



the letters to the editors

Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

Address:

George Thompson
Editor
P.O. Box 1314
Salinas, Calif. 93901

Dear Editor Thompson:

My thanks to you, Treasurer Erwin Young, and other members of the Board for printing in the April-May issue of THEATRE ORGAN the financial statements for the years 1973 through 1976 and the proposed budget for 1977 as I had requested in an earlier letter published in the Dec.-Jan. issue.

I feel this information will be useful to each interested individual member to ascertain just why the dues increase was necessary, and it is simply good business practice to let the members see where their dues money is spent. Let's continue to publish annual figures in the April-May issue each year so that all of us may be better informed. I appreciate the many letters of support my proposal received and thank everyone who took the time to write. Their involvement and concern can only make ATOS an even better organization.

Sincerely,
Timothy S. Needler

Dear Editor:

Delighted to read in THEATRE ORGAN, February-March 1977 issue, of the proposed side trip to

Scotland in the '77 Organ Safari to England.

I make my own trip over there every year, most of my time being spent in my native Scotland. I would like to remind you of the listing printed in your February, 1973, issue. Most of these organs are still around but the playing condition of the largest, the Hilsdon in the Playhouse in Edinburgh, is in doubt. The theatre is operated by a radio station, Forth Radio, and they run live pop shows.

The two Compton organs in Aberdeen are in perfect playing condition. The 3/10 in Powis School is the organ played by George Blackmore when he was resident organist of the Astoria Cinema. The organ was rescued by the school kids of Powis and built into the school auditorium under the direction of Bob Leys, musical director of the Academy. Bob is also house organist at the Capitol Theatre in Aberdeen. Though the organ lift was covered by an extended stage to house the Scottish Orchestra, an opening was left "a la Long Island University" to permit the organ to rise to stage height.

I sincerely trust these two organs will be visited. This is a lovely city and a gateway to the Highlands and Balmoral Castle. Bob will be delighted to open the organs to all ATOS members and guests.

The Capitol Theatre is family owned and has a fine restaurant. They are the kind of people who will say at any time, "You want to see our organ? I'll get the keys and be right down." That is unless, of course, this is during normal movie presentation.

Wurlitzers do survive in Scotland by way of home installations. A 2/10

from the New Victoria Cinema in Edinburgh is active in the home of a textile manufacturer, Mr. Tom Lockhart, in the city of Kircaldy, Fifeshire (not far from the nations capitol, Edinburgh). It came from the Embassy Theatre in Baltimore, by the way.

The Christie in Bangour is now 3/14. The console is on the stage (rollabout).

I do hope ATOS visits Scotland. Its absence of theatre organs will be offset by its fabulous scenery. Pity you could not make the trip for the Edinburgh Festival and Tatto.

Sincerely,
James C. Donald

Following names and addresses of people to contact in Scotland. There is a "breakaway" group in Kilbride.

Bob Leys
2 Colthill Cress
Milltimber, Aberdeen
Scotland, AB1 DEF

House organist — Capitol Theatre;
Musical Director — Powis Academy

Mr. A.T. Wilson
8 Pinegrove
Ldybank, Fife
Scotland

Kilbride Organ Group
Mr. Gordon Lucas
West Cottage
Duntarvie, Winchburgh
West Lothian, Scotland

Scottish Cinema Organ Society;
Former House Organist — Playhouse, Edinburgh.

P.S. Paris, France — Until 1975 the 2/10 Wurlitzer in the Paramount was still in the theatre. Console missing. Organ installed over proscenium arch. Difficult to remove but is up for grabs.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I derived a great deal of pleasure from the excellent photograph of the Moller organ console in the Trenton War Memorial which appears on the cover of THEATRE ORGAN for February/March 1977. Your staff who selected that picture for publication, and W.T. McKissock, Jr., the photographer who captured the instrument in such a striking presentation are to be commended.

Of great significance to me, and I hope to other readers of THEATRE ORGAN, is that the photograph and

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the reality of the organ in the Trenton War Memorial would not have been possible without the concern and efforts of Bill McKissock and his associates.

Of course, this is not the only instance where affirmative and constructive action has rescued a fine instrument from oblivion. Fortunately, there have been other transfers and restorations, but not enough. However, the photograph and the story behind it are an excellent representation of similar successes in restoring and preserving theatre pipe organs, and as the notation to the Cover Photo indicates, a tribute to those who have worked and are working.

