



The Eastman Theatre Building. On the sixth floor was situated the studio in which was housed a Wurlitzer for Motion Picture Organ instruction. The theatre housed a 4M Austin organ, which all MP students used as part of their graduation examinations.

In 1922, the Eastman School of Music, which was slated to become world-renowned, opened in Rochester, N.Y. The Kodak King, George Eastman, admitting he couldn't "hold a note," though being a staunch music lover, had been the benefactor, contributing \$17½ million for establishing the school and the building of the adjacent 3300-seat Eastman Theatre, dedicated to "the enrichment of community life."

Courses in voice, composition, theory, and all the major musical instruments were provided through a staff of extremely competent instructors under the directorship of Dr. Howard Hanson, who joined the school in 1924.

The organ department included 11 practice studios, 9 of which were equipped with 2-manual organs; and two teaching studios, each furnished with a 3-manual organ. All of these organs as well as the 4M Aeolian-Skinner in Kilbourn Hall, and the 4M Austin in the Eastman Theatre, had consoles which were standardized as far as possible to enable students to progress easily from the smaller to the larger instruments.

The studios contained only consoles; the pipes being housed in soundproof chambers in the attic above the ceiling.

A special studio adjacent to the front corridor on the sixth floor in the Eastman Theatre Building was equipped for a Motion Picture Organ course. There were not many music schools throughout the country offering this specialized instruction. In this room was installed a 2M 8R Wurlitzer, Opus No.

553. The orchestral effects included chimes, auto horn, castanets, cymbal, bass drum, snare drum, orchestra bells, sand block, tambourine and xylophone. The studio, which seated about 35, contained a complete outfit for the projection of motion pictures, and the student was given practical experience in learning how to accompany the silents. Both classwork and individual instruction were provided. According to a 1922 catalogue, this course, under guidance of a teacher, was "an advantage not heretofore afforded in the teaching of this increasingly-important branch of organ playing." The course was of three year's duration, and following is an outline of it as prescribed about 1927:

	Subjects	Hrs. Per Week	Units Per Sem.	Teachers
First Year	Organ I	1	4	Abel Marie Decaux
	Piano 7	½	2	Warren Gehrken
	Theory I	5	3	Melville Smith
	History of Music	1	1	Dr. J. Barlow Penney
Second Year	Motion Pic. Organ I	1	4	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith
	Theory IC	1	1	Melville Smith
	Theory II	4	4	Melville Smith
	Musical Form	2	2	Donald Tweedy
	Scoring I	2	2	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith
	Repertoire I	1	1	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith
Third Year	Extemporization I	1	1	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith
	Motion Pic. Organ II	1	4	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith
	Orchestration	2	2	Donald Tweedy
	Scoring II	2	2	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith
	Repertoire II	1	1	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith
	Extemporization II	1	1	Robt. J. Berentsen; H. O. Smith

EASTMAN

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Course for Motion Picture Organists

by Lloyd E. Klos

Subjects as Described in the Catalogue

Motion Picture Organ I. A thorough training in organ technique, in classical and popular style will be given, emphasis being placed upon the attainment of a repertoire of sufficient size and variety for actual performance in the theatre; also a sufficient knowledge of extemporization to improvise short compositions of some musical merit.

Motion Picture Organ II. The work of the first year is continued, including a more detailed study of popular and classical numbers, and of special types of playing as required in the theatre.

Repertoire I. The student is given instruction in the classification and recognition of music suitable for solo performance and picture accompaniment until a complete picture library is attained; further, the study of musical dramatic devices, theatre routine, organ construction, and subjects of general musical knowledge particularly necessary for theatre work.

Repertoire II. This class includes historical development, covering the music of all periods and countries and particularly the dramatic devices of the opera composers. Further attention is given to organ construction, including the preparation of organ specifications, picture play and cue sheet writing, theatre routine, psychology of the audience, etc.

Extemporization I. This class includes the study of harmony, counterpoint, form, transposition, registration, characteristic rhythms as used in the accompaniment of motion pictures.

Extemporization II. This is a continuance of Extemporization I, and includes instruction in the fugal and sonata forms.

Scoring I. This class is given with the aid of a motion picture operator and includes the scoring of scenes, news reels, cartoons, feature programs, etc. The student prepares and performs complete programs under the supervision of the instructor.

Scoring II. The subject of thematic development, coherence and emphasis as required in picture-playing form the major content of this class, students being required to improvise complete picture programs.

