

# theatre organ

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**theatre  
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# The Cover...

In the glow from one of the magnificent stage candelabrum, Horace Weber is shown seated at the console of the beautiful 3m/15r Wurlitzer in Melbourne's doomed Capitol Theatre. The scene, taken from the dress circle during the final recital last November 17th, serves to introduce the featured article in this issue, starting on page twelve. Written by Eric Wicks, a former pupil of Weber and now a newspaperman, the feature will be presented in two parts - this issue being devoted to the life of the organist; the next will describe the theatre, the organ and its removal by the Victorian Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia.

Already a nostalgic remembrance of a golden era, this photo also signals the termination of a long friendship, or, if you will, a devotion of an artist to an outstanding instrument. It is a fitting tribute by TOSA to a superb organist, a wonderful Wurlitzer, and a truly dramatic, theatrical closing of a great theatre.

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# Wurlitzer's Dominate Convention Areas

Pipe Organs abound in the Niagara Frontier Chapter area and there will be approximately 17 available for inspection. Some of those listed will figure prominently in the convention musical programs:

Shea's Buffalo Theatre - 4m/28r Wurlitzer. Restoration progressing well and organ should be in condition by July. This is the largest Wurlitzer in New York State outside of New York City and acknowledged one of the finest acoustical installations. Theatre seats about 3,600.

Riviera Theatre, North Tonawanda - 3m/11r Wurlitzer will be in good condition by July and console elevator put in service. Instrument was used by Wurlitzer as a demonstrator. The theatre seats about 1,800.

Rapids Theatre, Niagara Falls - 2m/8r Wurlitzer, highly unified with second touch on pedals. A 16-foot Bourdon has been added as well as chimes. Organ in good condition. Theatre seats about 1,800.

Skate Haven Roller Rink, Lackawanna (suburb of Buffalo) - 3m/15r Wurlitzer from the Seneca Theatre, with Diaphones added. Will be completed by July. Niagara Frontier expects to have concert there before convention time. Tentative plans call for a banquet in rink proper where organ is installed. Seating capacity about 2,000.

R.K.O. Palace Theatre, Rochester - 4m/21r Wurlitzer in mint condition. Reginald Foort remarked that this organ is the first in many years that he has played where everything works. Player attachment has been added by member Danny Schultz. Theatre seats about 3,000.

Imperial Theatre, Toronto, Canada - 4m/28r Warren. Latest report is that organ will not be all completed by July. Theatre seats about 3,200.

Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, Canada - 5m/21r Wurlitzer in mint condition, used for all Garden shows by Horace Lapp. Organ has world's fattest tibia, re-scaled and voiced for 30 inches of wind pressure. Installation includes 15-rank Wurlitzer from Shea's Hippodrome, Toronto. Gardens seats about 14,000.

Odean-Carlton Theatre, Toronto, Canada - 3m/19r Hillgreen-Lane, latest known theatre built (1947) and organ was designed and installed at that time. Organ is very lovely and sweet to the ear. Seating capacity about 2,300. A cinerama screen recently installed hides console. Theatre has small balcony restaurant and art gallery.

Transfiguration R.C. Church, Buffalo - 2m/10r Wurlitzer, mint condition with no changes made when instrument was removed from Rialto Theatre, Lockport,

Spring '64

N.Y., and moved to the church. Fabulous acoustics.

## Home Installations

Harold Logan, Niagara Falls, Ontario - 3m/19r Wurlitzer in mint condition.

John Spalding, Kenmore - 3m/10r Marr & Colton with Wurlitzer console, recently reinstalled.

Joe Thomas, Lancaster - 3m/5r Wurlitzer-Marr & Colton. Everything playing except noise makers; they have air but not connected to console yet.

Harvey Elsaesser, Buffalo - 3m/7r Wurlitzer-Marr & Colton all playing and sounds good.

Irving Toner, East Aurora - 2m/3r Wicks Unit Organ with added octave of Wurlitzer Diaphones to pedals. Irv also maintains the 2m/5r Wurlitzer in Blazing Star Lodge (Masonic Temple) East Aurora, and has access anytime.

Joseph Sanders, Jr., Williamsville - 2m/7r Link, originally in Capitol Theatre, Buffalo. An excellent basement installation.

Robert Knock, Buffalo - 2m/4r Wurlitzer. Fine installation in music room.

## For Wurlitzer Widows

Wurlitzer Widows and Kids have not been forgotten by Niagara Frontier Chapter - they are scheduled to have a wonderful time on boat sightseeing trips, bus and plane tours, fashion shows, radio and television participation shows, a trip on a real steam locomotive, going to horse races, art galleries, museums, a trip to the zoo, famed Niagara Falls, Crystal Beach and Fantasy Island, and inspection of the formal gardens in Rochester's Eastman Park.

## Final Maclean Record Offered By Mail Order

Quentin Maclean, just a few weeks before his death due to lung cancer, played informal "jam sessions" on the residential Wurlitzer of ATOE member Dr. Ray Lawson, in Montreal. More by accident than design, these sessions were taped. The artist was completely relaxed, and there was no rehearsing; nor was there any intention to publish the music at the time.

Now the best extracts of the time Maclean spent at the console playing this instrument have been made into stereo recordings. They are available only by ordering direct from Laurentien Records, P.O. Box 23, Station B, Montreal, Canada. Record price is \$5.00 postpaid, tapes \$9.50 postpaid.

This release, Laurentien officials noted, "is issued with a pang of regret - it is the last of Quentin Maclean."

## Wurlitzer Console In House - No Organ

It's comforting to have a Wurlitzer console around the house, even if there are no chambers, relays, pipes, blower and percussions. New Yorker Danny Schultz believes this - he recently removed the 3m/13r Wurlitzer from the Paramount Theatre in Rochester and hauled it to his home at Fishers, about 18 miles southeast of the theatre location.

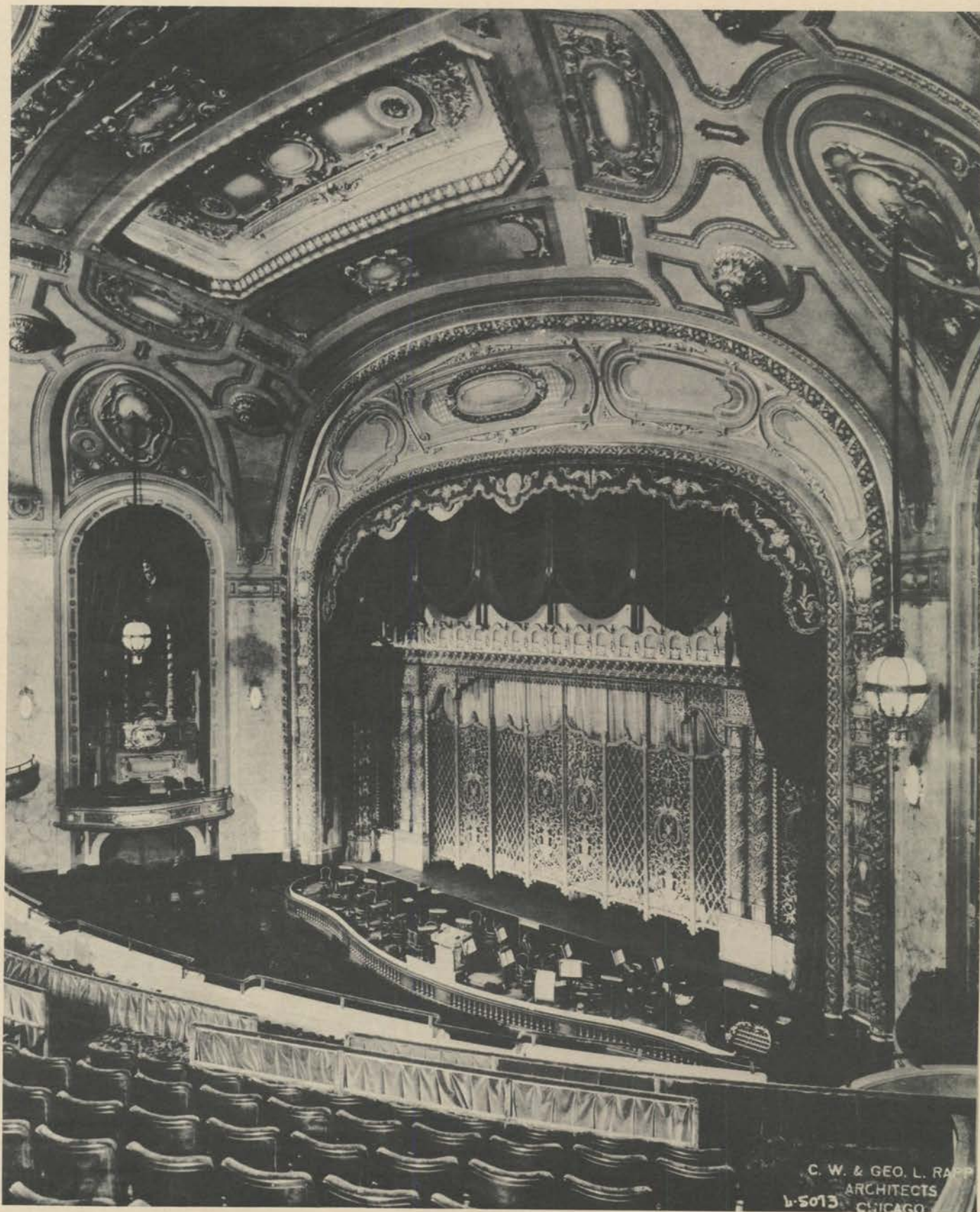
"Our installation is setting at present waiting for additional funds and Spring so the chambers can be dug," Schultz has advised. He plans to photograph the entire rebuilding session and will prepare a story for future publication in THEATRE ORGAN. The organ is Opus 1928, Style 240. It was installed in the Paramount in 1928.



Schultz Wurlitzer Console Cannot Play Organ



SHEA'S BUFFALO THEATRE



Shea's Buffalo Theatre shown as it looked in 1926 with the console of the 4m/28r WurliTzer in 'up' position on its elevator.

Golden grille gates on stage were a feature in several theatres designed by Architect Brothers C.W. & George L. Rapp.

—From the Helgesen Collection

theatre organ



# NIAGARA FRONTIER REBUILDS ORGAN

by Irving J. Toner

When Buffalo Theatre Magnate Michael Shea decided to erect a new downtown movie palace, the theatre world sat up and took notice.

Highly successful in his own operation of a chain of theatres, an impresario in the entertainment world and beloved by stars of stage and screen who played his circuit, Shea wasn't a man who did things half way.

Shea's Buffalo Theatre, when it opened in 1926, was certainly no disappointment. The largest and most beautiful theatre in the state, outside New York City, had just about everything — or seemed to! Its giant stage was equipped for every conceivable type of presentation. Its huge orchestra pit, which could hold an entire symphony orchestra, rose slowly and majestically to stage level at the touch of a button. Nearly all the greats of stage and screen of the "Golden era" trod the stage and rode the elevator which ascended to six floors of dressing rooms.

The organ Michael Shea chose for his newest and finest theatre was, of course, a Wurlitzer, built in the Wurlitzer plant in North Tonawanda, scarcely 15 miles from downtown Buffalo. Immediately billed as "The World's Mightiest Wurlitzer," it came close to being just that.

Larger Wurlitzers had been built and installed prior to this one, but the Buffalo Wurlitzer had something very special about it.

The only really large instrument ever installed close to the factory, it received special attention from some of Wurlitzer's best voicers. In the huge interior of the new theatre there was room for Wurlitzer experts to bring out the best in the instrument.

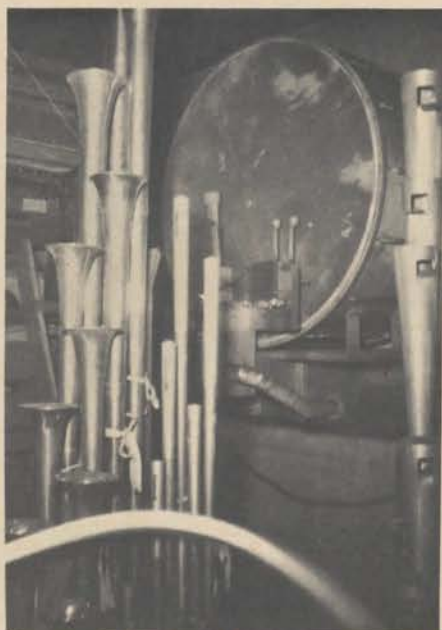
The sound was BIG!

The sound was FABULOUS!

It still has much of that gorgeous "Big Sound" today, after a lengthy and tortuous restoration program carried on by members of Niagara Frontier Chapter.

The organ was used for intermissions, sound newsreel accompaniment, and to augment the 60-piece orchestra up until the mid-thirties. (During sound newsreels an alert projectionist would cut off the sound on titles and on certain scenes and the organist would play these parts; sound would be allowed to come through only for action and speaking parts of the news.) Even after stage shows and the pit orchestra disappeared, the organ continued to be used for opening and closing the theatre, and intermission solo work.

Sometime during the early war years the organ fell silent and we are able to determine it was unattended and unplayed until about 1946. At that time the new management decided to rehabilitate the instrument. An extensive re-leathering



Fanfare Equipment

program was undertaken by a former Wurlitzer maintenance man and some of the work of re-leathering was actually done at the Wurlitzer factory. Brown leather was used throughout in the apparent belief that it was superior to zephyr skin.

This program of restoration came to a sudden halt before it was completed due to another change in management. Again the instrument sat unplayed and unattended until about 1959 when Niagara Frontier Chapter members became interested in its possibilities. The pizz action had been removed from the theatre and various phases of the restoration were found just as they had apparently been left the day the project was dropped.

Unfortunately, a heavy grade of brown leather had been used for some of the primary pneumatics. Over the years the leather shrunk, requiring extensive readjustment of primary valves but worse still, as the leather shrunk, it became stiff. Consequently, it has become necessary to replace a great many of the primary pneumatics, even though the leather is otherwise in excellent condition and would be good for many years.

Water damage in the brass and solo chambers and in the relay room further complicated the progress of restoration. It has been necessary to do some of the work a second time. In desperation, Niagara Frontier Chapter finally undertook and successfully completed a major roof repair over that section of the theatre in order to insure that no further water could get into the organ.

The four manual rather plain majogany console, mounted on a lift, is located at the extreme right side of the orchestra pit. The solo and brass chambers are

found slightly back from the stage on the right side, with the brass above the solo. The foundation is above the main in a similar location on the left side. On each side the lower chambers can be entered through doors directly from the balcony, but each upper chamber is reached only by climbing a ladder.

