

# Metrolina Organ Quarterly

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*The journal of the Metrolina Theatre Organ Society*

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February 1993

Vol. 4, No 1

NEXT MTOS MEETING

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1993

6:30 p.m.  
at the home of

CHARLIE CLAYTON

306 Riverton Road  
Matthews, N. C. 28105  
(704) 821-9891

We will have an elegant covered dish dinner, so please call the Claytons by February 26 to let them know what you are planning to bring. HOW TO GET THERE:

From the stoplight on Old Monroe Road in downtown Stallings, go south on Potter Road. After about two miles (after passing Robinson Road and Raintree Drive on the right) turn left onto Nelson Road; almost immediately turn left again on Tree Hill Road. Riverton is the second street to the right. No. 306 is near the end.

AGENDA:

- A brief history of the theatre organ
  - The upcoming convention in Chicago
  - Progress on the Carolina Theatre
- 

CDs AVAILABLE AT THE MAIN LIBRARY

Lyn Larsen:	Filmtracks
Carlo Curly:	The Greatest Hour
Lyn Larsen:	Up and Away
Larsen & Curly:	Dueling Organs
Billy Nalle:	Spectacular Theatre Organ
	(re-release of Big, Bold and Billy, Brooklyn Paramount)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

February 27, 10:00 a.m.

Greg Owen (of New Bern), Byrd Theatre, Richmond

March 13, 5:00 p.m.

Garrison Keillor's show, Alabama Theatre, Birmingham

March 27, 2:00 p.m.

Dan Miller, organist at Calvary Church, Charlotte, will play the 3/18 Robert Morton at the home of Dr. Paul Abernethy in Burlington.

There will be open console afterward, and possibly a trip over to Williams High School to see the theatre organ being installed there.

A \$5.00 donation is requested.

March 28, 2:00 p.m.

Tom Hazleton, Chatanooga

April 17, 7:00 p.m.

Lee Erwin, Paramount Theatre, Bristol, Tennessee, for the dedication of the theatre organ there.

June 17, 7:00 p.m.

Lyn Larsen and Jack Bethards, Alabama Theatre, Birmingham

For more information about any of these events, call:

Buddy Boyd (407) 823-9261 or

Mac Abernethy (919) 855-5969

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You have probably noticed the page in each issue of Theatre Organ headed "An Acre of Seats in a Palace of Splendor." It is provided by the Theatre Historical Society, which is devoted to the preservation and restoration of historic theatres (including their organs). They put out an excellent quarterly publication, Marquee. For membership information, write to them at:

York Theatre Building, Suite 200  
152 North York Road  
Elmhurst, Illinois 60126

THEATRE ORGAN RECORDINGS available at Camelot Music on  
Independence Boulevard, upstairs in the Classical room:

The THEATRE ORGAN

Ronald Curtis at the Compton Organ, Paramount Organ  
Studios (the evocative name of Curtis's residence)  
Laurence James at the Wurlitzer Organ, Buckingham Town  
Hall

THE BYRD SINGS Ron Rhode, at the Wurlitzer Organ , Byrd  
Theatre, Richmond

The MIGHTY WURLITZER

Robert Ducksch

HOT DOG

Don Thompson

MAJESTY OF THE ORGAN

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Ashley Miller  | Robin Richmond |
| Bill Thomson   | Don Baker      |
| Reginald Foort | Ray Bohr       |

GUY BOVET a l'orgue de cinema (Wurlitzer)  
du College Claparede a Geneve

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WELCOME to new member --

Joylynn Huebner  
4310 Waterview Circle  
Charleston, S. C. 29408  
(803) 552-2424

