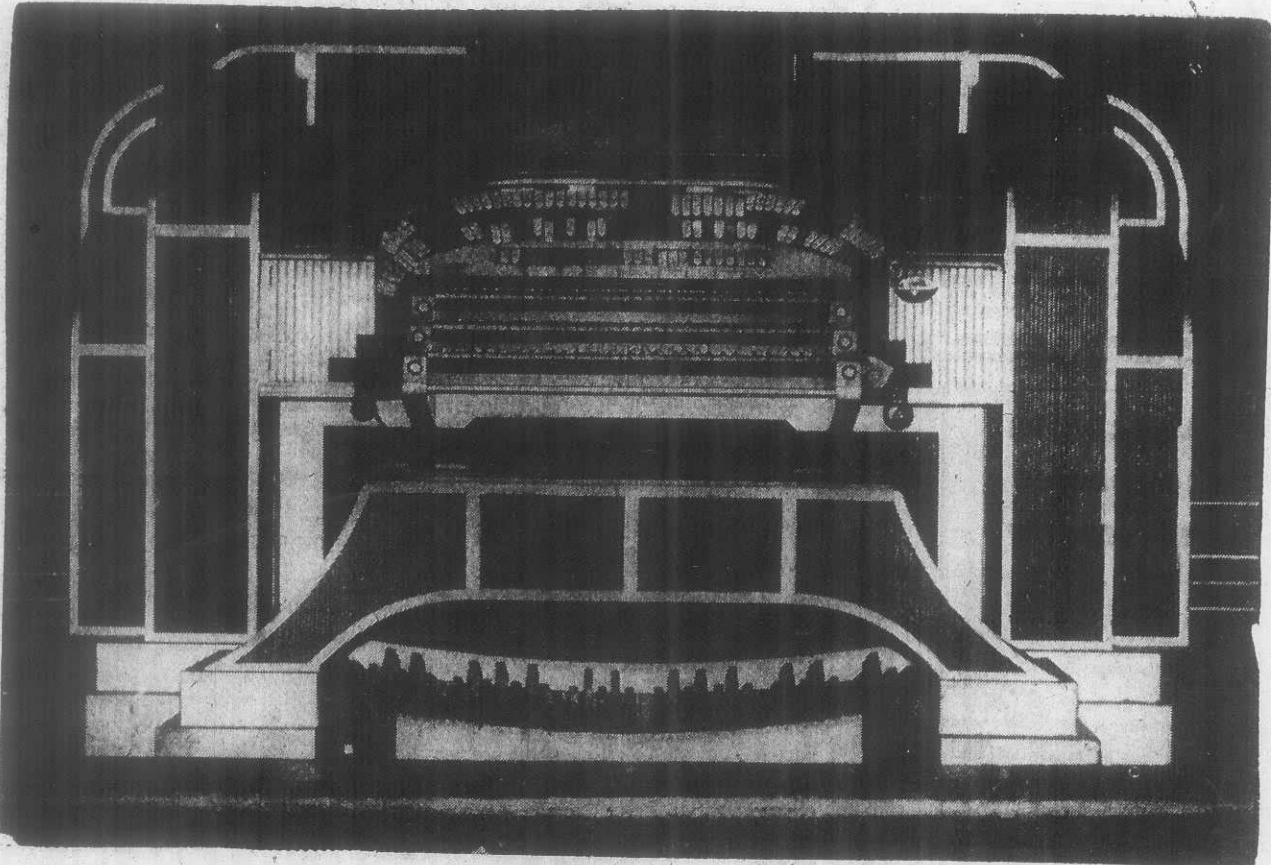


The SAVOY ORGAN



As he sat at the Hammond Organ my mind went back to the hey-day of the Limerick Savoy Compton Organ, when we had regular visits from performers like A. Gordon Spicer, Alban Chambers, Fred Bridgman, Philip Dore, Neville Turner, Jack Courtney, Pat Navan, George Rothwell, Stanley Bowyer, John A. Enright, Norman Metcalfe, and Peter Heid.

