



Barry Simmons, ATOS Library Curator.

Morton theatre organ into shape. Simmons has been hooked ever since on restoring and refurbishing those tabernacles of sound which, in another time, embellished Rudolf Valentino and Buck Jones' silent deeds-of-derring-do.

Dr. Abernethy, like Simmons, is a resident of Elon College, North Carolina.

I consider it an honor and an opportunity to be the national curator," Simmons said last month in his office at Elon College where he has been Director of Financial Aid for two years. "Already I've been working with Dr. Abernethy to enlarge the holdings of cue sheets — both originals and reprints — pictures, and tapes. I just hope we can improve the collection and make more people aware of what an experience one of these old organs can be."

Simmons is a native of Chase City, Virginia. He was graduated from Elon College in 1973 with a degree in political science. After some graduate work at Middle Tennessee State University, Simmons returned to his alma mater as an administrative assistant and eventually moved into his present position.

He is married to the former Janie McCulley of Tenby Chase, Delran, New Jersey. They have no children. The 25 year old Simmons is also secretary-treasurer of the Piedmont Organ Society, Inc.

As if keeping his eye on the ATOS Library isn't enough, Simmons is working with Mac Abernethy, Dr. Paul Abernethy's son, installing a 3/11 Wurlitzer in the 5,000-seat gymnasium at the college. This project is about half completed and lacks only a little more money and elbow grease. □

## Tape Recording . . .

# PRIVILEGE or PESTILENCE?

by Allen R. Miller

We have heard from both sides on the question of recording live performances. It would be unusual to find a theatre organ concert not being recorded by someone on quality equipment for historical purposes. Often, these recordings are made available for limited copying, with the permission of the artist, for personal use only. Such recordings have enhanced my own enjoyment of theatre organ beyond the selection of artists and instruments available on disc.

Although we went through a period when tape recording was not permitted during concerts, the miniaturization and improvement of recording equipment in the battery-operated, hand-held category, has led to an acceptance of such devices at concerts. Before such devices were allowed, they showed up at concerts under heavy overcoats, in handbags or otherwise smuggled into the auditorium. Due to fear of being caught, the underground recordists went to great lengths to keep their activities as inconspicuous as possible. It was possible to sit next to someone who was recording a performance, and never realize that a recording was being made.

With the present acceptance of hand-held recorders at concerts, the use of these devices is becoming a plague. If you own or operate a cassette recorder or other battery-portable recorder, you should give some serious thought to the privilege you are enjoying, and what steps you can take to ensure continued allowance of these devices.

At the 1974 ATOS national convention, I couldn't believe how inconsiderate some members were to their fellow-listeners by what I will call obnoxious fiddling with recording apparatus. In at least two instances, fistfights nearly broke out over the abuse of the recording privilege. ATOS is a fun organization, with most of its members deriving pleasure from listening to theatre organ. It is possible to record without distracting those who are sitting near you. Here are some general tips to follow:

First, know your equipment. Theatres are usually dark during performances. Darkness is no place to become acquainted with a new recorder. If you can't operate it blindfolded, then leave it home.

Do not stop and start your recorder during the performance. This rule above all should be emphatic. In almost every case, a C-90 or C-120 cassette will get you through a section of a concert without stopping. Start recording before the organist begins to play, and let the recorder run. Sit back and enjoy the concert yourself. If the tape runs out during a selection, do not turn the tape over or otherwise fiddle with the recorder until the applause between selections. If you are a bit clever, you will note the time when you start your recorder, and can pick a proper time to turn the tape over before the tape runs out.

Try to operate your machine as quietly as possible. This takes practice at home. You can eject a tape silently by placing your hand lightly on the cassette and pressing the EJECT button slowly. All operating buttons click loudly when the recorder shuts off or if STOP is pressed. You can keep the buttons from clicking by holding a finger on the depressed button and releasing it gently when the recorder shuts off or when you simultaneously depress STOP. If you think the tape may run out during a selection (according to your timing from the start of the program) hold your fingers on the PLAY and RECORD buttons. When the recorder shuts off, the buttons will be released against your fingers, and you may then gently release the buttons silently. Try this at home to get the feel of your particular recorder.

If you experience difficulty, either forget it, or leave the room until you have solved the problem. I know of one person who inserted a fresh cassette backwards . . . so that the tape was already at the end of side two. Every time this person pressed RECORD, the recorder waited a moment, then shut off because the tape was not moving. Not realizing what



the trouble was, the person kept trying to record for several minutes to the distress of everyone within several seats.

Don't be a balcony spotlihter. If you need a small flashlight to see what you are doing, use the miniature penlight type and fix it so the light is subdued. Giving the bulb several coats of fingernail polish will do a good job or you can make a paper diffuser for the bulb. Remember that nobody wants to see your flashlight blinking on and off like a firefly.

Resist the urge to play back the last selection at the end of the concert. Nobody wants to hear your long-lost echo, and it is too late to do anything if your machine didn't record. Please wait until you are at home or in the privacy of your own car to play your tape.

If your recorder is the type which bleats when the tape runs out, don't even think of taking it with you. That end signal sounds like a Clarinet cipher, and if the organist doesn't stop playing altogether, five men may run for the organ chamber. Also, if your machine is capable of playing or monitoring through speakers while recording, be doubly certain that the speaker is off or the volume turned all the way down before you start recording. Otherwise the sound from the speaker will be picked up by the microphone and cause feedback... a howling which also sounds like a cipher and will cause nasty glances from your neighbors and more scurrying for the chambers.

Don't rewind or fast-forward a tape during a performance, as this also causes disturbing noises. If you record the entire performance without stopping, and know how to operate your machine, you will have no reason for advancing the tape in either direction.

These suggestions will help you operate your tape recorder as inconspicuously as possible. The following suggestions will help you get as good a recording as possible.

1. Use a good quality tape of the "High-Output/Low-Noise" type. Having recorded several hundred cassettes myself, I have found MAXELL UD to be "the best," and this seems to be backed up by leading audio magazines using it as a standard



Sponge Microphone Holder.

by which other tapes are tested. TDK and MEMOREX are also excellent. I have never had a MAXELL cassette jam, not even a C-120, and I have heard this same report from other enthusiasts. This is not meant to "push" certain brands, but rather to pass along my own personal experience.

2. Do not hold the microphone in your hand. Movement of your

fingers will create all sorts of extraneous noise in your tape. Instead, fasten the microphone to your clothing at the shoulder or make a holder by cutting a hole in a cellulose sponge (the soft foam type) and insert the microphone through the hole. You can now hold the sponge, or even set it on a convenient surface or wedge it between two seat backs. The soft sponge will isolate the microphone from the noise you would otherwise introduce by handling it.

3. Allow the recorder to rest quietly in your lap or on a stationary flat surface. Moving the machine while it is recording will tend to introduce speed variations.
4. Insert fresh batteries before the concert. With some recorders, a fresh set of batteries will just last through one concert.

Where tape recorders are allowed, let's be as unobtrusive as possible with them so that we may all retain the privilege of using them. □

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