



THE POST HORN

Summer 2019

Official Newsletter of the

Bluegrass Chapter

American Theatre Organ Society

www.LexTheaterPipes.Org

BG ATOS ELECTS OFFICERS - PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

Tim Jones has been re-elected President of the BG ATOS and William Webber was elected Vice President at the recent annual meeting on June 17th, 2019. They will serve with Secretary Greg Weller and Treasurer Brian Hunt whose terms continue.

Lynn Vera was elected as a new director joining the current directors Tim Baker, Garry Marsh, Rhonda Marsh, David Pilkinton and Dana Ross.



LYNN VERA

Tim Jones has just completed his first term as President and will now continue for a second two year term. In addition to his duties as President, Tim serves as the leader for the Ky Theater Wurlitzer restoration project. He will work to coordinate the restoration activities as well as manage the technical aspects of getting the organ in playing condition. Tim is an accomplished organist as well as a technical guru on all aspects of theatre pipe organs.

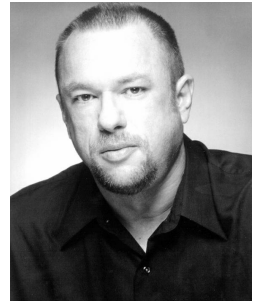
William Webber will serve a two year term as Vice President. William is a former President of the chapter. He and Tim, along with several others, were instrumental in the renaissance of the

chapter over the past 10 years. In addition to the VP leadership and administrative roles, William will lead the organizing efforts for the various fund raising activities (including the concerts at the Kentucky Theater). William is an outstanding musician. He has always been in the music business from his days as a keyboardist and singer for touring rock bands to serving as organist and music director for multiple church congregations. He studied music/church music at Drew University and is currently an associate organist and song leader at the Kentucky Theater.



TIM JONES

Lynn Vera's director role will focus on communications. She is ideally suited for this role as she is a talented organist and music director (St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Lexington) and has served as the Communications Coordinator for The Episcopal Diocese of Lexington. On a technical level, she's an experienced website developer with two web developer certifications and a MSLIS degree (with emphasis in information technology). She is building a new website for our chapter and will be looking to expand the chapter's visibility by promoting BG ATOS on various social media channels.



WILLIAM WEBBER

SUMMER CLASSIC MOVIE SERIES

BG ATOS organists are again entertaining the audiences at the Kentucky Theater's 2019 Summer Classic Movie Series with a pre-movie concert on the Allen organ. The Kentucky Theater shows specially chosen classic movies on Wednesdays during the summer from May 22nd to Sept 4th.

This year, chapter members Brian Hunt, Tim Jones, David Pilkinton, William Webber and Dr. John Landon are the featured organists. Dr. Landon plays for all of the matinee shows and the others rotate for the evening performances.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

By Tim Jones



I hope everyone is having a great summer! This one has been no different for me – busy. Busy with quite a few things. And, while I'm usually

writing my contribution to the newsletter at the last minute, I can sneak a few things in before press time that have happened after most of the newsletter is waiting on me to proofread and add my message.

When I got into theatre organs, well, the second time when I actually bought an instrument, I found myself wishing for a good practice instrument. Upon moving to Lexington, I began searching, and after about three other instruments, I decided I like the sound of Conn, and wished for the 651. So, after researching and saving, I found one from Wisconsin. It was in good shape, aside from needing to clean contacts. It was an enjoyable instrument for about 15 of the 17 years I owned it.

Fast forward to 2019. Through acquaintances, I learned of several Conn organs that were going to be liquidated along with other pianos and organs. The end result was a Conn 653 at a price I couldn't refuse. And knowing the 651 was needing some more involved maintenance, I elected to work on the 653 and sell the 651. The 653 was moved to Sphar Organ Service's shop. Their technician has been going through and bringing the instrument back to life. While it hasn't

come home yet, I am excited for the new instrument. So, Saturday 7/13, my old Conn 651, a 'spare' 651, and a LOT of spare parts left for its new home in Kansas City. I elected to give it away, knowing the organ market, knowing how I acquired the 653, and knowing that I needed the space for 'other things'. The new owner has set it up, and it appears that through the move it has survived well and sounds good.

Those 'other things' specifically are parts from a generous donor in Cincinnati. He has had a small instrument in storage for many years and was wanting to reclaim that space. It is more or less a 5 rank Style B Special. The trip on Sunday 7/14 yielded a couple sets of swell shades, a couple sets of bourdon offsets (if anyone needs 2-3 sets, they are available), some winding components, framing, and other miscellaneous items. My sincerest gratitude to the donor for his generosity to the Chapter and to me.

