

Silent Film Music and the Theatre Organ

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Introduction

Until the 1980s, the community of musical scholars in general regarded film music—and especially music for the silent films—as insignificant and uninteresting. Film music, it seemed, was utilitarian, commercial, trite, and manipulative. Moreover, because it was **film** music rather than film **music**, it could not claim the musical integrity required of artworks worthy of study.

If film music in general was denigrated, the theatre organ was regarded in serious musical circles as a particular aberration, not only because of the type of music it was intended to play but also because it represented the exact opposite of the characteristics espoused by the *Orgelbewegung* of the twentieth century. To make matters worse, many of the grand old motion picture theatres were torn down in the fifties and sixties, their music libraries and theatre organs sold off piecemeal or destroyed. With a few obvious exceptions (such as the installation at Radio City Music Hall in New

York City¹), it became increasingly difficult to hear a theatre organ in anything like its original acoustic setting.

The theatre organ might have disappeared altogether under the depredations of time and changing taste had it not been for groups of amateurs that restored and maintained some of the instruments in theatres or purchased and installed them in other locations. The American Association of Theatre Organ Enthusiasts (now American Theatre Organ Society [ATOS]) was established on 8 February 1955,² and by 1962, there were thirteen chapters spread across the country. In England, the Theatre Organ Club filled a similar role.

Some of the instruments rescued from theatres on the verge of demolition³ moved to new homes in private studios or pizza parlors. These rooms—however carefully designed—were not suited to the acoustic design of the instrument, and they gave an impression of the instrument's sound quite different from the effect it conveyed in its original installation. Manufacturers of electronic instruments, especially the Rodgers Organ Company of Hillsboro, Oregon, and to a lesser extent the Allen Organ Company, helped maintain public—if not scholarly—interest in the theatre organ by producing instruments people could purchase for private homes, but these instruments, too, provide only a pale shadow of the sound of theatre organs in theatres. Although the theatre organ survived after a fashion, removal from its intended setting and use did nothing to encourage scholarly attention.

The last few years, by contrast, have seen a remarkable development of interest in film music and a general acceptance of

¹This is, in any case, a very late instrument and a rather unusual installation.

²A review of the organizational meeting of the ATOE, as it was commonly called, appears in "Report of the Charter Meeting," *Tibia* 1, no. 1 (1955): 4–5; reprinted in the tenth anniversary issue of the society's journal: *Theatre Organ* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1965): 4–5.

³In some cases, the theatres themselves were secure, but management still decided to sell the organ, which had deteriorated to the point of being unplayable or which was not envisioned as being of further use.

the medium as worthy of serious scholarship and preservation. Both the 1989 and 1990 joint annual meetings of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory included sessions devoted to film music, a new monograph series entitled *Film Music* has been launched by Garland Publishing, catalogues of source material have begun to appear, and the number of books, articles, and dissertations that concentrate specifically on film music or composers has increased to a point quite inconceivable ten years ago.⁴

This formal and traditional scholarship is complemented by a rather substantial body of material produced or collected by various enthusiasts, writers on popular culture, and specialized fan clubs devoted to particular film composers. While material of this sort rarely features the sophisticated apparatus of scholarship, it can be of considerable value when used cautiously because it includes pictures of music, musical instruments, or musicians; interviews; worklists; and all manner of odd scraps of specialized information that happen to be of interest to a particular author or readership. Scholars tend to overlook this material, perhaps because it is difficult to find in the traditional repositories. Nevertheless, it is indispensable to the serious study of this medium.⁵

Encouraged by groups such as the ATOS and the Theatre Historical Society, communities in recent years have begun to preserve older motion picture theatres and their organs, and the Smithsonian Institution and other societies have produced television

⁴A selected and annotated bibliography appears as the final part of this article.

⁵This is especially true where the theatre organ is concerned. It is unfortunate that complete runs of the various journals of the ATOE and ATOS are so rare in public collections, and Martin Marks's otherwise very useful bibliography ("Film Music: The Material, Literature, and Present State of Research," *Notes* 36 [1979]: 282-325) overlooks them altogether. Clifford McCarty, in his introduction to *Film Music I* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), xii, singles out the newsletters and annuals devoted to composers such as Max Steiner, Bernard Herrmann, Jerry Goldsmith, and others, and depreciates this material as "characterized by the contributors' ardor for a composer or film genre and their insufficient understanding of either music or film." I would reiterate, however, that while there is undoubtedly ephemera in this material, one is not likely to find the valuable kernels in any other source.

programs, videotapes, and public performances in the restored theatres that allow the public to hear and see silent films in something like their original context.⁶ The enthusiasm generated by these events has led several companies to begin commercial release of reconstructed silent films with orchestral or theatre organ accompaniment.⁷

The recognition of film music as a field worthy of serious attention and the abundance of material now available makes this an excellent time to begin developing a history of the theatre organ and its use with silent films. At a minimum, such a history would need to take into account the various builders, the types of installations, the sonic design, the leading musicians, treatises and other instructional material, the organist's use of scores or cue sheets, improvisation, the working relationship between the organist and exhibitor, and of course the films themselves. This article can only touch on some of these issues, and it certainly does not pretend to be a comprehensive history. It may, however, provide an outline and some resources for those who may wish to pursue the subject or might simply like to include something on the subject in their teaching.

The Theatre Organ and Silent Films

Within the field of film music scholarship, it has become a commonplace to observe that the silent films were never really silent: they were always accompanied by at least a piano or small ensemble, and in the larger theatres, by an orchestra or an organ. Scholarship dutifully notes that the film accompaniment might be performed by (1) an ensemble playing from a score compiled by the

⁶One of the best examples of this sort of community preservation project is the Ohio Theatre in Columbus. There were, of course, occasional performances of silent films with organ accompaniment sponsored by institutions, clubs, or private entrepreneurs throughout the last three or four decades, but these were exceptional and did not attract broad public interest. Perhaps the most important example from the fifties and sixties is Gaylord Carter's Flicker Fingers Productions.

⁷See the bibliography for an annotated listing.

studio or the director and distributed with the film; (2) an ensemble playing from a score compiled by a particular theatre's music director, perhaps guided by a cue sheet distributed by the studio, perhaps not; or (3) an individual musician, who might refer to the studio's cue sheet or simply improvise a score.⁸

While this description is true enough as far as it goes, it does suggest a kind of fixed presentation, as if any given film in any given theatre would be performed in a certain way, show after show. This, of course, is the modern sense of commercial film exhibition: the audience attending a showing of *Gone with the Wind* or *Days of Thunder* assumes it sees exactly the same version everyone else has seen. The truth, however, is otherwise: films become damaged and sections are excised in repair; local distributors cut certain sections deemed unsuitable for a particular market; films are withdrawn and re-released, sometimes even within the first few weeks; and so on. Moreover, various cuts of a film are frequently approved by the director or the studio or both. Thus, it cannot be said that these are merely defective versions that do not reflect the film makers' intent.

The problem is even more acute for silent film because the showing of a silent film did not entail just running a strip of film through a projector; it was, in a real sense, a performance, involving numerous variables ranging from the time of the show to the speed of the film itself.⁹ Thus, even in the case of "bigger" films that

⁸For a useful introduction, see Gillian B. Anderson, "The Presentation of Silent Films, or, Music as Anaesthesia," *Journal of Musicology* 5 (1987): 257-95; cf. the Introduction to her *Music for Silent Films 1894-1929: A Guide* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1988), xiii-xlix.