Mounting the big 32-foot Diaphones, which are usually placed above the proscenium arch or back stage in most theatres, was no problem at all in the Buffalo — the height of the structure is such that they could stand on the floor of the balcony, six on each side, just outside the door to the lower chambers. Only slight mitring was required to set them in place.

Possibly this extremely high ceiling accounts for some of the different sound of the organ, for sound different it does — it is quite unlike any other Wurlitzer ever heard.

The stop tablet layout on the console is somewhat different from the standard 285 Wurlitzer keydesk. The organ contains a total of 28 ranks plus the usual toy counter, percussions, and effects. Solo String, Clarinet and English Horn — voiced on 25 inches of wind —

\*please turn to page 6



Irving  
J.  
Toner

No newcomer to the columns of Theatre Organ, Irving Toner is well known for his activities in behalf of Niagara Frontier Chapter. He is a past president of the unit and now directs its organ restoration projects.

Electronics has been his basic interest since the early days of radio, with music always a close second. In the former field he has owned and operated an independent sales and service business, both before and following World War II. Irv has served as local, state and national president of the Television Service Trade Association (NATESA).

In service he was a signal corps officer attached to MacArthur's staff and specialized in overseas radio communications. Following the war he worked three years at the Wurlitzer factory in North Tonawanda in connection with development and production of the company's first electronic organ.

Musically, Irv started by pounding the piano in a two-bit silent movie during his high school years, graduating a few years later to roller skating rink organ work. He has been featured several times in concerts at the console of the Buffalo Wurlitzer, and is official convention organist for the New York State Lions clubs.



## Maclean Award Given Secretary

Honoring several years of service to Niagara Frontier Chapter, Laura Thomas, who is known nationally as Editor of the Silent News Reel, official publication of the New York unit, was named recipient of the first annual Quentin Maclean Award. Presented by Chapter President Grant Whitcomb at the regular board meeting last January 8th, the award was made on the basis of outstanding work in furthering the Chapter aims and objectives; the board of directors determine who the recipient will be. The plaque was designed and made by Director Harry Picken.

The award reads: "With Pleasure and Respect the Niagara Frontier Chapter of American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts Hereby Name Laura Thomas as the recipient of The Quentin Maclean Award for the year 1963.

"This award named in honour of the late Quentin Maclean, famed British theatre organist, is awarded annually by the board of directors to a member of the chapter, who in their opinion, has done outstanding work by way of furthering its aims and objectives.

"Laura Thomas, in her capacity as secretary of the Niagara Frontier Chapter, has carried out the duties of this office with grace, enthusiasm, and distinction, and it is therefore with great pleasure that the directors name her as the first recipient of this Annual Award. December \*\*\* 1963."

Secretary-Editor Thomas noted that the honor is shared with "the members who worked along with me." She named Clealan Blakely, Rita Becker, Grant Whitcomb, Robert Sieben, Dick Britton, Don Hyde, Phyllis Maute, Millie and Al Jerge, Terry Perrone and Irv Toner and



Shea's 32-ft. Diaphones

acknowledged their excellent assistance.

Joe Thomas, who happens to be the WurliTzer widower, was cited for silent suffering and putting up with the typewriter noise at late hours, plus the fact that "shirts, socks, etc., are just about out." "How fortunate that he is a true T.O. Enthusiast," explained the chapter scribe.

### Plays Morton In Hawaii

National ATOE Director Gordon Kibbee and Dick Simonton spent the better part of a month in Hawaii at the beginning of this year and were the guests of Theatre Organist John DeMello and other Island organ buffs for inspection and playing sessions in the two theatres where pipe organs are still installed. The two houses, Princess and Waikiki Theatres, both have Robert Mortons. Kibbee had several sessions at the consoles of each instrument.

## Flicker Fingers Going East

Flicker Fingers - the theatre organ and the silent screen - leaves Southern California during April and May to travel north and east with two films scored by ATOE Organist Gaylord Carter, for presentation in Fresno, San Francisco, Rockford and Joliet, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri.

On April 15th, at the Warner Theatre, Fresno, Carter will accompany "The Mark of Zorro," a Douglas Fairbanks classic, at 8 p.m. Next stop for the organ-film firm will be San Francisco's big Orpheum Theatre, on Market Street. Film fare for this midnight show, April 18th, will be another Fairbanks' giant - "The Thief of Bagdad." Both theatres boast having the "best" Robert Morton pipe organs. Price range for the shows is between \$2 and \$3.50.

For a short breather before going east, Carter returns to Los Angeles and on April 28th at the console of the 4m/37r Kimball organ in the Stanley Warner Wilerna Theatre will play the score for Colleen Moore's great silent

epic, "Ella Cinders." The show is slated for 8:30 p.m.

On May 6th "The Mark of Zorro" puts the big "Z" on Rockford, Illinois. The theatre and type of organ was not learned at press time. Next day, May 7th, Carter presides at the keydesk of the great four manual Barton in the Rialto Theatre at Joliet, Illinois, with the same film. Crowning his tour, Carter then travels to St. Louis and on May 8th plays the score for the film on the great 4m/36r Crawford Special in the cavernous Fox Theatre.

Flicker Fingers was organized by Carter and partner Jim Day several years ago. The duo have been presenting silent films with organ (sometimes electronic) accompaniment in and around the Metropolitan Los Angeles area. Prior to its razing, the concern presented a performance at the beautiful San Francisco Fox Theatre. Depending on the success of the coming tour, Flicker Fingers plans call for a similar tour later this year throughout the eastern states.

### CHAPTER REBUILDS ORGAN

\*continued from page 5

extend to the 16-foot pitch. The Tuba Mirabilis is another rank in this category, and is voiced on 25 inches wind pressure; the bottom of this rank has wooden resonators and is a real "earth shaker,"

English Post Horn brilliance makes this rank stand out well above the entire organ.

In addition to the standard WurliTzer Vox, there is also a solo Vox Humana of larger scale. The organ also contains a Solo Tibia Clausa, a standard Tibia Clausa and a Tibia Plena. Both 15 and 25-inch wind pressures are supplied by the 30-horsepower, 25-cycle blower in successive stages.

Many of the famous theatre organists of the day appeared at one time or another at the console of Shea's Buffalo WurliTzer. Jesse Crawford and Ann Leaf were probably two of the most prominently known to national theatre audiences. Eddie Weaver played a four month engagement, and Herbie Koch presided at the console for a slightly longer period. The late Maurice Nicholson was staff organist at the theatre during most of the years the organ was used for regular performances.

Other famous organists played the theatre at one time or another, including the legendary C. Sharpe Minor, Albert Hay Malotte, Carl Coleman and Niagara Frontier Chapter's own Art Melgier.

The late Henry Murtaugh is probably the organist most remembered by Buffalo audiences of yesterday - his song slide novelty presentations, plus his outstanding performances with Shea's Buffalo Symphony Orchestra was enough to make people sit through a mediocre movie a second time just to hear him.

Since 1945 the organ has not been played publicly, but nowadays it gets a workout before showtime once or twice a week by various Niagara Frontier members, and has figured in several highly successful Chapter concerts.

### Restored Organ Heard By Chapter

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK -- March roared in like the proverbial WurliTzerized lion when Dean Robinson was presented at the console of the 4m/20r WurliTzer on Loew's State Theatre by Niagara Frontier Chapter ATOE. Attendance at the March 1st musical fete was about 2,000. The organ, almost a twin to the Rochester RKO Palace WurliTzer, has been restored by Harris Cooper, Tom Anderson, Dick Neidich, Danny and Oline Schultz and Dick Croft.

This instrument, which will be one of the instruments heard during the coming ATOE convention in the Rochester area, will be featured in a future issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

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1963 - Volume V, No. 1, 2, 3 . \$1.25 ea.





**GOING ON AIR**—John Brent, young ATOE recording organist watches Engineer John Bartley for signal that he is on the air. Program is aired over FM station KUTE every Sunday evening in the Southern California region. Brent plays the huge 4m/61r Robert Morton organ in the Elk's building, Los Angeles, and is also refurbishing the instrument during free time.



Without the normally "fabulous" theatrical fanfare associated with such ventures, theatre pipe organ music returned to Southern California airwaves March 1st at 11 p.m. when ATOE's John Brent Ledwon presented the first in a series of half hour recitals on the massive 4m/61r Morton pipe organ installed in the Los Angeles Elks Temple 99 over the Glendale, Calif. FM Station KUTE, 102 kilocycles.

Sponsored jointly by the Elks and the Station, Ledwon, who will air his show under the name he has adopted for his recordings, "John Brent," has stated that his format for the weekly concerts will feature pop tunes, light classics and the playing of request numbers.

## Big Christie Now

### Treat For Dutch

Big British pipe organs are going "Dutch Treat," it would seem. The various radio stations in Holland have several massive English organs already—there is a large Compton, and the famed BBC Moller made the trek across the English Channel early this year to Hilversum. Now K.R.O. Radio Station, also in Hilversum, has just purchased the large 4m/32r Christie organ in the Odean-Regal Marble Arch Theatre. The theatre is slated to shutter March 23rd and the station has seven days to remove the organ. Purchase price was reported to be 750 pounds. This was the largest Christie commercial theatre installation ever built.

Spring '64

## NEW YORK ORGANIST

### COMMENDS 'BIG MO'

After playing two sessions on the great 4m/42r Moller in Atlanta's cavernous Fox Theatre, Gotham Organist and ATOE's Billy Nalle had nothing but praise for the restoration work underway and commended Joe Patton, who heads the big job, for the excellence in refurbishing the organ.

Nalle, who was in the deep south on recital and television work, noted that if things progress as they have the past year, he hopes in another year to present a formal public concert on the "Big Mo."

## Delaware Unit Hears Tower Wurlitzer

By R. A. Pfunke

"Ace" Pancoast and Leonard "Melody Mac" MacClain were featured artists at the December meeting of Delaware Valley Chapter held in the Tower Theatre, Upper Darby, Pa. The organ, a 3m/17r Wurlitzer, is the instrument made famous by the latter-named organist who has recorded several albums on it.

A January business meeting, held at the Chapter's home, the Sedjwick Theatre, saw unanimous votes given the Chapter Constitution and By-laws, and an increase in dues. The organ was then opened after meeting and turned over to those who wished to play.

In February the club journeyed to the former Brooklyn Paramount (now Long Island University) to hear and play the 4m/26r Wurlitzer. The big theatre was saved from the wrecker's ball and altered to house various university classrooms. The meeting, filmed and shown on NBC's "Sunday" program, was originally intended to show theatre organs, but instead delved more into talk of old movie palaces.

It is interesting to note how the theatre was converted for college use. Part of the main auditorium was turned into a basketball court; the lobby became a cafeteria; the upper, or main balcony, was partitioned off for lecture rooms.

Due to the rebuilding of the organ, it was not in the best of condition and many ciphers developed.

The University issued the invitation to the chapter to attend the session.

## CARTER TOUR ADDS DETROIT GROUP

On his midwest Flicker Fingers junket, Gaylord Carter will present a show at the Detroit Theatre Organ club and will play the big Fisher-Orbits Wurlitzer for the motion picture "Mark of Zorro."

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**THEATRE  
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REVIEW  
QUARTERLY**



# TORONTO SPLURGES

by Clealan Blakely

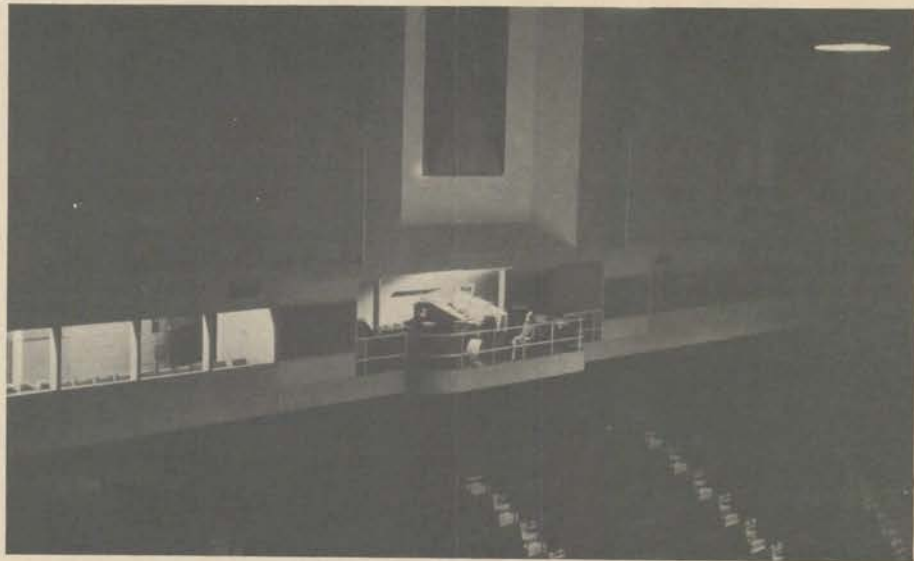
Three live organ concerts and a tape session of the late Quentin Maclean's recordings were the features of an excellent ATOE meeting in Toronto last November 16 and 17.

On the 16th both American and Canadian ATOE members converged on the city and first thing that afternoon made a pilgrimage to the home of Annette Maclean in Leaside to hear tapes made by her late husband. Included were those of the memorial broadcast which was presented on the Canadian network a few days after his death, and selections on the famous Trocadero WurliTzer in London, as well as the Shepherd's Bush Pavilion and Regal Marble Arch. His amazing versatility was evident in this group of selections ranging from popular to classical. In several numbers the left hand unison-off techniques perfected by Jesse Crawford was used most effectively.

Some classical numbers, played on the 2m/24r Casavant in Holy Rosary Church, were included, as well as excerpts from his famous "Nocturne" broadcasts.

After dinner at "The Inn in the Park," there was a great rush to get to the Northern Secondary School auditorium to hear Don Baker play the new Conn Theatre Organ. Introduced by Kathleen Stokes, well known Toronto theatre and broadcasting organist, Don quickly demonstrated Conn tonal capabilities.

Following the concert a large group of members drove to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Clare Snelgrove, where an hour of electronic contentment was spent listening to impromptu solos and duets on the Hammond and Kinsman organs.



Console of the Maple Leaf Gardens WurliTzer is high above main floor, as shown above, in special niche below a large portrait of England's Queen Elizabeth.