The Savoy Organ is rated as one of the best of its kind in these islands, and the real pity of it all is that this magnificent instrument is not heard more frequently.

The present generation has absolutely no idea of the many hours of delight which this instrument gave their mothers and fathers in the late 30's and early 40's, when it was featured on every programme, week after week.

In recent years it is featured only periodically, and more's the pity.

I have heard Compton Organs in many parts of Ireland and in England, but none has given me more pleasure than the luxury instrument in the Limerick Savoy.

IN LONDON

Last year when I saw "Ben Hur" in the Empire Theatre in Leicester Square, London, I heard the superb twenty-unit Wurlitzer featured before the film.

Almost every Theatre Organ lover is now anxiously awaiting the future, or fate, of this instrument, as the famous Empire has closed its doors for the last time, after 33 years as the West End's most famous luxury cinema.

I understand that a private purchaser has expressed some interest in it and whilst the size of the instrument will necessitate careful consideration to any scheme, it is to be hoped that it may be saved in its entirety.

Europe's largest Theatre Organ is one of great dignity and tonal refinement, and is situated at the Odeon, Marble Arch, London, and is not, to my knowledge, being



Tommy Dando

used at the present time. Selfridges' famous London Store is hardly a place where one expects to hear organ music, but such was the case early this year when a display of organs was held.

IN DUBLIN.

A recent visit to the Dublin Theatre Royal to hear my old friend, Tommy Dando, at the organ, ended in disappointment.

The organ is no longer a feature of programmes at this house. Again, more's the pity.

In America, enthusiasts in San Francisco share similar anxieties regarding the fate of the thirty-six-unit Wurlitzer in the Fox Theatre, and which I hear is being forced to close, due to high taxation.

ORGANS ON THE AIR

Little has been heard of Electronic Organs on TV, but recently they have been featured on I.T.V. programmes like "Take Your Pick" for which Harold Smart plays, and "Double Your Monty," where we find Robin Richmond.

The B.C.C. policy regarding Light Programme organ broadcasts creates another problem among enthusiasts.

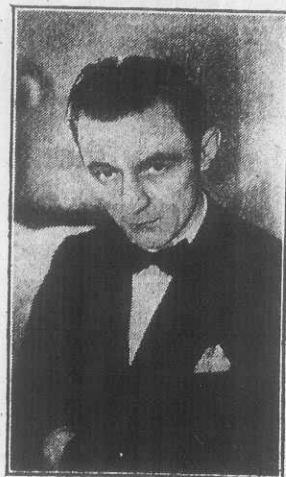
The B.C.C. considers that the theatre and cinema organ appeals only to a minority audience (30 per cent. reduction in listening figures for the last quarter of 1960), and has to take its rightful place in relation to music commanding a larger audience.

Apparently the B.C.C. thinks that with more cinemas closing, the decrease in audiences has reduced the appeal of the theatre organ.

Others think that as the public are being denied the live cinema organ entertainment, the B.C.C. would be doing its duty by allocating more air time to organs to help to compensate for the loss.

IN LIMERICK

My exclusive picture in this issue, taken by staff photographer, Donal McMonagle, shows the magnificent instrument in the Limerick Savoy. This instrument is valued at almost £10,000, and though the public only sees the actual keyboard



Savoy Manager Thomas G. English.

and flood-lit surround, the full instrument itself occupies almost the entire "under-the-stage" space.

It is to be sincerely hoped that this present trend to disregard the organ from cinema programmes is only temporary, and in this connection, Savoy Manager, Mr. Thomas G. English, assures me that whenever possible the Compton Organ will be heard at the Savoy.

It is good to hear of a Manager complying with the wishes of his patrons.

But, then, Mr. English has never wavered from the idea that the organ is traditionally part of the Limerick Savoy and that it adds that extra special touch to any programme in this largest house in Limerick.

The Oyster Ballroom

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