So, while I have been trying to sell off parts of my collection that I know I won't need, other parts keep finding their way to me. The end result is that the parts are destined to be used in at least four instruments, including the Kentucky project and my personal instrument. It seems that so many instruments become organ parts for other instruments. With the availability of these smaller instruments, if you have the desire to own a small theatre pipe organ, now is the time to jump in. Parts (and complete organs) have not been so readily available before in my lifetime.

Thursday, July 11, I met Kevin Sphar

at the Kentucky Theater to get the Allen Expander connected and functioning. While this section is not an advertisement (paid or otherwise) for Sphar, it does attest to their level of knowledge and skills. Kevin and his crew work on about anything electronic that makes noise. The Expander was hooked up quickly and before I knew it, we were doing some very minor voicing on the Allen. Where some ranks were almost unusable and others overbearing, we tamed them just enough. This will give us sounds that are so classic to the theatre organ!

So, while this message was mostly about what is moving where, and who owned what and when, enjoy the remainder of your summer, and we'll get some outings planned. Bill and I are working on some things for later in the year and into next that will be fun. Don't forget about October 6th with John Lauter accompanying "Steamboat Bill, Jr." Stay tuned!

ATOS TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE

The 2019 ATOS Technical Experience will be held Aug 5-8 in Indianapolis, IN. Carlton Smith, Clark Wilson and Justin Nimmo will be the primary instructors. This year's focus will be on the complete rebuilding of theatre organ regulators and on the basics of releathering techniques for Barton and Wurlitzer manual chests.

Tim and Julene Jones will be attending and are encouraging others to also attend.

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Kentucky Theater's 2nd annual Silent Film Classic

The Kentucky Theater and the Bluegrass Chapter of ATOS will present the 2nd annual Silent Film Classic Movie with live theatre organ accompaniment on Sunday October 6, 2019 at 7:00 pm.

John Lauter, from Farmington Hills, MI will be the featured organist. The evening will start with a short concert followed by an audience sing-along of favorite and patriotic songs. This all leads up to the feature showing of the classic silent film "Steamboat Bill, Jr." accompanied by Mr. Lauter.

"Steamboat Bill, Jr." is a 1928 silent comedy film starring Buster Keaton released by United Artists. The film, named after a popular Arthur Collins' 1911 song "Steamboat Bill", also featured Ernest Torrence, Marion Byron, and Tom Lewis.

William "Steamboat Bill" Canfield is the owner and captain of a paddle steamer that has seen better days. He eagerly awaits the arrival of his college student son, whom he has not seen since the lad was a baby. Expecting a big, husky man like himself to help him compete with businessman John James King and his brand new luxurious riverboat, he is sorely disappointed with his slight, awkward offspring, who shows up with a pencil moustache, ukulele and a beret. He becomes outraged when he discovers that his son and King's daughter Kitty, also visiting her father, are in love. Both business rivals are determined to break up the relationship.

The film is known for what might be considered

Keaton's most famous film stunt: the facade of an entire house falls on top of him while he stands in the perfect spot to pass through the open attic window instead of being flattened.

Detroit native John Lauter has been presenting theatre organ concerts for over 20 years. He made his public debut at the Detroit Redford Theatre

at age 16. Mr. Lauter has been featured in programs at the Paramount Theatre in Denver, the Castro Theatre in San Francisco, the Richard Knight Auditorium of Babson College in Boston, the Organ Stop Pizza restaurant in Phoenix, the Rialto Square Theatre in Joliet, IL, the Ohio Theatre in Columbus and the Palace Theatre in Marion, Ohio. He also was a featured performer at the American Theatre Organ Society's 2009 convention in Cleveland.



John Lauter

John spent three years playing at Theatre Organ Pizza and Pipes restaurant in Pontiac, Michigan.

The Michigan Theatre in Ann Arbor, Michigan featured John as staff organist for 17 years.

The 1988 re-opening of Detroit's Fox Theatre found John playing before the "Ultimate Event" which featured Frank Sinatra, Liza Minnelli and Sammy Davis Jr. live on stage!

John has used the theatre organ in very traditional roles, as a solo and silent film accompaniment instrument, in addition to other unique combinations - with big bands, a Bluegrass-Fiddle band and behind vocalists and instrumentalists.

