

# Theatre Organ

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

JULY / AUGUST 1998



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**GEORGE WRIGHT**  
**1920 - 1998**

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# GEORGE WRIGHT

... at the Rialto Theatre



Lyn Larsen, Peg Nielsen and George,  
Los Angeles, 1968 (Lew Williams photo)



*Photos at left:*

... George at the  
Denver Organ Grinder

(Dan Bellomy Collection)



Eddie Dunstedter and George.

(Lew Williams Collection)



IN LOVING MEMORY  
**GEORGE WRIGHT**

August 28, 1920 - May 10, 1998



George Wright and Ron Wehmeier, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1980.

*“George played a concert on my then 3/19 Wurlitzer.  
My idol became my friend to the end.”*

*(This tribute generously paid for by Ron Wehmeier)*

*“George Wright was not just an organist. He was a musician first.”*

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JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN

JULY / AUGUST 1998 VOLUME 40, NUMBER 4

PRESIDENT: HARRY HETH  
EDITOR: THOMAS L. DeLAY  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY: MICHAEL FELLEZZER



Paramount Theatre's 3/12 Style Balaban 1A Wurlitzer in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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## President's Message



As I write this, I am counting the days until the beginning of the '98 Annual ATOS Convention in San Francisco. Nor-Cal has worked for many months in preparation for this event.

Lately, on the Internet, there has been much discussion on the problems of getting a good turnout at theatre organ concerts. There is much hand wringing and very little in the way of constructive thought. The successes seem to be mostly when the local media is involved in the promotion of the event, not as a recital (gasp), but as a musical experience.

John Ledwon is heading up the committee on Public Relations and I'm sure he would welcome your input on what it takes to "fill the house." Let John know how you do it.

Communication between Chapters also can be a very positive thing. If you learn of an event in a neighboring area, make an effort to attend. While you are there, meet with the people in charge, pick their brains, and learn how they do it.

Another problem that comes up, time after time, is the scheduling of events on the same date and time by neighboring

chapters. This is quite a problem when dealing with the availability of venues and artists, but you need to make a serious effort to learn what else is going on and adjust your dates so that all may attend rather than spreading the potential audience among various venues.

I hope we can establish a clearing house for dates so that there is only one place to go for available date information. This will work only if everyone provides input for every scheduled event and makes appropriate inquiries when setting up a program. The dates and locations of the scheduled Annual and Regional Conventions are listed in the ATOS *International News* so this can be your first stop for information. Scheduling a chapter event during a convention prevents your hard working people from attending the ATOS gathering.

The Annual and Regional Conventions are a great place to network and become informed as to what is going on in the wonderful world of theatre organ.

Hope to see you in Cedar Rapids in October.

*Harry Heth*



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Interior of the 2,000-seat Paramount Theatre for the Performing Arts (originally the Capitol Theatre), Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Opening in mid-1928, the house was designed by architects Peacock & Frank. This theatre still houses its original Balaban 1A Wurlitzer, Opus 1907.

Photo by George Henry

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**EDITOR** **Thomas L. DeLay**  
P.O. Box 3929  
Pinedale, CA 93650  
209/431-4305 • Fax 209/431-0604  
e-mail: tdelaycalifornia@worldnet.att.net

**PRESIDENT** **Harry Heth**  
1247 Peden / Houston, TX 77006-1130  
713/527-8096 • Fax 713/527-9182  
e-mail: tibvox@aol.com

**VICE-PRESIDENT** **Robert Maney**  
229 Ellen Avenue  
State College, PA 16801-6306  
814/238-2022 • Fax 814/238-4034  
e-mail: rlm1@psu.edu

**SECRETARY** **Jack Moelmann**  
P.O. Box 25165  
Scott AFB, IL 62225-0165  
618/632-8455 • Fax 618/632-8456  
e-mail: rjgp84a@prodigy.com

**TREASURER** **Alden Stockebrand**  
2030 E. Lafayette Place  
Milwaukee, WI 53202-1370  
414/224-6442 • Fax 414/224-9406

**ADVERTISING** **Alva James**  
5765 S.W. River Lane  
Hillsboro, OR 97123-9122  
503/848-0677 • Fax 503/848-3691  
e-mail: daJames@aol.com

**ATOS SPECIAL SERVICES** **Vernon P. Bickel**  
785 Palomino Court  
San Marcos, CA 92069-2102  
760/471-6194 • Fax 760/471-6194(\*51)

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY** **Michael Fellenzer**  
P.O. Box 551081  
Indianapolis, IN 46205-5581  
317/251-6441 • Fax 317/251-6443  
e-mail: fellenzer@in.net

## Journal Staff

**EDITOR** **Thomas L. DeLay**  
**ASSISTANT EDITOR** **Donna Parker**  
**EDITOR EMERITUS** **George F. Thompson**  
**EDITOR EMERITUS** **Robert Gilbert**  
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Allen Miller  
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Dorothy Van Steenkiste  
Jeff Weiler

**CORPORATE OFFICE**  
American Theatre Organ Society, Inc.  
5 Third Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103-3200

**DESIGN & TYPESETTING**  
Stanley LeMaster Typesetting

**PRINTING & MAILING**  
Times Litho

## ATOS COMMITTEES & CHAIRPERSONS

**AGO LIAISON & AWARDS & RECOGNITION**  
Donna Parker  
P.O. Box 6103 / Aloha, OR 97007-0106  
503/642-7009 • Fax 503/848-6607  
e-mail: donnaparker@webtv.net

**ARCHIVES/LIBRARY**  
Joe Moffatt  
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e-mail: jjmbc@worldnet.att.net

**BYLAWS**  
Robert Maney  
229 Ellen Avenue / State College, PA 16801-6306  
814/238-2022 • Fax 814/238-4034  
e-mail: rlm1@psu.edu

**CHAPTER RELATIONS**  
Doris Erbe  
4942 Hummelsheim Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63123-4711  
314/481-1840 • Fax 314/481-5885

**CONVENTION PLANNING (through 1999)**  
Tim Needler  
5440 N. Meridian Street / Indianapolis, IN 46208-2656  
317/255-8056 • Fax 317/257-7031  
e-mail: tneedler@in.net

**CONVENTION PLANNING (beginning in 1999)**  
Mike Kinerk  
2655 Pine Tree Drive / Miami Beach, FL 33140  
305/532-9000 • Fax 305/376-3679  
e-mail: mkinerk@herald.com

**EDUCATION**  
Jeff Weiler  
15 Peachtree Lane / Wichita, KS 67207-1023  
316/684-5411 • Fax 316/684-5423  
e-mail: gaumont@aol.com

**ENDOWMENT FUND**  
Vernon P. Bickel  
785 Palomino Court / San Marcos, CA 92069-2102  
760/471-6194 • Fax 760/471-6194 (\*51)

**INNER-CITY YOUTH PROGRAM**  
Dorothy Van Steenkiste  
9270 Reeck Road / Allen Park, MI 48101-1461  
313/383-0133 • FAX 313/383-1875

**NOMINATIONS**  
Connie Purkey  
564 E. 4050 S. #9J / Salt Lake City, UT 84107  
801/265-9794 • e-mail: purkeygal@aol.com

**ORGANIST COMPETITIONS/SCHOLARSHIPS**  
Dorothy Van Steenkiste  
9270 Reeck Road / Allen Park, MI 48101-1461  
313/383-0133 • Fax 313/383-1875

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**  
John Ledwon  
28933 Wagon Road / Agoura, CA 91301  
818/889-8894 • Fax 818/707-3808  
e-mail: jblprod@westworld.com

**PUBLICATIONS REVIEW**  
Alden Stockebrand  
2030 E. Lafayette Place / Milwaukee, WI 53202-1370  
414/224-6442 • Fax 414/224-9406

**RESTORATION & PRESERVATION**  
Allen Miller  
167 Carriage Drive / Glastonbury, CT 06033-3231  
860/633-5710 • Fax 860/633-7230  
e-mail: ztronics@tiac.net

**TECHNICAL**  
Brant Duddy  
P.O. Box 179 / Cedars, PA 19423-0179  
610/584-4035

**THEATRE ORGAN INTEREST GROUPS**  
**THEATRE PIPE ORGANS**  
Al Seif  
156 San Luis Way / Novato, CA 94945-1715  
Voice/Fax 415/897-9148  
e-mail: pipeorgn@aol.com

**ELECTRONIC ORGANS & YTOE LIAISON**  
Jack Moelmann  
P.O. Box 25165 / Scott AFB, IL 62225-0165  
618/632-8455 • Fax 618/632-8456  
e-mail: rjgp84a@prodigy.com

**COMPUTER NETWORKS**  
David Kelzenberg  
2801 Highway 6 East, #344 / Iowa City, IA 52240-2629  
319/351-3926 • Fax 319/335-1366  
e-mail: kelzenberg.david@mcleodusa.net

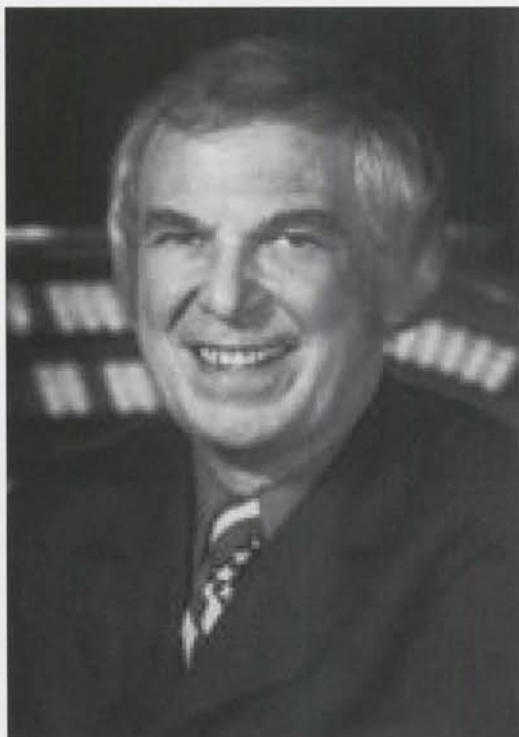
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# GEORGE WRIGHT

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## THE MAN AND THE MUSIC

*Dedicated to Mr. George Wright,  
one of the most gifted musicians of the Twentieth Century.*

You cannot separate the music from the man.

A master of the keys,  
Expressing the emotion of a song  
While it plays within his soul.

Dramatic notes or gentle tones,  
Witty or whimsical phrasing,  
Arranged with gifted artistry.  
Portrayed with truthful expression.

You cannot separate the music from the man.  
The music is the man.

*Marie Cutshall, May 1998*

■ In reflecting on the life and career of George Wright, it is fascinating to draw a parallel with the work of Frank Sinatra, who followed him in death by only four days. Both were stylists in their own fields who drew upon previous influences and added new ones. Sinatra, a vocalist, adopted an instrumentalist's approach to his singing by emulating the long phrasing and breath control of Tommy Dorsey's trombone playing. George Wright, an instrumentalist, adopted the approach of a vocalist in his organ playing as had his predecessor, Jesse Crawford. They were fortunate enough to be musicians during the Golden Age of American popular music, and both made tremendous impressions on the public while performing at New York's Paramount Theatre during the 1940s, once even appearing on the same bill. They had mercurial temperaments and did not suffer fools gladly, but could be very supportive and generous to others. And after them, nothing would ever be the same in the way that singers and organists thought about their crafts.

But it is George Wright that we are concerned with here. What was it in his playing that reached out and gripped his listeners as no other organist's ever had? The usual requisites come to mind: technique,

musicianship, and experience gained over many years of working in every conceivable setting, but it was his ability to adapt musical traits from other mediums and turn them into something uniquely his own. One only had to hear a few notes to be able to identify George Wright. Like Glenn Miller's style, it was recognizable and accessible. There was never more going on than the ear could easily follow and appreciate, and he never resorted to sheer technical "athleticism" at the expense of the music.

Another hallmark of a Wright performance was his rhythmic vitality and sparkle. How many people know that George would sometimes spontaneously break into a dance step, usually the Charleston? Having once seen him do this in a Portland crosswalk and during a performance of the *Widor Toccata(!)*, it's easy to see how the free-for-all swing of a tune like "Nagasaki" would come so naturally to him.

George probably worked with every major figure in popular music during his lifetime, and seemed to take it as a matter of course. A major figure himself, he was not overly impressed by the performers around him, particularly those with overblown egos. His musical education

was gained in the public eye, real time, in the orchestra pits, and radio studios of the period, an education no longer available to most performing artists.

It is primarily for his recording that we know him now. In the 1950s and 1960s he had the preeminent name among theatre organists, notwithstanding the scores of others recording at the time. He once said that the greatest compliment he ever received was from a recording engineer working for the HiFi label. During a break, the engineer came up to him and said, "You know, I don't like the organ and I don't like organ music ... But I like it when you play it."

George was a remarkable recording artist. How many of us were first introduced to the best of American pop music through his albums? *Jalousie, Slaughter on 10th Avenue, Love for Sale, Showboat* ... the list is endless. If any one trait comes to mind in his recorded work, it would have to be spontaneity. The listener never got the feeling that a piece had been rehearsed endlessly; it occurred "in the moment." George himself related that he would prefer to leave a "fluff" in a recording that was alive and spontaneous rather than have a perfect, yet "sterile," version take its place.



As the years passed, a new generation of organists began to appear, organists who had been George's musical children, so to speak, who had all of his recordings and were steeped in his style and approach. He was mildly annoyed at this; not that he was being copied, but that they had not innovated and assimilated into their own styles as he had done. In previous times, Liszt and Horowitz had their own followers in much the same circumstance, and England's Reginald Dixon, of Tower Ballroom fame, had a slew of admirers. What was the reason this was happening? Perhaps it was because that when George played a tune, it was just so effective and (here's that word) *right*, it would be hard to conceive of it any other way. He always seemed to find just the right sound for any given passage of music.

When I remember George Wright the man, I have to be thankful to him for his kindness and encouragement through the years. As a star-struck 15-year-old, I was able to play for him, and he asked me to "do him a favor" by taking piano lessons. No sounder advice was ever more gratefully accepted. When, some years later, I had decided to look outside of music for steady employment and made the decision to stop playing, George heard of this and was concerned enough to phone me, assuring me that he would approve of my decision no matter what. (I'm still at it, by the way). More recently, I would sometimes receive a nice note from him after I'd played a concert somewhere, saying that he'd heard "good things" about it. I will always cherish these kindnesses.

Now he has gone. At the conclusion of his 1984 workshop at Colorado State University, he bid everyone a fond farewell with the words, "Play better!" Well, now we'll have to. *Lew Williams*

■ Learning of George Wright's brief illness and death has once again led to extensive reflection concerning how his music has affected my forty-four year career. Although our close friendship struck an ego-laden iceberg many years ago, I could not deny that more than half of my activities were carried on his "Diaphonic Wing of Song." Walk with me as we wipe away the dusty cobwebs of the theatre organ past for an insight to George during his later activities at the San Francisco Fox and Paramount theatres.

The first midnight concert at the Fox Theatre drew a full house of nearly 4,700 people. As the console rose slowly out of the pit with his album arrangement of "There's No Business Like Show Business" the sound of the organ was far from what



*George Wright and Dan Bellomy, late 1960s. (Dan Bellomy Collection)*

the audience had heard on the recorded version. The full house absorbed so much of the upper work; the beautiful ensemble seemed very distant and the organ was further crippled by windchest problems. The dedicated volunteer help was not able to correct important dead notes through-out the manual chests.

Following the first concert, George Wright requested that his devoted friend and organ man, Paul Schoenstein, undertake the pre-concert work at the San Francisco Fox Theatre. Paul had taken care of the Fox Wurlitzer for George in the 1940s and now felt he needed the assistance of a younger helper. As a former apprentice, I was pleased to be asked to join him at the Fox. Tom Hazleton, who was the new staff organist at the San Francisco Paramount, proved to be an excellent key holder. After several nights work replacing magnets, re-leathering critical notes and extensive tuning, the organ was ready for George's rehearsal. It was also decided that the organ should be helped with low-level amplification, by placing microphones outside of the chambers and feeding the signal through the three Voice of the Theatre stations on the stage. The work was undertaken by Bill Larken, the theatre's RCA Photophone engineer. The level was so low that the only give away was the old upright piano, located outside of the Main chamber. With the mike pick-up, it sounded like a grand.

Most of the rehearsals at the Fox and Paramount were delightful sessions that began at midnight and lasted well into the dawn, or until the six-packs ran out. George Wright did not work out set arrangements for the up-coming concert;

he just played tunes as they came to mind and listened to the marriage between the organ and the house. On more than one occasion, he asked young Tom Hazleton to "play the box," so he could check the balances out in the auditorium.

All of the midnight concerts sold out and for good reason. George Wright's "off the top" arrangements kept you on the edge of your seat. Unlike most other organists, he was able to take great chances during the creation of an arrangement. He could go way out on the limb and the branches kept breaking, but just at the last second he was able to scamper back to the trunk. His personality and music held the audiences captive throughout the two hour events. His profound respect for the composer and ingestion of the lyrics allowed the tune to soar from the console and blossom throughout the house.

After the second concert at the Fox, George asked me to meet him at the theatre later that morning to help him load his Howard seat into his automobile. After loading the iron, we had a three-hour breakfast at the old Whitcome Hotel, where he shared many thoughts about the music business and his career. To my surprise, he felt some regret that he had not become more active in the classical organ world. I believe this was in part due to his respect for Richard Purvis, the famed organist/composer at Grace Cathedral. In his youth, Dick Purvis played a weekly theatre organ program from the Chapel of the Chimes. During this last San Francisco Paramount concert, George dedicated and played Purvis' old radio theme "I'll Take An Option On You." I believe that George



knew in his heart that he could have never achieved the freedom of expressing his musical soul within the boundaries established by the hide-bound traditions of the classical organ world.

George Wright's right hand was the greatest keyboard vocalist of all time and his deft left hand was the best of John Scott Trotter or Nelson Riddle. We are fortunate that Banda will continue to release George's classic recordings. Thank you George for the Electro-Pneumatic Bloom of Your Music. *Edward Millington Stout*



*George at the State Theatre, Kilburn.*

*(John Sharp photo)*

■ Without George Wright, you might not be reading this magazine. While standing apart from "organized" theatre organ, he was its principal catalyst. Without his recordings from the 1950s, I don't think the theatre organ revival would have been as strong or have lasted as long. True, there were many theatre organ records out there then, but his were somehow different: George's exuberant and precise playing, coupled with the HiFi label's pumped-up audio, engaged many new ears and made the theatre organ sound like more than a cobwebby relic from the musty past. No one could spend very much time in a hi-fi store without hearing one and maybe wanting to take a copy home. Any bug that goes around will always bite a few, and I'm sure more theatre organ enthusiasts were created by George Wright than by anybody or anything else.

I speak from experience: growing up in the movie theatre business, I knew vaguely about theatre organs like I knew about, say, projectors, but not until hearing George's records on a local FM station and attending the midnight San Francisco Fox concert the station was promoting did I really care. Theatre history came alive for me that night, and I owe what I do today mainly to George Wright.

Just as George Wright was not "the next Jesse Crawford," nobody will ever be the "next George Wright." He came from an era when theatre organ, in theatres, on records and on the radio, was a part of the entertainment scene, and those days are long gone. The organists who have followed him all draw from what he did, and always will, but they play mostly for a select audience and will never be able to do what he did. George Wright is unique, essential, and irreplaceable.

*Steve Levin, Editor, Marquee*

■ I think back to the night I won the door prize at the local Hammond Organ Society when I was nine years old. It was a copy of an album called "The Wright Touch" by George Wright. I took the album home and played it several times straight through before tuning off the stereo. I was mesmerized by that sound — the sound of a wonderfully done theatre pipe organ with an absolute master at the console. It was my first exposure to theatre organ and I personally believe it to have been the major factor in my choosing the theatre organ as my ultimate form of musical expression.

Through these years, I have managed to meet George — make friends with him — argue musical points with him — and consistently be inspired by him. Although not close in the past few years, George was my friend and my mentor. Every time I spoke to him, I hung up the phone and went straight to the organ; something in the conversation had sparked a new musical point.

George was a true original. Yes, he loved and made use of many "tricks" of the late Jesse Crawford, but, he never failed to make the musical presentation all his own before it was over with. He made you feel the emotion of the music. He used whatever instrument he was playing at the time to convey every last tear-filled ballad, every last joy-filled novelty tune, every last ounce of excitement of that Broadway show medley — HIS way — a "way" which was just another example of his love for the music and the instrument.

Just like most theatre organ artists of my generation, I went through my period of wanting to play note for note George Wright arrangements — and I didn't do a bad job it — or so he told me one time in my hometown Hammond dealership. Years after that, he also told me that he was very proud of the fact that I had managed to discover my own style and use for the instrument rather than relying on another's inventiveness. THAT was a turning point, for me and my music, again through the courtesy of George Wright.

George was continually a musical inspiration in many, many ways and his recordings will allow him to continue that inspiration for not only myself, but all other people who choose to open their minds and ears to this wonderful instrument that George introduced to so many. I would like to think that many of my present day colleagues would be willing to also admit that their own music is probably better for the fact that they had the opportunity to listen to and know George. So many people in general seem to not be willing to admit what is so obviously true when you hear them play. I am proud to say that I loved the man's music and that it had its lasting effect on my own work. I, along with many of my colleges, will continue to use those registrations that are so very familiar to theatre organ folks — and one of these days we will ALL be able to thank George for allowing us to borrow bits and pieces of his genius to incorporate into our own style.

I owe George so very much — for his inspiration, friendship, and belief in my own worth as a musician. As he said in an out-take, "the session is over, let's go home." George is home. He is at peace. He knows we are all thinking about him today — I just know it. He's probably also enjoying a libation of some sort with Jesse Crawford and Eddie Dunstetter and that thought makes me smile.

We shall forever remember you George — we shall forever be thankful for your enrichment of our lives — musically and personally.

*Dan Bellomy*

■ The musical creativity and output of George Wright is certainly enormous, unequaled, and probably well known by anyone who has ever had even a passing interest in the theatre organ. George was also an extremely interesting, multi-faceted, and highly unique person away from the more usual setting of an organ console and a theatre.

While George was the organist and music director for St. Mary's Catholic Church in Whittier, California, he produced and conducted a full presentation of the "Requiem" by Fauré, as well as presenting memorable Christmas Eve services for a number of years. He improvised and performed the background music for the soap opera "General Hospital" five days a week, all through the 1960s. He had a great love and knowledge of art, architecture, flowers, theatre, and fine food. His understanding of the technical inner working of the theatre pipe organ began while he was in high school, and he continued striving throughout his entire life to constantly improve and refine a sound which



he regarded as his "ideal" theatre organ ensemble.

George was also involved with, and supportive of a number of charitable causes; true to his very private nature, these were never the subject of any conversation. He preferred to just help out here or there as anonymously as possible.

George Wright leaves a wonderful musical legacy that will never grow old, and will never be equaled. He also leaves a large empty spot in my heart. *Lyn Larsen*

■ George Wright is in all our thoughts these days. Organists will say how much his musical style influenced their own. Listeners will say how much they loved his music. Those who heard him in live performance will say how audience friendly and how relaxed at the console he was. To all of the above I would like to take note of his knowledge of pipe organ technology and especially his absolutely wicked, not politically-correct sense of humor.

At the home of the late Bob and Ruth Carson, during a Los Angeles ATOS convention, I had the audacity to try my hand at the console in the company of George and a who's who of theatre organ luminaries. After thoroughly murdering "The Impossible Dream" as only one who can't count can do, George proudly announced to all that I should stick to building theatre organs and forget playing them. It was a light-hearted moment, but I did heed his advice.

Local theatre organ people used to call me "high pressure Hedberg" because I raised wind pressures on the Oriental Theatre's 3/13 Wurlitzer. In particular, elevating its 10" English Post Horn to 25"! I wanted it to blast out like the San Francisco Fox. How dare I change what Wurlitzer ordained! For the most part, George publicly endorsed what I did because it made musical sense. To George, if the sound was right, he could make music. Ultimately it was the music that mattered most. George's ear for tonal balance was just as keen as his perfect pitch.

One error that he did point out to me was that I would never achieve a sexy, breathy Tibia by raising its wind pressure. The secret was to lower its pressure and then ream the hell out of the toe holes. He was right. He was always right. George was equally at home in the chamber as he

was at the console.

For all his keyboard prowess, George was a generous man. After the Oriental Theatre closed and before the Organ Grinder was built, a friend and I reopened a local neighborhood theatre. That was where I had hoped to install the Oriental's Wurlitzer. Rodgers Organ Co. built a twin to Bob Powers famous Style 260 copy. Before Rodgers delivered the organ, I installed it in my theatre and George played a beautiful concert on it just before Christmas, 1971. After the performance, he said something like, "This concert is my Christmas present to you. I waive my fee. Reimburse me for my airfare and you keep the rest. I hope it will help you install the Oriental here." WOW!

We knew George Wright as perhaps the greatest theatre organist of all time. I feel blessed that I knew him as a wonderful human being. He will always be with me.

*Dennis Hedberg*



*George at the Auditorium Theatre, Rochester, New York, circa 1971*

■ When the news reached our household the evening of May 10, the caller sounded tense. It was clear that something tragic was about to be revealed. Then, after a nervous pause came three stunning words: "George Wright Died." Although we all know it had to happen someday, it still doesn't seem possible. An enormous talent has passed into history and the theatre organ world will not be the same without him.

My first exposure to his work was as a 10-year-old boy in the 1960s when most theatre organ music was very average intermission-style fare. The George Wright

sound with its abundance of contrasts, vivid combinations and spectacular arrangements, immediately made me an avid lifetime fan. He almost single-handedly revived the theatre pipe organ with an imaginative approach that totally eclipsed everything else in the realm of popular pipe organ music. George was, by far, the most influential artist of the genre: to this day, the unmistakable stamp of his overall approach to playing can be heard in the work of almost every theatre organist of the past forty years. One can only imagine what would have become of the theatre organ, or what level of quality the playing would have reached without George Wright.

It was a privilege to have known him personally. This acquaintance was struck in 1979 after I had expressed my appreciation when he was named "Theatre Organist of the Year" by the ATOS. This was in the form of a letter to the editor of the THEATRE ORGAN. In response, George took the time to call me at home, and the resulting conversation lasted more than a half-hour. In some ways, he was a father figure of sorts, and he occasionally gave both advice and encouragement. Few people are aware of how generous he could be to individuals, once he knew that someone was on the level, with no hidden motives. I have heard of numerous instances of his acts of kindness, in some cases, involving charity. My own family was the astonished recipient on more than one occasion. He was very quiet about this sort of reaching out and never made a show of it. One project we discussed over a period of several years was his biography. An outline had been prepared, but sadly, it was never written. However,

one thing he left behind is a vast body of recordings; over fifty albums from a brilliant career that spanned more than half a century. They stand as shining examples of what can be done on an instrument that is not easy to play. The best of these recordings are pure musical gold.

Although it is sad that George Wright has left us, he did live a long, full life marked by outstanding accomplishments, and these achievements will never be forgotten by the theatre organ community. We have seen several theatre organ giants fall in the past few years, but this time, THE giant has fallen. *Ron Musselman*



■ With the passing of the “Living Legend of the Theatre Organ,” a significant — perhaps the significant — chapter in the history of the theatre pipe organ and its music has drawn to a close. Imitated by many, equaled by none, he was indeed a legendary figure, whose profound and far-reaching influence on current perceptions of what constitutes good theatre organ music cannot be overstated. He redefined the standards by which performances in this genre are judged, creating a new quality scale on which he immediately assumed (and, in the minds of most, retained) the top position.

When is HiFi label albums first hit the shops in the 1950s, people who bought them fell broadly into two categories: those who already loved the sound of the theatre organ, remembering it fondly from the so-called “golden days,” and a large proportion who had no idea what a Mighty Wurlitzer was. Reactions from both groups were the same: they were stunned by the confidence, the vitality, the passion and sheer excitement of the playing, and thrilled by the sound. They had never heard anything like it before, and they wanted more. Several of those albums sold more than a million copies. Overnight, Americans began to take a renewed interest in the fine old instruments which were lying forgotten in faded movie palaces across the country. The renaissance of the theatre organ had begun.