Next morning at 10 we assembled at Maple Leaf Gardens to hear Ronnie Padgett at the 5m/21r WurliTzer. This vast auditorium puts the organist at a disadvantage — the console is about half way up the south wall, with the organ above, and the audience a couple of hundred feet away. However, with the public address system, Ronnie was able to M.C. his program, which proved most enjoyable.

His opener, "Orpheus in the Underworld," and then "Granada," built up to a thrilling full ensemble; then the solo voices came into their own for an Irving Berlin medley. The piquant Kinura gave just the right touch to his arrangement of "Greensleeves," then the Tubas took over for "76 Trombones" building up again to full ensemble into "You'll Never Walk Alone."

One of Ronnie's most amazing numbers was his arrangement of "Tico, Tico." After introducing it at regular tempo, he told us he would do one chorus at half the speed, one octave lower; one chorus at double speed, one octave lower; one chorus at double speed, one octave higher; then finish with a high speed chorus at normal pitch. This proved to be a real show stopper; the high octave chorus was done on the eight-foot ranks only.

Padgett later complimented Stu Duncan on the lightening speed of the action, which made possible his unusual presentation of the selection.

A very effective medley of Al Jolson favorites, making full use of the Strings and Solo Tibia, and a final thriller in Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor" provided a fitting climax. The 32-foot Diaphones had been connected for the occasion and added to the effect.

Following this excellent event, it was only a few steps west on Carlton to the Odeon Theatre, where, even though we

were early, we were greeted by a six-foot high sho card reading "The Odeon Carlton Welcomes the Niagara Frontier Chapter, American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts." Victor Nowe, genial manager of the Carlton, was responsible for the poster.

Organist Colin Corbett opened his concert with "Intermezzo," a Tuba solo, string and flute accompaniment, then adding orchestra bells for "Getting To Know You." A predominantly Tibia ensemble was effective for "The Boy Next Door" followed by a sprightly arrangement of "Dancing Tambourine," with Strings, Reeds and Xylophone.

Not by any means the least effective



Theatre Organist Colin Corbett Stands Beside Big Poster Put Up By Management.



Ronnie Padgett at Maple Leaf WurliTzer Console.





Colin Corbett at Carlton Hillgreen-Lane.

part of this Odeon concert was the assistance from the staff in the presentation of the organ. The beautiful contour curtain, softly lighted in subtly changing colors, made a perfect frame for the blond console, and Colin's white jacket picked up the changing colors of the arc spot from the projection booth.

Most of the concert was done in ensemble style, and as far as I could see, on the Great and Solo manuals only — the Orchestral perhaps still had a cipher, as it did the last time I played the instrument.

However, this concert certainly gave the younger members a good idea how organ presentations were done in the theatre organ era in the luxurious comfort of a beautiful movie palace.

#### Future of Organs Questioned

At this writing the fate of the 3m/19r Hillgreen-Lane is rather uncertain, since the Odeon is being converted to Cinerama. The screen will not cover the chambers, but will hide the present console alcove.

Unfortunately the future of the 5m/21r Wurlitzer in Maple Leaf Gardens is also in doubt pending a decision on the extension of the north and south walls to project over Wood and Carlton streets, making possible the installation of 4,000 additional seats. If this happens the organ has to come out or be moved — something of an extensive project that might be too costly.

After dinner the party split up, most leaving for home, others attending the Tivoli Odeon or Imperial Theatres to see the shows as guests of the management. The party arrangements had been under direction of Fred Trebilcock and John Holleywell, and the two men received extensive praise for their efforts.

Some of us still hadn't had enough, so we met John Holleywell downtown at the Imperial Theatre to inspect the rebuilding of the 4m/28r Warren which is now underway. John led us up a vertical iron ladder that seemed to me to be 100 feet high. We ultimately arrived at the high level blower room and got a look at the Solo and Orchestral organs. Chests and pipes have been cleaned and appear to

Spring '64

## Younger Set Plays Silents

Southern California now has two "cinema" organists — famed Gaylord Carter, who is known far and wide for his Flicker Fingers presentations, and lately, one of his pupils, Bob Alder, Jr., of La Canada, Calif., who has mastered the tricks of the master and manages to turn in creditable performances accompanying silent films.

Young Alder, a member of Los Angeles Chapter ATOE, early in April played the organ accompaniment for the Lon Chaney film "Phantom of the Opera" in the large Saxon Auditorium at Pasadena City College. He was schooled in picture cuing by Carter as a part of his regular lessons and played the same film at the Pasadena John Muir High School last year. His silent film training was learned at the console of the South Pasadena Rialto Theatre 216 Wurlitzer.

It is interesting to note the Alder family is completely "organ-ized": Bob's father, an electrical engineer, is head of LA ATOE's Wiltern Theatre Kimball maintenance program; his mother, an AGO member, is assistant organist to Gaylord Carter at the Church of the Lighted Window, in La Canada.

be in excellent condition. The old DC-powered blower, bulky and obsolete, is being replaced with an Orgoblow from the Tivoli. The relay is hopeless and will require complete replacement.

We climbed on over the procenium to a catwalk over the main ceiling; it was a bit scary on this swaying catwalk, past the huge dome in demi-darkness, but we safely completed the journey to the Echo organ. This unit speaks into a large tone chute opening into the dome. It is in bad condition with many pipes flattened, broken and missing.

The console is completely dismantled and is being rebuilt. When I saw the panels it brought back a vivid recollection of Kay Stokes at this console back in the early thirties — it had a lacy fretwork finish in tow-tone green with ivory trim and was on a lift on the left side of the pit.

There is much work to be done before this organ can play again — the Toronto boys are hoping it will be possible to complete it by convention time next summer.

On the way home I stopped by Holleywell's and heard Quentin Maclean tapes that were made on the Ray Lawson Wurlitzer in Montreal. These were quite fabulous and demonstrated Mac's remarkable talent for registration. Everyone who heard his arrangement of "Teddy Bear's Picnic" on the Gardens' Wurlitzer two years ago thought it was great — but this version was still greater. Some of the bizarre effects he achieved were quite new to me.

It has been most unfortunate that a recording of these tapes has not been made available for sale. I am sure any Theatre Organ fan would like it.

## ATOE Man Gets Tacoma Morton

Removal of the 3m/10r Robert Morton pipe organ from the Roxy Theatre, Tacoma, Washington, has been made by ATOE'r Bill Morrison, of the same city, it is reported by Lt. Col. Sam Dickerson, Theatre Organ's roving reporter. The instrument, which was installed in chambers under the stage, was removed earlier this year. It is believed the theatre was originally a Pantages house because of the manner of installation of the Morton.

#### Hall Morton Still In Place

Dickerson reported that the Seattle Music Hall Morton is still in the theatre and removal for shipment to Sacramento, California, has not started. Another organ still in playing condition in Seattle is the 3m/15r Wurlitzer in the Orpheum Theatre. "Most everything works except that the organ sounds a bit muffled behind the new gold curtain masking the big Cinemascope screen and chambers," Dickerson said.

## DEATH TAKES

### S. S. DAUGHERTY

Samuel S. Daugherty, vice chairman of Delaware Valley Chapter, died of a heart attack at his home last December 21st. A member of the unit for four years, he had served in the vice chairmanship since 1962 and was held in high esteem by the membership.

Speaking of his service to the chapter, John Armstrong, Jr., chairman said, "His sincere effort and good judgement on behalf of the chapter and its individual members has been appreciated by all of us. I believe this man's loss will be strongly felt by many and that his memory will remain in each one of our hearts forever."

## FINDS PHOTOPLAYER

Herb Shriner, TV comedian and ATOE member, recently found an old American Photoplayer under wraps in an Indiana barn. It had been used in a theatre, then stored out in the country. He plans to bring it to his new home in Beverly Hills, Calif.



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# Started Playing Silents In Pigtails



Esther Higgins pictured above when she was playing one of the two manual Wurlitzers in the Camden, N.J., area during the silent film era.

by Esther Higgins

One of my earliest recollections of our neighborhood movie house in Camden, New Jersey is of three wide-eyed girls sitting in the second row of seats, during the third showing of a Wallie Reid - Wanda Hawley auto racing classic, while our mother walked up and down the aisles looking for her three children out long past their bed-time, and due for a reprimand.

When my parents bought a piano I was just five years old. I began playing it "by ear" from then on until my mother enrolled me with a piano teacher at the age of ten. After nearly five years of Czerny, Cramer, Duvenoy and Sonatinas, the organist of the Colonial Theatre in Camden (now the site of the City Hall) heard me play and decided I could fill in after school at the organ. This was February 1919.

After four lessons on the two-manual Kimball, I started as assistant organist at \$4.00 a week. Though only 15 years old I still remember the first show I played. It was "Mickey" with Mabel Normand. Everytime Mabel Normand appeared on the screen I played the song "Mickey." My repertoire would have been more limited though, had it not been that I played many of my numbers by "ear."

The truant officer practically camped on our door step, but by that time I was "hooked," and was advised by the theatre manager to put up my long pig-tails which I did by winding two plaits around my head. Sophistication! I managed to stall off the truant officer by attending school as sketchily as possible, until I quit for good. I had chosen my life's work, or so I thought.

I remained at the Colonial for nine months, then went to the Grand Theatre as assistant organist. The Grand was then Camden's top house. Here I played a Pilcher church organ. Of course this required my becoming a full-fledged member of Local A.F. of M., Philadelphia. After about a year at the Grand, I became regular organist at the Princess Theatre, in Camden (now a juvenile dress shop). Here I played a two-manual Wurlitzer for quite some time then returned to the Grand and the Pilcher as main organist.

The larger instruments were still in Philadelphia, where I was relief organist frequently. I took lessons on three of these large organs - in the Arcadia, the Karlton and the Victoria Theatres, studying under the late Irving Cahan, and Viola Klaiss, who is now living in Florida. These houses in both Camden and Philadelphia were owned by the Stanley Company - later the Stanley-Warner chain. I also played relief organ at the Family and Capitol Theatres in Philadelphia. These houses were called "shooting galleries" - they were long and narrow with an aisle down the center.

When the Stanley Theatre was built in Camden, it topped the Grand in both size and elegance, had a large orchestra and employed the late Lew White at the 3m/21r Wurlitzer. This organ is now in the home of ATOE members, my dear friends, Edythe and John Riedel of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. They have added 10 or more ranks, but that is a story in itself.

My scrap book, which I kept from February 1919 till September 1921 lists 292 "features" for which I played. All but 14 of these listings have at least one accompanying picture of members of the cast. This makes a total of 333 treasured pictures. Also listed are 67 comedies I accompanied with several pictures of well known stars of that period. Plenty of nostalgia here in this scrap book!

For many years I saved a large number of cue sheets from the pictures. Real collector's items! Among them were sheets from such shows as "The Gold Rush," Cecil De Mille's "Male and Female," etc. Several years ago I sold these to the late Ted Huff, who was then working at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. I do not know

what became of them.

After "talkies" came in, I remained at the Grand as head organist for two years, playing for short comedies, between shows, and during film breakdowns, which were frequent at that time. Many times the needle would jump and the talking would be out of "sync." Some hilarious results would ensue and it was my job to amble out and fill in with loud organ music to quiet down the disturbed customers.

In the meantime, I'd sit in a small enclosed cubby-hole under the organ pipes spending my time eating, sewing, reading and for a while, I even cultivated a pet mouse. This was too good to last however, and finally the "talkies" were perfected and all organists were "OUT." Some turned to hairdressing, others to insurance, etc. Me - I got married!

In 1935, Doris Havens, who was an organist at WCAU radio station, an affiliate of Columbia Broadcasting System in Philadelphia, sent for me; two organists were needed in the studio at all times. Not only did we play the organ but on our "off" times, acted as hostesses and pulled relief on the telephone switchboard. This was glamorous work where we met all of the radio stars. Many I cannot remember, but I do recall vividly the late Lawrence Tibbett, Kate Smith, Bob Hope, Frank Parker, Redfern Hollingshed, Deanna Durbin and Eddie Cantor - to name a few.

At that time Kitty Kallen was a dear little girl singing her heart out on the Horn and Hardart "Children's Hour," where many stars got their start under Esther and Stan Lee Broza, now retired. The Broza's son, Elliott Lawrence, the orchestra director was just a youngster then who loved to tease us and "get in our hair."

During this period I remember doing a fill-in on Sunday afternoons between Father Coughlin's broadcast and the New York Philharmonic program. For two and a half years every week night I played the theme, "Memories" for the full-network Philco Radio Show, with the late Boake Carter.

It was my privilege also to be able to assist the late Ivan Eremeff, the Russian inventor with his electronic organ "The Photona" which is now on display in the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. This organ was built on the photo-electric cell principle. Mr. Eremeff died during his experimental period and the work ended there.

The organ used in the auditorium at WCAU was a small two-manual Wurlitzer, taken from a theatre in Wilmington, Delaware. On this I made some organ originations which were pumped to the Dixie Networks.

From the listeners of the Dixie Network, I received a nice batch of fan mail,

theatre organ



much of it from a 14-year old boy, Tommy Burroughs III, of McMinnville, Tennessee. I met Mr. Burroughs at an AGO meeting 22 years later in Philadelphia, and again at an ATOE meeting at the Paramount Theatre in New York City. He is a commercial artist in New York and we meet frequently at the ATOE gatherings and have wonderful talks about the organ and our mutual affection for it. What a fine group of people these ATOE members are and what an exciting world of music has opened up for me again!

To go back a bit, after WCAU, there was a long lay-off. Then when my husband was sent to the Pacific I took a job playing an organ in a funeral chapel. My friends said, "My word, has she come to that?" But "that" kept my hand in, and I really enjoyed playing the organ which was a two-manual Moeller with a fine vox and lovely chimes.

In early 1958 my husband, Harold R. Higgins, a broadcast engineer, died of a stroke. After a period of mourning for one year, I returned to music in a very unusual way - or so it seems to me.

It was nearing Christmas and I was feeling very sorry for myself as I looked at the gay shop windows and the happy shoppers on the streets of our town of Collingswood, N.J. Suddenly I heard an amplifier playing carols, and there in a shop window was a lovely Christmas tree and a little Gulbransen spinet played by an attractive red-head in a purple dress, obviously enjoying her task. I was enchanted!

I thought the whole idea was a stroke of showmanship and I wanted to meet the dealer who had staged this inspired scene. So I wrote to the Gulbransen dealer in Collingswood, Mr. John McMahon, a keen business man and fine organist. I expressed my opinion of his original idea and asked him to put my name on his professional list, in case he needed another organist. Though I am no red-head I had a spurt of ambition to be back in the musical picture.

