



THE POST HORN

Fall 2021

Official Newsletter of the
Bluegrass Chapter
American Theatre Organ Society
BGATOS.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By DANA ROSS

Hello everyone! This summer was exciting as we were beginning to see some relief from all the pandemic guidelines and restrictions. However, our elation faded as we are now facing a new challenge with the delta variant. Although it's hard to predict how long this is going to last, it's clear that it's going to have an impact on all of us for some time going forward. However, even with the current COVID limitations, there are several positive and exciting things going on with our chapter.

~~~ CHAPTER LEADERSHIP ~~~

We were able to have our annual business meeting and picnic in June. At our business meeting, the chapter elected officers and directors for the next term. Our leadership team is highlighted in another article in this newsletter, but I would like to acknowledge the three people who are new to chapter leadership positions – Cathy Hunt, Grant Holcomb and myself.

Cathy Hunt was raised in Lexington. She attended the University of Kentucky earning a degree in music. She stayed with the University and worked as an academic advisor until she retired. She served as the organist for Arlington Christian Church for 17 years. She is an avid baseball fan and is on a quest to attend a game in every major league ball park. When she has some free time, she enjoys trying new recipes and cooking ideas.

Grant Holcomb is a native of Lexington. He attended Lafayette HS and the University of Kentucky pursuing a degree in Organ Performance. His career goals are focused on full time church music. He has served in numerous local and national AGO positions. He is currently an organist for Central Christian Church.

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IN THIS ISSUE - page



Dana Ross - I'm from Paducah in far western Kentucky. I came to Lexington many years ago to attend UK and I've been here ever since. While my degree and my jobs have been in computer systems / computer applications, I do have some musical connections as I was married to an organist and I do play several instruments, though none of them have a keyboard. You might have seen me marching with the UK Alumni Band at halftime of the Wildcats' recent homecoming football game. I'm currently retired from IBM. I have a goldendoodle named Crosby and I enjoy working on vintage British sports cars.

Several chapter members in current leadership roles have changed positions. I would especially like to recognize **Lynn Vera** who is our new newsletter editor. She has a tremendous background in online media and we look forward to a wonderful and exciting newsletter experience as she brings her special touch.

~~~ ANNUAL PICNIC ~~~



Scenes from the 2021 Annual Picnic

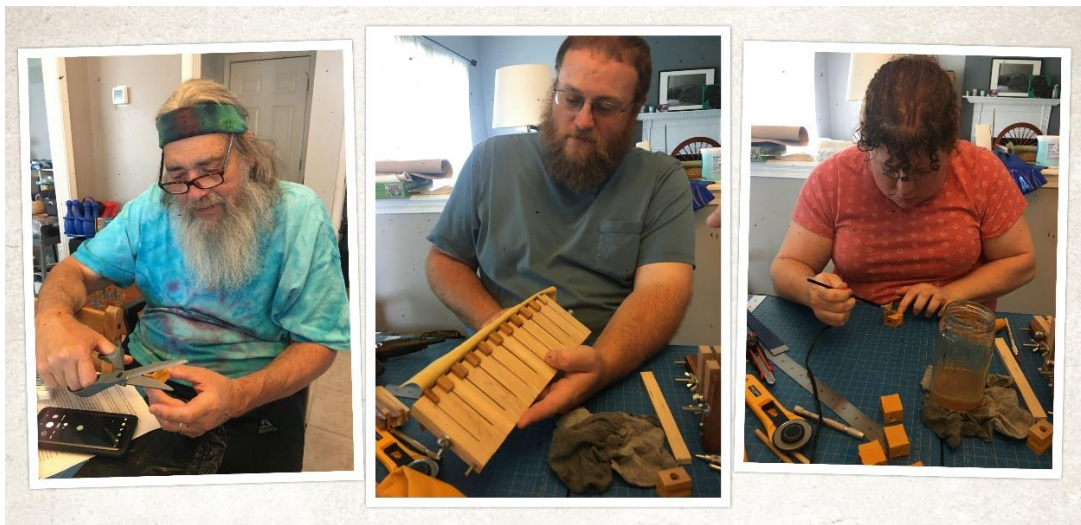
Taking advantage of the time this summer when "Delta" only referred to an airline, we were able to enjoy getting together in person for our annual picnic. Following the formalities of our business meeting, we were able to relax and enjoy an afternoon of good food and good company. Since we hadn't had an event in quite a while, it was wonderful to get to see all of our members and guests in person again. The picnic was planned, organized and hosted by **Bill Webber** and **Devon Williams** who did an outstanding job. Everyone had an amazing time and the picnic was a phenomenal success.

