

LETTERS

5840 Lindo Paseo
San Diego, Calif. 92115
July 7, 1966

Dear Editor:

On page 3 of Theatre Organ, Spring 1966, you show a picture of Carl Weiss at the 4/23 Wonder Morton at Loew's Jersey Theatre. The enclosed picture of my uncle, Ted Meyn, was taken at this console sometime during the 20's while he was playing this theatre.

Ted was born in Kansas City, Kansas and at a tender age began playing for silents in his father's theatre there. He also played in Kansas City, Missouri at the Pantages and Loew's Midland (another beautiful Morton which is still there), broadcasting over Radio Station KCKN from the Midland.

He played in Wichita, Kansas, Cleveland, Ohio, and finally the Capitol Theatre off Broadway in New York, where he weathered the transition from pipes to plug-in and was the last organist at the theatre. He ended playing Hammond for bounce-the-ball singalongs, and I once sat at the console with him listening with a headset as he rehearsed some numbers while the picture was on.

After leaving the Capitol, Ted played a while at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago, where the enclosed picture was on display outside. Of course the organ he played looked somewhat different (Hammond).

Ted and his wife are now living at the Diplomat Gardens, 590 Ocean Ave., Apt. 34-A, Longbranch, New Jersey. I am certain if the New York Chapter would contact him, he would consent to play the Loew's Jersey organ for a meeting, and I know the members would hear some great playing. I would hope someone would tape it and send me a copy.

Very truly yours,
Don F. Keilhack

4526 Sheridan Avenue
Miami Beach, Fla. 33140

Editor, The Bombarde
Dear Sir:

Now that the question of bolsters vs. stop-rails has been settled (I hope) maybe it is time we got rid of another very popular misconception about theater organ programs—"singing along to the bouncing ball" . . .

Seems like a lot of people have a tendency to telescope their memories—the "bouncing ball" did not come along till after the silent movie days, after most theater organs were silenced by the new "whole show on the screen" idea.

Here are the facts. Toward the end of the silent movie era, some theater organists,



Ted Meyn at the console of the Wonder Morton at Loew's Jersey Theatre. (See letter in column one.)

unable to attain the popularity or skill of the great soloists, took the cheap and easy way out—"audience participation." If the audience can be persuaded to sing along, lustily enough, they will drown out some second-rate organ playing, and have some fun into the bargain. Usually, the words of the tune were projected from slides (not film) changed on cue in the projection booth.

When sound film came along, Dave Fleischer (brother of Max, famed for Out of the Inkwell, Betty Boop, and Popeye the Sailor) got the idea for a quick and easy series of sound films called "Organologues"—just the words of the song, with a simple animated bouncing ball moving along with the music, and keying the exact word to be sung. The music was on the sound track—I don't remember ever seeing one of these films used with a live organ background, though it is possible that some few organists who were still working then may have played along with the film to give the sound some guts . . .

Because theater sound systems in the early days of talking films were woefully underpowered—a theater of 1000 seats often had as little as 25 watts of sound power, and even with the highly efficient horn speakers used in those systems, 25 watts is not much (many a home hi-fi installation has from 50 to 100 watts). These systems were peaked in the mid-range for best voice reproduction, and were sadly lacking in both bass and extreme treble, and an organ recording played through such a sound system was pretty thin and empty sounding—nothing at all like the "Mighty Wurlitzer" . . .

But it was cheap and easy for the theater management to book these films and fire the organist, and so that is just what they did.

But the point of all this is that the "bouncing ball" was a patented gimmick of Dave Fleischer's, it came in with sound film and was not part of the silent film era nor the

great period of the theater organ.

Sincerely,
John S. Carroll

Mr. Editor:

I've heard rumors about there being a school for theatre organists in or near Boston in the late '20's. Can you shed any light on it?

Edmund Weir,
Boston, Mass.

(Indeed there was such a school. It was founded by the famous theatre organist Lloyd G. del Castillo, who is well remembered as a top movie organist in the Boston area. He now lives in Los Angeles, does film scores, radio and TV background music. Here's a rare photo of one of his studios, clipped from a 1930 issue of "Melody" magazine by fellow organist Harry J. Jenkins.)



The Lloyd del Castillo organ studio in Boston circa 1929. Shown is the 2-7 Estey organ which was equipped with 3 percussions and 15 traps and effects. It was a complete school for theatre organists. The drape covers the screen used for projecting films for student organists to cue.

