



THE POST HORN

Late Summer 2022
Official Newsletter of the
Bluegrass Chapter
American Theatre Organ Society
BGATOS.org

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By DANA ROSS

Hello Everyone!

After two years of dealing with COVID, life in general is starting to return to some sense of normalcy and that is also very true for BG ATOS. We are enjoying the resumption of many of our activities and are looking forward to even more exciting endeavors as we move forward with our mission to promote theatre organs and theatre organ music.

THE KENTUCKY THEATRE / SUMMER MOVIE CLASSICS

Our long-standing tradition of playing pre-show concerts at the Kentucky Theatre prior to the Wednesday night showings of the Summer Movie Classics returned after a Covid hiatus.

Dr. John Landon kicked off the series on May 25th playing for the movie "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid". **Tim Jones, Brian Hunt, Grant Holcomb** and **Lynn Vera** joined Dr. Landon in providing the pre-show entertainment for the series which ran to September 7th.

The music was presented on the chapter's Allen organ. We certainly look forward to the day when we'll be able to use the original Kentucky Theatre Wurlitzer for these shows.

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Grant Holcomb and **Lynn Vera** playing pre-show concerts for 2022 Summer Movie Classics at the Kentucky Theatre

KENTUCKY THEATRE WURLITZER RESTORATION PROJECT

We are making good progress in several areas with our project to restore the Kentucky Theatre Wurlitzer organ. We have had multiple member work sessions focusing on re-leathering the primary pneumatics and we have already completed enough for four ranks.

Thanks to **Brian Hunt, Cathy Hunt, Garry Marsh, Tim Jones** and **Julene Jones** for all the work they've done over the past months. (Tim and Julene have redefined the concept of a romantic evening to be working together with a glue pot and leather from the comfort of their living room!)

The work on our regulators has been completed. They were professionally restored by **Chicago Organ Works** and we now have them in storage at our Nicholasville site waiting for the rest of the organ to be completed.

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Tim Jones with the completed regulators

Looking to the future, we've received a grant to purchase the materials needed for the next phase of the restoration which will be the two original wind chests. For more detail on the project, see the article on page 6 in this newsletter from our project lead Tim Jones.

JACK MOELMANN PIANO DONATION

We were excited to receive a piano from the estate of **Jack Moelmann** who sadly passed away on 12/30/21. Jack was larger than life with ATOS. He was a member of ATOS since 1967, served on the Board of Directors in one capacity or another continuously for 23 years (1983-2006), chaired several committees, and was the ATOS President from 1985 until 1988. He was the ATOS Secretary 1993-2006, and was chosen as an ATOS Honorary Lifetime Member in May 1994.

Jack combined his musical interest and electrical engineering background to put together an elaborate Theatre Organ instrument (*both* electronic and pipe) in his home in O'Fallon, IL which had, in addition to the 3 manuals, 22 ranks, extensive stops and controls and 88 speakers, a set of Christmas Bells, 12 dancing ducks and 9 train horns.

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Many of the Bluegrass chapter members have a connection to Jack. **William Webber** represented the chapter at Jack's memorial service in O'Fallon, IL. **Patrick Ryan**, who is a Bluegrass chapter member, was a close friend of Jack's and is the executor of his estate. William worked with Patrick to arrange for the chapter to receive the piano.

The piano, from Jack's home organ, is fully restored and ready to be interfaced to our Wurlitzer organ. William, who has been to Jack's home on several occasions, has heard the piano play.

Patrick brought the piano to Lexington on May 11th. He and **Tim Jones** moved it into storage at our Nicholasville site where it is comfortably awaiting the completion of our Kentucky Theatre organ restoration project.



Patrick Ryan and **Tim Jones** with the Moelmann piano.

ANNUAL MEETING AND PICNIC

The chapter held its annual meeting and picnic on June 18th. **Dr. John Landon** and **Ray Holt** graciously hosted our gathering and everyone in attendance had a great time.

At our annual meeting there were reports on finances, social media, the newsletter, the Restoration project and the Kentucky Theatre.

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All of our current directors were re-elected for another one-year term:

Tim Baker – Louisville Memorial Auditorium

Grant Holcomb – Young Organist Representative

Bill Johnson – Transportation, Liaison with Lexington AGO

Garry Marsh – Director of Sales

Rhonda Marsh – Director of Sales

David Pilkinton – Liaison with Louisville AGO

Lynn Vera – Social Media, Webmaster, Newsletter Editor

Bill Webber – Volunteer Coordination & Member Recruitment

There were no officer elections as our officers serve either two-year or three-year terms and all have another year to serve.

After the business meeting we enjoyed a picnic potluck meal together. Thanks to chef **Brian Hunt** for his mastery of the grill and to everyone who brought a dish to share.