Right to the end, George Wright was an innovator. He never lost the ability, common to all great artists, to re-invent himself: to present a familiar tune in a new and interesting light. The Wright style was highly personal and immediately recognizable. To some extent, his ballads recalled the sugary recorded confections of his idol Jesse Crawford, but his up-tempo numbers were ripped off with a sassy, swingy, cock-sure bravura that reminds this listener of the Nelson Riddle orchestra on Frank Sinatra’s Capitol label albums. It was an intoxicating combination.

Another mixture he got just right was the critical one between pathos and comedy. NO organist could wrest more feeling from a ballad; listening again to his classic recordings of songs by Richard Rodgers and George Gershwin, there are times when the very soul of the organ seems to be singing. On the other hand, George’s sense of fun — the ability to share a musical joke at his own or the organ’s expense — added a wonderful feeling of never being quite sure what was going to happen next. To paraphrase one of his album titles: *It was All Wright*.

Someone once said that “George



George during the building of the Pasadena Studio organ (Banda photo)  
At right: George at the Gaumont State, Kilburn. (John Sharp photo)



Wright could make good music on a kazoo” — a theory which, fortunately, does not appear to have been put to the test! His career was blessed with some exceptionally fine instruments, from the early days at the New York Paramount and San Francisco Fox theatres, to the definitive recording organs he created at the Don Leslie studio in Pasadena and later at his home in North Hollywood. He knew exactly what he wanted to hear and possessed many of the technical skills required to achieve these singular effects. Nobody, but nobody, could make Tibia pipes sound the way he could. What did he do to them? We may never know, but we’re glad that he worked out the secret!

His innovative ideas on tremulant settings and the regulation of pipe-ranks, individually and in relation to each other, have become an industry benchmark, plainly audible in all the best instruments of today. Likewise his theories on theatre organ unification, which have not advanced materially since he drew up the stop list of the Pasadena studio organ in the early 1960s. These tonal developments were woven into some of the most colorful and sympathetic registrations ever employed on the theatre pipe organ, many of which are now part of the instrument’s standard vocabulary.

And now he’s gone. What of the future? His music will live on through old LPs, archive recordings and Terry Cutshall’s splendid Banda CD series, which includes welcome re-issues of earlier material. The fate of the “Hollywood Philharmonic Organ” is unknown, and one can only hope that it will be preserved intact, in a location where its manifold qualities and unique features can be enjoyed by a wide audience. Organists and organ technicians will continue to find the George Wright Sound a source of inspiration for their own artistic efforts.

Some may claim not to have been influ-

enced by him, but few have escaped wholly untouched, and even they cannot dismiss him. At this early stage, it is hard to imagine anyone else pushing back the boundaries of the art form as far, or in as many directions, as he did ... but we shall see.

Meanwhile, it is right that organists like the writer, who owe their interest in the theatre pipe organ largely to the pulse of excitement they felt upon hearing the music of George Wright for the first time, should take this opportunity to reflect on his legacy with affection and gratitude.

Thank you, George. *Simon Gledhill*

(Used with permission from Cinema Organ Society)

■ The passing of George Wright on May 10 left this old-timer sadly reminiscing. When I heard the news I thought again of old friends: Dick Leibert, Henry Murtagh, Jesse Crawford, Arthur Gutow, Milton Charles, and the host of fine players who departed this life. I wondered to what extent they still lived in our memories. George Wright was an icon; often the subject of imitation by young organists. I did not know George intimately. About ten years ago, I had sandwiches and coffee with him in a restaurant in Pontiac, Michigan. He was modest and friendly, with no trace of conceit or hubris. At the time of his death, he had just released a recording of a piece from Gustav Holst’s *The Planets*, a work that I have been struggling with for many years. As I knew George, he was a man of good reputation; a careful, diligent musician. With the approach of the 21st century, we could urge others to follow George in his choices of good music, both pops and classics. Who can forget his fine job on a dozen pieces from *My Fair Lady*? George had time for the “good stuff.” Let the rest of us follow his example. AVE ATQUE VALE, George.

*John Muri*





George at his Hammond X66.

At right: at the console of the Oakland Paramount's Mighty Wurlitzer. (Oakland Tribune photo)



in this octave. After helping me tune the octave, he immediately identified any note I keyed in this top octave of the one foot stop. What an ear! I had a little fun with George, for when I installed the top octave, I sneaked in a matching stop tablet engraved, "STOMPONETTE, ONE FOOT ONLY."

Then there was the STUDIO organ. It seemed George was always dissatisfied with recordings on the various organs, as the organ operating noises, acoustic environment, and pipe selection did not meet the excellence that he felt was required for recording. So, quite "Wrightfully," he decided the only way to have an organ which would satisfy him for recording was to build it from scratch. After quite a search, we found the proper building, he started to acquire pipes he particularly liked (some came from Europe), completely rebuilt the console, chests, etc., and after about two years we had an organ.

The organ turned out to sound exactly as he thought it should, so without any knowledge or experience in being in the record business, George recorded "Let George Do It" and we were in the record business using "Solo" as the label. As most are aware, we could not cope with the business methods then prevalent in the record business, and quickly gave up. Dot Records picked it up, so the organ effort was not wasted, as many wonderful records were made before a fire destroyed the organ.

It is so sad to lose George, and it is indeed unfortunate that he could not go on forever, providing us with his most inspiring and unusual music. *Don Leslie*

## ODE TO GEORGE WRIGHT

Open the Pearly Gates Lord,  
The Legend is coming through  
A little wider than usual please,  
there's a Wurlitzer coming, too.  
He used his talent well,  
he really did you proud.  
He used it to the fullest,  
and always pleased the crowd.  
A little child was born last night!  
Give him the talent too, "You Know!"  
the one you gave George Wright  
to shine above the few.  
He'll use it very wisely,  
and practice from the start,  
just the way George did,  
he played it from the heart.  
We are sad to loose the Legend  
with talent by the ton,  
but now The Song Has Ended,  
The Melody Lingers On.

*Maureen Cross, Bendigo Theatre Organ Society, Bendigo, Victoria, Australia*

■ "George Wright is accepting a limited number of pupils ... call ..." said the ad ten years ago. So we answered the ad, hardly believing not only that it was true, but that we would meet him ourselves; that would have been enough. Meet him we did, and he was friendly, personable, and quite willing to have us play for him. Play for him! Play for him? Does one go to Michelangelo and show him your sculpture? Or show your paintings to Rembrandt? How does one play the organ to audition for lessons from George Wright? Carefully ... very carefully. Next, we found ourselves taking lessons from him, first in a retail music store, and later at his home in the Hollywood Hills on his own Wurlitzer.

For several years, we had the blessing of his wisdom and experience, for two-hour sessions once or twice a month. Nothing could ever compare with this experience. He showed us how he did it, details of technique and mastery, secrets of registration and styling. Hours were spent trying to imitate his effortless portamento between opposite ends of the keyboard. He would say, "Just start here, with both hands, and go there, and hit every note along the way. Evenly, of course!" We kept watching in amazement.

In fact, he introduced us to one another, another gift. Both of us are cancer specialists — one from Los Angeles, the other from Cleveland. We often reflect on that fulfillment of the impossible dream ... to spend hours, and days, and months, and years trying to absorb everything he could show us. We wrote it all down. Now try to do it. Impossible!

At his concerts, he made stop changes between notes, so fast you could not see them. We watched this in person, still unbelieving. If a motion picture tried to capture this, likely it would be invisible, between the frames!

Above all, he was tolerant and kind to us mere mortals, and did his best to be helpful, constructive, and accepting. Once in a while, we would "get it," and he was appropriately enthusiastic. We are far better for having the experience of knowing George and having him watch over us during those years. Now we often say, with friends, "this is how George taught me to do that." The living legend continues.

*Malin Dollinger & Larry Kass*

■ As one of the multitude of George Wright fans, I had the fortunate experience of spending quite a bit of time with him over many years. George and I met in 1941 when he was a mere nineteen years old, at the Sherman Clay store in San Francisco. Even at that time, he was regarded as the most talented musician in the area. At this meeting, he heard and played the Hammond with my speaker, which led to the rather close association with my wife Carolyn and our family, lasting over a good part of our lives. In the old days, we would be honored to have George at many of our parties, at one, I was sitting on the piano bench while George was producing incredible things at the organ. During a lull, I accidentally bumped my elbow on the piano keyboard, depressing three adjacent keys, and within a hundredth of a second, George played the same three notes on the organ.

At one time, George was working with the Conn organ, preparing to make a record. He complained that the flute one foot pitch did not have the last octave. I made another octave of flute generators, and added it to the Conn, but it was so high in pitch that I was having trouble trying to tune it, and casually mentioned to George that it was so high that probably exact perfection would not be needed. He wouldn't stand for such an attitude and told me he could identify any notes played



*"George Wright picked his friends; you did not pick him."*



## GEORGE WILBUR WRIGHT

July 10, 1921, 11 months old

*The mere mention of the name of George Wright to anyone at all interested in theatre organ results in many exclamations of praise for this truly gifted artist. His recordings are "required listening" in every record collection. It is fitting that we here present his story — of a lad who dreamed of great adventures in the theatre organ world...*

George was born in Orland, California (about 150 miles north of San Francisco) on August 28, 1920.

"Certain of my older acquaintances may not be too far from wrong in suggesting that Mother was frightened by a Wurlitzer and that I was weaned on Jesse Crawford recordings. As a child I was enthralled by the magnificent variety of rumbles, roars, and shrieks emanating from the organ grilles in accompaniment to the action on the movie screen. I vividly recall Betty Compson, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Eleanor Boardman, and all the rest of the Roaring Twenties screen stars, but even more vividly I recall the theatre organ accompaniment. My mind was firmly made up — even at that tender age — that I should be an organist and show the world that I, too, could commit the aforementioned rumbles, roars, and shrieks. I would even aim for the highest of all peaks and someday perhaps be allowed to touch a finger gingerly to one of the instruments that God, in the person of Jesse Crawford, had played.

## GRANT UNION

"A few miles from Stockton, in North



*Grant Union High School, circa 1936.*

Sacramento, the Grant Union High School had just bought the organ from a theatre in Northern California and was about to have it installed in the school auditorium. The problem was to select an organist — preferably a student. The superintendent visited our home with the lucrative offer — paying me to attend his school and a free organ on which to practice. Outstanding athletes have been lured from one school to another, but to approach a music student! I literally jumped at the offer, packed my small suitcase, received the somewhat reluctant parental blessing and ventured forth into the wide, wide world to seek my fortune."

## SAN FRANCISCO DAYS

"I moved a bit further uptown in 1942 at the request of the National Broadcasting Company. What a job to land on a good Wurlitzer in good condition! This 3/19 job, which NBC purchased from Paramount Studios in Hollywood in 1941 for the outrageous sum of \$1100, was virtually a new organ — all brown skin leather, bakelite magnet caps and originally voiced and finished by the great genius, Jimmy Nuttall. It had been my privilege to express my thoughts about its installation when Paul Schoenstein and Charles Hershman were laying it out for the new NBC building, so it ended up exactly as I wanted it — nothing but pipes and rackboards and percussions in the actual chambers, with all the noise-making regulators, tremulants, and conductors in a sub-chamber. This was a typically fine Crawford-type of Wurlitzer that almost played itself when hands were placed on the manuals, and it was a plea-



sure to hear some real Wurlitzer sounds once again — Tibia, Krumet, Oboe Horn, Quintadena, Brass Trumpet and all the trademarks."

"No sooner had I caught my breath at NBC when the manager of the San Francisco Fox Theatre phoned to ask that I take over the community sings on the Saturday night midnight shows at his palace of passion and pleasure. My thoughts raced back to that opening night in 1929 — the voice of prophecy had spoken in the voice of the theatre manager. The deal was all set, but the organ proved to be a disappointment to me. Mrs. William Fox had caused several elaborate layers of golden draperies to be hung over the organ grilles in spite of the pleadings of the Wurlitzer installation men. The organ sounded like a mouse in a ball park. After one show, I was ready to throw in the towel, especially when the manager would not grant me permission to remove the draperies. An enterprising girl friend and colleague, June Melendy, allowed me to cry on her shoulder over the unhappy situation. Fortified with a suitable stimulating beverage, and a long, sharp butcher



*KNBC San Francisco, May 8, 1944. (Banda photos)*





San Francisco Fox, 1942.

San Francisco Fox, 1943.

George with mother, LuLu, S.F. Fox lobby, 1942.



San Francisco Fox, 1943. (Banda photos)

George at the San Francisco Fox lobby 3/12 Möller, 1943.

knife in hand, (acquired from June's mother,) we entered the theatre late that night, as partners in crime, cut the heavy ropes that supported the draperies. I must say that Miss Melendy, scaling the iron ladders leading up the walls of the building in high heels, huge picture hat and new mink coat presented a never-to-be-forgotten picture! The dastardly deed committed, and bedecked with about thirteen years of black dirt, dust, and dry rot covering us from head to toe, we truly looked like the Gold Dust Twins.

"The management could not but forgive us. The new sound of the organ was a revelation. The mouse in the ball park had emerged a giant, attuned to his surroundings. I can truthfully say that this is, by and large, the best theatre organ I have ever played. True, it has its faults and idiosyncrasies as does every organ, but this is the definitive theatre Wurlitzer.

Soon the Saturday midnight community sing was expanded to a four times daily schedule for Saturdays and Sundays, and the other five days a week followed in short order — by public demand, I'm happy and proud to say. June played on my day off, Wednesday, and occasionally we dragged out the second console and frightened the paying customers with duets."



June Melendy and George, San Francisco Fox 1963.

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NBC publicity still, 1947. (Banda photos)

## NEW YORK & BEYOND

"Happy days, those, but soon ended, for in November, 1944, I was called to New York to play a show for NBC. Naturally, as soon as I arrived in New York the sponsor decided to move his show to Hollywood. I stayed and stuck it out. There were many pleasant days in New York in radio — including guest appearances with Paul Whiteman, Percy Faith, Bing Crosby, Perry Como, my own little orchestra on the Robert Q. Lewis Show, and a wonderful seven-year association playing in a trio with Charles Magnante, accordionist, and Tony Mottola, guitarist, on a radio show sponsored by The Prudential Insurance Company. It took the strength of Gibraltar sometimes to put up with the singer on the show, but the musical good times with Charlie and Tony were more than rewarding.

"Came the Paramount Theatre and another childhood dream come true. Here was Crawford's famous organ — even his old dressing room — now presided over by the unbelieving dreamer. Yes, I pinched myself, but there wasn't much time for even pinching — what with sometimes six and seven shows a day to play at the theatre in addition to my radio activities. I really kept the pavement warm between NBC and the Paramount! Yellow Cab profits went up that year — as undoubtedly did those of Goodyear Rubber.

"Now that I think back, it's hard to draw too many New York details from my memory. Time passed so quickly, success came in the musical field, but hanging over it all was the ever present dislike of New York City and having to live there. Gad! Those icy, cold winters — those hot, humid summers. California beckoned once again, so here I am in Hollywood living a relaxed life once more and never once missing being tied down to a theatre schedule. One relaxed show a day for Don Lee Television allows me to keep my finger in the professional field and permits



New York Paramount, 1950.



Orchestral Chamber, New York Paramount, 1950.



November 15, 1957, Jack Bailey - "Queen For a Day" television program.



The Conn years, 1957 NAMM concert.

Below: ABC Television - "General Hospital," 1975.



me ample time for practice and planning new recording repertoire.

"Do I think the theatre organ as such will ever come back? Most definitely my answer must be negative. Where are the organs to play? Who will service and repair them? Who will play them? Does the public want to hear them? I don't think so. Quite a number of us have been lucky enough to acquire these instruments for home installations, but there, I think, it

ends. Perhaps recordings may stimulate a certain amount of new interest, but it just isn't in the cards for a medium such as television to get on the band wagon. Space requirements, installation, and service expense don't fit into the picture — with accent on the space requirements. Let's leave the theatre organ to the hobbyists ... and a wonderful hobby it is. I know — it's mine, too. And I wouldn't have missed a moment of it for the world."



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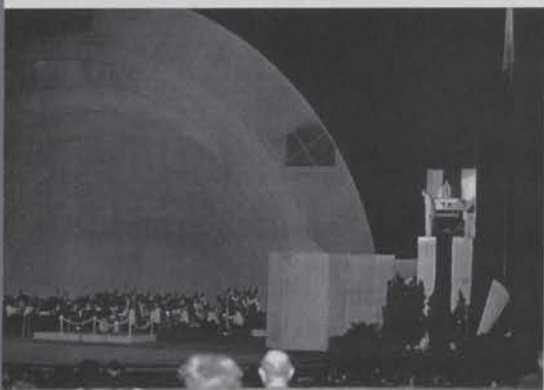
*Entertainment and superb music were a trademark of George Wright concerts ... as you would readily see and hear ...*



*George Wright chatting with Oregon Chapter members and guests after a concert in Portland.*

*George Wright's legacy of music will forever continue to be a source of pleasure and inspiration to us all.*

*Imitated by many, equalled by none, he was indeed a legendary figure.*



*Hollywood Bowl Concert. (Banda photo)*



*George Wright and Len Rawle prior to George's concert at the 4/16 Wurlitzer in Gaumont State Theatre, Kilburn.*

*(John Sharp photo)*

■■■  
*The complete article from which biographic excerpts were taken appears in THEATRE ORGAN, Vol. 33, No. 4, and THE TIBIA, Vol. 1, No. 2*



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## The ATOS Endowment Fund What Is It?

The ATOS Endowment Fund was established to financially assist theatre pipe organ projects and/or programs which will have a lasting impact on the preservation and/or presentation of the theatre pipe organ as an historically American instrument and musical art form. This includes projects and/or programs of particular historical or scholarly merit.

The ATOS Endowment Fund Resolution and Declaration of Trust is a legal document which clearly defines how the Endowment Fund will be administered. This document calls for an Endowment Fund Board of Trustees to administer the ATOS Endowment Fund. The Board of Trustees is responsible for: (a) providing Endowment Fund information to the membership, (b) the general administration and prudent management of fund assets, (c) fund raising activities to maintain and increase the fund, (d) establishing criteria for the review of grant and/or loan applications, and (e) receiving, reviewing and recommending action on grant and/or loan applications to the ATOS Board of Directors.

Upon approval from the ATOS Board of Directors, the Board of Trustees may distribute funds from

the Endowment Fund in the form of grants or loan for projects and/or programs which will have a lasting impact on the preservation and/or presentation of the theatre pipe organ, or for projects and/or programs of particular historical or scholarly merit. In no event and under no circumstances shall more than ninety percent of the accrued interest on the Endowment Fund principal be distributed for projects or programs. In no event and under no circumstances shall more than twenty-five percent of the principal be loaned for projects or programs. All loans must be secured by real property. A promissory note shall be drafted, establishing a reasonable interest rate and payment schedule.

It is important for ATOS members to understand that the more the Endowment Fund grows, the more ATOS can do financially to help preserve and present more theatre pipe organs around the country.

For information regarding the ATOS Endowment Fund, please contact Vern Bickel, 785 Palomino Court, San Marcos, CA 92069-2102, 760/471-6194.

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# Member's Forum

Dear Editor:

In the March/April issue of THE-ATRE ORGAN, the article about the former Rockefeller Center Theatre 4/34 Wurlitzer in New York City, brought back memories of an amusing incident that happened in 1965.

After spending a year restoring a little 3/8 Marr & Colton in the Garden Theatre in Greenfield, Massachusetts, Alan Straus and I, visited Jimmy Boyce at the America-On-Wheels roller skating rink in Alexandria, Virginia. The owner of the rink required that Jimmy would play the Wurlitzer theatre organ two hours a night and the Hammond for the other two hours. After listening to Jimmy play this magnificent pipe organ for the first two hours, he sat with us at the snack bar during his break. While discussing how much time and work is involved in restoring a theatre pipe organ, a woman came up to Jimmy and very indignantly wanted to know when Jimmy was going to play the "REAL" organ, instead of the Wurlitzer. That woman upset Jimmy so much, he told the manager of the rink that the Hammond was broken, and so he played the last two hours on the Wurlitzer instead of the Hammond. We cheered when Jimmy did that, and we got to hear two more hours of his excellent playing on that great instrument, that we wouldn't have heard.

Gene Bowers  
Norfolk, Massachusetts

Dear Editor:

Since hearing on Monday the sad news about the passing of a truly great musician, George Wright, an interesting coincidence came to mind.

Truly great artists are few and far between. There are many who are good, sometimes even excellent, but truly great, only a few.

George Wright's passing occurred exactly two years after the passing of

another truly great, Ethel Smith. Ethel died May 10, 1996 at age 86 in Palm Beach, Florida. George on May 10, 1998.

Both these personages were master technicians, great rhythmists, unique interpreters, imaginative in their registrations, endless in the variety of their performances, entertaining artists, and the very best in their field. Would the world know and appreciate as much as it does about the marvels of the theatre organ without George Wright. Would the Hammond organ ever have become such a marvel of entertainment without Ethel Smith?

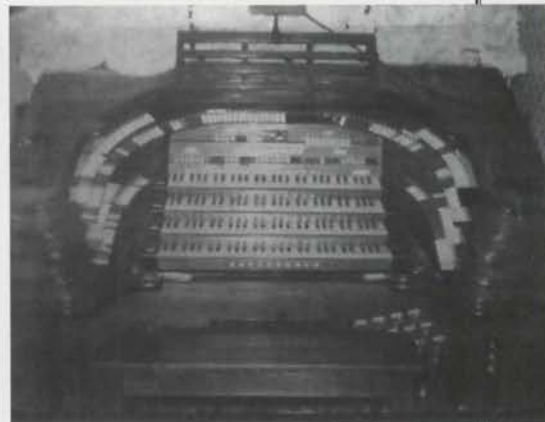
They did not enter the world at the same time, but each died on the same day in the month of May. We are surely the richer for them having crossed our paths and we are surely saddened by the reality of their passing. We have much for which we should be, and are grateful.

Yours truly,  
Joe Moffatt, Curator  
ATOS Library/Archives  
Editor, Newsletter: *The Museum of Hammond Organs*

Dear Editor:

What an enormous and pleasant surprise to receive my copy of THE-ATRE ORGAN today, and see the cover picture and accompanying article on the former Center Theatre organ! This unusual instrument and I crossed paths 37 years ago, and the following might be an interesting personal footnote to the fine article by Mr. Frey:

In 1961, I was attending Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, and made the acquaintance of a professor of speech, one Harry Bolich. In the course of my studies with Professor Bolich, the subject of my interest in theatre organs arose, and he informed me that he was a personal friend of a Dr. Warren C. Phillips, a renowned ophthalmologist and organ enthusiast in Harrisburg.



*4/34 Center Theatre Wurlitzer console, in the home of Dr. Warren C. Phillips, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (1961).*

He told me that Dr. Phillips owned a very large theatre pipe organ, and that, if I were to write him, I just might get to hear, see and/or play it.

I did write Dr. Phillips, and received not only an invitation to see the organ, but an offer to purchase it as well! The purchase price? An unreal \$4,500 cash! I only regret that I never kept that letter! However, I did go to his home with Professor Bolich, and saw the organ (it was unplayable at the time). Dr. Phillips was a most hospitable fellow, but both the organ and his home were up for sale, and, at that time, he had already relocated to Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. I could not believe that a (near) twin to the Radio City organ was there in front of me (see deteriorating Polaroid) and could be all mine for under \$5,000! I was speechless! The console was in pristine condition then. Not a scratch, and the keyboards glistened. Even the pedalboard looked brand new ... barely played at all. I could just hear this in my mother's home back in Freeport, Long Island. WOW! THEN ... came the visit to the basement! Another story. I had no idea what made all that music! Nor did I realize what was involved with a home installation of that magnitude. Needless to say, my parents didn't approve. NO WAY!

Thus, I had to decline Dr. Phillips' offer, but I was delighted to learn, some time later, that Jimmy (Boyce) did get the instrument. He later became a dear friend, and I supplied



him with all the detailed paperwork from the Wurlitzer Company as to the exact specs on the organ, its original installation, and even detailed notes made by the installers in 1932. I had seen the Center Theatre some years earlier while attending the television broadcast of the "Mr. Peepers Show," starring Wally Cox. At that time, the theatre was used for NBC TV shows. Further information came to me via my friendship with the late Dr. Parmentier, who played the Center Organ during his tenure with Radio City, etc. I believe he played for the Sonja Henie ice shows.

But, my biggest thrill came when Jimmy Boyce invited me to sit in as organist at the America On Wheels rink in Alexandria, Virginia, and on the Center organ. No expression at all, but it was a truly AWESOME experience. I couldn't thank Jimmy enough. I am so happy to see this much-neglected and rare instrument being up-graded and put to use ... finally. It's been a long trip! Thanks to you all for the story.

Most sincerely,  
Rodger L. Reiner

Dear Editor:

Thank you for printing my article. You can find out about Winders in Dave Junchen's encyclopedia in Vol. 2, page 729. They were originally based in Richmond, Virginia. The Eastern Theatre in Columbus, Ohio, was one of two theatre organs that they built. This organ was installed around 1915 and you are right, they used supply house pipes. The company organized and moved to Santa Monica, California, and opened shop as the Artcraft Organ Company, Vol. 1, page 31. They apparently did little if anything to improve their quality or lack thereof.

Around 1919, Möller replaced the organ with a duplexed two manual of about 15 ranks. In the late twenties, a local Columbus builder, James G. Bennet, again rebuilt the organ adding unification. By the time I bought it in the late 60s, only the Tibia, flute and a Horn Diapason remained. The other metal pipes were mostly gone. Someone had removed all the pipes on one side of the diatonic chests! There was a mixture of Winders, Möller, and supply house pipework in the chambers.

The flute and its chests and the shades were Winders, the Main chest was a Möller duplex straight of 10 ranks and a smaller 3 rank duplex and only two ranks were unit. I still have the Tibia and organ supply toy counter.

Your comment that some Mortons tuned the VIII flat is right on the money. This organ was originally also tuned flat. Clark and Brant after much discussion and trying it both ways, recommended that we tune both Celestes sharp. One is slow and the other is fast. I have to agree, after hearing it both ways, the sharp Celeste sound much better.

Sincerely,  
David Billmire, M.D.

*(Editor's Note: In the Billmire Robert Morton specification, the Tuba was not shown in the Right (Solo) Chamber list. Please consult the text for further information on the 16' Tuba.)*

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. Send to: Editor, THEATRE ORGAN, P.O. Box 3929, Pinedale, California 93650.

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# WIND ON THE PRAIRIE: PIPE ORGANS OF CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

by David C. Kelzenberg

Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Visions of tall waving fields of corn spring to mind; or, perhaps, Grant Wood's ubiquitous imagery—a certain farmer, standing next to his wife, pitchfork in hand, with that familiar farmhouse and its Gothic window in the background. To visitors, Cedar Rapids' historical role of breadbasket city is evident: Numerous grain milling, corn processing, and meat packing industries ring the center of city, with the giant Quaker Oats plant—the largest cereal mill in the world—holding place of honor right in the center of downtown. Blindfolded, it's easy to tell when you are in Cedar Rapids—all of these varied food production enterprises contribute their share to an unmistakable "ambience" which permeates the city; a friendly olfactory greeting which welcomes the prodigal Cedar Rapiidian back home.

But pipe organs? Of the many images this heartland city might bring to mind, good pipe organs would not likely to be at the top of the list. Now a well-kept secret is about to get out! For the very first time, Cedar Rapids will play host to the American Theatre Organ Society, as members are welcomed in October for the 1998 ATOS Regional Convention. ATOS members will see and hear marvelous instruments by Wurlitzer, Barton, and E.M. Skinner, all of which have been recognized as historically significant by the Organ Historical Society. They will also see opulent former movie palaces—theatres whose likes have all but vanished from most of our bigger cities.

