

### JOHN CATHERWOOD RESPONSIBLE FOR STATE BARTON

John Catherwood, the man who was primarily responsible for the rebirth of the Kalamazoo State Theatre Barton organ, has been a theatre and theatre organ nut since his teen years. "I was born and raised in Detroit and did my share of theatre organ 'snooping' during my teens at the Fox, Michigan, United Artists, Fisher and Hollywood Theatres, plus several neighborhood houses," he recalled. "My love of theatres and their wonderful organs continued to grow and I was naturally anxious to meet and hear the organist at the State Theatre in Kalamazoo when I returned to that city for my sophomore year at Kalamazoo College. That was the fall of 1950.

It was my good fortune to meet Bud Taylor. At that time Butterfield Theatres had just started using some of their organs again and had a very strict policy that no one was so much as touch the instruments except the house organist. I

Below is a full view of the stage and proscenium walls, from the upper balcony. Striking realism of the outdoor effects is gained by the outline and decorative detail



Stepping into the auditorium proper with its 1814 seats, your senses are assuaged by the full magnificence of the Ebersson design. The illusion is of a Spanish courtyard with trees and vines skirting the tops of the building surrounding you.

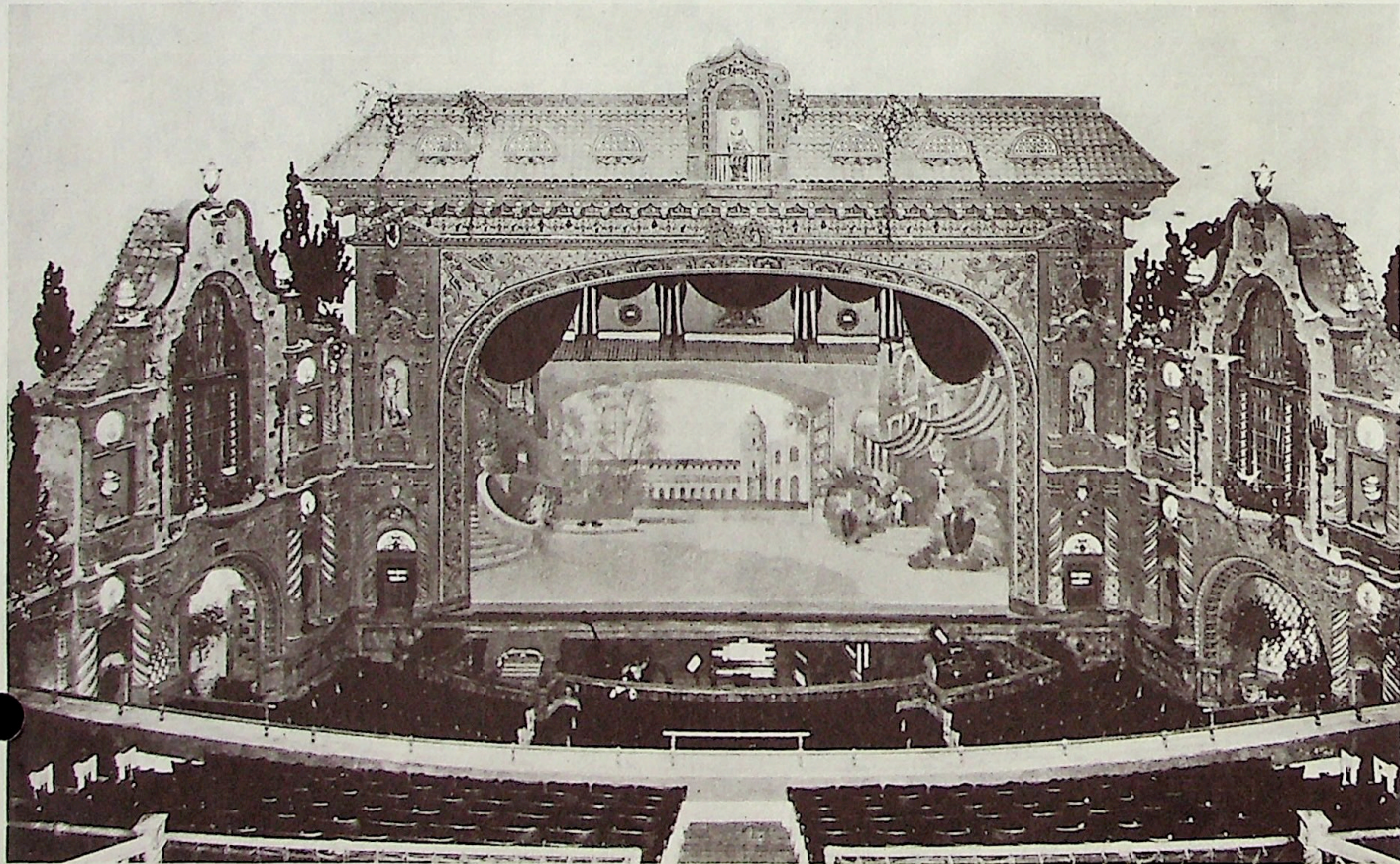
You find more to the State Theatre than its lobby and auditorium. There is also a two-story office structure facing Burdick Street, and commercial space on the ground level of both Burdick and Lovell Streets. The exterior of the building is constructed in buff tapestry brick, with ornate terra-cotta trimmings. Ornamental trim is featured along the cornice of the structure; especially noticeable is the arch above the box-office area. An after dark eye-catcher is the large vertical sign at the corner which brightly spells out in incandescent bulbs, S-T-A-T-E.

rarely missed a Saturday morning practice session with Bud and occasionally had a chance to try my hand when the manager was out of town. Bud and I became good friends and we have kept in close touch ever since then.

I remained in the Kalamazoo area and quite naturally was interested in the State Barton. Permission to rebuild the organ was obtained from W. S. Butterfield Theatres in February 1961. For restroing the organ, permission was granted for unlimited use of the instrument.

"Immediately the job of cleaning and rehabilitating the organ was started. Mag-

(Continued on Page Nineteen)



CATHERWOOD RESPONSIBLE FOR STATE BARTON —continued from page 18  
net caps were cleaned and armatures replaced. Chests and pipework were given a thorough going over, and all wind line leaks were repaired."

Catherwood was joined in his rehabilitation of the State Barton by William Mollema. In March 1964 the two began rebuilding the console. Stop rails were enlarged and Mollema designed and the two men fabricated new combination action and setter board for planned expansion. "Butterfield Theatres had 'given' us the 3/10 Barton at Kalamazoo's Captiol Theatre. It's console had been badly vandalized," Catherwood noted.

This organ was added to the State instrument by placing it in a basement chamber under the front of the stage. However, it did not work out well and the two men finally abandoned that project in 1967, after much trial and error. Both instruments were rather limited in unification, and both had six-rank straight chests in the Solo chamber plus unit Tibias. All chests in the Main chambers were unit.

The State Barton originally had five pistons on the Accompaniment and Great manuals and three on the Solo. Mollema enlarged to ten pistons on all manuals plus separate trem, percussion and trap cancels. He added Sub and Super Couplers to the Solo, and added five independent pedal pistons. After this job was done the console was re-finished.

The organ was completed enough to be heard and the two men alternated on weekends from September 1968 to May 1972 playing the seven and nine o'clock intermissions.

All the original lether is still in the organ and it is virtually like new. A new Trivo Post Horn was added in May, 1978, and in July of the same year the original Dennison Vox was replaced with a Robert-Morton Solo Vox Humana. Then, in September the Tibia chest was moved to a more prominent position in back of swell shades. Next the duo located and installed a capped 4' octave of Tibia to replace the original open flues. They also replaced the "missing" 16' octave with a Barton Solo Tibia set; the original Tibia was completely missing when the men started work on the organ in 1961. At that time Butterfield officials let them use the Capitol Tibia which went only through 8'.

A Moller Tuba octave was added to the Main in March 1975. The organ has had very limited use in the past few years except for the annual Vaudeville shows which started in 1977 for the State's 50th anniversary celebration. Organist Ron Rhode played a concert in September 1978 and Dennis James presented both a concert and film in November 1979. Catherwood played a Halloween show October 1980.

The two men continue to maintain the instrument as time allows. Catherwood lives 70 miles from Kalamazoo and Mollema is a sales and service representative for the Wicks Organ Company.

### BUD TAYLOR STILL ALIVE AND WELL IN CARMICHAEL, CAL.

Contrary to rumors that he died last July, Bud Taylor, one of theatre organ's excellent organists up until his forced health retirement several years back, is very much alive and keeping an interest in theatre organ activities in Carmichael, Calif.



January 1981

where he lives in retirement. He frequently visits pizza/organ spots and has maintained extensive correspondence with organists and organ buffs throughout the nation. He was one of the organists who had lengthy engagements at the Kalamazoo State featured in this issue.



A BETTER BARTON—Barton organ advertisements trumpeted this make instrument as being "silver throated," but many of the organs were somewhat raucous. There were, of course, exceptions, and the Kalamazoo State Barton must have been one of those, to a degree, because the organ in its later years became a charmer. Under the restorative hands of John Catherwood and Bill Mollema it truly could claim to be "silver throated!" The two men made additions and changes, having the exceptional good fortune to be able to select pipework from other organs in the Butterfield chain. Their labor was rewarding in that they fashioned an excellent sounding organ. It is one that former State Theatre Organist Bud Taylor describes in glowing praise as being as good or better than a Wurlitzer of the same size! — photo by Brother Andrew Corsini

## ORGANIZED ADS

**FOR SALE**—WANGERIN 2/4 Theatre organ, oak console, less chests, pipes and percussions. Buyer to remove March 1st. \$300. Hammond RT-3 with JR 20, \$2,000. **SIX RANK PORTABLE Theatre Pipe Organ** with all new action, swell box and your stop list, \$9,000. Chris Feiereisen, 1801 Johnston Drive, Manitowoc, Wisc. 54220, or call (414) 682-9538 before 8am CST.

**WURLITZER THEATRE ORGAN**—3M/22R Paramount Publix Goldie Moderne Console. Now playing, \$38,000.00. Knabe Ampico grand piano wired to play from console, optional. Send \$1.00 for Specs and Photo. G. Merriken, 2141 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Springs, Maryland 20904.

**BEST OFFER** gets this 2/6 Barton with single phase blower and more. For further information contact: Ron Wilfong, 3005 Pioneer, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73107, or call (405) 943-1980.

**WANTED**—Back issues of THE CONSOLE, May, 1965; December, 1970; May, 1980; Oct., 1980. Robert Ayres, 520 Ben Vista Drive, Salem, Ore. 97302.

