

# WICHITA DECLARES ATOE WEEK

## To Honor NEW MID-AMERICA CHAPTER

photos by Tom Cusick

*Members of the Mid-America Chapter A.T.O.E., Wichita, Kansas, made a musical week starting April 23 through 29, 1967, which climaxed in a theatre organ concert, sponsored by the chapter, with Chairman Robert L. Foley as the artist. Mr. Foley was presented in "A Tribute to Raymond Shelley", well-known organist at the Miller Theatre from 1933 until his death in March, 1965. Tickets were priced at \$1 donation, the proceeds of which will be used to provide for a pipe organ in Mr. Shelley's memory.*



Bob Foley, Chairman

WEEKLY activities started with members of the organization meeting at the Miller Theatre on Sunday morning, April 23, to begin the final refinement of the organ for a major concert. While some members played the Wurlitzer 235, others worked in the chambers making needed adjustments and repairs on the instrument. Later in the day, members of the program committee finished plans for publicity during the week, and urged those selling tickets to push a little harder in order to try to have a good crowd for the concert on Saturday night.

Tuesday morning found Chairman Foley and Vice-Chairman David Dillon at the weekly meeting of the Wichita City Commission to receive from Mayor Clarence Vollmer a proclamation declaring April 23 through 29, 1967, as "Wichita A.T.O.E. Week".

Wednesday evening found several of us part of a large crowd at the Miller Theatre for a special showing of "MacBeth". The chapter, in recognition of A.T.O.E. Week in Wichita, sponsored a pre-show special for the theatre. Bob Foley was at the Wurlitzer console for thirty minutes before show time and we were given a short preview of the Saturday night program. This preview was well-received and, needless to say, inspired us to work even harder on ticket sales.

Thursday and Friday mornings were spent helping Bob with more adjustments and final tuning of the instrument. Several members were kind enough to take off from their jobs to work on this project. Then came Saturday, the big day that all of us were waiting for. At eight a.m., four of us met at the theatre to replace shutter bumpers and do "touch-up" tuning of the organ. At 9:00 o'clock, Sig Bensen from Station KAKE-TV arrived at the theatre to do a color sound film of the concert which was to be presented on the 10:00 o'clock news. We were through about 11:30 and all enjoyed a welcome coffee break which had thoughtfully been provided by two kind members. After a few more

checks on the organ, everyone went home to rest and eagerly await the big event.

Target time for members to arrive at the theatre to wait for regular show to break and to be sure of their assigned jobs was scheduled for 10:45 p.m. At 11:00 p.m. we were overjoyed to see a long line of people waiting to get into the theatre and another line waiting at the box office where Kathryn Moore was busy selling more tickets.

The huge gold curtain parted and David Dillon, master of ceremonies, started the evenings festivities. After greeting the guests and partons, David noted the fact that this was the climax of the Wichita A.T.O.E. Week and, in addition to paying tribute to the memory of Raymond Shelley, we were also commemorating the 45th birthday of the theatre. To help celebrate the Miller's big day, May 1, 1922, David introduced Mr. Bob McLean, Assistant Manager of the theatre. With the assistance of Dorothy Rork, David presented Mr. McLean with a large cake which had been specially decorated to resemble a stage with the curtains open. Inscribed on the cake was "Happy Birthday Miller Theatre—45 years—from ATOE". A ten by fourteen framed copy of the program cover picture was also presented to McLean. Following Mr. McLean's acceptance of the cake and the picture, David then read the portion of the proclamation from the city which stated, in part, that "everyone was urged to continue to enjoy organ music."

The house lights dimmed, a spotlight illuminated the organ console, and a big roll of the kettle drum announced the Overture to *Mame*. For the next hour and a half Bob moved from one selection to another, changing the mood from "dirty blues" to the lilting *Fascination* to the always exciting *Jealousie*. The beautiful counter melodies in second touch brought attention to the fact that an artist was painting us a musical picture. *Broadway Medley* brought back memories to those of us who were of



David Dillon and Bob Foley watch as Mayor Clarence E. Vollmer signs proclamation designating April 23-29, 1967, WICHITA ATOE WEEK.



Foley receiving proclamation from Mayor Vollmer.

that era, and excitement to those of us afraid to admit our ages. *Brazil* from the Shelley Suite left the audience breathless and applause interrupted an interlude into *Autumn Leaves*. The last number, *We Just Couldn't Say Good-bye* came true as the audience demanded two encores. A hush fell over the theatre as Irving Berlin's *The Song is Ended* melted into the crowd, only to be revived by the sound of *Bye Bye Blues*.

Members of the Mid-America Chapter were quite elated with the public's acceptance of the concert and lauded Bob Foley's artistry. Numerous comments were heard from the audience as they left the theatre hoping soon to hear another concert of this caliber.

A number of out-of-town guests were

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## MID-AMERICA STORY, cont.