⁹Certain shows were "first run" and required the fullest resources of the theatre, others were less grand. The projection speed of silent film was not stable at 16-18 frames per second, as is often thought. The conductor's stand in larger theatres was frequently equipped with a rheostat that enabled him to increase or decrease the projection speed in order to coordinate music and film more closely and, in a sense, to "conduct" the film. When films were accompanied by individual musicians, the projectionist and the musician would settle on the proper speed for the film. This might vary from performance to performance. Dennis James ("Performing with Silent Films," *Film Music I*, 78) notes the projectionist's cue sheet for *Old Ironsides*, in which instructions are given for variation of the film speed ranging from 20 to 25.33 frames per second.

were closely coordinated with special scores,¹⁰ the actual performance of the film would vary according to the interpreters.¹¹ As Dennis James, staff organist at the Ohio Theatre (Columbus), observes:

Silent film is a performance medium. This concept was lost with the advent of sound-on-film. With it passed what is now seen as the single most necessary part of the silent film experience—the live performance. . . . the live element of silent film music performance cannot be ignored.¹²

The examination of silent film music cannot take place solely through the collation of extant scores, cue sheets, and the like with film scripts and surviving prints, though this is certainly important. Because silent film music is part of a dynamic performing art—quite unlike the music for sound films, but rather like the music for opera—careful study must also be given to the performance tradition.¹³

¹⁰This was especially characteristic of the films of D. W. Griffith, and perhaps the best example of close coordination between film and music is *Broken Blossoms* (1919). A videotape of this film with its original score is listed in the bibliography.

¹¹For an entertaining reminiscence of the extent of these variables, see Rudy Behlmer's interview with Gaylord Carter (one of the last surviving professional theatre organists from the '20s), "Tumult, Battle, and Blaze: Looking Back on the 1920s—and Since—with Gaylord Carter, the Dean of Theater Organists," in *Film Music I*, 19-59.

¹²James, "Performing with Silent Films," 78.

¹³The analogy between silent film and opera was drawn even in the days of silent films: "Nothing can give a better idea of what good moving picture music should be, than the careful study of successful operas" (Edith Lang and George West, *Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures: A Practical Manual for Pianists and Organists and an Exposition of the Principles Underlying the Accompaniment of Motion Pictures* [Boston: Boston Music Co., 1920; reprint, in the series the Literature of Cinema, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970], 6). Anderson ("Presentation of Silent Films," 277-78) believes that the musicians could "change the film directors' intentions by varying the speed of the projectors, by reorganizing the films' sequences or by deleting whole scenes," but this suggests a modern sense of director as *auteur*, which few directors of the period possessed. In fact, directors, studios, and the stars

The organ and the organist

In the 1920s, at the height of silent film making, the theatre organist played a dominant role in the accompaniment of silent films. Although some of the recent studies of silent film music acknowledge the theatre organ's importance, the nature of the instrument and the special techniques of the theatre organist's art have received little attention.¹⁴

The theatre organ evolved from various developments in late nineteenth-century organ building, which included unification, increased wind pressure, the invention of so-called "orchestral" ranks, combination actions, and so on.¹⁵ One of the leading exponents of a new type of orchestral organ was Robert Hope-Jones, but he was not so much interested in building organs for theatres as he was in simply "improving" the instrument in general. It was left to the Wurlitzer Company to absorb the Hope-Jones

themselves regarded the musicians and the exhibitors as partners in the presentation of their work. As an example, note Carter's reminiscence of his work with Harold Lloyd (Behlmer, "Tumult, Battle, and Blaze," 23, 53-55).

¹⁴Anderson's notice of the theatre organ and its role ("Presentation of Silent Films," esp. 267-70; and *Music for Silent Films*, xix-xxi) is commendable, but it relies almost entirely on *The American Organist*, which represented then, as now, a rather conservative and traditional view of the organ and its music. Many, if not most of the notices printed in its theatre organ section were not written by practicing theatre organists. E. M. Skinner, for example, one of the contributors to *The American Organist* quoted by Anderson, can scarcely be considered an impartial witness on the character of the organs and the quality of the organists. For a fuller perspective on the activities of the theatre organist, see Behlmer's interview with Carter ("Tumult, Battle, and Blaze," 19-59) and interviews published in nearly every issue of *Theatre Organ*. Note especially interviews with Leonard MacClain, *Theatre Organ* 4, no. 3 (1962): 4-7; C. A. J. Parmentier, *Theatre Organ Bombarde* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 12-17; Arsene Siegel, *Theatre Organ Bombarde* 8, no. 3 (October 1966): 2-4; Paul Forster, *Theatre Organ Bombarde* 9, no. 1 (February 1967): 20-21 and 9, no. 2 (April 1967): 40-45; and Gaylord Carter, *Theatre Organ Bombarde* 9, no. 5 (October 1967): 5, 36-40.

¹⁵These developments have been detailed elsewhere and need not be reviewed here. For further information, readers may wish to consult George Ashdown Audsley, *The Art of Organ-Building*, 2 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1905; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1965); idem, *The Organ of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1919; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1970); William H. Barnes, *The Contemporary American Organ* (New York: Fischer, 1952).

Organ Company in 1910 and to begin producing the characteristic theatre organ (originally called the Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra) that was always associated in the public's mind with Wurlitzer even when organs of a similar sort were built by Möller, Kimball, Marr & Colton, Barton, or Morton—to name only the better-known builders.¹⁶

It would be impossible to generalize a “typical” specification for a theatre organ built in the late teens or twenties. The organs ranged in size from two manuals and six ranks to four or five manuals and more than fifty ranks.¹⁷ Nearly all of them, however, had at least one rank of the common voices: a tibia (a stopped wooden pipe), a vox humana (a capped reed), a string (an open pipe of very narrow scale), a flute, some sort of principal (usually called a diapason), and an open reed (perhaps an oboe, krumet, or tuba); and all of them had tremulants to give the organ its characteristic vibrato. Larger organs would have additional reed and flue ranks, as well as special brilliant ranks including the brass saxophone, brass trumpet, and posthorn. Finally, theatre organs typically included a battery of percussion instruments that could be controlled from the console. Even smaller organs would include bass drum, kettle drum, crash cymbal, cymbal, snare drum, triangle, castanets, Chinese block, tom tom, sleigh bells, doorbell, and at least one bird¹⁸ and an autohorn. Larger organs might add harp and marimba,¹⁹ chimes,

¹⁶A handy survey of these and other builders appears in John W. Landon, *Behold the Mighty Wurlitzer: The History of the Theatre Pipe Organ* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 23–85. This book is a useful beginning attempt to develop a history, but it is by no means comprehensive.

¹⁷While fifty ranks might seem small in terms of a classically constructed instrument, it must be remembered that each rank in a theatre organ would typically be unified at four different pitch levels and on various manuals. Consequently, fifty ranks might be comparable to two hundred ranks in a traditional organ.

¹⁸The “bird” was a small brass container with an open conical top, filled with a light oil. It was controlled by a separate pedal or button, which caused air from the organ to be blown through the oil, creating a chirping sound.

