

With Bob Van Camp and Arthur Fiedler . . .

Moller and Symphony make beautiful music together

by John Clark McCall, Jr.

The theatre organ's role with symphony orchestras is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Jesse Crawford recorded with RCA's Victor Orchestra, many cinema organs like the New York Roxy Kimball and Radio City's Wurlitzers have been heard in ensemble with house orchestras, and more recently, the Wichita Century II and Richmond Mosque organs have been featured in symphonic programs. But it is safe to say there is no precedent for what took place at the Atlanta Fox on March 8, 1977. Not only did house organist Bob Van Camp debut the Moller organ with the nationally acclaimed Atlanta Symphony, he did it under the baton of one of America's greatest virtuoso conductors, Arthur Fiedler.

A benefit for the Fox (which raised over \$30,000 towards the theatre's loan debt), the concert was a complete sell-out with over 1,200 ticket requests turned down. Arthur Fiedler, impresario of the Boston Pops, brought to his guest appearance the verve and "youth" (Fiedler is 83) that have marked his artistry for over four decades.

After a brilliant performance of selections from George Gershwin's *Girl Crazy* in the second half of the program, the Fox organ console was elevated to picture level, Fiedler acknowledged Van Camp, and together the Moller and Atlanta Symphony led the audience — 4,000 strong — in a "Patriotic Sing-Along." Selections included "America," "America the Beautiful," "Yankee Doodle," "This Land is Your Land," "You're a Grand Old Flag," and for a grand finale, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

The organist and organ were in complete accord with the orchestra. This Moller is so superbly voiced, and Van Camp's artistry was so exacting, that it sounded as if the orchestra was suddenly extended a city block in length on either side. The full, rich sound came from everywhere, which only spurred the aud-

ience to greater participation (Fiedler conducted the orchestra with baton and the audience with his other hand).

The Fox audience was left crying for more — and it was obvious that "more" meant more Moller as well. But the program moved on to its finish — complete with several orchestral encores and standing ovations.

Fiedler's open mind in music — marked by his appearances with Ella Fitzgerald, Chet Atkins, Al Hirt,

and the Carpenters — made the Fox organ's participation a natural and an event that materialized at the conductor's suggestion. In all honesty, it was hard to discern the sound emanating from the organ in contrast to its real orchestral counterpart. This is another testament to the superior qualities of the installation and the console artist. Events such as this make "Saving the Fox" a priority for not only organ enthusiasts, but for devotees of music everywhere. □

Arthur Fiedler