ORGANIZED ADS BRING RESULTS

## CONTRIBUTOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributions made to The Console by readers adds to the interest of the publication, and many times these items are found only locally so that if they had not been sent the news would have been "lost!" The staff is indebted to the following readers for their contributions: Harold J. Brown, Joliet, Illinois; John Schellkopf, Beverly Hills, Calif; George Lufkin, Shelton, Washington; Gilbert C. Petzke, Evanston, Illinois; Irv Eiler, Los Angeles, Calif; Jack Reynolds, Los Angeles, Calif; William T. Benedict, Chicago, Illinois; Don Wick, Loveland, Colorado; Ray E. Wilson, Auburn, Calif; G. E. Marshall, Hunters Hill, N. S. W., Australia; Miles J. Rudasill, Jr., Richmond, Va; Rodger L. Reiner, Freeport, N. Y; The Windsheet, Nor-Cal Chapter Newsletter, Palo Alto, Calif; The Post Horn, Bluegrass Chapter, Lexington, Ky; The Organ Spiel, Sierra Chapter, Sacramento, Calif.

The Console is also indebted to Mrs. Juanita Hilsenbeck and Biff Buttler of New York, who telephoned the information about the death of Peter Schaeble, and also to Jeff Barker, another friend of Peter Schaeble, who called from Manchester, England to relate the same tragic news.

### NORTH TEXAS CHAPTER GETS INTO SILENT MOVIE SHOWS

North Texas (Dallas) Chapter ATOS will present its first silent film show featuring Charles Evans, Dallas organist, at the console of the Style 260 Wurlitzer pipe organ in John Beck Hall on Friday evening, January 30th. The film will be "Broken Blossoms," starring Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmes. Showtime is announced for 8pm, and the evening's admission is announced at 50 cents (old time show prices).

John Beck hall is the organ studio the late John Beck added to his residence. His will left the home to friends who created the hall in his memory.



# The State Theatre

Written by Jerry Alexander

In these 1970's, the American Public has turned its mind back to previous eras of American life, in what future historians may call "The Great Nostalgia Explosion." One of the eras we look back upon is the "Roaring Twenties," the decade bracketed by World War One and the Great Depression: those hectic and carefree days of Prohibition, flappers, Babe Ruth, jazz, the Teapot Dome Scandal and seemingly unlimited financial expansion.

Americans of the twenties wanted escape, and one of the routes taken was the movies. The film industry, having a keen feel for the tastes of the time, exhibited films in structures of eye-boggling opulence and luxury - the "Movie-Palaces." By attending these theatres, the public could visit places their pocketbooks couldn't afford: the palaces of European royalty, the courtyards of Spain and Italy, the exotic Orient and even Paradise.

This phenomenon did not bypass Kalamazoo. The State Theatre, at Burdick and Lovell Streets, was built during this era, and remains a major film house in Kalamazoo. Anyone entering senses this theatre is different. The State Theatre is a true movie "palace".

The State opened its doors July 14, 1927, and remains a prime example of the "atmospheric" school of movie-palace design, created by architect John Ebersson.

Ebersson was born in Austria and, after receiving training in architecture and engineering, immigrated to this country in 1901. He soon opened his architectural office and began designing smaller theatres throughout the Midwest. By the early Twenties, Ebersson had graduated to designing larger vaudeville and movie houses.

In January, 1923, he struck architectural gold with the opening of the world's first atmospheric theatre, the Majestic in Houston. Ebersson had felt movie-palaces were becoming static in design, and conceived the idea of atmospheric theatres in order to use the inner courtyards of the Romantic architectural periods and the colors of the Mediterranean.

The audience sat in a simulated garden or courtyard canopied by a plain, dark blue ceiling with twinkling electric stars and moving clouds projected across the sky. The side walls were designed as building facades and garden walls. The windows of these buildings were lit from inside, with artificial trees and vines adorning the walls.

For the remainder of the movie-palace era, Ebersson designed atmospheric houses exclusively. His designs were often imitated, but only in a few cases were they equaled or surpassed.

Some of the other Ebersson atmospheric houses near Kalamazoo included the Capital in Flint; the Grand Opera and the Riveria Annex in Detroit; and the Capitol, Avalon and Paradise in Chicago. Another Ebersson atmospheric design was the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago. The architect died in 1954, after designing over 300 theatres.

Ground was broken for the W.S. Butterfield chain's State Theatre in October, 1926. Nine months and \$350,000 later, the Spanish-motif structure was opened with a combination vaudeville and film policy featuring three acts from the Keith Circuit and first-run films. The orchestral accompaniment for the vaudeville turns was provided by Don Warren and Orchestra. The organist accompanied the film and provided intermission interludes. The last regular run of vaudeville was early in 1931. However, a staff organist continued until 1937.

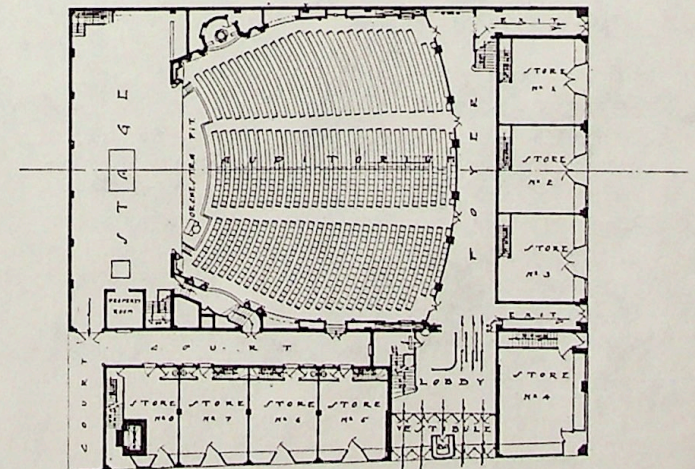
Beginning in 1934 with the touring company of "The Green Pastures," the State also presented many legitimate attractions. Included were: "You Can't Take It With You;" "White Oaks" with Ethel Barrymore; Clifton Webb as "The Man Who Came To Dinner;" "Hellzapoppin'"; "Life With Father;" "The Corn Is Green" with Ethel Barrymore; "Watch On The Rhine" with Paul Lucas; and "Harvey" starring James Dunne and, in supporting roles of the 1950 production, Jean Stapleton and Ernest Borgnine.

During the 40's, many of the Big Bands appeared, including: Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong along with Jack Teagarden and "Fatha" Hines, Tiny Hill, Russ Morgan, Ted Weems (with vocalist Perry Como), "Scat" Davis, and Lawrence Welk.

Many other nationally known personalities have appeared: Victor Borge, Blackstone the Magician, George Goebel (as a member of the WLS Barn Dance Troupe), Joe Howard and His "Gay 90's Revue," and, in vaudeville days, such acts as Edgar Bergan and Company, "Howard, Fine & Howard" (later known as The Three Stooges), and Nick Lucas.

The State still houses its Barton theatre-organ, also excellently maintained. The organ was used regularly from opening until 1937. In those years the staff organists were Edith Ehrens, Clarence Leverenz, and Bud Taylor.

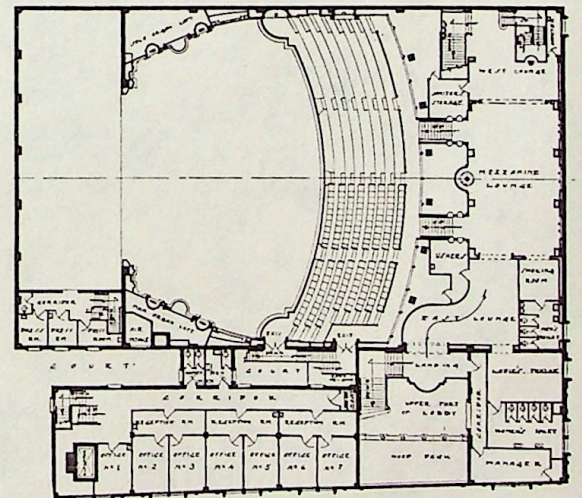
The organ was silent from 1937 to 1950 when Bud Taylor returned to Kalamazoo and played during intermissions until the Spring of 1951.





*Exterior view of the State Theatre operated by the W. S. Butterfield Circuit, shown above. The building provides store and office space. The outside lines follow the Italian style of architecture featured in a play-house which reproduces a garden scene as an auditorium setting.*

BUTTERFIELD THEATRE  
IN KALAMAZOO  
DESIGNED BY EBERSON



*The inner lobby of the State Theatre, Kalamazoo, showing stairway to mezzanine. Ceramic tile is used in stairs and floor.*



Then, the organ again fell silent and deteriorated for 10 years until John Catherwood and William Mollema volunteered to rehabilitate the instrument in 1961. By the late 60's, the pair had the organ in working condition, and they alternated at the console on Saturday nights.

The last live entertainment presented at the State was in November, 1971. At that time, St. Louis' Fox Theatre organist, Stan Kann, accompanied the Lon Chaney classic "The Phantom of the Opera." Since then, the Barton has not been heard publically.

Structurally, the theatre remained unchanged until 1964 when the vertical sign rusted out and came down. A tasteful remodeling of the theatre began.

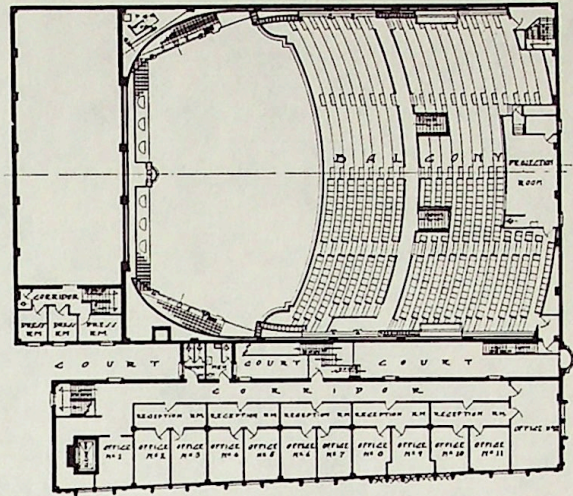
The exterior lost its ornamental cornice, the first story received a new facade, and a new combination marquee-vertical sign was erected above the box-office.

The lobby and mezzanine received the brunt of the face lift. The ornamental lighting was removed; the pottery, the furniture, the painting reproduction were stored away. The Mediterranean color scheme disappeared under a new coat of paint.