¹⁹These were generally the same marimba, but the “harp” stop caused each bar to be struck only once when the key was depressed, while the “marimba” stop caused the bar to be struck repeatedly as long as the key was depressed.

glockenspiel, tuned timpani, chrysoglott, xylophone, and grand piano. Some of these percussion instruments and most of the sound effects were invoked by depressing foot pedals or buttons, while others—especially the tuned percussion and rhythm instruments—were controlled from the keyboard so they would respond together with the organist's solo line or the accompaniment pattern.

Unification enabled each one of the ranks and some of the tuned percussion to be played from the console at various different pitch levels and in various combinations according to the stops selected, all by depressing a single key on, in most cases, any one of the several manuals.²⁰ The stops themselves were organized into various divisions and controlled by narrow stop tablets distributed in rows (the number depended on the size of the instrument) around the so-called “horseshoe console” (see plate 1). A typical arrangement of stop tablets from left to right would include pedal, accompaniment, great, and solo.²¹ The stop tablets for each division would range from lowest to highest, left to right, with the percussion tablets at the extreme right of each division's set. In addition, the sonic character of the ranks was color-coded on the stop tablets: white tablets indicated flues (or percussion); red tablets, reeds; yellow tablets, strings; and black tablets, couplers. Around the rim of the horseshoe console, little hooded lights were installed so the organist could easily see the tablets and keyboards in the darkened theatre.

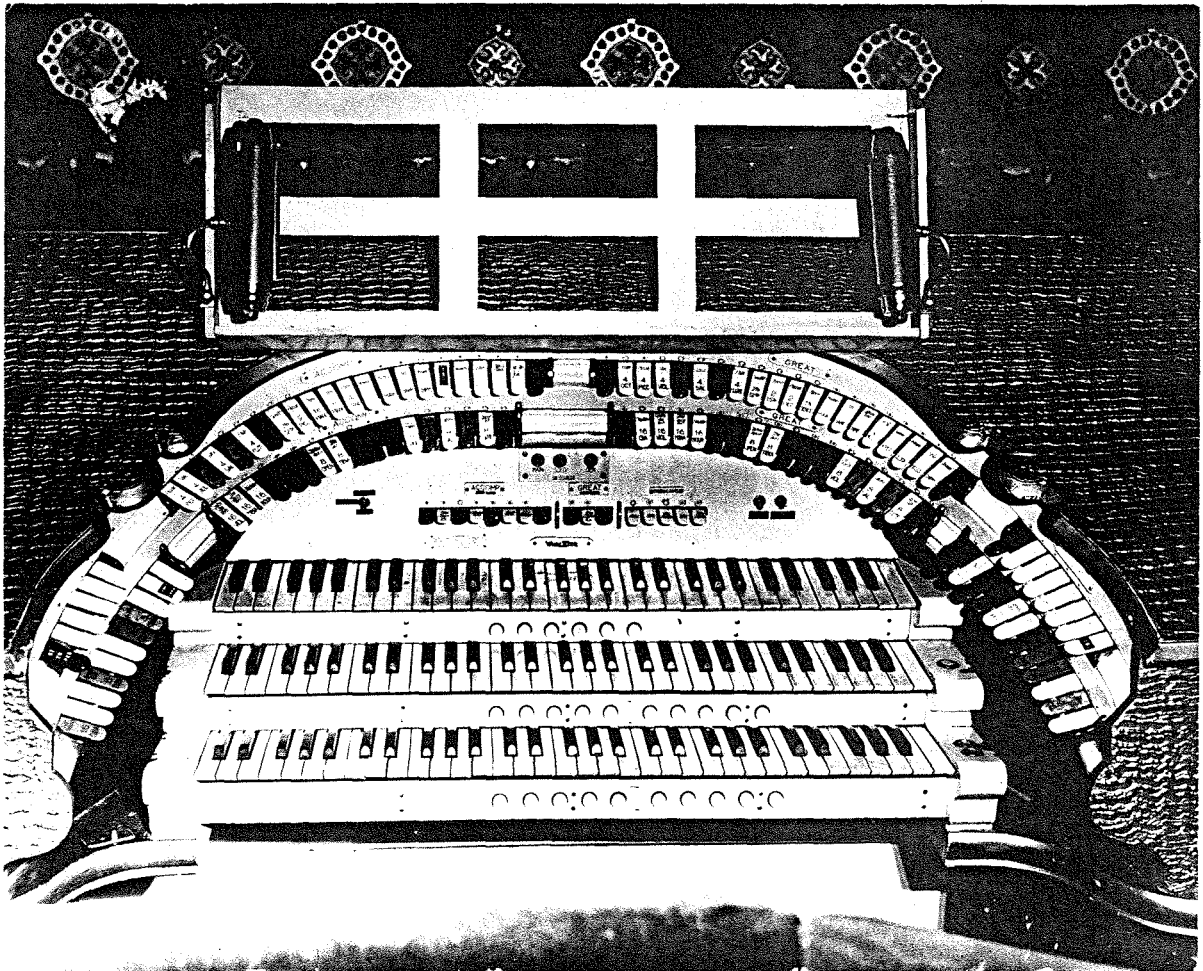
The arrangement of the console enabled the organist to make rapid changes in sound by shifting from one keyboard to another, changing stops by hand,²² using the extensive combination action

²⁰Each rank would be controlled by several stop tablets. For example, a single flue rank might have stop tablets for 16', 8', 4', 2²/3', 2', and 1³/5'.

²¹Larger instruments might include a bombarde division.

²²The size, arrangement, and color-coding of the tablets allowed the organist to add or subtract whole groups of registers with a quick flick of the fingers. Because the tablets moved easily, it was also possible to turn on or off a large spread of tablets by running a finger very quickly around the horseshoe along the top or bottom of the row of tablets.

Plate 1. Front view of the console for the 13-rank special style 235 Wurlitzer formerly installed in the Oriental Theatre (Portland, Oregon). The console is just below "film" position in this photograph (the front of the stage apron can be seen above the music rack). The second touch stops are the smaller stop tablets in the center, above the solo keyboard. Buttons controlling the doorbell and other sound effects can be seen on the right cheeks of the great and accompaniment keyboards.



("pistons") below each manual and above the pedal board, or using the crescendo pedal.²³ The pistons, which could be set on an electric setter board at the back of the console for any combination of stops, activated tiny bellows behind the stop tablets, turning them on or off. Some of the pistons functioned only on a certain division of the organ, and others were "general" pistons that could change the stops anywhere on the organ. On larger instruments such as the Wurlitzer at the Fox Theatre in San Francisco (now demolished), the organist could further control the pipes and some of the percussion that would sound from a single key by employing "second touch" and "pizzicato touch."²⁴ In addition, all the ranks, sound effects, and percussion, with the exception of some 16- and 32-foot pedal ranks found on larger organs, were normally enclosed in swell boxes, each controlled by a separate pedal, and this allowed the organist considerable control over the dynamics of the sound without alteration of its color.

Theatre organs were characteristically installed in chambers on the left and right sides of the proscenium, although some were installed in chambers in the dome of the theatre's ceiling or under the stage.²⁵ Proscenium installations, which were certainly the most common, provided the organist with the possibility of creating striking antiphonal or stereophonic effects. Above each stop tablet on many Wurlitzers was a white or black dot indicating whether the rank was installed in the chambers on the right (black dot) or the left (white dot).