In preparation for the opening of their new IMAX theater, the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn contracted John to compose and record a silent film accompaniment for a silent film collage. This collage would be shown before each feature movie there.

In February 2010, John was a musical guest on NPR's popular Prairie Home Companion program. Host Garrison Keillor remarked, "the man (Lauter) has unerring good taste". Lauter performed solos on the live broadcast and joined forces with PHC's "guys all-star shoe band" for some numbers.

John is the organist for the Unity Church of Lake Orion. He lives in Farmington Hills, Michigan with his wife Amy, son Benjamin and daughter Maryanna.

Tickets are \$15 and are on sale now at the Kentucky Theater box office.

Make plans to attend this exciting evening!



ONLY YESTERDAY #7

By Dr. John Landon



In the last issue of Only Yesterday (#6), I told about my beginning studies for a Ph.D. degree at Ball State University. My degree was to be a Ph.D. in Social Science, preparing people to teach social work, sociology, anthropology and American history. I majored in three of these areas: sociology, anthropology and American History.

One day in a class of mine, my major Professor said, “One of the best disciplines for the budding scholar is to write a biography of some famous person about whom no full-length biography has been written.” I gave this a lot of thought and finally decided to write a full-length biography of Jesse Crawford, at one time the most famous of all theatre organists. I am sure I never realized all that would be required to complete such a task. The finished book contained 372 pages.

One of the first tasks involved driving 25 miles to Ball State University Library where I would pour over the Entertainment Section of the New York Times on microfilm. It happened that the head librarian there had been the head librarian at the seminary I attended and for whom I had worked. He extended every courtesy to me and was very helpful in my research phase.

Jesse Crawford and his wife Helen had appeared singly or in tandem at the twin consoles of the Mighty Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ in the Paramount Theatre in Times Square, New York City. So, I read every Entertainment Section of the New York Times for the years 1926 to 1933. Then, I realized that I would also need to read the Chicago Tribune newspaper to glean the same kind of information from 1922 – 1926. Crawford was Chief Organist of the Chicago Theatre during those years. Fortunately the library had microfilm of the Tribune for this time period. I listed every date/week when the Tribune or New York Times contained an advertisement about what film was playing, what live acts were also on the bill and every mention of Jesse Crawford. It was painstaking and time consuming work but when I finished this phase of the research I had a better picture of Crawford.

Then, it was on to the next phase of research. I wanted to interview Fanny Wurlitzer who lived in Kenmore, a suburb of Buffalo, New York. This would never have come to pass without the help of friends. I knew a man, Frank May who lived in Kokomo, Indiana, who had installed a large four manual Wicks theatre pipe organ in his garage. I made frequent visits there to play the organ and visit with Frank and his wife. Little did I know that Frank would be instrumental in my getting to interview Richard Simonton.

Simonton had a life-long interest in Jesse Crawford. He lived in North Hollywood and had installed a four manual Wurlitzer pipe organ in an 80 seat theatre in his basement. He had in mind to provide an organ in first rate condition on which he hoped Crawford would record. *(That did in fact come to pass)*. Simonton was the founder of ATOE (American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts as it was then known). He set up a meeting in his North Hollywood home and invited many theatre organists and other interested persons for the purpose of starting an organization which would promote the theatre organ and its music. This occurred in 1955.

However, I did not know Simonton and he had probably never heard of me, a lowly doctoral student half a continent away. But Frank May attended the next American Theatre Organ Convention in Los Angeles and he took it upon himself to speak to Simonton. He told Simonton that I was a doctoral student planning to write a full length book--a biography of Crawford. Simonton was interested. When Frank returned home he gave me the address to which I should write to get in touch with Richard Simonton.

I corresponded with Simonton and eventually set up an appointment to go to California and interview him. My first interview with Richard Simonton was at his home during the first week of March 1970. I spent the week with Simonton both at his home and his office and viewed his many Crawford materials including photographs. I gathered

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SUMMER CLASSIC MOVIE SERIES

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The performances are very well received. The audiences appreciate being transported to a time when organs were prominent in movie theaters and especially while they are experiencing a movie showing in the historic Ky Theater.