The letter went promptly into his waste-basket. But, a heavy snowfall set in, and luckily no trash was collected that week. The week before Christmas the local bank asked for an organ and organist to play carols. Mr. McMahon went on a wild hunt through all the trash in the can and providentially found my letter. He sent for me for an audition and I have been working for him ever since. I have just completed my fifth year of playing Christmas carols and Christmas music at the bank. Now I teach, demonstrate, play fashion shows, wedding receptions, at restaurants, and occasionally tape an FM show for radio station WKDN. In the past five years I have joined four organ clubs and usually play at three of them.

I've composed more than 15 numbers for church organ, published by the Lorenz Co. of Dayton, Ohio. Hansen has published two of my books. The first one is called "Introductions, Fill-ins, Breaks and Endings" and the second is "More Introductions, Fill-ins, Breaks and Endings." These are numbers 18 and 40

respectively of Hansen's "All Organ Series." My pupils use these books, and evidently many others since the royalties are coming in quite regularly.

I have a musical setting for "The Lord's Prayer" coming out in 1964 by Lorenz, which I hope will be used by many choirs. I do quite a bit of arranging and only wish there were more hours in the day to finish all I'd like to do.

In the earlier days of movie playing only piano music and church organ music was available in printed form. Consequently we had to transpose, arrange and improvise extemporaneously for screen accompaniment. This was marvelous experience, I now realize and I learned immeasurably from it.

On October 20, 1963 Mr. Lowell Ayars and I were featured in a pioneer effort (for this area) - a Sunday afternoon concert of standard and "pop" music at the Broadway Theatre in Pitman, New Jersey. This was sponsored by a local service organization. To everyone's amazement, 625 tickets were sold and the enthusiastic response of the audience testified to its thorough enjoyment of the presentation. Mr. Ayars, an ATOE member, is an accomplished musician with whom it was a real joy to work. The beautiful 3/8

Kimball performed nobly and happens to be one of my favorite instruments anywhere.

The Lansdowne Theatre in Pennsylvania also boasts a little jewel of a Kimball organ which I have played before and between shows recently. Three young ATOE members have restored this organ to perfection in both sound and operation.

Each year I look forward eagerly to our local ATOE chapter's trek to the Surf City Hotel in New Jersey where we play the big WurliTzer which Leroy Lewis made famous.

My one unfulfilled desire is to have a record out and if fortune keeps smiling on me the way she has, maybe this dream too will come true.

If I could have one wish for 1964, it would be that we could have a regular circuit of theatre organs working throughout the country, with a roster of fine artists - Ann Leaf, Don Baker, Dr. Milton Page, Ethel Smith, Leonard MacClain, Gaylord Carter, Dick Scott, Eddie Sheen and all the other notables, too numerous to mention filling the theatres to capacity at least one night a week.



A recent photo of Organist Higgins at the Console of the Richard Loderhose WurliTzer.

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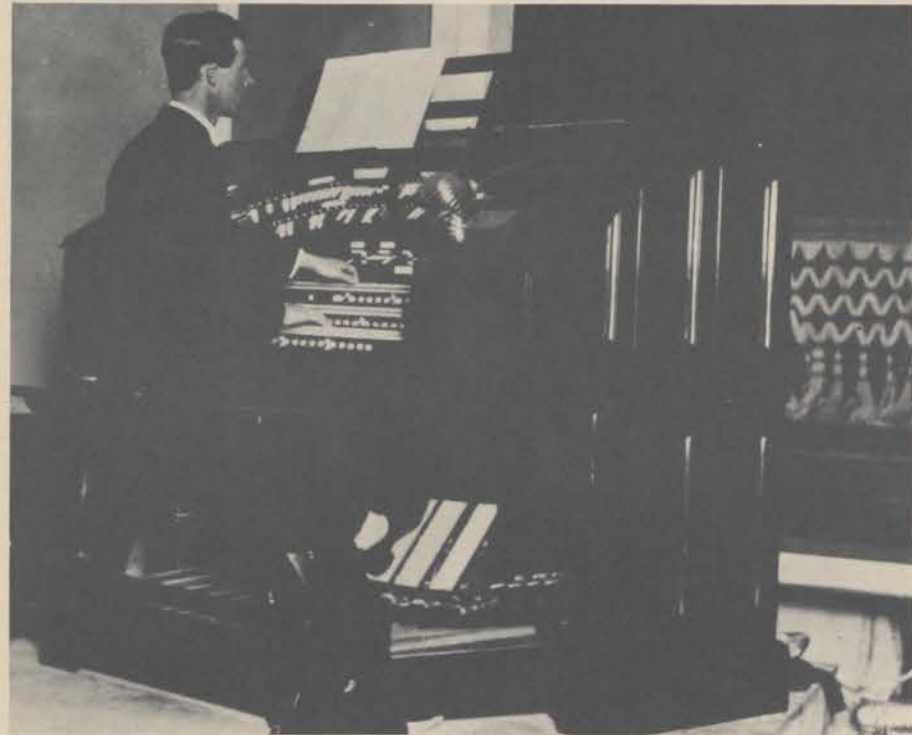
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# A Great Organist Closes A Great Organ In A Great Theatre!



Horace Weber at opening of Melbourne's Capitol Theatre, November, 1924. Console then was highly polished rosewood.

by Eric Wicks

On Wednesday evening, February 5, 1964, the world-famous Capitol Theatre, Melbourne, Australia, screened its last film programme, "Guns of Darkness," with Leslie Caron and David Niven. The Capitol, work of American architectural genius Walter Burley Griffin, the designer of Canberra, rated by many authorities as the world's most perfect cinema, had succumbed to the big guns of competition from television, drive-ins, and 1000-seat long-run houses. The next day, for the first time in almost 40 years, the theatre which had opened in a blaze of glory on Saturday, November 8, 1924, with "The Ten Commandments," a 20-piece orchestra, and a magnificent 3m/15r WurliTzer, would be in darkness.

For most of the audience that attended the final night it was a sentimental occasion. Some had been present on the opening night. Others had worked there over the years. Many were patrons with a deep affection for the timeless quality of the theatre which had needed no modernisation in four decades, its magnificently beautiful ceiling, and who remembered the many exciting and happy hours they had spent there. The orchestra pit had disappeared under a stage apron built into the theatre with the installation of a wide screen 10 years ago, and the WurliTzer organ, bought by the Theatre Organ Society of Australia, Victorian Division, had been removed — the con-

sole left the theatre after the show the night before.

After the final National Anthem, the audience almost to a man remained standing whilst a record was played, the concealed ceiling lighting for the last time blending and changing through endless patterns of soft color, the two magnificent crystal candelabra burning brightly, and theatre manager Ron Jenkinson and his staff stood to attention at the front of the stalls, facing the audience, in their last tribute to a fine theatre.

In the centre of the front row of the lounge stood an erect grey-haired figure, head slightly bowed, listening to the memory-evoking strains of "Look for the Silver Lining," played on the Capitol WurliTzer. It was Horace Weber, the featured organist at the opening of the theatre, hearing again the music with which he closed the organ at the final recital on Sunday afternoon, November 17, 1963.

Horace Weber is a phenomenon in Australia's musical life. For over 60 years his masterful playing of the king of instruments in theatre, church, city hall or cathedral has been heard throughout the country.

Many enthusiastic lovers of organ music will listen to recordings from England, Europe or the United States, and mentally compare what they hear with the standard set by Horace Weber. Whether it be one of the great composi-

tions from the classical repertoire, a simple hymn, or a frivolous Hit Parade pop, over the years Horace Weber has presented them with an innate musicianship and virtuosity of performance which seldom fall short of perfection.

## Father Started His Training

His musical training was thorough, in the best classical tradition. A cathedral organist whilst still in his teens, his entry to the theatre organ world came at a time when he was already acknowledged as a brilliant organist and musician.

Over the years, whilst playing in theatres, his approach to the instruments at his command has always been that he is playing an organ, not a box of whistles and kitchen utensils. The result has been basically sound organ music, developed in the way that can only be accomplished by true organists.

Adelaide-born Horace Weber, the son of a piano mechanic who was himself a fine organist, started his musical career as a choir boy at St. Peter's Anglican Cathedral in that city at the age of seven and a half, and later won the coveted silver medal for the "best all-round boy." His father started teaching Horace the piano when he was aged nine, and allowed him glimpses of organ playing on a cabinet organ. He remembers the first time he played an organ with full scale pedals; it was at St. Luke's Church, Adelaide, where his father was organist. Weber's amazing progress is exempli-



Weber at Capitol in 1932. Console was given "wedding cake" treatment when American Newell Alton came to theatre with Conductor Jan Rubini in 1929.

theatre organ

fied by the fact that he was appointed assistant organist at St. Peter's Cathedral when aged 12. His father overcame the difficulty of adequate practice by arranging with the South Australian Education Department for Horace to attend school in the afternoon only. So one week he would practice all the morning on the organ at the cathedral — a big three-manual Bishop from London, and go to school in the afternoon, and then the next week he would practice piano in the morning, and go to school in the afternoon.

Although training for a musical career, Horace had all a boy's natural instincts for sport and outdoor activity. One of his boyhood friends, R. S. Thompson, now a prominent Adelaide businessman, recently recalled how Horace was "always keen to kick a football, but naturally did not play in matches because of the risk to his fingers. But he would join us at practice, and always wore gloves even when 'marking' (the high leap for the ball to grasp it whilst in flight which is one of the characteristics of Australian football) the ball to have a kick."

Horace has a vivid memory of how he first learnt that he was to become the acting cathedral organist, when only aged 12. "The organist and choirmaster, Mr. John Dunn, was going to England for a trip, and was to be away 11 months. He simply said to me, 'I'm getting Mr. Arthur Otto in to do the choir, and you will do the organ.' That's all he said. But it was a very fine experience. I think that it hit me along musically more than any experience I had. You just had to do the work."

Passing the senior organ examination of the Royal Academy of Music when aged 14, Weber then started piano studies at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, Adelaide, under the head piano teacher, Russian-born Bryceson Treham, with a career as a concert pianist in view.



Gordon Hamilton, TOSA Division President, during a midnight practice session. He was featured with Weber at final recital.

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Horace Weber shown as he plays final recital on Capitol WurliTzer last February 5th.

Although he developed into a magnificent pianist, and still is, his brilliance as an organist brought increasing demands for his services as a recitalist, first at various churches around Adelaide, and then his first big recital at the Adelaide City Hall when aged 16.

The following year, he was appointed from 15 applicants to the post of organist and choirmaster at St. John's Cathedral, Napier, New Zealand, where, during his four years' stay, he gave over 100 recitals, apart from services.

It was here that he had the opportunity to go to America. "I had a choice of going to America — everything was right — or getting married," says Horace. "Well, I got married. And I'm not sorry."

## Became A WurliTzer Man

Instead of America, it was back to Australia, first to the North Adelaide Baptist Church, where he gave his two-hundredth recital, and then he followed the former city organist into the Flinders Presbyterian Church, Adelaide, where he stayed for three years, until the big change — his introduction to the WurliTzer.

"It happened this way," says Horace. "They put an organ in the Grand Theatre, Adelaide, and the proprietor of the theatre, Mr. Drake, appointed a man named Will Parsons as organist. He played the piano at West's Pictures in

Hindley Street. I knew him very well — a very fine theatre pianist, but he didn't know an organ from a harmonium. He was appointed under a two-year contract to play that organ. Well, the organ was opened, and Will held that position for about five weeks. Then they closed the organ up, and had it all done up again.

"One Friday night Mr. Drake came to see me at the church during choir practice. I knew old Mr. Drake, although not very well — he had been a great big tall ex-bookie.

"Anyway, he wandered into the church during choir practice and walked straight up to me and said, 'You're Weber, aren't you?', and I said 'That's right, Mr. Drake.' If I hadn't known him I would have thought he was a policeman, the way he spoke. 'I want to see you,' he said. I said, 'You can't, Mr. Drake, until after practice.' 'Right, I'll meet you at the Grand Theatre at half-past nine,' he said.

"I wandered around there, and there it was. He had me cornered to play this theatre organ. I'd never seen a theatre organ in my life. I was used to the old cathedral work. It was a two-manual WurliTzer Duplex, with an 88-note piano keyboard at the bottom, and a 61-note manual at the top. I told him I didn't know anything about theatre playing. But he said, 'Go down and play something. And don't tell me you can't, because you can.'

\*Please turn page



## A GREAT ORGANIST

"So I went down and played two things that were among his favorites, although I didn't know it — the Soldier's Chorus from Faust, and he thought that was absolutely wonderful. Then I played the same old thing which I often played at the Capitol — The Rosary — and he thought that was wonderful, too. A few days afterwards he saw me and told me that if I would sign a three-year contract he would give me 17 pounds 10 shillings (about 80 dollars) a week.

"And of course I took that position! You can imagine, a poor old church organist in 1919, what he would be getting, and a man comes along and says, 'I'll give you £17/10/-a week, three year's contract.' I said 'thank you very much.'"

Those, of course, were the silent film days. And Horace Weber says he thinks he learnt more playing theatre organ for silent films than he did at the Conservatorium or in Cathedral work. "Playing picture organ in silent days you had to play from all sorts of scores — song copies, piano conductor's copies, all sorts of things. When you had to make your own pedal part from these it would be quite hard, but when you came back to ordinary organ music — three staves — it was quite simple."

Here it must be mentioned that to Horace Weber the pedal part, even for a pop, is not just a rhythmic bassy bump — it's a real pedal part, played with both feet, with the top end of the pedal board getting almost as much work as the lower.

The organist at the Grand was not on view to the public. The console was raised about half-way up the theatre wall facing the screen, and surrounded by a high curtain. "In summer I'd probably play just in a singlet. In winter I'd have my topcoat and everything on."

Horace says the Grand WurliTzer was a fine little organ of its kind — 11 or 12 ranks, with two flutes — a concert flute and an ordinary Hohl flute, but no tibias. He used to try and fit the picture, using appropriate music, such things as Wagnerian opera, even Bach. "A lot of people don't think I play Karg-Elert. And Max Reger. Karg-Elert was just composing then for the harmonium, not the organ. I used to play a lot of him, to fit in with a dry picture. The picture was dry, so I played dry music," says Horace.