²³The crescendo pedal was always to the right of the set of swell pedals. The order was adjustable in which the stops were brought on as it was depressed.

²⁴"Second touch" stops played when the organist depressed the key a bit more forcefully than usual, which would cause it to descend to a second stopping point. "Pizzicato touch" stops played through a special relay that caused the selected pizzicato stops to sound briefly when the key was depressed to its normal stopping point; this would create a sort of sforzato effect. A fuller description appears in "Questions and Answers," *Theatre Organ* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1962): 12.

²⁵As examples, the Wurlitzer in the Oriental Theatre in Portland, Oregon was a ceiling installation, the Kimball in the Roxy in New York City was a substage installation, and the Wurlitzer in the San Francisco Fox was a proscenium installation.

In the teens, it was common for the organ console to be installed in a fixed position in front of the apron on the left side or in the center of the orchestra pit.²⁶ As theatres became larger, however, the organ and the orchestra were placed on separate elevators. When accompanying a film, the organist would rise from the pit to a level somewhat above the stage, play a short overture, and then descend to a level somewhat below the stage as the film began. If the organ was installed in the center of the pit, the organist could easily see the screen. It was also quite common for the organ to be installed on the left side of the pit, and in these cases, the lift sometimes included a turntable that allowed the organ to rotate.²⁷ As it would rise on the lift, the organ would be turned with its back towards the left side of the house so the audience could watch the organist's performance; then, as it partially descended for the film, it would rotate clockwise so the organist could see the screen.

The sound of a theatre organ, like that of any organ, is a combination of the characteristics of the instrument itself and the acoustics of the room. Larger theatre organs were typically installed in larger theatres, such as the 4-manual, 36-rank Wurlitzer installed in the 4,651-seat Fox Theatre in San Francisco or the 5-manual, 29-rank Kimball in the 6,214-seat Roxy Theatre in New York City (now demolished). This does not mean, however, that the sound was comparable. The Fox organ was installed in chambers on either side and on top of the proscenium arch, while the Roxy organ was installed under the stage. In addition, the two theatres had different shapes. The sound of the Fox organ—as a result of its size, installation, and the shape of its room—was subtle, blended, clear, and

²⁶This was the case in the Regent (1913) and the Rialto (1916) in New York and the Million Dollar (1918) in Los Angeles, for example.

²⁷As in the original installation at the Oakland Paramount (1931).

powerful (but never loud), while that of the Roxy was more muffled.²⁸ In their original acoustic environment, organ accompaniments for the silent films (always assuming, of course, a competent performer) underscored the visual dimension with a sophisticated, highly colored music. In addition, if the organ had a proscenium or dome installation in an auditorium with a somewhat rounded shape (the common configuration), the music would seem to fill the auditorium from all directions rather than appearing to come from behind the screen or any other specifically discernible position. This created the rather mysterious and impressive effect that was frequently noted as a feature of silent films in the twenties.²⁹

The overall design and mechanism of the theatre organ allowed a skillful organist to create truly remarkable orchestral—and theatrical—effects of considerable sophistication. Because all these resources were controlled by a single performer, it was possible for the music to be coordinated with the film to a degree not possible with full ensemble accompaniments. C. Roy Carter, writing in 1926, asserted that the theatre organ was capable of providing the most perfect accompaniment for motion pictures:

Its superiority over the orchestra for this means is undisputed, not only because of the Organ's greater flexibility and range of tonal expression but because under the control of an artist it can do all and much

²⁸By contrast, theatre organs of any size re-installed in small rooms such as pizza parlors or private studios do not blend, are not subtle, and are frequently loud rather than powerful. Thus, they convey an acoustic impression very different from their original effect.

²⁹An advertisement for the San Francisco Fox of 18 June 1929 observes: "Softly in the air everywhere is the sound of *music* of unseen origin." Clealan Blakely (quoted in the preface to John W. Landon, *Jesse Crawford, The Poet of the Organ: Wizard of the Mighty Wurlitzer* [Vestal, N.Y.: Vestal Press, 1974]) recalls his visit to the famous New York Paramount, which possessed a Wurlitzer similar in size and installation to the Fox's instrument: "It seemed that I was completely surrounded by the most beautiful music. . . . The gorgeous sound of this the greatest of all the Wurlitzers, in the full stereo of these shallow chambers, a near perfect acoustical environment, . . ."

more than a large orchestra, greatly surpassing it in power and grandeur and even variety of tone.³⁰

The accompaniments

With the extended and flexible resources of the instrument, the theatre organist could complement the theatre's orchestra when it was accompanying a film, fill in for a time while the orchestra rested, or accompany the film as a soloist. When an orchestra was used, of course, a score of some sort was employed. Some of these scores were supplied by the studios, but in the majority of cases, the score would be assembled by the theatre's music director, either from cue sheets supplied by the studio or from the director's own creative ideas.³¹

In his reminiscence recorded by film historian Rudy Behlmer, Gaylord Carter recalls that the orchestra might play for about thirty minutes, he would take over for about twenty minutes, and the orchestra would then return for the final minutes of the film. In connection with the "big" film, *Ben-Hur*, which was supplied with a score, Carter observes that for the main show in the afternoon, the orchestra would begin the film, he would take over in the middle, and the orchestra would finish the showing. The supper show would be accompanied by the organ alone (with an assistant playing). The

³⁰C. Roy Carter, *Theatre Organist's Secrets: A Collection of Successful Imitations, Tricks, and Effects for Motion Picture Accompaniment on the Pipe Organ* (Los Angeles: Calif.: By the author, [1926]), 1; also quoted in Anderson, "Presentation of Silent Films," 269.

³¹Gaylord Carter supplies a detailed description of this process (Behlmer, "Tumult, Battle, and Blaze," 23-34); for a description of Erno Rapée's or Hugo Riesenfeld's procedure, see Anderson, 270-77; and Ben Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats: The Story of the Golden Age of the Movie Palace* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1961), 175-80.

Plate 2. A typical cue sheet available from the studio as a guide to compiling a score.