SEE CHART NO. 2

The catalogue continues: "For graduation, the student must have satisfactorily passed examinations in all subjects as outlined in the course, and must present a complete motion picture program as given in the Eastman Theatre."

Short Motion Picture Organ courses were given in summer school also. Following is the description of the course taken from the summer school bulletin, dated June 25 to July 28, 1923, entitled "Organ Accompaniment of Motion Pictures":

"This is a special course offered to a class limited to 12 students whose

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CHART NO. 2

1927 Scoring Class Film Library

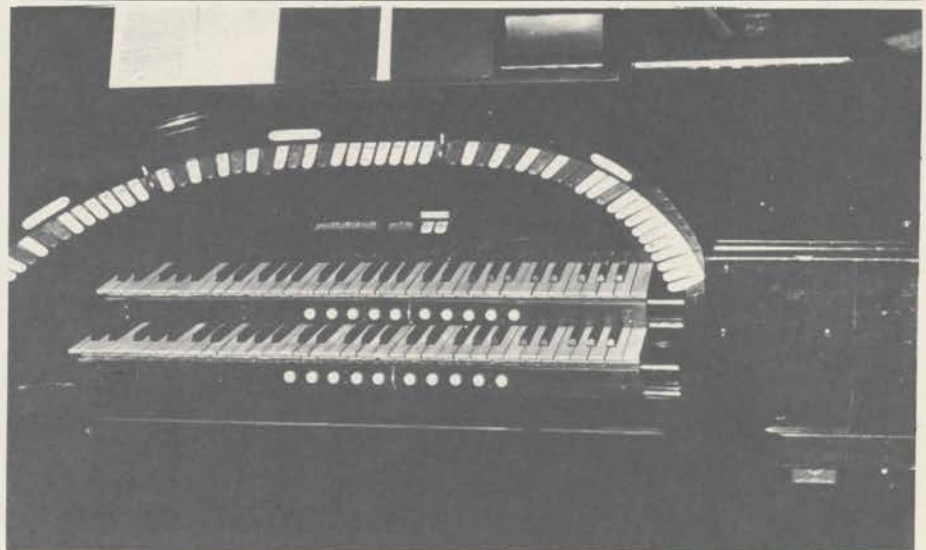
Title	Featured Actor	No. of Reels	Film Studio
Deception	Emil Jannings	8	Paramount, 1921
Disraeli	George Arliss	7	Pathe, 1921
Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde	Lionel Barrymore	7	Paramount, 1920
Gypsy Blood	E. Jannings, Pola Negri	6	First National, 1921
Irish Luck	Thomas Meighan	7	
Passion	E. Jannings, Pola Negri	9	First National, 1921
Peter Pan	Betty Bronson	10	1925
Polly of the Follies	Constance Talmadge	7	First National, 1920
Potash & Perlmutter			Goldwyn, 1923
Primitive Lover	Constance Talmadge	6	First National, 1922
Ruling Passion	George Arliss	7	United Artists, 1922
The Golem	German	6	FPL

Comedies

Cops	Buster Keaton	2	First National, 1920
Dog's Life	Charlie Chaplin	3	First National, 1918
Gobi	Larry Semon	2	Vitagraph
Homemade Movies	Ben Turpin	2	Mack Sennett
Shoulder Arms	Charlie Chaplin	5	First National, 1918

Weeklies

4 News Reels
Tony Sarg's Almanac



Console of ex-Eastman School Wurlitzer as it looks today in Groveland Presbyterian Church. Woodwork was given a coat of dark stain in an effort to hide the scars of age. The percussion and trumpet rank were removed in the "churchifying" process. -L. Klos Collection



Pipework adjacent to percussion section in ex-Eastman School Wurlitzer. Organ was being dismantled prior to installation in church. -L. Klos Collection



A group of Motion Picture Organ students pose for the camera at the Marr & Colton Organ plant, Warsaw, NY in the spring of 1927. Standing, left to right, are students Alma Lissow, Sally Mossman, unidentified and Edith Mansion; David J. Marr, President of the M&C Co. and host to the occasion; students Doris Germer, Marion Taylor, Eda Roman and Elizabeth Scurry.

Seated are Frank "Gus" Clement, student; Bryant G. Parsons, organ repairman and lecturer; Robert G. Berentsen, teacher; Ira Shirk and Chester Klee, students. Through a trip to an organ plant, students were given the added knowledge of how organs were constructed and how they operated.