"During the period I was there we added a bass drum, snare drum, and two cymbals. They were the most vile things you ever heard. They were terrible drums, but the best we could buy in Adelaide. My brother Victor put them in — he is a piano and organ mechanic. But in those days they had no way of working them. The bass drum was just a thump."

### Played First Big WurliTzer

In 1922 Horace Weber was engaged to open the two-manual Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra at Hoyt's De Luxe Theatre (now the Esquire) in Melbourne. Two



## About Eric Wicks ★

Eric Wicks, Vice-President of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia, Victorian Division, was a pupil of Horace Weber for three years before joining the Australian Army during the Second World War, which, he says, was probably a good thing for those people who like to enjoy listening to theatre organs. He is now editor of the Melbourne suburban newspaper, East Yarra News. He likes to tell friends he is a member of the "coolie labor" force helping the more expert TOSA members dismantle theatre organs.

years later, in 1924, he was appointed from 12 applicants as organist for the first full-scale WurliTzer in Australia at the new Capitol Theatre.

It was the first WurliTzer in Australia with 16, 8 and 4 Tibias, and cost the then staggering sum of £15,000 (about 75,000 dollars). Newspapers of the day indicate that the opening of the theatre with "The Ten Commandments," the large orchestra under Sam White, the stage "prologue," and the magnificent organ rising up from the pit whilst being played by Horace Weber, was something of a riot.

The program in those days opened with a "gazette," (type of newsreel—Ed.) after which there would be the orchestral overture, followed by the solo organ spot. Once, giving one of his "Trips through the Organ," Horace announced to the audience that he was going to do something different — play the piano with his feet. They thought it was a joke. He coupled the piano 16, 8 and 4 to the pedal, and played the Bach G Major Fugue. They thought it was wonderful. Horace says there was nothing wonderful about it — just showmanship, that's all. But there are few theatre organists who could do it with a work of that nature.

Old timers remember the big controversy in the newspapers when the then city organist of Melbourne, William McKie (now Sir William McKie, organist at Westminster Abbey) told students during a lecture at Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music that the Capitol WurliTzer was only fit to use as drains. When this was reported in the press, Horace Weber bounced right back, and the argument was very heated.

Eventually McKie came across from the town hall (it was only on the other side of Swanston Street) to the Capitol to hear Weber play the WurliTzer for him. McKie was quite surprised, and admitted that the organ's tone was very fine. He

said he had been quite mistaken, and had made his statement to the students on what he had been told, without having heard the WurliTzer. But he wouldn't accept the invitation to try it himself.

In 1929 Weber left the Capitol for the Victory Theatre, Kogarah, New South Wales (his place at the Capitol was taken by American Newell Alton, who came out with violinist-conductor Jan Rubini), and later he followed another American, Price Dunlevy, at the Sydney State 4m/21r WurliTzer, from which he broadcast daily for two years. He was then at the Roxy, Paramatta (a three-manual Christie) before returning to the Melbourne Capitol in 1932 for two years. He then transferred to Perth, West Australia, where he was featured at the Ambassadors and Regent Theatres before returning to Melbourne and the Capitol in 1938 for another six years.

His last theatre appointment was at Melbourne's Regent and Plaza Theatres in 1948-49. The Plaza, with a 2m/13r WurliTzer, is below the Regent. The original Regent, opened in 1929, was destroyed by fire in 1945. During his period here Weber was again playing the Ambassadors' Perth organ, which had been brought across to Melbourne, and rebuilt from a 3m/15r to a 4m/19r by including some of the Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra originally in Hoyt's De Luxe, before being installed in the Regent to replace the original 4m/21r WurliTzer lost in the fire.

Since his retirement from regular theatre work, he has been actively engaged as organist and choirmaster at the Armadale Baptist Church, Melbourne, and gives many recitals there and at other churches. In recent years he has also been in demand as an electronic organ demonstrator.

(Editor's Note: Part two of Eric Wicks' excellent story discloses the tremendous activity on the part of the Victorian Division of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia to prepare the Capitol WurliTzer for the final Weber concert, the big musical event, and final removal of the instrument by the Society. The article will appear in the next issue of THEATRE ORGAN.)

## MacClain, Cole Suffer Attacks

Two famous organists have recently suffered heart attacks and have been forced into semi-retirement until their health improves. The two, ATOE's Leonard MacClain, who resides at Devault, Pa., and Buddy Cole, of North Hollywood, Calif., have both produced new recordings that are currently being distributed throughout the United States. Both men are inactive and will be on the mend for several months.

However, it was announced in Niagara Frontier Chapter's "Silent Newsreel," official unit publication, that MacClain sent word he plans to attend the 1964 National ATOE Convention in New York next July.

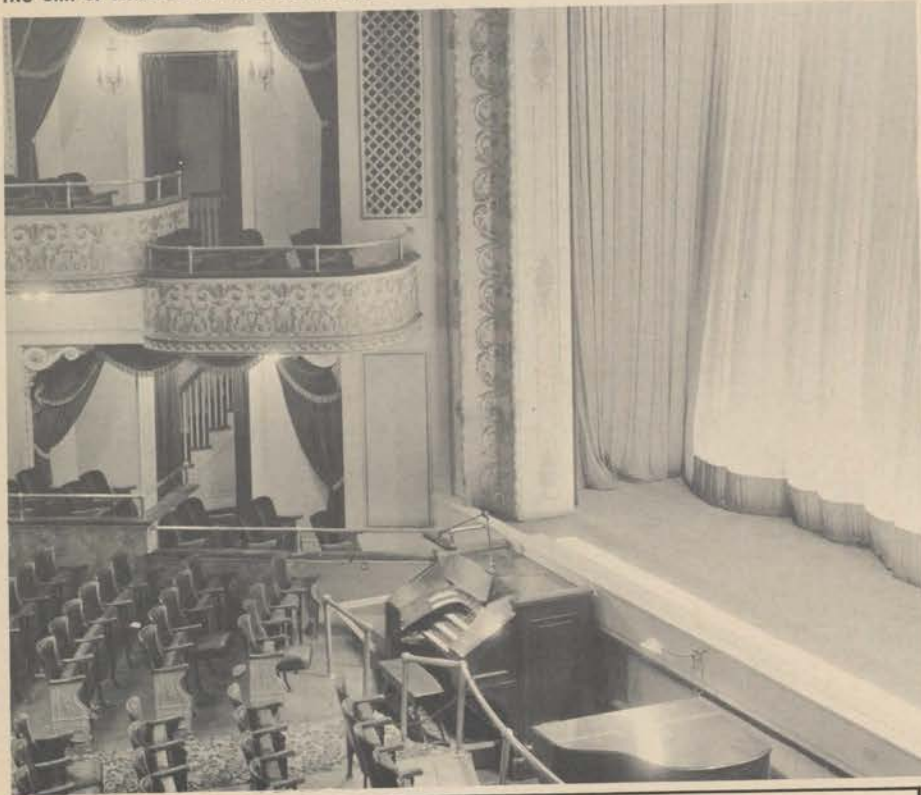
theatre organ



## FEATURES POSTPONED

Due to publication of articles relative to the 1964 National Convention in New York, several standing features of THEATRE ORGAN have been rescheduled for publication in the next edition. Only one item, "Chapter News," has been abandoned; henceforth all chapter items will be published as part of the news content of this journal. Correspondents are requested to list their names on all copy sent in for use in 'by lines.'

BELOW—Seemingly out of the past, but very much in present is the Broadway Theatre, Pitman, N.J., where Esther Higgins and ATOE'r Lowell Ayars presented a Sunday afternoon concert on the 3m/8r Kimball for 625 concertgoers.



New Officers of Puget Sound Chapter, L/R – Roger Johnson, secretary-treasurer, Dick Schrum, chairman, and Andy Crow, immediate past chairman. Schrum last year served as secretary-treasurer.

## Dick Schrum Top Tab Man For Puget Sound Chapter

Popular Northwest Organist Dick Schrum was elected Chairman of Puget Sound Chapter during a meeting of the chapter, Sunday, March 1st. Roger Johnson was named to serve as Secretary-Treasurer for the new year.

A concert meeting preceded the business session at the Mt. Baker Theatre, Bellingham, Washington, with Woody Presho at the console of the 2m/10r WurliTzer. The members toured chambers following the formal musical portion of the program, and then a "jam session" was held until 12:45 p.m., when the house opened for business. Club members Don French and Andy Crow, outgoing chairman, played for customers entering the theatre.

The business meeting was held during a dinner at the Bellingham Yacht Club. During this period several talks were presented on electronic instruments; one described the new \$12,000 Hammond G-100 concert organ.

Schrum reported that Andy Crow will present a concert in May at the Olympia Theatre, while he (Schrum) hopes to have a public performance playing the Seattle Paramount WurliTzer in April.

Next meeting of Puget Sound Chapter will take place at the home of Bill Morrison, Tacoma, who recently purchased, removed and installed the 3m/10r Morton organ formerly in the Tacoma Roxy Theatre.



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### Carter Plays Silent Film At High School

Gaylord Carter, Southern California's leading exponent of silent film-pipe organ presentations, played the accompaniment for Douglas Fairbanks in "The Thief of Bagdad," last February 29th at the Monrovia High School Auditorium, Monrovia, California. Approximately 700 patrons paid to see the film and hear Carter perform at the console of the 216 WurliTzer. The show, including an overture for the film, ran for about three hours.



# Dream House Remodeled Nine Times For Final Wurlitzer

By Weldon Flanagan

Though the Fort Wayne Paramount Wurlitzer wasn't the largest instrument ever built by North Tonawanda's whistle factory, the most overwhelming surprise when the organ first sounded off in the Flanagan's Dallas residential palace was that it did not blow everything out of the house. Of course there was one deflecting feature — the swell shades did not open direct into the general listening area and caused the musical breezes to circulate against the walls

before hitting the listeners. In some close-quartered installations, the musical draft has been known to cause chills.

One thing is certain, however: when a pipe organ is installed in a residence, the owner is the boss and well able to do anything thought wise — be it wise or wrong.

The reader may notice in the house diagram an owner's idea; the unusual arrangement of the Flanagan Solo Organ. After having played a theatre instrument live for over 10 years, the author has developed a few likes and dislikes that are reflected in the installation of the Fort Wayne instrument.

One concerns the Tibia. This rank requires the greatest amount of area for the sound to develop properly, and is therefore the back rank in the Solo chamber, with the traps and percussions being closest to the shutters. Normally the latter items have a muffled sound in most theatre and residential installations where there are no percussion chambers.

The story of the Wurlitzer really starts back in the early fifties. At that time the organ owned was a 3m/8r Wicks theatre instrument that left much to be desired. There was something else that entered the picture about then that left absolutely nothing to be desired — the future Mrs. Weldon Flanagan. When matrimony became the topic of the day and night the little lady happened to mention that she "was startled to think of all that stuff being in a home."

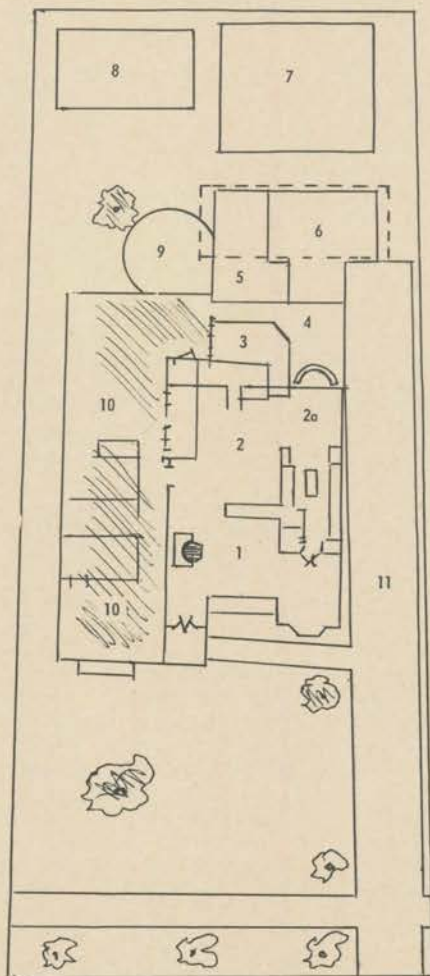
So, the bulk of the Wicks was donated to our church. The theatre equipment was discarded and parts were used with an old 24-rank Hook & Hastings straight organ. Other theatre ranks were sold to friends and pipe organs were forgotten! This was March, 1957. The old Hook & Hastings, with added Wicks, played the wedding march in April of the same year. Life was bliss until July, 1961. Then an organ bug, long dormant, flared up and did a little biting. This caused a suggestion to be made to the effect that a theatre pipe organ be located and installed in the new house. B—O—O—M!!! Mrs. Mary Flanagan quietly cried all night and was upset for several days after.

It must be explained that even though a pipe organ did not live in the house from 1957 to 1961, there were several different makes of electronic instruments boarding there. And the house, which was brand spanking new to begin with, had been remodeled seven times in four years. This was done to achieve certain desired effects for the plug-ins. After all, playing a 4m/20r Publix Wurlitzer every day, three times a day at the Dallas Palace caused certain spoilage of the organist when it came to having just a plain, ordinary electric organ in the house.

Realizing that the disease had re-



Owner Flanagan at console of his Wurlitzer



**FLANAGAN IN FULL**—On a lot that tapers from 65 feet in front to 55 at the rear, and is 150 feet in depth, Weldon Flanagan has installed his Wurlitzer in his home as shown above. An explanation of the rooms and buildings, by the numbers — 1— Living room where console is placed; 2— Den; 2a— Breakfast room and kitchen area; 3— Planter fireplace; 4— Mixing chamber; 5— Main organ; 6— Solo organ; 7— Blower, generator, air conditioning, heat for blower and chambers; 8— Pool; 9— Patio; 10— Bedrooms and baths area; 11— Driveway and carpport.

turned, a restricted okay was given. "If you really want it that bad, it is all right with me, providing this is the last time we will have to remodel." There was a neat little 2m/8r Wurlitzer in Ohio and it arrived in Dallas in jig time. Reportedly an original installation in the Iris Theatre, Detroit, the organ was minus a few things needed to make it a true theatre screamer.

In the meantime the final remodel work was started — construction of a large room on the back of the house. This turned out to be disaster. Money ran out and several ideas had to be abandoned, and there were acrimonious arguments with the City of Dallas when the attempt was made to secure a permit to build the room in the first place. All this subsequently turned to advantage as the reader will see later on.