(Musical "cue-sheet")				
"ROSE OF THE WORLD"				
No.	Min.	(T)itle or (D)escription	Tempo	Selections
REEL No. 1				
1	1½	At screening	<i>2/4 Allegro</i>	Farandole — Bizet
2	1¾	T — Rosamond English	<i>4/4 Moderato</i>	¹ Rose in the Bud — Foster
3	1½	D — Harry leaves boudoir	<i>2/4 Allegro</i>	¹ Farandole — Bizet
4	1	T — For two months, no word came	<i>4/4 Allegro furioso</i>	Furioso No. 1 — Langey (Battle music)
5	1½	T — Then the survivors returned	<i>4/4 Tempo di marcia</i>	The Rookies — Druram
6	1½	D — Rosamond and Berthune	<i>3/4 Andante sostenuto</i>	¹ Romance — Mildenberg (1st part only)
7	3	T — After a time	<i>2/4 Allegretto</i>	Canzonetta — Herbert
REEL No. 2				
8	3	T — Surely you can help me?	<i>6/8 Poco piu lento</i>	En Mer — Holmes (From Letter D)
9	1½	T — Before her lay	<i>3/4 Andante sostenuto</i>	¹ Romance — Mildenberg (1st part only)
10	2½	T — Doctor finds body in queer state	<i>4/8 Lento</i>	Erotik — Grieg
11	1¾	T — So Lady G. sailed for the homeland	<i>6/8 Andantino</i>	Barcarolle — Hoffmann
12	3½	T — The first day at Saltwoods	<i>3/4 Moderato</i>	Prelude — Damrosch (From <i>Cyrano</i>)
REEL No. 3				
13	2	T — At last Rosamond sent for Major Berthune	<i>3/4 Andante Cantabile</i>	An Indian Legend — Baron
14	1½	T — It's a letter from Uncle Arthur	<i>2/4 Allegretto</i>	Air de Ballet — Borch
15	1	T — I am secretary of	<i>3/4 Andante sostenuto</i>	¹ Romance — Mildenberg
16	2	T — Then came agony	<i>2/4 Allegro</i>	¹ Farandole — Bizet
17	3	T — A little incident occurred	<i>2/2 Agitato</i>	¹ Implorations Neptune — Massenet
18	1½	T — What an inclosed note told	<i>2/4 Molto allegro</i>	Le Ville — Puccini (Battle music)
REEL No. 4				
19	2½	T — Prompt, etc.	<i>4/4 Risoluto</i>	Cry of Rachel — Salter
20	2	T — The dregs of life	<i>2/4 Allegretto</i>	Canzonetta — Godard
21	2½	D — Rosamond leaves table	<i>3/4 Allegro</i>	Appassionato — Berge
22	1	T — Have you noticed any derangement	<i>3/4 Allegretto</i>	Air de Ballet — Herbert
REEL No. 5				
23	3	T — The breaking point	<i>2/2 Agitato</i>	¹ Implorations Neptune — Massenet
24	3½	D — Jani enters with urn	<i>6/4 Allegro</i>	Flying Dutchman — Wagner (Overture — omit sailors' song)
25	1½	D — Doctor enters	<i>4/4 Andante moderato</i>	One Who Has Yearned — Tschaikowsky
26	1½	T — Wounded, Harry escaped	<i>6/8 Allegretto</i>	Love in Arcady — Wood
27	1½	T — The rainbow's end	<i>4/4 Moderato</i>	¹ Rose in the Bud — Foster
THE END				
¹ Repeated Selections				
(With kind permission of the "Famous Players-Lasky Corporation.")				

evening show would again alternate between orchestra and organ.³² Carter also notes that relatively few films were supplied with scores and in many cases, the theatre's music director would assemble his own score.³³ Dennis James adds that the orchestra in large metropolitan areas generally played only the evening performances, and sometimes only the weekend shows.³⁴

In smaller theatres and for some of the shows in even the largest theatres, the organist accompanied the film as a soloist. In these cases, even when a score or cue sheet was available, organists regularly improvised their own scores. The improvisation might be based on the organist's repertoire, in which case various excerpts would be strung together to match the broader moods of the film. In 1920, Edith Lang and George West's *Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures* recommended repertoire under the broad categories of "nature," "love themes," "light, graceful, elegiac, impressive, festive, and exotic moods," "comedy," "speed," "neutral music," "waltzes," "standard overtures," and "special characters and situations," the last of which included the subcategories "tragedy" (impending and aftermath), "death," "battle scenes," "storm scenes," "villanous [*sic*] characters," "youthful characters," and "old age." A few samples may illustrate the character of a typical pastiche score: for "nature," Lang and West recommend twenty-eight pieces, including Saint-Saëns's *The Swan*, Helm's *Sylvan Sketches*, or Friml's *Iris*, *Cherry Blossoms*, or *Woodland Echoes*; for

³²Behlmer, "Tumult, Battle, and Blaze," 33–35. It is commonly asserted that these exchanges were clumsy (see, for example, Anderson, "Presentation of Silent Films," 266 and 280, again relying on *The American Organist*), but they could also be subtle, as attested by Lee Haggart's reminiscence of the "fade-in" from orchestra to organ one Sunday evening in 1921 at Miller's California Theatre in Los Angeles (*Theatre Organ Bombarde* 9, no. 4 [August 1967]: 24). Haggart states that the exchange was "often well done" in many large theatres and then describes the subtlety with which the conductor, Carli Elinor, and the organist, Arthur Shaw, accomplished the shift on that particular evening.

³³"I'd say only one picture in ten would have a score. . . . I think that the local ego of the musical directors and/or conductors had something to do with it [creating a new score when there was an 'official' score available]. They would probably go to management and say, anything we could do would be better" (ibid., 28–29).

³⁴James, "Performing with Silent Films," 68–69.

“love themes,” sixteen pieces, including Elgar’s “Salut d’amour,” Grieg’s “I Love Thee,” and Friml’s “Mélodie”; for “impressive moods,” nine pieces, including Enesco’s Adagio, selections (unspecified) from Wagner’s *Parsifal*, and Meyerbeer’s *Torch Dance*; and for “neutral music,” nineteen pieces, including Chaminade’s *Air de ballet*, Friml’s *Chant sans paroles*, and Schubert’s *Moments musicaux*. Their “standard overtures” include Rossini’s *William Tell* and *The Italians in Algiers*, Suppé’s *Poet and Peasant*, and Weber’s *Euryanthe*, while “special characters” include Scarpia’s music from Puccini’s *Tosca* (for villainous characters), Grieg’s *Butterflies* (for youthful characters), and Hopekirk’s *Sundown* (for old age). To accompany death, the authors recommend the funeral marches of Chopin, Beethoven, or Mendelssohn, but add “(N.B.—In the presence of actual death, observe silence!).”³⁵

The more proficient organists, by contrast, would improvise scores from their own musical imagination, and treatises like that by Lang and West provided good advice on the procedure. Their book is arranged in three parts: equipment, musical interpretation, and the theatrical organ. “Equipment” refers to musical equipment, which the authors characterize as “mental alertness,” “musical resourcefulness,” and “repertoire,” while part II, on interpretation, is conveniently arranged by type of picture or scene: the feature film, flash-backs, cartoons and slapstick, comedy drama, news reels, educational films, and travel films. Part III must not have been of much use in the twenties: the theatre organ developed very rapidly during this period and Lang and West’s description is more typical of an organ of the mid-teens.

Lang and West begin by observing that the organist must be creative and quick:

His attention should be riveted on the turn of events, his emotions should promptly respond to pathos or humor, to tragedy or comedy, as they may be interwoven in the

³⁵Lang and West, 27–30. I have given the names of the compositions and composers as they appear in the book.

picture play. A keen sense of humor is a necessary requirement in his make-up. But his wit should be capable of attuning itself to various gradations, from subtle irony to broad “slap-stick” farce and horse-play.³⁶

Organists must quickly capture the mood and location of a scene without causing it to become distorted or burlesqued. They must also be able to respond to the facial expressions of the actors and underscore these with appropriate musical ideas. Finally, organists must keep in mind that they are not playing a recital but furnishing theatrical music for a theatrical production: “In the ‘movies,’ a mere finger-acrobat becomes a nuisance. On the other hand, . . . a constant ‘murmur’ of the organ is most irritating.”³⁷

These considerable requirements are best accomplished, according to Lang and West, by improvisation based on the development of themes, and they proceed to describe ways in which short thematic ideas of varying characters can be developed. The model is the development of character motives in Italian opera:

Therein the welding of action and music is so close, that they cannot be separated; the musical characterization amounts to a labelling of each singer with a pertinent phrase or motive. . . . One of the first modern examples of graphic stage music is Puccini’s opera “Tosca.” Each character is treated in a manner that reveals the essential traits of his or her nature.³⁸

Nine examples provided by Lang and West of the variation of a single theme are worth reproducing in full because they show clearly

³⁶Ibid., 3.