Letters, continued

Of Kimballs and Diaphones

Mr. Editor:

While I was reading Stevens Irwin's article about Diaphones ("Of Kimballs and Diaphones," Summer 1966 issue), some notable omissions loomed—credit to those who invented and developed the Diaphone, also the fact that all Diaphones, regardless of make, are very closely related—often being exact duplicates of other brands.

The Valvular Diaphone (the type in use today) was invented in the late 1890's in England by James H. Nuttall, one of Robert Hope-Jones' most resourceful innovators. He is also credited with originating the Kinura, Oboe Horn, Krumet (1912), resonant cavity Orchestral Oboe (1907) and the Serpent (1926)—and they constitute only a fraction of his contribution to the modern theatre organ. In 1899 he sold the Diaphone principle to the U. S. Lighthouse Service to put some zing into fog horns. Many a lighthouse is still giving out with Diaphoned "beeeeeee-ooooohs" today. Before Nuttall perfected the valvular action, Hope-Jones worked out a fairly successful "tremolo" Diaphone action, an example of which was installed as part of the famous Hope-Jones McEwan Hall organ (Edinburgh) but that would predate Nuttall's action by no more than three years at most. Therefore, we fail to see how Mr. Irwin arrives at 1885 as the "starting date" of the Diaphone—unless he is counting the experiments of Blackett and Howden (of Newcastle) about that time. However, B & H, so far as can be traced, never came up with a workable model. Although often obscured by latter day flim-flam, the trail of the Diaphone converges back to Robert Hope-Jones and James Nuttall—regardless of the brand name. The man who made the most profound mark on all Diaphones in this country was Joseph J. Carruthers, a member of the Hope-Jones nucleus of highly skilled Old World craftsmen who followed their leader to the USA in the early days of the century. Carruthers laid out the original scales for the H-J Diaphone at Elmira. When Wurlitzer absorbed the Elmira plant, Carruthers didn't take to life in North Tonawanda and quit to join Kimball in Chicago, where he became chief flue pipe voicer. There, too, he laid out the Diaphone scales just as he had at Elmira. His son, Harry, did the same for Robert Morton in California shortly thereafter. Therefore, it would seem that a Diaphone is a Diaphone—and Hope-Jones is the granddaddy while James Nuttall did the actual fathering. For those unfamiliar with Nuttall—and he is one of the most neglected of organ innovators—it might be interesting to know that with the German-trained Theodore Ilse, he developed the horseshoe console—circa 1907.

—Lee Haggart, Burbank

(Mr. Haggart is a former Robert Morton Co. employee whose specialty was, and still is, voicing pipes, especially reeds. He estimates that he installed 28 theatre organs in Southern California houses during the "golden era.")

Martha Lake Marches On!

Mr. Editor
(You Clod!)

It's Abyssinian' ABYSSINIAN, not "African!" Ooooooh!! After all the grief that I went through to find this rare rank, (and I mean) you had to go and . . . Oooh!! I'll go out of my mind!! ABYSSINIAN STRINGED OBOE!! Oooooooooohhh!!

And furthermore, I'm not such a hulk. I'm certainly not as bulky as you, fat boy. I should have my sweetie, Bencie Hall, beat you up, down, and sideways for that! Ooohh!

In the future, heed this one comment I have to make: a bit of advice on fair play and etiquette, a little sage observation gleaned from a long and colorful life jammed with poignant meanings: WATCH IT, BUS-TER!

Hmmmmph,
Martha Lake, Miss
ATOE, AFofM, DDT, BLAH
Squallor Hollow, Wash.

(Methinks our large scale Gamba is being pulled. True, we goofed on the name in the recent combined issue ATOE convention coverage, but the lady doesn't seem to know that Abyssinia is in Africa. If she ever has the gall to stage another "concert" we'll send Effie Klotz to review it. They deserve one another—absymally.)

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B. W. Bartlett
5369 Princeton St.
Oakland, Calif.

To the Editors,

(Also an open letter to any ATOE'ers with the patience to wade through my copious and excessive verbiage.)

With that kind of a greeting, what can I be other than wordy? I was wondering if anyone can help me with a couple of questions. I have a few discs that are confusing me. "Tribute to Ken Griffin," an 88 center by the mythical Chas. Rand on Coronet CX-167 features a real live theater pipe organ with a percussionist or percussion ensemble. It is a good clean recording and has some good tunes and good arrangements on it, and I would like to know the who (artist) and the where (organ and location, and origin). Also, on the record More Theater Organ in Hi-Fi featuring Lennie MacClain on Epic LN 3655, where is the Tower Theatre located, and what kind of organ is it that is being played? (The jacket only sez Tower theater, nuthin else.)