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2021 Annual Picnic group photo

~~~ KENTUCKY THEATRE WURLITZER PROJECT ~~~



Work Session: releathering primary pneumatics

While the pandemic put a damper on our chapter work effort, we are still making progress with the restoration. City Organ Works in Chicago IL is currently working to restore 3 wind trunks, 9 regulators, and 2 equalizers for the Kentucky Theatre Wurlitzer. They encountered some challenges in tearing them down such as the use of white glue and silicone sealants, but that is now complete. They are now cutting the leather and starting to reassemble them. They expect to have this work finished by mid-October.

At the chapter level, work sessions have begun with members getting together to begin releathering the primary pneumatics. We have already completed two sessions. The next sessions are scheduled for 10/9/21 and 10/30/21. **Tim Jones** is leading the effort to releather the primary pneumatics. He has designed a specialized jig which allows us to releather 10 pneumatics at a time and we are making great progress. Attending one or both sessions have been **Tim, Julene Jones, Garry Marsh, Brian Hunt, Cathy Hunt** and **Dana Ross** (myself).

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~~~ THE KENTUCKY THEATRE ~~~

We were excited to learn that the City of Lexington has recommended the **Friends of the Kentucky Theatre** (FOKT) to be the new operators of the theater. The theatre has been closed since October of last year and the City has gone through a Request For Proposal process to select a new theater management team. The Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council must still sign off on the contract and that is expected to happen at the Sept 30 council meeting. FOKT says they hope to open by the first of December 2021.



New Logo for The Kentucky Theatre

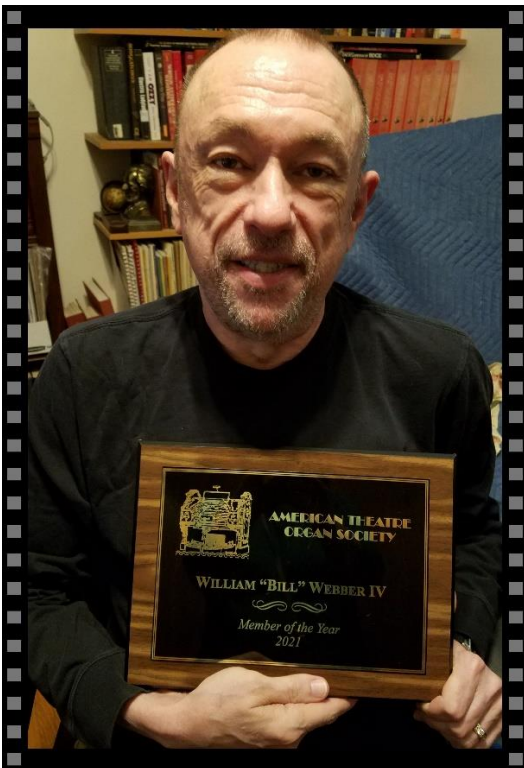
FOKT has some exciting new plans in the works for the theater including new film festivals, a change to non-profit status and possibly the addition of a smaller third screen.

But some of the cinema's popular programming will return. That includes the Rosa Goddard Film Festival, midnight showings of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show and of great interest to us, the Summer Classic Movie Series"

We look forward to working with FOKT to help them in any way we can, especially in providing a theatre organ experience to the movie patrons.

To learn more about the Friends of the Kentucky Theatre and to sign up for their newsletter, [CLICK HERE](#).

~~~ AWARDS ~~~



We are all very proud of chapter member **Bill Webber** who was named the ATOS National Member of the Year for 2021 during this year's ATOS National Convention. This is an impressive and tremendous honor for Bill and one that is very much deserved. We all know how much Bill has done for our local chapter and for the theatre organ community overall. It's great to see him recognized at the national level.

The complete article about Bill's award can be found on page 11.

Information about how to order Bill's new CD is on page 13.

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~~~ FUTURE EVENTS ~~~

We are anxiously looking forward to being able to schedule more social events as well as more concerts and presentations. While the news with the Kentucky Theatre is positive, their plans are still being solidified and with the uncertainty surrounding the Delta variant, we can't commit to anything, but we are working to develop contingent plans which we can put into place as soon as it becomes possible to do so.