BG-ATOS 2022 Annual Picnic

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FINAL THOUGHTS

I'm excited with all of the possibilities the chapter has before us. From a project standpoint we will have multiple opportunities to participate in the restoration of the Kentucky Theatre Wurlitzer. Operations of the Kentucky Theatre are growing every day. Hopefully by next spring we will be able to work with them to plan an Easter silent movie event at the theater. And even though Covid has not disappeared, we are looking forward to being able to schedule more social events for the chapter. All in all, the future of the chapter looks great. Thanks.

Dana Ross, BG-ATOS President

NEXT PHASE OF RESTORATION

The next phase of our restoration comprises the two 1922 manual chests for the original Style F Wurlitzer. They are a five rank chest for the Main Chamber (Concert Flute, Clarinet, Viol d'Orchestre, Viol Celeste, and Open Diapason) and a three rank chest for the Solo Chamber (Vox Humana, Tibia Clausa, and Tuba Horn). The work involved goes far beyond releathering. Tasks will also address reliability issues that have become standard for the industry. Now that these components are 100 years old, addressing each and every dark corner is vital.

Tim Jones, BG-ATOS Vice President



Dana Ross and **Brian Hunt** work to improve reliability for the older pallet springs. Adding a tiny screw prevents the end of the spring from sticking into the wood and causing ciphers.

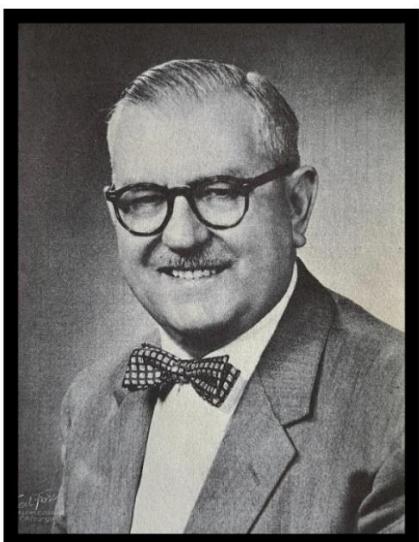
FEATURE ARTICLE:

REGINALD FOORT AND HIS TRAVELLING ORGAN

By Dr. John Landon

Author of JESSE CRAWFORD, POET OF THE ORGAN: WIZARD OF THE MIGHTY WURLITZER (1974)

When I first began writing the book *Jesse Crawford, Poet of the Organ: Wizard of the Mighty Wurlitzer*, the publisher, Harvey Roehl, owner of the Vestal Press suggested that I get in touch with well-known theatre organist Reginald Foort, whom he knew. He suggested that I contact Foort and ask if he would be willing to write the Foreword for the book. Mr. Roehl supplied me with Foort's address and I wrote him. One evening as I was fixing my supper in the house where I lived on the north side of Lexington, the phone rang and a very British voice said, "This is Reginald Foort." My supper was forgotten. Here was my chance to speak directly to perhaps the best known theatre (cinema) organist in England. We had quite a discussion of Crawford whom Foort knew personally and we talked about cinema organs in England. I had made two trips to England by this time and I was beginning to learn about organs there.



Reginald Foort in 1968

Foort agreed to write a Foreword for the Crawford book. It was the beginning of a friendship which lasted many years. When I wrote my second book on theatre organs, *Behold the Mighty Wurlitzer*, Foort kindly offered to write a Preface for it.

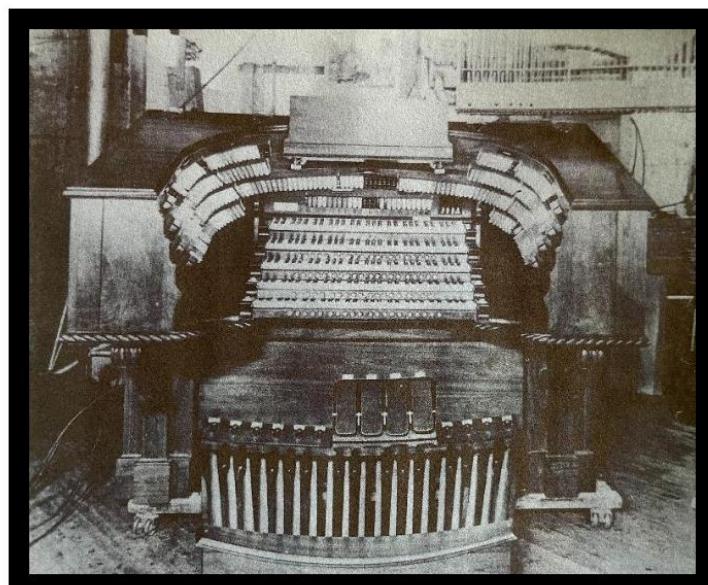
Foort spent a number of years playing the circuits of cinemas in England. He later became Staff Organist for the BBC (British Broadcasting Company). As such he was allowed only two outside engagements each month. It was not long before his name had become a household word.