1928 was a banner year for theatres in Cedar Rapids. A number of smaller theatres and vaudeville houses had existed in the city previously, but 1928 witnessed the construction and opening of two spectacular movie palaces in the heart of downtown Cedar Rapids. These theatres were built and



The Iowa Theatre's celebrated three-story, electrically illuminated ear of corn, clearly visible in this night shot from the mid-1940s. (Photo courtesy B'hend/Kaufmann Archives)

furnished in a grand style, the likes of which this city had never seen before. Both theatres boasted every modern convenience and accoutrement. Built at the end of the prosperous "Roaring 20s," and without the slightest premonition of the national disaster which loomed less than two years in the future, these theatres were designed to be elegant showplaces to rival what one saw in the biggest cities. No expenses were spared in equipping them with the latest in technology, fashion, and comfort. Their first audiences were treated to motion pictures, live stage shows, and music provided both by pit orchestras and pipe organs. Miraculously, both the Iowa and Capitol theatres—and the organs heard on their opening nights, survive to the present day. This is particularly fortuitous, as both of these instruments are unique examples of the theatre organ genre.

Beating the competition by some

three months, the Iowa Theatre was first to open its doors, on June 6, 1928. Standing on the corner of First Avenue and Third Street, this approximately 1,200-seat house boasted a prime location, and its connecting office building was prime downtown real estate. The Iowa was the brainchild of a somewhat shady promoter named Calvin Bard. If the rather fanciful prose of the opening night program is to be believed, Bard ran away from home at the age of ten to join the circus, where he became friendly with a certain drummer named Dan Barton. Bard and Barton went separate ways upon leaving the circus, but their continuing careers in the field of show business would intersect, as we shall see shortly, some 26 years later, in Cedar Rapids' beautiful Iowa Theatre.

One of the Iowa's most spectacular features was a giant electric sign in the shape of an ear of corn, three stories tall and set at a 45-degree angle at the



corner of the building. Illuminated by hundreds of colored light bulbs, it was clearly visible for many blocks along both First Avenue and Third Street. Ted Paulson, son of the Iowa Theatre's chief contractor O.F. Paulson, remembers from the theatre's earliest days a "flagpole sitter" who spent several weeks on a small platform above this sign, high above downtown Cedar Rapids. Unfortunately, this unique historical artifact no longer exists. It was removed and sold for salvage at a change of ownership, although it did survive into the 1970s.

The Iowa Theatre ushered in a new level of extravagance in entertainment to Cedar Rapids. That it would be outdone in almost every way in just three short months by its larger rival the Capitol Theatre in no way diminished the contribution which the Iowa made to the community. Also, as the giant ear of corn sign demonstrates, the slightly newer Capitol did not outdo the Iowa Theatre in every way.

The Iowa Theatre was lavishly decorated by hand. A special glitter paint was actually applied by blowing it through drinking straws, right onto wet plaster! However, its most amazing feature, for many, was its Golden Voice Barton Grande pipe organ. The Bartola Musical Instrument Company of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, makers of the Barton organ, were known for gaudiness of decoration on their consoles, and the bold, assertive quality of their organs' sound. The head of Bartola was none other than the old circus acquaintance of Calvin Bard, Dan Barton, who brought much of his circus "showmanship" into his organ building. For Cedar Rapids, Barton conceived the most spectacularly and gaudily decorated organ console Bartola was ever to produce. This

console was covered with a deep black velvet material, which was completely covered with small spiraled patterns of sparkling glitter. All console edges were trimmed with literally thousands of rhinestones, and two large diamond-shaped panels, imbedded with hundreds of rhinestones, were positioned on both sides of the fallboard above the manuals. Because

Barton felt particular pride in this instrument (even though remarkably, his firm did not actually build it!): According to the opening night program, Dan Barton was there in the Iowa Theatre's audience to witness its premier performance, with George Cervenka conducting the Iowa Theatre Concert Orchestra, and organist Don Pedro at the console. Also

according to the program, organist Pedro was "late of the Spanish king's court staff of musicians... (and) will bring to you some of the unusual novelties with which he has recently entertained Europe's royalty." Attempts to locate additional information about Don Pedro have proven fruitless; it is likely that both his name and his background were products of this age of show-business hype.

Decades later (in the 1960s), when Dan Barton, long out of the organ business by then, was located by a new generation of theatre organ enthusiasts, the Iowa Theatre instrument was one which he vividly remembered because of its spectacular and unusual decoration. But, its special console is not its only unique feature. It has a spectacular sound to match its spectacular decoration; a sound which, while fundamentally similar to the brassy, assertive Barton sound, has a special flavor, all its own.

There are two reasons in particular for this unique and spectacular sound. First and most obviously,

the auditorium into which the organ speaks has been dramatically reduced, to about 1/3 of its original size. This happened in the 1980s, after the theatre had closed and was purchased by the Cedar Rapids Community Theatre (now Theatre Cedar Rapids). The house was simply too large for their purposes, and by remodeling and bringing the house size down to about



Opening night organist Don Pedro, obviously a good listener, stands at the Iowa Theatre's spectacular 'Rhinestone Barton' console, in this photograph dating from the theatre's earliest years. (Photo from George Cervenka collection)



Another early staff organist of the Iowa Theatre was Polly Kidd, shown here gracefully astride the Rhinestone Barton's' leather Howard seat. (Photo from George Cervenka collection)

of this spectacular and uniquely decorated console, this instrument has become known as the "Rhinestone Barton."

The effect of this spectacular display, particularly as the console rose from the pit into a gel-colored spotlight, must have literally taken the breath away from those early patrons. There is reason to suspect that Dan



500 seats, they created office and rehearsal space which was badly needed, while significantly reducing their operating expenses. As a consequence, the organ—designed to fill a space roughly three times the size of the current room, has no trouble making its presence known!

The other reason may be found in the instrument itself. It doesn't sound exactly like a Barton, because it isn't really a Barton at all! Like several of his 1920s competitors, Dan Barton was flooded with orders for new theatre organs. Like most of his competitors, he "farmed out" some of his orders to other builders as in this case, to the Wangerin Organ Company of Milwaukee. While the Rhinestone Barton carries Bartola nameplates, it is, at 3 manuals and 14 ranks, the largest of several Wangerin-built instruments, supplied to fill orders for Bartola, and delivered as "Barton Organs." Wangerin was a respected supplier of church organs, and their instruments were acknowledged to possess superior mechanical and tonal qualities. This instrument certainly speaks for the quality of their work. Particularly noteworthy are some spectacular reeds (including a Saxophone and a powerful English Horn), and three ranks of

strings which literally must be heard to be believed. They are keener than a knifeblade, and rival many reeds for brilliance. Indeed, these strings can be heard over the full organ! Some of the reed pipes were likely "farmed out" by Wangerin to Denison. It had been presumed that the console was provided by Barton, but recent restoration work suggests that the console was also produced by Wangerin, and was merely decorated by Barton.

The late David Junchen, the theatre organ scholar/restorer who began the monumental *Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ*, considered the Rhinestone Barton one of his favorite instruments. He included photos of its spectacular console in both of the Encyclopedia volumes that he produced, and wrote about its unique sound.

After the stock market crash of 1929, the theatre (like most businesses) fell on hard times. During the hard years of the great depression, much

live entertainment in theatres was abandoned. Like most American theatres, those in Cedar Rapids became primarily movie houses. With the increasing pervasiveness of sound movies, the orchestras and organs were seen as an unnecessary extravagance. First to go were the relatively expensive orchestras. There was little need for organs when the movies featured their own soundtracks, and they quickly fell into disuse as well.

Promoter Calvin Bard apparently left town with many outstanding debts, including one for the Iowa Theatre's pipe organ. Ted Paulson, whose father (O.F. Paulson) was the Iowa's general contractor, relates another interesting historical anecdote: In the early 1930s, Dan Barton apparently contacted the senior Paulson about the money still owed for the Iowa's pipe organ. Barton threatened to repossess the instrument, to which Paulson replied, "It's right here, come on over and get it!" Fortunately for Cedar Rapids, Barton apparently decided that there would be no market for the instrument elsewhere, or, for whatever reason, that it would not be worth the trouble to remove it. In any case, it is most fortunately still in its original home in Cedar Rapids.

*Left: Solo chamber of the Iowa Theatre's Wangerin organ, showing six of the seven ranks in this chamber.*

*Below: Main chamber, with three string ranks visible to the left and bottom of the Diapason to the right. (Photos by Paul Montague).*



Here is a rank listing for the 3/14 Wangerin ("Rhinestone Barton") installed in Theatre Cedar Rapids (originally the Iowa Theatre), Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Wangerin Opus 510, 1927:

MAIN CHAMBER	(wind)	SOLO CHAMBER	(wind)
Diapason 8'	15"	Tibia Clausa 16'	15"
Concert Flute 16'	10"	Oboe Horn 8'	10"
Clarinet 8'	10"	Vox Humana 8'	8"
Tuba 16'	10"	Saxophone 8'	10"
Viole d'Orchestra 8'	10"	Kinura 8'	10"
Viole Celeste 8'	10"	English Post Horn 8'	15"
Dulciana 8'	10"	Solo String 8'	15"
Chrysoglott		Marimba harp	
		Xylophone	
		Bells	
		Chimes	
		Bass, Kettle, Snare Drums	
		Cymbal	
		Tambourine, Castinets, Tom-Tom,	
		Chinese Block, Triangle, traps	



As in many of America's theatres, for many subsequent years, the organ sat unused. In the early 1960s, the Iowa Theatre was remodeled, and a stage extension was built over the orchestra pit, effectively sealing off the long-dormant organ console. For the next two decades, the console was completely inaccessible, and a particularly uncooperative management permitted no access to the instrument, even as, in the late 1970s, a renaissance of interest in the nearby Paramount Theatre's organ was taking place. Most people forgot that the Iowa Theatre even had an organ. A blessing in disguise, this may have saved the instrument from both destruction and "midnight organ supply" theft. Eventually, some interested individuals gained access to the instrument—with considerable difficulty. In 1980, the theatre was finally closed as a movie house, and the building was sold to the Cedar Rapids Community Theatre. Shortly thereafter, a private non-profit corporation was formed to purchase the organ itself. Funds transferred benefited the theatre in the form of a new sound system, and placed the organ in the hands of a group dedicated to protecting and preserving it in its original home. The remodeling of the building, which drastically altered the size of the auditorium, also made the organ much more accessible. The current owners of the building recognize the value of the instrument, and its future is reasonably secure. The owners of the organ, Cedar Rapids Barton, Inc., have done much to restore the organ to its former glory. Work remains to be done, however; particularly in the console, where much of the original expensive decoration has been lost, and where the combination action is almost entirely non-functional. Even with these shortcomings, the Rhinestone Barton remains a spectacular instrument. Organist Ron Rhode recorded his popular 'Corn silk' CD here, and it has been occasionally used for concerts. Improvements currently being made to this instrument by Cedar Rapids Barton and CRATOS, which will be completed prior to the 1998 Regional Convention, should return this unique musical artifact to world-class status.



Console of the Paramount Theatre's 3/12 style Balaban 1A Wurlitzer organ. (Photo by Ray Frischkorn)

Down the street and around the corner from the Iowa Theatre stands an even more imposing edifice, the Paramount Theatre. Opening shortly after the Iowa, on Saturday, September 1, 1928, it was originally named the Capitol Theatre, and was part of the Publix chain.

Publix's A.H. Blank and Sam Katz were marketing geniuses, and they created for Cedar Rapids a theatre that would have been a showplace in any city. The Capitol opened with great flourish. Its opening had been heavily advertised for several weeks, and when the big day arrived, it was heralded by fireworks and airplanes which dropped prizes in the vicinity of the theatre. A regional search had turned up several youngsters who claimed to have never seen a motion picture—they were provided with rail fare to the city and enjoyed the show as guests of the Capitol on opening night.

The Capitol was bigger in every dimension, more spectacularly equipped, and more opulent than its downtown rival, the Iowa. Some 2,000 could be seated in air-conditioned comfort in its spacious auditorium. It also housed a large office building which claimed as tenants some of the most important business-

es in the community, including, on its top floor, the studios of pioneer radio station WMT.

While both theatres had attractive outer lobbies, the Iowa Theatre's opened directly into the main foyer at the back of the auditorium. A staircase in the foyer lead to the balcony foyer, with access directly into the loge section of the balcony, and secondary staircases leading directly into the aisles of higher regions of the balcony.

Contrast this utilitarian arrangement to that which patrons found at the Capitol. First, the lobby opened into a grand Hall of Mirrors, supposedly patterned after the Hall of Mirrors at the Palais de Versailles in France. This huge, high-ceilinged room featured large, ornate cut-glass chandeliers reflected in giant mirrored walls. At the end of this Hall of Mirrors one encountered the first few steps of the grand staircase. Patrons could either turn left into another ornate and massive hallway, or proceed up the grand staircase to the balcony. The grand staircase also proceeded to the left, and on both levels one finally arrived at the theatre foyers, nearly a block away from the first point of entry. A second grand staircase connected the main floor and balcony level foyers. From the balcony



foyer, another set of grand staircases ascends, not directly to the upper balcony, but to another entire full-width foyer! At the Capitol, every room, every corridor, every foyer, and every staircase was designed to suggest grandeur, and opulence was universally conspicuous. Even the lower level lounges were reached via a long, winding corridor, and every nook and cranny, every bend in a hallway, displayed a piece of sculpture or an oil painting.

It has been suggested that the Capitol Theatre surpassed the Iowa Theatre in every way, but this is not entirely true. The Capitol boasted a beautiful marquee, but it was not as spectacular or as memorable as the Iowa's immense electric ear of corn. Furthermore, there is the matter of their pipe organs. In this arena, the Iowa Theatre clearly outshined the Capitol as well, with its 14-rank Wangerin/Barton "out-ranking" the Capitol's organ by three ranks. Still, the organ installed in the Capitol was and is a significant instrument in its own right.

The Publix chain was buying Wurlitzer instruments for its theatres, and the Cedar Rapids Capitol was to have a Wurlitzer organ. The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda, New York, was, of course, the quintessential, and by far the largest, manufacturer of theatre pipe organs. "Wurlitzer" became both a household word and a generic term for theatre organs, in the same way that Frigidaire and Kleenex did for their products. In contrast to the Iowa Theatre's gaudy black console, the Capitol's, spectacular in its own way, is a light antique ivory color, with gold leaf trim. The Cedar Rapids Capitol's was to be the first of a series of "special" Wurlitzers designed specifically for the Balaban & Katz theatre chain. According to Judd

Walton's Wurlitzer opus listing, the Capitol's Wurlitzer is Opus 1907, a Balaban Style 1A. (Wurlitzer also built Balaban Styles 2, 3, and 4; no Style 1 was ever built.) Only seven of these Balaban Style 1A instruments were ever built, and the Cedar Rapids Paramount's is unique, being the only unit still installed in its original home.

The Balaban Style 1A was derived from the Wurlitzer model 230, a popular 3-manual/11-rank specification.



*The Paramount Theatre's picturesque Hall of Mirrors, with the grand staircase to the balcony level beginning in the distance.*



*This photograph, taken on a warm August day in 1930, appears to show a daredevil acrobatics act in progress under the Capitol's marquee. Perhaps the gravity-defying young woman (who appears to be the object of a game of "catch") and her male colleagues comprise "Three Lightning," advertised above them on the marquee.*

However, it differs from the standard model 230 in several important ways. Most importantly, the string ranks are entirely different. Whereas the 230 typically used a Viol d'Orchestra, Viole Celeste, and Salicional for its complement of string ranks, the Balaban 1A employed the more useful Violin, Violin Celeste, and Solo String ranks. There were also several differences in the way the models were unified.

The featured staff organist on opening night at the Capitol Theatre was Stanley Anstett, who had studied at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. In addition to organist Anstett, opening night patrons enjoyed Richard Dix in the feature film *Warming Up*, the Capitol Concert Orchestra, and Paul Spor, the "Prince of Pep," with the Capitol Joyboys, in Publix Stage Entertainment.

Within just a few years, Paramount bought out the Balaban & Katz chain, and Cedar Rapids' Capitol Theatre became the Paramount Theatre. However, the Great Depression and the advances in sound film technology sounded the death knell for vaudeville, live music and entertainment in this theatre as effectively as they had elsewhere. While Hollywood's cinematic masterpieces continued to bring in patrons for the next several decades, the Paramount's seven floors of backstage prop and dressing rooms, large stage, and massive lighting panel were seldom used. Its once-featured Mighty Wurlitzer organ, like its Wangerin/Barton counterpart down the street, was almost never heard by theatre patrons.

In the 1950s, a local organ technician named Howard Burton was permitted to make some minor repairs to the Wurlitzer, and he began to play the organ during movie intermissions. For some reason, this use of the organ was short-lived. Then, in 1967, a young teenager accepted his very first job as an usher in the Paramount Theatre. That teenager was this writer. For the princely sum of 75 cents per hour, I wore a bright red coat with gold trim, escorted patrons down dimly lit aisles, and picked up empty popcorn boxes after the last show.

I also became fascinated with the



Paramount's pipe organ, which was still in very good condition and accessible for playing (unlike the Iowa's Barton, which had been completely inaccessible for years). While the organ was virtually never heard by the public, I was one of four people who regularly played it when the theatre was not open for business. Other regulars were Burton; businessman George Baldwin (who had been, as a small child, in the audience for the Capitol's opening night show, and who still regularly enjoys playing the organ to this day); and a local chiropractor named Robert Kline.

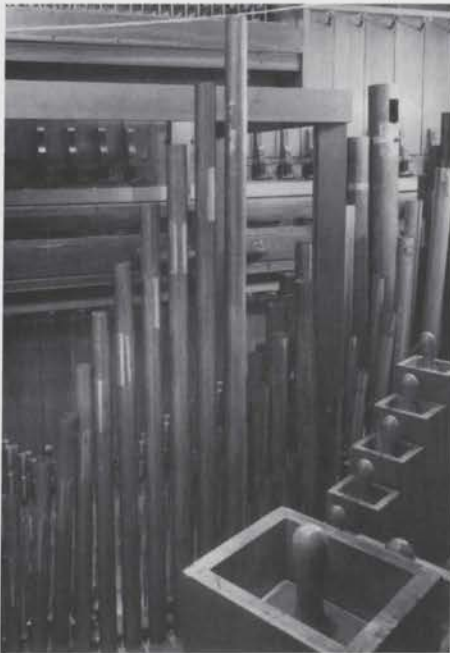
In 1969, Howard Burton again generated local interest in the organ, and became the driving force behind the formation of the Cedar Rapids Area Theatre Organ Society, or CRATOS. Slowly, CRATOS, since its inception, a chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society, began the process of restoration of the Paramount's Wurlitzer. By this time, the theatre itself had begun to deteriorate to an alarming extent. But CRATOS, initially in the person of Howard Burton, cleaned and refurbished the organ, and began its series of "Theatre Organ Spectaculars" which continues to the present day. (The huge job of restoration and ongoing maintenance of the Wurlitzer soon fell to Jim Oliver, a dedicated volunteer who almost single-handedly returned the organ to superb condition, and kept everything working for over two decades, until health problems forced him to give up this labor of love.) That first CRATOS concert featured veteran theatre organist John Muri. Cedar Rapids turned out to hear its Mighty Wurlitzer for the first time in decades, and the house was sold out. Subsequent "Spectaculars" featuring artists like Gaylord Carter, Rex Koury (composer of TV's 'Gunsmoke' theme), Al Bollington (famous for playing pedal solos in his army boots), Ashley Miller, and a young Dennis James continued to bring in crowds. Indeed, CRATOS did much to promote young theatre organists: Ron Rhode, Lew Williams, and Walter Strony all presented their first public performances in Cedar Rapids!

There was great concern for both the Paramount Theatre and its pipe

organ when Tri-States Theatres, the Paramount's last private owners, decided to permanently close it in 1974. The theatre had seriously deteriorated due to "deferred maintenance" before its doors were closed. It appeared that this landmark might face the same fate which had befallen so many formerly grand downtown theatres, such as New York's Paramount and Roxy Theatres, and the San Francisco Fox. But some Cedar Rapids citizens refused to let this happen. Philanthropists Peter and Lorraine Bezanson purchased the

closed Paramount Theatre, and immediately "sold" it to the city of Cedar Rapids for the price of \$2, for use as a performing arts center. A fund drive was initiated for the purpose of restoration of the Paramount Theatre, and the decision was made to carefully and correctly restore this beautiful landmark to its former glory. No expense was spared in this restoration—new seats were installed, and everything was cleaned and painted. Master painter Joe Hughes spent six years of 12-hour days to restore the walls, employing a marbling tech-

Main chamber of the Wurlitzer style Balaban 1A in the Paramount Theatre, Cedar Rapids.



Solo chamber of the Paramount Theatre's 3/12 Wurlitzer. (Photos by Paul Montague)



Here is a rank listing for the 3/11 (now 12) Wurlitzer model Balaban 1A, installed in the Capitol (now Paramount) Theatre, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Wurlitzer Opus 1907, 1927:

MAIN CHAMBER	(wind)	SOLO CHAMBER	(wind)
Diaphonic Diapason 16'	10"	Tibia Clausa 16' (orig.8')	15"
Concert Flute 16'	10"	Orchestral Oboe 8'	10"
Clarinet 8'	10"	Tuba Horn 16'	15"
Vox Humana 8'	6"	Kinura 8'	10"
Violin 8'	10"		
Violin Celeste 8'	10"		
Solo String 8'	10"		
Brass Trumpet 8' (not original)	10"		
Chrysoglott			
		Marimba harp	
		Xylophone	
		Bells	
		Cathedral Chimes	
		Sleigh Bells	
		Bass, Kettle, Snare drums	
		Crash, Tap, Sizzle, Brush cymbals	
		Tambourine, Castanets, Chinese	
		Block, Tom-tom, Sand Block,	
		Triangle, traps	

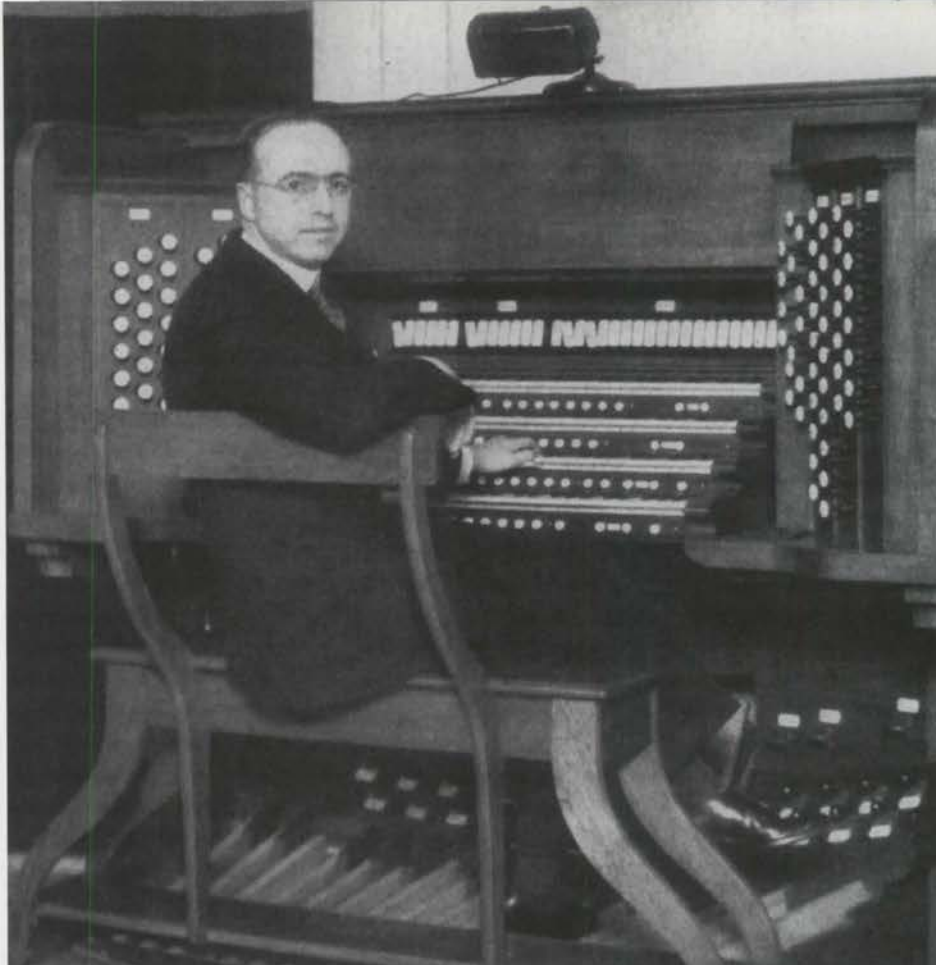


nique learned from his father during the 1920s. Damaged and missing glass was replaced in the huge chandeliers and mirrors, and duplicates of the original carpeting and magnificent stage curtain were created and installed. Thanks to CRATOS, the Wurlitzer pipe organ was in superb shape. When the building reopened as the Paramount Center for the Performing Arts, it was no longer a movie house. It was a beautiful home for the Cedar Rapids Symphony Orchestra, for stage shows and concerts, and for CRATOS Pipe Organ Spectaculars.

Unlike many theatre pipe organs, the Paramount Wurlitzer remains largely in original condition. For the most part, CRATOS has elected to restore rather than replace and upgrade. The organ still uses its original Wurlitzer relay, with the pneumatic stop and combination action still fully functional. There have been a few minor modifications to the specifications. One significant change was the addition of a brass trumpet rank in 1986, bringing the organ to 12 ranks. And, a 16-foot extension of the Tibia Clausa is currently being installed, and will be playable by the time the Regional Convention takes place.

Just about a year after these two theatres opened their doors for the first time, another important pipe organ was being built for the city of Cedar Rapids. This would be an impressive concert instrument, bought and paid for by the people of the city, and not to be installed in a church or theatre, but in the city's municipal auditorium, the Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

During these early years of the century, organ music of all kinds was vastly more popular than it is today. Cedar Rapids was but one of dozens of American cities, including San Francisco, Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Boston, which had or were to purchase pipe organs for public buildings. Cedar Rapids planners apparently received very good advice, for they selected the firm generally acknowledged to be the finest builder of concert instruments of the time, Ernest M. Skinner, to build their city's concert organ. (Skinner also built



*Cedar Rapids Municipal Organist Marshall Bidwell at the console of the city's then-new E.M. Skinner concert organ. In 1931, when this photograph was taken, the organ had just been installed in Veteran's Memorial Coliseum. It is currently installed in Sinclair Auditorium on the campus of Coe College. (Photo courtesy The Diapason)*

instruments for First Presbyterian Church and Bruce more, a large estate belonging to the wealthy Sinclair family. The latter instrument is also extant, original, and playable, although in need of restoration.)

Presumably, that good advice came from Marshall Bidwell, organ professor at Coe College, and a strong proponent of the cause of organ music in Cedar Rapids for the previous ten years. Bidwell was widely respected as a teacher and concert artist throughout the country. His opening night recital on this instrument was played before four thousand people (several hundred others were turned away at the doors), on the night of April 2, 1930. Subsequently, Bidwell was placed in charge of this instrument, and appointed to the position of Municipal Organist for the City of Cedar Rapids.

The Skinner organ was a typical example of the "orchestral" instrument so favored at the time, brought to perfection in the work of E.M. Skinner. While smaller than some of

the Skinner organs in larger cities, it was fairly complete in specification and possessed many of the special "color" stops for which Skinner was justly famous. Unfortunately, it was installed virtually at the end of the "golden age" of organ music in the first quarter of this century. While Bidwell initially performed before packed houses in the Coliseum, within two years the audiences had dwindled to just a few dozen per recital. Bidwell gave up his regular recitals in the Coliseum, and resumed weekly recitals at First Presbyterian Church, which he also served as organist. Then, in 1932, Bidwell left Cedar Rapids, accepting a new position with Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute of Music, and beginning his long association with the Carnegie family. The big Skinner was now played no more than three or four times per year.