I'm very hopeful that the measures taken to address the Delta variant will be effective and any new restrictions will be lifted giving us the confidence to resume our normal lives and activities. Looking ahead, if you have a suggestion for a social or learning opportunity we should consider for the chapter, please let me know.

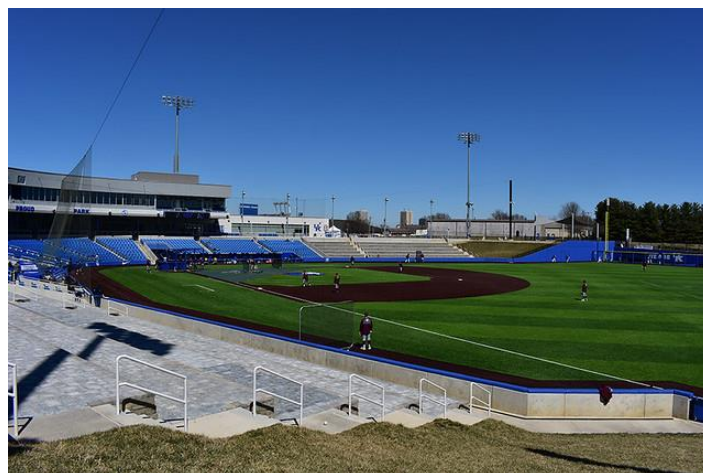
~~~ FINAL THOUGHTS ~~~

BG ATOS is a special group with an enthusiasm, a focus and a willingness to do what needs to be done that's unparalleled in a volunteer organization. While the current situation has put a damper on things for the past year and a half, I'm confident there are better days ahead and I look forward to all the things we are going to accomplish together. - **Dana Ross, BGATOS President**

JOB POSTING

Kentucky Proud Park Organist

Shayna Stahl is the new Director of Athletic Bands at UK. One of her colleagues in Athletics asked if she knows any students or anyone who would be interested in a paid position playing the piano or organ at the Kentucky Proud Park for baseball season. For more information please contact Dr. Stahl at Shayna.Stahl@uky.edu



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

It's an honor to have been asked to take over the production of this newsletter, beginning with this issue. I'll never be able to fill Dana Ross's shoes; he is a true genius in the arts of writing and presenting information! I will preserve Dana's incredible work and add all his newsletters to a special new page on BGATOS.org. These documents will provide us with easy access to our history as a Chapter. The new webpage will be announced in the next edition of *The Post Horn*.

If you are reading this online (not a printed copy), you may have noticed that I've added clickable links in both text and images. For example, in the paragraph immediately above rest your mouse over the blue underlined text "BGATOS.org". In the lower left corner you will see where the link goes. Simply click your mouse to go there! To backtrack and return to this document, hit the "Back" key (left arrow at upper left). To find the clickable links in this document, run your mouse over the pages and the link messages will pop up. In this newsletter I will do my best to follow the traditional standard of using blue underlined text to indicate a text link. The image links are not as obvious, but if you run your mouse over the images you will find them! There are several image links in this issue.

Adding clickable links allows us to access online media directly from this newsletter. In the box below you'll be able to watch our new video with just one click! - *Lynn Vera*

FEATURED VIDEO

"Summer Lights", our second collaborative video project with the Lexington Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, is done and ready for viewing! This video features members of our two chapters in a joyful, lighthearted program of organ and acoustic music. We also have a special guest composer: Phil Lehenbauer, whose fresh and dynamic organ music is played around the world!

Click on the image below to view "Summer Lights". The accompanying program is [HERE](#) (the program also includes the link to the video). Enjoy!



BGATOS ANNUAL MEETING AND PICNIC

The Bluegrass Chapter ATOS held its annual meeting and picnic on Saturday, June 12, 2021 at the home of William Webber and Devon Williams in Lexington, Kentucky. More than thirty were in attendance. Grill masters Brian Hunt and Timothy Jones were flipping hamburgers and hot dogs on the outdoor grill. Chapter members brought enough food to feed an army !! The sun was shining contributing to the perfect weather, and everyone had a great time. It was so good to be together again following the pandemic and its restrictions. Also in attendance were Fred Mills, manager of The Kentucky Theatre, and Colton Aubrey Hooke, Kentucky Theatre employee.

The Bluegrass Chapter ATOS board members for the coming year were installed at a short service conducted by Dr. John W. Landon, Chapter Historian. Chapter board members for the coming year are in the picture below, left to right: (seated) Dr. John W. Landon (Historian), Brian Hunt (Treasurer), and Cathy Hunt (Secretary). Standing are Tim Baker (Director), Grant Holcomb (Director and Youth Representative), Bill Johnson (Director), Dana Ross (President), David Pilkinton (Director), Tim Jones (Vice President), Lynn Vera (Director), William Webber (Director), Rhonda Marsh (Director), and Garry Marsh (Director).