The little Wurlitzer had no Tibia and numerous other accessories that were wanted. This started a search for extra equipment — and it turned out to be the best thing that could have happened. The organ grapevine led to California and Russ Nelson, who is a national director of ATOE, and, at that time, was in the business of buying and selling pipe organs by the piece or package. Without this used organ dealer, the Fort Wayne Paramount Wurlitzer would have landed somewhere outside of Dallas. Miscellaneous parts were purchased and he was ultimately advised that certain ranks and equipment were still desired.

When the organ in Indiana became available, Nelson sent word that it contained many of the items that were desired for the smaller Wurlitzer. The date was sometime in March, 1962, and three weeks later the organ was safely stored all over the house, after a wall had been removed to get the console in

theatre organ





Location of the console in living room

and later replaced. It isn't difficult to envision one pleased customer and a wife who was beside herself and ready for a nervous breakdown.

The cost of transportation was in excess of what was originally budgeted and a return trip was necessary to the Republic National Bank. The employees of the institution were outspoken in appraising the sanity of the situation when they learned that a 40-foot moving van was on its way to Dallas loaded to the gills with organ parts and the bank balance was literally \$0.00. Banking friends came through just in time. This is all very funny now, but it was not so at the time.

To give credit where it is due, Russ Nelson was not only responsible for aiding in the acquiring of this fine instrument, but his expert care, with the help of Harvey Heck, another California organ buff, in removing the instrument assured proper handling and shipping. There have been hundreds of words of correspondence between that familiar box number in Orange, California, and Dallas, Texas. Descriptions of installations, certain things that should be done, others to avoid - in total, advice that could never have been paid for was available just for the asking.

After the initial shock was over, and calm was halfway restored, the decision was reached to build a house around the organ. The idea had to be discarded, however, for there was a shortage of about \$30,000 in funds necessary to complete the plan.

In the meantime the little "dream house" was in a state of disorder and confusion, with coal dust everywhere. The back door could not be opened to feed the dog or put out the garbage. It was somewhat of an amusing sight to see the house trash being taken to and put out through the theatre stage door, or carried to the trash cans at the music store. Eventually everything was rearranged. Through all this the WurliTzer Widow Flanagan was amazingly understanding.

Spring '64

At this point the house had undergone its eighth remodeling. With an under-standing Father-in-law contractor, a sigh, a tear and a few distressed stares by neighbors, the decision was made to remodel a ninth and final time. It was felt by this time that we would never be able to move and so the plans included changing the kitchen, enlarging the master bedroom and fixing up several other items.

Construction started in August and was completed in November, 1962. There was no kitchen, air conditioning, etc., during this time and it was impossible, for financial reasons, to not live there. With no back walls in the house, the dog running wild, plus the constant worry of protecting organ parts from workmen and rain, nerves were stretched to the breaking point.

Installation of the organ was begun in December, 1962 and progressed very slowly; everything had to be done in spare time. Fortunately, as mentioned above, the first room could not be completed and eventually became organ chamber space. Many cuts and bruises later, with events too disappointing to enumerate, the wind was ready to be turned on. One final problem however was the three phase, 220 volt current necessary to operate the blower. The local power company had agreed to install the necessary service and put in

Editor's Note: Weldon Flanagan is well known to most theatre organ buffs for his lengthy stint at the console of the Dallas Palace 4m/20r Publix WurliTzer. In this issue he tells of the extensive trials and tribulations encountered when he installed the Fort Wayne Paramount WurliTzer in his home. In a future edition of THEATRE ORGAN he will write about his experiences with the Dallas Palace organ. In addition to playing the theatre and residential instruments, Weldon Flanagan manages to tend to business - he operates the large House of Music, Inc., in downtown Dallas.

a special transformer at no charge. Everything was wired in and then it was discovered that two weeks prior the city council had passed an ordinance ruling that no power lines could be installed over a swimming pool. Our pool was in the way.

This was almost too much; however, after talking things over with the city electrical inspector, the wiring was approved and completed. The wind was turned on the third week of April, 1963.

At this writing the organ is practically complete - except for some additions that will be made later. There are no parts scattered about and the house is once more the big-little "dream home" with the added pleasure of "music by WurliTzer." The organ is listed as Opus 2128 and was shipped to Fort Wayne August 26, 1930.

The cat is not at all interested or disturbed by the WurliTzer except when he is moved from his favorite spot, the Howard Seat.

#### - FACTUALLY SPEAKING -

Relays are located in attic above living room and den areas.

Chambers and blower have a 100,000 BTU heater and three-ton air conditioning unit with separate thermostat from house temperature.

Console regulator is located in hall closet.

Ceiling in mixing room is 14' down to 10'.

Chamber ceiling within dotted area is 19' to 15'.

Blower is located in separate building on individual concrete foundation with no vibration to organ.

The organ is on separate foundation to the house and is solid concrete slab.

Chambers are constructed as follows: outside to inside 1 inch wood, 2 inches air space, 1 inch Celotex, 2 inches sheetrock, 1/2 inch wood, steel reinforcement rod and 4 inches of blown Gunite, both ceiling and exterior walls. (There is no neighbor problems when organ is played).

House is of regular brick veneer construction. Attic is floored and sheetrocked for relays.

Main organ has 14 shutters with 12 movements; solo has same number.

The blower uses air from chambers which is temperature regulated. This seems to have eliminated usual rumbles.

Air pressures used are six, ten, twelve and fifteen inches.



'Hammondite' Flanagan graduates to big WurliTzer.



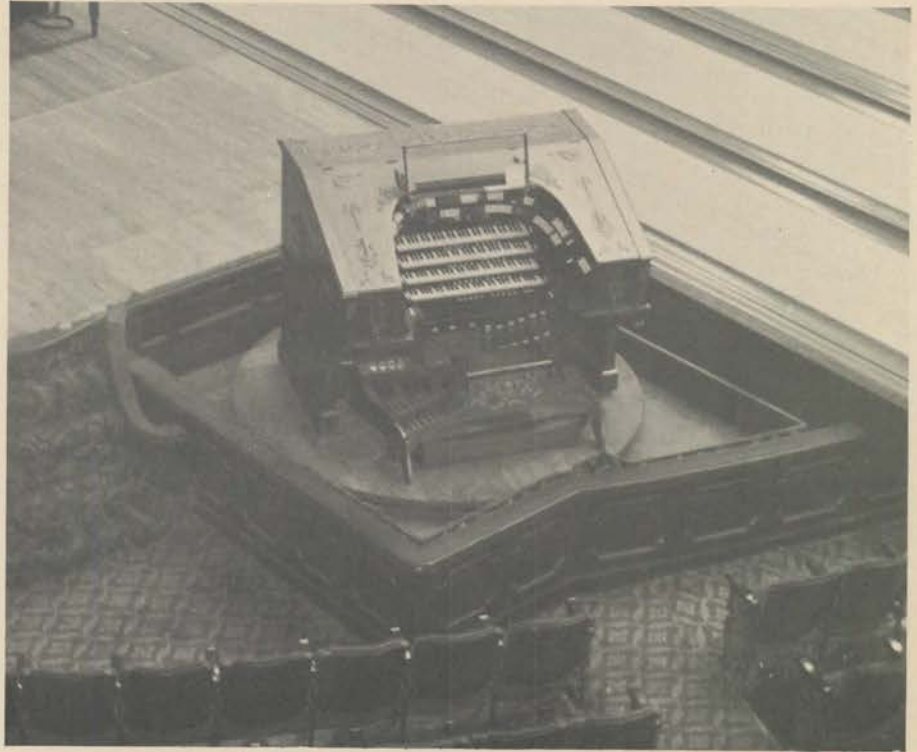
# Pipe Organs In Business

It isn't at all unusual for a theatre organ to be removed from its dusty perch in a picture palace and reinstalled in an organ buff's home. Sometimes, however, the organ goes back into business, earning its keep in a restaurant, high school auditorium, or serving the congregation in a local church.

To introduce "Pipe Organs in Business," two theatre instruments are featured in this first of the series — the Robert Morton Organ in the former Loew's Midland Theatre, Kansas City, Mo., and the Christie Organ now in the Regent Theatre, Stotfold, England, which is now the Ex-Servicemen's Club. The Morton is currently silent again, but the Christie is used to entertain for stage shows, recitals and dances.

The Midland Morton fell into silence and disrepair following the advent of sound motion pictures. After 14 years of non-use it was refurbished enough to make it playable; there had been extensive water damage to some portions of the instrument and this could not be repaired. In 1961 the theatre was converted to an elaborate bowling alley called the Midland Stadium. It was the home of the Kansas City Stars of the National Bowling League.

In converting the theatre, none of the theatrical equipment was disturbed except where necessary for the installation of four bowling lanes. The only visible loss was a few rows of center orchestra seats. The projection equipment, curtains, paintings, statuary and, of course, the organ were retained. It was used on nights when the Stars played their home games. During bowling



The Midland Morton in position for bowling

seasons the organ was available for recitals.

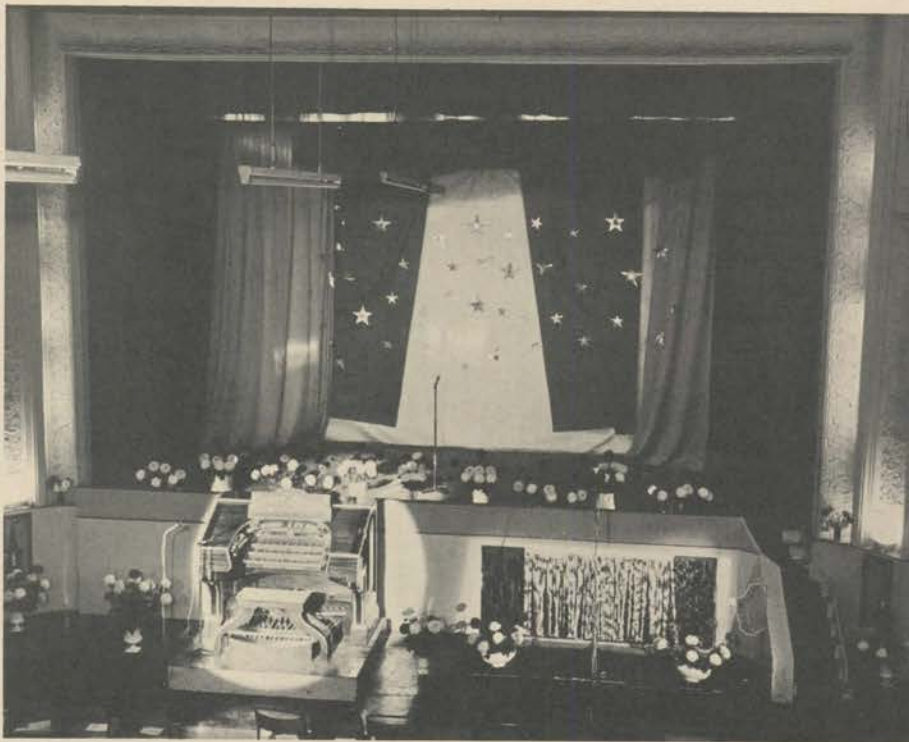
Lack of patronage forced cancellation of bowling and the theatre was again reconditioned, renamed the Saxon and opened as a first run motion picture house. The organ again suffered water

damage and last Summer the theatre's air conditioning system went out and the house was shuttered. A small theatre, The Studio, located on the former Midland-Saxon mezzanine, is open daily. It is not known at this writing whether the large theatre will be reopened.

The British counterpart presents a much more encouraging picture. THEATRE ORGAN is indebted to John Fosskett, secretary of the Theatre Organ Preservation Society, for supplying details of the installation. This is the second pipe organ to be installed in the Regent Theatre. When it opened in the mid-thirties, the cinema was equipped with a Wurlitzer organ that was removed from the La Scala Theatre in Glasgow. It was used in interludes and with stage shows. After World War II, with the decline in patronage, the Wurlitzer was sold and moved to the Ritz, Birkenhead, where it remains today.

Ultimately the Regent was converted to a Club and little over one year ago it was decided to install an organ for the enjoyment of the patrons. Many instruments were investigated and finally the 3m/10r Christie in the Carlton Theatre at Tuebrook was purchased. It had been first installed in 1932. A two chamber organ, it was rebuilt into the single chamber space at the Regent by Phil Burbeck and Rupert Kettle. Work started mid June, 1963, and by the beginning of August the installation had taken shape and the wind was on.

Although a fair amount of juggling had to take place the general character of the instrument remained unchanged. The



Ex-Servicemen's Club Christie in spotlight. —Photo by John D. Sharp

theatre organ

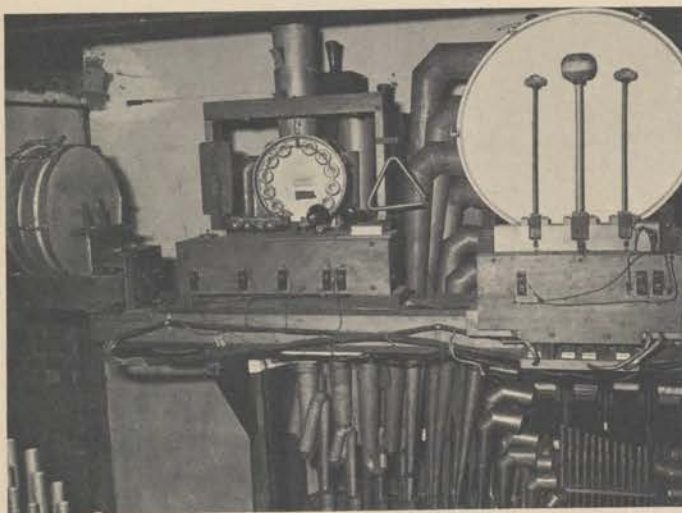


percussions were placed to be effective for dance work, but this was done in such a manner that it was not to the detriment of the pipe work. The organ speaks out with effectiveness, due to the hall acoustics, helped by the upward opening shutters and sensitive layout of the instrument. The only addition has been an octave coupler, (solo super to great).

This is definitely one organ that speaks for its keep — it's a pipe organ that is really in business!



