



Reunited with an old friend, Reginald Foort confides to his concert audience that his favorite Moller sounds better than ever in the current location.



Reg. sets up registration for the *William Tell Finale* during his recording session. During his concert the night before, the opening bars generated the expected 'Hi-Yo Silver' from his enthusiastic audience.

After his concert, Reg. Foort graciously signed autographs on his records or on the flyleaf of his book, *The Cinema Organ* (Vestal Press). Here he's signing for Organ Power staffer Cheryl Creel. He later gave her some pointers on memorizing long passages of music.



Reg. Foort Resumes . . .

A 38-YEAR-OLD "LOVE AFFAIR"

Story and photos
by Stu Green

November 8, 1976, was an historic date for organ music enthusiasts in San Diego. Actually, the eyes of organ fans everywhere were on the southern California city, because Reg. Foort had come to town for a reunion with the 5/27 Moller "traveling" organ he had brought to reality 38 years ago in Great Britain. Both Foort and the organ have moved around considerably since 1938. Foort emigrated to the USA after World War II. The organ followed him a couple of years ago, after an 18-year stint as the official British Broadcasting Corporation's studio organ and a shorter time with the VARA Dutch broadcasting system at Hilversum in the Netherlands.

The organ was purchased by San Diego businessman Preston "Sandy" Fleet a few years ago and returned to the USA. After a facelifting at the Moller factory, it was moved to San Diego and installed in an ex-bowling alley now a pizza parlor in Pacific Beach, a seaside suburb of San Diego.

The logical man to open the new pizza parlor was obviously Reg. Foort, who in 1975 spanned the continent from his Florida home to fill the engagement. Perhaps it isn't a very good idea to have an organist of Foort's stature appear in concert at an opening where the invited guests are more intent on hearing themselves talk than listening to the music. Foort's performance was impressive but largely unheard due to the continuous loud chatter. The

organ-oriented press took the audience to task for its bad manners, and, for once, a printed bawling out may have worked.

A year passed, Foort must have had some apprehensions on Nov. 8, 1976 as he sat down at the 5-manual console before an audience this time comprised of paying customers. But it was a far different atmosphere than that of a year ago. This time the crowd (circa 500) was attentive, silent and appreciative — silent except for applause and the standing ovation before Foort had played a note.

He established a fine rapport with his audience immediately. When it had become obvious they had come to listen, he declared:

"There's nothing I like better than

Organ Power Pizza No. 2 is located in a former bowling alley. The superstructure once bore a sign to entice bowlers. The building is located in the business center of Pacific Beach.



THEATRE ORGAN

an audience that will sit back and enjoy the music — and SHUT UP!" The audience agreed enthusiastically, so Reg. continued.

"I suppose you poor, misguided people think I came here to entertain you. I really came here to enjoy myself." He smiled and patted the console; the audience was welcome to share that enjoyment.

While introducing the *La Boheme* music he confided, "I love opera music but I can't stand watching an opera (with) all those singers standing around yelling at one another." Again, the audience indicated agreement. His *La Boheme* set was a thing of beauty — and no yelling vocalists.

Reg. was especially happy with the acoustical environment. Even with a large crowd, there is still plenty of liveness in the room. There have been a few changes made in the organ. The aforementioned Trompette en Chamade has been added, although there's an equally bright Trumpet in one of the chambers. Also the Pedal Division now boasts a rare octave of Tympani, which Reg. didn't use because he played no tunes which required Kettledrums this time. There were also the 6 ranks of pipes of the separate Style D Wurlitzer organ which are playable from the Moller console, but these were temporarily "out of order." That leaves the Wurlitzer Tibia which has replaced the original huge-scale Moller Tibia set of pipes.

"Frankly, I don't hear much difference" said Reg. "The Moller Tibia was made by the former Wurlitzer wooden pipe designer who, by 1937, was working for Moller. The secret is in the tremulant. Moller was never able to 'trem' a Tibia as effectively as, say, Wurlitzer."

For three days, following his concert, Reg. Foort taped many of his concert selections for Doric Records for eventual release in grooves. It was his first recording session since the sides he cut for a "Readers Digest" release (played on the now gone Kearns-Carson 3/26 Wurlitzer organ in Hollywood) in the late '60s.

In all Reg. Foort had more than 10 days in San Diego with his beloved instrument and, judging from the concert and recorded sounds, the affection between instrument and master is mutual. Both artist and instrument still "have it." □

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A GALA WEEKEND IN TORONTO

by Lloyd E. Klos

The past year was devoted to a number of safaris, tours, and trips above the usual round of organ activity. The Rochester Theater Organ Society was no exception, and on November 6 & 7, sponsored a weekend junket to Toronto for the purpose of seeing and hearing theatre organ installations in the Organ Grinder Restaurant and Casa Loma.

The affair was originally planned as a one-day venture, but wiser heads, fearing rush-rush atmosphere, moved to make it more leisurely. Though an excellent decision, it still required several weeks of meticulous planning.

General chairman of the event was RTOS Vice President Tom Lockwood, ably assisted by his wife, Marcia. Bus captains and their assistants included the writer, Ken and Elinor Evans, Ernest and June Weirick and Harold Hyland. George Lockwood served as official photographer.

Close to 100 had boarded the three Greyhound cruisers (appropriately named "Tibia" "Kinura" and "Vox Popper") on Saturday morning by departure time. Fortified by doughnuts and steaming cups of coffee, tea and cocoa enroute, the group was in happy spirits by the time the buses pulled up to the front doors of Shea's Buffalo Theatre. Curt Mangel, superintendent of the 3200-seat house,

gave a gracious speech of welcome, followed by theatre historian Dan Harter's synopsis of theatres owned by Mike Shea from before 1900 until his death.

The guests were led into the refurbished auditorium where they heard a few numbers on the 4/28 Wurlitzer by Bill Hatzenbuehler. The organ is slowly being restored, and it was evident that much remains to be done. Solo voices were nonexistent, and the entire brass and percussion sections were unplayable, due to a leaky roof which is undergoing complete repair. What was playable, however, indicated the nucleus of a very powerful organ, and with dogged determination of Messrs. Mangel, Hatzenbuehler and competent aides, the objective of a completely restored Wurlitzer will be achieved. One has only to view the immense amount of work accomplished in the theatre by Curt and the Friends of the Buffalo to agree.

Following the organlude, the visitors were separated into groups for guided tours of the theatre. Our hosts were most knowledgeable in answering questions and in describing all phases of the restored house.

The cold wind was fiercely blowing off Lake Erie when we reboarded the buses for Toronto. More hot coffee helped alleviate the chill in

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