

by Paul Abernethy, Jr.

In the August 1967 issue of the *THEATRE ORGAN BOMBARDE*, there is an article telling of the hectic and speedy removal of a 2/8 Robert-Morton from the Center Theatre in Durham, N.C. by a handful of ATOS members from the Piedmont Chapter. After four long years of storage, uncertainty, worry, negotiation and finally restoration and installation, the Morton had found a new home. It is housed by Dr. Paul Abernethy in his home in Burlington, N.C. and maintained by this author.

Two years were required to restore the Morton and to make its new home ready to accommodate her. Every chest, switch-stack and tremolo were cleaned and re-leathered and it was necessary to strip five coats of white paint from the console to restore it to its natural mahogany finish. Since the new chambers were not designed along the old floor plan, new rack and floor boards were made to meet the specifications of the new chambers. To insure maximum reliability, the blower, generator, and a host of magnets were rewound and every facet of the organ was scrutinized carefully to make sure it was in the best condition possible.

When the organ was originally installed, there was an echo chamber included in the specifications. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of these four ranks are not known. Consequently, there was an abundance of spare stop keys which were put to good use. To have added another rank of pipes would have destroyed the tone and made the organ into something other than what it was meant to be, so it was decided that adding

View of the 40' by 20' addition to the Abernethy home.



# A MORTON PLAYS AGAIN

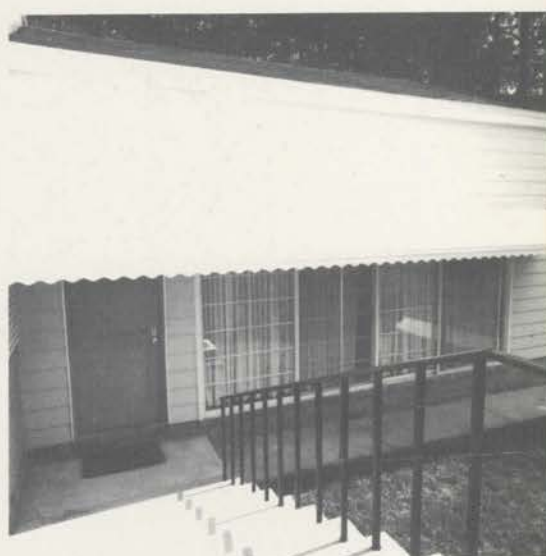
sound effects and two percussion instruments would be a subtle but yet significant change for the better. Included in this addition was a Wurlitzer Harp, Piano, Fire Gong, Bird Call, Car Horn, Cow Bell, Maid's Bell and a Train Whistle. These new effects have, on the one hand, enlarged the scope of the organ immensely but have not detracted from the original character of the organ.

Finally, on a hot August 31, 1970, Eddie Weaver, staff organist at the Byrd Theatre in Richmond, Virginia, came to Burlington to play the opening concert on the reborn "Mighty Morton." Over 120 people crammed into the "Abernethy Cathedral" or lounged on the lawn to hear his lively and entertaining performance. This marked the end of two long years of restoration and it might be added that Eddie made every back-breaking minute well worth it! The Abernethy organ was originally installed in the National

THEATRE ORGAN



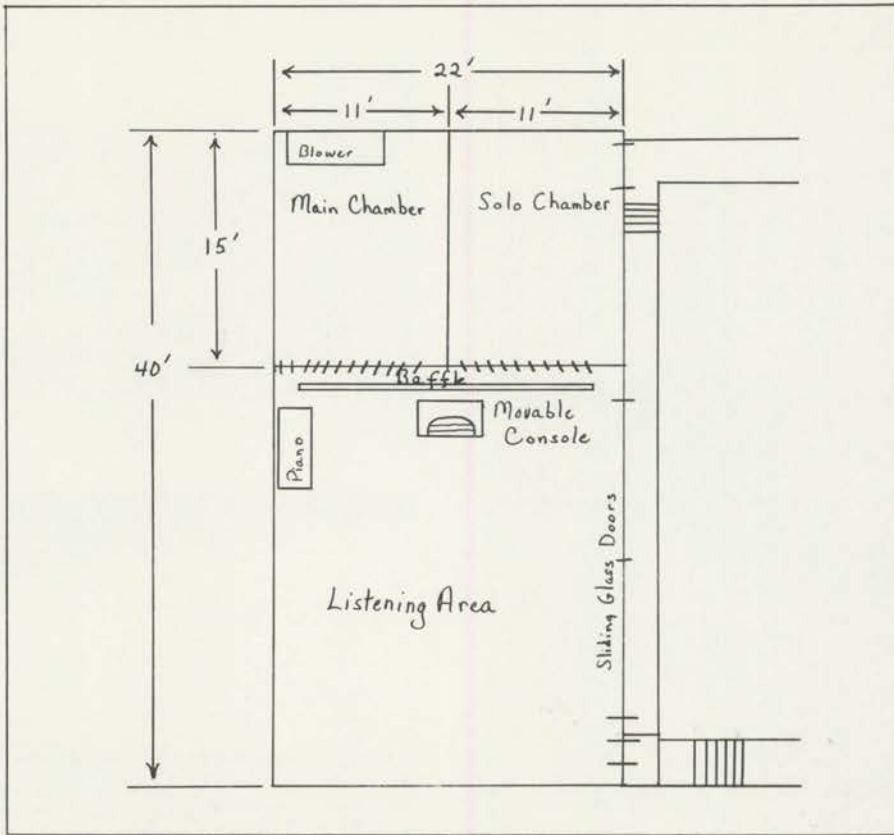
Chambers are behind baffle above the console.



Visitor's entrance to "Abernethy's Cathedral."

"Doc" Abernethy at the console.





Theatre, Greensboro, N.C. in 1922 (order No. 2343), just 22 miles from its present location. In the mid 1930's, Vernon Suit, a local organ buff, moved the organ to the Center Theatre in Durham, N.C. where his wife later became staff organist. There the organ remained until its removal in 1966. (This particular organ has a baby sister, a 2/6 Robert Morton, located in Greensboro. An article is forthcoming on the condition of the organ).

To all those who contributed their time and talent on the Morton which has been affectionately dubbed "Margaret," this author extends his hearty thanks for a job well done. Without your help, the job would never have been accomplished. All of you throughout the ATOS who have given time on your jobs and families or those who have sacrificed dating and girl-friends to lend a hand, regardless of where or when a theatre organ needed your help, are showing what ATOS is all about. We need more like you and I salute you all. Let's keep those Tibias sobbing! □

Rebuilding of the ex-Center Theatre's (Durham, N.C.) 2/8 Robert Morton in the Burlington, N.C. home of Dr. Paul Abernethy.