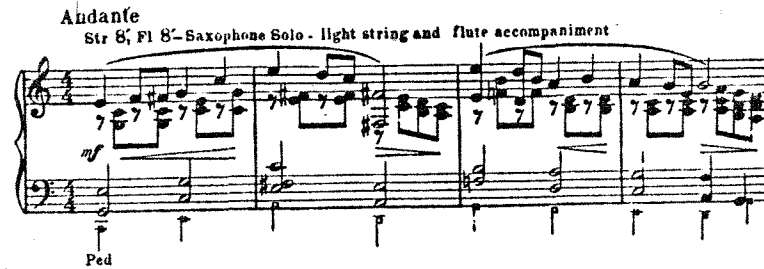
³⁷Ibid., 7.

³⁸Ibid., 6.

the techniques used by theatre organists to extend and characterize material.³⁹

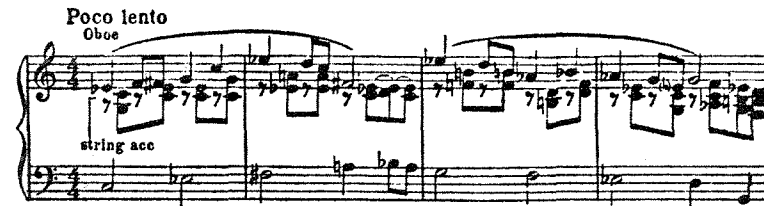
First, the heroine is represented in ordinary circumstances:

Example 1.



then emotionally distressed or sorrowful (change of modality):

Example 2.



³⁹Ibid., 8-11.

then indecisive (rhythmic variation):

Example 3.

Moderato
Light reeds - one manual

sf sf sf mf f risoluto sf

then with pleasant anticipation (metric diminution):

Example 4.

Allegretto
Flutes 8, 4'

mp mf

Harp accompaniment

then with apprehensive anticipation (rhythmic-metric and chromatic variation):

Example 5.

Agitato
Str. 8; Fl. 8, 4'; Bassoon 16' (Cboe on 16' coupler)

p misterioso

Strings

then as the subject of the hero's meditation (change of register and ornamentation):

Example 6.

Adagio molto espressivo

cresc

Ped.

The musical score for Example 6 consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked 'Adagio molto espressivo' and includes a 'cresc' (crescendo) marking. A 'Ped.' (pedal) marking is present at the beginning of the first system. The second system continues the piece with similar expressive markings.

then happy or dancing (change of meter and tempo):

Example 7.

Grazioso

Oboe, Piccolo

Strings and Flute acc.

The musical score for Example 7 features two systems of music. The first system is for Oboe and Piccolo, marked 'Grazioso'. The second system is for Strings and Flute, marked 'Strings and Flute acc.'. The score shows a change in tempo and meter, moving from a slower, more expressive style to a more lively, dancing style.

and under heightened emotion (change of meter, tempo, and dynamics):

Example 8.

Maestoso
Pull Organ

s *ff cresc.*

The score for Example 8 is written for a grand staff in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Maestoso' and the registration is 'Pull Organ'. The piece begins with a piano (*s*) dynamic. The right hand features a series of chords and dyads, while the left hand plays a steady bass line. A crescendo (*ff cresc.*) is indicated over the final measures.

Example 9.

Largo, ma non troppo
Strings 16', 8', 4', 2' - both hands on the same manual

s

The score for Example 9 is written for a grand staff in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Largo, ma non troppo'. The registration is 'Strings 16', 8', 4', 2' - both hands on the same manual'. The piece begins with a piano (*s*) dynamic. The right hand features a series of chords and dyads, while the left hand plays a steady bass line. A crescendo (*ff cresc.*) is indicated over the final measures.

Themes should be distinguished not only by their melodic and rhythmic character but also by their registration and tonality. As they are interwoven, the entire composition should modulate

frequently (eight pages are devoted to this subject, with extensive examples) to provide further tonal variety.⁴⁰

After these basics have been mastered, the aspiring theatre organist is advised to “awaken a tendency for improvisation” by putting together and developing small melodic and rhythmic motives and by learning to harmonize the line, first in a simple manner and then with greater complexity. The harmonization should avoid a “text-book” sound (example 10)

Example 10.



in favor of a more colorful treatment (example 11) in which “an expressive melody [is] unencumbered by middle voices, and simply seconded by chords that form a proper harmonic sequence, broken up, or figured, in an appropriate manner.”

⁴⁰Ibid., 14–21.

Example 11.

Once again, it is stressed that improvisation is not “more or less dexterous finger play,” but rather the expressive interpretation of musical material.⁴¹

The techniques described by Lang and West are confirmed by Gaylord Carter in his interview with Rudy Behlmer: “I can write out a four-bar theme and do that with variations for an hour without referring to any notes. . . . Endless variations. Upside down, inside out, backwards, slow, fast. . . .”⁴² George Tootell’s *How to Play the Cinema Organ*⁴³ provides similar advice but in less technical terms, and comparable accounts appear in the reminiscences of other theatre organists.

⁴¹Ibid., 26.

⁴²Behlmer, “Tumult, Battle, and Blaze,” 56–57.

⁴³(London: Paxton, 1927); partially reprinted in *Theatre Organ Bombarde* 9, no. 2 (April 1967): 8; 9, no. 3 (June 1967): 8–10, 14; 9, no. 4 (August 1967): 22; 9, no. 5 (October 1967): 18, 32, 42–45. Tootell’s frame of reference is the English theatre organ school, and his work is not as technical or sophisticated as the treatise by Lang and West.

It becomes clear from the treatises of the period, reminiscences by figures like Gaylord Carter, and an analysis of actual accompaniments that there are two principal types of basic themes useful for silent film accompaniment. The first type includes those with short, clear, and distinctive melodic contours. These will generally be based on a diatonic scale fragment or a set of intervals articulated by a clear rhythm. Variations will fill out the contour with chromatic ornamentation, sequence the material, transpose it from one level to another, and modify the modality. Themes of this sort are easy for an audience to remember and associate with a particular character or image. They lend themselves to improvised variation because they are neither too long and complex nor fully developed. The second type includes those that are essentially based on a short harmonic chain. While these can be associated with characters or images, they are most effective in conveying moods that shift according to the alteration of individual chords within the chain.

Lang and West are not specific about the way in which theatre organists should prepare their accompaniments, no doubt because this varied from theatre to theatre and from film to film. Dennis James, however, provides a useful summary of his own methods in preparing accompaniments for *Broken Blossoms*, *Robin Hood*, *Don Juan*, and *Orphans of the Storm*.⁴⁴

From my own experience accompanying silent films as diverse as *Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Tarzan*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*,⁴⁵ I would add that I preferred to preview the film once (during which time various musical ideas would—generally, but not always—come to my mind), work out my themes on the organ for a couple of hours, and then run through the film with my accompaniment, which would enable me to get a sense of timings and transitions and to make mental

⁴⁴James, "Performing with Silent Films," 65–78. Although not a contemporary of the silent films, his procedures for developing accompaniments are similar to those described by Lang and West.