After several years he decided to take advantage of his name recognition by resigning from the BBC to go on tour. He joined forces with a variety booking agency. He decided to form a company to finance this project. Foort's idea was to have a special theatre/concert organ which could be easily moved from one place to another. He wanted to be able to finish in one theatre on a Saturday night at 11 p.m., take the organ apart and prepare it for shipping by truck or rail, and travel perhaps 100 or 150 miles over the weekend and re-install it in a different theatre ready to play by Monday at 6 p.m.

Foort contacted several British pipe organ builders and he said that instead of their starting with ideas for a travelling pipe organ they told him what they thought he needed. In Foort's own words, "I knew exactly what I wanted. Above all the organ had to look and sound like a mighty organ. No earthly use going into the Palace Theatre, Manchester for example, and have the audience say, 'It's a nice organ but they have a far bigger and better one up the street in the Paramount Theatre.' " (1)

Foort wanted to have four manuals and 16 ranks but in the end he decided to have one built with five manuals and 27 ranks. Foort drew up a picture of the console and decided on what ranks he wanted included. This organ was to have the following ranks: Tuba Mirabilis, Tuba Horn, Brass Trumpet, Chorus Trumpet, English Post Horn, Diaphonic Diapason, English Diapason, Tibia Clausa I, Tibia Clausa II, Tibia Clausa III, Doppel Tibia, Vox Humana I, Vox Humana II, Clarinet, Krumet, Orchestral Oboe, Saxophone, Musette, Viol d'Orchestra, V.D.O. Celeste, Gamba, Gamba Celeste, Orchestral Strings (2 ranks), Muted Strings (2 ranks), Concert Flute. Five ranks were carried down to the 16 foot pitch to form a magnificent Pedal Organ: Tuba Mirabilis, Chorus Trumpet, Diaphonic Diapason, Concert Flute, Gamba. The Tibia Clausa I was the biggest ever built up to that time. It was 5 notes bigger than the New York Paramount #1 Tibia. That stop and the big reeds were on 15 inches of wind.

Foort's fellow organist, Reg Watson, had been closely associated with the Möller Organ Company of Hagerstown, Maryland. He took Foort's specifications to Ted Moller, President of the Möller Company. Moller said to Foort, "If this is what you want we will build it for you." (2)



The five-manual console before it was shipped from the Möller factory (Hagerstown, MD) to London in 1938.

When the organ was finished they packed it in 65 packing cases and sent it to England by the ship *Aquitania*. Foort hired 15 staff members and purchased four 30-foot trucks to haul it around. It took about four and a half hours to take the organ apart and load it onto the trucks. Six blowers were required.

If the organ arrived at the next theatre by 6 p.m. on a Sunday evening the men would set it up in position, returning the next morning by 7 a.m. to complete the installation by 10 a.m.



Trucks to deliver the organ from theatre to theatre.

It is reported that very little tuning was required. Möller had fitted the tuning wires with set screws which helped pipes from going out of tune when trucked over rough roads. It was estimated to cost \$100,000 a year to run this operation and they only were able to do so for eight and a half months before the start of World War II.

Because the BBC's own pipe organ had been destroyed by the first German air raid on London, Foort offered his travelling organ to the BBC for the duration. The organ was then installed in North Wales, out of range for the German bombers. Foort did several broadcasts on it for the BBC and two television shows which were well-received. Eventually the organ was sold to a radio station in Hilversum, Holland. In later years it was installed in the Organ Power Pizza, Pacific Beach, San Diego, California, where Foort recorded a remarkable LP entitled *Reginald Foort, Master of the Magnificent Möller Theatre Organ, Organ Power Pizza*.

Reginald Foort's Möller organ was built by Möller in 1938. Perhaps the most famous Möller theatre organ is the 4/42 installed in the Atlanta Fox Theatre. It was built in 1929.

Footnotes –

(1)Reginald Foort. *The Cinema Organ*, 2nd edition, Vestal Press, Vestal, New York; 1970. P. 147.

(2)Ibid., p. 150.



Dr. John Landon

ANNUAL DUES ARE DUE!

