

## CONVENTION PREVIEW

# THE CHICAGO STADIUM'S BARTON

by Lloyd E. Klos

*(The author realized much valuable information for this feature from 1929 issues of "The Diapason.")*

For many months prior to its dedication, the Chicago Stadium's 6-51 Barton organ was under construction in the factory of the Bartola Musical Instrument Co. in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The instrument was designed by Dan Barton, and its building was under the supervision of Alfred Stoll, superintendent at the plant.

At the time of its installation, it was the largest unit ever constructed, and the voicing and range were on par with demands of a building of this size.

The organ's big hour came on August 1, 1929, when Ralph Waldo Emerson, organist titulaire, assisted by his wife Elsie May Look Emerson, played the dedicatory program. The audience ranged from 6-month-old babies to 85-year-old men. Twenty-five thousand program invitations had been sent out, and there was no admission fee.

The program opened with "The Pilgrims' Chorus" from "Tannhauser", and according to one reviewer, "The Industrial Workers of the World had staged a disturbance a few blocks from the stadium the same evening, and hundreds of police were kept busy dispersing the crowd and beating up stubborn heads with banana stalks, to the accompaniment of patrol wagon gongs, etc., but those of us who got through the noisy crowd to hear the pilgrims, were impressed with the fact that these must have been much more numerous than the Chicago I.W.W. The tremolo, or rather the batch of 16 tremolos of which the announcer boasted through the amplifier, was at work throughout the number, somewhat to our regret, as it made the crusaders sound as if their teeth chattered as they sang. Perhaps they had been out in a cold rain. The Bach-Gounod 'Ave Maria', played by Mr. Emerson, and the 'Adeste Fideles' sounding out over the fight ring, seemed somewhat incongruous — about the same as Dvorak's 'Humoresque' at a recital in church, and no more so.

"Mr. Emerson distinguished himself with his clever imitations of a newspaperman's dream, beginning with the snoring; of the old-fashioned reed organ, etc., and by a splendid storm imitation. It was the best thunder we ever heard on any organ and was worth going a distance to hear. The organ was used effectively also in accompaniments

to excellent solos by Herman Felber, Jr., violinist; Theodore DeMoulin, cellist; William O'Connor, a splendid tenor; as well as a male trio and an ensemble selection. Mrs. Emerson, assisting her husband, also gave a pleasing interpretation of Kreisler's 'Caprice Viennois.'

"Toward the close, came the imitations of 300 calliopes, 500 bagpipes, 150 German bands, 200 fifes, 300 trumpets, 100 drums and 25 100-piece bands — which was, it was needless to say, a sufficiency.

"The announcer had told us at least 40 times in the course of the evening through the amplifier, that this was the 'world's greatest organ,' and we never argue with an amplifier — certainly not

with the one installed in the Chicago Stadium."

The Chicago Stadium, occupying an entire block, is situated on West Madison Street between Wood and Lincoln Streets, a mile and a half west of the Loop. It seats 20,000, and when opened, was the largest amphitheatre devoted to sports in the United States.

Paddy Harmon, well-known Chicago sports promoter, was president of the company, and originator of the organ idea. He had been in the amusement business, operating dance halls, theatres, bicycle races and other sporting events for years, and owing to inadequate music at these affairs, conceived the idea of an organ for the new stadium.



Al Melgard at the 7½-ton Chicago Stadium Console. It is situated on a platform high above the floor and painted a bright red. Notice NBC carbon microphone at left. L. Klos Collection

### STOPLIST OF CHICAGO STADIUM 6-51 BARTON ORGAN:

Tuba Profunda	Viole Celeste IV	Harp (Metal);
Tuba Mirabilis	Viole Celeste V	Tibia Pizzicato
Solo Tuba	Viola Celeste VI	Chimes (Tower Bells)
English Post Horn I	Solo String I	Bass Drum I
English Post Horn II	Solo String II	Bass Drum II
English Horn	Gamba	Bass Drum III
Tuba Celeste I	Gamba Celeste I	Bass Drum IV
Tuba Celeste II	Gamba Celeste II	Bass Drum V
Tuba Celeste III	Vox Humana I	Bass Drum VI
Oboe Horn I	Vox Humana II	Cymbal I
Oboe Horn II	Vox Humana III	Cymbal II
Trumpet	Major Flute	Cymbal III
French Horn	Gross Flute	Cymbal IV
Saxophone	Double Flute	Cymbal V
Diaphone I	Tibia Plena	Cymbal VI
Diaphone II	Tibia Molis	Snare Drum I
Stentophone I	Clarinet I	Snare Drum II
Stentophone II	Clarinet II	Snare Drum III
Solo Diapason I	Kinura I	Snare Drum IV
Solo Diapason II	Kinura II	Snare Drum V
Tibia Clausa I	Kinura III	Snare Drum VI
Tibia Clausa II	Xylophone I	Snare Drum VII
Tibia Clausa III	Xylophone II	Snare Drum VIII
Tibia Clausa IV	Xylophone III	Snare Drum IX
Viole d'Orchestre I	Xylophone IV	Snare Drum X
Viole d'Orchestre II	Orchestra Bells I	Snare Drum XI
Viole d'Orchestre III	Orchestra Bells II	Snare Drum XII
Viole Celeste I	Orchestra Bells III	Crash I
Viole Celeste II	Orchestra Bells IV	Crash II
Viole Celeste III		Crash III

Ed. Note: Complete specifications will be published in a future issue.

An original thought of Mr. Harmon's was the possibility of playing for the action of sporting events in the same manner in which action was accompanied in motion pictures, and this was the intended purpose of the organ.