The movie schedule and the performing organists are:

May 22	– PURPLE RAIN	(Benefit for Friends of the Kentucky Theater)
May 29	– STAGECOACH.....	William Webber
June 5	– REAR WINDOW.....	Tim Jones
June 12	– THE TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE.....	Tim Jones
June 19	– THE WIZARD OF OZ.....	William Webber
June 26	– RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK.....	Tim Jones
July 3	– FIDDLER ON THE ROOF.....	David Pilkinton
July 10	– CHARADE.....	William Webber
July 17	– GONE WITH THE WIND.....	David Pilkinton
July 24	– KISS ME DEADLY.....	Brian Hunt
July 31	– SON OF FRANKENSTEIN.....	Tim Jones
Aug. 7	– THE GOONIES.....	William Webber
Aug. 14	– FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT.....	Tim Jones
Aug. 21	– THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME.....	William Webber
Aug. 28	– BLADE RUNNER: THE FINAL CUT.....	Brian Hunt
Sept. 4	– THE BIG LEBOWSKI.....	(no organist)



William Webber, Tim Jones and Garry Marsh celebrating after another successful Wednesday night at the Kentucky Theater's Summer Classic Movie Series.

MERCHANDISE SALES

Several members of the chapter, led by Rhonda and Garry Marsh, work at our sales table in the outer lobby of the theater selling our chapter t-shirts, stop tab key chains and tickets for our October 6 event. This is a very important activity for the chapter. It serves the dual function of being a very important fundraiser and it allows us to publicize and market both the chapter and our restoration project to people outside the music community.



Rhonda Marsh and Lynn Vera at the chapter merchandise sales table before the showing of "Charade" at the Ky Theater 7/10/19.

Rhonda and Garry organize the sales table, get the tee shirts printed, make the organ stop key chains and coordinate the sales schedule. Helping them are: Cathy Hunt, Jim Fitzpatrick, Lynn Vera, Grant Holcomb and Jane Johnson. All of them do a wonderful job and are great ambassadors for both the chapter and theatre organs in general.

ALLEN ORGAN UPDATE

An Allen MIDI expander has been purchased for our existing Allen MDS Theatre-III Deluxe organ in the Kentucky Theater. This organ is being used for performances until the Kentucky Theater Wurlitzer restoration project is completed. The MIDI expander cost roughly \$900. The funding was supplied by chapter members Tim Jones, Dr. John Landon and William Webber. It will add several more layers of sounds and sound effects to what we already have.

William Hackney Golden Age Theatre Organist for the Kentucky Theater

This article is reprinted from an edition of the Kentucky Mighty Wurlitzer newsletter from the latter half of 2004.

Kentucky lost one of its last surviving theatre organists from the Golden Age in August of this year when William A. Hackney passed away in his Lexington home at the age of 95. Bill served as Honorary Board Member for Kentucky's Mighty Wurlitzer-Theatre Organ Project,

Inc. since 1995. Bill was an exuberant person with a good sense of humor and a sharp wit.

Bill Hackney was born in 1909 to parents Burley and Martha Hackney of Mortonsville, near Versailles, in Woodford County, Kentucky. He began his musical training on the piano at the age of 6, and by the time he was 14, he was studying classical

organ at the Episcopal Church in Versailles. The Lyric Theater in Versailles hired him in 1925 as piano accompanist to the silent pictures, where he served for approximately two years.

In 1926, during a visit with his sister, Bill attended a movie at the Kentucky Theater in Danville, KY where he heard his first Wurlitzer theatre organ. He was immediately carried away with it (musical accompaniment of the silent film on the picture sheet) and decided that was what he wanted to do. So he convinced his father of his interest in theatre organ. Bill and his father went to Lexington to discuss theatre organ lessons with H. Haden Read, chief organist at the Kentucky Theater. Haden Read agreed to provide lessons to the 16 year old Hackney, and by early 1927, Bill Hackney joined Elladee Mahoney and Vera Eckert as staff organists. Bill was making \$100 per week at the Kentucky Theater in 1927.