—L. Klos Collection

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preparation is adequate to make intensive study of organ accompanying of motion pictures immediately possible. It should be considered as a post-graduate course if considered in relation to the regular organ course of the school. In addition to proficiency as a player of the organ, the candidate for this course is requested to have a fundamental knowledge of harmony, modulation, transposition and some knowledge of counterpoint.

"This course is conducted by Deszo D'Antalfy and John Hammond, the organists of the Eastman Theatre. In the regular sessions of the school, it is arranged on a 12-week schedule. The course may be thus taken as a summer session course since the

instructors will be on duty in the Eastman Theatre during the entire summer period.

"Students who are not prepared to meet the requirements of this course, may take private instruction which will furnish such preparation."

Later on, the courses were changed somewhat, and following is their description, taken from the summer school bulletin, dated June 22 to July 25, 1925:

"The Department of Organ Accompaniment of Motion Pictures of the Eastman School of Music offers two courses of 5 weeks' duration for the summer session. The first is a Preparatory Course, designed for those who work to equip themselves for entrance to the regular Motion Picture Course or advancement therein. The second is a

Master Course designed for those who have had thorough organ training and extensive theatrical experience.

"Students taking the Preparatory Course receive two individual 1-hour lessons per week at the organ, and a class scoring period with projection, 2 hours per week.

"Students in the Master Course receive 2 individual 1-hour lessons per week at the organ with private projection for each lesson, and also a weekly 2-hour class conference at which questions pertaining to the work of the motion picture will be discussed.

"All students are advised to take the summer course in theory, consisting of a daily lesson in harmony.

"Those not wishing to take the

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Harold Osborn Smith, who, with Robert Berentsen, taught a course in Motion Picture Organ at the Eastman School of Music in the late Twenties and early thirties. Mr. Smith also accompanied the silents at the Eastman and Regent Theatres. —L. Klos Collection

courses may study privately with the regular instructor."

The first instructors of the Motion Picture Organ Course were John Hammond and Deszo Von D'Antalfy. They were extremely competent teachers, and there are many organists who up to this day regard John Hammond as pure genius. Deszo D'Antalfy will be remembered as having gone on to fame as one of the members of the first pipe organ trio at the 6200-seat Roxy Theatre in New York, beginning in 1927.

Later on, two men succeeded to these positions. Robert J. Berensten and Harold Osborn Smith, two more excellent organists, taught the course in addition to accompanying the silent pictures in the Eastman Theatre.

Mr. Berentsen came to Rochester in 1923 to become organist at the Eastman Theatre, later to teach both Motion Picture Organ and regular organ courses in the Eastman School. Born in Chicago of Norwegian descent, he studied music in Minneapolis and later in Europe. While overseas, he was the only organist to participate in Norway's choral celebration in 1914 of the 100th anniversary of the adoption of its constitution.

Before joining the Eastman Theatre staff, he was organist at the William Fox Academy of Music at the Broadway Theatre, organist and orchestra leader at the new Atlantic Theatre, and Chief Organist at Major Bowes' Capitol Theatre in New York City. He was a former president of the Society of Theatre Organists of New York.

Mr. Berentsen was organist at the Eastman until the end of the silent movie era. For 14 years, he was organist and pianist for the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and for 24 years was organist and choir director at Central Presbyterian Church, providing music for 1500 services and hundreds of other church meetings. Three times he was elected Dean of Rochester Chapter, AGO.

Harold Osborn Smith came to Rochester in 1925 at the invitation of Chief Organist Berentsen at the Eastman. Mr. Smith was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1880. He studied music at Cleveland

University School of Music and Ohio State University, then studied abroad in London and Berlin. For ten years following his musical study, he toured as piano accompanist with concert artists.

Upon assuming his duties in Rochester, he and Mr. Berentsen shared the task of accompanying the silent movies in the Eastman Theatre until the advent of the talkies in the late twenties. A member of the Eastman School faculty, starting in 1925, he began in the opera department, later teaching courses in Motion Picture Organ and regular organ. For a number of years, he served as official organist of the Rochester Philharmonic, and from 1926 to 1953, was organist and choirmaster of First Presbyterian Church, missing only 6 services in that time — a most enviable record.

Former students will argue into the night as to who was the better organist-instructor. Each had his loyal supporters, and the writer will not take sides in a controversy whose answer cannot be determined one way or the other.