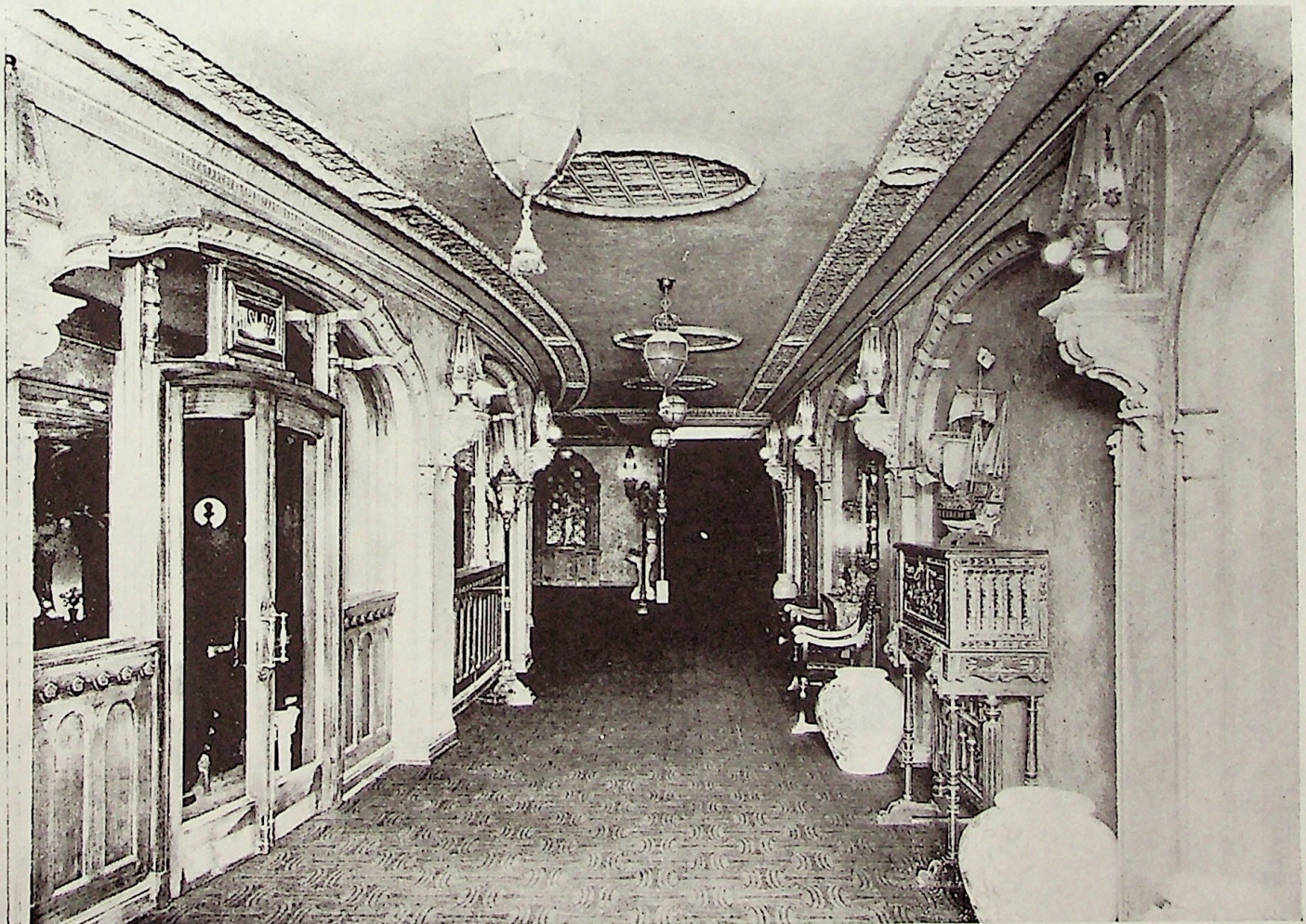
The most drastic alteration was the area immediately above the entrance doors. A peppermint-stripe awning replaced the full-width balcony which had held statues, pottery and artificial cypress trees.

The auditorium remained virtually untouched. The few removals included trees and vines, the birds suspended from the ceiling, and some of the statuary from the side walls. New seating was installed, reducing

Photos on these pages, from The Console Collection, originally were published in an issue of Motion Picture News, during 1927.

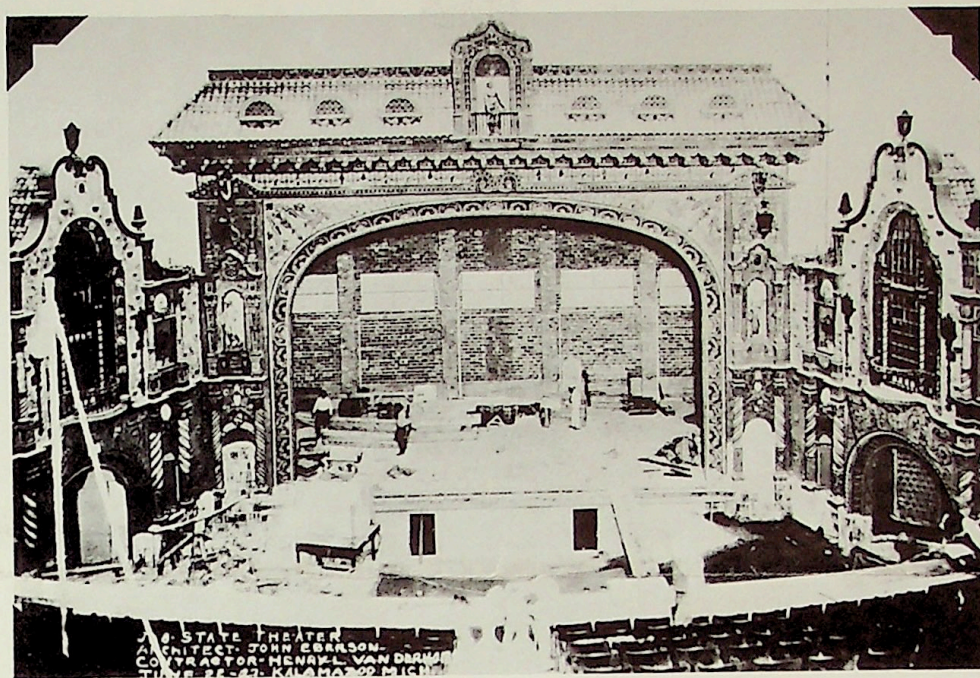


Below, the main floor foyer, showing enclosure at rear of auditorium seats. Furnishings and decorative pieces contribute to the air of comfort and warmth of this foyer.



# Kalamazoo's Spanish

# The State Theatre



Written by Jerry Alexander

**I**n these 1970's, the American Public has turned its mind back to previous eras of American life, in what future historians may call "The Great Nostalgia Explosion." One of the eras we look back upon is the "Roaring Twenties," the decade bracketed by World War One and the Great Depression: those hectic and carefree days of Prohibition, flappers, Babe Ruth, jazz, the Teapot Dome Scandal and seemingly unlimited financial expansion.

Americans of the twenties wanted escape, and one of the routes taken was the movies. The film industry, having a keen feel for the tastes of the time, exhibited films in structures of eye-boggling opulence and luxury - the "Movie-Palaces." By attending these theatres, the public could visit places their pocketbooks couldn't afford: the palaces of European royalty, the courtyards of Spain and Italy, the exotic Orient and even Paradise.

This phenomenon did not bypass Kalamazoo. The State Theatre, at Burdick and Lovell Streets, was built during this era, and remains a major film house in Kalamazoo. Anyone entering senses this theatre is different. The State Theatre is a true movie "palace".

The State opened its doors July 14, 1927, and remains a prime example of the "atmospheric" school of movie-palace design, created by architect John Eberson.

Eberson was born in Austria and, after receiving training in architecture and engineering, immigrated to this country in 1901. He soon opened his architectural office and began designing smaller theatres throughout the Midwest. By the early Twenties, Eberson had graduated to designing larger vaudeville and movie houses.

In January, 1923, he struck architectural gold with the opening of the world's first atmospheric theatre, the Majestic in Houston. Eberson had felt movie-palaces

were becoming static in design, and conceived the idea of atmospheric theatres in order to use the inner courtyards of the Romantic architectural periods and the colors of the Mediterranean.

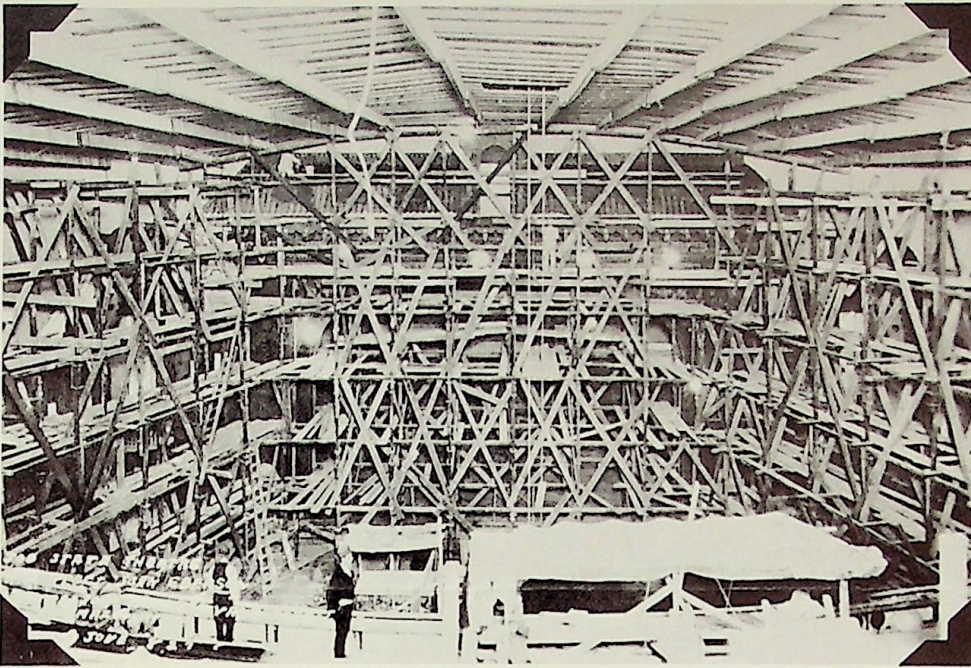
The audience sat in a simulated garden or courtyard canopied by a plain, dark blue ceiling with twinkling electric stars and moving clouds projected across the sky. The side walls were designed as building facades and garden walls. The windows of these buildings were lit from inside, with artificial trees and vines adorning the walls.

For the remainder of the movie-palace era, Eberson designed atmospheric houses exclusively. His designs were often imitated, but only in a few cases were they equaled or surpassed.

