

Ogontz, Metropolitan, Fox, Carmen, and the Stanley in Atlantic City.

He served in the Fellowship of Theatre Organists, and broadcast over WIP, Philadelphia. When the Hammond electronic came out in 1935, he was a demonstrator at Wanamaker's. In the late thirties, he deserted the organ and moved to California "to play golf."

Mr. Bonawitz is survived by a son, Karl, Jr.; daughters Judy and Sonya; a sister, seven grand children and five great grandchildren. □



## 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 Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.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. 93902

Dear Mr. Thompson;

My reason for writing to you is to inform you and the many readers of our purchase of the 3/9 Wurlitzer Opus 2231.

This organ was originally shipped on September 14, 1939 to radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where it was installed and used up until sometime in 1955 when it was then purchased by the Baldwin Community Church just a few miles outside of Pittsburgh.

The organ was originally a 3-manual special with 9 ranks, although in the church it had been expanded to a total of 18 ranks with some additions of their previous church pipe

organ.

We purchased only the 9 Wurlitzer ranks and the vibraphone and chimes. It also at onetime had a toy counter and the Glock which was not available from the church but an original Wurlitzer toy counter and Glock were furnished to us from the people we bought the organ from.

The nine ranks were as follows: Tibia, Flute, String, String Celeste, Diapason, Tuba, Vox, Post Horn, and Clarinet.

It has 4 tremos, 104 total stops on a single bolster. 7 of these stops are accomp. 2nd touch. It has two shoes for swell shades and a crescendo pedal that sets the complete organ. There are also 5 preset combination buttons for each manual and 5 preset buttons for the pedal registration.

We would like to know if any of the readers or artists (that might have played the organ) could furnish us some background information on the organ and maybe possibly have pictures, or records when in its original installation in the KDKA studios that they would be willing to share with us.

We would be very happy, after the organ is installed in our home, to furnish to your magazine an article and pictures of the removal of the organ from the church and installation in our home.

We would appreciate any information or cooperation from you or the readers. They can reach us by writing;

Gene D. or Mary Lou Bryant  
8407 Columbus Ave., S.  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55420

Dear Mr. Klos:

Thank you for sending copies of the June issue of THEATRE ORGAN, containing the feature on my mother, Gladys Goodding.

It has been much enjoyed by all who have seen and read your fine article.

Sincerely,

(Mrs) Maxine G. Magnuson

Dear Mr. Klos:

Editor George Thompson sent me copies of the April 1977 issue of THEATRE ORGAN Magazine with the article about me. It was overwhelming, to say the least. Many thanks, indeed.

I showed the letter of my induction

into the Theatre Organists Hall of Fame to officers of the 1200-member Elks Lodge #1672 in Winter Haven, Florida. This is the lodge for which I play every Thursday evening. They were very impressed, and reprinted the letter in *The Elks' Horn*, our monthly newsletter.

Thanks again and very best regards.

Sincerely yours,  
John Gart

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I should mention that the job that you and your staff is doing is incredible. I would also like to say that Lance Johnson's column is certainly one of the best features of THEATRE ORGAN and most helpful and informative. The fact that he takes time to answer questions besides working at his regular job as an organ builder/technician says a lot for the man. And of course considering all the work that you and your staff do, that says a lot about the ATOS staff!

Sincerely,  
Ken Ladner

Dear Mr. Thompson,

This is in answer to the several critics of my article published in your magazine of a year ago.

Perhaps my article should not have been simply titled ORGAN FLUE PIPES, but rather "The Physics and Acoustical Analysis of Organ Flue Pipes." Perhaps, too, I should have chosen a scientific journal to publish my findings, but I felt that it would get attention where it is most needed in a magazine such as THEATRE ORGAN.

My article was not written so that some amateur could experiment on an existing organ, because organ pipe voicing is a very precise and tricky subject, best left to a professional voicer.

My critics have all been voicers — my article was not aimed at them but, rather, as a scientific guide to organ builders.

My article does not say how an organ pipe should be built, as apparently several readers seem to imply, but rather, which factors contribute the most to why any given pipe sounds and performs the way it does, and how pipes could be built to satisfy a wide range of conditions. It might have been beneficial to have

included waveform photos with my article. The more that is known about why and how a particular pipe organ sounds the way it does, the more can be done to duplicate and improve on positive qualities and to eliminate any negative ones.

Anything I stated as a fact is backed up with years of testing on such equipment as electret condenser microphones, DC coupled oscilloscopes, DBM's, etc. If there were any exceptions, I clearly stated them. As a result of my work with flue pipes I have since built a small pipe organ for the home out of spare parts, plus parts given me by fellow ATOS'ers.

Before someone denies another's work as having no relevance to the art he should first be prepared to disprove anything stated.

I challenge anyone with a qualified engineering background, and with facilities for testing, (if they doubt my claims), to conduct extensive testing on their own, stating the test conditions and the methods employed, plus the type of equipment used. I'm sure their tests would substantiate all my claims. Anyone un-

willing to do so has nothing more than his own subjective opinion on the matter. Prejudiced criticism with no solid facts for it is destructive to the industry.

I encourage organ builders to acquaint themselves with the modern test equipment and methods available to them, as have the manufacturers of virtually all electronic instruments, in order to compete successfully. I highly encourage that more research of this type be done concerning all facets of organ building. I felt that it was beyond the scope of my article to deal with such factors as the effects of architectural acoustics on the sound wave, or to even begin to delve into the highly complex formulas dealing with reed pipes, etc.