Thanks are also in order for the outgoing officers of the chapter: Timothy Jones (President), William Webber (Vice President), Brian Hunt (Treasurer) and Lynn Vera (Secretary).

- submitted by William Webber, BGATOS Director

LOUISVILLE NEWS



The major multi-year preservation project for the historic Pilcher Pipe Organ in [Louisville Memorial Auditorium](#) began preliminary work this week. A matching grant from the Wyncote Foundation, as well as other generous contributions, have made this work possible. **Tim Baker** reports that several reservoirs have been removed, and some pipework for fitting tuning sleeves.

The work is being done by **D. C. Schroth Organ Builders**. You can follow this project and view images on their Facebook page, [HERE](#).

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the December 2020 Press Release from Louisville Memorial Auditorium presenting information about the Pilcher Pipe Organ and details about this restoration project.

KENTUCKY WURLITZER NEWS

The primary releathering effort is underway, with scheduled sessions through October. I am awaiting the arrival of a few other items that will allow us to further spread out the work, and possibly have two crews. Dana and I will be continuing to refine our primary batch jigs. I am working on making jigs for cutting secondary pneumatics, which will be the next step forward. There is no lack of activity, but the process for releathering pneumatics takes awhile.

[City Organ Works](#) is currently finishing up the regulator work for the Kentucky Wurlitzer. David Rhodes anticipates completion within a few weeks.

Any and all members interested in restoration efforts can help us out. Generally, we meet two Saturdays per month, although that can change as tasks are completed and next steps are undertaken.



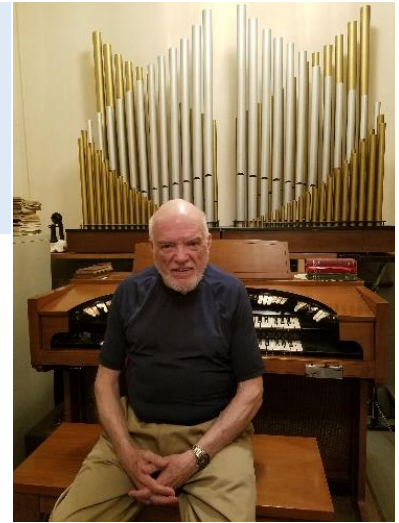
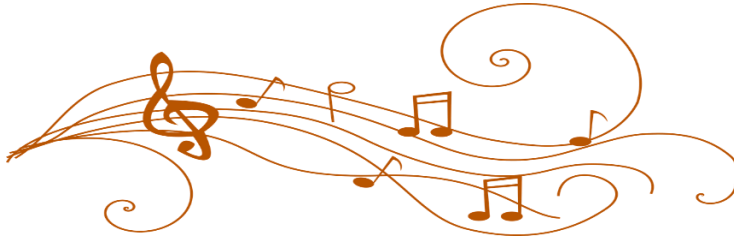
- submitted by Tim Jones, BGATOS Vice President

SINCE YESTERDAY

THE HISTORY OF THE THEATRE ORGAN

Part 2

By Dr. John W. Landon



One name springs to the lips when we start delving into the history of the theatre organ. That name is Robert Hope-Jones. It is clear that he had no idea that he might be starting a trend toward placing organs in theatres. His work heretofore had to do with organs in churches. He was primarily an inventor. He gave us a number of devices which helped to make the theatre organ a reality. His inventions had to do with building an orchestral organ capable of reproducing many of the sounds of an orchestra. This would permit playing serious orchestral works on the organ. This becomes clear when one realizes that many of his major inventions predate 1907, several years before it became widespread practice to install organs in motion picture theatres.

Hope-Jones built the first reliable electric action pipe organ. An electromagnet was placed at the bottom of each pipe which opened the valve to admit air to sound the note when a key was depressed at the console. This meant that the organ console (the portion of the organ which houses the keyboards) could be placed anywhere connected to the pipes only by a cable of electric wires. Formerly the console had to be connected directly to the pipes themselves. Hope-Jones perfected this idea in building an organ for a church in England in 1886. The church was St. John's Birkenhead. Hope-Jones staged a startling demonstration by putting the console out in the church yard. There he sat amidst tombstones, playing to an audience which heard the sound issuing from the pipes within the church itself.⁽¹⁾ Eventually Hope-Jones' many patents became the property of the Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda, New York.

Other patents which Hope-Jones brought with him from England were: tilting tablets instead of draw knobs, and a well designed electropneumatic action for which he received a patent in 1890. His use of various pipe voices to duplicate sounds of the orchestra was another very useful feature when it came to placing organs in theatres. Hope-Jones did not purposely direct his efforts toward the invention of the theatre pipe organ. "In the days of his earliest inventions theatres were not using organs. Yet the sum total of his contribution to organ building made the theatre organ possible."⁽²⁾