Very truly yours,
Stanley Warzala

Dear George:

The following was told to me, Secretary of Rocky Mountain Chapter, at an organ party we had on March 6, 1977 by one of our members who just returned from New Zealand — *Margaret Ann Foy* — *November in New Zealand*:

I attended a dinner-dance and concert at the Station Hotel in Auckland, New Zealand. It was given by the Organ Society of New Zealand which was originally an electronic group, but many members have joined the Kiwi ATOS group. I had such a delightful evening as they are such a warm, friendly group of people.

In Chrichchurch, in the South Island, we went to dinner at the Town Hall Restaurant and had music on an electronic organ by Richard Hare. I have one of his records which I shall treasure always. Back in Auckland on the night before I returned home, the Kiwis gathered at the home of Norman Dawe, the original organizer of the Kiwi ATOS group. As this was a farewell party, many of the members expressed desires of making long range plans to attend the National Convention of 1979 in Southern California. There are only two pipe organs in the North Island, but with such an interested, vital, working group of people, there just might be more one day.

They are avid readers of the THEATRE ORGAN magazine over there. They just about memorize the whole thing word for word. If

anyone from the States visits New Zealand, you must look up the Kiwi ATOS club in Auckland. They will show you a wonderful time and you will remember them for many years.

Sincerely yours,
Frank R. Gandy, Secy.
Rocky Mountain Chapter

Dear Sir:

In your February/March issue on page 9, I am incorrectly billed to appear for the American Organ Safari in England in October.

I will, in fact, be giving organ concerts in the Los Angeles area at that time and I have never ever been invited to participate in the British Safari.

I would appreciate a correction in your next issue as I have already had letters from my confused American hosts.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Robin Richmond

Editor's Note:

Mr. Richmond's name appeared in the copy of a paid advertisement. It was not an error of the editorial staff.

Dear George,

I read with interest the letter from J.B. Sherk, also of Toronto, in the Feb/March issue in which he complained that organists do not make any attempt to cater to young people.

This is a matter which has concerned me for some time. Do we include almost no pops in our programs because we know there will be almost no young people in the audience — or are there almost no young people in the audience because they know they will not hear any of their own music? Or is it maybe because we make no effort to attract them to the concert in the first place. I submit that the latter is the case.

Having played for most of the last decade in pizza parlors, primarily to young people, I think I have some answers and I'm sure my colleagues in the pizza business will agree with me. I would say that a good eighty per cent of my pizza parlor audience in Toronto is between the ages of 15 and 30, presumably the ages when pop music is the prime interest. Therefore you would expect eighty

per cent of the requests to be for pop music. Not so!! I have learned over the years what to expect from my audiences, they are fairly predictable. The older crowd, say fifties up, can be relied upon to ask for the same stuff all the time — "Hawaiian Wedding Song," "Ebb Tide," "Dr. Zhivago," "Alley Cat" and so on. Oddly enough, theatre pipe organ fans who, one would think, would be more demanding, also generally ask for these same few numbers.

But what do the young crowd ask for? Some pop for sure. One of my biggest requests is for the song "Color My World" by the rock group Chicago. But this is a lovely ballad, with a classical piano style accompaniment. Apart from this I receive maybe one request a night for an Elton John song or something similar, so generally it can be said that they don't want to hear rock played on the theatre organ. (It sounds silly anyway, I've tired it).

So what do they want? Surprisingly enough, an overwhelming number of their requests are for classical music. Toccata and Fugue is the most frequently requested piece, closely followed by also "Sprach Zarathustra (2001)," "1812 Overture," "William Tell Overture" and similar virtuoso pieces. True, they also ask for "Beer Barrel Polka" a lot, because they like to see all the clackers going, but that is an exception. They also like show tunes, even ones from way back when. I ask frequently why they ask for the tunes they do and always receive the same reply — "we get enough rock on our record players at home and on the radio all the time, we want something different when we come here."

So I feel we should not underestimate their musical interests. They do like good music, and have little time for the bland pap that is often churned out in organ bars. So maybe we organists should attempt to draw young people to our concerts by playing better quality music. Virgil Fox seems to do OK, with his advertising emphasis on "heavy" organ, and his audiences are comprised almost exclusively of young people.

Organists thinking of taking this approach however, should beware of the chapter reviewer. One refused to review my concert for your ex-

cellent magazine because, he said, it had too much classical content and he didn't understand it. In actual fact, only 16% of the program was classical, and virtuoso exciting pieces at that, so his comment to me would seem to indicate not a failure to understand, but a closed mind. After all, what's to understand in a dramatic toccata which uses all the resources of the organ? The kids understand it all right, but they would just laugh if I tried to play acid rock on the organ. So I think these are some of the answers. Maybe other organists would care to comment.

