

ANOTHER 'PAGE' COMES TO LIFE!

by Ruth Ward

Rejoice and be glad! Another theatre pipe organ has a new home and "speaks" in glorious tones of beauty and splendor. It has been an exciting year of nostalgia and musical adventure.

Opening night means many things, but to organ enthusiasts, this one, just one year ago, had double meaning — another theatre pipe organ had been renovated, and Indianapolis once again had a theatre pipe organ to serve the community and ATOS as well.

Just one year ago, the 2/10 Page rose majestically from the pit of the Hedback Theatre in all its glory as in the era reminiscent of the mighty theatre pipe organ. Dennis and Heidi James, two outstanding young organ and piano artists, came to Indianapolis for the first public concert on the newly installed organ. The event, sponsored jointly by CIC-ATOS and Footlight Musicals, was an overwhelming success with sell-out performances both Friday and Saturday nights.

Through the generosity of Indianapolis industrialist Phil Hedback, the organ was purchased and installed in the Hedback Theatre. Built in 1925 by the Page Organ Company of Lima, Ohio, for a Fort Wayne, Indiana, residence, this was the first time this instrument had been installed in a theatre.

The theatre, formerly called the Civic Theatre, had been used for many years by a prominent dramatic group for its productions. In need of more parking space for his employees, Phil Hedback found a large lot adjacent to his manufacturing plant (for heating and cooling equipment) was up for sale, but discovered that in order to buy the parking lot, he also had to buy the theatre, situated on a part of the property.

He purchased the whole package, and it became the Hedback Theatre. The theatre is now leased to Footlight Musicals, Inc.

When the theatre was built, more than 50 years ago, chambers had been included for future installation of a pipe organ. In the intervening years the organ chambers had been used to house, of all things, the theatre's heating system, which meant the entire heating system had to be removed and relocated. Quite an undertaking in itself, it demonstrates the true dedication of organ enthusiasts and proves they will do anything to save a theatre pipe organ.

There is an interesting story behind Mr. Hedback's theatre organ

venture. It all started when CIC-ATOS was trying desperately to find the means to purchase, and a place to install (a prerequisite to purchasing) the Rivoli theatre pipe organ, up for sale at that time. Phil was approached by the CIC-ATOS about his theatre as a potential location. A tour of the building revealed the theatre to be too small to accommodate the Rivoli's 3/14 Uniphone. In the course of conversation, Tom Ferree, owner of the Rivoli organ, mentioned casually that he had a smaller organ in storage that would fit in the space available. By this time, Phil Hedback had become so intrigued with the idea of having an organ in his theatre that he decided

The 2/10 Page theatre organ in the Hedback Theatre, Indianapolis, Indiana.





(L to R): Phil Hedback, Dennis and Heidi James and CIC-ATOS Past Chairman Ross Kirkpatrick at the opening night program, Hedback Theatre.

to purchase the smaller instrument himself.

Plans were made for Tom Ferree to install the organ with whatever assistance ATOS members could give and in return arrangements would be worked out for concerts, meetings and practice time for members.

Phil Hedback admits that before

being approached by the CIC-ATOS, his only interest in the theatre organ was remembering the days of the silent movies and attending the theatre in Minneapolis where Eddie Dunstedter played. It is now a completely different story; Phil and Betty Hedback have become two of CIC-ATOS's most enthusiastic supporters.

The Hedback Theatre promises to be a cultural center, offering a variety of activities, attracting drama and music lovers alike. A joint effort of CIC-ATOS, the Hedbacks, and Footlight Musicals, it features silent movies and a revival of theatre pipe organ entertainment. The organ is also being used regularly for short programs preceding the Footlight Musicals productions.

Another theatre pipe organ has come to life! □

Theatre Organ in Concert with The Baltimore Symphony

January 15, 1977 saw over 2,650 people at Baltimore, Maryland's historic Lyric Theatre for a special "Pops" concert entitled The Best of Hollywood. On the podium to conduct the first-rate 100-member-plus Baltimore Symphony for the program was associate conductor Andrew Schenck. At the console of the Conn 651 electronic theatre organ was American Film Institute organist Ray Brubacher.

During the program which began with the familiar 20th Century Fox theme, the organ was heard in a special unannounced "added attraction" the silent film *The Scoundrel's Toll* accompanied by Ray, a solo number, two "bouncing ball" sing-along films and in the finale. The orchestra performed music by Erich Korngold, Alfred Newman, Max Steiner, Bernard Herrmann and other great composers who have lent their talents to writing music for the screen.

Conductor Schenck, a very gifted young musician with first-class credentials, evidently enjoys putting his outstanding ensemble to the "pops" test and judging by the numerous curtain calls received by orchestra and organist, the audience in Baltimore really take their symphony orchestra to heart. After the finale, which consisted of orchestra and organ playing music of Irving Berlin, the program closed with the Bugs Bunny theme with conductor doing the "That's All Folks" much to the delight of the audience.

Hammann Music Company of Baltimore very generously provided the outstanding organ installation for the program. □

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