Some of the other Eberson atmospheric houses near Kalamazoo included the Capital in Flint; the Grand Riviera and the Riviera Annex in Detroit; and the Capitol, Avalon and Paradise in Chicago. Another Eberson atmospheric design was the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago. The architect died in 1954, after designing over 300 theatres.

Ground was broken for the W.S. Butterfield chain's State Theatre in October, 1926. Nine months and \$350,000 later, the Spanish-motif structure was opened with a combination vaudeville and film policy featuring three acts from the Keith Circuit and first-run films. The orchestral accompaniment for the vaudeville turns was provided by Don Warren and Orchestra. The organist accompanied the film and provided intermission interludes. The last regular run of vaudeville was early in 1931. However, a staff organist continued until 1937.

Beginning in 1934 with the touring company of "The Green Pastures," the State also presented many legitimate attractions. Included were: "You Can't Take It With You;" "White Oaks" with Ethel Barrymore; Clifton Webb as "The Man Who Came To Dinner;" "Hellzapoppin'"; "Life With Father;" "The Corn Is Green" with Ethel Barrymore; "Watch On The Rhine"



with Paul Lucas; and "Harvey" starring James Dunne and, in supporting roles of the 1950 production, Jean Stapleton and Ernest Borgnine.

During the 40's, many of the Big Bands appeared, including: Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong along with Jack Teagarden and "Fatha" Hines, Tiny Hill, Russ Morgan, Ted Weems (with vocalist Perry Como), "Scat" Davis, and Lawrence Welk.

Many other nationally known personalities have appeared: Victor Borge, Blackstone the Magician, George Goebel (as a member of the WLS Barn Dance Troupe), Joe Howard and His "Gay 90's Revue," and, in vaudeville days, such acts as Edgar Bergan and Company, "Howard, Fine & Howard" (later known as The Three Stooges), and Nick Lucas.

The State still houses its Barton theatre-organ, also excellently maintained. The organ was used regularly from opening until 1937. In those years the staff organists were Edith Ehrens, Clarence Leverenz, and Bud Taylor.

The organ was silent from 1937 to 1950 when Bud Taylor returned to Kalamazoo and played during intermissions until the Spring of 1951.

Then, the organ again fell silent and deteriorated for 10 years until John Catherwood and William Mollema volunteered to rehabilitate the instrument in 1961. By the late 60's, the pair had the organ in working condition, and they alternated at the console on Saturday nights.

The last live entertainment presented at the State was in November, 1971. At that time, St. Louis' Fox Theatre organist, Stan Kann, accompanied the Lon Chaney classic "The Phantom of the Opera." Since then, the Barton has not been heard publically.

Structurally, the theatre remained unchanged until 1964 when the vertical sign rusted out and came down. A tasteful remodeling of the theatre began.

The exterior lost its ornamental cornice, the first story received a new facade, and a new combination marquee-vertical sign was erected above the box-office.

The lobby and mezzanine received the brunt of the face lift. The ornamental lighting was removed; the pottery, the furniture, the painting reproduction were stored away. The Mediterranean color scheme disappeared under a new coat of paint.

The most drastic alteration was the area immediately above the entrance doors. A peppermint-stripe awning replaced the full-width balcony which had held statues, pottery and artificial cypress trees.

The auditorium remained virtually untouched. The few removals included trees and vines, the birds suspended from the ceiling, and some of the statuary from the side walls. New seating was installed, reducing capacity to nearly 1400. (In 1974, the balcony was closed, cutting capacity to about 900.) Other casualties included the "cloud-machine," and, in the early 70's, the stars and much of the ornamental lighting were doused to save electricity.

From its opening, the State has presented first-run film entertainment. And although it is strictly a film house today, live entertainment was presented for many years. The stage area remains ready to mount a production with the 14 dressing rooms backstage still maintained.

What is the future for the State Theatre? Howard Poth, the current manager says, "We intend to operate it for another 50 years." Lyle Smith, Vice-President of Butterfield Theatres says, "It is our intention to continue to operate the State Theatre in the future . . . as a first-class, first-run theatre." Smith continued, ". . . in our opinion, Kalamazoo has the most vigorous and viable downtown of any community of like size in the Midwest, and we expect it will continue to grow and prosper."

Even though the State has not received an official "historic" or "landmark" designation in the community, it unofficially has that status to many who call Kalamazoo home.


After all, where else in this area can one sit in a Spanish Courtyard? □



Kalamazoo's Spanish Courtyard

VOLUME 19  
NUMBER 1

The **CONSOLE**



PUBLISHED MONTHLY

WHEREVER ORGANS ARE PLAYED AND HEARD, THE CONSOLE IS READ

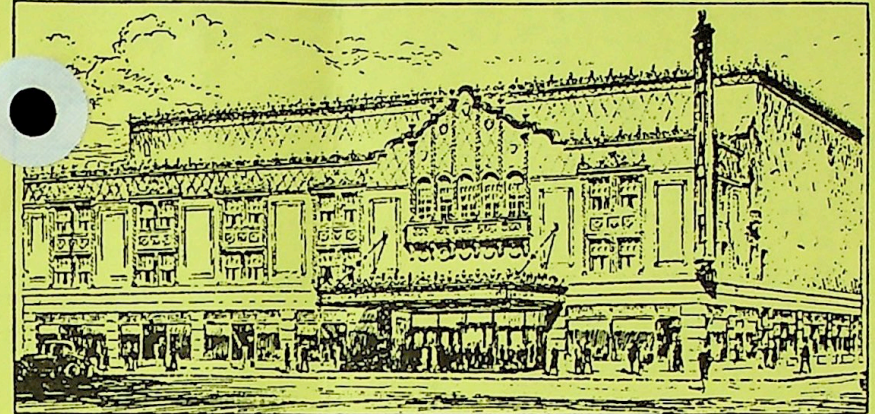
JANUARY  
1981

COLOR PHOTOS BY BROTHER ANDREW CORSINI



# State Theatre

KALAMAZOO MICHIGAN



STATE THEATRE VAUDEVILLE ASSOCIATION

PRESENTS:

## AN OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS DECEMBER 8, 1985 3:00 PM

FEATURING

ORGANIST WILLIAM MOLLEMA  
KALAMAZOO BALLET COMPANY  
KALAMAZOO COMMUNITY CHORALE

ALL TICKETS ARE \$3.00

State Theatre Vaudeville  
P.O. Box 649  
Comstock, MI 49041

BULK RATE  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Comstock, MI 49041  
Permit # 4

State Theatre Vaudeville  
P.O. Box 649  
Comstock, MI 49041

M-G-M's BIG  
MUSICAL!

## THE WIZARD OF OZ

FEBRUARY 16, 1986 3:00 & 6:00 PM

**BIG TECHNICOLOR MUSICAL—NOW ON WIDE SCREEN!**

Greater on  
Wide Screen!

ORDER NOW!

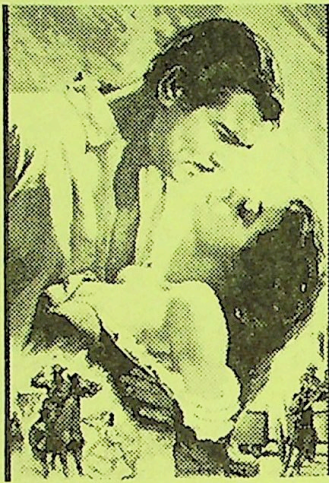


TICKETS \$3

THE MAIN CHARACTER FROM THE MOVIE WILL  
APPEAR LIVE AFTER THE SHOW TO SIGN  
AUTOGRAPHS AND FOR PICTURES.

JANUARY 19, 1986 2:00 & 6:00 PM

# GONE WITH THE WIND



In new screen splendor... The most magnificent picture ever!



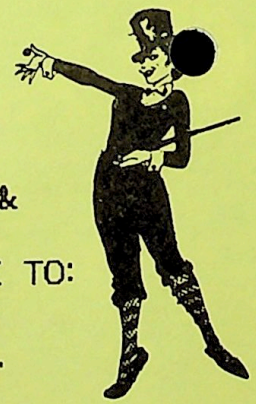
STARRING  
**CLARK GABLE**  
**VIVIEN LEIGH**

A SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL PICTURE - DIRECTED BY VICTOR FLEMING - SCREEN PLAY BY SIDNEY HOGAN - PRODUCED BY METRO GOLDWYN MAYER INC. MADE BY METRO GOLDWYN MAYER INC. - TELETYPE UNIT - PRODUCED BY METRO GOLDWYN MAYER INC. - MGM

TICKETS ARE \$3.00

RESERVE YOUR TICKETS TODAY!  
ADVANCE TICKETS  
CAN BE PURCHASED BY MAIL

SEND YOUR TICKET ORDER, CHECK &  
STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE TO:  
STATE THEATRE VAUDEVILLE ASSOC.  
P.O. BOX 649 COMSTOCK, MI 49041



ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE  
VAUDEVILLE ASSOCIATION?  
PLEASE JOIN US!

FILL OUT THE SURVEY BELOW AND MAIL IT TODAY.

Your financial gift will be used for the preservation and continued use of

Kalamazoo's Historic State Theatre

### Memberships

Senior	\$10.00	Donor	\$50.00
Individual	15.00	Patron	100.00
Family	25.00	Angel	500.00

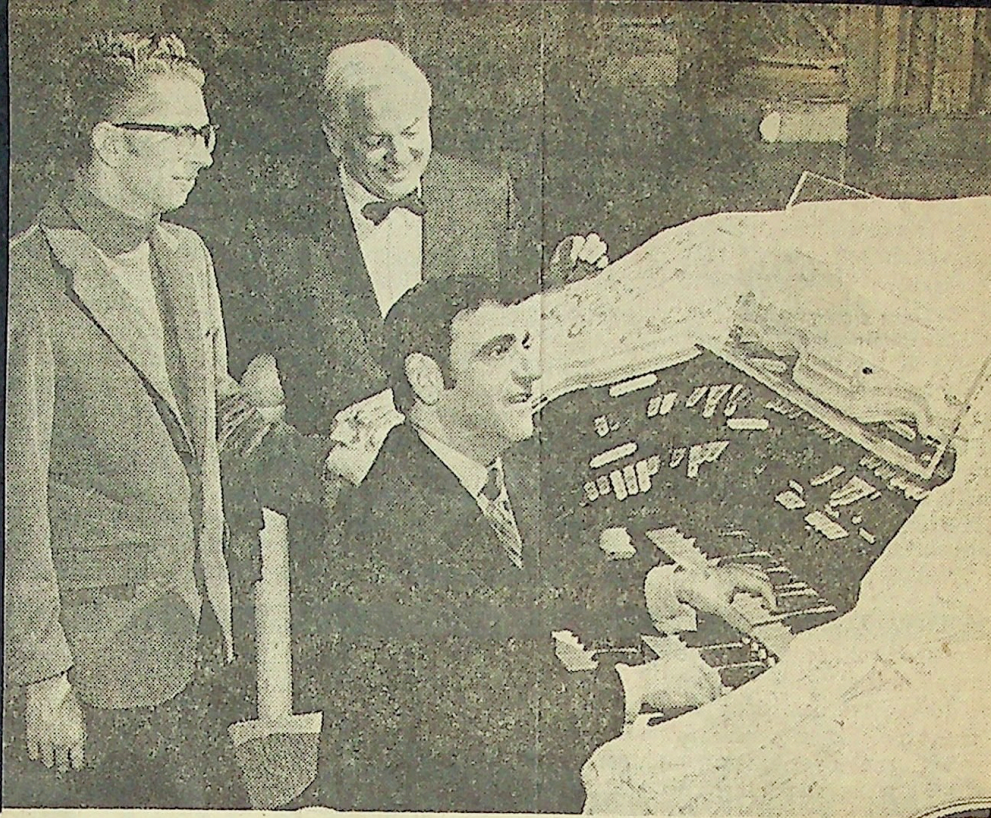
As a member you will be listed in our Vaudeville Show Programs and you will receive advance notice of all State Theatre Vaudeville Productions.