At the same time, a young woman returned to her home in Cedar Rapids, after attending the New England Conservatory of Music. That woman, Eleanor Taylor, would become the



Here is the current specification of the Ernest M. Skinner organ, Op. 771 (1929), originally installed in Veteran's Memorial Coliseum, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, currently installed in Sinclair Auditorium, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa:

<b>GREAT</b>		<b>CHOIR (enclosed)</b>	
Open Diapason	16'	Quintaton	16'
Bourdon (ped)	16'	Orchestral flute	8'
Diapason	8'	Dulciana	8'
Claribel Flute	8'	Principal	4'
Octave	4'	Flute Ouverte	4'
Harmonic Flute	4'	Nazard	2-2/3'
Twelfth	2-2/3'	Piccolo	2'
Fifteenth	2'	Tierce	1-3/5'
Mixture	IV	Corno di Bassetto	8'
Trumpet	8'	Trem.	
Chimes		Harp	
Flemish Bells		Celesta	
<b>SWELL (enclosed)</b>		<b>PEDAL</b>	
Lieblich Gedeckt	16'	Resultant	32'
Open Diapason	8'	Diapason	16'
Rohrflute	8'	Open Diapason (gt)	16'
Flute Celeste	8'	Quintaton (ch)	16'
Gamba	8'	Bourdon	16'
Voix Celeste	8'	Lieblich Ged. (sw)	16'
Octave	4'	Octave	8'
Flute	4'	Cello (sw)	8'
Nazard	2-2/3'	Flute	8'
Flautino	2'	Gedeckt	8'
Plein Jeu	III	Super Octave	4'
Mixture	V	Flute	4'
Waldhorn	16'	Principal	2'
Cornopean	8'	Mixture	IV
Flugelhorn	8'	Ophicleide	16'
Vox Humana	8'	Waldhorn (sw)	16'
Clarion	4'	Tromba	8'
Tremolo		Clarion	4'
<b>SOLO (enclosed)</b>		<b>COUPLERS</b>	
Violincello	8'	SW/GT	16-8-4
Gamba celeste	8'	SW/CH	16-8-4
Harmonic Tuba	8'	SW/SOLO	16-8-4
English Horn	8'	SW/PED	8-4
French Horn	8'	SW	16-4
Trem.		CH/GT	6-8-4
Chimes		CH/PED	16-8-4
<b>TOE STUD COUPLERS</b>		CH	16-4
SW/PED		SOLO/GT	16-8-4
GT/PED		SOLO/PED	8-4
SOLO/PED		SOLO	16-4
SOLO/GT		GT/SOLO	16-8-4
		GT	4
		GT/PED	
		SOLO/SW	
<b>PISTONS</b>		<b>EXPRESSION PEDALS</b>	
Generals	1-6	CH	
Divisionals	1-8	SW	
Ped	1-8	SOLO	
Tutti		CRESCENDO	
Gen. Cancel			

cated ownership of the organ. It was owned by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and by the City. Fortunately, her efforts were unsuccessful, as the Coe College chapel, along with its Estey organ, were completely destroyed by a fire in 1947.

Eleanor Taylor's dream to bring the Skinner organ to Coe College was finally realized in 1952, and the organ was installed in the new Sinclair Auditorium. Some minor changes were made to the instrument at this time, including the addition of a Swell Plein Jeu. Now, Taylor had a fine teaching and performance instrument at her disposal, even though it was of a style which was quickly becoming unfashionable. She continued to attract talented students, and served as a role model for many young organists in the community, this writer included. One talented young theatre organist whose life was touched by this organ, who has played it on many occasions (and who continues to champion its cause) is Jeff Weiler, who attended and graduated from Coe College.

In 1971, more changes were made to the organ, including the addition of several ranks from the old E.M. Skinner organ from First Presbyterian Church, which had recently acquired a new Reuter organ. Unfortunately, some of these changes, while considered improvements at the time, deviated from the original Skinner tonal ideals. A few original ranks were removed, including the Great First Diapason (the Second Diapason remains). Some "upperwork" was added, including 3-rank mixtures on the Great and Pedal. However, the great Skinner "color" still shines forth, and the instrument remains one of the least altered moderately large E.M. Skinner organs still in superb playing condition. The beauty and durability of Skinner's work is nowhere more evident than in this beautiful four-manual drawknob console, controlling over 60 ranks, and still fully functional after nearly seven decades.

*(The author wishes to thank the following for invaluable assistance in the preparation of this article: Darren Ferreter, Joy Weiler, Paul Montague, Larry Chace, Ted Paulson, and Dennis Uings.)*

respected "matriarch" of the Cedar Rapids organ world, and would be associated with the Cedar Rapids Skinner organ for the next five decades. Initially Taylor, who had been a promising student of Marshall Bidwell while in high school, assumed his job as organist of the First Presbyterian Church. Within a few years, she has also assumed his old

teaching job at Coe College. Before long, she was making overtures about moving the Skinner organ to Coe, where it would be used and heard far more frequently than it was in the Coliseum. (At the time, Coe had a 3-manual Estey described by some as a "hootin' box of whistles.") However, arrangements for such a move were difficult, due primarily to the compli-



# WIND ON THE PRAIRIE

## ARTISTS & VENUES

### FRIDAY

October 16, 1998 7:30 p.m. David Peckham, Paramount Theatre

### SATURDAY

October 17, 1998 9:30 a.m. Ron Rhode, Iowa Theatre  
2:00 p.m. Clark Wilson, Coe College  
7:30 p.m. Dennis James Silent Film: *That Certain Thing*  
Paramount Theatre  
10:00 p.m. Jam Session (possible), Paramount Theatre

### SUNDAY

October 18, 1998 9:30 a.m. Walt Strony, Iowa Theatre  
2:00 p.m. Barry Baker, Paramount Theatre (open to public)  
7:30 p.m. John Seng, Iowa Theatre



David Peckham

Left to Right:  
Ron Rhode  
Clark Wilson  
Dennis James



Left to Right:  
Walt Strony  
Barry Baker  
John Seng



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*In a Monastery Garden*, *The Student Prince*, and

Songs by Carrie Jacobs Bond: *A Perfect Day*,

*I Love You Truly*, *Just A-Wearyin' for you*.

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# 1998 ATOS Scholarship Awards

Members of the Scholarship Committee are pleased to announce that the following students received scholarships:

## CATEGORY "A"

*Students working toward college organ performance degree. Scholarship award will be given to their college and applied toward their tuition.*

### ■ Elva Fleming Memorial Scholarship - \$1000

- ◆ SUZANNE BIRKHOLZ (22)  
Concordia University  
Meguon, Wisconsin

### ■ William B. Warner Memorial Scholarship - \$1000

- ◆ SUSAN LEWANDOWSKI (19)  
Eastern Michigan University  
Ypsilanti, Michigan

## CATEGORY "B"

*Students studying with professional theatre organ teachers. Scholarship award will be given upon completion of lessons with professional theatre organ teachers. (All scholarships must be completed by May 5, 1999).*

### ■ William B. Warner Memorial Scholarship - \$500

- ◆ CATHERINE DRUMMOND (16)  
Eigston, Leicester, England  
Teacher: Paul Kirner - England

### ■ \$500 Scholarships

- ◆ LISA ROSE MARY COX (18)  
Ballarat, Vic Australia  
Teachers:  
Mr. Davis Cross, Australia  
Mr. John Ferguson, Indiana
- ◆ VERONICA ANNE DILLON (20)  
Auckland 1702, New Zealand  
Teachers:  
Mr. Chris Powell, New Zealand  
Mr. Jelani Eddington,  
New Haven, Connecticut
- ◆ MATHEW BRUCE LOESER (13)  
Victor Harbor, South Australia  
Teacher:  
Mrs. Helen Blakebrough,  
Kensington Park, Australia

- ◆ KRISTI MUMBRUE (14)  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan  
Teacher:  
Mrs. Melissa Ambrose Eidson  
Madison Heights, Michigan
- ◆ HEATHER NOVAK (13)  
Farmington Hills, Michigan  
Teacher:  
Mrs. Melissa Ambrose Eidson  
Madison Heights, Michigan
- ◆ SIMON PATTISON (16)  
Ossett, England  
Teacher: Mr. David Redfern  
Belper, Derbyshire, England
- ◆ DANIEL JEROME PIERCE (16)  
Muncie, Indiana  
Teachers: Jelani Eddington,  
New Haven, Connecticut  
John Ferguson, Indiana  
Dr. Frederick B. Shulze,  
Upland, Indiana
- ◆ RON RESEIGH (16)  
Kentwood, Michigan  
Teacher: Mr. Tony O'Brien
- ◆ ROBERT SUDALL (14)  
Eldwick, Biongley,  
West Yorkshire England  
Teachers:  
Mike Woodhead, Southway,  
Eldwick, Bingley  
Brian Cryer, Holmfield, Halifax
- ◆ HEATH WOOSTER (20)  
Burwood Victoria 3125  
Australia  
Teacher: Mr. Addam Stobbs  
N. Balwyn Victoria, Australia

### Members of the Scholarship Committee are:

Paul Fleming, John Ledwon,  
David Love, Tony O'Brien,  
Connie Purkey, Gordon Schwacke,  
Steve Schlesing, Jinny Vanore,  
Bob Wilhelm. Chairman,  
Dorothy Van Steenkiste

**On August 1, 1998, Requirements and Application Forms will be ready to send out for 1999. Watch for additional news of our 1999 Scholarship Program in your September issue of THEATRE ORGAN.**

We were very pleased to receive 15 applications in 1998 and we awarded thirteen scholarships. This year we set up the \$1000 William B. Warner Memorial Scholarship in his memory and also issued a \$500 scholarship in his name. The scholarship has been established for two more years. The \$1000 Elva Fleming Memorial Scholarship has been set up by Mr. Paul Fleming in his trust so that it will continue for many, many years.

Our program was listed in the guidance information system (GIS) published by Houghton Mifflin Company in Chicago, Illinois, and also the Educational Assistance Council, National Research and Processing Center in Burbank, California. We receive requests from various colleges and their students apply. There were many requests for applications from these reports. Also, our chapters are getting the news to their local colleges and organ students. Word is out and everyone feels this program is encouraging young adults to continue their education in organ performance. The committee will meet at the convention in San Francisco and they hope to expand and continue the program.

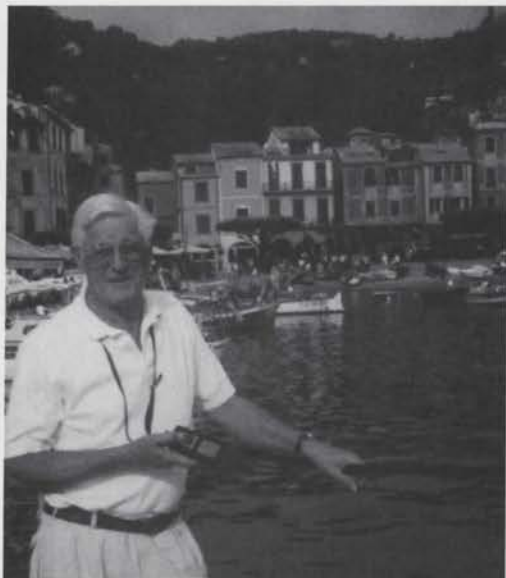
Our Scholarship Program includes two \$1000 memorial scholarships and ten \$500 scholarships.

These scholarships have encouraged our young people to continue with their studies. We had twelve entries in your Young Theatre Organist Competition this year.

Anyone interested in setting up a memorial scholarship or desiring to contribute to our program, should call or write Dorothy Van Steenkiste, Chairman of the program: 9270 Reeck Road, Allen Park, Michigan 48101. 313/383-0133, Fax 313/383-1875.



## New William B. Warner Memorial Scholarship



William B. Warner in Portofino, Italy.

A one-thousand dollar scholarship in Category "A" of our Scholarship Program has been established in memory of William B. Warner by his wife Maggie Warner, his daughter, Helen Bicking, and some special friends. They feel he would be pleased that this scholarship has been set up for students to receive assistance in continuing their musical education. Music was important during his whole life.

Bill was born in Bad Axe, Michigan, on March 30, 1916. As a boy in Michigan, he studied accordion and piano and continued practicing his music after his family moved to Brooklyn, New York, in 1929. He considered making music his life's career. However, when it was time to start college, he chose to go to Stevens Institute in Hoboken, New Jersey, and became a mechanical engineer, graduating in 1940.

Though his engineering career came first, music was his second interest. Bill liked the music of the thirties, songs from musicals, popular ballads, and jazz. Music was in his spirit always, he filled his home with machines and instruments to keep music surrounding him.

In the 1950s, Bill purchased a grand piano that he played constantly for forty years. In the 1960s, he built an

electronic organ for his home which turned out to be a family project lasting several months. He organized his family, assembly line fashion, to do the work. He was proud of what he and his family accomplished. The organ was eventually donated to a Unitarian Church in New Jersey. Bill later acquired an Allen, three-manual theatre deluxe organ. He redesigned his home to accommodate the instrument on which he performed happily for his family and friends for more than 25 years. Living in Florida, Bill searched and bought an old Hammond in rather poor shape. After having it repaired, it too became a source of delight.

Bill loved the theatre organs around New York City and served as President of NYTOS in the 1960s.

Bill was a truly gifted "Mr. Fixit." He repaired and improved things in his home keeping everything in good working order, including tuning his piano and organs. To quote statements made by Bill quite often; "measure twice, "cut once" and "how do you eat an elephant - bite by bite."

Quoting his wife Maggie, "Bill had a lovely nature; kind, often humorous, and always practical. He died determined to conquer his cancer, choosing to take the most challenging course of treatment for a possible chance of a cure. His favorite songs surround and remind us of his legacy of music. Bill was devoted to his family and his friends, adding to their strength with his understanding and compassion.

The \$1000 William B. Warner Memorial Scholarship for 1998 was awarded to Susan Lewandowski to continue her studies in organ performance at Eastern Michigan University.

A \$500 additional William B. Warner Memorial Scholarship for 1998 was awarded to Catherine Drummond to continue her studies with a professional theatre organ teacher in England.

The scholarship has been established for the year 1999 and 2000.

## Journal of American Organbuilding

### Quarterly Publication of the American Institute of Organbuilders

This publication is devoted to the dissemination of knowledge regarding the design, construction and maintenance of pipe organs in North America. Although primarily a technical journal for the benefit of organbuilding professionals, it is also a valuable resource for architects and project consultants, church musicians, building committees, seminary and university libraries, and anyone involved with the design or renovation of contemporary worship space.

Far from being the "lost art" that the average person believes it to be organbuilding in the United States and Canada is maturing and thriving in hundreds of small and large shops throughout the continent. At the same time, serious challenges lie ahead for those promoting the pipe organ in an era of limited budgets and competing options. Readers of the *Journal of American Organbuilding* will benefit from the thoughtful exchange of information and ideas intended to advance this time-honored craft.

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The organ was frequently used to accompany singers and other instruments. Ann Leaf had a series of broadcasts featuring tenor Ben Alley. I have a tape of Bing Crosby singing "Can't We Talk It Over" and "I Found You" accompanied by Helen Crawford at the Paramount studio 4/21 Wurlitzer. Lee Erwin had a girls trio and others on his "Moon River" program which continued for many years of WLW, Cincinnati. Lew White had many one-hour programs with various vocalists and instrumentalists. There were also those who sang as they played: Lowell Ayres, Betty Gould, Fats Waller, and others.

But all of that was so long ago that most of our members were not around to enjoy it. There are some things

every chapter should do to preserve the music of the theatre organ. Every member should look at and listen to the video "Legendary Theatre Organists" featuring Jesse Crawford, Ann Leaf, Lew White, Dick Leibert, Reginald Foort, and Don Baker with commentary by Gaylord Carter. Also, play any recordings at meetings made in the 20s and 30s by any theatre organists.

Three good books that describe the entertainment situation during the original theatre organ period are: "Jesse Crawford" by John W. Landon, "The Best Remaining Seats" by Ben Hall, and "The Cinema Organ" by Reginald Foort. These books, and others, should be in every chapter's library and read by members who are really interested in the theatre organ and its music.

Keep in mind, it was the Tibia Clausa and other pretty sounds that made the theatre organ popular with the public; not the English Post Horn which was used sparingly for variety and contrast.

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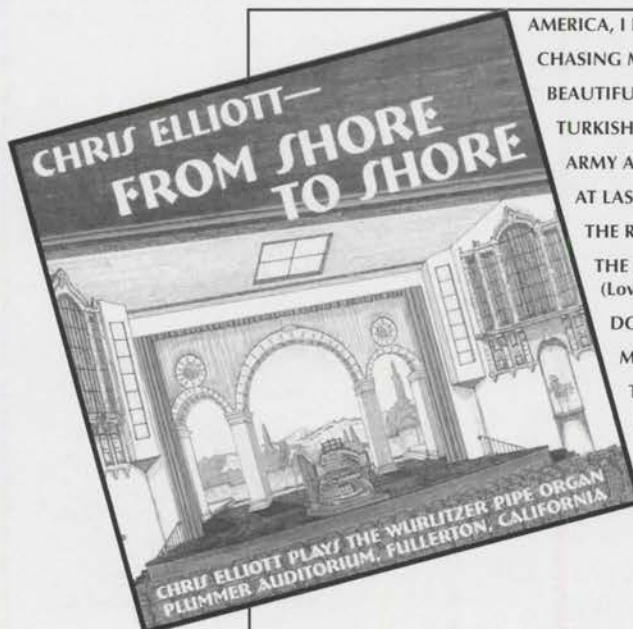
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Organ: Robert-Morton 4/23

The waning months 1929 kept Loew's building department exceptionally busy, with seven large houses under simultaneous construction in New York alone: the five "Wonder Theatres" plus the Pitkin in Brooklyn, and the 83rd Street in Manhattan. The 175th Street was the last to open; its organ was Robert-Morton's last major job and is the only one of the so-called "Wonder Mortons" still in place. (The name is a back-construction based on the theatres, "Wonder Organ" having been a Kilgen moniker.)

The theatre comes from the Lamb office's "mix and match" period, when parts of existing designs could turn up virtually undisguised almost anywhere, as if the plans had gotten shuffled somewhere in the copying process. (The epitome of this system was Loew's Triboro, with an Oriental exterior like the 175th Street and Pitkin, a French lobby and a Spanish atmospheric auditorium!) Many lobby details appeared earlier in Loew's State, Syracuse, and later in Loew's 72nd Street. The auditorium borrows heavily from the State's, the most apparent difference being pairs of "birdcage" ornaments on the organ screens in place of the single units in Syracuse. Neither auditorium is more than superficially Oriental.

The building itself, occupying all of a small, irregular block, is remarkable for being adorned all over. Elaborate canopies, visible here, shade the fire escapes, and the water tank above the stage is disguised as a stubby minaret. For decades the house has been the headquarters for the ministry of "Reverend Ike," and is well preserved. The organ is showing its age but remains in use.



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*Steve Levin*







# THE AMERICAN MASTER ORGAN COMPANY LIVES ON

by John Peragallo as told to Dave Schutt in 1974

This is the story of an ambitious young organbuilder. He embarked on an adventure that is just as exciting now as it was when it occurred in 1917. But that's getting way ahead of the story.

John Peragallo was born in New York City's lower east side. His parents came from northern Italy in 1895. By the time he was 12, he was anxious to get started on a career of his own. At this time, Ernest M. Skinner was gaining great acclaim for the fine organs he was building. When cathedrals and churches in New York City wanted the very best of everything, the organ was an E. M. Skinner. John Peragallo joined Skinner's maintenance crew that worked under the distinguished guidance of Fred L. Wilck. John learned very rapidly.

He was soon tuning and regulating reeds in addition to his other maintenance chores. After five years of this excellent training under a master craftsman, he was ready for something bigger. Fred Wilck hated to lose John and regretted that the Skinner Company couldn't offer John a higher-paying job. However, he didn't wish to hold him back, and therefore he encouraged John to move to a new organ company that was being formed in the booming industrial city of Paterson, New Jersey.

Paterson, just west of New York City, had a reputation for aggressively attracting new industries. The president of Paterson's Chamber of Commerce was James T. Jordan, who was very successful in the piano manufacturing business. In 1915, he encouraged three enterprising young musicians to form a company to build organs. There were the two Ely brothers and Frank White, who later went on to fame as an organist at the Roxy Theatre in New York. They decided to call the company the "American

Master Organ Company." It was capitalized with \$50,000. Mr. Jordan was so enthused about the project, he invested \$35,000 from his personal fortune. All that was lacking was someone who knew how to build organs.

About this time (1915), there was a general exodus of exceptional talent away from the Wurlitzer organ shops in North Tonawanda, New York. Many fine craftsmen had been drawn to Wurlitzer by Robert Hope-Jones' personal magnetism. When he died in 1914, many of these people left the House of Wurlitzer. Earle Beach, J. J. Carruthers, R. P. Elliot, Fred W. Smith, David Marr and J. J. Colton were in this category.

A fine foreman by the name of MacSpadden was also in this category. He and some of Marr and Colton's friends in Warsaw, New York, built a small organ for a theatre in Ottawa, Canada. They were anxious to be on their own.

This team fulfilled the need of the American Master Organ Company. MacSpadden became the factory superintendent in Paterson, New Jersey. He also brought his blueprints of Hope-Jones' chests with him and blueprints of the magnets.

Other master craftsmen were recruited. Carl Sherman (later with Kimball) built chests. The new company had its own wood and metal pipe shop under the direction of Mr. Meyer, who was a cousin of the pipemaker, Jerome B. Meyer. E. M. Skinner lost Mr. Brockbank, their reed voicer, to the new company.

Our energetic teenager, John Peragallo, stepped into this environment of extraordinary talent as head of the electrical wiring department. The owners of the company were locked in arm-to-arm combat with the enormous Wurlitzer resources, and

they had to have something special to offer. The musicians who controlled the company wanted versatile, well-unified organs. The combination action and relay/switches were important selling points. Price was also significant as American Master organs sold for about half of the Wurlitzer equivalents.

During the first two years of operation, the company turned out five theatre organs (including the instrument in Ottawa) and four church organs.

The theatre organs had "piano consoles." The top manual was a piano keyboard, and the pipes were located in cabinets in the orchestra pit. (However the Ottawa organ chamber was above the proscenium arch.) The church organs had five or six ranks with two manuals.

One day, there was great excitement around the American Master Organ Company. Frank White successfully bid on an instrument for the Silver Bar Amusement Company of Butte, Montana, that would set a new standard for organbuilding excellence. The organ was to contain 30-ranks on four manuals. Wurlitzer's quote was \$45,000, while the American Master quote was \$20,000. If they got the job, and Frank White was sure they would, it would require the most dedicated effort from all 35 employees of the American Master Organ Company.

The Silver Bar Amusement Company was building the largest theatre then to exist in Montana. It had approximately 1,200 seats with a balcony and a luxurious promenade behind the seats on the main floor. The promenade was isolated from the auditorium by glass partitions that were beautiful beyond description. The theatre had an "air-washer" cooling system to keep the customers comfortable in the summertime. The



theatre was being built as a motion picture palace, and the acoustics were intended to enhance musical presentations from either the pit orchestra or the grand organ that spoke through a latticework grill in the ceiling. They called the theatre the "Rialto" with the expectation that it would bring Broadway to this remote mining town.

The organ was patterned after the finest Wurlitzer instruments of the day. However, there were noticeable changes everywhere. Extra unification was provided by John Peragallo's relay that was of monumental proportions. The sound effects, traps and percussions were extraordinary. The sensational reiterating cymbal and 32 tuned tympani drums on the pedal were particularly noteworthy. The console was a model of beauty and convenience. The sound of the echo organ (including its Vox Humana on 15" wind) was funnelled through a huge metal duct so it appeared to come from the rear of the theatre. There was a 32' Diaphone on 25" wind.

There were also some peculiarities: the organ had only three tremulant stopkeys. It had a roll-top console. The combination action was "blind;" that is, it didn't actually move the stopkeys when you pushed a combination piston. A small light came on to indicate which stops had been selected by a particular piston. It had a 5-rank unenclosed Great division. There was a reed stop called a Kinamoco which had apparently been discovered by Mr. Brockbank in one of his sober moments. The stopkey engraver preferred to call the wood harp a "Miramba." The 32' Diaphone consisted of three pipes (CCCC, DDDD, GGGG) which lay horizontally behind stage and were primarily to form an exceptionally terrifying thunder effect.

After eight months of work in the factory, the organ was almost ready to ship to Butte. The Tuba and Diapasons arrived from Samuel Pierce's pipe shop in Massachusetts. Most of the organ had been assembled and tested in the erecting room in Paterson. However, the vacuum-operated percussions caused problems from the beginning, and they still were not working properly. However the the-

atre was ready for the organ, and the installation must get started or the American Master Organ Company would be liable for a \$100 per day penalty that was part of the contract. In March, 1917, the organ left Paterson for the long trip by rail to Butte, Montana. The percussions were to be shipped later.

A few days later, on March 20, John Peragallo boarded the Nickelplate Railroad line to begin almost four months of frustration as the installation foreman. With him was a helper, Arthur Hughes, who was primarily a brick mason by trade.

When they arrived in Butte, they were surprised to find that it was a highly-organized union town. The construction workers building the theatre were concerned whether the organ was built with union labor. When they saw all the electrical wiring, they were adamant that it should be connected by union electricians. The rigging into the chambers had to be done by union ironworkers. John Peragallo told Cy, the union spokesman, that an organbuilder's union did not exist, and that his only concern was to get the organ playing for his company. John sent a telegram back to Paterson advising them that they could expect additional expense to hire some union riggers.

It turned out that Cy respected John Peragallo's ability to assemble the hodge-podge of seemingly unrelated pieces. They developed an understanding whereby John used union labor during the day, but after midnight John could do anything he wanted.

Nearly two months went by, and the theatre was about to open. The percussions had just arrived and never did work right! Their vacuum actions were assembled incorrectly and had to be modified on the job. In addition, the armatures were soldered to phosphor-bronze springs. The few armatures which survived the trip from Paterson, became unsoldered soon after the units were placed in operation. On a good day, the electromagnet winding department in Paterson produced almost as many good magnets as they did rejects. This nonuniformity of magnets was most noticeable in the critical vacuum

actions for the percussion units.

With time running out, the thought of the \$100 per day penalty clause was on everyone's mind. Frank White decided to come out from Paterson to see what was taking so long. He entered the theatre demanding to know, "What's all this (expletive deleted) with the union?" When Cy heard this, he jumped on Frank, and a good fight started. They were both big men. John Peragallo succeeded in stopping the fight by convincing Cy that it was just Frank White's blustering nature to talk like this.

However, Frank White (or anyone) could not perform the miracle that was necessary to get the organ playing in time for opening night. In fact, an orchestra played the pictures for several weeks while the organ was being finished. At last it was ready to try. The 20 hp Kinetic blower supplied plenty of wind for the organ and vacuum for the percussions. The organ sounded magnificent. Everyone was very pleased. The acoustics of the theatre coupled with the fine pipework and voicing, produced a sound that was unforgettable. In fact, the volume of the 32' Diaphones had to be reduced because the beautiful glass partitions at the rear of the theatre shattered from the vibration. The result lived up to the motto of the American Master Organ Company: "Science, Musicianship, Craft; Master Workmen to Master Musician."

In the meantime, Frank White returned to Paterson as there was much trouble at the factory. MacSpadden, the factory superintendent, had quit. The unforeseen expenses of the Butte job combined with the penalty clause drained away what little cash was left. If they could get the contracted three-manual organ delivered to the Central High School in Paterson, they could collect a large installment of its \$10,000 purchase price. Shield Toutjian was on his way from California to become factory superintendent and possibly part-owner of the company. He was one brother of a family of musicians and musical instrument craftsmen from Armenia. Around 1900, his father, Lucius, restored ancient musical instruments for John Wanamaker's "Museum of Arts" in Philadelphia.





Lucius and his four sons, Shield, Robert, Bartan, and Kersam worked for the Los Angeles Art Organ Company and for Murray M. Harris. But that's another story.

Toutjian finished the factory work for the Central High School organ. However, he could see that the American Master Organ Company was nearly dead. They didn't have enough money to keep the doors open long enough to ship the Central High School organ. The Butte organ and poor management financially destroyed the firm. They wired John Peragallo \$71.80 to cover his fare, and told him to come home; they were bankrupt. So on July 16, 1917, he left Butte—never to return.