A friendly reminder: if you have not yet paid your **\$15** annual dues for 2022-2023, please write a \$15 check (or more!) to “Bluegrass Chapter – ATOS”, indicate “Annual Dues” in the memo line, and mail to **Brian Hunt, BG-ATOS Treasurer**
1008 Claiborne Way
Lexington, KY 40517

You may also renew online through our website. [**CLICK HERE**](#) to go to our Donate page. Then click on the “Donate” button within the red-framed “Donate using PayPal” box at left. This will send you to the PayPal website, where you have two choices: the yellow PayPal button if you have a PayPal account and wish to use it, or the white debit/credit card button. As you go through the process there will be an option to write “Dues” on a memo line. (NOTE: if you don’t see both yellow and white buttons, please clear your History, refresh your browser, and click on the link to the Donate page again.)

Thank you for your support of our mission to promote the theatre pipe organ and its music, and to restore and reinstall the Kentucky Theatre Wurlitzer!

MEMBER NEWS

A historic thing happened on August 10, 2022: to the best of our knowledge, **Lynn Vera** became the first female theatre organist to play at the Kentucky Theatre since the silent film era!

Editor's note: yes, that is me! What an honor!

I especially want to thank Dr. Landon, William Webber, Tim Jones and Brian Hunt for their generous gifts of time to help me prepare to become a theatre organist. This has been an incredibly fun adventure for a retired church organist, and I look forward to learning more and continuing along this journey!

-Lynn



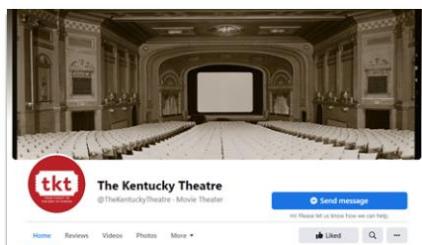
NEWS FROM THE KENTUCKY THEATRE

We have exciting news: as part of the Kentucky Theatre's 100th Anniversary Celebration there will be TWO silent film presentations! Both are not to be missed!

On Saturday, October 15th at 7:30 p.m. the Kentucky Theatre will present **Nosferatu**, a 1922 German classic of horror with live organ accompaniment by our BG-ATOS Director **Tim Baker**! A silent film era masterpiece, Nosferatu's eerie, gothic feel set the template for the horror films that followed.

As of the time of this writing details are pending for the November event, but it will be at the beginning of the month. [CLICK HERE](#) to sign up for the Kentucky Theatre Newsletter, and you will be among the first to know! Also click on the images below to connect via Facebook and website.

FACEBOOK:



WEBSITE:



MARKETPLACE

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

Chapter Historian **Dr. John Landon** has published his new book, and it is 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!

John Landon



ONLY YESTERDAY

"My Love Affair with the Theatre Organ"

WILLIAM WEBBER'S CD: "Something Old, New, Borrowed, and Blue"

Bill Webber's theatre organ CD, "**Something Old, New, Borrowed, and Blue**" was released in August 2021. 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 Theatre](#) in Greensboro, North Carolina. The CD features songs from Lady Gaga, Korla Pandit, Disney, C.A.J. Parmentier, Stephen Foster, and much more.

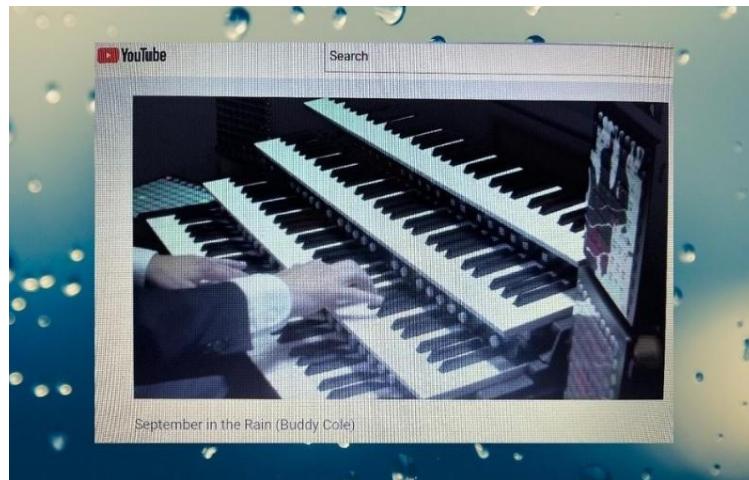
If you would like to order this CD on Amazon, [CLICK HERE](#).



FEATURED VIDEO

Pierre Fracalanza ([TheatrePierre](#)): “September in the Rain”

This is a reproduction of **Buddy Cole**’s beautiful arrangement of “September in the Rain”. This selection appeared in Buddy Cole’s last solo album, *Autumn Nocturne*, recorded in the summer of 1964. Mr. Fracalanza reproduced Buddy Cole’s arrangement on a virtual theater pipe organ, the [Paramount Organ Works 450](#) for Hauptwerk 5+. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the video.



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](#).

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