Yours sincerely,
Don Thompson, Toronto.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

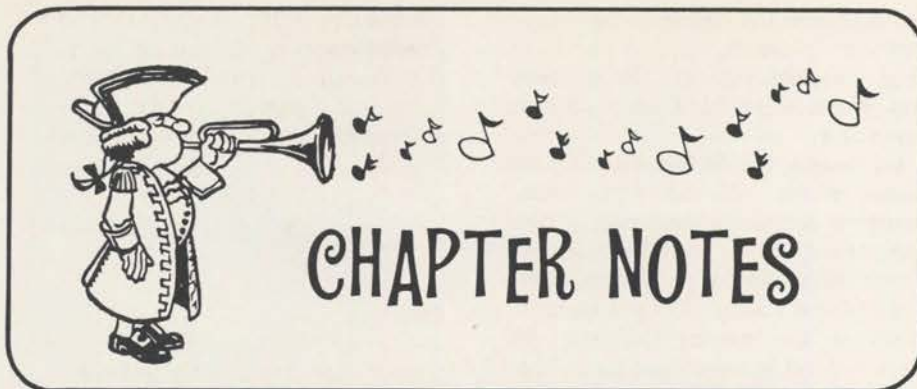
The King Records, Inc. catalog of recorded masters was recently purchased by Gusto Records, Inc. Among the many valued masters in the King catalog are some twenty cuts by George Wright. Recorded at the New York Paramount Theatre on the Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ, selections include:

- "Love For Sale"
- "Jeanine"
- "Makin' Whoope"
- "Easter Parade"
- "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"
- "Tenderly"
- "Times Square Boogie"
- "Stella By Starlight"
- "Stardust"
- "Body and Soul"
- "Night and Day"
- "Beguine The Beguine"
- "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes"
- "Always"
- "España Cani"
- "Brazil"
- "Birth Of The Blues"
- "Honky Tonk Train Blues"
- "Falling In Love"
- "Blue Moon"

Due to the historical significance of these early George Wright selections, do you think there would be active interest from your readership in purchasing these recordings if they were made available on album and/or 8 track tape?

We would appreciate your opinion as to the interest and feasibility of re-issuing the aforementioned George Wright "collector" edition.

Cordially,
Jim Wilson



Let us know what's happening in YOUR Chapter!

Send Photos and News to:

GEORGE THOMPSON
P.O. BOX 1314
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA 93901

Deadline for all material is the FIRST of the month PRECEDING Publication.

Copy for Aug.-Sept. issue must be in by July 1.

ALABAMA

We have another newcomer to announce this month. The wife of Chuck Hancock, who is head of our work crew here in Birmingham, presented him with their first child. Congratulations to the Hancocks. We're raising a whole new generation of ATOSers!

Our March and April meetings brought us some super entertainment. Both performers are members of our chapter — so we feel very fortunate to have such capable and willing artists right in our midst.

At our March meeting, Jack Moelmann journeyed over from Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and entertained us with a marvelously varied concert. We had a larger-than-usual crowd and all were quite pleased and enthused by Jack's performance. He is a Major in the Air Force at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, and is quite well known throughout that state. He has played, at one time or another, at most of the large hotels along the gulf Coast, performs at numerous charitable community activities, has given benefit concerts in his home on his own special Hammond which he customized himself and has given concerts on the Temple Theatre pipe organ in Meridian,

Mississippi. As you can well imagine, Jack is a busy fellow and much in demand and we're especially proud to have him as a member of our chapter, and very grateful to him for playing a concert for us.

Jack is certainly no newcomer in the pipe organ field having been assistant organist at the age of 12 at Grace Episcopal Church, Chicago, Illinois (which is his hometown) on a 4/98 Casavant. He toured Europe in 1960 and performed at such places as Westminster Abbey in London and the Pantheon in Rome. He also became only the second military person to perform in concert on the magnificent 3/99 Moller in the Chapel of the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. For a year and a half he presided nightly at the 2/9 Wurlitzer in Shakey's Pizza Parlor at Anaheim, California. It was on this particular organ that he cut his latest record album, "Jack Moelmann at the Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ." A hobby of Jack's is collecting old silent films, and he



Major Jack Moelmann from Ocean Springs, Mississippi. (Thomas L. Hatter Photo)