Please help us serve you better by completing the survey below

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

- Please put me on your mailing list.
- I have ideas for programs at the theatre and have enclosed them.
- I am interested in the Preservation and use of the State Theatre. Tell me how I can Help!
- I am interested in (circle all those that apply to you)  
Organ Concerts Children's Programs Family Programs  
Concerts Classic Films Live Stage Shows
- I want to make a contribution. Please find my check enclosed.



ORGANIST STAN KANN TRIES OUT INSTRUMENT AT STATE THEATER  
 Watching Are Jerry Alexander (Left), WMUK Program Director, Fred Marley, Theater Manager  
 —Gazette photo

One of the men who played the State organ when it was used regularly was Bud Taylor, who later became organist at the Roxy Theater in New York City. He got his start at a funeral parlor in Vicksburg, learned under Leverenz who was "house organist" at the State, and now lives in Southern California where he is a recording artist.

Mollema was a Kalamazoo College physics student in 1962 when he discovered the organ



## THEATER WORLD

BY LOUIS BOCKSTANZ



### Smallest Summer Theater Brings Back Popular Program

SOUTH HAVEN — What well may be Western Michigan's smallest summer theater is planning a return engagement of its most popular attraction of the summer. The theater is the Village Theater at Sleepy Hollow Resort and the attraction is a double bill consisting of two musical dramas, "Trouble in Tahiti," by Leonard Bernstein and "The Telephone," by Gian Carlo Menotti.

The two dramas will be staged Saturday and Sunday at the 200-seat resort-theater north of South Haven, with performances to begin at 8:30 each evening. They were presented there July 19 and were so well received that the theater decided to bring them back for the two additional evenings.

The program is performed by Robert Smith, Janice Fleming Omvig, and Heather Golemba. They have played the same program in the Gate of Horn in Chicago for several weeks.

This is one of a series of programs being staged at the rustic barn-like theater on the grounds of the well-known resort. Although established and still primarily for the benefit of resort residents, the performances are open to the public — at an admission charge, of course.

The programs at the theater are an outgrowth of the desire of proprietor Richard Gray to add a bit of culture to the entertainment provided at the resort. The entertainment also includes such features as folk music concerts, film presentations, and, on a one-shot basis, a try-out by Kalamazoo College of one of its Festival Playhouse repertory plays last week.

#### State Organ

It will be noted in a page elsewhere on these pages that the big organ at the State Theater will be used again. The big old instrument, as old (37 years) as the theater, has not been heard in many years, having fallen into a sad state over the years. However a program of repair has been carried on and the voice of the organ will be heard again, one night a week, according to manager Fred Marley.

#### More about music . . .

Grand memories of a grand old era of the motion picture theater were brought back for many Thursday evening when the refurbished State Theater observed its formal "grand re-opening."

A theater pipe organ has a sound all its own, and the sound was never better than on Thursday. Two years of "labor of love" by Bill Hollema and John Catherwood restored the State organ to its old glory. The music they played, in a half-hour concert before the show and later before a special "sneak preview," stirred the older folks in the audience and must have surprised the younger ones who had never heard a theater organ's full-throated sound.

Fred Marley, the State's manager, and Lyle Smith of Detroit, in charge of theater operations for Butterfield Theaters, Inc., said the Butterfield chain has reactivated a half-dozen organs in movie houses around Michigan. The State's organ posed the toughest job because it was in the worst shape, according to Smith.

Beautifully refinished, and spotlighted against the theater's new stage curtain, the grand old pipe organ was something to see as well as hear. And future audiences will be able to see and hear it, we're told; plans now are to present an organ program, along with the screen feature, at least one night a week.

And while there's room here, a word about the movie previewed at the State. It was "A Shot in the Dark," starring Peter Sellers, and just has to rate as one of the funniest films ever made. The preview audience was in hysterics as Sellers stumbled, bumbled and fumbled his way through one of the wildest of "mystery" yarns. And the five-minute cartoon titling which opens the movie is fun, too. "Shot" is the State's next regular attraction, opening Thursday (Jack R. Bell).

# Plan Formal Reopening of State Theater

## Program to Be Held Thursday

Newly remodelled State Theater will have its grand opening Thursday as part of the Burdick Mall's fifth anniversary celebration.

Highlighting the opening will be a sneak preview at 7 p.m. of a top comedy as well as the regular attraction and organ solos by both Bill Hollema, senior physics major at Kalamazoo, and John Catherwood.

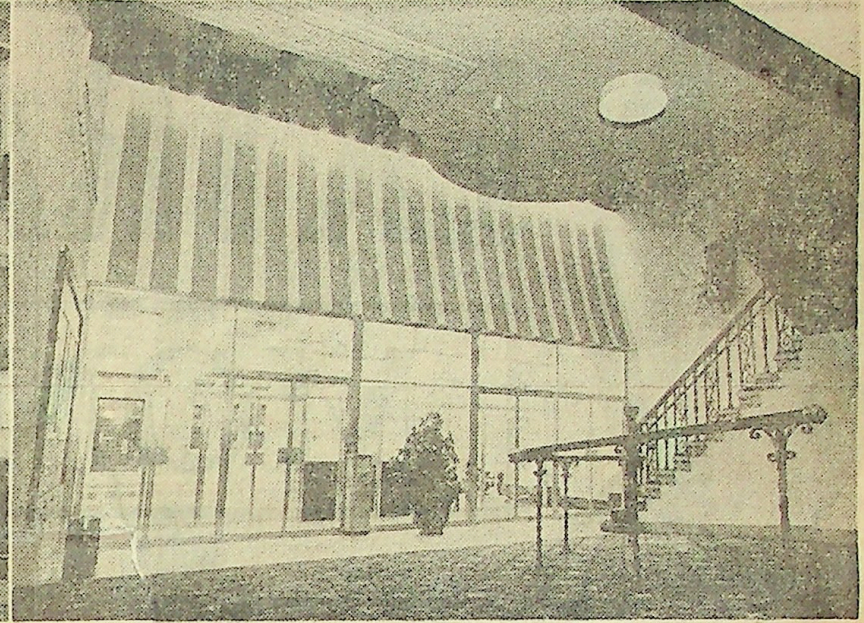
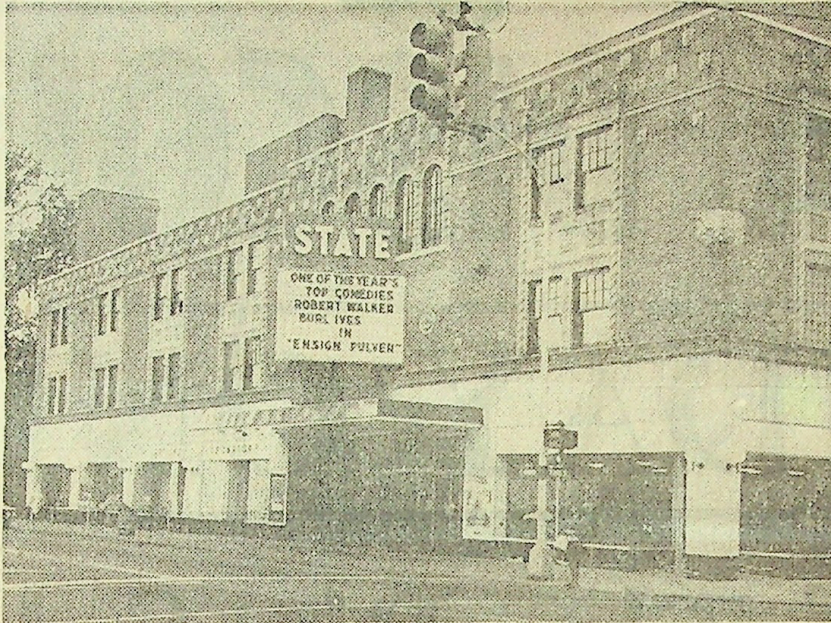
Mollema and Catherwood have spent part of the past two years repairing the 37-year-old organ.

State Theater manager Fred Marley said 250 Kalamazoo city and county dignitaries have been invited to the Thursday night opening.

Included in the theater building remodeling area a new marquee, new marble facing, new store fronts, new concession areas, new curtain, new carpeting, new orange crowd-control ropes, completely re-done restrooms and rearranged seating.

Reason for the fewer seats is that there now is six inches more leg room between rows, Marley said.

The new marquee brought to an end a common late-night



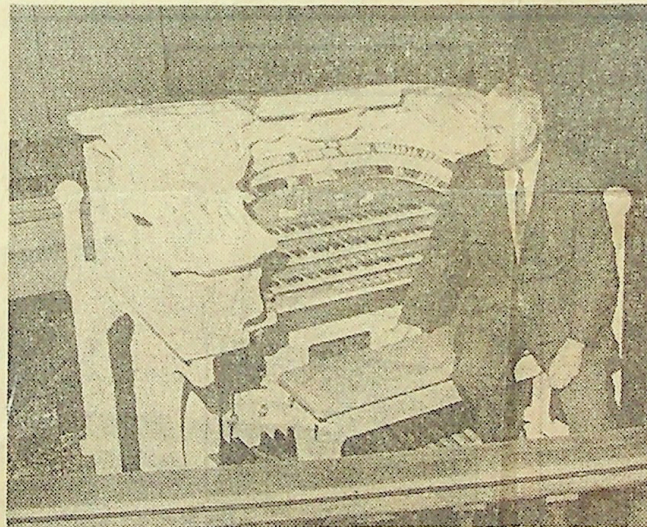
EXTERIOR AND LOBBY INTERIOR OF REFURNISHED AND REMODELED STATE THEATER  
Includes New Marquee, New Sign and New Fronts for Stores and Shops in Building

8-16-74

downtown sight—a long ladder used to change the letters on the old marquee.