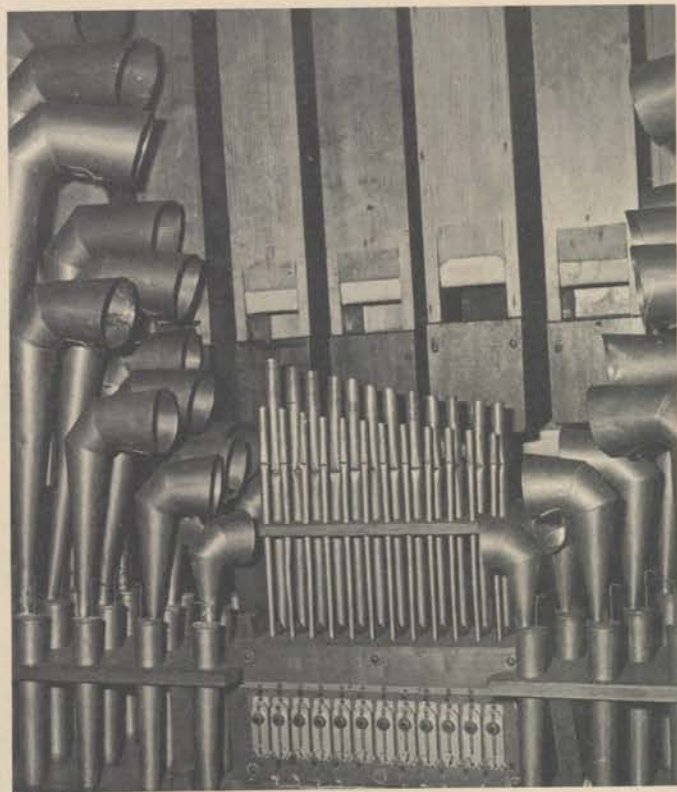
Part of the tonal percussions required much juggling to put in place without effective paperwork.



Installation of traps and percussions was made wherever space permitted. Above: Drums surround a small section of toy counter holding tambourine, castanets, triangle and sleigh bells. Percussions are used during dances at the club.



Pictured on this page are photos of the former Regent Theatre at Stotfold, England, showing installation of the Christie organ. Excellent photography of John D. Sharp provides THEATRE ORGAN readers with the fine views. Above, members of the club crowd around the console to look and ask questions of organist William Davies.



Installation of pipework in the single chamber. A smaller WurliTzer was installed prior to the Christie and this necessitated crowding extra ranks into the same space under the stage. Chamber area is to right of console as seen in proscenium view on page 18.



# Organ Society Listening Post

by

Ian Sutherland

On a certain evening, once a month, members of the London District of the Cinema Society can be seen converging on the magnificent Public Library belonging to the Holborn Borough Council in Theobalds Road in West Central London. (Holborn is one of the best known business districts of London, with, surprisingly, quite a large residential population). What are they doing there, these members of the Cinema Organ Society? Well, perhaps we had better begin at the beginning.

Soon after the Society was formed in 1953, a few of the London members decided it would be a good idea to get together in an informal way to have a chat, and listen to records of theatre organ music. It was not possible to get to know each other very well at meetings in vast theatres in semi-darkness while recitals were taking place, and the idea of these meetings met a real need.

At the start, about 10 or a dozen members used to meet in the hall attached to St. Mark's Church, Marylebone in West London. At most of these early meetings the records came from the wonderful collection of about 3,000 discs belonging to Douglas Badham.

Doug was then General Secretary of the Society and is now its much respected Chairman. He is a great authority on theatre organ records – particularly the pre-war 78's, which were the only ones available at the time.

Gradually other members joined in and brought along their favourites, all of which gave some of us a chance to hear records which were new to us. Incidentally, quite good business was done in buying and selling duplicate copies and some members were able to add to their collections discs they had been searching for for years. In those early days meetings were quite informal, and we soon got to know our fellow members during the interval while drinking a cup of tea – a peculiarly English habit which seems to mystify you American friends!

Later, a small room was obtained adjoining the Fred Tallant Hall at Euston, which was more central. Another advantage was that they had a refreshment room which we were allowed to use. As the Society grew, this room soon proved too small, and we had to move into the small hall in the same building, and eventually into the main hall. The buildings were rather old and decidedly Victorian in comfort, and furthermore there was no place to store our record playing equipment, which had to be transported back and forth every time we met.

After looking around for some little time, Dennis Mathew, then General Secretary, heard there was a chance of hiring the lecture theatre in the Holborn Library, recently opened by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. A few of us spent our lunch break going to see the Librarian and viewing the Hall. We found a beautiful little theatre with a seating capacity of 200-300 on the top floor of the Library, which had built-in stereophonic hi fi playing equipment, and a first class tape machine. Although the hire charge was more than we had been paying, we felt that the location was ideal. Rather nervously we suggested our charge per member should be increased to two shillings and sixpence (roughly 35 cents, to you!). But we need not have worried as more and more members joined us.

Since moving to our new 'home' about four years ago, we have become more ambitious, and the usual programme is varied from time to time to include film evenings (mainly on organ topics), showing of colour transparencies of consoles, theatres and organists, or a combination of these with records. Other popular events have been tributes to the late Jesse Crawford, and Quentin Maclean. In the latter case we were able to hear by kind permission of C.B.C. the Canadian radio tribute to "Mac". Also by special permission, and kind cooperation of A.T.O.E. members, we were able to hear the complete broadcast of "Farewell to the Fox," originally broadcast from San Francisco. We have also been honoured by visits from famed radio organists George Blackmore and Gerald Shaw, who have presented their musical autobiographies with the aid of their own private recordings.

At some of these special events attendances have reached nearly 200 people, and nowadays an average attendance is 40 to 50. Meetings are somewhat less informal than in the early days, as the disc jockey for the evening always takes a great deal of time to prepare an attractive programme, very often based on a theme of his own choice.

We do not forget the great players of the past and 78's still find their place in our programmes; some of them still sound remarkably good on hi fi equipment. Douglas Badham is still responsible for the meeting arrangements which we all enjoy immensely.

We can certainly recommend the idea to the readers of THEATRE ORGAN. The writer has found that it is well worth while, for not only can we recall our old British organist friends, but we have been introduced to the stylings of many of your famous American organists, not forgetting also, those in Australia, and the continent of Europe.



Cinema Organ Society members listening to records played by Len Rawle (sitting at table with tape recorder in Holborn Library Hall).

—Photo by John D. Sharp



# An Organ Alone

By Sam Dickerson

The number of theatre organs damaged by water is not astronomical, but widespread enough to establish the calamitous fact as something that is expected rather than being placed in the "unusual" category. But a theatre organ that has undergone two separate tidal waves and come through with only the loss of console and blower places the instrument in the "Believe-It-Or-Not" book of theatre organ wonders. Such is the story of the 3m/7r Robert Morton Pipe Organ, number 2507, presently located in the Hilo Theatre, Hilo, Hawaii.

First installed in the Palace Theatre, Hilo, the organ was used for silent films. During 1931-32 Alice Blue was the organist, and in May of the latter year, John DeMello took over presiding at the console.

In April, 1940, both John and Robert Morton were moved to the new Hilo Theatre where DeMello was musical director for stage shows and provided organ music before shows and during intermissions. He also played the organ for broadcasts six times weekly over Radio Station KHBC in Hilo. The programs were first aired from the Palace in May, 1936, and then from the Hilo after the organ had been moved.

December, 1941, changed the lives of many — the Robert Morton organ in the Hilo Theatre was no exception. Regular organ programs were discontinued, and John DeMello moved to Honolulu, where he now is a theatre manager and still plays occasionally at the Princess and Waikiki Theatres. The Hilo organ was heard on special occasions during the war years with Bernice Ah Nin or Anahea Brown at the console. These two ladies still live in Hilo.

The first tidal wave hit the Hilo Theatre in April, 1946, and the three manual console received severe water damage. The organ chambers, located high alongside the stage, completely escaped damage. Removed and sent to Honolulu for repairs by Leo Schoenstein, organ man for Consolidated Amusement Company, the console was not re-installed in the theatre until approximately two years later.

In its refurbished condition the key-desk remained in the theatre until May, 1960 — when the second tidal wave picked it up and moved it out of the theatre — in many pieces. The console was destroyed completely; one of the manuals was found much later outside the theatre in the parking lot.

Located along the waterfront in Hilo, the theatre is quite susceptible to the results of these freaks of nature. The 1960 tidal wave smashed into the theatre through a double door in the back of the

stage, tore through the silver screen, uprooted the organ console, (located in a fixed position in the center of the pit) demolished most of the seats, and left 10 feet of water on the floor. This all happened at one o'clock in the morning while the theatre was empty.

Once again the organ itself was spared damage. When inspected last December 3rd, the chambers appeared to be in excellent condition.

Located in two chambers along the sides of the stage, the organ is arranged as follows:

The theatre has not been repaired since the 1960 tidal wave and today it stands alone along the Hilo waterfront with the tropical foliage grown up about the walls, and the interior of the theatre standing dark and deserted with most of the seats removed.

#### LEFT CHAMBER

Vox Humana  
Post Horn  
Tibia  
Principal  
Bass Drum, Snare Drum  
Tom Tom, Wood Block  
Tambourine, Castanets  
Zylophone  
Chrysoglott

#### RIGHT CHAMBER

Kinura  
Viole d'Orchestra  
Flute  
Chimes  
Harp

## BILL THOMSON PLAYS CONCERT AT RIALTO

Bill Thomson, popular young recording organist, played a concert to a capacity audience last April 6th at the Rialto Theatre, South Pasadena, Calif. The event, presented by Pipe Organ Attractions, started at 8:30 p.m. and did not conclude until 11. Thomson played popular tunes of the day and light classical numbers. The Rialto's 216 Wurlitzer performed flawlessly throughout the evening. This is the instrument that was twice damaged by rain and rebuilt by John Curry.

A feature of the Thomson concert was the sale of a recording of the selections played during the evening. The first record made on this instrument, sale of the platter was reported heavy.

#### HILO MORTON

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Since the following article was written, the Robert Morton Pipe Organ in the Hilo Theatre has been sold to Organ Buff Roger Angell, of Honolulu. "I have just purchased the organ, which was originally a 3m/7r instrument, and it has required one week to remove and pack. Installation is already underway — the chambers were built beforehand. Will send a story on it when the installation is completed," he has advised Theatre Organ.



The Hilo Theatre, Hilo, Hawaii, as it appeared in 1940 before tidal waves washed through the house from rear to front doors and carried organ console and blower into oblivion. Rear stage door is less than 100 yards from ocean.

—From the DeMello Collection



# The Story of Robert Hope-Jones

THE CONCLUSION

The combination pedals and pistons are all provided with double touch. Upon using them in the ordinary way, the manual stops alone are affected. If, however, considerable extra pressure be brought to bear upon them, the appropriate Suitable Bass tablet is thereby momentarily depressed and liberated--by this means providing a suitable bass. In large organs, two or three adjustable toe pistons are also provided to give independent control of the Pedal organ. On touching any of these toe pistons, all Suitable Bass tablets are released, and any selection of Pedal stops and couplers that the organist may have arranged, are brought into use. The Hope-Jones plan seems to leave little room for improvement. It has been spoken of as "The greatest assistance to the organist since the invention of combination pedals" by none other than Mark Andrews, Associate of the Royal College of Organists in England.

## SPORZANDO PEDAL--Double Touch

Under the name of the Sforzando Coupler, a device was formerly found in some organs by which the keys of the Swell were caused to act upon the keys of the Great. The coupler being brought on and off by a pedal, sforzando effects could be produced, or the first beat in each measure strongly accented in the style of the orchestration of the great masters. Hope-Jones in his pioneer organ at St. John's Church, Birkenhead, provided a pedal which brought on the Tuba on the Great organ. The pedal was thrown back by a spring on being released from the pressure of the foot. Some fine effects could be produced by this, but of course, the whole keyboard was effected, and only chords could be played.

## BALANCED SWELL PEDAL

The introduction of the balanced Swell pedal in 1863 has greatly increased the tonal resources of the organ. A further and great step in advance appears in recent organs built by the Hope-Jones Organ Company.

The position of the swell shutters is brought under the control of the organist's fingers as well as his feet. Each balanced swell pedal is provided with an indicator key fixed on the under side of the ledge of the music desk, where it is most conspicuous to the eye of the performer. As the swell pedal is opened by the organist's foot, the indicator key travels in a downward direction to the extent of perhaps one and a quarter inch. As the organist closes his pedal, the indicator key again moves upward into its normal position. By means of this visible indicator key, the organist is always aware of the position of the swell shutters. Through patent electric mechanism, the indicator key is so connected with the swell pedal that the slightest urging of the key either upward or downward by the finger will shift the swell pedal and cause it to close or open as may be desired and to the desired extent. When an organ possesses 4 or 5 swell boxes (as in the case of Hope-Jones' organs) modify the tone by many thousands per cent, it becomes highly important that the organist shall at all times have complete and instant control of the swell shutters and shall be conscious of their position without having to look below the keyboards. Hope-Jones also provides what he calls a general swell pedal (and its corresponding indicator key), any or all of the other swell pedals may be coupled at will.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Following is the conclusion of the text relative to Robert Hope-Jones, "The Father of the Theatre Organ" as it appears in a book, "The Recent Revolution in Organ Building," written by George L. Miller in 1909 for the annual convention of the National Association of Organists. Mrs. David Marr loaned the book to ATOE Member Lloyd E. Klos while he was doing research on the history of the Marr & Colton Company.

## SWELL BOXES

The invention of the Swell is generally attributed to Abraham Jordon, who first exhibited the Nag's Head Swell in 1731.

By the adoption of scientific principles, Hope-Jones has multiplied the efficiency of Swell Boxes tenfold. He points out that wood, hitherto used in their construction, is one of the best known conductors of sound, and should, therefore, not be employed. The effects produced by his brick, stone and cement boxes (Worcester Cathedral, McEwan Hall in Edinburgh, and Ocean Grove in New Jersey) mark, in ascending degrees, the dawn of a new era in Swell Box construction and effect. It is now possible to produce by means of scientific Swell Boxes, an increase or diminution of tone amounting to many thousands per cent.

We have heard the great Tuba at Ocean Grove, on 50-inch wind pressure, so reduced in strength that it formed an effective accompaniment to the tones of a single voice.

The Hope-Jones method seems to be to construct the box and its shutters (in laminated form) of brick, cement or other inert and non-porous material, and to substitute for the felt usually employed at the joints of his patented "sound trap." It is Hope-Jones' habit to place the shutters immediately above the pipes themselves, so that when they are opened, the Swell box is left practically without any top. It is in such cases not his custom to fit any shutters in the side or front of the swell box.

To relieve the compression of the air caused by playing for any length of time with the shutters closed, he provides escape valves, opening outside the auditorium. He also provides fans for driving all the cold air out of the box before using the organ, thus equalizing the temperature with the air outside. The use of Swell boxes of this vastly increased efficiency, permits the employment of larger scales and heavier pressures for the pipes than could otherwise be used, and enormously increases the tonal flexibility of the organ.