Suffice to say, these men turned out some excellent students. One was J. Gordon Baldwin, who hailed from Warsaw, Ohio. A terrific improviser, according to his contemporaries, he had several positions in Rochester — organist at the Monroe Theatre, one of the "Console Twins" at the Piccadilly's two-console Wurlitzer, and finally musical director and organist at WHEC. He is in the middle west at last report. Joseph L. Briggs of Cheston, West Virginia played the Arnett, Princess and Regent organs in Rochester, and when theatre organs were stilled, he became a teacher of the Hammond, a job in which he is still very busily engaged.

Frank A. "Gus" Clement played nine Rochester Theatres, and is now on the staff of Rochester Institute of Technology. George C. Garis of Pen Argyle, Pa. played four west-side theatres in Rochester, achieving much popularity while at the Madison, by broadcasting over WHAM. Possessor of a unique style and friendly personality, his theme song "Beyond the Blue Horizon" drew many listeners. Thoroughly enjoying his work, he played up to the final days of the theatre organ in the city. Harold W. Geschwind, who played nine theatres in Rochester, spent three years in a downtown Richmond, Va. theatre, then returned to this city where he is a music instructor for the Board of Education. He harbors fond memories of his theatre organ days, saying he got his greatest feeling of enjoyment and accomplishment which succeeded anything he has done since. Chester E. Klee played in five Rochester houses, then moved to Olean, N.Y. where his is a busy schedule — music teacher, church organist, President of the Olean Civic Music Assn, Kiwanis musician, and a writer of a music column for the Olean Times-Herald. Ira F. Shirk from Ephrata, Pa. played ten theatres in Rochester, eventually becoming a church organist and teacher when the silents went out. There were many others who returned to their home towns to serve in theatres until they were forced by the trend of the times to seek other lines of endeavor.

By examination of Eastman School records, the last Motion Picture organ students were graduated in 1930. The handwriting was on the wall for a pro-

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Student Harold W. Geschwind at the console of the Eastman School Wurlitzer. The organ, situated in a sixth floor studio, was used almost constantly by students who loved to play the tunes of the Roaring Twenties. The picture was taken in 1925.

—L. Klos Collection

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC'S COURSE

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fession which had flourished for three decades.

Following are the students of the classes of Motion Picture Organ who received degrees or certificates upon completion of the course. Not included were many who majored in the regular organ course for church and concert work, but took short courses in theatre organ. These students were able to get jobs accompanying the silents in local houses, and thereby augmenting their income to defray school expenses. There are some, like Margaret Culp Morrow and Harold Geschwind who insist that the MP organ course made them better church musicians. Others, however, do not readily talk of their experiences in theatres, considering them "degrading."

The Wurlitzer in the MP studio was a great favorite of the students, and was used night and day, albeit it was practically worn out, say those who used it. It was a bit disconcerting to the teachers of regular organ to try to teach the works of Bach, only to have someone down the hall push the crescendo pedal on the Wurlitzer while giving out with a hot chorus of "Yes Sir, She's My Baby." Soundproof studios had not reached the zenith they enjoy today. Students paid 50¢ an hour for practice time, and had to sign up well in advance, so popular was the Wurlitzer.

An interesting facet of the course was the contribution of Mr. Bryant G. Parsons, a well-known local pipe organ maintenance man. President of his own firm, which was organized in 1914, Mr. Parsons was engaged by the Eastman School to lecture on the mechanics of the pipe organ. Gist of his presentations were "What happens when you push the starting button" and "What to do until

the serviceman gets there."

In connection with his talks, students were taken on tours of the Eastman Theatre Organ chambers, thereby gaining first-hand knowledge of the workings of the King of Instruments. Also on the agenda were visits to the Marr & Colton organ factory in Warsaw, N.Y. where the students, escorted by Mr. David J. Marr, were able to see the building of a theatre organ from raw material to finished product. It is doubtful if many organ students today are given such specialized instruction to enable them to understand the workings of the modern pipe organ.

According to former organ student, Doris Germer Stang, now living in Kingston, N.Y., her class visited the Marr & Colton plant in the spring of 1927. She remembers: "At that time, the organ factory in Warsaw was a modern, very up-to-date plant. They appeared to be very busy at that time. I remember some of the group tried out the various organs, and they were very modern with many new and different stops which we were not used to."

When the Motion Picture Organ course was terminated, the organ was removed, churchified, and installed in South Presbyterian Church. After a span of time, the church decided to substitute an electronic, and the pipe organ became the property of the organ dealer-repairman, who later re-installed it, minus the trumpet rank, in the Groveland Presbyterian Church where it is today.