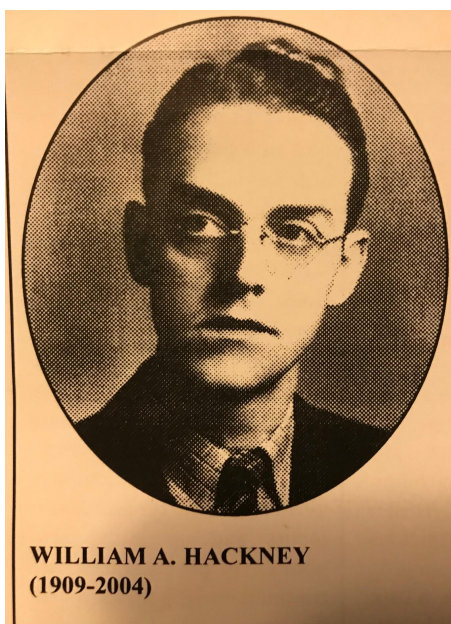
The Kentucky Theater's original 2/9 Opus 562 Wurlitzer pipe organ was enlarged in January 1926 by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company, becoming a 3/14 (3 manual console with 14 ranks, or sets of pipes). This was the largest Wurlitzer theatre organ in the state of Kentucky and Bill thoroughly loved playing this marvelous instrument.

Mr. Hackney's career as a theatre organist accompanist was cut short by devastating thunderstorms that inundated Central Kentucky on June 29, 1928. Main Street in downtown Lexington was flooded and the Kentucky Theater was filled with floodwaters up to the first manual on the console, according to an oral history interview conducted in May 1997 with Bill Hackney. Since talkies were in the theater by April 1927, the theater management decided not to restore their magnificent theatre pipe organ which remained silent thereafter.

For a short time, WLAP-AM broadcasted Bill Hackney performing on a Wurlitzer hybrid (actually an enlarged 1915 Felgemaker, Opus 1215 by Wurlitzer in 1928) at the Strand Theater, and later at the old Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington.

Bill was employed as a salesman for Raleigh Products in Georgetown, KY and studied piano tuning as a side interest. During World War II, he served as an Army chaplain's assistant. After the War, he returned to Cincinnati and began his formal training and career as a piano tuner. Bill returned to Lexington, where he tuned pianos at Berea College, Eastern Kentucky University and for local citizens. Bill was active until retiring in his mid eighties.

Mr. Hackney did not return to the Kentucky Theater for almost 70 years, until a silent film event with digital theatre organ accompaniment was held in January 1996. He described the experience in the recently renovated theater as disappointing, since the theater had undergone significant renovations, especially in 1991; and the digital theatre organ didn't sound like the Wurlitzer pipe organ. However, he was extremely excited about the future return of the Mighty Wurlitzer to its Kentucky Theater home. Unfortunately, he passed away on August 9, 2004, years before the Wurlitzer will make its triumphant return.



WILLIAM A. HACKNEY
(1909-2004)

MEET THE DIRECTORS - GARRY MARSH



Garry Marsh is a member of the Board of Directors of the Bluegrass Chapter of ATOS. He has been active in the music/organ community of Lexington since the 70's and continues to play an important role.

Garry was born just up I-75 in Covington Ky. When he was 7, his family

moved to Lexington. He attended Henry Clay High School and was part of the first class in the new high school building in 1970. After high school he attended electronics school. Today he still lives in the same general neighborhood where he grew up.

For as long as he can remember, Garry has been interested in electronics. His younger brother shared that interest and the two of them collaborated on many technical exploits.

While in high school, the two of them built a radio station in their basement. While there are no recordings of their broadcasts, they certainly enjoyed being on the air and talking to the world (or at least the neighborhood). They even were the subject of a story in the local newspaper "The Herald Leader".

While most people enjoyed the newspaper article, there were some who were not amused. One day when Garry came home, there was an official government car sitting on their street with a large antenna on top which was being pointing at his house. It turns out that running a pirate radio station from your basement with enough power to be heard miles away and without the benefit of a broadcast license did not make the FCC happy. When Garry walked in his house the FCC was giving his dad a stern warning. Fortunately, the station was off the air at that time as they were working to rebuild the control board.

When CB radios became popular Garry was one of the early adopters. While later on, CB's would become ubiquitous in cars with everyone freely using them, early on, there were pretty strict rules on what you could do. So running an overpowered CB base station on the wrong channels without any call letters warranted

another visit by the FCC. This time there was a fine. Garry acknowledged that "My dad put up with a lot from me".

After eight years working for IBM in a manufacturing job, Garry found a love for theater with a local arts group "The Junkyard Players". Initially he designed, set up and operated the sound and light systems. But, when a role opened up that needed someone like Garry, he became one of the performers. He loved it and he was very good at it. He went on to play many different and interesting roles and was an audience favorite, even when he played a villain.

