

OUR MANNERS ARE SHOWING

by John Muri

Social groups develop behavior patterns for themselves, with some of the rules emerging in response to unhappy experiences. Organ buffs, like everybody else, need occasionally to review the permanent ethical principles and see if our practices will bear approval in their light.

I thought of this when a program chairman told me about a soloist he had engaged — let's call the player Joe Tibia — who hadn't bothered to make up or send a program. When asked what should be listed on the printed program, the player replied, "Joe Tibia Favorites." The chairman then asked what should be listed for the half after the intermission. The reply was "More Joe Tibia Favorites." That fellow couldn't have given much thought to his program. On the night of the concert he didn't appear at the theatre until the moment he was to enter the pit. He had everyone worried, and I don't suppose he will be asked to return. It is certainly not admirable nor intelligent.

Some organists do not send adequate biographical press-material to committees that are anxious to get wide publicity. If there is no information to print, what kind of publicity job can a committee do? Every organist who contemplates going on tour should have several pages of good up-to-date publicity material ready and should send them out as soon as an engagement is confirmed. This will include a respectable program that is more than just "Popular Hits" or "Favorites", and there should be no delay in the speedy release of advertising copy. A chapter that hires an organist has a right to his full cooperation in making the affair a success.

There is a problem for organists in deciding whether or not to play compositions used by other soloists. In the classical field, this is no problem. Everybody plays what he likes and nobody cares much, but what would people think if some of us would

start using "The Perfect Song"? I don't suppose there would be any more earthquakes in California than usual, but I get irritated when I hear about somebody's featuring one of my favorite war-horses. If a fellow has developed a specialty, he should be allowed exclusive use of it — assuming, of course, that he hasn't copied it from somebody else.

Belittling remarks are out of order, unless harm may come from concealment of damaging facts. It is important not to make such remarks at concerts where strangers may be listening. They might be much-impressed newcomers who can be so negatively affected as to give up going to more of our concerts. Then, too, they might be relatives of the artist. At such times, it's better to follow the old saying: don't say anything if you can't say anything good. It's stupid to antagonize people needlessly.

In this regard a number of us are offensive. A few of us have too strong a drive to dominate chapter activities; others of us have too hair-trigger a tendency to get mad and quit at the mere suggestion of offense. I am dismayed as I witness friction between individuals, between groups within chapters, and even between groups in different geographic regions. Sometimes the antipathies are justified, but usually they spring from pettiness on one side or the other. It is reprehensible for us to hold grudges against members of other chapters simply because the latter are members of another group. Jealousy and hatefulness are at their worst when members of one chapter schedule activities in direct competition with another simply to cripple the latter's activity. I suppose there is no way to make people like one another, but simple morality dictates that we refrain from hurting other people's honest endeavors. I can't find words to describe the horrors of hatefulness and the ugliness it creates in those who contain it.

On the happier side, Christmas parties are occasions for us to get together and establish stronger friendships. I urge people who have parties in homes with organ installations to allot only a certain amount of time for organ-playing — say, an hour — after which the instrument is shut down while the party continues. No organ should be booming away for hours in a restricted area, forcing people to yell at each other for conversation. The host might be happy in having visitors play his pride and joy, but it's rough on those who want to talk to friends they don't see very often. There is no problem in large homes where those who wish to talk can move to a less noisy area, but there is no excuse for protracted loud organ-playing in a small home. Perish the thought that there needs to be continual background-music at our parties. They would be pretty dull affairs if they needed it. Organists at such parties should avoid using *loud* and *louder* as their only registrations. Some booze and a couple of organists playing loud duets can make listening and talking painful, if not impossible. And, by the way, I don't think anyone should smoke, eat, or drink while at a friend's console.

Especially at Christmas, we should not neglect our older retired players. A number of them live alone, and it is only civil to call them at times to see if they are well or if they need help. At our house we have occasionally asked an old timer in for dinner, or we have gone out to visit, taking along some little present or something special to eat. A card to a sick or afflicted member can be very helpful. How important these little things become after we can't do anything about them any more!

Each year I increasingly value the privilege of knowing and hearing retired veterans like Lew Betterly, Bill Holleman, Ida Sermon, and Luella Wickham. We are especially grateful for the presence and activity of the veteran old pros who are still working. How good it is to know that people like Lloyd Del Castillo, Al Melgard, Reginald Foort, Pearl White, and Ann Leaf are still part of the scene! As time passes and old friends become fewer, the dear faces of these players and their music are yet with us, a source of daily strength, of thanksgiving, and of rejoicing. □