The new marquee has an entrance behind it from the second floor. Located above the new boxoffice and entrance way, this permits use of an eight-foot stepladder rather than a 20-foot stepladder as needed before.

The grand opening feature beginning Thursday will be "Look for Love," a comedy starring Connie Francis and guest-starring Johnny Carson, George Hamilton, Yvette Mimieux, Paula Prentiss and Danny Thomas.



RESTORED ORGAN READY FOR USE  
Manager Fred Marley Surveys Job

—Gazette photos

**HEATER FEATURED** — The current issue of Console, a publication of the Theater Organ Society, contains a feature on the State Theater and three full-color photographs by Brother Arsini of Notre Dame University. Work in restoring the theater, one of the last movie places still regularly operating in Michigan, as well as John Catherwood and William Hollema's restoration of the theater's Barton organ, is recounted in an article by Jerry Alexander of Kalamazoo. Copies are available by mail to Console magazine, P. O. Box 744-C, Pasadena, Calif.,

Phantom, a man with a face like a skull...

Lon Chaney "the man of a Thousand faces," designed the makeup for his character the Phantom. He put plugs in his nose to open the nostrils and make them slant up. He put plastic-like circles in his jaws. These made it look as though his cheekbones were sticking out. Hooks inside a wig pulled the skin of his face upward. Prongs pushed his lips back from false teeth.

Chaney made himself look like a walking dead man. And when THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA first appeared, people in the audience screamed and fainted.

Chaney's make-up tricks were very painful and are no longer used. In fact, they ruined his health.

**DON'T GET MARRIED  
'TIL YOU VISIT**

**Campus  
Tux Shop**

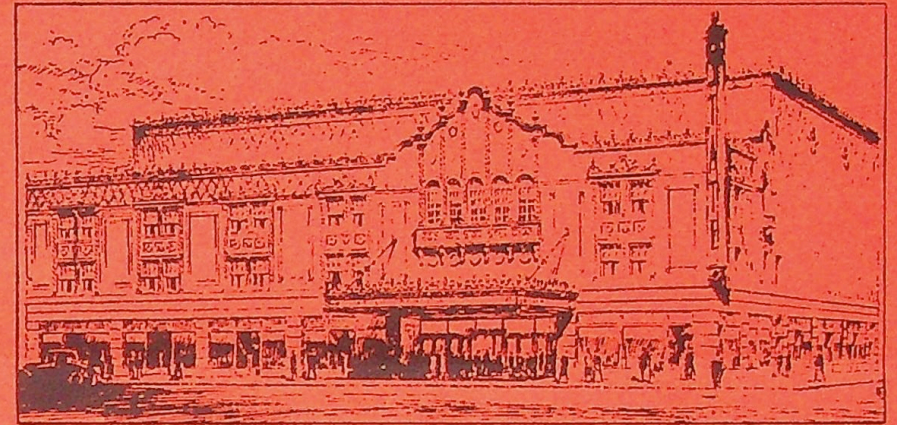
**RENTALS & SALES  
CALL**

**382-4496**

3416 S. WESTNEDGE - KALAMAZOO

# State Theatre

KALAMAZOO MICHIGAN



**wkmi 1360**

State Theatre Vaudeville Committee Presents

## Phantom of the Opera

Accompanied by

John Catherwood

**October  
31st**



THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Directed by ..... Rupert Julian  
Secenerio by ..... Elliott J. Clawson  
From the Novel by ..... Gaston Leroux  
Photographers ..... Charles Van Eager  
Milton Bridenbecker  
Virgil Miller

CAST

Erik (The Phantom) ..... Lon Chaney  
Christine Daae ..... Mary Philbin  
Raoul de Chagny ..... Norman Kerry  
Florine Papillon ..... Snitz Edwards  
Simon ..... Gibson Gowland  
Phillippe de Chagny ..... John Sainpolis  
Carlotta ..... Virginia Pearson

"Considered by many to be the best of the Lon Chaney silent films, and rightly so. Never before or since has this magnificent story, about a wronged musician who hides in the bowels of a cavernous opera house while weaving his diabolical plot of revenge after he's been disfigured, been more satisfactorily mounted. Chaney is fascinating as the crazed "Phantom", and his makeup is a work of cinematic magic, especially for it's day." --Steven H. Scheuer

Tonight's film was released by Universal Pictures on September 6th, 1925

About our Organist John Catherwood...

Born and raised in Detroit, John received his formal education at Kalamazoo College.

An early facination with the pipe organ was instrumental in his spending several years as a boy choirister at St. Paul's Cathedral. He also regularly attended Saturday mattinees at downtown theatres where organs were still used

After college, and two years as a Chaplain's assistant at Ft. Riley, Kansas, he settled in Kalamazoo with his wife and family. A college days' friendship with Bud Taylor, well-known Kalamazoo Organist, was renewed. The old bug bit harder than ever and it wasn't long before John met Bill Mollema and in 1962 the two began total rebuilding of the State Theatre's Barton Organ.

Considered by many organists to be one of Barton Organ Company's finest, the State's organ was built in 1927 for the theatre's opening. Two new sets of pipes were added in 1978 completeing specifications drawn up by Bill and John when the projected began 18 years ago.

Although used only occasionally in recent years, Kalamazoo is indeed fortunate to have a working theatre organ installed in its' original home. Considering the beauty and elegance of that home, Kalamazoo is indeed, twice blessed. The "Golden Age" of the theatre Organ is still alive and well in Kalamazoo and with your continued support it will remain so!

\* \* \* \* \*

If You would like to be included on our mailing list please fill out the bottom of this page and give it to an Usher.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Mysterious City of Sin and Intrigue!



"CASABLANCA"

June 19, 1982

State Theatre Kalamazoo

Pre-Premiere Party at 6:30 p.m. • Film at 8:00 p.m.

Sponsored by the Committee for Richard R. Lamb/Circuit Court

Tickets available at Boogie Records & Rx Optical Laboratories

ADMISSION \$5.00

- Gala Pre-Premiere Party
- Visit "Rick's American Cafe"
- "Sam" will be playing your favorite music
- Have your picture taken with "Bogey" in a scene from the film.

Paid for by Committee for Richard R. Lamb,  
P.O. Box 902, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49005

## Seat / on the Aisle

No one can say for certain at this moment what will become of Kalamazoo's ornate downtown movie palace, the State. No longer regularly operating as a movie theater and being used only for special events and attractions, the State nevertheless remains an outstanding and unique example of theater architecture that will never be duplicated.

Whatever the theater's fate, the elegance of its interior is moving toward a preservation of the only sort that now seems possible. It is being chronicled in photographs and paintings by a group of local and area people for generations to come — and remind others of its halcyon days as the home of legitimate touring theater, vaudeville, silent and "talking" movies. This lovely showplace, the last of only five of its kind which were designed by John Eberson, an architect famed for his "atmospheric" theaters, may some day be gone but not forgotten thanks to Harry Burns of Kalamazoo and some dedicated associates.

With cooperation of the theater's owner, Butterfield Theaters of Southfield, Burns' Status Galleries, Ltd. in Kalamazoo Center has joined with photographer James Bevins and painter Craig Hendrix to document the interior. Bevins and Hendrix roamed the theater for days photographing its beautiful art decor. Using Bevin's photos as reference, Hendrix will shortly begin work on a 30 by 40 painting that offers a panoramic view of the stage — a painting he proposes to work on in daily, public view at the Kalamazoo Center starting July 9. A slide show of Bevins' photos will be projected as Hendrix works on his painting.

Bevins' colorful photos also will be produced in 20 by 40 signed editions of 48 each, 5 in the series, with the first to be released this month. Upon completion of the painting in September, a full color lithograph will be reproduced from Hendrix's original oil. The artist-signed and numbered edition will be limited to 250, with 25 artist's proofs.

Burns, who recalled spending many an afternoon watching movies in the State while growing up in Kalamazoo and says "I love that theater," is doing what hasn't been done extensively as many architecturally significant theaters are altered or razed. Even Broadway's Helen Hayes Theater was not thoroughly documented before recently falling under the wrecking ball. No pictures are known to exist of Kalamazoo's Capitol Theater, also ornate in its way before being remodeled and later razed to make way for a parking ramp.

A Plainwell photographer who specializes in commercial, fashion layouts, advertising illustration and industrial photographs, Bevins has come up with the most detailed and interesting photographs of the State's interior we have come across. Hendrix, who received his early art education at Princeton University, is from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia who now lives in Constantine where he combines ministry with his painting career.

To mark completion of the documentation project, a reception party and an evening of live theater on the State Theater stage is being planned by Robert Walker, a well-known Kalamazoo actor who is also associated with the gallery. To the best of anyone's knowledge or available records, it would be the first straight play on the theater's stage in more than 30 years.

ONE WE RECOMMEND — The best reason for theatergoers to visit Chicago this summer may very well be Milo O'Shea, who will bring the

## State's stage to get its first play in 32 years

A real, live play will come to the stage of Kalamazoo's State Theater for the first time in 32 years when "American Primitive (John Abigail)" is presented there Friday and Saturday, Oct. 22-23.

The last time there was legitimate theater at the downtown movie palace was in 1950 when film and stage star James Dunne starred in a touring production of "Harvey." In supporting roles in that production were a pair of performers who achieved fame a little later — Ernest Borgnine and Jean Stapleton.

Two stagings of "American Primitive," a work based on the letters of the early American patriot and second United States president and his wife, the most distinguished and influential first ladies in U. S. history, have been planned in conjunction with the completion of a painting by Craig Hendrix of the interior of the ornate theater. The painting as well as prints of the painting and color photographs are part of a "documentation" of the now-closed theater arranged by Harry Burns of Status Galleries,

Ltd.

Robert Walker and his wife, Heidi Woodbury, both active performers at the New Vic Theater for several years, will appear in the play which Walker also is directing and Burns and Walker are producing. It's a work well known to the Walkers who toured in it in Maine for the Stage Coach Theater. Supporting roles are yet to be cast. "American Primitive" is being produced by SG Marketing and Status Galleries of Kalamazoo in association with Unicorn Stage Arts, Ltd.