Also, I have two discs and wonder if they, either or both, are rare. One is Lee Erwin Plays Moon River Music, on a Zodia LP with no separation between the groove bands, and the other is Al Melgard Vol. II at the Chi Stadium Organ on a Replica LP and finally, Here's Melgard featuring Al on the Replica Studio Wurli with a bunch of clowns on saxes and clarinets and other human wind instruments.

At this point, I would like to cry in my rootbeer for a minute or two and maybe stain a friendly shoulder or two with the salty drops from my greenie orbs. I guess it's part of human nature to choose up sides and

start taking pot shots at each other, but, cussit, I shore do get upset when I see it happening with my favorite brand of people. In colleges, they teach the young tads to recognize and value the other fellows art, and opinion. Old Benj. Franklin once sed, 'I don't agree with you, Jack, but I'll fight for your right to say your say.'

What I'm gettin at is this, from where I sit, I see the members of the mighty AGO divided and sniping. The Romantic Organ lovers make cute little comments against the E. Power Biggsian Bach to the Tracker Baroquians, and accuse them of having "one tracker minds." I see the members of the ATOE make smart, cutting little remarks about the long-hair AGO types, and the AGO types make cute remarks about "non-musicians playing non-music on organs that aren't really all there." (Sly stab at unification there, did you notice?) And among the ranks (no pun intended) of the ATOE we have nit-picking nastiness about the battle of the Pipes vs. the Plugs. One writer to the editor actually asked for ammunition to hurl back at the AGO types not too long ago. A good sign was the blurb by Judd Walton in his question and answer column about the relation between pipes and plugs. Would that I had the perspicacity to dash off something that good, on the subjects noted above. If it's got more than one manual, and a set of pedals for the footsies, unless it's a harpsichord, pappy, it's an organ. It Don't Matter None whether it's got trackers or magnets, unification or not, swell shades or free standing baroque case-work, it's still a bloody organ. So maybe it produces its sounds by electronic means, it can still make purty music. I would like to see a broadening of tastes in organ music. I would like to see organ lovers open up their minds and their ears. (And hearts.) I would like to see people study up on the various organs and organ music and come to the realization that the different types of organs are due to different types of music and the different types of music were written because of the types of organs that were available when they were written. Like it or not, ATOE'ers, knocking off the tremis and selecting a few flue stops does not make Bach really sound out properly on a Theater Organ. By the same token, I defy anybody to make a tracker swing with sexy sobbing tibiae. Sure, the differences are there, recognize them, don't overlook them, but darnit, make them a unifying factor among organ lovers, not a battleground. The foremost proponent of Tracker & Bach is our old pal E. Power Biggs. He was impressed with the artistry of the late Raymond G. Shelley, and if we are to believe the article on page 35 of the Spring '65 issue of Theatre Organ mag, he arranged to have Columbia record Shelley. Due to his interest, the artistry of Raymond G. Shelley still lives, and can be heard by present day TO fans. I say that kudoes are due friend Biggs for this and many other things he has done. The point I wish to make is that in spite of his intense interest and preoccupation with the modern tracker organ, and the music of Bach, E. Power Biggs is truly a man of broadly based, catholic tastes in music. The man is definitely not a musical snob, although he could be, and no one would blame him.

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LETTERS, continued

Musical snobbery, like any other form of snobbery is a sign of a lack of maturity. The need to dichotomize is a sign of an insecure, infantile mind.

Don't get the idea that I'm painting a black and ugly picture, or that I think these faults are universal. To the contrary, I attended a good example of interdisciplinary concertizing. In the middle of the northern Calif. chapter's Hi-Jinks last year, we got a chance to sit up in the choir stalls to hear Purvis work over the big Skinner at Grace Cathedral in Frisco. There was a big crowd and Mr. Purvis was well received to say the least. Richard Purvis is himself a fine example of what I'm yakking about with regard to broad tastes in organ music. Another example, George Wright now plays in church, you can bet he ain't playing no bump and grind music baby! Funny how the artists, the true artists, are themselves the most catholic in their tastes, and the least involved in controversies about these little divisions in our ranks. That might be because they are true musicians and if it's music and it's an organ, they dig it.

We should all only be like them maybe?

Yours Truly,
B. W. Bartlett

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"TRAVELIN' BOB" REPORTS

Mr. Editor:

While visiting Colorado this year I met Bob Castle at the Denver Paramount and listened to him play for over an hour. He plays intermissions at the theatre on Sunday evenings. He's an excellent organist, too. The instrument is a 20-rank Wurlitzer and Bob told me he had restored all but the Culcima which is too soft to be heard anyway. There is no piano, but it has a good Harp. Both the theatre and the building owner want the organ to be used, so Bob feels that it is relatively safe for the foreseeable future. I understand there is one other organ in a Denver theatre but that it's not playable at present.