From the Charlotte Observer,  
1/17/93

From the American Organist,  
January 1993

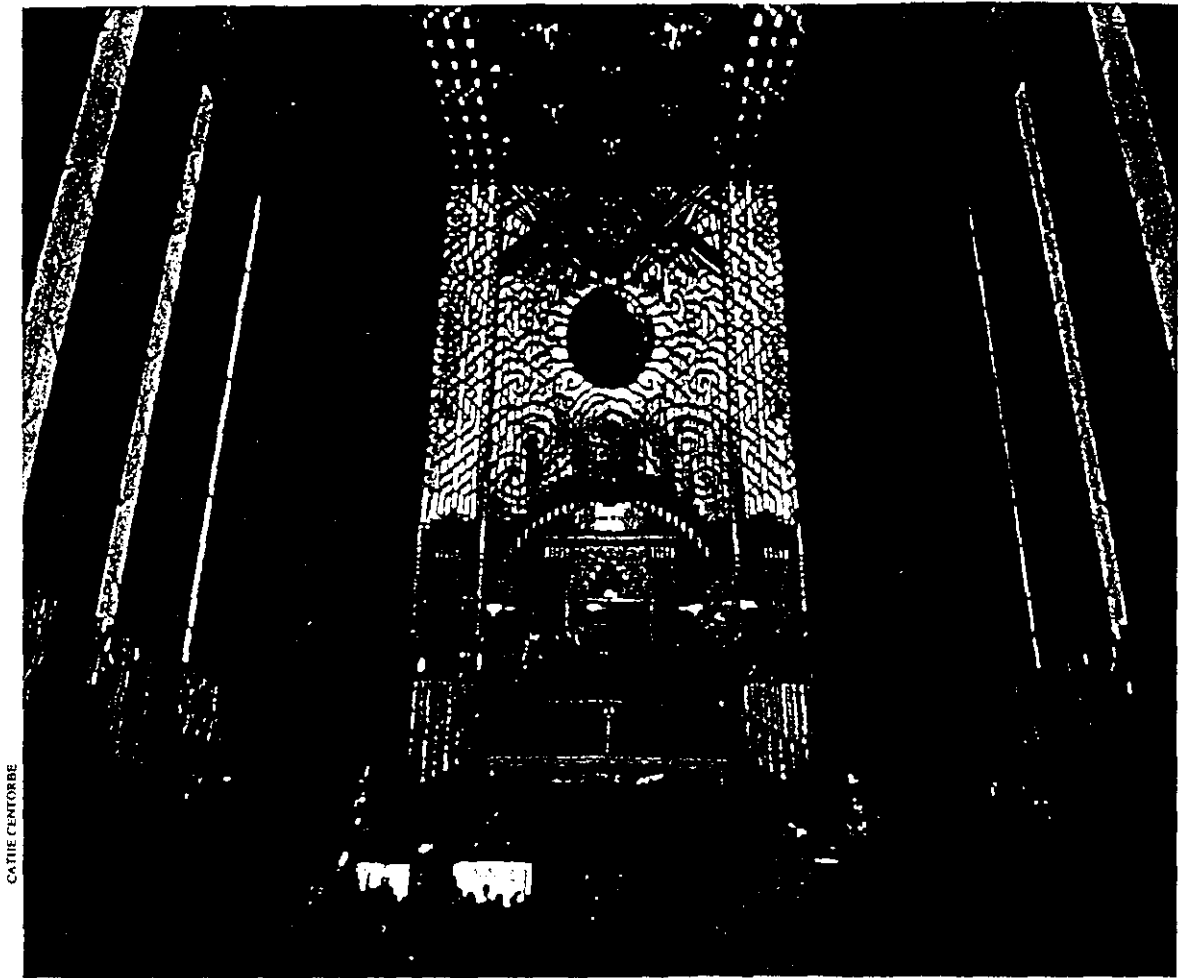
**Encore! Encore!**

*1/17/93*  
I hope 1993 brings the commu-  
nity support to restore the historic  
Carolina Theatre in uptown Char-  
lotte. The Carolina, which closed in  
1978 after more than 50 years as the  
city's flagship movie theater, is our  
last chance to have a great theater  
in Charlotte — a place for pre-  
mieres, sneak previews and major  
first-run features.

MARK HUFFSTETLER  
Charlotte

Cape Fear, N.C. Sept. 27, Celia Tolar-Bane  
and C. Ralph Mills played recitals at St.  
John's Episcopal Parish in Fayetteville as  
part of the International Folk Festival. Oct.  
17, an organ crawl to Lumberton included  
visits to the First Presbyterian Church (1971  
Schantz), Chestnut Street United Methodist  
Church (Baroque-style Casavant), and the  
Carolina Civic Center (Robert Morton theater  
organ). —Chris Garton-Zaveskv

From Modern Maturity,  
December 1992 - January 1993



CATHIE CENTORBE

Elaborate metal grillwork graces the Grand Lobby of the restored Paramount in Oakland, California.