Tickets will go on sale at a reservation booth in the Kalamazoo Center in late August.

A reception also will be held in conjunction with the display of the painting and photographs. Hendrix started work on the painting in the Kalamazoo Center this past week.

Constructed over a half-century ago as a movie and vaudeville theater, the State hosted numerous touring plays during the first 20 years. Ethel Barrymore and Clifton Webb were among the prominent performers who appeared there.

# The silver screen glistens in Kalamazoo

By PATTY CARPENTER  
Gazette Staff Writer

If it's flicks you want, it's flicks you'll get.

Kalamazoo boasts 23 movie theaters, giving patrons of the silver screen a wide choice of where to go and what to see.

The loss of the 55-year-old State Theater in downtown Kalamazoo earlier this year was felt by filmgoers who may miss the theater's 11 rank Barton theater organ and the annual Vaudeville shows the State hosted.

The 1,400-seat cinema, owned by W.S. Butterfield Theaters, closed the doors on its elegant antique interior in April, the victim of dwindling audiences. Butterfield hasn't divulged plans for Kalamazoo's oldest theatre.

But take heart, there are still plenty of places to spend an evening with the stars.

The expanded Movies at Westmain, a United Artist's complex, is just a year old.

Located in the Westmain Mall, it offers five screens with the newest sight and sound equipment. The largest in the Kalamazoo area, Movies at Westmain boasts a 750-seat main theater and four 200-400-seat additions.

The Eastowne, a five-screen complex on Gull Road at Sprinkle in northeast Kalamazoo, places second in size to Westmain. The capacity of the theaters there ranges from 275 to 300 seats.

Other movie houses in the immediate area include:

- The 1000-seat Campus Theatre on West Michigan near the Western Michigan University Campus.
- Maple Hill Mall Cinema, a triplex theater, seating from 200 to 400 persons in each studio, tucked away behind the Maple Hill Mall Shopping Plaza on West Main Street and Drake Road.
- The Twin Plaza theaters, with 350 seats

apiece, on South Westnedge Avenue south of Milham Road.

- Beacon Cinema on Portage Road near the Kalamazoo Municipal Airport, each with 350 seats.

In addition, those who prefer foreign, art and classical films will want to check out Le Bijou twin theatres located in the lower level of the Kalamazoo Center-Hilton Inn downtown. Total seating capacity at Le Bijou is 380.

Also, Kalamazoo College hosts the area's leading film society, showing foreign and art films and a smattering of Hollywood classics twice a week.

The Light Fine Arts Building's Recital Hall on campus is usually the place of showing. But films with larger audience appeal are normally in the college's Dewing Hall Auditorium, Room 103.

The Kalamazoo Art Center also offers a film series during the fall and winter months at its downtown center.

## Art in brief

8-15-82

**HENDRIX IN NATIONAL SHOW** — Kalamazoo artist Craig Hendrix — who has been seen of late working on a painting of the State Theater in the window of Status Galleries, in the Kalamazoo Center — has been selected from among 1,369 artists nationwide to participate in the Great Lakes Regional Art Exhibit, held this fall in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. The highly competitive juried show will be held Sept. 10- Oct. 1, under the sponsorship of the city's Valley Art Center, and will draw artists from eight states. Hendrix's painting of Kalamazoo's State Theater, which he is painting publicly at Status Galleries, is slated for an Oct. 1 completion, with an unveiling scheduled for Oct. 22 at the theater.



# Theater

(Continued from Page A-1)

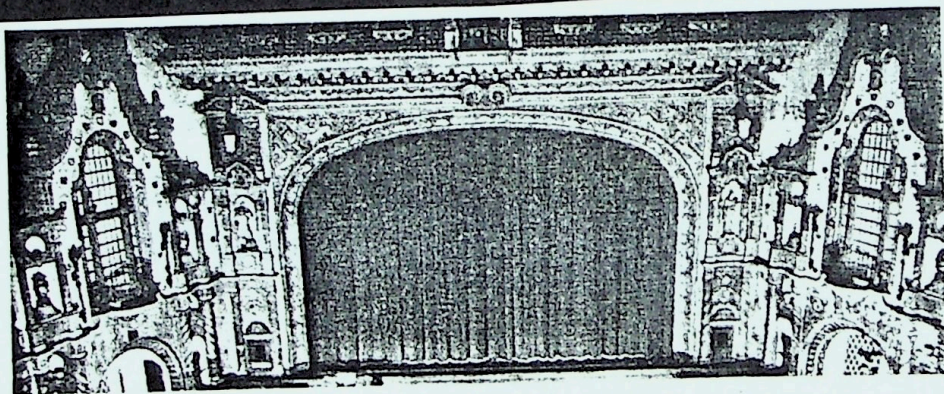
Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra. Hunt, a leader in restoration of the theater, staged annual vaudeville and other events there. Gordon Smith is manager of Miller Auditorium at Western Michigan University. Smusz heads the Kalamazoo County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Walker is associated with S.G. Productions and Status Galleries.

Strong support for saving the historic theater, a treasured example of theater architecture by John Ebersson, was voiced by Neil Saunders of the Fontana Society; Barry Ross, a musician and edu-

cator, and Harry Burns, director of a Kalamazoo Art Gallery which is "documenting" the theater in photographs and paintings.

Art Hilgart, president of the Kalamazoo Civic Players, urged that any appraisal of the theater's future should delve extensively into its value in helping to attract conventions to the city. The theater is two blocks from the Kalamazoo Center and Hilton Inn.

Hunt, who has had a long and sentimental attachment to the State, said he foresees no problem in raising money to acquire the theater, but said the major problem will be its continued use and operation.



Status Galleries Ltd. will co-host a "Gala Evening at the State Theatre," October 22 and 23. Featuring *American Primitive*, it will be the first live play on State's stage in 32 years. Commemorating the event are limited-edition photos like the one above. An original acrylic rendering of State's interior will be publicly displayed during a cocktail reception following the performance and grand organ recital. Advance tickets are now on sale, as is the limited-edition photo series. For information or reservations, call Status Galleries at 381-2130, ext. 191, or stop in at the Plaza Level, Kalamazoo Center Hilton Inn.



Conferring on State Theater photos by Jim Bevins (right) are (from left) Harry Burns, Craig Hendrix and Robert Walker.

award-winning comedy, "Mass Appeal," to Drury Lane Theater in Water Tower Place on July 22 for an eight-week run.

Bill Davis's work about a successful but cynical priest and a troubled seminarian was the show which captured our fancy during a winter visit to Broadway where it ran for 28 weeks and was nominated for a Tony Award. It didn't win a Tony, but both the New York Drama League and Outer Critics' Circle voted O'Shea's performance the best of the season in a straight play. By our book, O'Shea is one of the finest actors of this if not several decades, and he was never any better than he is in "Mass Appeal." Davis, incidentally, is now working on the screenplay for a movie version which will be called "Internal Combustion."

Also coming to Chicago later in the year will be the musical, "42nd Street," which has been set for a Dec. 27 opening at the Civic Opera House.

Speaking of Chicago theater, "The King And I" starring Yul Brynner has been held over through July 18 at the Arie Crown and will leave Chicago with the all-time box office record. In 10 weeks at the McCormick Place playhouse, it will have grossed a cool \$4 million. Who says theater is dead or there's no longer a place for family-type shows.

As for theater in the other direction, the word from Canada's Stratford is that the famed festival has already hit over \$5 million in advance ticket sales for the current season, with "The Mikado" at the Avon leading all shows in sales followed by "The Tempest" at the Festival Theater.

—Don W. Carlson

## State of the State Theater

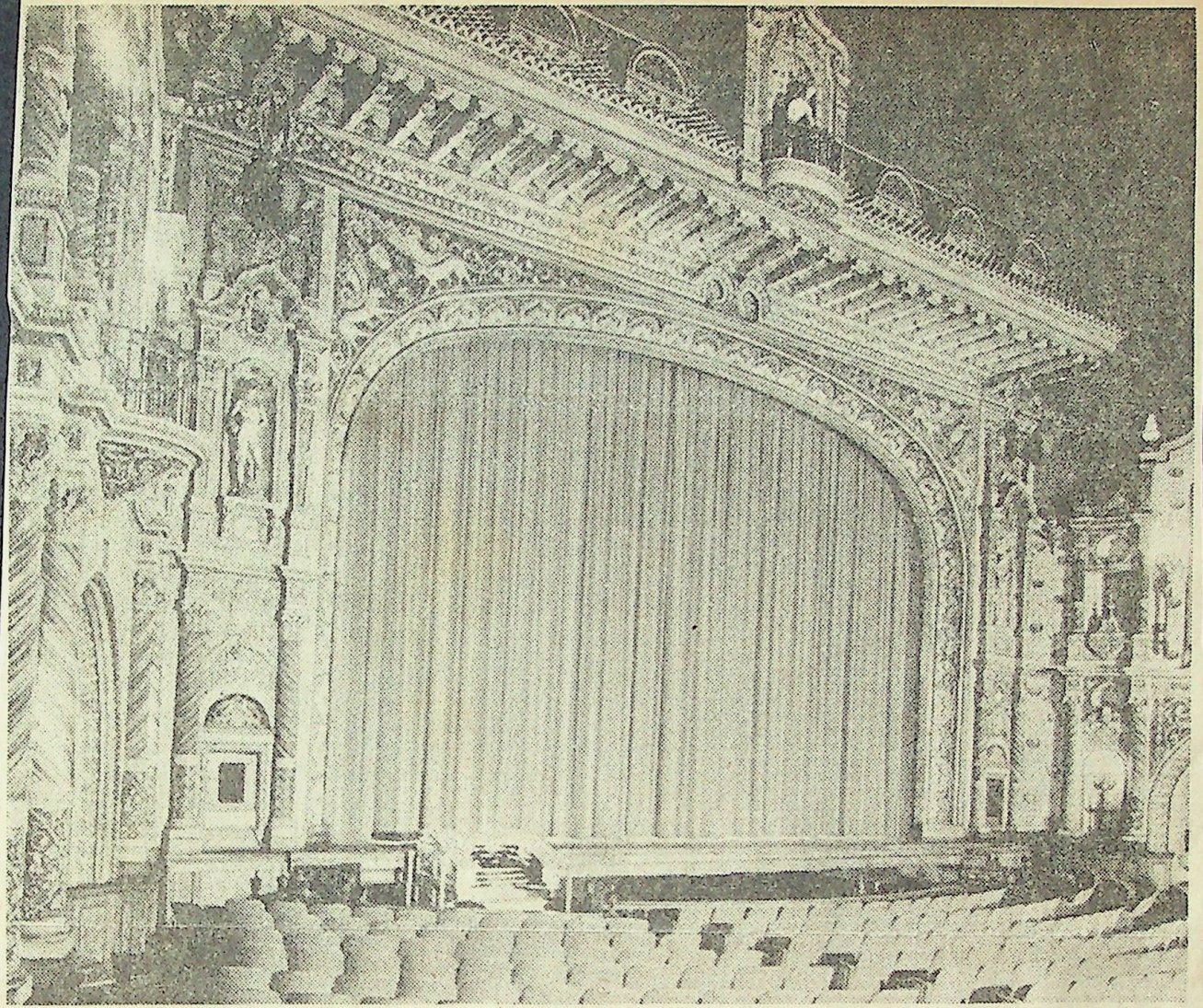
To the Editor:

What is the future of the State Theater? Is it going to be torn down and made into another asphalt parking lot? Is it going to be abandoned? Or can something useful, entertaining and beneficial to the community be done with this building?