The studio where the course was taught is still in evidence. It is used for a classroom, and upon visiting it, one may see where the pipes were located, as the chambers have been closed in. The room is rather odd-shaped, not rectangular or square, its dimensions roughly about 20' x 40', and has five uneven sides to conform with the outside contour and the interior design of the 40-year old building.

Both the instructors who served the Motion Picture Organ course during most of its existence are deceased. Mr. Smith died in Rochester in 1955 at the age of 75. Mr. Berentsen died in 1962 in Florida.

Thus, we come to the end of our story of the Motion Picture Organ Course which ran for 8 years in the Eastman School of Music. It is regrettable that the school wasn't in existence at least ten years earlier, as the country would have been blessed with more theatre organists of proven merit. That the school turned out scores of good ones during its existence offers proof that the Eastman School is indeed top caliber. For, no matter what instrument is taught there, the superb teaching staff upholds jealously the original intent of George Eastman when he founded the school: "Dedicated to the Enrichment of Community Life."

Have something on your mind? Why not write a "Letter to the Editor"? Do it now!

CHART NO. 3

Student	Home Town	Year Grad.	Certificate or Degree
Ashbaugh, Joseph	Kane, Pa.	1928	D
Baldwin, J. Gordon	Warsaw, Ohio	1928	C
Barreuther, Harry	New York, N.Y.	1925	C
Briggs, Joseph L.	Cheston, W. Va.	1927	C
Brown, Gladys E.	Warren, Pa.	1930	C
Clement, Frank A.	Rochester, N.Y.	1930	C
Crane, Iva P.	Endicott, N.Y.	1930	C
Davidson, Tura	Boston, Mass.	1926	C
Disque, Charlotte L.	Rochester, N.Y.	1929	C
Dougherty, Buena Vista	Lewiston, Mont.	1930	C
Forbes, Theron G.	Batavia, N.Y.	1930	C
Garis, George C.	Pen Argyl, Pa.	1928	C
Germer, Doris L.	Angelica, N.Y.	1929	C
Gershwind, Harold W.	Boyertown, Pa.	1928	C
Goodwin, Jeanette	Rochester, N.Y.	1926	C
Harper, Harold	Rochester, N.Y.	1925	C
Hipwell, Hazel	Fredonia, N.Y.	1925	C
Irvine, Katherine J.	Bradford, Pa.	1930	C
Jerge, William	Buffalo, N.Y.	1927	C
Jolles, Harold	Cattaraugus, N.Y.	1925	C
Klee, Chester E.	Rochester, N.Y.	1929	C
Lehn, Edgar V.	Youngstown, Ohio	1929	C
Leisle, Dorothy C.	Nebraska City, Neb.	1930	C
Mansion, Edith	Sherman, N.Y.	1929	C
McKibben, Fred	Dallas, Texas	1926	C
Merrill, Philip	Augusta, Maine	1926	C
Miller, Paul J.	Gowanda, N.Y.	1927	C
Mills, Ernest	Albion, N.Y.	1928	C
Myers, Fred	Rochester, N.Y.	1925	C
Nicholls, Charles R.	Claremont, N. Hamp.	1930	C
Nickerson, Mercedes	Willsboro, Pa.	1927	C
Ogborn, Owen O.	Charlotte, N. Car.	1928	C
O'Neill, Morris Conn	Warren, Pa.	1929	C
Peris, Mildred	East Rochester, N.Y.	1925	C
Rogers, LeRoy E.	Salt Lake City, Utah	1927	C
Roman, Eda Hannah	Red Lodge, Mont.	1929	C
Roobenion, Seenooch	Boston, Mass.	1927	C
Rosenberg, Frances D.	Rochester, N.Y.	1929	C
Rudnicke, Stanley P.	Plymouth, Pa.	1929	C
Schrengost, Kneal	New Kensington, Pa.	1927	C
Scurry, Elizabeth	Seattle, Wash.	1929	C
Shirk, Ira F.	Ephrata, Pa.	1930	C
Snyder, Elvin R.	Minersville, Pa.	1927	C
Stratton, Robert	Greensboro, N. Cr.	1927	C
Switzer, Marie	Olean, N.Y.	1928	D
Taylor, Marion	Rouses Pt., N.Y.	1930	C
Treat, Edna	Rochester, N.Y.	1929	C
Triplett, Ruth	Spokane, Wash.	1927	C
Van Slyke, Harold W.	Carthage, N.Y.	1930	C