⁴⁵For the Portland (Oregon) Silent Film Series and the Willamette University Film Series. Prior to encountering Lang and West, I, like James, discovered the same techniques by experience.

notes about important visual cues. All this could be done in one afternoon and evening before the film's performance the following evening. Nevertheless, it was not always possible to preview a film, and in those cases I had to rely on a certain knowledge of typical silent film conventions.

Conclusion

Silent film is a misnomer. The films of the mid-to-late teens and the twenties were a special performance medium that joined moving visual images, music, and an architectural setting to create a unique composite art. Much of the study of early film to the present has concentrated on only one of the three components, but study of the film or the score or the theatre as separate components cannot illuminate the special qualities of this art. Now, studies are needed that examine particular films (or groups of films) in the context of their performance history—studies of the sort that have been undertaken with considerable success in the history of opera.⁴⁶ Some of the questions that need to be asked are these: in which theatres were the films originally released and in what versions, what accompaniments were used and who were the performers, how did the accompaniments that were actually performed relate to the structure of the film and the building in which the film was being shown, how long did the film run and what changes occurred in the course of the run, how were they received? When we broaden our view, we will have taken the first steps towards rediscovering the enormous power exerted by early film.

⁴⁶For example, the recent dissertation by Rebecca S. Wilberg, "The Salle Le Peletier and the *Grands opéras* of Giacomo Meyerbeer" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1990).

Bibliography and Sources

This is not intended in any sense to be a comprehensive bibliography for the study of early film. Particularly in the case of printed materials, it is intended merely as a starting point.

In addition to printed materials, a considerable number of excellent reconstructions of silent films are now available with musical accompaniment. A few of these accompaniments are recordings of the film's original score, many of them have highly effective new orchestral scores composed in the style of the time by Carl Davis, and a large portion of them feature theatre organ accompaniments played on Wurlitzers (or comparable organs) by Gaylord Carter or John Muri. While they are not a substitute for an actual performance of a silent film in a theatre, they do provide a basis for analyzing accompanimental techniques, for use in teaching, and—in the case of the accompaniments by Carter—an important documentary record of authentic performance practice. There are also a few documentary videotapes preserving performances of other important early theatre organists such as Jesse Crawford, Ann Leaf, Dick Leibert, and Don Baker; showing the early theatres; and presenting interviews.⁴⁷ Together with important printed sources noted throughout this article, these form a tremendous resource awaiting systematic study.

Printed material

In addition to the following items, attention should be drawn to complete runs of *Tibia* and, later, *Theatre Organ*, the journal of the American Association of Theatre Organ Enthusiasts (later American Theatre Organ Society); and *Bombarde*, the journal of the American Association of Theatre Organists. *Theatre Organ* and *Bombarde* merged to become *Theatre Organ Bombarde* for a while.

⁴⁷There are, in addition, a number of videotapes of silent films of much lower quality with truly dreadful accompaniments played on modern electronic instruments. I will pass over these in silence. The videotapes I recommend on grounds of quality and stylistic accompaniment are included in the bibliography.

Unfortunately, early issues of these journals (which began in 1955) are exceedingly rare, but they contain a wealth of important material for any study of silent film music. *The American Organist* also published regular features on the accompaniment of silent films during the 1920s.

Anderson, Gillian. *Music for Silent Films 1894–1929: A Guide*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1988.

A very useful guide, but principally to the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Library of Congress, with appendices covering the Arthur Kleiner Collection at the University of Minnesota, the Department of Film at the George Eastman House, the Music Division of the New York Public Library, and the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film in Brussels. See also Krummel *infra*.

_____. "The Presentation of Silent Films, or, Music as Anaesthesia." *The Journal of Musicology* 5 (1987): 257–95.

Both of these items also contain useful additional references within the footnotes.

Behlmer, Rudy. "'Tumult, Battle, and Blaze': Looking Back on the 1920s—and Since—with Gaylord Carter, the Dean of Theater Organists." In *Film Music I*, 19–59, ed. Clifford McCarty. New York: Garland Publishing, 1989.

Bickel, Vernon P. "The ATOS Archives/Library." *Theatre Organ*, July/August 1984, 27–30.

A description of the ATOS's attempt to collect in one central repository materials pertinent to the study of the theatre organ.

Courtney, Jack. *Theatre Organ World*. London: Theatre Organ World Publications, 1946.

Everson, William K. *American Silent Film*. A History of the American Film, no. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

A very strong scholarly introduction to early film. An excellent appendix, "The State of Film Scholarship in America," provides a candid view of the field and annotated references to important sources for the study of early film.

Franklin, Joe. *Classics of the Silent Screen*. New York: Citadel Press, 1959.

While essentially intended for the general reader, Franklin's comments are incisive. He provides a useful synopsis of fifty important silent films and brief biographical sketches of seventy-five stars.

Hall, Ben M. *The Best Remaining Seats: The Story of the Golden Age of the Movie Palace*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1961.

Once again, essentially intended for the general reader, but Hall's book is very well done overall and lavishly illustrated. See especially pp. 174–99 on music in the theatres.

Hofmann, Charles. *Sounds for Silents*. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1970.

Hofmann was accompanist at the Museum of Modern Art, and the book includes a recording of his performances. An important early study, but narrowly focused.

James, Dennis. "Performing with Silent Films." In *Film Music I*, 61–79, ed. Clifford McCarty. New York: Garland Publishing, 1989.

Krummel, Donald W., Jean Geil, Doris J. Dyden, and Deane L. Root. *Resources of American Musical History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

The index directs the reader to numerous library collections holding silent film cue sheets, piano-conductor scores, unpublished material, etc. An important tool in addition to the catalogue by Anderson.

Landon, John W. *Behold the Mighty Wurlitzer: The History of the Theatre Pipe Organ*. Contributions to the Study of Popular Culture, no. 6. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983.

A good beginning study but not, as its title states, **the** history of the theatre pipe organ. It contains a general introduction, brief surveys of the principal builders, and an overview of activity on the part of theatre organ enthusiasts in the period after World War II. Of particular value are the capsule biographies of theatre organists (appendix 1) and the "notes on sources" (pp. 197–206).

_____. *Jesse Crawford, The Poet of the Organ: Wizard of the Mighty Wurlitzer*. Vestal, N.Y.: Vestal Press, 1974.

Lang, Edith, and George West. *Musical Accompaniment of Motion Pictures: A Practical Manual for Pianists and Organists and an Exposition of the Principles Underlying the Accompaniment of Motion Pictures*. Boston: The Boston Music Company, 1920; reprint, in the series *The Literature of Cinema*, New York: Arno Press, 1970.

The most important treatise on the technique of improvising accompaniments to silent films.

Naylor, David. *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981.

Extensively illustrated, and with intelligent comment on the architectural structure of the larger theatres. It includes pictures and comment on many theatres now demolished.

Pildas, Ave. *Movie Palaces*. Foreword by King Vidor. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1980.

Light on commentary, but many pictures not included in Naylor.

Prendergast, Roy M. *Film Music: A Neglected Art*. New York: Norton, 1977.