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When I was beginning research on the life of Jesse Crawford I knew it would be helpful to interview Farny Wurlitzer who was living in retirement near Buffalo, New York. How was I to find a way to interview this man who was chiefly responsible for the Wurlitzer Company developing and marketing the Wurlitzer theatre organ?

I had a friend living in Kokomo, Indiana who had installed a theatre organ in his garage. I had been to his home and had played his Wicks theatre organ. One day in talking with him I mentioned my desire to interview Farny Wurlitzer. His eyes lighted up. "I know just the person who can get you in touch with Farny Wurlitzer he said. I have met and talked with Richard Simonton at several ATOS Conventions. In fact I am planning to go to the next ATOS Conventions." (3) And in fact he did just that. After he returned home from the convention he gave me Richard Simonton's mailing address. He had talked with Simonton about my desire to interview Farny Wurlitzer. I wrote to Mr. Simonton, who in turn contacted Farny Wurlitzer, and thus the ground was prepared for me to interview Farny Wurlitzer at his home in Kenmore, New York on June 5, 1971. It is to be remembered that Richard Simonton had single-handedly organized and brought the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts into being.

In the next segment of *SINCE YESTERDAY* I will tell about my meeting this great man without whom the theatre organ would probably never have come into being.

(1) In the book, David H. Fox. Robert Hope-Jones, published by the Organ Historical Society in 1992 there is a picture of Hope-Jones at the console of St. John's Church, Birkenhead, England. Hope-Jones is playing the organ from outside the church door and the instrument is being heard by worshippers within the church.

(2) Landon, John W. BEHOLD THE MIGHTY WURLITZER, THE HISTORY OF THE THEATRE PIPE ORGAN. Greenwood Press, 1983.

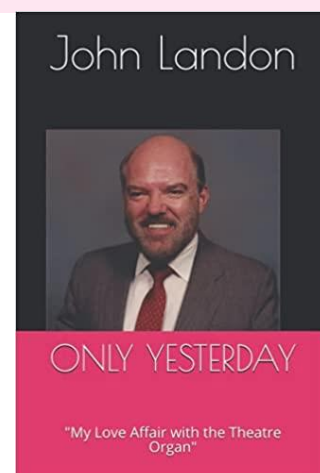
(3) Ibid.

DR. LANDON'S NEW BOOK "ONLY YESTERDAY" IS NOW AVAILABLE ON AMAZON!

Chapter Historian **Dr. John Landon** has published his new book, and it is already garnering 5-star reviews!

This is an autobiographical story of a young boy growing up in rural America in the late 1930's and '40's who developed a love affair with theatre organs, although he had never seen one.

"Only Yesterday – My Love Affair with the Theatre Organ" is available on Amazon in both Kindle and Paperback formats. [CLICK HERE](#) to get your copy now!



ATOS NATIONAL MEMBER OF THE YEAR

We are all very proud of chapter member **William Webber** who was named the ATOS National Member of the Year for 2021 during this year's [ATOS Convention](#). This is an impressive and tremendous honor for William and one that is very much deserved. William is very active supporting our local chapter, supporting other chapters in the surrounding area and working at a national level with multiple published articles in Theatre Organ journal.

The presentation was made by ATOS Vice Chairman (now *Chairman*) Tedde Gibson on a zoom call as this year's ATOS convention was held virtually (Zoom image below).



Candidate nominations for this award are made by ATOS members nationwide who know the individuals that are making major contributions to the local chapters and to the theatre organ community overall. Then an ATOS awards committee reviews the nominations and makes the selection. It is significant that William was nominated by multiple ATOS members from multiple states.

During his acceptance Bill said, "I'm honored and grateful for this recognition from ATOS. I had a lot of help from BG ATOS chapter members and from other chapters and from the leadership of the national organization. You can't do things alone and I'm not afraid to pick up the phone and ask for help. Thanks again for this honor."

Born and raised in Cynthiana, KY, William Webber is a professional musician and currently a director of the Bluegrass Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society.

William began taking piano lessons when he was 5 years old. He graduated to a Hammond B-3 organ when he was 12 years old and he began playing the pipe organ at his church when he was about 13 years old.