# Matinee idylls

## Movie palaces make a dramatic comeback

On March 11, 1927, the American movie palace reached its zenith when thousands lined 50th Street and Seventh Avenue, immediately north of Times Square, to witness the opening of the eighth wonder of the entertainment world—the Roxy Theatre. Fans strained to see Norma Talmadge, Gloria Swanson and Harold Lloyd pay homage to Samuel Rothapfel's cathedra of the cinematic art.

Two months later that frenzied scene repeated itself on Hollywood Boulevard. Showman Sid Grauman welcomed the queen and king of silent cinema, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, to the dedication of his Chinese theater.

By Douglas Gomery

Picture palaces of equal size and grandeur emerged across the United States. Philadelphia natives may still evoke the awe they felt upon entering that 4,700-seat Mastbaum Theater. Many a Windy City youth spent all day Saturday in the cavernous confines of Balaban & Katz's 3,880-seat Chicago Theatre. In those heady days just before the Great Crash a new movie palace—from the Paramount in Toledo, Ohio, to the Majestics of Austin, Dallas and San Antonio, Texas—opened every week.

To go to the show at a picture palace was a transcendental experi-

ence. The lobby of a Stanley Theater, whether the one in Jersey City or the one in Pittsburgh, dwarfed any sixplex found in today's malls. And there was more, so much more: fine furnishings, massive decorative tapestries, marble statuary, sculptured plasterwork that recalled the halls of Versailles or a Spanish castle courtyard. One historian appropriately labeled the movie palace "an acre of seats in a garden of dreams."

Although movie palaces survived the Great Depression, the suburbanization of America, among other things, nearly did them in. As GIs returned from World War II, they moved their families to Levittown rather than take an apartment near

Loew's Pitkin in Brooklyn or Loew's Paradise in the Bronx. By 1970 more than half of the original 2,000 movie palaces had been razed; prospects for the survivors looked bleak indeed.

But then something remarkable happened. Architecture enthusiasts joined motion-picture fans to stop developers. By 1980 it was clear that hundreds of "wonder theaters" would not be forever lost. Today we find a refurbished picture palace in nearly every major American city—from the Fifth Avenue in Seattle to the former Olympia (now the Gusman Center) in Miami—and some smaller communities as well.

The save-the-movie-palace movement began in 1966 with the transformation of the old St. Louis movie house into Powell Hall, thus beginning the revitalization of St. Louis' theater district. But it has never been easy. Tales of how close some great

architectural treasures came to being reduced to rubble make any movie fan tremble.

In 1969 Columbus' Ohio Theatre, across from the state Capitol, was scheduled to be razed. Today the Spanish baroque-inspired masterpiece, saved from destruction by the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts, anchors a vibrant central city. The "new" Ohio handsomely hosts top names in music, theater and dance, as well as classic films and Broadway productions.

An art deco masterpiece, the Paramount of Oakland, California, closed as a movie house in 1971. Few believed it would survive. But the Oakland Symphony sponsored its restoration and this wonder of gleaming metal zigzags, rainbow lighting effects, silhouettes of Egyptian goddesses and massive murals remains a dazzler today.

In some cases theaters were only able to survive as something else. The former Brooklyn Paramount had its 4,000 seats removed, its auditorium floor flattened, and became a gymnasium for Long Island University. Across the East River, at 175th Street and Broadway in upper Manhattan, evangelist Reverend Ike has turned a Loew's movie palace into a 3,500-seat sanctuary for healing.

Most surviving movie palaces have found new life as performing arts centers. Examples include former Loew's States, one in Syracuse, New York, and another in Providence, Rhode Island. And city after city has found it cheaper to refit a former movie palace than to build from scratch. A refurbished Arlington in Santa Barbara, California, reopened for first-run movies, classical music concerts and other live performances on May 22, 1976—45 years to the day from its original dedication.