When he arrived in Paterson, he found that the previously thriving little company had disintegrated. Frank White was playing in a theatre and giving organ lessons. The Ely brothers had taken jobs as accountants in New

York City. Only James T. Jordan, the piano manufacturer, had any interest in the company. Jordan advanced more money for John Peragallo and Shield Toutjian to install the Central High School organ. When that was done, Toutjian decided to become a traveling missionary for his own religious sect. Jordan encouraged Peragallo to remain in Paterson and continue in the organ business. Peragallo acquired the logo with the motto and some of the shop machinery from the American Master Organ Company and founded his own company, the Peragallo Organ Company, in 1918.

With his son, John, Jr., and his grandsons, John III, Frank and Stephen, the Peragallo Organ Company is thriving and anticipating a still greater future dedicated to "Science, Musicianship, Craft; Master Workman to Master Musician." (*and still is in 1998—Ed.*)

What happened to the organ in the Rialto Theatre? The manual pipes in the main chambers were removed years ago, with their whereabouts unknown to the writer. Salt Lake City organ enthusiast, Ronald McDonald purchased what remained of the organ, including the pipes from the previously-hidden echo organ and unenclosed great division. The console was located in a moving and storage warehouse. Here, the console sat for about 32 years. McDonald paid the storage bill of \$32 and took the console.

The console was later sold to Bob Breuer, owner of Arden Pizza and Pipes, Sacramento, California. Bob had it cleaned up, specially lighted, and displayed in his pizza restaurant. (Editor's update: In the late 1970s, Breuer brought the console down to his Pizza and Pipes restaurant in Fresno, California. The console now languishes in a Fresno warehouse.)



SPECIFICATION

AMERICAN MASTER ORGAN COMPANY  
 RIALTO THEATRE, BUTTE, MONTANA

(Note: This is the original spelling on the stopkeys)

**PEDAL**

16 Bourdon Primo  
 8 Bass Flute  
 8 Violon Cello  
 16 Contra Bassoon  
 8 Viol d'Orchestre  
 16 Ophicleide  
 16 Tombone  
 16 Diaphone  
 8 Tuba Horn  
 8 Trumpet  
 16 Open Diapason  
 8 Open Diapason  
 32 Diaphone (C, D, G)  
 8 Accomp to Pedal  
 8 Great to Pedal  
 8 Orchestra to Pedal  
 8 Solo to Pedal  
 Bass Drum (2nd)  
 Kettle Drum (2nd)  
 Snare Drum (2nd)  
 Cymbal Reiterator (2nd)  
 Tympani (2nd)  
 Triangle (2nd)  
 8 Open Diapason

8 Salicional  
 8 Stopped Diapason  
 8 Unda Maris  
 4 Violine  
 4 Orchestra Flute  
 8 Viol d'Amour (Echo)  
 4 Viol Celeste  
 8 Orchestra Diapason  
 (2nd)  
 8 Tibia Clausa (2nd)  
 8 Violin Diapason (2nd)  
 8 Tuba Horn (2nd)\8  
 Trumpet (2nd)  
 Solo to Accomp (2nd)  
 Orchestra to Accomp  
 (2nd)  
 16 Bourdon Secundo  
 Glockenspiel  
 Harp Celeste  
 Snare Drum  
 Tambourine  
 Sleigh Bells  
 Castanets  
 Chinese Block  
 Piano  
 Mandolin  
 Cathedral Chimes (2nd)  
 Triange (2nd)  
 Snare Drum (Echo)

4 Orchestra Flute  
 4 Viol d'Orchestre  
 4 Viol Celeste  
 2 Solo Piccolo  
 16 Contra Bassoon  
 8 Clarinet  
 8 Vox Humana  
 16 Bourdon Secundo  
 8 Violin Diapason  
 8 Stopped Diapason  
 4 Flute  
 16 Ophicleide  
 16 Trombone  
 8 Tuba Horn  
 8 Trumpet  
 4 Clarion  
 2 Piccolo (Echo)  
 8 Flugal Horn (Echo)  
 4 Octave  
 Mixture  
 8 Concert Flute  
 8 Orchestra to Great  
 8 Solo to Great  
 Great Xylophone  
 Miramba  
 Unaphone

8 Clarinet  
 8 Orchestral Oboe  
 8 Vox Humana  
 8 Kinamoco  
 16 Bourdon Secundo  
 8 Stopped Diapason  
 4 Flute  
 16 Ophicleide  
 8 Tuba Horn  
 8 Trumpet  
 8 Chimney Flute (Echo)  
 8 Vox Humana (Echo)  
 8 Accomp to Solo  
 8 Great to Solo  
 Glockenspiel  
 Orchestra Bells  
 Harp Celeste  
 Piano  
 Mandoline  
 Triangle  
 Triangle Reiterator

2 Solo Piccolo  
 16 Contra Bassoon  
 8 Orchestral Oboe  
 8 Vox Humana  
 8 Kinamoco  
 8 Violin Diapason  
 8 Unda Maris  
 4 Violine  
 4 Flute  
 8 Tuba Horn  
 16 solo to Orchestra  
 8 Solo to Orchestra  
 4 Solo to Orchestra  
 Unaphone  
 Sleighbells (Echo)

**ACCOMPANIMENT**

8 Viol d'Orchestre  
 8 Viol Celeste  
 4 Viol d'Orchestre  
 4 Viol Celeste  
 4 Harmonic Flute  
 8 Clarinet  
 8 Kinamoco  
 16 Double Bass  
 16 Bourdon Secundo  
 8 Violin Diapason

**GREAT**

16 Bourdon Primo  
 8 Orchestra Diapason  
 8 Tibia Clausa  
 8 String  
 8 Viol d'Orchestre  
 8 Viol Celeste

**SOLO**

16 String (Tenor C)  
 16 Viol d'Orchestre (TC)  
 16 Viol Celeste (TC)  
 8 Tibia Clausa  
 8 Viol Celeste  
 4 Viol d'Orchestre  
 4 Viol Celeste  
 2 Solo Piccolo  
 16 Contra Bassoon

**TREMULANT**

Tremulant Main 1  
 Tremulant Main 2  
 Tremulant Echo

**ORCHESTRA**

16 Bourdon Primo  
 8 Orchestra Diapason  
 8 Tibia Clausa  
 8 String  
 8 Viol d'Orchestre  
 8 Viol Celeste  
 4 Flute  
 4 Viol d'Orchestre

*Editor's Note:*

*Many thanks to Dave Schutt for this piece and to the owners of PIPORG-L for this article. For further information on the American Master Organ Company, please see Vol. I of the Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ, page 28.*

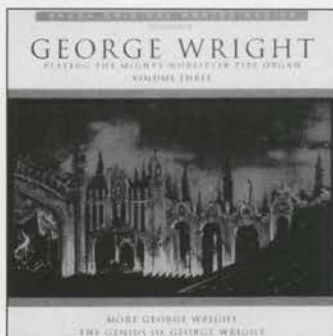


# For The RECORDS

RALPH BEAUDRY, EDITOR

*Compact discs, cassettes, videos, and books to be reviewed should be sent to Ralph Beaudry, 1119 N. Louise #5, Glendale, CA 91207. Please be aware items must be received three months prior to the issue date in which the review will appear. Information telephone: 818/243-8741*

## George Wright Playing The Mighty Wurlitzer Pipe Organ, Volume III "More George Wright" & "The Genius of George Wright"



When my good friend, George Wright, called a short while ago and asked if I would review Banda Records' latest compact disc comprising the re-release of two albums he originally recorded on the Hi-Fi label eons ago I said, "I would be glad to." He then extended his usual admonition to me to not listen to his CD with all my digital gizmos turned on. I assured him I would not cheat.

Just for fun, let's pretend it is the mid- to late 1950s where vacuum tube technology reigns supreme and stereo was in its infancy. Where Ampex, AKG, Telefunken, and Altec were among the finest names in professional recording equipment. Where McIntosh, Marantz, Klipsch, Electro-Voice, Berlant Concert-

tone, Thorens, Rek-O-Kut, Wharfedale and a host of other American European manufacturers were eager to demonstrate their wares for growing numbers of hi-fi enthusiasts.

Let's also take note of a curious bunch of people who banded together forming American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts. They refused to let one of America's new indigenous musical instruments, the theatre pipe organ, fade into extinction. It is the confluence of these two endeavors that launched George Wright into the icon he is today.

I was a high school teenager during this time period and more interested in building Heathkit amplifiers than in girls and sports. After first hearing a 3/10, Style H Wurlitzer in the Castle Theatre, Vancouver, Washington, in 1948, a fellow nerd accidentally re-introduced me to the organ as he was showing off his latest hi-fi acquisition via a George Wright recording. I soon discovered what many other hi-fi aficionados already knew; George Wright recordings really were the best way to show off a budding hi-fi system. Not realizing it at the time, this was the beginning of a forty year love affair with the organ. Being driven by both audio and organ, I frequented local record shops always on the lookout for new organ recordings ... especially George Wright recordings.

One such expedition led to my purchase of "More George Wright" and "The Genius of George Wright." Let me pretend I am that hi-fi/organ crazy teenager reviewing this Banda compact disc as if it were an original release. OK? Here goes.

"More George Wright" is the third recording by George Wright for the Hi-Fi label on an instrument transplanted into a home studio from the Paradise Theatre, Chicago. It opens with "The Waltz In Swingtime." I find it most refreshing on this warm, spring day. George's lilting waltz tempo is so naturally brilliant it compels this non-dancing nerd to actually move his feet a little. The sound is clear, crisp, well balanced, and is sure giving my woofers and tweeters a good exercise.

A subdued "That's All" lets us hear a favorite George Wright trait ... tapping out the beat with a predominately 8' Tibia in the pedal. A registration that is destined to become a theatre organ standard is a simple 8' Tibia Clausa and 8' Vox Humana. The emotion Mr. Wright draws from such a basic theatre organ sound is a testament to his credo ... it's all about the music.

Following the rhythmic "Edelma," where my ear is quickly drawn to the tambourine and piano with its mandolin attachment engaged is, "You'll Never Walk Alone." To the basic Tibia and Vox, George now adds a 16' Saxophone to carry the melody. He builds this Rodgers and Hammerstein favorite to what surely must be full organ. At least my hi-fi system thinks it is and so must my mother because I can hear her yelling at me to turn down the volume. Her dishes are rattling!

I like loud, fast music. The beauty of ballads has not yet sunk into my teenage brain. Irving Berlin's "Nice Work If You Can Get It," gets a snappy, jazz band arrangement.

There are a couple of low register English Post Horn notes that bring a grin to my face. Only a crude teenage kid would make this flatulent association.

"The Galloping Comedians" definitely satisfies my need for speed. I am in awe of Mr. Wright's technique. How does he get around those five manuals so fast and yet so precise? None of my other organ recordings sound like this. Just listen to the incisive Master Xylophone and you will hear what I mean. Not only that, but what kind of air powered mechanism moves this fast? I need to learn a lot more about theatre organs.

It must be a huge task to tune and balance each of the thousands of pipes so they speak as one. In his arrangement of the mystical "Sanctuary," Mr. Wright and the wonderful new medium of hi-fi display the care lavished upon this instrument. The 8' Clarinet is absolutely devoid of any tuning or voicing errors. Mr. Wright also exploits the string ranks of the organ in this piece. He seasons them with just a touch of Vox Humana.

The "Genius of George Wright" begins with "España Cani." Long a favorite accordion piece it translates well to the organ under Mr. Wright. The introduction features the Marimba and soon the Xylophone is heard. As good as modern hi-fi recording is, the organ can still overpower it. The opening of "España Cani" is slightly blurred by the organ's massive pedal division. I can only imagine how great the theatre organ will sound when recording technology is truly able to capture its magnificence.

How do you get multiple pitches from a drum? George answers this question in his sultry rendition of "Hernando's Hideaway." From drums, to simulating a calliope, George Wright does it all with this amazing instru-

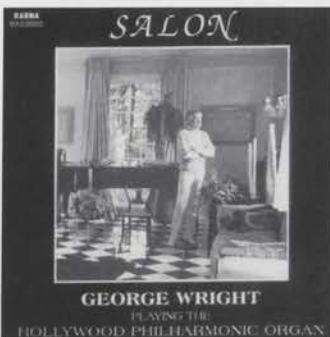


ment.

OK, we have returned to 1998. Banda's "George Wright Playing the Mighty Wurlitzer Pipe Organ, Volume III," for the most part sounds as if it were recorded yesterday, not forty years ago. The sound is open with only the slightest amount non-twangy, digital reverberation added. All of "More George Wright" is reproduced on the CD. Eight of the twelve tracks of "The Genius of George Wright" are included. My only disappointment is that "Wabash Blues" isn't one of them.

If you own and like the originals you will certainly want this CD. If you never heard the originals you must have this recording to understand that it was George Wright and this organ that spawned a renaissance. Available from Banda, P.O. Box 1620, Agoura Hills, CA 91376-1620. Now available through on-line services [www.theatreorgans.com/cds/banda.html](http://www.theatreorgans.com/cds/banda.html). Costs US/Canada \$20, UK \$23 (US), Australia \$24 (US). *Dennis Hedberg*

## George Wright's "SALON"



As the keyboard artist who almost single-handedly revived the theatre pipe organ over 40 years ago, George Wright continues to amaze his listeners with a creativity and stamina that appear to be undiminished to this day. He has touched just about every musical base imaginable, playing music ranging from Simon and Garfunkel to Beethoven. Now in his latest release, "Salon," we hear yet another musical side of George Wright. This CD could be

described as a "concept" or "theme" program, in that all of its pieces are somehow related. In this case, the compositions are typical of music presented in the setting of a "salon," or music room of the large, often palatial private residences of a bygone era. Or it was in a larger setting of a commercial establishment, such as the lobby or dining room of a finer hotel. In either case, the music consisted largely of classical or semi-classical fare.

In contrast to the more spacious, reverberant acoustics of a theatre or concert hall, the salon music experience was a more intimate, direct aural ambience: that is the approach George has taken here with his Hollywood Philharmonic organ. This is an up-close sound, very clean and detailed, and with no apparent spatial enhancement in the recording process. Some of the tuned percussions and unenclosed portions of the instrument seem to be suspended in space, right before the listener. On better stereo systems, these sounds will be reproduced with an almost startling realism.

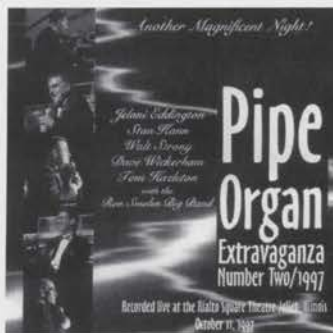
George's excursion into salon music starts with selections from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, which features registration with appropriate oriental flavoring, some very orchestral sounds, and ear-catching accents. Following that is "Water Lily," a lovely, atmospheric piece with some nice and subtle contrasts. He plays "Japanese Sunset" with an imaginative introduction utilizing harp, drum and a Vox-laced string-like series of chords. This is one of George's ultimate "sound picture" pieces. It spans more than five minutes and utilizes an assortment of sounds, both solo and in combinations. A very soothing picture it is, much like viewing a fine Japanese silk painting of a pastoral scene. George also includes *Liebestraum*, and although he's recorded it before, it emerges here fresh

and new, clothed in different registration. Jesse Crawford's "Forgotten Melody," a vintage piece from the Golden Age of the theatre organ is a nice inclusion, and not at all out of place here. Ketelby's sentimental "In a Monastery Garden" has George playing one of his most gorgeous introductions. Through registration and phrasing, the melody is conveyed to the listener in its best light. He concludes with Romberg's *Student Prince* medley, which ends by showcasing one of the most unforgettable melodies of all time.

There are several more cuts in this 72-minute album. All of it has an air of culture and peacefulness, augmented by things like the MIDI harp that makes welcome appearances in several places. Yet, the actual sound of the instrumentation is secondary to this music: the most important aspect of "Salon" is the understanding and sensitivity that George brings to the material.

The 50+ albums of George Wright's recorded work are all pieces that form a very large picture. If you enjoy the work of this master, and great theatre pipe organ in general, "Salon" is a must for your collection. Without it, you will be missing a significant component of the complete picture. Available from Banda, P.O. Box 1620 Agoura Hills, CA 91376-1620. Now available through on-line services [www.theatreorgans.com/cds/banda.html](http://www.theatreorgans.com/cds/banda.html). Costs US/Canada \$20, UK \$23 (US), Australia \$24 (US). *Ron Musselman*

(Editor's Note: These reviews were written just prior to Mr. Wright's untimely passing.)



## Pipe Organ Extravaganza #2 Five Organists

Following the phenomenal success of their Joliet Organ Fling in November, 1996, our JATOE Chapter began making plans for the second Organ Extravaganza which was held on the weekend of October 11 last year. This 74-minute CD has a generous number of the highlights of that second 3-1/2 hour show which starred (in alphabetical order) Jelani Eddington, Tom Hazleton, Stan Kann, Walt Strony, Dave Wickerham AND the Ron Smoller Big Band. Joliet's magnificent Rialto Square Theatre, with its original 4/24 Barton, again is the venue — and this time all the artists play their solo number on the Barton.

For the *en masse* selections they also play an Allen 212 Deluxe (with its 20 speakers mounted in front of the organ chambers,) a Roland Model 1890 Electronic organ, a Roland Model KR-570 Digital piano, and a Steinway 9' Concert Grand. Again Lee Maloney is the genial Master of Ceremonies (and is also the organist for the pre-programmed closing track, "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening.") There are just enough of Lee's introductions and comments to guide the listener easily through the program.

Dave Wickerham is first up with those great 1940s classics "Flat Foot Floogie" and "Mairzy Doats" followed by a stirring arrangement of "National Emblem March." Stan Kann is next but before playing the organ he's entangled by a recalcitrant microphone. His comments about organs and his selection, "Dancing Tambourine," are equally hilarious. Note Stan's demonstration of pizzicato touch; and who else would play the melody upside down in the final chorus? Walt Strony salutes Al Melgard, his mentor and long-time organist at Chicago Stadium's 6 manu-



al Barton, with a warm, tender arrangement of Melgard's composition "My Vision" — and follows that with a dynamic, percussive version of "Tico Tico" which sounds better on the Barton than it ever could on a Hammond.

Next up is Ron Smollen's Big Band in a swing arrangement of "Little Girl" (didn't band leader Orrin Tucker sing that to "Wee" Bonnie Baker?) Closing out the first half of this Extravaganza is Jelani Eddington's remarkable, rocketing "Roller Coaster." Tom Hazleton opens the second half by showing off the Barton's formidable brass in his own "take" on the Sidney Toch classic, "Hot Dog." Then, in a 9-minute medley of tunes from *My Fair Lady*, he solos almost every individual rank in the organ. The five organists join the Big Band in what Maloney calls the Big Band National Anthem — "In The Mood."

But, coming next is one of the most superb recordings you'll ever find on a theatre organ album; the complete 15+ minute arrangement of Gershwin's masterpiece, "Rhapsody in Blue," with Jelani Eddington at the Steinway Grand and Dave Wickerham handling the entire orchestral score (except for the opening clarinet obbligato) on the Barton. Jelani and Dave give new meaning to the word "Magnificent." For the really Grand Finale, all five organists (and the audience) unite for "The Stars and Stripes Forever" — during which the Big Band marches down the aisle to join in on the stupendous final chorus.

It's a breath-taking performance by five of the world's finest organists and, once again, Jim Stemke of Digital Sonics has beautifully captured all the music and excitement of another once-in-a-lifetime event. Yes, lightning has struck twice in the same place! CD only for \$20.00 (postpaid) from JATOE, P.O. Box 47, Joliet, IL 60434. Two Special Footnotes: (1) the CD of *Pipe*

*Organ Extravaganza #1* is still available (same price and address) and (2) this year's Extravaganza #3 will be held on the weekend of November 14.

## Wurlitzer Showtime Paul Roberts



Way back in the middle 50s, RCA-Victor released one of the most unusual theatre organ recordings of all time. *Midnight For Two* featured organist Ray Bohr and The Three Suns. For those who may not remember, The Three Suns played electronic organ, guitar and accordion, and were one of the most popular instrumental groups in the 50s. A review in the ATOS Tibia (Spring, '57) stated the New York Paramount Wurlitzer was the organ used and Ray and the Suns made "... a happy combination."

On this 72-minute album Paul Roberts, while not trying to duplicate the instrumentation of that LP, has come close to capturing the sound for he's playing a sweetly-voiced Wurlitzer along with his pre-recorded tracks on piano and rhythm bandbox. The Wurli is Opus 2183, a Style 220 Special originally placed in the Empire (Granada) Edmonton, London in 1933, and has been in its current home at the St. Albans Organ Museum since 1970. "Showtime," in the album's title, refers not to the way the tunes are presented but rather to the fact each of the 27 selections is from a Broadway musical show.

The earliest musical is Jerome Kern's *Showboat* (1927) while the most recent tune, "As If We Never Said Goodbye," is from 1994's *Sunset*

*Boulevard*. Included are three British musicals which also had successful runs on Broadway. These are "Consider Yourself" from *Oliver*, "Flash, Bang, Wallop," from *Half a Sixpence* (over 500 performances in 1965,) and three melodies from Noel Gay's musical *Me and My Gal*, which opened in London in 1937, but almost 50 years later, was "revived" in New York for over 1,400 performances.

Following in The Three Suns tradition, all the selections are played in strict-tempo for dancing, but without a hint of Blackpool Style and only nine of the 27 are played in a medley. Most titles are given a full arrangement of from two to 4-1/2 minutes during which the melody moves often from piano to organ and back. There's lots of variety in tempo and rhythm. Even "Ol' Man River" and "You'll Never Walk Alone" sound great in dance tempo! "My Favorite Things" and "Sunrise, Sunset" waltz nicely while "Surrey With the Fringe on Top" and "Aquarius" (from the rock opera *Hair*) are up-tempo delights.

Receiving a Latin-beat are "I Talk to The Trees," "Some Enchanted Evening," and "If Ever I Would Leave You" (which is paired with the unlisted "Stranger in Paradise" from *Kismet*.) A few of the other titles are "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "Getting to Know You," "Til There Was You," "Hey There," "Almost Like Being in Love" and the album's raucous opening number, "No Business Like Show Business."

This is simply one of the most refreshing albums to come along recently. Even if you don't want to roll back the rugs and dance, it's enjoyable listening. Compact disc only for \$20.00 postpaid (add \$3.00 for shipping outside the U.S.) from Cardinal Productions, P.O. Box 22035, Beachwood, OH 44122.

## Through The Decades: The 1930s Nigel Ogden



Those of us who lived through the post-depression years of the 1930s, with bank closures, unemployment, dust bowl, and threats of impending war, may have forgotten about the multitude of bright, cheerful, uplifting melodies that decade spawned. This 75-minute *second* album in the *Through the Decades* series, again featuring Nigel Ogden at the 3/14 Blackpool Tower Ballroom Wurlitzer, has 50 of that era's greatest hits on its 18 tracks.

Once again, while a few are given fully arranged solo spots ("These Foolish Things," "Two Sleepy People," and "The Continental,") the balance are heard in medleys of from two to seven tunes. Several contain unrelated titles, like the opening group of "Let's Face the Music and Dance," "Let Yourself Go," and "Cheek to Cheek," or the unusual hodge-podge of "Says My Heart," "Love Thy Neighbor," and a fast and furious "Chinese Laundry Blues"! Most, however, are related as with the "Moonlight" and "Donkey" Serenades or the "September Song" and "September in the Rain."

Nigel has included a charming waltz medley of memory-floggers; "In a Shanty in Old Shanty Town," "Dancing With Tears in My Eyes," and "Who's Taking You Home Tonight?" There's also a refreshing 8-minute medley featuring seven great George Gershwin tunes; the titles are not listed, but you'll surely recognize each



one. However, the 6-1/2 minute *Memories of Jessie Matthews* requires some explanation. From 1923 to 1949 Matthews was one of England's most popular musical stage and screen stars. She introduced many hit songs including "Dancing on the Ceiling" (from 1930's *Ever Green*, one of three Rodgers and Hart musicals which opened in London but never made it to New York!) Other titles in her medley are "Everything's in Rhythm with My Heart," "When You've Got a Little Springtime in Your Heart," "Head Over Heels in Love," "Over My Shoulder," and "Gangway" (which was Lew William's console-raiser at the 1987 Convention and appears on his CD release *Live at the Möller*, Journal, Jan. '97).

A sampling of some other wonderful 30s tunes Nigel includes on this disc are "Broadway Rhythm," "Stardust," "Lady of Spain," "I'm Confessin'," "I'm in the Mood for Love," and "Stay As Sweet As You Are." Once again, Nigel plays "Blackpool Style," bright, bouncy, breezy with lots of registration, tempo and rhythmic variety, all very much in keeping with Reg Dixon's legacy. Despite having been written in such a gloomy decade, this album is certainly toe-tapping, cheery listening! Compact disc only for \$20.00 (postpaid - cash or checks in US\$) from Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust, 21 New Hall Road, Jericho, BURY, Lancs, BL9 7TQ, U.K.

## Live In Concert Don Thompson

Although he's lived in the US for several decades, British-born organist Don Thompson has never "American-ized" his playing style' nor has he ever espoused the rather flamboyant "Blackpool" techniques. Instead his selections, registrations and arrangements are based on those favored by British organists in the 30s and 40s, particularly Reg Dixon.

This was very evident on



## DON THOMPSON LIVE! in concert at the WURLITZER

his tour Down Under in 1996 when these tapes were made. "These tapes" is right for Don has released two versions of his Adelaide concert on the beautiful 4/29 Wurlitzer in the Capri Theatre. *Live in Concert* runs 80 minutes, and contains just the music, while *A Concert Experience* is 110 minutes and includes his very informative comments on each selection. ("What Are You Waiting For Mary?" is heard only on the *Experience* cassette while "Hot Dog" is found only on the *Live* tape.) It's interesting that Don's concert had a theme right out of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* — music associated with London is featured in the first half while Paris is celebrated in the second half. "Carillon de Westminster," composed by French organist Louis Vierne, serves as a "bridge" between the two cities so, in his concert, it closed the first half of the program.

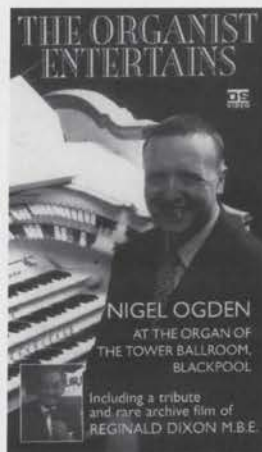
Don opens his London side with "The Thin Red Line" which is occasionally played during the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. An 8-1/2 minute "Selections" from Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate* is next, because it's the first Broadway musical Don saw in London (and it was based on Shakespeare's *Taming of The Shrew*.) Organist John Howlett composed the oddly titled, march-like "Leicester Square Looks Round." "My Old Flame," in a somewhat Crawford-like arrangement, salutes Jesse's concert tour of the U.K. in the 30s. Noel Gay's (not Bob

Merrill's) "Love Makes the World Go Round" is paired (in a recreated Dixon arrangement) with Berlin's "Change Partners." "Ebb Tide" is included for it was one of Don's first recordings for the BBC. Closing out the first side is an 11-minute, ten tune melodic *Tour of London*.

The *Paris* side opens with Kern's "The Last Time I Saw Paris," followed by a W.W. II favorite, "Marche Lorraine" and Vernon Duke's "April in Paris." For a dash of humorous French church music Don includes Lefebure-Wely's "Marche Offertoire." "Extose," by Louis Gamme, is French salon music circa 1900 and, of course, Don plays Jacques Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld" (certainly French, but the operetta's setting is ancient Greece.) An 8-minute medley of old favorites from Noel Coward and W.W. I ends the program. Don's encore might be considered a recommendation to travel to London and Paris "While We're Young."