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After high school, William attended Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. He decided to finish up his college experience at Northern KY University (NKU) in Highland Heights, Ky.

After graduation from NKU with a Bachelor of Arts in Music, William went to work for the family business - Webber Farms (a leading producer of sausage products based in Cynthiana, KY). Working in Food Service Sales, William contacted major businesses across his 10 state territories to introduce them to Webber Farms' sausage.

As much as he enjoyed the family business, William could not resist the call of the music world. So, after two years in the world of sales, he joined a rock and roll band and began touring the country. For the next 14 years, he performed as a keyboardist and singer in several bands including Concourse and Triple Crown. The bands performed in larger night clubs and event venues and Concourse opened for a couple of major acts.

In 1993, William moved to New Jersey and enrolled at Drew University. He got his Masters of Sacred Theology (MST) and his Masters of Theological Studies (MTS) magna cum laude, both with a focus on church music and sacred studies.

While at Drew, he continued his performance work. Taking advantage of the differences in the worship practices of various religions and denominations, he had a schedule where he worked at a church every day except Mondays, either playing for their service or supporting their choirs' practice. While in New Jersey, William was consecrated as a diaconal minister in the United Methodist Church.

In 2009, William moved back to his home place in Cynthiana. A couple of years later he moved to Lexington.

William's introduction to theatre organs came from a friend who told him about the Wurlitzer organ project at the Kentucky Theater. He went to one of the Mighty Wurlitzer meetings and became curious about all the things a theatre organ could do. After the meeting, Dr. John Landon told William about the Bluegrass Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society. At the time the group was small and met on an annual basis.

William was excited about all the possibilities that the chapter could pursue. After asking a lot of questions and posing numerous ideas, the group rewarded William by making him Vice President.

The chapter has grown immensely since that time due to the efforts of William and the founding members. The chapter sponsors multiple events: some with a focus on the members and others aimed at the general public. William has played many roles in the chapter including Vice President (twice), President, board member, fundraising chairman and event chairman.

William is a serious student of the theatre organ. "It's not like anything else I've ever played". He has attended multiple conventions and concerts and continues to learn from the nationally recognized theatre organists he has met.

He has a Conn 652 in his basement which he continues to expand with additional speaker cabinets and speaker pipes. Other Conn organ owners have told him he quite possibly could have one of the largest Conn theatre organs, with all original Conn components, in a private home setting. William says "the sound is incredible!"

WILLIAM WEBBER'S NEW CD RELEASE



Bill Webber's new theatre organ CD, "**Something Old, New, Borrowed, and Blue**" was released in early August. It is the culmination of nearly two years' worth of work.

It was recorded on the 3-manual, ten-rank Robert Morton theatre pipe organ at the [Carolina Theater](#) in Greensboro, North Carolina. The CD features songs from Lady Gaga, Korla Pandit, Disney, C.A.J. Parmentier, Stephen Foster, and much more.

If you would like to order a copy, you may go to williamwebber.hearnow.com where you can listen to short snippets of each tune. Then click on BUY FROM ARTIST to go to the order page.



THE POST HORN is an official publication of the Bluegrass Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society. It is published quarterly in digital format and emailed to all Chapter members. Anyone may request a copy; simply fill out and submit the ["Contact Us" form on BGATOS.org](#).

For up-to-date news, event postings and other items of interest please visit our [Facebook page](#).

Our website is here: BGATOS.org.