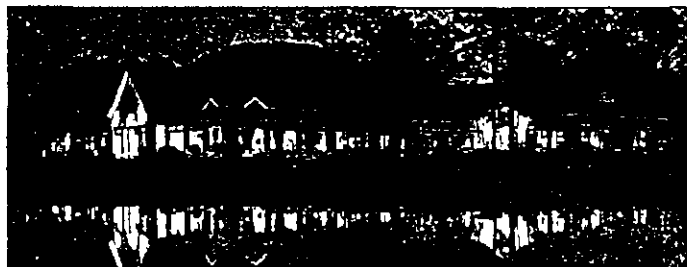
One can also find elegant examples of the movie palace form in the most remote places. You might fly into Wichita, Kansas, and not realize that just 15 miles to the east lies an art deco gem, the Augusta Theatre. The theater combines black and silver, murals and neon, with an intricate geometric-patterned ceiling. A decade ago rumors flew that the community anchor was doomed, but spirited citizens took up the challenge and the screen is again awash with the colors and sounds of motion pictures.

Discovering a restored picture palace can be an overwhelming personal revelation. You might attend a concert and find that the building is far more interesting than the entertainment on-stage. It is then that you may fully appreciate what it was like to go to a show back when these architectural stars were born.

For more information and publications on preserving America's cinematic heritage, contact the Theatre Historical Society of America, York Theatre Bldg, 2nd Fl, 152 N York Rd, Elmhurst, IL 60126. ■

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## Theatre Organ News

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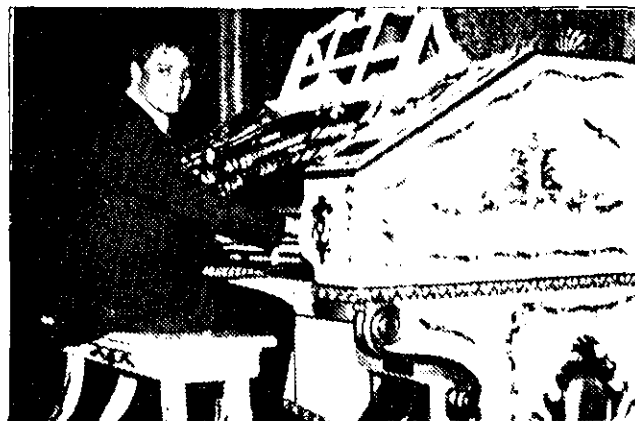
NUMBER 1 & 2

### NEXT PROGRAM

## Greg Owen Returns for Byrd Theatre Concert Saturday Morning, Feb. 27

Greg Owen, the popular young organist who performed for VTOS last February at the Byrd Theatre, will return on Saturday, February 27 at 10 a.m. to play the Byrd Wurlitzer for VTOS members and their guests.

Greg is an accomplished musician and gave a splendid concert for us last year. His knowledge of theatre organ music is extensive and he plays with tremendous feeling. He has played some of the most famous pipe organs in this country including the great Midmer Loah in the Atlantic City Convention Hall, the 4/36 Wurlitzer in the Detroit Fox Theatre and the Moller in the War Memorial Theatre in Trenton, New Jersey. Soon he will travel to Birmingham, Alabama, to play the Alabama Theatre's 4/20 Wurlitzer.



GREG OWEN AT THE CARPENTER CENTER WURLITZER CONSOLE

We can always count on Greg for a great time when he plays the great Byrd Theatre 4/17 Wurlitzer. And he tells us that he has many new arrangements to play including selections from *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Be sure to make arrangements to be at the Byrd Theatre for this special concert and bring your friends along. Admission is free.