Cost of the instrument was \$250,000. It is of the unit type and has 51 sets of pipes, 17 percussions and a drum section which consists of 6 bass drums, 6 cymbals and 12 snare drums. The wind pressures vary from 15 to 50 inches, there being 6 ranks of pipes on 50 inches pressure. The cathedral chimes have been adapted from Deagan church tower bells and are struck with 9-pound hammers, operating on 50 inches of wind pressure.

The console, painted a bright crimson, has 828 stopkeys, and weighs 7½ tons. All the combination pistons are duplicated by stopkeys. The blower is a 100 HP Orgoblo, and was the largest blower in the world at the time of installation, according to the Spencer Turbine Company.

The installation was made in the roof of the building in five specially built concrete organ lofts, the sound being distributed throughout the building by special deflectors.

When asked what organists have played it, Al Melgard, the house organist, says, "I had the contract in advance, but had to finish my WBBM contract, so Ralph Waldo Emerson opened at the Stadium until I took over. Both of us were with Barton Co. at the time. I have had several organ assistants and guests, but now, Ron Bogda is my regular assistant and is very fine. I have been there for almost 40 years. It could turn out to be steady, eh?"

The organ has been heard throughout the country via radio and television when National Presidential Nominating Conventions were held in the building. The instrument can easily be heard above the bedlam of 20,000 or more voices of those present.

If this writer's efforts to describe this behemoth of an instrument have been inadequate, we can only say that this organ cannot be described — it must be heard. It simply staggers the imagination! ATOE Conventioneers will have the opportunity to say "Amen" to that statement after they've heard the organ in July.

**SHOW TIME IN  
CHICAGO  
1969 National Convention  
July 3-7**

As Chicago Stadium organist Al Melgard will be featured at the 1969 ATOE Convention, the following article by organist Henry Francis Parks in the February 1927 issue of *Jacobs Orchestral Magazine*, found by Lloyd E. Klos, is of interest:

There are mighty few organists in Chicago who enjoy quite the popularity which Al Melgard of the Barton Organ School in the Mallers Building, does. There isn't a better liked organist in the city of Chicago than Al, and it is not only because he lends a helping hand to every deserving organist who comes along, but because Al has yet to be heard passing an unkind remark about any other organist or criticizing even his own pupils. He is no "Yes" man either! Just one of those rare specimens of the *genus homo* who thinks of the other fellow's feelings before he opens his mouth.

## DICK SCHRUM ENTERTAINS RTOS

Dick "M. L." Schrum, ATOE past president, wound up his mid-winter concert tour by presiding at the Rochester Theatre Organ Society's Wurlitzer on February 15. He had already done a most creditable job at the Radio City Music Hall on February 9, both as soloist and in duet with Ashley Miller. The big New York snowstorm caused Mr. and Mrs. Schrum to journey via Washington in order to appear in the Flower City.

The 2-hour program had several highlights. It is common knowledge that the baseball magnates are trying to change the structure of the national pastime. Dick changed the structure of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" by doing several versions: by imitating a calliope; by cha-cha beat; a la church organ; and finally as a marching jazz band with snarling posthorn. He performed, as he put it, "a deathless de-arrangement" of a popular tune, "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else Cha-Cha Rock," with the xylophone carrying the melody in solo throughout.

Dick performed several medleys, but the one which had nostalgia written all over it, was entitled "Those Were the Days — Memory Tweakers." It included "Destiny Waltz" which was the signature tune of the radio show "One Man's Family" and performed by organist Paul Carson for so many years; "Little Orphan Annie" which was done nightly by organist Larry Larson in the early Thirties; "The Perfect Song" which Gaylord Carter made famous on the "Amos n' Andy" show; and themes

That is one of the reasons why Al has opened many a Barton organ in new theatres throughout the country; why he broadcasts from WLS, the Sears Roebuck Company station operated from the Sherman Hotel; why the aces of the profession come in from all parts of the country to learn his tricks on the Barton instrument; why he really needs an 8-day week to teach all those who apply for instruction. There are other reasons. For instance, he has studied theory, harmony, counterpoint, composition and what have you? He has been a legitimate church organist. He has held some of the best movie positions in this section of the country. What more, I ask you, would you ask?

Above all, I have yet to see Al ruffled or rattled. Despite the many responsibilities he has, he keeps an evener keel than anyone I know of. Al Melgard is a mighty high-class fellow, a gentleman, and a real organist!

from the radio shows "Take It or Leave It," "Burns and Allen" and the "Bob Hope Show." A rendition of "Hard-Hearted Hannah" turned out to be a Xerox copy of the way a George Wright would perform it.

Having visited the local Strassenburgh Planetarium, the artist played an appropriate number, the beautiful "Stars Are the Windows of Heaven," remembered as a best-selling disc of the Mills Brothers and, much earlier, of Jesse Crawford. Following "Keep Your Sunny Side Up," there was a pause as Dick left the Howard Seat (first performer to use it) and the announcement of forthcoming artists (Lee Erwin, George Wright and Ann Leaf) was made.

And, here she came, Martha Lake in all her glory(?) With flying high-heeled shoes, crazy hat, bright green dress, love beads, and a vase of flowers on the console, "she" did her thing. "The Sabre Dance," "Spring Song" and "Paramount on Parade" were picked out of the wild montage.

Though Dick loved playing the 4-22, time was fleeting, and it was necessary to cut some numbers in the second half. A salute to the great British organist, Sidney Torch, was included, as were "Melancholy Serenade," "Satin Doll," and a dedication to wife Marilyn, to whom he became engaged nine years previously, "My Funny Valentine." An encore was "Lazy River," and the program ended with the console's lowering to "I'll Be Seeing You."

—Lloyd E. Klos