Foley at the console of the Miller Theatre Wurlitzer, Style 235.

present for the concert including Don Story of Phoenix, Arizona, who was the farthest from home; while others came from Springfield, Missouri; Kansas City, Missouri; Miami, Oklahoma; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Daylight savings time and a post-concert party managed to cause many of the chapter to get little sleep. Also the need of being up and at Bob Foley's house at 10:00 a.m. for the groundbreaking of the large new studio room to house the 4/22 Morton-Wurlitzer caused others to lose more sleep. Representatives from three A.T.O.E. groups manned shovels to turn the first dirt. Dr. Robert Fray, secretary of the Heart of America Chapter, Kansas City, Missouri; Mrs. Oneta Puckette, representing ATOE'ers from Miami, Oklahoma area; and Bob Foley, Chairman of the

Mid-America Chapter. A good time was had with a jam session on the 3/5 Morton-Wurlitzer.

Final activity of the week was a trip to the Miller Theatre for the regular Sunday morning session. Members and guests alike were well entertained by Bob Foley, Don Story, Oneta Puckette, and Victor Rork.

## A Neighborhood Tale, cont.

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This type of conversion is not unusual around the U. S., but in Chicago this was the first time the public had been exposed to theatre organ in a long time. This first public CATOE concert was important for two reasons: the overwhelming public response necessitated returning Pearl to the Barton console on May 18, and secondly, the powers-that-be in theatre management circles were forced to sit up and take notice at the response to live theatre organ. It is now known the public relations man for Brodman and Sherman theatres was aware of the show, and more important, the Balaban and Katz chain knew of it too. In speaking with a B & K executive relating to other matters shortly after CATOE's first success, it was stated B & K "had spotters out" for the show. In response to a question about resuscitating organ activities (notably at their Chicago Theatre) at B & K, the reply was "This is the first time it has been done and we'll have to wait and see what happens if it happens again." Thus where the official silence at B & K about their organs had been as solid as a stone wall, the wall seems to have been cracked. It would seem that nothing succeeds like success.

## University of Omaha, cont.

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nesses, underscored all prat-falls, and raced with dogs, pussycats, heroes and villains. There wasn't a rough edge or a dead spot in the entire twenty minutes of music and effects. Anything after this *tour de force* couldn't have been other than an anticlimax. So Bill obliged with some oldies, played a few requests and said good-night with *San Francisco*—the one with "little cable cars." Spontaneously the entire house rose to its feet for a standing ovation. Bill finally got away by playing *76 Trombones*. Only then did the happy fans head homeward to turn their clocks forward—thus losing still another hour's sleep.

Aside from being an artistic triumph for Bill McCoy—which it was!—the concert has brought about an immediate renaissance of interest in theatre pipe organ music in eastern Nebraska. "Please do it again, soon." say the press, the fans, and those who missed the concert, but now wish they hadn't. And who knows, they might just do that in Omaha.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING— DETROIT, MICHIGAN

9:00 A.M. SATURDAY,

JULY 1, 1967

Meeting opened by President Schrum with welcome and introductions. In attendance were 7 of 8 regular Board members, with Chapter Chairmen and representatives bringing the total to 19.

Briefly, the results are as follows:

Financial report for the period Jan. 1 through June 30, 1967.

Received:	\$20,196.34
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Disbursed:	12,749.60
Bal. on hand:	8,042.99

The Board strongly suggests that all chapters take steps to incorporate and obtain liability insurance.

The National insurance policy will be changed to a general liability policy effective immediately.

The Board gave full support to a program of streamlining and standardizing the National structure, aimed at eliminating confusion and unnecessary bookwork, and to improve communication. Details will be in a letter to Chapter officers.

An increase of \$1 was unanimously passed, raising National dues to \$7 annually, beginning Jan. 1, 1968. This was deemed necessary due to increased business and printing costs over the last three years.

A roster was deemed unfeasible at this time due to the cost, and because it is so soon out of date due to constant movement of the members. An alternative solution is being studied.

A new policy regarding selection of future convention sites and dates was adopted. Bids will be called for each spring, and the site and dates will be de-

termined on at the Annual Board of Directors Meeting during the convention. The announcement will be made at the Annual Membership Meeting and Banquet, and subsequently published in the official publication, *Theatre Organ Bombarde*.

It was announced that Bill Peterson is retiring from the post of Publications Director after the August issue of *Theatre Organ Bombarde*. Tom Kaasa, Seattle Wash., has agreed to accept the post. The editorial staff will remain the same, with George Thompson and W. Stuart Green as editors, with the addition of Lloyd W. Klos as contributing editor. Vi Thompson will continue as Circulation Director. A word of thanks was given Bill for his fine accomplishments in the past year.

National elections were held, with the following results:

### President

*Richard H. Schrum, Seattle Wn.*

### Vice President

*Richard F. Kline Jr., Frederick Md.*

### National Sec'y

*Marilyn A. Schrum, Seattle, Wash.*

### Treas.

*W. "Tiny" James, Alameda, Cal.*

A word of appreciation was given to retiring officers Dottie MacClain and Erwin Young Jr., who will remain on the Board.

The Honorary Member for 1967-68 was selected. Retiring Vice President Erwin A. Young Jr. was selected by a unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon by a very unanimous vote.