Garry next found himself working at the Lexington Shriners Hospital. He started in materials management and wound up as the head buyer for the facility. He loved the family atmosphere at Shriners and looked forward to going to work each day. It didn't hurt that they let him set up his electronics test equipment in his office. He enjoyed tinkering and repairing various pieces of office equipment and electronic hospital devices in addition to his primary job. It was here that he met Rhonda, one of the nurses, who he would marry. He retired a few years ago after working there 33 years.



Garry at the console of the WHAS Kilgen organ in Louisville, Ky

When Garry was around 12 years old, he went to a concert which featured a pipe organ. Even at this age, he was already a serious audiophile and he fell in love with the power and versatility of the organ. His parents agreed that if he took piano lessons, he could eventually get an organ. Piano lessons went well for a while, but the pirate in

Garry struck again. One day, he decided to tape his practice session. After the first half hour, he rewound the tape, hit play and headed outside. This scheme went well for a while, but his mom eventually discovered it. That put a bit of a delay in him getting an organ. *(He did*

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MEET THE DIRECTORS - GARRY MARSH

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eventually get the old organ from Faith Lutheran Church in Lexington when they purchased a new one).

Garry was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time for one of the major theatre organ events in the history of Lexington. He was living on the Oscar Wilson estate when Oscar purchased the Ky. Theater Wurlitzer. Garry was there when the organ was installed and for the many concerts Oscar sponsored. He also had access to the organ any time he wanted and often played for Oscar. Oscar loved to hear "Alley Cat".

Always staying up to date with current technology, Garry got into electronic keyboards in the mid 80's. Playing keyboard, he found himself in several bands in the Lexington area. He stayed active in the live performance scene until kids came along, when he changed his focus to studio work. He built a state of the art studio in his basement and did studio recording work. He composed music for many local businesses.

Garry is an expert on laser projectors. He has designed, built and sold laser projectors and laser systems to bands, businesses and individuals for over 25 years. Today, he has a laser system set up in his basement which he uses to check out the latest technologies. He has over 15 laser shows programmed in his home system and he can sit back and enjoy one of them or let the system create a show based on the music that is playing.

Back in the late 70's and early 80's, Garry enjoyed, along with others, going over to Dr. John Landon's house to hear him play his Conn organ. Out of that group came the Bluegrass ATOS chapter and Garry was one of its early members. He remained friends with the chapter members during the time the chapter slowed down and he is an active and valuable member with the current incarnation of the chapter.



Garry's one vice is a love for great sound. He is always looking at new technologies and sound equipment to create a better audio experience. He buys more keyboards than he can play and he can't resist someone who has some top sound equipment for sale. He is a true audiophile. While he appreciates all of the high tech advances in audio over the years, he'll quickly point out that there's still a lot to be said for vinyl records. With records, there is no sampling, there is no compression - you hear all of the true sweet original sound with vinyl.

Garry is looking forward to the day when he can once again hear the true sweet original sounds of the Kentucky Theater Wurlitzer, which is an old friend to him, as it fills the auditorium of the theater with beautiful organ music.

DONATIONS

In addition to donating directly to the chapter, there are two easy methods of supporting the work of BG ATOS. Both are simple to sign up for and use, and they provide an ongoing benefit with no out of pocket cost to the donor.

Kroger Community Rewards

Go to <http://krogercommunityrewards.com>

Link your Kroger Plus Shopper's Card to our charitable organization, Bluegrass Chapter American Theatre Organ Society, organization number 42729. Then, whenever you use your Kroger Plus card, a portion of any purchase you make will be donated to BG ATOS!

Amazon Smile Program

Amazon Smile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices and shopping features as Amazon.com. The Amazon Smile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice.

Go to: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/31-1052999> to sign up.

On your first visit to Amazon Smile, you will need to select "Bluegrass Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society Inc ATOS" as your charitable organization. Then, always use the specific website <http://smile.amazon.com> to do your shopping, as Amazon does not make a donation if you are shopping at www.amazon.com.

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a great deal of information about Crawford and, furthermore, Simonton opened three important doors for me.

My interview with Crawford's widow Lucy Crawford was on March 9, 1970 at her home in Alpine, California. This was the first door which Simonton had opened for me. She was a recluse and usually would not see anyone but Simonton went with me and took Lucy a nice flowering plant of some kind which resulted in Lucy opening her door to a several hour interview. At this interview I was able to use my portable photocopy machine to copy many photographs and other material about Crawford's professional life.

