

Lansdowne, Pa.

Teen-Ager Featured as Theater Organist

Forty years ago the above headline would not have been too unusual. However, in the year 1968 this caption is quite odd, albeit true, for several reasons.

First, there is a scarcity of theatres with organs still in place. Even more scarce are movie houses featuring live organ music. Then we add a talented young lady who is playing theatre organ regularly, in a theatre, and a rare item of more than passing interest appears.

Our subject is Miss Shirley Hannum, 18, of Lansdowne, Pa., who is featured organist at the Lansdowne Theatre. Miss Hannum started at the age of four, picking out nursery rhymes on a toy piano. At six she started formal piano lessons which continued until she was 13, when she discovered organ music and the versatility of the instrument.

Shirley started organ lessons with Mr. Dan Hodgson; then Leonard MacClain took over her musical education. With his capable tutoring Miss Hannum became a polished theatre organist. At 15 she was hired by Sears Department Store to play organ during the Christmas holiday season.

At 16 Shirley started playing the 3-8 Kimball organ on Friday and Saturday evenings during intermissions. A short while later, due to public acceptance, the organ was placed on schedule, being played every day before the show and at the intermissions. Miss Hannum has been at the console most evenings since the regular policy was inaugurated.

Now at 18 she is organist-choir director at the Bethany Temple Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Shirley taught an organ class in the Lansdowne-Aldan High School this summer; has played weddings, receptions, and concerts. She also teaches a few young students privately.

During the 1967 ATOE Detroit Convention, Miss Hannum was a chapter representative, playing the Orbits 4-34 Wurlitzer.

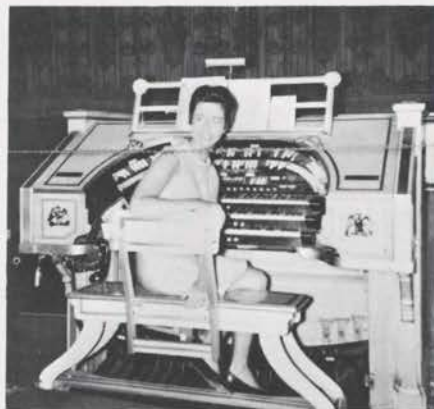
No doubt part of Shirley's ever mounting enthusiasm for theatre organ is due to her engagement at the Lansdowne Theatre Kimball. This 3-manual, 8-rank organ was installed in 1927 when the theatre opened, with Leonard MacClain as organist.

Richmond, Va.

'T.O. Capitol of World' Names June 2 'T.O. Day'

Once again, Richmond, Virginia, Theatre Organ Capital of the World, was the host for a gala concert featuring Eddie Weaver at the console of the Wurlitzer 3-17, 260 Special in the Mosque Auditorium. The Mosque and its fabulous organ and acoustics certainly need no elaboration in these pages, their fame by now being world-wide. However, many of the thousand-plus concert-goers were indeed impressed with the Mosque's new look; a completely redecorated auditorium, not ruined by modern trapping, but rather redone in the lush style of the Twenties when this beautiful auditorium first saw use.

Promptly at 3 p.m. the house lights dimmed and Potomac Valley Chapter Chairman Woody Wise came on stage to announce the guest artist. For the



SHIRLEY HANNUM, 18 years of age, gives smiling acknowledgement of applause at one of her regular intermission performances at the Lansdowne, Pa., 3-8 Kimball.

In 1963 it was renovated by Bill Greenwood and crew. After 36 years of silence it emerged a sparkling example of a well-voiced theatre organ.

Mrs. Eleanor O'Connor, manager of the theatre, believes the organ has a place in theatre programming; she is more than enthusiastic on the subject of Shirley Hannum's playing ability—and these two factors are the necessary ingredients for furthering a promising career and perpetuating the theatre organ.

It is gratifying to see young people of Miss Hannum's calibre taking an active interest in playing theatre organ, since it is they who will carry on the tradition of the instrument and will determine its future as an art form.

next two hours Eddie Weaver led the audience through some of the many beautiful excursions in theatre organ music for which he is so well known. The program ranged in scope from the classics, operatic arrangements and transcriptions, right down to the very latest tunes, all of which showed the versatility of the Mosque Wurlitzer. Soon Eddie's brother, Charlie Weaver, just had to get into the act, and with his help the audience was kept in a rollicking mood all during the program. After intermission, Eddie returned to play the violin which he does indeed quite well, along with the organ, with the ghost of the Mosque controlling the organ unseen, a feature when presented at Eddie's home base, the nearby Byrd Theatre, always has the audience begging to know how this is done. A bit later on, the motion picture screen was lowered and the audience was treated to some "good old corn," with all the greats of the silent comedy screen parading by in a seemingly endless display of slapstick humor which Eddie so skillfully makes so enjoyable. It was all too soon that the final medley was presented; a duet for two organs, Eddie at the Wurlitzer and his very talented daughter, Jody, at a Hammond spinet with two Leslies set up on stage.

Earlier that morning, ATOE members and friends were the guests of manager Robert Coulter at the Byrd Theatre for the morning concert which featured Ray Brubacher at the console of the de luxe 4-17 Wurlitzer. Ray's program ranged from selections from the new film, *Dr. Dolittle*, to several seldom-heard tunes such as *Butterflies in the Rain* and *When You're Counting the Stars Alone*, and closed with a grand finale combination of *Under the Double Eagle* and *The Stars and Stripes Forever* played as one composition.

Altogether, it was another most memorable Sunday for theatre organ lovers. Appreciation must be expressed to Bob Coulter and Cliff Schwartz at the Byrd, and to Tommy Landrum, Dick Barlow, and Paul White for their work on the organs, and to everyone who was involved in making the public appearance of organist par excellence Eddie Weaver the gala occasion that it was.

— Ray Brubacher