One evening I had dinner at the Three Coins restaurant in the village of Louisville (near Boulder) where the 3-13 Wurlitzer from the Rochester, New York, Paramount is played by Dick Hull (he used to play it at the Paramount, too). This impressed me as a very nice installation and Hull is a wonderful performer. Very friendly, too. He plays several numbers in a row in the Don Baker way then takes a short break, then another group. He came to my table during one break for a visit and told me that he ordinarily keeps the volume low, realizing that not all present are organ fans. However, he opened it up for me on the next number and showed that the organ has plenty of power without being oppressively loud. Patronage is very good in this out-of-the-way location (several miles from the main highway).

Bob Wilson
Yakima, Wash.



This 10 horsepower motor rotates the "Orgoblo" fan blades. Note the sleeve bearing and associated oil cup, also the oil cup at the other end of the motor shaft. Keeping them full saves burnouts.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON BLOWERS

(Continued from Page 15)

May I reiterate, if you are not experienced in taking motors apart, either get a group of husky enthusiasts and move the motor intact to the repair shop or have a repairman take over the whole job. Before moving the motor, open the connection box on the side of the motor, unwind the insulating tape, mark the wires with tags, and unfasten them (do not cut them). If the motor has sleeve bearings, drain the oil. Be careful not to get oil on the motor's windings or on brushes (if any). Unfasten the motor from its mounting and move it to the floor, keeping the washers and spacers under each foot of the motor separate so they can be put back in the same positions. Lifting a motor requires at least two strong people, with a third person to keep track of the spacers, washers, nuts and bolts. Motors are heavier than they look, and by all means keep your back straight when lifting one! Otherwise, you can injure your back seriously. Do not lift from the end of the long motor shaft because, like your back, it may bend. Grab the shaft near the motor.

6. When work has been completed, remount the motor and reassemble the blower in reverse order of the way it came apart. Be sure to follow the instructions marked on the blower, such as "Align 'V' mark on fan with line on motor shaft," and "Be sure rotation is in this direction." Each fan wheel must be placed in the center of the space provided for it, so set the separating partition first, then the fan. Before applying power to the reassembled blower make certain that everything is free by turning the motor shaft a few rounds by hand.

The ideal time to change bearings is when the blower is dismantled for moving. And remember—blowers should

never be reassembled with worn bearings.

Now that your blower is purring smoothly, remove and bury those filthy clothes! Better yet—burn them. Happy motoring!

—Chris, Manitowoc, Wisc.

An Organist Speaks . . .

(Continued from Page 14)

GREAT

("SOLO" on a two manual organ)
Add Great to Great 16' and 4' couplers.

Add Tibia unification at 5-1/2', 2-2/3', 2', and 1-3/5'. It is also advisable, if possible, to have other high end unification (flute, String, Diapason) for ensemble brilliance.

Eliminate Bourdon 16' Orch Bells - Sleight Bells and group Strings and Celestes on one tablet for each pitch at which they appear to make room for all 8' voices and the addition of these 16' voices as they apply: Eng. Posthorn 16', Trumpet 16', Tuba 16', Clarinet 16', Sax 16', Tibia 16', Vox 16'.

GREAT SECOND TOUCH

Eliminate all but English Posthorn 16' and 8' on a two manual organ. If Posthorn is not available then Trumpet 16' and 8' may be substituted.

Add Solo to Great 16' and Solo to Great 8' 2nd Touch Couplers to a three manual organ.

SOLO (3-manual organ)

Add 16' and 4' Solo to Solo Couplers.

Add Solo to Great 16' and Solo to Great 8' Couplers.

Add Vox 8' to Solo.

Add Tibia at 2-2/3' and 2' to Solo.

Add String Ensemble 8' (one tab to play all strings)

Eliminate all 16' stops (except Tibia) if necessary, to facilitate the above changes.

These changes will certainly add brightness, variety and ease of playing to your installation. They put the voices where they are needed by eliminating misplaced ones originally put there by "format" or the need to fill a stop rail.

The process isn't easy. It requires additional switches but the emergence of electronic switching has cut costs in that department.

The best time to perform the operation is before the installation when it's much easier to arouse the gumption to re-arrange the stop rail than after the organ is playing and such an operation would mean a shutdown.

But whenever it's done, the results are well worth the effort.

For further information about the John Seng Wurlitzer-style concert organ, see the BOMBARDE, volume II, No. 4 (Fall 1965).