The second door which Simonton opened for me concerned Farny Wurlitzer. Farny was the person in the Wurlitzer organization who had promoted the theatre pipe organ. It was his "baby." He was up in years and did not see many guests but Simonton arranged for me to go to his home in Kenmore, New York and interview him. Farny insisted that I not record his voice. I had to use the legal size yellow pads and write down as much of the interview as I could. He had been interviewed many times before and he was very kind. In answer to my questions he would wait until he saw that I had finished writing what he had said before he spoke again. My interview with Farny Wurlitzer was on June 5, 1971.

The third door which Simonton opened for me was getting in contact with Crawford's daughter, Jessica. I interviewed her on August 26, 1970 in New York City. She did not wish to be tape recorded so I used legal size yellow pads and wrote furiously. It was quite a task to make notes and eat at the same time. Crawford had two children, daughter Jessica and a son, Howard. Howard sent word that he did not wish to participate.

In the earlier days of gathering information for the Crawford book I arranged the index on a table tennis table where I sorted stacks of index cards and other bits of information. This was in the basement of the house in Indiana where I was living. These were the days before personal computers.

Slowly the book began to take shape. My major professor, Dr. Dwight Hoover, left on a sabbatical year to England. Each time I finished a chapter I would airmail it to London. He would write back with a list of corrections and suggestions. He was instrumental in helping me put all of this together to comprise the finished product: "JESSE CRAWFORD, POET OF THE ORGAN: WIZARD OF THE MIGHTY WURLITZER", which was published in 1974 by Vestal Press in Vestal, New York.

Dr. John Landon

DID YOU KNOW?

Many composers got their start by playing the theatre organ. **Oliver Wallace**, arguably America's first real theatre organist became an employee of Disney and composed, among other things, the score to Dumbo. **Rex Koury** composed the Gunsmoke theme heard on television and radio for many years. The late **Richard Purvis**, who was for many years the organist and master of choristers at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, was also an enthusiastic promoter of theatre organ, and wrote many arrangements for it.

Theatre organists were the "rock stars" of their time. **Reginald Dixon**, MBE was the most popular organist of all time. During his 40 years at the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool, UK he performed at the Wurlitzer some 80,000 times to audiences of 6500+ at a time. Among the most "heard" organists in the United States was **Dick Leibert**, who held for many years the enviable position of Head Organist at New York's Radio City Music Hall. **Jesse Crawford**, the first organist ever to sell over a million recordings, was known in households across America as the "Poet of the Organ". Another legendary theatre organist of modern times was the late **George Wright**, who created a huge series of studio recordings on theatre organs which sold millions. And famed Mormon Tabernacle organist **Alexander Schreiner** was also an active theatre organist.

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The Louisville Connection

by Tim Baker



There will be several events at Louisville's Memorial Auditorium this fall which will feature the Pilcher theatre pipe organ:

* On Saturday October 26th at 7:00 pm, theater and music patrons will be able to step back in time for an evening of movie, music and fundraising while experiencing the world's largest Pilcher

pipe organ presentation of the silent movie classic "The Phantom of the Opera" starring Lon Chaney. Tim Baker will accompany the movie.

There will be a party with a DJ in the lobby, multiple cash bars and complimentary snacks throughout the evening. Also, there will be a gift basket raffle and photo wall. Everyone is to come dressed for the occasion - costumes are encouraged.

* While the date and time is still to be decided, around Halloween, there will be a showing of the family friendly silent movie "Haunted House" starring Buster Keaton. Tim Baker will accompany the movie on the organ.

* Thursday, December 5th at 7:00 pm will be the time to journey back to the silent movie age when majestic sounds of pipe organs accompanied holiday movies on the big screen. You will enjoy the movie "Santa Claus" accompanied by Tim Baker. General admission: \$10.00 donation.



Memorial Auditorium has installed a permanent digital video projector to enhance the audience's experience. The William H. Bauer foundation provided half of the funding and has the rights to show films. The foundation is looking to start a film series in the fall.

ORGAN UPDATES

WILLIAM WEBBER: His Conn 652 recently got an overhaul and is now working perfectly. He has added two synthesizers and an electric piano to it.

TIM JONES: He has been adding components to his future home instrument (Wurlitzer pipe organ). Tim also just purchased a CONN 653 theatre organ (electronic) that is being overhauled by Sphar Organ Service in Cincinnati.

LOUISVILLE'S PILCHER ORGAN: Overall the organ is doing well. It has new cymbals for the toy counter and the chimes have been restrung.

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