An unusual but interesting program (especially in the longer version with Don's comments) played in his usual straight-forward style which, while pleasing his audience, could distress those who insist that all the "I"s be dotted and "T"s crossed. Cassettes only. *Experience* (110 minutes) is \$14.00 and *Live* (80 minutes) is \$12.00 both postpaid from Pipe Organ Presentations, 95 Duboce Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94103.

## VIDEO REVIEWS



## The Organist Entertains Nigel Ogden

On February 8 this year, Nigel Ogden celebrated his 1,000th BBC radio broadcast by playing a special concert on Blackpool's 3/14 Wurlitzer in the Tower Ballroom. Part of this concert recreated a typical Reginald Dixon radio program from the 1930s and 40s; this section was heard on Nigel's actual 1,000th broadcast on March 3. "The Organist Entertains" is a one-hour weekly show started in June, 1969 by British organist Robin Richmond and now, 29 years later, is the most popular and longest running special music program in BBC history. When Richmond retired Nigel took over on March 3, 1980 so he is now in his 18th year as host! This one-hour video was released as part of Nigel's concert and millennial broadcast.

Nigel already has released a CD tribute to Dixon, *Sentimental Journey* (Journal, Sept. '96) and in this new video he recreates a typical Dixon Sunday concert. Nigel greets us on the Promenade in front of the Ballroom (note the 100 year old tramway is still operating!) and then escorts us inside, through the under-stage "catacombs" to the organ console which he rides up into the ballroom playing, of course, "I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside."

The musical portion of the video begins with a typical medley of six quick-step marches, which includes the "Spanish Gypsy Dance" and "Funiculi Funicula" and continues with an 8-minute *Showtime Medley* of seven Richard Rodgers' tunes including "Mountain Greenery," "My Favorite Things," and "Lover." For a bit of ballad relief we have an untremmed "I'll Walk Beside You" which certainly demonstrates these 14 ranks can be suitably orthodox when needed. Up to this point the photography has concentrated on varying close-up shots of the



artist and keyboards, but it should be noted the overhead camera seems to present a minor optical illusion of slightly curving keyboards!

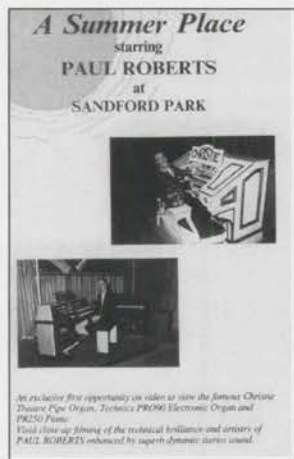
A rather brief tribute is next, with photos of Reg Dixon at the organ's console while one of his most famous recordings ("Somebody Stole My Gal") plays in the background. Nigel then plays a duplicate of Dixon's arrangement, and registrations, so you can hear how the organ actually sounded when Dixon played it. There is a delightful, short filmed interview with Dixon. Nigel explains and demonstrates some of this organ's famous and unique features such as the Kinura and Krumet registrations, the Great to Solo couplers, and the Accompaniment Second Touch which can bring down the Great voices for either melody or counter-melody playing.

Nigel demonstrates all of these facilities in the following *Quickstep Medley* of "Let's Face the Music and Dance," "Margie," "Chinatown, My Chinatown" and two others. Since Dixon's Sunday concerts always included some light classical selections, Nigel plays six minutes of *Potted Overtures* including "Poet and Peasant," "Zampa" and three others. For his closing medley, since Dixon liked to play audience requests, Nigel has a 10-minute medley of eight favorites including "The Trolley Song," "Sweet and Lovely," "The Last Waltz," and "Toot Toot Tootsie Goodbye." The console descends with Nigel's own signature tune, "From This Moment On."

Beautifully photographed and edited, with stereo sound, there is a nice balance of music and commentary; one might only wish there had been more views of the organ's chambers and the ballroom's ornate architectural details. But we must add a very important **CAUTION**: this video is only available in the PAL format which can-

not be played back on American VCRs. If you do not have a friend with the proper conversion equipment to make an NTSC copy for you, check the telephone Yellow Pages to locate a video service which can do it for a fee. The video is available for \$25.00 postpaid from Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust, 21 New Hall Road, Jericho, BURY, Lancs, BL9 7TQ, U.K.

## A Summer Place Paul Roberts



Although his name may not be widely recognized, in the past several years British organist Paul Roberts has made eight concert tours across North America and two more are planned for next year. Well trained (with degrees in organ performance), he has an expanding schedule of concerts on both pipes and electronics around the world, along with a growing list of recordings and videos. In 1994 he completed ten years as one of the resident organists at Sandford Park, a popular family entertainment resort in England. This 40-minute video tape was filmed there and displays Paul's talents on the three instruments in their ballroom - a Technics PRO 90 electronic organ, a PR 250 electronic piano, and the 3/17 Christie pipe organ (now much enlarged since leaving its original home in the nearby Regent Theatre, Poole.)

Christie organs, in quantity the #3 British theatre organ (80 organs compared with about 100 Wurlitzers and 260

Comptons,) came from the renowned classical organ builders Hill, Norman and Beard. This 40-minute video opens with "info-mercial" type scenes of the resort's facilities and recreational activities while Paul plays "A Summer Place" on the Technics organ. He first appears, as the Christie rises to concert level in the ballroom, playing his signature tune, "I Want to Be Happy." In the video Paul alternates selections among the instruments but we are not reviewing the selections in the order seen.

Two of his solos on the Technics organ are swingers: "The Lady is A Tramp" and "Bye-Bye-Blues." In the first, he plays one chorus on the piano with accompaniment on the organ; in the second he demonstrates both how to play the melody and accompaniment with the left hand (while the right runs rampant over the keyboards) and how to use the "glide effect" tastefully. Paul, also on the Technics, plays a soft-rock "When Joanna Loves Me" while we watch the dancers on the ballroom floor - oddly, when the camera looks toward the stage, it appears the organist is at the Christie.

Both the Technics organ and piano have automatic rhythm units which Paul uses to good effect. It's surprising to see "stop keys" on a piano but they appear to control the rhythm unit "voices." Somewhat puzzling are the overhead camera shots in which Paul's hands appear "reversed" - those are, of course, overhead mirror views. "Georgia On My Mind" and "Blue Moon" are Paul's piano selections; both begin as ballads and become up-tempo swingers when he adds the rhythm unit.

The Christie is featured on nine tunes. "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and "Misty" are the emotional heart-tuggers while the bright up-tempo favorites are "Deed I Do," "Twelfth Street Rag," and a

medley of "Five Foot Two" and "When I'm Cleaning Windows" (an old British music hall gem.) The camera looks at the children's playgrounds while Paul plays "Pigalle." An overly florid "Cabaret" and a repeat of his signature tune conclude the video. There a bit of Blackpool Style manual hopping here and there which does make the keyboard viewing more interesting.

Our VCR indicates the album was recorded monaurally, which may account for some sound "cloudiness," particularly in the accompaniment. Paul is an entertainer and this video is a pleasant souvenir of Sandford Park. The video is in NTSC format (the American system) and is available for \$30.00 postpaid (add \$3.00 for shipping outside the US) from Cardinal Productions, P.O. Box 22035, Beachwood, OH 44122.

## BOOK REVIEW Theatre Organs: Today's Installations in Germany (Kinoorgeln Installationen der Gegenwart in Deutschland)

by Karl Heinz Dettke



Judd Walton's *Wurlitzer Installation List* (published in 1973 with a 1976 Supplement) documents eleven Wurlitzers that were shipped to Germany between 1927 and 1931. Dr. John Landon's *Behold The Mighty Wurlitzer* (1983) lists 17 theatre organs as being in Germany (seven Wurlitzers, seven Weltes, and three Christies) but he states this is only a partial listing and "...



many of these organs and theatres were destroyed in World War II." He also notes that a majority of German theatre organs were built by the original Welte firm (which was not associated with "US Welte" after World War I.)

This 1998 book documents in great detail the twelve theatre organs (nine in public venues and three private installations) which exist *today* in Germany. A soft bound 5-1/2 x 8-1/4 book, it contains 238 pages with 35 photographs and several line drawings. In addition to a complete history of each organ and its specifications, also found are a glossary, a section devoted to an overview of the theatre organ movement and an extensive list of references. Although Herr Dettke wrote most of the book, five other writers contributed some of the chapters on specific organs.

Unfortunately, the entire book is written in German - thus making this valuable and fascinating addition to organ literature virtually unusable by anyone not able to read that language. We used *Cassell's German-English Dictionary* in preparing this review, but it could give us only a glimpse at the wealth of information printed about each organ.

Public installations. Twenty three pages are devoted to the

2/13 Philipps organ recently restored in Berlin's Babylon Theatre. Next are nine pages about one of the original German Wurlitzers; the von Siemens residence 4/16 (Opus 2064) which was moved to Berlin's Music Museum in 1982. A Link 2/4 organ, from Ithaca, New York's Temple Theatre, is now housed in Dortmund's Federal Building. In Dusseldorf there is a 2-manual Welte from Weisbaden's Walhalla Theatre.

The second Wurlitzer, Opus 1920, a 2/6 Style 165, was originally shipped to Munich's Union Theatre but was repossessed in 1932, shipped to England, where it had several "homes" before it returned to Germany for installation at Frankfurt's Film Museum. Forty-one pages are devoted to the most famous Welte of all - the original installation 3/24 organ in Hamburg's NDR Broadcasting Studio. (See the review of Gerhard Gregor's 2 CD recording in the May/June issue). Next is the complete story of the unique Oskalyd (built by Walcker) 2/19 organ which, since 1980, has been playing in the King's Room of the Heidelberg Castle.

The other two public installations are both Welte organs. Mannheim's Technical Museum has a 2/9 while Potsdam's Film Museum has a 2/12. Thirty-five pages are

devoted just to these two instruments. All three of the private installations are "imports." First is the 3/7 (plus Melotone and Solo Cello) Compton, Opus A414, a 1937 installation at the Regal, Putney, which traveled to Brey am Rhein in 1987. Next is the 3/9 Kilgen, a 1926 organ from the Jayhawk Theatre in Topeka, Kansas, whose new home is in Frankfurt. Lastly is the 3/11 Möller (with rollplayer) now located in Weickersheim.

While this book may not be of interest to those who do not read German, it nevertheless is an obviously valuable addition to the regrettably small amount of material available about theatre organs in other parts of the world. Since most of these instruments have only recently been returned to fully playable condition, it is proof that theatre organs are alive and well in Deutschland. Available for 72 DM from Verlad Erwin Bochinsky GmbH & Co. KG, Munchener Strasse 45, D-60329, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, OR for \$68.00 (plus \$3.00 per order postage) from Organ Literature Foundation, 45 Norfolk Road, Braintree, MA 92184-5918.

## FOOTNOTE

A Footnote to the Carol Williams Wurlitzer Plus! review in the March 1998 Journal.

Mr. Richard Cole, Curator of The Musical Museum in Brentford, England, has written with additional information about their Wurlitzer, Opus 2174. Here are excerpts from his letter:

"Copies of the original Wurlitzer blueprints ... show the organ to have been built originally as 'Special 3 manual, Mr. Comstock - Chicago, Ill.' The date on these original blueprints is 18 September 1929, and the original (wiring) *schedule number* is #1038. The label affixed to the main cable also confirms this original order (Special for Mr. Comstock, Chicago. #1038 Tested 10 October 1929.) This original instrument was a 3 manual, 11 rank instrument.

"The organ was enlarged, with the addition of a Tuba Horn and Chimes ... and shipped to England at the end of 1931. The instrument was given a new (wiring) *schedule number*, #1099, and the newer, altered and updated blueprints are dated 18 December 1931. A handwritten note on the console blueprint carries the message 'Finished Feb. 8, Opened Feb. 15, 1932 by Reg Foort ...'

"I have always surmised, in view of the dates involved, that the organ was *canceled* ... the enlarged instrument was then shipped to England ready for installation at Kingston. I think it unlikely that the organ was ever actually installed in a Chicago location."

Our sincere thanks to Mr. Cole for this valuable information. 1999 ATOS Convention-goers would certainly enjoy a visit to The Musical Museum, which is near Kew Gardens and Heathrow, at 368 High Street, Brentford.



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# Closing Chord

## In Memoriam CON DOCKERTY

James D. (Doug) Bailey  
1929-1998



Doug Bailey, long time Potomac Valley chapter member and theatre organist, died of pneumonia March 24, 1998. Born in Washington, D.C., he was an English graduate of American University, where he also received a Master's Degree in communications. He began his career in local broadcasting in the 1940s. He did interviews on local radio stations as a teenager and became program director of American University's radio station while in college. In 1938, he became a page, working for WMAL and then for NBC radio where other pages included fellow American University graduate, Willard Scott.

As a young man, he played during intermissions on the Marr & Colton organ at the Hiser Theatre in Bethesda, Maryland, getting free practice time on the instrument in lieu of pay. Later, he did a three hour daily radio broadcast from the theatre as organist, pianist, and deejay. Self-taught, he played entirely by ear.

In the 1950s, he played organ and piano for WBCC radio in Bethesda, Maryland, and lectured at American University, where he served as advertising director and assistant public relations director. He also wrote radio-television columns for newspapers

and served as program director at several radio stations in the Washington area.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, he served as co-host with Charles Osgood (now of CBS radio/television) for a morning show on WFCR in Fairfax, Virginia, and produced live radio programs with the theatre pipe organ, from his Rockville, Maryland, studio. Doug's Möller was originally in Loew's Palace Theatre in Washington.

He founded Doug Bailey Advertising and Doug Bailey Films, Inc. in Rockville, where he produced, wrote, and directed commercials and documentary and trade films until his retirement. In his career, he received two Emmys, plus numerous other awards from radio and film making organizations, but he will be most remembered as a kind, optimistic, generous, and talented man who enriched our lives. *Donald Faehn*

## William J. Bunch



A service in witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in memory of William J. Bunch was held May 8, 1998, in Central Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington. Bill died May 2, from the effects of Parkinson's Disease after suffering from it for more than 15 years. He was 81.

Bill was born in Portland, Oregon, and grew up in the Grays Harbor area of Southwest Washington. Following graduation from the University of

Washington, he went to work for Sandy Balcom, Balcom & Vaughan Pipe Organ Co., of Seattle. In the late 30s and during W.W. II years, a lot of activity for B&V included removal of original installation theatre organs, removing their traps and percussions except chimes and harp, adding an 8' Dulciana, and reinstalling them in churches, schools, residences, mortuaries and skating rinks (the latter without Dulcianas!)

B&V began building their own organs following W.W. II. Bill resigned in 1955 to accept the position of Shop Superintendent with Aeolian-Skinner in Boston, where he remained for 11 years, rising to the position of Vice-President. He returned to Seattle in 1966 upon Sandy's retirement, and took over B&V which he ran until retiring at age 70. In addition to being a long time member of the AGO in Seattle and while in Boston, he worked with a core of theatre organ enthusiasts on the formation of the then ATOE. He had personal contact with many great names out of the past, here and abroad, in organ building and a substantial number of organ scholars and performing artists. Bill had a remarkable memory for detail and fortunately, before the effects of Parkinson's took his mind in his last years, he shared his vast library with the OHS and responded to interviews with a number of authors then in the process of gathering research for important books and articles on American organbuilding.

During his student days in the early 30s, he made extra money playing theatre organs live over radio, in dance halls, skating rinks and on Sundays, the 1932 2/8 Möller, in Seattle's Central Lutheran which he eventually rebuilt and enlarged into the 3/38 that was played at his memorial service. The Aeolian-Skinner staff relied upon his extensive skills in solving, often over the phone, engineering problems at installation sites or voicing/speech problems from his office in Boston. He had the gift for getting to and fixing almost any problem with



any type of playing action, quickly and in the least costly manner. He strongly supported the organ reforms begun at the onset of W.W. II and extensively developed thereafter.

Bill is survived by his wife, Maxine to whom he had been married for 55 years, four children and a host of grandchildren. The organ craft has lost a substantial contributor. Peace be to his memory. *Paul Sahlin*

## Patrick Shotton

All who knew Patrick Shotton grew to love him dearly. He was one of those kind people in the theatre organ hobby groups that made it fun to be associated with the theatre organ art-

form. Every now and then my telephone would ring in the morning and I would be treated to a conversation with Patrick. He was a true gentleman who was quite knowledgeable and had contacts dating from the 1950s when the American Theatre Organ Society was still the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts. Patrick's keen memory held so many historical points that I found it an education and a joy to converse with him. He often filled me in on some of the intricacies of the British Theatre Organ scene and many interesting points on the British builders. I never heard him say an unkind word about anyone and will miss that wonderful British accent that punctuated so many Saturday morn-

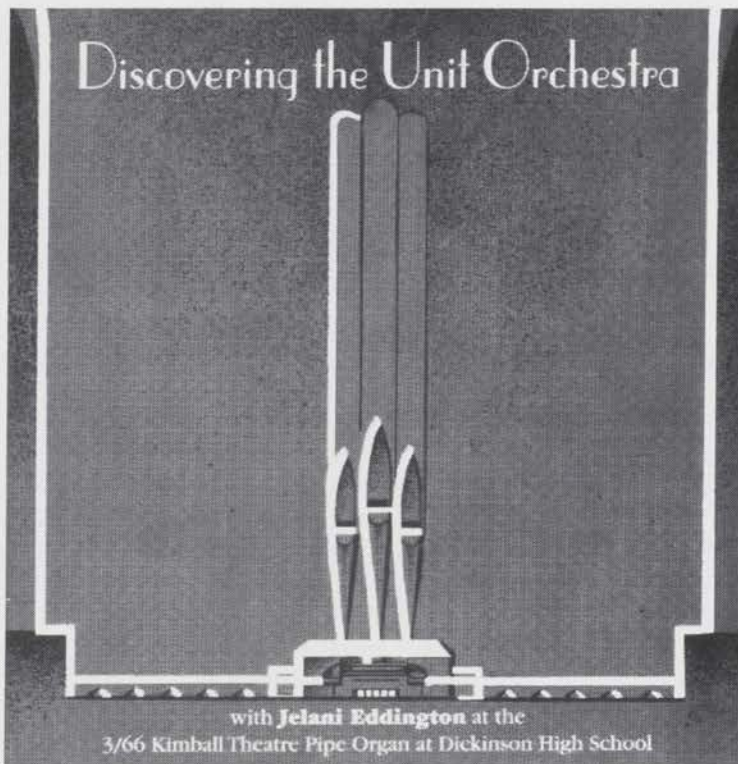


ings to give me seeds for thought. Patrick was a major asset to the theatre organ artform on both sides of the Atlantic. He will be sadly missed.

*Al Sefl*

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## ALAMO

George Webster: 210/656-4711

**San Antonio, Texas.** The Alamo Chapter is excited about the prospects of a new large theatre pipe organ coming to San Antonio. At the April 16 meeting, chapter President George Webster announced that possibility and introduced Steve Stendebach who heads up the Euro-Alamo Management's team which is planning an extensive renovation of the old Aztec Theatre in downtown San Antonio. Mr. Stendebach plans to develop a family atmosphere restaurant for the Aztec similar to the successful "theatre pizza parlors" found in many parts of the country although the menu will be more varied. The Aztec is conveniently located right on the famed "River Walk" which at the moment just happens to be Texas' No. 1 tourist attraction. According to Mr. Stendebach, the key ingredient for the success of this venture will be the installation of the right kind of instrument, large and capable enough to attract outstanding artists from all over the country and versatile enough to provide the musical sounds that most people are seeking.

The featured artist of the evening was Walter Strony who delivered his usual fabulous performance on George Webster's Allen Theatre III Plus. Among his hits were music from *Titanic* and *Showboat*, and "Nola" in which Walt must have changed keys at least ten times. Walter also provided an outstanding accompaniment for the silent film *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* starring Buster Keaton. After the tornado scenes, George Webster's Theatre III was in shambles ...

Steve Stendebach was able to persuade Walter to stay over until the next day for an escorted tour through the old Aztec Theatre and to solicit his thoughts concerning the project. Walt gave him a "thumbs up" and thought the Aztec was "quaint."

Harry L. Jordan



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## AUSTRALIA FELIX

Brian Pearson: INT + 61 8 8298 6201

**Warrendale, Australia.** We are pleased that two young Australians will be featured in the young organists competition concert during the 1998 San Francisco ATOS convention. Ryan Heggie of Adelaide and Heath Wooster of Melbourne have both appeared in the USA before, and will be living testimony of the popularity of the theatre organ throughout the English speaking world. Quite a few members of this chapter will be making the long, trans-Pacific flight to the convention despite the very disadvantageous exchange rate for our dollar as a result of the currency crises of our Asian trading partners.

This, of course, works to the advantage of American visitors to Australia and New Zealand. Next year's TOSA Easter convention will be held in Melbourne, which has a population of about 3,500,000 and six theatre pipe organs. Milwaukee's David Wickerham and the best Australian theatre organists will be the featured artists. In addition, streetcar and electric suburban railway buffs will have two of the world's most extensive systems as an added interest, to say nothing of preserved steam in the very beautiful nearby Dandenong Ranges.

The TOSA Easter convention in Adelaide this year was a huge success. Two American friends who are tireless conventioners at home said that it was the best that they had attended. Lew Williams was covered with glory, and received an unheard of four encores. Inevitably, most members of Australia Felix are also members of TOSA, and our retiring secretary, Gail Ward, as secretary of the convention sub-committee, and Ross Lange as its president, bore the main burden of the organization of this most successful event. Your correspondent played a minor role as a member of the sub-committee, and several other members of ATOS also worked hard to make it such a very enjoyable and memorable occasion.

ATOS members who are at any time visiting Australia should make contact with me well before leaving via the above telephone number or my e-mail address: bpearson@adelaide.on.net. I will be pleased to organize contacts for them (sometimes free accommodation) in all states, so that they will have the best chance of visiting our organ installations.

Brian Pearson

## CEDAR RAPIDS

William Peck: 319/393-4645

**Cedar Rapids, Iowa.** CRATOS continues to gear up for our Regional Convention this October here in Cedar Rapids with all aspects of it pretty well on schedule. Watch for articles in THE-ATRE ORGAN featuring the event with all important details and information.

Our other recent interesting activity was our spring spectacular in April when Hector Olivera came and presented his final United States theatre organ concert. As many of you have heard, he has made the decision to pursue the classical organ concerts and give up his playing those such as he did here last month. Our attendance for a theatre organ concert was the largest in many years. We had approximately 900 at the Paramount Theatre for the Performing Arts to listen to him give our 3/12 Wurlitzer an unbelievable work out. Last year, he performed for one of our Cedar Rapids community concert series. With that organization having 1,800 members, it was many of those people who came to this spectacular to hear him for a second time. This was a factor in our augmented attendance. Hector left from Cedar Rapids to meet his wife in Ohio and then directly on to Europe for one month of concerts, ending up in Paris for vacation.

Our May monthly meeting will be held at the Paramount with our picnic the following month. From there on, it will be all preparation for the Regional. Hope to see many of you here in Cedar Rapids for that event. *George K. Baldwin*



## CENTRAL FLORIDA

David Braun: 941/957-4266



Bob Baker at the Tampa Theatre. (A. Zeman photo)

**Tampa, Florida.** The chapter's annual meeting in March was held at the beautiful Tampa Theatre. Since it was to be election of officers, no guest artist was scheduled to play the 3/12 Wurlitzer. Our retiring president, Bill Shrive, was given the chapter's appreciation and best wishes. Bill has been a moving force in all our endeavors for many years. At the conclusion of the meeting, Bob Baker presided at the console. Bob is in charge of scheduling the organists to play each day before the featured movie is shown. He opened the musical part of the day as only Bob could. His bouncy, happy personality is reflected in his arrangements and style. He made everyone smile and as a result, more people played at open console. Bob, as is his way, was there to help all who asked. Our new slate of officers and directors was introduced and the new president, Dave Braun, thanked all for their support and spoke of his aspirations and hopes for the future. It was a pleasant afternoon as indicated by the reluctance of the members to leave.

April found us at the home of Peg and Joe Mayer. Our guest artist was a new member Johnnie June Carter. She is a most interesting and talented lady. A fifth generation Floridian is a rarity. Her father was a country doctor who used the living room of his home as a waiting room. It had a piano and the rest is history. Johnnie went from piano to organ particularly after she first heard the Tampa Theatre organ. Since then, she has taught music, played in churches as



Johnnie June Carter at the Conn 652.

(J. Mayer photo)

well as at the Miss Florida Contest held in Sarasota. After losing her father, she stopped playing. Fortunately, she went on a tour of the Tampa Theatre and our own John Otterson was responsible for getting her back to the organ bench and joining our chapter. She played a varied program on the Conn 652 and as it was Palm Sunday, she closed with a hymn that left nary a dry eye. At the April meeting of our neighboring chapter in Sarasota, our two wonderful organists, David Braun and Bob Baker performed. It was a smashing success as they go together like peanut butter and jelly. It was delightful. And, another member, Rosa Rio, whom we all know and love, played to a sellout crowd in Detroit. She did that in spite of rain, sleet, and snow. To hear Rosa perform, we would brave any weather!

Peg Mayer

## CONNECTICUT VALLEY

Juan Cardona, Jr.: 203/426-2443

**Huntington, Connecticut.** Dr. Alan Goodnow entertained an enthusiastic group of CVTOS members and guests at our annual Birthday Party celebration held February 28 at Thomaston Opera House. His selections were mainly from Broadway shows and were very enjoyable.

A beautiful spring day on March 15 brought out a sizable audience of theatre organ enthusiasts when Ron Rhode appeared in concert at the Thomaston Opera House. Only the day before, we encountered heavy wet snow and unplowed roads while driving Ron to the opera house for practice. He must have brought the Arizona sunshine with him for, miraculously, Sunday was a much different day.



Ron Rhode at the Marr & Colton, Thomaston Opera House. (Art Bates photo)

Ron's concert highlighted pieces from his latest recording but included many Romberg favorites and several marches (which he does so well). The audience really enjoyed it and many asked when we plan to have this outstanding performer return to Thomaston. Very soon we hope!

Our May 9 concert at Shelton High School featured Jelani Eddington at the 3/13 Austin. "He's having a good time up there," someone said. Indeed, his music took full advantage of that which the organ is capable, while showing how talented this young man is. From his opening "Wunderbar" to the final encore of Chopin's "Fantasie Impromptu," he was in command of the manuals and the audience. Connecticut audiences have come to know him and look forward to his concerts. Jane Bates



Dr. Alan Goodnow entertained at the CVTOS annual birthday party at Thomaston Opera House. (Art Bates photo)



## CUMBERLAND VALLEY

Robert Eyer, Jr.: 717/264-7886

**Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.** The Capitol Theatre in Chambersburg, home of the chapter's Möller, is enjoying strong community support and the organ continues to be prominently featured. Behind the scenes, the organ crew has been busy in preparation for installing a five-rank chest it has refurbished; among the tasks nearly completed are designing and installing new winding, restoring pipework, and installing rebuilt tremors. Also, the swell shades for the Main (left) chamber have been refinished and lined with new felt. Led by crew chief Mark Cooley, the group working on these tasks includes Max and Ruth Cooley, Bob and Jason Eyer, John McBride, and Nelson and Kevin Rotz.

*Bob Maney*

## DAIRYLAND

Corey E. Olsen: 414/646-8647

**Racine/Milwaukee, Wisconsin.** At our April social, we were privileged to hear two totally different organs in one afternoon! The setting was in Racine at member Father Tom Lijewski's church, St. John Nepomuk Catholic Church. The first organ we heard was in Father Tom's rectory. The organ is a 3-manual custom computer classic Allen. He entertained us with show tunes and arrangements by Jesse Crawford and demonstrated the authentic sounds the computerized instrument can make, such as chimes, bells, woodwinds and



*The Ron Smolen Big Band at the Dairyland Spring Concert. (Sandy Knuth photo)*

piano. The next organ we heard was located in the church balcony, where they have a 3/13 Wangerin pipe organ. The church organist, Fred Bach, played both the organ and piano for us. We especially enjoyed his inspirational rendition of a medley composed of "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" and "The Hallelujah Chorus" arranged by Lorenz. Then it was back to the rectory for refreshments and open console.