I remember it well . . . twinkling stars on the ceiling, the beautiful pottery and lights along the side walls, the superb Spanish architecture. I feel sorry for those people, young and old, who have never seen a movie there or heard the magnificent organ.

It is very sad to see this theater sit empty. I really miss the State Theater and hope that something will be done to reopen it. **JANICE G. HERRICK, 3318 Konkle.**

8-26-82



—Photo by Jim Bevins

Interior of historic State Theater displays a vast and ornate design.

## *Group starts bid to save historic State Theater*

By DON W. CARLSON  
Gazette Entertainment Editor

The first concerted move to save Kalamazoo's ornate State Theater was taken Tuesday at a meeting called by the city of Kalamazoo's economic development division.

A seven-member committee, representing a broad cross-section of cultural interests, was named to make an appraisal of potential uses and maintenance arrangements for the 1,200-seat former vaudeville and movie theater which has been closed since last winter.

Most of the more than 20 people attending agreed that the theater should to be saved for nostalgic, architectural and other reasons, and that raising funds or working out a financial arrangement to acquire the quarter-block-large

structure at Burdick and Lovell streets would be possible. But there was a divergence of views on the theater's utilization as a performing arts center and how it could be maintained.

That's what the committee will look into immediately — to determine how many groups would be interested in using it for plays, concerts, recitals, ballet, lectures, meetings and other activities, and whether it would be valuable as an adjunct to attracting conventions to the city.

If these factors are resolved favorably, presumably the next step would be determine procedures for acquiring the 54-year-old structure, which also houses a number of stores and offices, from Butterfield Theaters of Southfield.

Lyle Smith, president of Butterfield, attended the meeting and promised the cooperation of the theater circuit. Smith said there was "no timetable" at present for disposing of the property and that his company was anxious to resolve the matter at the earliest convenience to local groups. He also pledged that the theater would not be razed for a parking lot.

Michael Doleski, director of the city's economic development division, presided at the meeting. Named to a committee to get matters rolling were Paul Ferrone, Duwain Hunt, Gordon Smith, Lyle Smith, Diane Smusz and Robert Walker. A representative of the city is yet to be chosen.

Ferrone is manager of the

(See THEATER on Page A-7)

# Two shows keep State 'breathing'

**T**HE BATTLE TO SAVE KALAMAZOO'S DOWNTOWN STATE Theater is a long, long way from being engaged, much less won, but a pair of events coming up in the next couple of months should provide a respirator of sorts for this lovely movie palace until something definite can get going.

The State will get its first use as a concert hall in years when a gifted young guitarist by the name of Leo Kottke performs there on Saturday, Sept. 25. The great value of this particular attraction is that it should show what the acoustically-ideal State, which is about the size of most non-musical Broadway theaters, has to offer as a concert hall. Promoter Wayne Deering reports tickets are selling well for the appearance of the Grammy Award-winning artist whose music was used in the Academy Award-winning "Days of Heaven."

Four weeks later, on Oct. 22-23, the State will light up again for "A Gala Evening of Art and Theater" featuring the unveiling of a Craig Hendrix's large oil painting of the theater's interior (part of an extensive photo documentation of the theater) and a performance of "American Primitive," the William Gibson play which will be getting its first staging here. "American Primitive," based on the letters of John and Abigail Adams, will be the first real, live play on the State's stage in 32 years. And that attraction should show how ideal the State can be for the smaller, more intimate productions — from "Gin Game" size to small musicals.

Plans for "American Primitive" took a giant step forward this week. Robert Walker, who is producing, directing and co-starring with his wife, Heidi Woodbury in the play about John and Abigail Adams, announced completion of casting and the production staff for the presentation. He's also looking ahead to another show at the State.

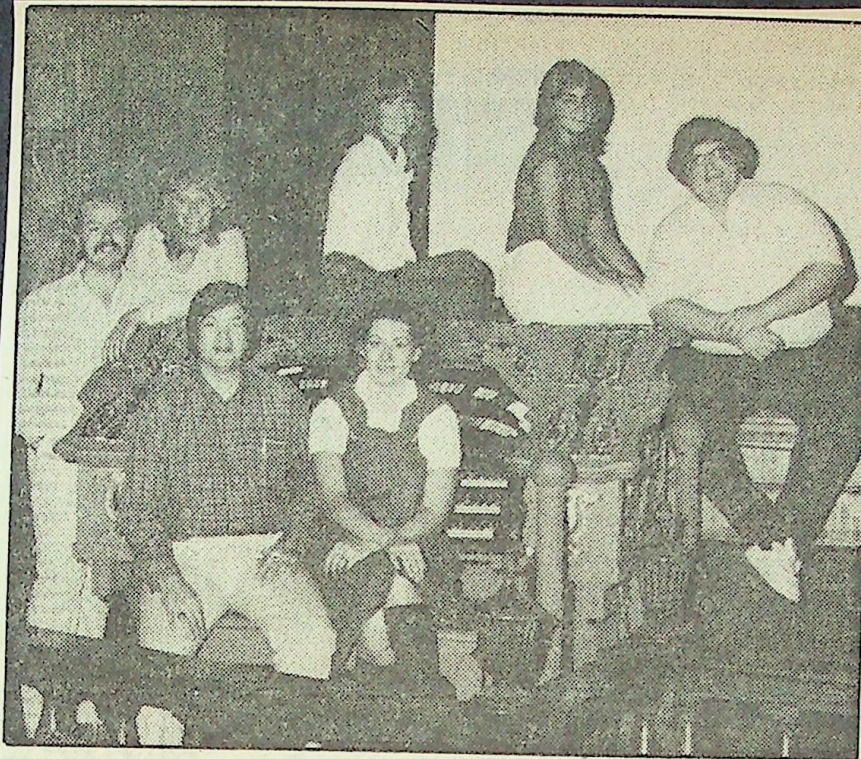
Playing character roles and also serving as narrators in "American Primitive" will be Jeff Pillars, who has been seen in "The Good Doctor," "Teddy in That Splendid Little War," "A Man for All Seasons," "Zorba" and "Good Friday" at the New Vic Theater, and Gail Lucht, a WMU graduate and former New Vic company member. She has appeared in "A Doll's House" (for which she received an Irene Ryan acting award nomination) at Western and "A Christmas Carol," "Waltz of the Torreadors," "Zorba" and "Company" at the New Vic. Gail and Jeff also co-starred in "The Edge of Running Water" by Kalamazoo playwright Arnold Johnston. Also appearing in "American Primitive" will be Michael Matusiak and Kitty Kachniewicz.

Serving as assistant director will be Mark Brown, a sophomore student and theater major at WMU, with Jerry Hopson as stage manager. Hopson served as stage manager and technical director for a production of "American Primitive" by Maine's Stagecoach Theater which also featured Walker and Woodbury.

Walker announced the opening night performance will be preceded by a concert by the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra's String Quartet which will perform in the lobby from 7 until 8:10. An organ concert, wine and cheese bar, tours of the theater and a slide show of photos of the theater by Jim Bevins will follow performances on both evenings. The cast, along with Hendrix and Bevins will welcome patrons, with both upper and lower lobbies turned into art galleries.

Walker reported tickets, now on sale at Status Galleries, Ltd., in Kalamazoo Center, were selling "very well" and he is so encouraged that he's already planning the production of another play at the State next spring — hopefully the premiere of a new work. Walker said a panel of local judges will sift scripts solicited from playwrights locally and nationally. That will come about, of course, only if the wrecking ball or whatever it is that happens to discarded theaters can be kept away from the State.

Perhaps — just perhaps, in the meantime someone else can be encouraged to use the State for a concert of dance, or a lecture, or possibly a chamber concert, and patrons of the lively arts can come to know the true value of the beloved State as a performing arts facility.



—Jim Bevins photo

## Making history

Robert C. Walker and his wife, Heidi Woodbury, are surrounded at the State Theater's Barton organ by (clockwise from left) Jeff Pillars, Gail Lucht, Kitty Kachniewics, Laura Woodbury and Mike Matusiak — the cast and crew for "American Primitive," which will be the first play on the movie palace's stage in 32 years. Walker and Woodbury play John and Abigail Adams in the William Gibson drama to be presented Oct. 22-23.

## 'Save-the-State' plan being drafted

**A** PROPOSAL TO SAVE KALAMAZOO'S HISTORIC STATE Theater is now being drafted by a special three-man committee. It will be submitted shortly to representatives of all groups who conferred recently on the future of the one-time movie palace which has been closed since late winter.

Though still incomplete, the plan is expected to suggest that "some form of governmental assistance will be required to make the financial package feasible."

The proposal stems from information provided from Butterfield Theaters of Southfield, owners of the midtown theater and office building — data which one member of the select group called "encouraging." It will be offered for consideration by the committee, which is comprised of Gordon Smith, Duwain Hunt and Michael Doleski. Smith is manager of Western Michigan University's Miller Auditorium, Hunt is a county commissioner, Comstock schoolteacher and drama coach instrumental in restoration of the theater, and Doleski heads the City of Kalamazoo's Community Development Division.

Doleski pointed out the proposal will be presented for "review and consideration . . . it is not the intention of the subcommittee that the document would be a solution which we would expect everyone to accept."

In the event there is support for some form of a suggested financial package, Doleski added, then "this document would be what our subcommittee would suggest be offered to the community-at-large as perhaps the most viable means for saving the State Theater."

No date has been set for submitting the proposal, although it is hoped it will be available for consideration by the early part of October.