A useful introduction to the larger field. Only chapter 1 (pp. 3–18) pertains to silent film.

Rapée, Erno. *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures*. New York: Belwin, 1925; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1970.

. *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists: A Rapid Reference Collection of Selected Pieces*. New York: Schirmer, 1924; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974.

Rapée, one of the best-known score compilers of the time and a favorite of the impresario S. L. Rothafel, assembled these collections of excerpts to assist musicians in creating pastiche scores. In the margins alongside each piece in *Motion Picture Moods* is a set of fifty-three moods or types (ranging

from “battle” to “impatience” to “western”) with page references to enable the user to turn quickly to the next effect.

Tootell, George. *How to Play the Cinema Organ: A Practical Book by a Practical Player*. London: Paxton, 1927.

Partially reprinted in *Theatre Organ Bombarde* 9, no. 2 (April 1967): 8; 9, no. 3 (June 1967): 8–10, 14; 9, no. 4 (August 1967): 22; 9, no. 5 (October 1967): 18, 32, 42–45. Tootell’s frame of reference is the English theatre organ school; his work is not as technical or sophisticated as the treatise by Lang and West (q.v.).

Videotapes

Silent Films with Orchestral Accompaniment⁴⁸

The Outlaw and His Wife (1917) [Kino Video, Collector’s Edition]
 Directed by Victor Sjöström
 Featuring Victor Sjöström, Edith Erastoff, John Ekman, and Nils Arehn

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919) [Kino Video, Collector’s Edition]
 Directed by Robert Wiene
 Featuring Werner Krauss, Conrad Veidt, and Lil Dagover

Broken Blossoms (1919) [Thames Video]
 Directed by D. W. Griffith
 Featuring Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess, and Donald Crisp

This version includes a re-recording of the original score.

⁴⁸Accompaniments composed by Carl Davis or others in the style of surviving orchestral accompaniments from the period. These are available from Movies Unlimited, 6736 Castor Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19149. Kino Videos are also available directly from the company: 333 West 39th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018.

Greed (1923–24) [MGM/UA VHS M301360]

Directed By Erich von Stroheim

Featuring Gibson Gowland, Zasu Pitts, and Jean Hersholt

Our Hospitality (1924) [Thames Video]

Directed by Buster Keaton

Featuring Buster Keaton and Natalie Talmadge

The Thief of Bagdad (1924) [Thames Video]

Featuring Douglas Fairbanks

The Eagle (1925) [Thames Video]

Directed by Clarence Brown

Featuring Rudolph Valentino and Vilma Banky

Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ (1927) [MGM/UA VHS M301474]

Directed by Fred Niblo

Featuring Ramon Navarro, Betty Bronson, May McAvoy,
Francis X. Bushman, and Carmel Myers

The Big Parade (1927) [MGM/UA VHS M301356]

Directed by King Vidor

Featuring John Gilbert and Renée Adorée

Flesh and the Devil (1927) [MGM/UA VHS M301358]

Directed by Clarence Brown

Featuring John Gilbert, Greta Garbo, and Lars Hanson

The General (1927) [Thames Video]

Directed by Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman

Featuring Buster Keaton and Marion Mack

Metropolis (1927) [Kino Video, Collector's Edition]

Directed by Fritz Lang

Featuring Brigitte Helm, Alfred Abel, and Gustav Froehlich

The Strong Man (1927) [Thames Video]

Directed by Frank Capra

Featuring Harry Langdon and Priscilla Bonner

The Crowd (1928) [MGM/UA VHS M301357]

Directed by King Vidor

Featuring James Murray, Eleanor Boardman, and Bert Roach

Queen Kelly (1928) [Kino Video, Collector's Edition]

Directed by Erich von Stroheim

Featuring Gloria Swanson, Seena Owen, Walter Byron, and Tully Marshall

Sadie Thompson (1928) [Kino Video, Collector's Edition]

Directed by Raoul Walsh

Featuring Gloria Swanson and Lionel Barrymore

Show People (1928) [MGM/UA VHS M301539]

Directed by King Vidor

Featuring Marion Davies and William Haines

This particular film includes a scene in which musicians can be seen playing on the set in order to put the actors in the proper mood for their scene.

The Wind (1928) [MGM/UA VHS M301359]

Directed by Victor Seastrom

Featuring Lillian Gish and Lars Hanson

Silent Films with Wurlitzer Accompaniment⁴⁹

Spiders (1919) [Kino Video, Collector's Edition]

Directed by Fritz Lang

Featuring Carle Vogy, Ressel Orla, and Lil Dagover

Oliver Twist (1922) [Blackhawk Video]

Featuring Lon Chaney, Jackie Coogan, George Siegmann, and Gladys Brockwell

The Ten Commandments (1923) [Paramount Home Video VHS 2506]

Directed by Cecil B. DeMille

Featuring Richard Dix, Leatrice Joy, Rod la Rocque, and others

The Phantom of the Opera (1925) [Kino Video, Collector's Edition]

Directed by Rupert Julian

Featuring Lon Chaney, Mary Philbin, and Norman Kerry

This is the 1929 reissue of the film, the one generally known. A video of the original version, which differs in many interesting respects from the 1929 reissue, exists on Kartes Video, Video Classics.

The General (1927) [Kino Video, Collector's Edition]

Directed by Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman

Featuring Buster Keaton and Marion Mack

⁴⁹Accompaniments performed by Gaylord Carter, formerly organist of Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles and the Hollywood Egyptian and Paramount Theatres, or John Muri. With the exception of the Blackhawk Films, these are available from Movies Unlimited, 6736 Castor Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19149. Kino Videos are also available directly from the company: 333 West 39th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018.

Running Wild (1927) [Paramount Home Video VHS 2744]

Directed by W. C. Fields

Featuring W. C. Fields

Wings (1927) [Paramount Home Video VHS 2851]

Directed by William Wellman

Featuring Charles "Buddy" Rogers, Richard Arlen, and Clara Bow (cameo by Gary Cooper)

The Docks of New York (1928) [Paramount Home Video VHS 2807]

Directed by Josef von Sternberg

Featuring George Bancroft, Betty Compson, and Baclanova

The Last Command (1928) [Paramount Home Video VHS 2785]

Directed by Josef von Sternberg

Featuring Emil Jannings

Old Ironsides (1928) [Paramount Home Video VHS 2786]

Directed by James Cruze

Featuring Wallace Beery, Boris Karloff, and Charles Farrell

Steamboat Bill, Jr. (1928) [Blackhawk Films]

Directed by Buster Keaton

Featuring Buster Keaton

The Wedding March (1928) [Paramount Home Video VHS 39501]

Directed by Erich von Stroheim

Featuring Erich von Stroheim, Fay Wray, and Zasu Pitts

Mathiesen, *Silent Film Music and the Theatre Organ*

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Documentary Videos Featuring the Theatre Organ

Legendary Theatre Organists: Vintage Films of Solo Presentations, Pictorials and Sing-Alongs [Film Technology VHS FTC 2032]

Hosted by Gaylord Carter

Featuring Jesse Crawford, Ann Leaf, Dick Leibert, Lew White, Reginald Foorte, and Don Baker

The Movie Palaces [Smithsonian Institution VHS]

Hosted by Gene Kelly; segment featuring Gaylord Carter