| MTOS Charter members |         | [Report any error to<br>Rod Glasgow 334-0366] |                    | No. of names |      | 2/17/93        |     |
|----------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|------|----------------|-----|
| -----                |         |                                               |                    |              |      | 17             |     |
|                      |         |                                               |                    | Member       |      |                |     |
|                      |         |                                               |                    | Since        |      |                |     |
| William B. Alexander | Bill    | 330 Euclid Avenue                             | Statesville, N. C. | 28677        | 1989 | (704) 873-9428 | [C] |
| John Apple           | John    | 4146 Sheridan Drive                           | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28205        | 1989 | 365-4300       | [C] |
| Charles S. Clayton   | Charlie | 306 Riverton Road                             | Matthews, N. C.    | 28105        | 1989 | 821-9891       | [C] |
| Scott Foppiano       | Scott   | 22055 W. 14 Mile Rd.                          | Birmingham, Mich.  | 48010        | 1989 | (313) 647-6960 | [C] |
| William C. Bay       | Bill    | 1600 The Plaza                                | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28205        | 1989 | 333-9395       | [C] |
| Paul R. Gelsleichter | Paul    | 4815 Autumn Leaf Lane                         | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28277        | 1989 | 542-7437       | [C] |
| Joseph R. Glasgow    | Rod     | 300 East Park Avenue, No. 2                   | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28203        | 1989 | 334-0366       | [C] |
| John J. Hamrick      | John    | 1133 Harrisburg Drive                         | Lenoir, N. C.      | 28654        | 1989 | (704) 754-6344 | [C] |
| Charles Haymaker     | Charles | 4228 Castleton Road                           | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28211        | 1989 | 365-6518       | [C] |
| Karen Hite Jacob     | Karen   | 2516 East 5th Street                          | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28204        | 1989 | 334-3468       | [C] |
| Michael Johnston     | Michael | 81 Providence Square Drive                    | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28226        | 1989 | 365-4300       | [C] |
| Michael Kamps        | Nike    | 5601 Carmel Rd.                               | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28226        | 1989 | 543-0350       | [C] |
| Thomas C. McCall     | Tom     | 1101 Redcoat Drive                            | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28211        | 1989 | 364-9685       | [C] |
| David Meles          | David   | Box 2274                                      | Matthews, N. C.    | 28106        | 1989 | 545-0435       | [C] |
| James G. Tryne       | Jim     | 3132 Selwyn Avenue                            | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28209        | 1989 | 527-1634       | [C] |
| Dan O. White         | Dan     | 1401 Burnley Road                             | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28210        | 1989 | 553-0100       | [C] |
| Benjamin Williams    | Ben     | 4700 Midleaf Court                            | Charlotte, N. C.   | 28212        | 1989 | 563-7625       | [C] |

| MTOS members            |         | [Report any error to<br>Rod Glasgow 334-0366] |                         | No. of names |      | 2/17/93        |     |
|-------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|------|----------------|-----|
| -----                   |         |                                               |                         |              |      | 11             |     |
|                         |         |                                               |                         | Member       |      |                |     |
|                         |         |                                               |                         | Since        |      |                |     |
| Warren C. Bergmann      | Warren  | 309 Greenhill Drive                           | Anderson, S. C.         | 29621        | 1990 | (803) 226-3648 | [M] |
| Fred R. Charles         | Fred    | 4125 Woodfox Drive                            | Charlotte, N. C.        | 28226        | 1990 | 542-0686       | [M] |
| Robert H. Clark, Jr.    | Bobby   | 3219 Plantation Road                          | Raleigh, N. C.          | 27609        | 1990 | (919) 832-8204 | [M] |
| Joylynn Huebner         | Joylynn | 4310 Waterview Circle                         | North Charleston, S. C. | 2941         | 1991 | (803) 552-2424 | [M] |
| James Paul Metzger      | James   | P. O. Box 70                                  | Balsam, N. C.           | 28707        | 1990 | (704) 456-7775 | [M] |
| Brian D. Miller         | Brian   | 302 Graham                                    | Chapel Hill, N. C.      | 27514        | 1991 | (919) 933-7203 | [M] |
| Daniel Miller           | Dan     | 12635 Parks Farm Lane                         | Charlotte, N. C.        | 28226        | 1990 | 846-8907       | [M] |
| Phillip E. Posey        | Phillip | 1124 Bunter Circle                            | West Columbia, S. C.    | 29169        | 1990 | (803) 794-5961 | [M] |
| Carolyn L. Skeen        | Carolyn | 2209-1 Canterwood Drive                       | Charlotte, N. C.        | 28213        | 1992 | 597-1840       | [M] |
| William R. Smith        | William | 1246 Second Street, N. E.                     | Hickory, N. C.          | 28601        | 1990 | (704) 495-7176 | [M] |
| James H. Thackston, Jr. | James   | 907 Denny Street                              | High Point, N. C.       | 27262        | 1990 | (919) 886-5874 | [M] |
| David S. Crouch         | David   | Box 546                                       | Newton, N.C.            | 28628        | 1992 |                |     |
| Donald E. MacDonal      | Don     | 6711 Constitution Ln.                         | Charlotte, N.C.         | 28210        | 1991 | (704)552-2690  |     |