With a full house, we held our spring spectacular on May 3, at the Avalon Theatre in Milwaukee. We titled the event "Swing Into Spring," which was very appropriate for the day. The organist was Dave Wickerham at the 3/26 Wurlitzer. We also had the Ron Smolen Big Band from the Chicago area. This group not only played dance music, but put on a show! We had professional ballroom dancers, Lloyd and Sally Thompson, who also happen to be DTOS members. Sally was Mrs.



*Dave Wickerham at the Avalon's 3/26 Wurlitzer. (Sandy Knuth photo)*

Wisconsin Senior in 1997 and traveled all over the state in that capacity, with dancing as her talent.

The organ and orchestra took turns playing many of our favorite songs from

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the 30s and 40s as well as playing many numbers together. At the same time, the Thompson's were dancing on stage. There was something to please everyone. The concert included a sing-along, in addition to the familiar old tunes. From the movie, *Titanic*, Dave played "My Heart Will Go On." All the performers on stage seemed to be having fun, which was sensed by the audience, too. It truly was a fun afternoon.

Sandy Knuth

## EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Donald Phipps: 508/990-1214

**New Bedford, Massachusetts.** Richard Knight Auditorium, Babson College, March 14 and Phil Kelsall from the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool, England, produced musical magic from our pipes. This was his third concert for us, and what a reception he received from the full house! It's a long, expensive journey across the Atlantic for about two hours at our console, but his enthusiasm is infectious with the "bug" transmitted to his audience. A wonderful evening with many varieties of music played accurately. All music was memorized, plus a fine console personality won him even more friends.

Our artist opened and closed with the Reginald Dixon favorite, "I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside." Mr. Kelsall utilized a good mix of fast and slow numbers, many pops and hymns with much double pedaling, many combination changes, inter-manual work and also use of our Kawai upright piano. He



Phil Kelsall, Donald Phipps and Dennis Shaw being presented with a Certificate of Appreciation and Life Membership in EMCATOS. At right: Phil Kelsall before our new 4/18 console. (Carolyn Wilcox photos)

produced the "Blackpool Sound" with his tangos, waltzes, fox trots, quick steps, etc. as our Wurlitzer has similar pipework to that in the Tower.

During intermission, President Donald Phipps, asked Phil to present a Certificate of Appreciation with EMCATOS life membership to Dennis Shaw for brining his friend to our shores and providing certain financial help.

Lightening fast playing of "Hold That Tiger" had our organ first roaring and then down to a whisper. This was but one of many crowd pleasers and Phil received much applause. Mr. Kelsall has come and gone, but memories of his visit will linger for a long time. We expect him back in the year 2000.

Member Edward Wawrzynowicz, provided the music for our March social. His numbers were obviously well



rehearsed, and his smooth style made for nice easy listening.

Two silent comedies were screened at our April 18 public offering at Babson, both featuring Harold Lloyd and Mildred Davis. Our accompanist, Chad Weirick, superbly fit his music to the action. *A Sailor Made Man* (1921) and *Grandma's Boy* (1922) were hilarious. Chad also played a short concert before hand, ably demonstrating some silent film music provided for organists with themes for various situations: mystery, pathos, love, etc. Two very well known men in the organ field, Ken Crome and John Ferguson, were present and introduced.

Member, Robert Evans, provided the entertainment for our April meeting with two great films. *A Tour of The Wurlitzer Factory*, in black and white, showed the many operations required in

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## EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS cont.

building a pipe organ and made one realize how labor-intensive it was, and is. The second film, *Legendary Theatre Organists*, was in color and featured Gaylord Carter introducing Jesse Crawford, Lew White, Ann Leaf, Don Baker and Reginald Foort. Mr. Carter played some solo work and theatre pipe organ music was heard throughout. Rare footage made up both films with everyone giving rapt attention to the subject material.

Stanley C. Garniss



GSTOS Presidents at the 25th Anniversary. L to R: Peter Panos, Bruce William Zaccagnino, Cathy Martin (present President), Bob Balfour (charter President), and George Andersen. (Jimmy Vanore photo)

## GARDEN STATE

Dr. Catherine Martin: 973/256-5480

**Trenton, New Jersey.** Unlike General George Washington who crossed the Delaware River to capture Trenton, New Jersey, our members crossed the Delaware on March 22, and headed to the Pennsylvania home of our GSTOS members Jim and Dot Shean. The incentive to travel the distance was the warm hospitality, good food and plenty of music played on the 3/19 Wurlitzer which Jim installed and added to over the years.

President Cathy Martin, now recovered from surgery, called for and conducted a full agenda meeting. When the meeting finished, the party started and continued the remainder of the evening.

We were delighted to have Bolton Holmes join the meeting. He was the featured organist at the Lincoln Theatre in Trenton which had a 3/16 Möller theatre pipe organ. While many theatres closed in the 50s, the Lincoln remained opened, having radio broadcasts, pictures, concerts and special stage shows which featured the pipe organ. Bolton told us that outside of



Bolton Holmes was featured organist at the Lincoln Theatre in Trenton and was the last to play the 3/16 Möller now in Trenton War Memorial. (Jimmy Vanore photo)

Radio City Music Hall, he was the only organist playing in the RKO theatres. When the theatre closed, it remained silent until the building was slated for destruction. The Möller was saved and donated by the National State Bank to the Trenton War Memorial Commission in 1974.

Garden State Chapter signed a contract with the Commission and the completely restored Möller was placed in the War Memorial Auditorium. The dedicatory concert in 1976 featured Ashley Miller as organist.

Garden State Chapter celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a festive party, April 23, at the Galaxy Triplex Theatre in Guttenburg, New Jersey. The Galaxy is a unique theatre situation in a mall which is part of a three tower, high-rise apartment complex built on the Palisades opposite New York City. The arrangements were made by member Nelson Page, owner of the theatre, and our Vice-President Robert Miloche. A live brass quintet greeted guests as they arrived in the upper level lobby; champagne and a laden buffet table set the party atmosphere. Jeff Barker, house organist, provided background music on the 2/6 lobby Möller, while members and friends gathered in groups remembering old times. Dessert and coffee were served in the lower level of the theatre. This level contains the 3/12 Kimball theatre pipe organ which is placed in the largest of three theatres. During the early evening, slides of places and faces from the past 25 years were shown on the big screen. When all the members and guests were seated, President Cathy Martin presented awards to Katherine Lordi and Bruce Pearson to show our appreciation for their support in moving the "Wonder Morton" into the Loew's Journal Square Theatre. She also gave fun awards to members belonging to GSTOS the longest time, to the newest member, the farthest distance traveled, to the oldest and the youngest. This was enjoyed by all. Jeff Barker accompanied a short film featuring Fatty Arbuckle. The remainder of the evening was open console on the Kimball. Eric Fahner, George Fenn, Ashley Miller and Bruce Williams entertained us. Many thanks to Nelson Page and Bob Miloche for a great memorable anniversary party.

Jimmy Vanore

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Ray Norton seated at "Goldie" surrounded by the local media.

## HUDSON-MOHAWK

Frank Hackert: 518/355-4523

**Schenectady, New York.** March 11, an event special for all lovers of theatre organ music and classic theatres occurred on the stage of Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady, New York. Silent movie organist, and Hudson-Mohawk chapter honorary, Ray Norton was interviewed and videotaped under the auspices of Proctor's Theatre Historical Committee and the New York State Museum. The two hour interview was covered by the local media including WRGB television's Kelly Boland and reporters for *The Gazette* and *The Times Union*. WRGB ran a spot on Ray during its evening news and the two newspapers printed stories with pictures.

The 91-year-old artist was the focus of attention as part of the Historical Committee's project to compile an oral history of the theatre. The Museum's officials were interested in Ray's reminiscences because in September 1997 he donated his 1923 Wurlitzer pipe organ, formerly installed in the now defunct Plaza Theatre in Schenectady, to the museum. During the interview, Ray shared his memories and wisdom of over 70 years of a musical life as a pianist, organist and piano tuner. He was hired by Proctor's Theatre in 1927 when he was only 20 years of age to play the theatre's Wurlitzer pipe organ (not "Goldie" the current installation) to accompany silent movies and fill in between vaudeville acts. He treated his rapt listeners to several tunes on Goldie including a demonstration of the type of music he used to play during the silents when he had no prior notice of the

movie's content but had to rely on the large repertoire of songs stored in his memory. Over the course of his career, Ray played at most of the theatres in Schenectady. During the interview, Ray played his favorite song "Out of Nowhere" to all who love theatre organ music and appreciate the legacy of veterans like Ray, he will always be "Somewhere" in our hearts.

The March meeting was held in the Guild Room at Proctor's Theatre. Member John Wiesner provided an excellent program presenting state-of-the-art MIDI sequencing and synthesizing technology. John is an innovative area performer of roller skating music who has developed a popular style of playing which has been adopted by rinks nationwide. An opportunity for open console was also provided for chapter members. The April meeting saw the nomination of officers for the 1998-99 season. The program for the meeting took place on the stage of Proctor's Theatre and consisted of three mini-concerts on "Goldie" by chapter members Bill Menz, David Lester and new member Montreal native Ken Albert. All three performances were well received by listeners. Open console and refreshments followed.

The free noon-time concert series sponsored by Proctor's Theatre and the Hudson-Mohawk Chapter continued in March and April with artists Al Moser and John Wiesner. Attendance was up for each concert, perhaps signaling the emergence from winter hibernation of area concert-goers. Ray Norton attended the April noon concert and was affectionately recognized from the stage.

Norene Grose



Artist John Wiesner in the Proctors Theatre Guild Room at the March meeting.

## JOLIET

Jim Stenke: 847/534-1343

**Joliet, Illinois.** Since the last chapter news, JATOE completed its East Coast Get-Away on the last weekend of April. On Saturday, the Wanamaker (Lord & Taylor) organ was a pleasure to hear with some of our members climbing into the chambers to see the inner workings. Saturday evening, Lew Williams provided a great program at Dickinson High School. Sunday started off with the Southern New Jersey Chapter meeting with us for brunch at the Sunnybrook Ballroom. One of our members, Warren York did a great job for us when he took the console. That afternoon we heard Elizabeth Melcher just knock our socks off with her classical performance at Longwood Gardens. We thank the Dickinson Theatre Organ Society for providing open console for us and also setting up the Sunday evening meal. Both groups enjoyed each others company while dining on stage at the Dickinson High School. Monday morning we visited the Allen Organ Co. factory with Tom Hazleton as our surprise artist. Tom always does a great job. The last stop before parting for home was the Trivo Company where most of us were very interested in the making of reed pipes. This was a great trip.

On May 3, we held our last social for the summer, with Tony Brandolino playing us. Tony is the former Director of Programming at the Rialto Theatre. He is an accomplished musician and did a fine job for us.

The Rialto Barton is undergoing a change this summer with the addition of 3 more ranks of strings. The total compliment will be 27 ranks for this great organ.

Mark your calendars for two exciting events coming up this fall. On September 13, we are having a "Texas BBQ" with Dan Bellomy as our artist for the day. There will also be open console time for those attending.

The main event for JATOE with year will be the "Pipe Organ Extravaganza III" on November 14, 1998. Artists for that evening will be Lew Williams, Kay McAbee, Jelani Eddington, Walt Strony, Larry Dalton on the Steinway with the Rialto Symphony Orchestra. There will be other surprises for those attending. In conjunction with the Extravaganza,



## JOLIET cont.

JATOE is planning the "Rialtofest Weekend," with proposed events as follows: Friday, November 13, Jelani Eddington, Tom Hazleton at the Sanfilippo Victorian Mansion. Dinner at the Carousel Room, and then on to Mundelein for a Lew Williams concert at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary. Saturday morning, November, 14, a concert at the Gateway Theatre with the artist to be announced. Catered dinner at the Union Station in Joliet and then the POE III at the Rialto Theatre. Sunday a continental breakfast at the hotel and back to the Rialto for Kay McAbee and Walt Strony. Sunday afternoon, we will travel to Beggars Pizza with Dave Wickerham as our artist.

For information call Jim Patak at: 708/562-8538.

## LAND O'LAKES

Roger R. Dalziel: 715/262-5086

### Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota.

It's too soon to start celebrating the victory, but local organ enthusiasts could perhaps be forgiven for admiring what could be the first glimmerings of daylight at the end of a very long tunnel. Efforts to secure an \$87 million financing package from the 1998 Minnesota Legislature were successful, and a construction management team for the \$175 million expansion of the Minneapolis Convention Center has already been chosen. The next step will be to resume restoration of the 10,000-pipe Mighty Kimball organ, with the purpose of installing it in the 4,200-seat theatre which is a planned portion of the newly designed center expansion. If the organ renovation team can now persuade the Minneapolis City Council to act, perhaps the Kimball project can start rolling again; it's long overdue.

The next artist scheduled to appear at the Phipps Center in nearby Hudson,

Wisconsin, is Barry Baker, who will perform at the console of the 3/16 Wurlitzer on May 15. Baker is planning to present a Boston Pops-style program of show tunes and light classics, including an eclectic array of rhythms and tempos featuring the works of George Gershwin, Cole Porter and Jerome Kern. We are all looking forward to his performance with keen anticipation.

Thomas Murray, professor of organ at Yale University, will play the 4/108 Aeolian Skinner at the University of Minnesota's Northrop Auditorium, also on the date of May 15. (He will likely attract the attendance of any souls who cannot travel as far as Wisconsin!) Regarded as one of the nation's premier concert organists, Murray is well known for his transcriptions for the organ of orchestral repertoire. The campaign to restore the Northrop organ has sparked an increasingly spirited fund drive seeking "organ donors," at a suggested \$200 per pipe, to contribute to the restoration of all of the 6,975 pipes in the instrument. Target date for completion of the drive is July 1, 2000. *John Webster*

## LONDON & SOUTH OF ENGLAND

Gwen Light: 01932 565819

Iain Flitcroft's performance at the Woking Leisure Centre in March was a pleasure to listen to. He played a wide range of well known tunes. Les Rawl's guest organist at our monthly concert was Graham Wright. His selection of music was enjoyed by the members present.

The annual general meeting was held at St. Richards Hall, Northolt on 22 April. Judith Rawle retired as chairman after her term of office and Jim Bruce was appointed as chairman to take her place.

We had a very enjoyable evening at

the end of April when Janet Dowsett was at the console of Les Rawle's Wurlitzer at Northolt.

Our April concert at the Woking Leisure heard Len Rawle give a superb performance at the console of the ex-Edmonton Wurlitzer. Len played an interesting selection of music.

*Gwen Light*

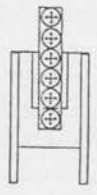
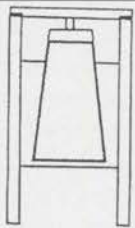
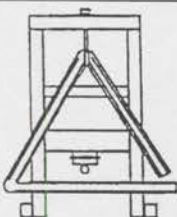
## LOS ANGELES

Joseph McFarland: 213/256-1469

**Los Angeles, California.** If there were any cobwebs in the pipes of the 3/23 Ross Reed Wurlitzer in Pasadena City College, they are surely gone now after Charlie Balogh's March 21 concert. Charlie's program was a well-balanced mix of jazz and tunes from the 40s and 50s composed by George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and others. When alerted at intermission that there were more young people in the audience than usual, Charlie readily agreed to do a musical tour of the organ, followed by the theme from *Titanic*.

Prior to the concert, LATOS got a "cheap shameless plug" on a very popular early morning AM radio show "Handel Yourself in the Morning" by participating in a program where organizations buy breakfast for the program host, Bill Handel and his crew. Bill not only mentioned the Charlie Balogh event on the program, but then brought his family to the event. He was so excited about the theatre pipe organ that he devoted nearly ten minutes of the following Monday's broadcast to raving about the instrument, the music, and the artist. He told his crew that he wanted all of them at the next concert.

LATOS and theatre organ in general, got another boost in April when *The Los Angeles Times* did a feature article on the 70th anniversary of the installation of the 3/14 Wurlitzer in the Orpheum Theatre in downtown Los Angeles

		
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which included three color pictures. One was of Shirley Obert seated at the console, the second was a console shot, and the third was of Susan Lewandowski practicing at the Redford in Detroit. The article gave a brief history of the Wurlitzer Company and quoted ATOS President Harry Heth, LATOS Chair Donn Linton, and others.

In honor of the 70th anniversary event, with the support and encouragement of John Olivan representing the Orpheum Theatre owner, Metropolitan Theatres, LATOS sponsored an unusual Saturday morning event featuring Bob Salisbury, organist at the 4/16 Page in the Avalon Theatre on Catalina Island. Thanks in part to the publicity generated by *The Los Angeles Times* feature article, there were over 700 paid admissions plus an unusually large number of children who were admitted free when accompanied by an adult. Attendees included people from Orange County, San Diego, Palm Springs, as well as people from Los Angeles that had not previously known about the Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ in the Orpheum Theatre. Bob's program opened with "Cloe" from the opening concert program found written on the wall of the Solo Chamber which had been played by Neuman Alton, the first house organist. Music from movies and television, including many of the Disney shows and *The Muppets*, followed and the program was narrated by Bob's wife, Mary Salisbury.

Dick Loderhouse, owner of the Bay Theatre in Seal Beach and the former New York Paramount studio organ installed therein, invited LTOS to open house on May 2. So many people took part in the open console session that Dick suggested a break to let the blower cool off during which he reminisced about his involvement in the world of theatres, organs, and artists in the New

York area.

Future LATOS events this year include: a *Titanic* theme show with John Ledwon on the Ross Reed Wurlitzer at Pasadena City College, August 22; a weekend trip to Catalina Island with a mini-concert by Bob Salisbury and open console on the 4/16 Page in the Avalon Theatre, and a November event at the San Gabriel Civic Auditorium 3/16 Wurlitzer featuring Rob Richards and "friends." LATOS is always delighted to have ATOS members from out of town join us.

Wayne Flottman

## MANASOTA

Charles Pierson: 941/924-0674

**Sarasota, Florida.** Work on the installation of our Wurlitzer theatre organ continues. Both large blowers have been hoisted into a chamber near the blower room. Two muffler boxes are in place on top of the blower enclosures. Wind line material has been delivered with several of the larger pieces in place. Construction of the new 4-manual console continues to be delayed. By the time this appears, we hope to have the larger pipe chests at least into their proper chamber, if not winded. At the shop, work continues with cleaning, repairing and shellacking of appropriate metal pipes. Norman Arnold and Chuck Pierson serve as crew chiefs for the project.

Bob Baker played the Charles Ringling Aeolian pipe organ for the May graduation procession at the University of South Florida/New College. The chapter maintains this organ for the University.

Our May meeting was at Grace Baptist Church, the site of our Wurlitzer installation. Those who chose to climb the ladders, got a first hand glimpse of the effort expended to date. A barrel organ was displayed by Dick Leis from

the Central Florida Chapter.

The annual meeting and election of officers was in June. Our thanks go to those leaving office, and congratulations to the new officers.

Carl Walker



Ron Rhode Concert - "Broadway Thru The Years." L to R: Penny Francis, Ron Rhode, and Gil Francis. Ron's new release was very popular at the concert. (Bo Hanley photo)

## MOTOR CITY

Thomas Hurst: 248/477-6660

**Detroit, Michigan.** March 28, Ron Rhode was presented in concert at the Redford Theatre Barton organ. His program was titled "Broadway Through the Years." He played music from the great musical stage era.

Our theatre is taking on a new look with all the painting and restoration work that is being done by George McCann.

The Motor City Theatre Organ Society was chosen by Preservation Wayne as the 1998 recipient of the "Pioneer Award" for excellence in preservation of the Redford Theatre. The presentation was made on Saturday evening, March 21, at the prestigious Detroit Club in downtown Detroit. Preservation Wayne is Detroit's only full-time staffed architectural preserva-

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## MOTOR CITY cont.

tion organization whose mission is to preserve, promote, and protect the neighborhoods and buildings that define and distinguish Detroit's unique character.

Presenter, Michael Hauser, began by narrating a slide presentation on the Redford Theatre. He covered the history of the Redford and Motor City Theatre Organ Society's involvement in its preservation and restoration. He presented the plaque to our President, Tom Hurst. In accepting the award, Tom made mention of the common goal shared by all our members in perpetuating the Redford Theatre and its Barton theatre pipe organ. Donald Martin, Chairman of Restoration, David Martin, and Dorothy Van Steenkiste were the honorees at the dinner together with Tom Hurst. It was a wonderful experience, but more importantly, all of us at MCTOS can feel proud in knowing that our efforts at the Redford are being recognized and appreciated by others. The plaque will be displayed in the outer lobby.

John Lauter and Mike Tyo will be featured at the Barton and new Technics SX-F100 organ on September 13. Lee Erwin will be accompanying a silent film on October 3, and Steve Schlesing, Pierre Fracalanza and Dan Maslanka will perform in our Christmas Program on December 12.

For more information write: Motor City Theatre Organ Society, 17360 Lahser Rd., Detroit, MI 48219. Phone: 331/537-2560 or visit our Internet site at <http://theatreorgans.com/mi/redford>.

*Dorothy Van Steenkiste*

## NEW YORK

David Kopp: 973-305-1255

**New York, New York.** March 15, the New York Chapter presented British organist Carol Williams in concert on the 3/15 Austin-Morton theatre organ at Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York. While many in the audience were surprised to hear Carol open a theatre organ concert with the familiar strains of "Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor," they were just as surprised to hear her segue directly from Bach to a toe-tapping arrangement of "Brazil." Carol's unusual opener demonstrated clearly that she is completely at home on



*Preservation Wayne Celebration - March 21, 1998 at the Detroit Club in Detroit, Michigan. MCTOS was presented with the "Pioneer Award" for their work in saving the historic Redford Theatre. Chuck Forbes, who has made significant contributions to preserving Detroit, including moving the Gem Theatre, Century Club building, and the Elwood Bar and Grill, was the evening's guest speaker. He was presented an award for outstanding dedication to the cause of preservation. Back row (L to R): Chuck Forbes, Tom Hurst, David Martin, Dorothy Van Steenkiste. Front: Donald Martin, Restoration Chairman. (Elayne B. Gross photo)*

both the classical and the popular side of the organ. Her program featured variety in musical selections, styling and registration. Brisk sales of her CDs and cassettes in the lobby, along with a sustained ovation that brought her back for an encore, showed that the audience appreciated Carol's performance. Open console followed the concert, with several members taking a turn at the organ. Thanks to the dedicated Chaminade organ crew, Brother Bob Lahey, Ken Ladner, Dennis Morrelly and Bob Atkins, the Austin-Morton was concert ready and in top form.

May 3, Jelani Eddington took a day off from studying for his final exams at Yale Law School to perform an excellent concert for us at the Long Island University/Brooklyn Paramount 4/26 Wurlitzer. Jelani rode the console up from the basement into the spotlight in the movie palace-turned-gymnasium with the popular opener, "From This Moment On." A beautiful rendering of "Here's That Rainy Day" showed off the lush strings and voxes of the big Wurlitzer, and was very appropriate for the weather outside. Other highlights included an excellent medley of

Gershwin tunes that brought "bravo's" from the audience, and a beautifully haunting rendition of the Beatles' song, "Yesterday," featuring several of the orchestral reeds. Jelani closed the delightful afternoon of music with classics from the theatre organ masters: the George Wright arrangement of "Jealousy," and in response to the audience's call for an encore, Ashley Miller's wonderful arrangement of Chopin's "Fantaisie Impromptu," both flawlessly rendered. The audience showed their appreciation for this talented young artist with enthusiastic applause and a sell out business of all his CDs and tapes at the record table. Thanks to several long days of expert work by Brant Duddy and Biff Buttler, and the tireless efforts of LIU crew chief Warren Laliberte assisted by Margie Plows, the big Wurlitzer was in fine tune and sounding better than ever. During intermission, Chairman Dave Kopp presented a plaque from the New York Chapter to his predecessor, John Vanderlee, in recognition of John's contributions to the chapter during his two year tenure as chair.

*Tom Stehle*





British organist Carol Williams played a concert for the New York Chapter at the Chaminade High School 3/15 Austin-Morton.



Jelani Eddington played the May concert for the New York Chapter at the Long Island University/Brooklyn Paramount 4/26 Wurlitzer.

## NORTH FLORIDA

Dave Walters: 904/781-2613

**Jacksonville, Florida.** In the six month period from November, 1997, through April, 1998, several events of the chapter were mighty convincing that, wherever there is music in the tradition of the theatre organ, there is soul and passion.

According to those in attendance, memories of the concert in November performed by Gene Stroble in the fellowship hall of the River Baptist Church, Hilliard, Florida, on his Mighty Magical Musical Machine are as vivid as yesterday's memories. Gene transported his customized Allen digital theatre organ with its two authentic external

organ chambers from home to church for this special concert.

Preliminary to the main act, a silent movie comedy with theatre organ accompaniment, Gene opened with several selections, including requests from the audience. He then displayed his virtuosity as a silent movie accompanist playing his unique theatre organ, with its special traps and toy counter, bringing much realism to the action on the screen. Rosemary Sikes supplied the delicious refreshments that followed.

The Christmas meeting consisted of electing the officers and music played by Gene Stroble. Gene played a program of carols from ancient times to the present, engaging us in enthusiastic carol

singing. After the musical program, we were treated to delicious refreshments provided by Patsy Pound.

In January, the City of Jesup, Georgia, was reintroduced to silent movies accompanied by theatre organ. Again, Gene Stroble transported his Mighty Magical Music Machine to the Jesup Presbyterian Church for two silent movie presentations, one with Laurel and Hardy and the other with Buster Keaton. The local newspaper called Gene's performance "an upbeat approach to organ music." Before the movies, "His selections ranged from classics to gospel songs to Gershwin." "... The silent movie presentations were a veritable showcase for the organ's diversity of sound."

At the regular January meeting hosted by Erle and Marge Renwick, Dave Walters, at the controls of an expanded Gulbransen Rialto K, played in grand organ style a wide variety of music, including the new hymn first played at the funeral of Princess Diana, "Make Me A Channel of Your Peace." The concert was followed by the serving of delicious refreshments and lively conversation.

The February meeting consisted of a discussion/planning meeting followed by a potpourri of music played by the various members present. We were encouraged to dream and to plan the future of our chapter based on the dreams. Since we are no closer to the realization of a chapter home with an organ than we were in the beginning, we need to think in different channels.

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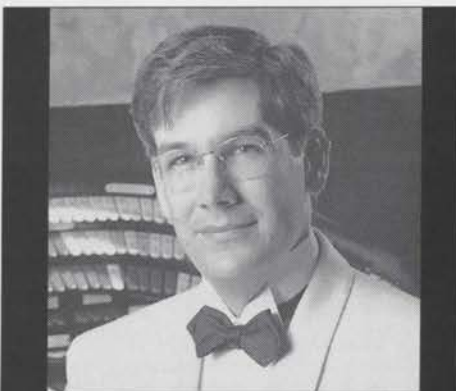
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## NORTH FLORIDA cont.

The meeting turned out to be enjoyable but no closer to our objective.

The March meeting in the Palatka home of Jim Lawson, was a most happy event. Jim, on his way to recovery from serious illness, with the help of caring Marie Stevens, hosted members and friends. Jim was the featured artist playing a Gulbransen Paragon. Hearing Jim play from his extensive repertoire, put us in mind of the early days of the chapter when he used to sit at the console and transform the home atmosphere into the atmosphere of one of the great movie palaces situated in Eastern United States between Rhode Island and Atlanta. The former Ocean State Theatre in Providence and the Atlanta Fox were not strangers to Jim. After the concert, the usual open console period, including refreshments and the exchange of pleasantries, became the order of the afternoon.

In April, we met at President, Dave Walter's place where Dave had three organs available. Most recently, he added a Gulbransen Premiere. Prior to this meeting, it was announced that there would be no business discussed at this meeting; only music played. Several members tried out the organs. Jim Lawson, even in his still serious condition, was in attendance with Marie Stevens. More devotion to theatre organ and its music can hardly be found.

