organ history and lore, and we eagerly anticipate Volumes II and III. The book is worth every penny of the price!

PAUL J. QUARINO

Frank Olsen: Theatre Organ Virtuoso, by John Sanderson. Available from Sanmar Marketing, Box 567, Thorold, Ontario, Canada L2V 4W1. \$8.95, including postage and packing.

John Sanderson's memorial to organist Frank Olsen provides as much historical as biographical content. Mr. Olsen's career

spanned two continents and more than 50 years, and this period encompassed the advent of movie houses, silent films and talkies. The author presents some colorful descriptions of the early movie houses in England as well as some social commentary on the patrons and the times. He says:

"Working class people whose lives were momentarily alleviated by the beer-drinking camaraderie in public houses, naturally thought of them as picture houses. Their children, often filthy ragged and sometimes without footwear, even in the nineteen-thirties, queued excitedly every Saturday outside what they chummily called flea-pits. Did they know that flea-circuses procured much of their stock from slumdom's stinking picture palaces?" (pages 7-8).

Frank Olsen's theatre organ career began in 1926 when he was just shy of 18 years; he was the youngest "Orchestral and Solo Organist for the City Picture House in Peterborough." (p.15) On New Year's Day, 1929, he gave his first solo recital on the Jardine Orchestral Organ in St. George's Hall in York. The place where he gained most fame, however, was the Picture Palace in Glasgow where he played a Wurlitzer Model F. In 1967, Frank accepted a position at the Central United Church in Port Colborne, Ontario, where:

"To his surprise, he found the theatre organ more alive in North America than in Europe. The instrument, although no longer played in the majority of North American cinemas, was nourished by enthusiastic fans who grouped themselves into *Theatre Organ Societies*." (p.29).

His remaining years as a performer and teacher were spent in Canada, but he did return to England for a final concert at the Odeon Cinema where he died at the console on September 4, 1983.

Although this is a small book (31 pages), it is large in its devotion to, and admiration of, the man it honors. Anyone who has an interest in history or in theatre organ will find it most interesting.

GRACE E. MCGINNIS

The re-opening of the South Bank Wurlitzer, A souvenir Programme and Brochure, compiled by Victor Patterson. Published by The Cinema Organ Society. Available from COS Sales, 23 Aveling Park Road, London E17 4NS, England. \$6.00, airmail postage included.

The South Bank Wurlitzer, located in Edric Hall of the Polytechnic of the South Bank, in the London Borough of Southwark, was re-opened on November 8, 1985, with a program featuring four British organists. The organ is the 4/21 instrument originally installed in The Trocadero Cinema, Elephant and Castle, London.

This booklet begins with biographies and photos of the four artists, together with lists of the musical selections each played. Following that is a brief story by Tony Moss about The Trocadero Cinema, with an exterior and an interior view of the theatre. Next, Wayne Ivany describes, with text and six photos, the

Trocadero Wurlitzer and the artists who played it. Compiler Victor Patterson describes the removal, reinstallation and opening recital at Edric Hall. This is followed by "Restoration, Re-opening and Future," by David Lowe, and Victor Patterson completes the booklet with some technical information and the specification of the organ.

Well-written text and 26 photos make this booklet very interesting reading, and we shall treasure our review copy.

Farewell Mr. Blackpool, A souvenir tribute to Reginald Dixon MBE, by Tony Bernard Smith. Published by The Cinema Organ Society. Available from COS Sales, 23 Aveling Park Road, London E17 4NS, England. \$3.00, including airmail postage.

This booklet was written over a weekend and rushed into print to have it ready for the Dixon Memorial Concert at the Tower Ballroom on July 14, 1985. But the rush is nowhere apparent; it is a loving tribute to the world-famous organist, beautifully written and beautifully produced. A copy should be in the library of every dedicated theatre organ buff.

In these few pages the author has given us biographical information, facts about the Wurlitzers in the Tower Ballroom, background on some of Dixon's recordings, and "The Dixon sound," a short discussion of his musicianship and playing technique. The booklet contains 19 photographs in addition to the portrait on the cover. □

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