

idle until organists Ron West and Barrie Brettoner were engaged for Wednesday matinees and Saturday evenings. The organ was used right up to the last night of the Arcadia, Wednesday, April 26, 1961. Thus the curtains fell for the last time, to an almost empty house, Ron West paying his last respects to the organ playing "We'll Meet Again."

The Arcadia Theatre building, furnishings, fittings and the historic Wurlitzer organ were placed on the market for sale. Though offers of more than \$2000 were made for the instrument, it was finally donated to the Council of the Municipality of Willoughby, where the theatre was located, by the theatre proprietors. It was later dismantled by organ builders S. T. Noad & Son and packed in car crates to be stored at the Council's Depot, where it lay untouched until November 1969.

So, quietly the Arcadia Theatre came to an end, even before the people were conscious of it, the local people who had by the thousands watched and helped this great suburban cinema grow over the decades from a small showplace to a fine top-ranking affair of the '30s to '50s.

I recall the radio broadcasts of the late 1940s and early 1950s by Charles Tuckwell, the then-resident organist. In the early 1950s, when on annual leave in Sydney, I visited the Arcadia for a normal movie session to hear the organ live. The sound was bright and un-

impeded by heavy curtaining, and Charles Tuckwell's snappy style of playing was memorable.

The organ is now installed in the Chatswood Town Hall and whilst it was officially opened in the 1970s, there is still much work needing to be done. This is sad, for although not large, it is a quality instrument and could proudly hold its own on the international circuit. Let us hope that this will soon occur.

I am indebted to Ian Griggs of Sydney for permission to use much of the material from his excellent book completed in the early 1970s on the history of the Arcadia and other cinemas in the surrounding district.

Bruce Ardley, well-known Australian organist and theatre organ enthusiast, has agreed to write this column for THEATRE ORGAN on a regular basis. His column will cover the theatre organ scene in Australia.

Bruce studied classical piano for nine years, beginning at age nine. He first heard a theatre organ when he was 13 and immediately became addicted. He began the study of classical organ at 17, and subsequently studied theatre organ with the late Stanfield Holliday at the 4/19 Wurlitzer in the Melbourne Regent. He has been a member of the Victorian Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia for over 25 years. By profession he is a bank manager. □

surmise is perhaps 60-65. Sorry to state, but most won't be around in the next ten to 15 years and there goes the theatre organ. Players, but no one to listen.

I doubt that the organ crews want to destroy their hobby by up-grading to synthesizers and electronic gizmos. We need to get more older people and those in their fifties to bolster the art. The new young generation of music lovers have tin ears. If it's not loud it's no good. They want to jump and shake, not listen quietly to some good music. They are also capable of damaging an installation. An exchange of audience is not an answer. A campaign to introduce new organ players to the pipes is in order. Use advertising money and price inducements to the organ and piano teachers and organ dealers to create a bigger audience of the present new organ players. Select the groups that will respond.

Maybe dealers and teachers can contribute to the cost of a bus load of new people who never heard of a pipe organ but want to see what it's all about. If they like to listen to it, I'm sure they may be an added customer for future concerts.

Special prices could be arranged with the chapters to get many from nursing homes who are the listening age. Dealer participation with their organ customers and organ classes should be made a part of the program. Maybe free copies of THEATRE ORGAN to people attending electronic organ concerts can help the education process.

ATOS and its chapters need a new way of thinking.

Musically,
Al Kaufman

Bridgeport, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Gilbert:

With regard to the article "The Theatre Organ . . . Wherein Lies Its Future?" by John Ledwon, in your January/February 1986 issue, I have a few comments.

While I agree that much of the popular music today has its appeal based upon the delivery and style of the artist, with the melodic considerations coming in a distant second, it should be mentioned that the old-time style of music with "hummable melodies" is still alive and well — except that such music is now in the country and western category. The only problem is that the theatre organ is not recognized as a standard instrument in the country and western field.

Second, overlooked in the article was the fact that many theatre organ concerts — and a generous number of theatre organ recordings — emphasize classical music. This type of music has not gone out of style and is still popular with concert goers, if not teenagers and the younger generation.

Mr. Ledwon's points are well taken, and it is incumbent upon all of us to help promote the popularity of theatre organs. It is interesting that when theatre organs were first installed in pizza parlors back in the 1960's, much was said that indicated that purists were offended by the entire concept. Now it seems that purists are a bit sad that the day of pizza with pipe organ accompaniment seems to be fading.

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 would like to thank most sincerely all those very kind people who wrote to me and sent tapes of Al Melgard at the Barton organ in Chicago Stadium. The letters and tapes were very much appreciated. Thank you all.

Yours sincerely,
Laurie Morley (Mr.)
Stokely, England

Dear Editor:

"Why is it that the console of most theatre organs have been placed on the left side of the stage?" That gem extracted from *Etude* by Jason and The Old Prospector brought on acute nostalgia when I realized I was the question's author!