*Erle Rentwick*

## NORTH TEXAS

Donald Peterson: 972/517-2562

**Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas.** We have begun the step-by-step process of getting our Robert-Morton in the Lakewood Theatre, returned to playable condition. The first step was to negotiate a new agreement with the operator/lessee of the Lakewood Theatre that assures our tenure and operations in the theatre. Beginning with the text of the earlier agreement, a revised agreement was written and approved by the chapter officers and then presented to the Lakewood Theatre operator for his appraisal and approval prior to putting the agreement into effect. He has told us that he wants to have our organ to remain in the theatre and likes the proposed basis for the joint chapter/theatre usage of the instrument once it has been restored and enhanced



Members of the Turtle Creek Chorale, with Danny Ray at the Rodgers 360, entertained at the North Texas, April meeting. Below: Danny Ray also played the Rodgers 360 for North Texas, at the Forshey Music Company in Dallas.



as we have stated. We have scheduled a meeting between officers of the chapter and the theatre operator when we hope to conclude the agreement and begin the work on the organ and the chambers. Our target is to complete this work in time for participation in the 50th anniversary celebration of the Lakewood Theatre in October 1998.

Program chairman, Don Reasons, has been finding alternate organ-equipped venues while we are unable to use our chapter organ. He has been successful in finding places that are most suitable. In April, we returned to the Forshey Church organ studios which is home to the new Rodgers 360 theatre organ. To play the Rodgers for our chapter meeting, Don selected North Texas member, Danny Ray. Danny is an accomplished organist who has played for our meetings many times in the past and is sure to always present a most entertaining program. This time, Danny proposed a departure from the norm by offering to get members of the prestigious Turtle Creek Chorale of Dallas to participate in the program, accompanied by Danny on the theatre organ. Mr. Ray is music director for the Chorale and was successful in getting about 20 of the Chamber Chorale members to volunteer to sing for our meeting.

Danny selected "Broadway" as the theme for the Chorale's program and they found a wealth of hits from Broadway shows with which to thrill us. This group is most talented and painstakingly trained to hone their presentations and are always in demand. Among the many venues where they have performed, is Dallas' Meyerson Symphony Center (with symphony

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4/29 Wurlitzer - Adelaide, Australia

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orchestras).

Danny preceded and followed the chorale performance with solos on the Rodgers 360 that showed his fine musical talent and the beautiful sound of this marvelous instrument. It was as close to the true sound of theatre pipes as you can imagine and was a very enjoyable experience. *Irving Light*



*Don Campbell and Dave Billmire working diligently on the keyboard restoration project at the Emery Theatre.*

## OHIO VALLEY

Jan Peek: 606/331-0962

**Cincinnati, Ohio.** The Ohio Valley Chapter hosted the Central Ohio Chapter on March 15, at the Emery Theatre. After a brief chapter meeting by both groups, the Emery Wurlitzer was brought to life by Jim Barton, one of the Emery's organists, who presented a 20-minute concert. Immediately following, the concession stand was opened for all to enjoy and the Laurel and Hardy silent film *Putting Pants On Phillip* was shown, accompanied by Jim who provided the musical score for the film. Open console and dinner followed. Since they were our guests, the Central Ohio Chapter members were first to try their hand at the Emery Mighty Wurlitzer, followed by our chapter members. All enjoyed a fine afternoon and graciously thanked us for our hospitality.

In hosting a neighboring chapter, we wanted everything just right! A lot of dusting and cleaning in the organ chambers was undertaken, the console received a detailed cleaning, and a thorough tuning of both chambers was accomplished. Thanks to Kevin Cain, Dr. Dave Billmire, Tom Smith, Joe Hollman and Don Campbell for getting all this completed. The keys of all three manuals of the organ have been rebushed. This work was performed on one manual at a time

so the organ could remain playable for the events that take place at Emery. What a difference! It's been in excess of 25 years since the total rebuild and this area was showing signs of wear. Thanks to Don Campbell, Dr. Dave Billmire, Kevin Cain, and Tom Smith for the many hours it took to complete this undertaking.

May 5, the Ohio Valley Chapter reached out to the local community by hosting the Over-The-Rhine annual business meeting. Over-The-Rhine is an older, original part of downtown Cincinnati where the early German immigrants settled. The Erie canal passed right by this area and had to be crossed to access it. The canal reminded the early Germans of the Rhine River in Germany, hence Over-The-Rhine. This area is in the midst of a rebirth with many micro-breweries and entertainment establishments throughout. Emery Theatre resides in this area and offered its theatre as a place for them to conduct their meeting. Jim Barton presented a varied concert for the group and provided the musical accompaniment to a Laurel and Hardy silent film. All attendees showed their appreciation with a rousing round of applause. This is the purpose of ATOS ... to show what role these wonderful instruments had in the past and what they have to offer for the present.

*Joe Hollmann*



*Kevin Cain cleaning in the Solo Chamber in preparation for the Central Ohio Chapter's visit to Emery Theatre.*

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## ORANGE COUNTY

Don Near: 714/539-8944

**Fullerton, California.** Our April concert featured Bob Ralston, whose varied talents were enthusiastically enjoyed by a large audience. The program ranged from a Laurel and Hardy silent film to some respectfully jazzed up sacred music in honor of Palm Sunday. Bob used the organ player system in order to perform three piano/organ duets. He pre-recorded the organ parts, then played the piano part live. This was our first attempt to do this and while the organ did what it was told to do, the software did not reset between selections, thus causing some anxious moments for Bob Trousdale while Bob Ralston played some unscheduled piano solo to smooth the glitch for the audience. The computer program has since been modified so as to avoid this problem in the future.

In another innovative use of the Wurlitzer, Fullerton High School presented *The Sound of Music* and asked if the organ could supplement the pit orchestra during the wedding scene. As the console could not fit in the pit with the orchestra, chapter board member Ed Bridgeford and Fullerton High School musical director Scott Hedgecock recorded the required music on the organ player system. During performances, with the console unattended back stage, it was triggered into action by a start button located on the conductor's music stand. The result was most satisfactory and expands the manner in which the Wurlitzer can be heard by the community. This also benefited the high school kids who helped set up the organ for each performance and were able to hear it and sing with it during the show.

We were so pleased with the above, we decided to develop a miniature "slave console," able to operate all of the Wurlitzer resources and small enough to fit on the orchestra lift with a live orchestra. It is planned to include two commercially available 61 note synthesizer keyboards, an abbreviated pedalboard, one swell pedal, and a controlling row of pistons. The synthesizers can be used either as tone sources on their own or for controlling the organ. There will be no console shell and it will be supported by a custom frame which can be taken apart for storage. The concept

is to have a setup which will be comfortable for "synthesists" to play as well as organists who are more familiar with the feel of the big console.

Our chapter is very excited over these expanded uses of the Plummer Wurlitzer for new and different audiences. We firmly believe the future of theatre pipe organ must include broadening the audience base and educating our local communities as to the historical and current value of this musical art form.

One other improvement was the completion and installation of our Pianocorder, which enables the auditorium's Baldwin piano to be played remotely. There is nothing quite like a real concert grand piano and to be able to play it from the organ console is thrilling. Piano volume is controlled from one of the console swell pedals and it can be used either as an accompaniment voice or a solo instrument. The system has excellent response and the piano blends beautifully with the rest of the organ. It will be ready to use for our August open console session and for most future concerts.

*Jim Merry and Bob Trousdale*

## POTOMAC VALLEY

Colonel Michael Hartley: 301/868-7030

**Clinton, Maryland.** "Warm, Solid and Brilliant," was the title of Charles B. Davis' incisive review of our March 29 program in the Harris Theatre at George Mason University. Sponsored jointly by the chapter and the Northern Virginia

Ragtime Society, the program was called "Ragtime and the Wurlitzer" and starred our own Bob Lachin at the Wurlitzer and John Petley and Alex Hassan on piano. In addition to solo sets by the three performers, John and Alex played several piano duets. The finale, with all three instruments and artists, brought a standing ovation from the audience. We are very fortunate to have such marvelous performers in our respective organizations. They left the audience wanting more, so we hope to produce a sequel performance in a future concert season.

The final program in our 1997-1998 "Sound of the Silents" concert series at the Harris Theatre, was quite a change from our usual format. The entire 257th Army Band (DC National Guard) was our "guest artist" on April 26, and they proved to be a real audience pleaser. In addition to a usual program of marches and light classics, the band showed they could really swing by including a variety of pop music, and some smashing vocals including Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." A special treat was an interlude by the band's woodwind quintet, composed of very talented artists who are professional musicians in their civilian roles. Toward the end of the program, we "flew in" a large American flag as "Stars and Stripes Forever" began. The Wurlitzer was heard in an accompaniment role for this program, with extensive use of glockenspiel and xylophone. A brief organ solo was also included.

*Bill Mastbrook*



*"Sound of the Silents" series, 257th Army Band (DC National Guard), April 26, 1998.*



## PUGET SOUND

Robert Zat:

**Seattle, Washington.** This year has brought great news to theatre organ aficionados in the Northwest. After several lean years (venue-wise), the fabulous Johnson mansion in Gig Harbor (formerly the Dick Wilcox home) has become available once again for concerts. Now, the original Wurlitzer in Seattle's beautifully restored Paramount Theatre is speaking again! In addition, Washington Center for the Performing Arts in Olympia, with its new Wurlitzer, will be used for a chapter concert in July.

At the Johnson residence, Jonas Nordwall and Andy Crow will play a duo program in May, dedicated to the memory of Jane and Homer Johnson. (The two Johnson families are not related). Jane, remembered by many for her outstanding program at the 1971 convention, was a literal fixture of the music scene in and around Tacoma. Homer, himself an accomplished organist, maintained numerous pipe organs in the Tacoma area. Until her death at age 83, Jane played a weekly shift at Tacoma Pizza & Pipes. Both Jane and Homer are greatly missed.

Melbourne's John Atwell will play a concert Saturday, July 11, at Washington Center in Olympia. The Wurlitzer was refurbished and reinstalled by Andy Crow and Les Lehne, and is a fine addition to the very busy performing arts building. This will be John's third performance for PSTOS.

The Paramount Wurlitzer is a long way from finished, but the owners are dedicated to getting it back on line and PSTOS hopes to again have access to the instrument for an occasional event. This couldn't be a better piece of news for all those anx-

iously waiting to once again hear this magnificent instrument!

Of interest to Internet surfers will be the "coming-soon" PSTOS website being created by Tom Blackwell. The address will be published in early June. Tom is doing an outstanding job, including vast amounts of historical information about organs, organists and theatres in the Pacific Northwest. Tom is adamant about withholding access until the site is truly ready ... no "under construction" message from him! The address will be published on PIPORG-L and on the theatre organ home page.

About 40 members gathered at a special social evening at Tacoma Pizza & Pipes recently to enjoy dinner and open console. Dick and Margaret Daubert, owners of the restaurant, welcomed the group and turned the evening into a fund raiser to benefit the Homer and Jane Johnson Memorial Scholarship Fund, by sharing a portion of the receipts. PSTOS thanks the Dauberts for their generosity in supporting the scholarship fund as well as allowing members to enjoy a turn at the magnificent Wurlitzer.

*Jo Ann Evans*

## RIVER CITY

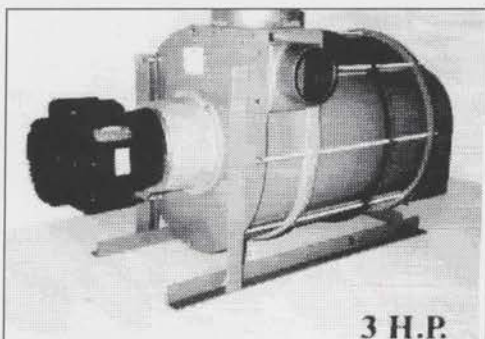
Gregory Johnson: 402/624-5655

**Omaha, Nebraska.** For our chapter's March meeting we were again invited to Tom Wolfe's house. A brief business meeting was conducted by Vice-President Lynn Lee, with Bob Markworth and George Rice presenting an update on installation progress of the Rose Theatre's Wurlitzer. For our afternoon's entertainment, host Tom Wolfe presided at the console of his 3-manual Conn theatre organ (which boasts several external speakers and multiple sets of Conn pipes). Now, we are a very informal group of theatre organ buffs, but when the program chairman introduced our artist, Tom wowed us by appearing at the console in spiffy white formal attire. In honor of St. Patrick's Day, he opened his program with "Londonderry Air," adding orchestra bells in one chorus. Then, for the benefit of those who missed Sunday church, he offered a medley of beloved hymns. Although we were into late March, not December, we were treated to a medley of Christmas carols ... after all, we did have snow on the ground! Tom is blessed with a keen sense of humor and spiced-up his presentation with comments like, "If you hear a few foreign notes, you may think I studied abroad," or "I've never claimed to be a musician, but am a virtue-oh-so." Tom closed with "Fascination Waltz." While we adjourned for table treats, Maurine Durand and Jeanne Mehuron entertained us during open console.

Our April meeting was hosted by Warner Moss in his north Omaha condo. Warner's home boasts a three-manual Conn

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## RIVER CITY cont.

theatre organ, augmented with Conn pipes. Vice-President Lynn Lee conducted a short business meeting and George Rice detailed installation progress of the Rose Theatre's Wurlitzer. Lynn then introduced our guest artist for the day, member Donna Baller. For this concert, Donna went through some of her older music books, selecting several numbers that were a little less well known, including "The Love Bug Will Get You If You Don't Watch Out." She closed the formal part of her program with several Lyn Larsen arrangements, including the "The First Day of Spring." For requests, Donna played a medley of rousing polkas. While some migrated to Warner's kitchen for light refreshments, Maurine Durand, Jim Boston, Warner Moss, Lynn Lee and George Rice entertained us with open console. *Tom Jeffery*



For the second half of his concert, Tom Wolfe managed a quick costume change, and was sporting a black tuxedo, when he returned to the console. *(Tom Jeffery photo)*

At right: Doyle Current and Shelly Shelton assist Dr. John Dapolito in placing new heads on the bass drum.

## SAN DIEGO

John Dapolito:

**San Diego, California.** During the past two years, since fire devastated our chapter organ and its home, the sanctuary of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Spring Valley, our concerts have been held at the homes of Chuck and Kay Lyall and Dr. John and Jane Dapolito, using their theatre pipe organs, or the meeting hall of Trinity Church, using an Allen theatre organ.

Our first concert in the sanctuary since its restoration, was performed by English organist, Paul Roberts. His style and excellent performance were enthusiastically received. At times, his style was reminiscent of Sidney Torch, often with finger busting arrangements played with great clarity and skill. The audience was very appreciative, not only of his music, but also of his wit and sense of humor. Our future concerts include Dana Loyal and Greg Breed.

Restoration of the last 15 ranks should be completed by early May. These will be added to the seven ranks already installed together with all 8 and 16 foot offset chests, tuned percussions,



Paul Roberts at the Allen organ.

shades and toy counter. We hope to have it completed by the fall of 1998. Following regulation and adjustments to concert standards, we will schedule our premier concert. *John Dapolito*

## ST. LOUIS

Jim Ryan: 314/892-07854

**St. Louis, Missouri.** January-May have been delightfully busy and fun times for SLTOS. January found us at



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First Presbyterian Church in Granite City, Illinois. Jack Jenkins, house organist at the Fabulous Fox in St. Louis, and also more importantly, National Sales Director of Wicks Pipe Organs of Highland, Illinois, gave the program. Jack is the organist at First Presbyterian. Since much of this church's pipe organ was destroyed by a fire caused by a contractor repairing the roof, a new Wicks organ has been installed. The exterior of the facade of the organ has exposed pipes and positively the most gorgeously designed woodwork this reporter has ever seen. Jack played a varied program, showing the capabilities of this marvelous instrument. The instrument is MIDI compatible and is capable of doing a complete performance by itself. An outstanding example of just what this organ can do was demonstrated by engineer of research and development, Ralph Walden, and Jack Jenkins. Jack programmed into its computer the entire *1812 Overture* and the organ executed it flawlessly. It's easy to see how Wicks has moved pipe organ design and building into the next century.

February found us again at the Fabulous Fox in St. Louis for an evening of open console. After short demonstrations by Mark Gifford, Bob Heil, Warren York, and a couple of other members, our chapter enjoyed playing the 4/36 Wurlitzer for the rest of the evening.

The March meeting was at Third Baptist Church in St. Louis. It is across the street from the Fox Theatre. Mark Gifford performed the program on the instrument which also contains a few ranks of theatre pipework including a Wurlitzer Tibia Clausa.

The end of March found us at the Lincoln Theatre in Belleville, Illinois. The occasion was the showing of the Cecil B. DeMille epic *King of Kings* with Mark Gifford providing the musical accompaniment with his own score. Breathtaking and inspiring are the only words to describe the performance.

Our April meeting was at the home of Leroy and Fran Ettling. Fran played the 650 Conn 3-manual theatre organ for the group. Leroy made a cameo performance. It was a wonderful afternoon of beautiful organ music. Fran also performs at the Lincoln Theatre and in the lobby of the Fox on the SLTOS owned 2/11 Wurlitzer.

May found us again at the Lincoln

Theatre in Belleville. The occasion was two performances of the 1920s comedy classic, *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, starring Buster Keaton. Dennis Ammann played his own score for this hilarious film. As always, he does a great job. Bob Heil dazzled the audiences with his pre-movie concert, and Sara Ammann, daughter of Dennis and Mary Lou Ammann, and her friend Matthew Hoffmann, performed some rousing vocal numbers and selected songs from *Showboat*. These two talented young people stole the show. *Dee Ryan*

## SIERRA

Craig Peterson: 916/682-9699

**Sacramento, California.** El Niño really impacted Sierra chapter's February program. There was so much water in the air and on the ground between Sacramento and Fresno that our scheduled artist, Richard Cencibaugh, could not drive to his concert at Grant Union High School. So three chapter members filled in at the last minute. Bert Kuntz entertained us during the first half of our program with a variety of big band numbers, show and movie tunes, and standards. "Stormy Weather" was very appropriately included. Shelly Antilla serenaded us from the grand piano during intermission. Dave Moreno opened up the second half of our program with several more movie tunes from the twenties. Then he accompanied Laurel and Hardy's *Two Tars* to close the program.

Our March program was another in the "March Morton Madness" series sponsored jointly with NorCal Chapter. Barry Baker presented programs on two different 3/15 Robert-Morton instruments on the same day. One instrument is in Bob Hartzell's "blue barn" at Lodi, California. The second is at the Kautz Winery in Murphys, California. This writer was not able to attend, but reports from those who did were that Barry presented excellent performances at both venues.

We returned to the ATOS 3/16 Wurlitzer at the Towe Auto Museum for our April program. Ron Rhode was our artist. As usual, Ron beautifully played a wide variety of selections. He also accompanied two films: Buster Keaton's *One Week* and Laurel and Hardy's *Double Whoopee*.

May 15, Dennis James will accompa-

ny *Tumbleweeds* with William S. Hart, also at the Towe Auto Museum. June will be dark so we can rest up for the ATOS Convention in San Francisco sponsored by NorCal Chapter (July 1-5/6), and also for the Sierra Chapter picnic at the McCluer's on July 12. In August, Don Wallin' will play for us on the chapter's 3/13 Wurlitzer at the Fair Oaks Clubhouse. September will again be at the Towe Auto Museum where Chris Elliott will accompany *Ella Cinders*. Our October program will feature Paul Quarino at the Towe Auto Museum for his traditional Halloween films. Our Christmas party will be on December 6 at the Fair Oaks Clubhouse. If you are in the area, please join us for these events. *Pete McCluer*

## SOONER STATE

Sam Collier: 918/834-6255

**Tulsa, Oklahoma.** Bob Ault, of Sedalia, Missouri, presented a delightfully different program for our March meeting, played on our 3/13 Robert-Morton at Tulsa Technology Center's Broken Arrow campus. You could easily tell ragtime music is his first love, with most of his program, complete with the stories behind each piece that he played, focused on ragtime. One tribute to Scott Joplin, was really unique: his second half opener was the "Maple Leaf Rag," played on the banjo. Our Bill Gillespie supplied the rhythm on what he called a "swimmerphone;" which looked like a fancy washboard to us! The rest of Bob's program was all on the organ, and you could almost imagine a Dixieland band for some of it, and a calliope for parts of the rest.

We returned to Tulsa Technology Center for our April meeting, this time featuring Carolyn Craft at the console of our Robert-Morton. She played a varied program, mostly popular standards. She included a "Honeybunch Medley," a couple of gospel songs, and Bob Whitworth assisted her on his trumpet for "Sugar Blues." Her grand finale was a thundering "Granada." Seven members played at open console.

In addition, President Sam Collier totally surprised this reporter by presenting her a framed certificate commemorating many years of service to the chapter, including eighteen years as *Windline* editor, and twelve years as



## SOONER STATE cont.

being the wife of the President. Actually, Lee was president for twelve years; I've been his wife for almost fifty years!

Our chapter organ was played for two occasions during the month of March. Carolyn Craft played for two sections of a patriotic assembly, "walk in" music, but she included *Oklahoma*, of course. Then, about ten days later, Wayne Barrington played for the Police Academy graduation ceremony, and he included "The Colonel Bogie" march for a processional.

There's also a bit more progress to report on the Dorothy and Lee Smith home installation: Stop Action magnets (SAMs) with all the stop tabs attached are in place on the expanded stop rail, and wiring is nearly completed, to the electronic relay, on the new back rail. Some of those telephone cable wire colors are hard to distinguish!

*Dorothy Smith*

## WESTERN RESERVE

Janice Kast: 216/531-4214

**Cleveland, Ohio.** Our March business meeting and social were held March 15 at downtown Cleveland's Grays' Armory. On very short notice (again!), chapter member Maggie Falcone provided an impromptu concert at the 3/15 Wurlitzer featuring an extended medley and the fiery "Ecstasy Tango." Non-fiery refreshments and open console time completed the delightful afternoon.

*Jim Shepherd*



L to R: Cathy Thurmond, President; Walter Strony; Barbara Mignery, Secretary/Treasurer; and Wallace Wright, Vice-President. Below: Walter Strony at the Allen MDS-317 theatre organ.

## YUMA

Edwin Thurmond:

**Yuma, Arizona.** The Yuma Theatre Organ Society finally has an organ in the historical Yuma Theatre, after a slow process starting in 1989 of trying to install a pipe organ. Due to many problems involving the restoration of the theatre building and installation of the organ, the decision was made to go electronic.

In 1997, due to the generosity of a few anonymous donors, we were able to purchase and install an Allen MDS-317 theatre organ. It was installed by Walter Strony, who performed our dedication concert on February 9, 1998, and had an excellent attendance.

On March 9, Bob Stewart, a member of our organ club, gave us another public program which also enjoyed good

attendance.

The city of Yuma is planning some further restoration of the theatre during the summer months, and we hope to resume our programming in the fall.

*Barbara Mignery*



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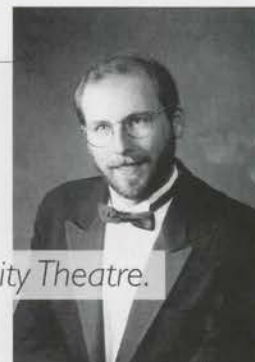
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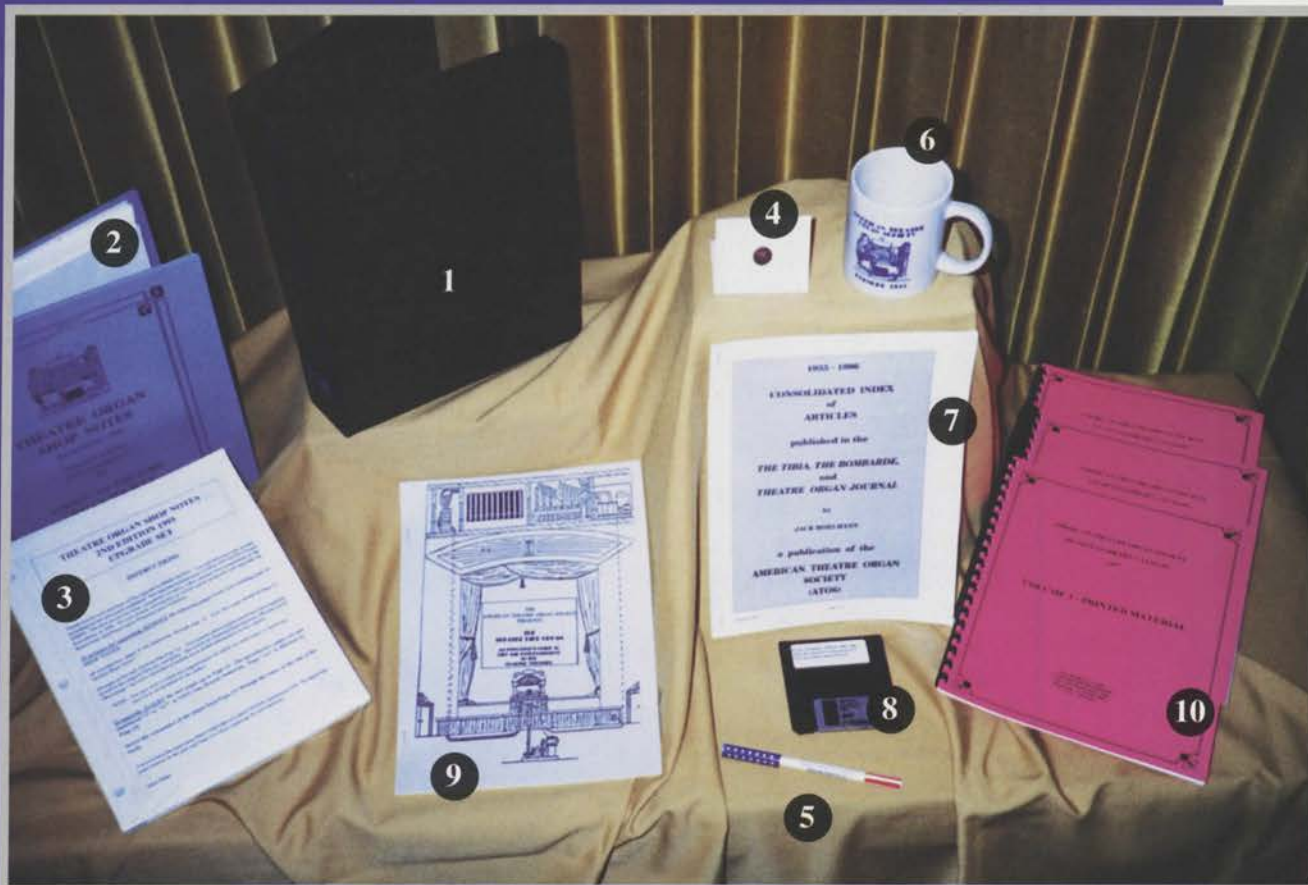


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	Accompaniment to Pedal	MIDI A (LP)	MIDI B (LP)	<b>Pedal Voice Palette</b>	Double English Horn 16'	Kinura 8'	<b>Accompaniment</b>	English Horn 8'	Tuba Horn 8'	Open Diapason 8'	Clarinet 8'	Viol Celeste II 8'	Quintadena 8'	Concert Flute 8'	Vox Humana 8'	Octave 4'	Piccolo 4'	Viol Celeste II 4'	Flute 4'	Harp	Chrysoglott	Snare Drum	Tambourine	Cymbal	Trap Select (Wood Block)	MIDI A (LP)	MIDI B (LP)	
	Sound Effects (LP)	MIDI A (LP)	MIDI B (LP)	<b>Solo Voice Palette</b>	Kinura 8'	Musette 8'																						
					Vox Humana 8'																							
					<b>Tremulants</b>	Main Tuba	Solo Tibia																					
					<b>Combination Action</b>	(Lighted Pistons)	Generals: 1 2 3 4 5	Divisionals:	Great	pp p mf f ff 1 2 3 4 5	Solo 1 2 3 4 5	Accompaniment/Pedal	pp p mf f ff	Pedal 1 2 3 4 5	Set and Cancel	4 Internal Memories												
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will endure beyond trends,  
beyond decades, and  
even beyond his  
greatest dreams.*

*It is to this man whom  
we applaud.*

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