## BELLOWS SPRINGS VERSUS WEIGHTS

Prior to the construction of the organ at Birkenhead, it has been the custom to obtain or regulate the pressure of wind supplies to the pipes by means of loading the bellows with weights. Owing to its inertia, no heavy bellows weight can be set into motion rapidly. When, therefore, a staccato chord was struck on one of these earlier organs with all its stops drawn, little or no response was obtained from the pipes, because the wind chest was instantly exhausted

and no time was allowed for the inert bellows weights to fall and so force a fresh supply of air into the wind chest.

In one of Hope-Jones' earliest patents, the weights indeed remain, but they merely serve to compress springs, which in turn act upon the top of the bellows. Before this patent was granted, he had, however, given up the use of weights altogether and relied entirely upon springs.

This one detail--the substitution of springs for weights--has had a far-reaching effect upon organ music. It rendered possible the entire removal of the old unsteadiness of wind from which all organs of the time suffered in greater or less degree. It quickened the attack of the action, and the speech of the pipes to an amazing extent, and opened a new and wider field to the King of Instruments.

## INDIVIDUAL PALLETS

Fifty years ago, the pallet and slider sound-board were well nigh universally used, but several of the builders strongly advocated and introduced chests having an independent valve, pallet or membrane to control the admission of wind to each pipe in the organ. The object of this was to prevent "robbing". While the pressure of the wind might be ample and steady enough with only a few stops drawn, it was found that when all the stops were drawn, the large pipes "robbed" their smaller neighbors of their due supply of wind, causing them to sound flat. By giving each pipe a pallet or valve to itself, the waste of wind in the large grooves was prevented.

A good pallet and slider chest is difficult to make, and those constructed by indifferent workmen out of indifferent lumber will cause trouble through "running"--that is, leakage of wind from pipe to another.

Individual pallet chests are cheaper to make, and they have none of the defects named above. Most of these chests, however, are subject to troubles of their own, and not one of those in which round valves are employed permits the pipes to speak to advantage.

Willis, Hope-Jones, Michell and other artists, after lengthy tests, independently arrived at the conclusion that the best tonal results cannot by any possibility be obtained from these cheap forms of chest. Long pallets and a large and steady body of air below each pipe are deemed essential.

## HEAVY WIND PRESSURES

The vast majority of organs built fifty years ago used no higher wind pressure than 3 inches. To Willis must be attributed greater advance in the utilization of heavy wind pressure for reed work.

Prior to the advent of Hope-Jones around 1887, no higher pressure than 25 inches had, we believe, been employed in any organ, and the vast majority of instruments were voiced on pressures not exceeding 3 inches. Hope-Jones showed that by increasing the weight of metal, bellying all flue pipes in the center, leathering their lips, clothing their flues, and reversing their languids, he could obtain from heavy pressures practically unlimited power, and at the same time actually add to the sweetness of tone produced by the old, lightly-blown pipes. He used narrow mouths, did away with regulation at the foot of the pipe, and utilized the "pneumatic blow" obtained from his electric action. He

\*continued on page 23

theatre organ



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## ROBERT HOPE-JONES (Continued)

almost all parts of the world shows the Hope-Jones influence, though some builders still fight against the leathered lip. It was only at the cost of considerable thought and labor that Hope-Jones was able to develop his crude and embryonic scientific theory into a process which bids fair to transform modern organ building.

As knowledge of the Hope-Jones methods spreads, coarse and unmusical stops disappear. He is without question right in urging that the chief aim in using heavy pressure should be to increase refinement, not power of tone. Sweet foundation tone produced from heavy wind pressure always possesses satisfactory power. He is also unquestionably right in his contention that when great nobility of foundation tone is required, Diapasons should not be unduly multiplied, but Tibias or large Flutes should be used behind them.

Every epoch-making innovation raises adversaries. We learn from these that pure foundation tone does not blend. True, there are examples of organs where the true foundation tone exists, but does not blend with the rest of the instrument, but it is misleading to say that "pure foundation tone does not blend." Hope-Jones has proved conclusively that by exercise of the requisite skill, it does, and so have others who follow in his steps.

### THE DECLINE OF MIXTURES

The decline of mixture work has in itself entirely altered and very greatly improved the effect of organs when considered from a musical point of view. The tone is now bright and clear.

The announcement by Mr. Hope-Jones at the beginning of the last decade of the past century of his complete discardment of all mixture and mutation work, may fairly be stated to have marked a distinct epoch in the history of the controversy.

### FLUTES

The chief developments in Flutes that have taken place during the period under consideration are the introduction of large scale, leather-lipped "Tibias" by Hope-Jones.

These pipes have already effected a revolution in the tonal structure of large organs. They produce a much greater percentage of foundation tone than the best Diapasons, and are finding their way into the most modern organs of size. They appear under various names, such as Tibia Clausa, Tibia Plena, Gross Flute, Flute Fundamentale, and Philomela.

The word Tibia is now used in this country to denote a quality of tone of an intensely massive, full and clear character, first realized by Mr. Hope-Jones, though faintly foreshadowed by Bishop in his Clarabella.

75 note Oboe Horn 4" wind, would make excellent Serpent. Ron McDonald, 1720 South 11 East, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Gulbransen Rialto Theatre Organ, latest model just over one year old. Organ stored for last six months, equipped with two Leslie speakers - \$3600. SP4 John Nelson, Hq Co USATCI, Fort Dis, New Jersey 08640.

### WANTED

Chests, pipes, regulators, blower, tremulants for theatre pipe organ. State condition and price. E.J. Borowiec, 224 S. 5th St., Delano, Minnesota 55328.

The Tibia Plena was invented by Mr. Hope-Jones, and first introduced by him into the organ at St. John's, Birkenhead. It is a wood Flute of very large scale, with the mouth on the narrow side of the pipe. The also inaugurated an entirely new departure in the science of reed voicing.

He employs pressures as high as 50 inches, and never uses less than five. His work in this direction has exercised a profound influence on organ building throughout the world, and leading builders in all countries are adopting his pressures or are experimenting in that direction.

### TRANSFERENCE OF STOPS

At the commencement of the period of which we are treating, the stops belonging to the Swell organ could be drawn on that keyboard only; similarly, the stops on the Great, Choir and Pedal organs could be drawn only on their respective keyboards.

It is difficult to say who first conceived the idea of transference of stops, but authentic instances occurring in the 16th century can be pointed out. During the last 50 years, many builders have done work in this direction, but without question, the leadership in the movement must be attributed to Hope-Jones. While others may have suggested the same thing, he has worked the system out practically in a hundred instances, and has forced upon the attention of the organ world the artistic advantages of the plan.

His scheme of treating the organ as a single unit and rendering it possible to draw any of the stops on any of the keyboards at any reasonable pitch, was unfolded before the members of the Royal College of Organists in London at a lecture he delivered on May 5, 1891.

When adopting this system in part, he would speak of "unifying" this, that, or the other stop, and this somewhat inapt phrase has now been adopted by other builders, and threatens to become general.

## HOPE-JONES' CONTRIBUTIONS TO ORGAN TONE

### DIAPASONS

In the year 1887, Hope-Jones introduced his discovery that by leathering the lips of the Diapason pipes, narrowing their mouths, inverting their languids, and increasing the thickness of the metal, the pipes could be voiced on 10, 20, or even 30-inch wind without hardness of tone, forcing, or windiness being introduced. He ceased to restrict the tone of the pipe, and did all his regulation at the flue.

His invention has proved of profound significance to the organ world. The old musical quality, rich in foundation tone, is returning, but with added power. Its station, in place of the hard and empty-toned Diapasons to which we had perforce become accustomed is rapidly growing. The organ in

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block is sunk, and the lip, which is of considerable thickness, is usually coated with a thin strip of leather to impart to the tone the requisite smoothness and finish. It is voiced on any wind pressure from 4 inches upwards. The Tibia Plena is the most powerful and weighty of all the Tibia tribe of stops. The Tibia Profunda and Tibia Profundissima are 16-ft. and 32-ft. Pedal extensions of the Tibia Plena.

The Tibia Clausa is a wood Gedeckt of very large scale, in other words, a stopped pipe, furnished with leather lips. It is invented by Mr. Hope-Jones. The tone is powerful and beautifully pure and liquid. The prevailing fault of the modern Swell organ is, perhaps, the inadequacy of the Flute work. It was the recognition of this shortcoming which led to the invention of the Tibia Clausa.

The Tibia Dura is another of Mr. Hope-Jones' inventions. It is an open wood pipe of peculiar shape, wider at the top than the bottom, and described as a bright, hard, and searching tone.

The Tibia Minor was invented by John Compton of England. It bears some resemblance to Hope-Jones' Tibia Clausa, but destined for use on an open wind chest. It is made of wood, though some have been made of metal. In all cases, the upper lip is leathery, following Hope-Jones' idea.

The Tibia Mollis, invented by Hope-Jones, is a Flute of soft tone, composed of rectangular wooden pipes.

#### STRINGS

At the commencement of the period herein spoken, string-toned stops as we know them today scarcely existed. To William Thynne belongs the credit of a great step in advance. Hope-Jones founded his work on the Thynne model, and by introducing smaller scales, bellied pipes, and sundried improvements in detail, produced the keen and refined string stops now finding their way into all organs of importance. His delicate Viols are of exceedingly small scale, some examples measuring only 1-1/8 inches in diameter at the 8-foot note. They are met with under the names of Viol d' Orchestre, Viol Celeste and Dulcet. According to Wedgwood in his "Dictionary of Organ Stops", "The Hope-Jones pattern of Muted Viol is one of the most beautiful tones conceivable." These Stops have contributed more than anything else towards making the organ suitable for the performance of orchestral music.

#### REEDS

In the last half-century, the art of reed voicing has been largely revolutionized. Willis created an entirely new school in this field. He was the first to show that reeds could be made really beautiful and fit for use without help from flue stops. When he wanted power, he obtained it by raising the pressure.

Hope-Jones took up the work where Willis left it, and has not only pushed the Willis work to its logical conclusion, but has introduced a new school of his own.

He has taken the Willis chorus reeds and by doubling the wind pressure and increasing the loading and thickness of tongues, has



**SUNDAY IN VICTORIA**—Reginald Stone at the console of his 2m/6r Kimball which is installed in the 400-seat Fox Theatre, Victoria, British Columbia, plays music for "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" as the audience sings under direction of blazer-clad baritone. Stone has presented silent movies at theatre on numerous occasions. A recent Sunday afternoon session featured organ selections by Stone, plus a soprano, two accordionists and a color travelogue on the screen. The organ is slated to be moved eventually to a larger location, Stone has advised **THEATRE ORGAN**.

produced results of surpassing magnificence. From the Willis' Cor Anglais, he has developed his Double English Horn; from the Willis' Oboe, his Oboe Horn; and from the Willis' Orchestral Oboe, the thin-toned stops of that class now being introduced by Austin, Skinner, and by his own firm. His chief claim to distinction in this field, however, lies in the production of the smooth reed tone now so rapidly coming into general use; in his 85-note Tuba; in the use of diminutive eschallots with mere saw-cut openings; and in the utilization of "vowel cavities" for giving character to orchestral-toned reeds.

The latter are of particular interest, as their possibilities are in process of development. The results already achieved have done much to make the most advanced organ in a sense rival the orchestra.

To exemplify the principle of the vowel cavities, Hope-Jones was in the habit, in his factory in Birkenhead, England in 1890, of placing the end of one of his slim Kinura reed pipes in his mouth, and by making the shape of the latter favor the oo, ah, eh, or ee, entirely modified the quality of tone emitted by the pipe.

In England, this vowel cavity principle has been applied to Orchestral Oboes, Kinuras and Vox Humanas, but in this country, it was introduced but six years ago, and has so far been adapted only to Orchestral Oboes. Examples are to be seen in the Wanamaker organ in New York, Park Church in Elmira, and Buffalo Cathedral. There undoubtedly lies a great future before this plan of increasing the variety of orchestral tone colors.

#### THE DIAPHONE

The invention of the Diaphone by Hope-Jones in 1894, provided the organ-builder with an entirely new method of producing tone, and the organist with a new group of tone colors. Much was made of this invention in the English musical press, but it does not seem to have been practically applied in that country in more than perhaps a score of instances. So far as this country is concerned, we believe the only true Diaphones in use are those in the Auditorium at Ocean Grove, N. J., and in St. Paul's Cathedral in Buffalo, N. Y., though a few specimens, half reed and half diaphone have been fitted under the name

of "Magnaton".

The Diaphone takes so many forms and covers to large a field that the cost of experimenting and working out its various forms and scales must necessarily be great. Possibly this is the reason why the invention has been so little developed. The tonal effects produced by the Diaphone which we have heard are magnificent, and it appears to us that the diaphonic principle will play an important part in furnishing the bass for organs in the future.

#### SUMMING UP HOPE-JONES' CONTRIBUTIONS TO ORGAN-BUILDING

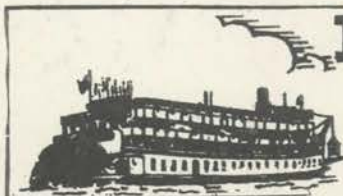
In 1903, Hope-Jones came to this country and joined the Austin Organ Co. as vice president, whereupon that company adopted his stop keys, wind pressures, scales, leathery lip, smooth reeds, orchestral stops, etc.

In 1907, the Hope-Jones Organ Co. in Elmira, N.Y. commenced the construction of organs containing all these and other English improvements.

Until recently, England unquestionably led in the development of the organ, and Hope-Jones led England. Now that his genius is at work in this country, who shall set limit to our progress? Even when expressing himself through other firms, his influence entirely altered the standard practice of the leading builders, and since direct expression has been obtained, improvements have appeared with even greater rapidity.

It is the author's opinion that in the course of the last half-dozen years, this country has made such great strides in the art that it may now claim ability to produce organs that are quite equal to the best of those built in England. And he ventures to prophesy that in less than another half dozen years, American-built organs will be accepted as the world's highest standard.

At a banquet given in the New York in 1906, Alexander Guilmant complained that no organ which he had played in this country possessed "majesty of effect." The advent of Hope-Jones has entirely changed the situation. When Guilmant next comes, he will be as quick to recognize the fact as was the celebrated English organist, Edwin Lemare, who pronounced the reeds at Ocean Grove, N. J. the finest he had ever heard.



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