Since there were no theatre organs or theatre organists in my area, my meager source of TO lore was the yearly visits of the piano tuner. The *Etude* had a Q & A department and I bombarded them with TO queries so often that they began ignoring me!

All because I happened to walk by the local

music store with its Victrola in the doorway playing Crawford's "Indian Love Call."

So my special thanks to "Nuggets from the Golden Days" for digging up such treasures. (The other question referred to, about blowers, was probably mine, too! Fifty-two years is a long time.)

Incidentally, why is it that the consoles of most theatre organs have been placed on the left side of the stage?

Sincerely,
Hugh Lineback
Silos Springs, Arkansas □

Dear Editor:

I would like to add a few comments to the article by John Ledwon in January/February 1986 THEATRE ORGAN. He has analyzed the problem correctly and his suggestions have merit. The present crop of theatre organists have a handle on the type of music the present older groups want. There should be no shortage of players. The shortage, however, is the audience. The median age I would

While THEATRE ORGAN is a dandy publication which tells of national happenings and occasionally delves into historical matters (such as the illustrious series years ago involving Dan Barton), it seems to me that the ATOS would be well-served if a companion publication were started, perhaps on the order of Tom B'hend's *The Console* which enjoyed a long publication run until it was suspended a year or so ago. Such a publication, if presented in an informal manner (as *The Console* was), could give information on instrument relocations, restoration techniques, hints for hobbyists, gossip (which is always fascinating to read), etc. There are ample precedents for this. The Musical Box Society International, for example, has two publications. One is printed on glossy paper and contains research articles and information of a more permanent nature, while a newsletter is more human-interest and deals primarily with current events. The formula seems to have been successful.

While some ATOS members, particularly those in larger cities, can regularly go to concerts, there are others whose enjoyment of the hobby, and knowledge of what is happening in the hobby, is more dependent upon what appears in print. Just an idea.

Sincerely yours,
Q. David Bowers
Wolfeboro, New Hampshire □

Closing Chord

Basel Cristol, a leading Chicago area theatre organist in the great era, died on April 7. She was 86.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, she began piano study at an early age, her father, brother and sister being talented musically. After emigrating to America, Basel studied at the Chicago Musical College, winning the Diamond Medal for proficiency.

After organ study, she began her professional career at Chicago's Central Park Theatre. Other theatres in which she played were the Circle, Roosevelt, Riviera, Tivoli, Uptown and Chicago. In the '30s, Basel went into radio, performing on WMAQ and WCFL, using a Hammond. An engagement in the Marine Dining Room of the Edgewater Beach Hotel, occasional stints at the Chicago Theatre for stage shows, and a 17-year stint at Iglers Restaurant kept Basel Cristol busy into her eighties. While at Iglers, she had a heart attack in 1973 and Hall of Famer Edna Sellers subbed for her. She retired from there in 1980.

For the definitive biography on Basel Cristol, see the March/April 1985 issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

LLOYD E. KLOS

Buddy Nolan, whose career playing theatre organ spanned more than 50 years, died on April 13, 1986, after a lengthy bout with cancer. He was 68. A native of Norristown,



Buddy Nolan

Pennsylvania, Mr. Nolan started playing professionally while in the ninth grade. His mother was a pianist, organist and vocalist under whose guidance Buddy learned to love music. "I dropped out of school in the tenth grade," he once said, "and played professionally from then on." He served in the Army in

WWII. In 1952, he began a long association with the Embassy Theatre in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he celebrated his fiftieth year in entertainment with a 1982 concert.

For many years Nolan played "Midnight Concerts" at the Embassy, which became a very popular attraction in Fort Wayne during the '50s and '60s. He recorded "Midnight at The Embassy," which has long since become a collector's item. In addition to his theatre work, Buddy Nolan was well-known in the Fort Wayne area for his nightclub and supper club engagements.

It was his long association with the Embassy that helped save the theatre in the early '70s when it was threatened with destruction. Buddy gave several well-publicized concerts and rallied support among the Fort Wayne public, who did not forget the years and years of theatre pipe organ pleasure given them by this very talented performer.

Surviving Mr. Nolan are a sister, Marcella, of Norristown, Pennsylvania, and a brother, Eugene, of Ellentown, Florida. Services were held in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne with burial in the Catholic Cemetery.

TIM NEEDLER

Rocky Mountain Chapter was saddened to learn of the passing of one of its long-time, very active members. **Jerry Cutshall**, husband of our secretary, Alice Cutshall, passed away on March 21 following a heart attack. Jerry donated many hours of his time working with chapter members to maintain the Paramount Theatre organ in downtown Denver. He retired from the Rio Grande Railroad after 48 years of service and, in addition to our chapter, he was active in Colorado Live Steamers, the Mile High Railroad Club and the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club. He is deeply missed by all who knew him.

DONALD ZELLER □

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