

The late Amy Croughton, veteran music and drama critic of the Times-Union in a compilation of theater history remarked: "The film 'Quo Vadis' was shown at Fitzhugh Hall at the northwest corner of South Fitzhugh Street and the Erie Canal where many were attracted by the novelty of a pipe organ to accompany the films instead of the usual piano. It was the expense of this organ, however, that took the Fitzhugh Clean Amusement Co. into bankruptcy in 1914." Whatever happened to the organ is unknown, but quite conceivably, it was repossessed by the Wurlitzer Company. Their organs were not bolted to the floor for this very reason — quick repossession in case of default in payment.

From 1915 to 1916 the building became known as the Winter Garden Theater, but strangely is not mentioned in old city directories. In 1917, it became the City Hall Garage for the repair and washing of "flivvers."

In 1923, the name changed again to the Rochester Garage. A restaurant known as Peter Doyle's did business on the ground floor, North side. In 1926, the garage became the "U-Drive-It System Garage," with the restaurant's being run by Clarence L. Ray. When the abandoned Erie Canal bed was developed by the city as a subway with Broad Street above it in the 1920's, the building was cut back drastically on the South and East sides. The remaining structure was known as the Fitzhugh-Broad Building. On the ground floor was housed the Cornucopia Restaurant (later, the Colony) with lawyer's offices on the second floor.

When the restaurant went into bankruptcy in 1954, the building was razed and the property became the Broad & Fitzhugh Parking Lot. Thus the site, where once Rochester's first Wurlitzer organ entertained the public has succumbed to the modern age.

make sure it sunk in. It did. The audience noise abated some during the second stanza, to be followed by a lively one minute ovation.

As mentioned, the attendance came to 3000. A check at the box office revealed that more than 500 tickets had been sold there just before the performance—er—recital. Many more had been sold to the public preceding the concert. It was estimated that about half present were AGOers.

Following the concert, Mr. Nalle was seen hugging a lady in the lobby. In fact he lifted her right off the rich carpet, like a long lost friend. She was — the retired principal of the grammar school Billy attended in his hometown, Fort Myers, Florida.

The New York Times picked up the curious story of supposedly staid AGOers going soft on what has sometimes been referred to as the "courtesan of the organ world" in a flattering article in its July 10 edition. A close friend said it started Billy's phone ringing continuously. It also awakened some advertising agency account execs that they had a genius on tap, right there at CBS. Result: Billy landed a job scoring twenty Post Cereal radio commercials. The exec wanted someone to "spoofer around with the music" but didn't care for soap opera organists. Then recalling that Billy scored a soaper called "Young Dr. Malone," he added, "but that was a jazz score — no schmaltz."

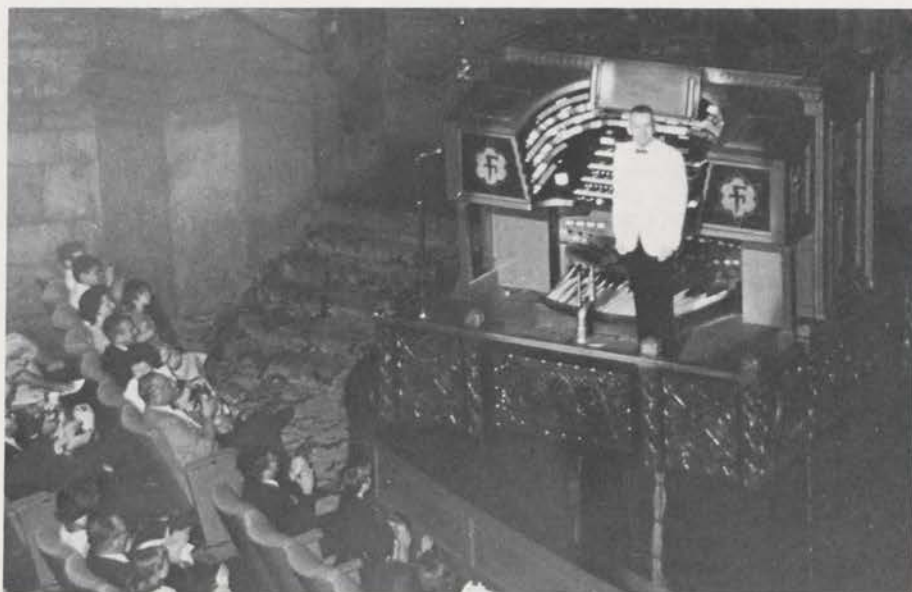
Interviewed briefly in a CBS passageway, Billy recalled his Atlanta adventure with delight — and a deep sense of gratitude to those who's made the recital technically tops. For example, the opener; the theatre darkened gradually to blackout, the organ started up in the dark with re-iterating Cymbals gradually swelling to a crescendo then — Bam! — the clean white spot hit the console as Billy hit the first notes of "Georgia on My Mind," which took him to the top of the lift (celebrated by a brief fanfare based on "Dixie."). Organ serviceman Joe Patten managed the production, which included a stage lighting crew and two men in the projection booth. Production entailed use of the three elevators in the pit. The grand piano came up on its elevator at the right side of the pit for solos played from the organ console. For a clincher the middle elevator rose to fill in the space between the two plateaus to enable Billy to walk across to solo on the piano's 88 directly, a well-embellished "Lover." The audience loved the novelty as well as Billy's musicianship.

Nalle had only praise for his helpers, saying "The Fox crew was completely pro — planned every movement and lighting effect to perfection — the most effective backup I've had in any theatre.

— Bert Brouillon

### Afterthoughts :

## THE AGO'S FIRST THEATRE ORGAN ADVENTURE



Happy Moment for Billy. The star stands to greet his applauding audience at the conclusion of his console riser.

One thing was certain about the theatre organ concert held during the AGO convention early in July; the conventioners liked it. A number interviewed afterwards wondered what all the fuss had been about previously when it had been considered low camp for a "serious" organist or musician not to wince when the words "theatre organ" were spoken aloud among the cultured.

Of course, those exposed to the theatre instrument in years past probably didn't have the luck to hear the genius of a Billy Nalle — nor to hear an instrument as great as the Atlanta Fox Moeller. Whatever the reasons for capitulation the

young man with the very short hair caused the "Miss Susies" as well as many others to melt on the spot when he met them in terms they understood — counterpoint in the best Bach style — a fugue based on "Alles Was Du Bist" better known to other shorthairs as "All the Things You Are" (it's done on Nalle's Mirrosonic record, "Billy!").

Up to that point the 3000 friends of serious music in the house had been quietly appreciative but hearing the Bach-Kern bit caused considerable audience reaction — so much so that the organist decided to milk a good thing and repeat the entire arrangement to