As to my qualifications, I am an electronic engineering technician with a background in acoustics having a deep interest in pipe organs. I have a U.S. patent on a new type of high fidelity solid-state mobile amplifier of direct-coupled design. Over the years, I have also built various pipe ranks, with the sole purpose of recording data showing the effect

any change in the design of the pipe had in the electronically analyzed output.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Weisenberger

*References: Acoustical Engineering by Harry F. Olson PH.D. (1957)*

*Calibration Standards: Altec Lansing and Electro-Voice speakers and data; Dynaco SCA 80 Q integrated amplifier; 2 calibrated electret condenser mikes; Eico 460 oscilloscope.*

Dear Editor:

My compliments for a well written and easy reading report on the great Chicago '77. However, if your space was limited, it might have been better used by allocating less for the description and location of Post Horns, mitered Tubas their accessories and other mechanical parts which we saw in the Chicago rinks and lately, can be seen in quite a few pizza restaurants. Perhaps, more in order would have been a little more mention of CATOS, and all the Chicago area people concerning their untiring efforts in keeping some of the nations most beautiful theatres intact, around their magnificent pipe organs. Chicago boasts "Theatre organ Capitol of the World" and could easily add — "The Worlds Theatre Capitol."

All of this was most prevalent when, during one of the seasons worst rainstorms, we went to Joliet — in the far south Chicago suburbs, just to attend the Rialto Theatre. Here, like something from the Palace of Versailles, the colonnaded entrance foyer led us to the grand lobby — a Georgian and Italian marble Corinthian-columned Rotunda, a-la Roxy. In the auditorium, Mr. Theatre-organ himself — Don Baker, aptly overcame all storm-wrought lighting failures and organ malfunctions as gracefully as he no doubt had done, many times before on stormy mornings at the New York Paramount . . . Yes, the sound of the big movie palaces and a master with a distinction (which a convention booklet so aptly described as a "descending chromatic run in the left hand") was there at the Rialto's mighty organ. Don brought forth from the elaborate grille-work in the Rialto's glazed terra-cotta and marble walls, everything from "Singing

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In The Rain" to "Fascinatin' Rhythm."

At the end of the concert the satisfaction on our faces was reflected in Don's smile which showed victory over a most attentive audience. He knew — we hadn't been eating pizza or talking — we had been watching, listening and enjoying. After coming through a raging storm — we had found it! — that is, hearing and seeing one of the best, under marble balustrades, gold braided velvet and crystals — whether a 2/7 or a 4/27 — it all had come from where it belonged, the King of Instruments in a Marble Palace.

If I were a native Californian and had attended the Chicago '77, my delightful entrance would probably have lasted all the way back to California. There, still entranced by sumptuous palaces and their magnificent pipe organs — it is possible that I would unconsciously have driven to San Francisco, looking for the great S.F. Fox Theatre, where in I could enjoy hearing it's Mighty Wurlitzer. Back to reality and to my dismay, I would find — that great palace is no longer there and never will be, again.

Looking forward to all future issues of THEATRE ORGAN, I remain

Yours very truly,  
John Mecklenburg  
CICATOS

Dear George:

Re: Vol 19 #4 THEATRE ORGAN, "Chauncey Haines at the Console" by Stu Green:

Please refer to Vol. 13 #2 Page 15, a similar article by Lloyd Klos; and also Vol. 13 #3 Page 9, my previous letter.

The console involved is the former Norshore Theatre in Chicago. The Chicago Theatre has always had a plain console.

I'm sure you will be pleased to note that over a dozen fellow ATOS members caught this, and brought it up in discussion. This kind of enthusiasm I find stimulating; certainly it will keep our hobby moving.

Sincerely;  
Joseph R. DuciBella  
Chicago Area Director  
Theatre Historical Society

Dear Mr. Klos:

I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the biography which you wrote about my husband, George, which appeared in the October issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

We had moved to Florida in September 1971, and George died within a month.

I was informed of the article by my good friend, Mrs. Dolph Gobel. The extra copies of the magazine I received will be appreciated by my grandchildren as something for them to cherish all their lives.

Thank you again, and may you enjoy good health.

Sincerely,  
Mrs. George Epstein

Dear Editor:

For most of his life the writer has been a music critic of one kind or another, starting as a cub reporter on his University newspaper and graduating to Critics Editor. Later, he had a page to himself in a British weekly and more recently was record critic for *The Organist Magazine*. So, presumably, he knows whereof he speaks. Having given criticism to others he should also be willing to receive it and generally is, if it is fair and unbiassed. However, it seems to me that the record criticism in theatre organ magazines and particularly in this one is in danger of losing sight of the aims of the artists concerned, and is certainly out of touch with reality. It is high time that the philosophies involved are re-stated and re-examined. Serious, scholarly criticism is one thing, mindless uninformed carping and joking at the expense of the artist are something else.

Let us look at specifics. First of all, consistency is vital. If we set a standard we must adhere to it, if we set a precedent it must be followed. Stu Green reviewed with a very uncritical ear Virgil Fox's very classically oriented record at Wichita, and also reviewed Keith Chapman's excellent classical releases. But because my own latest recording contained a piece of liturgical concert music he turned it over to Walter Beaupre for review, since he was "your classical man." Surely an inconsistency here? In addition, Stu gave high praise to Virgil's record

(incidentally, one of his worst) and accepted without question radical departures from tempo and text in a Bach fugue. Fair enough. But if one is to be generous and indulgent with classical interpretations then to treat popular organ records of light music as if they were an entrance examination for the Royal College of Organists is ridiculous. But this is what is being done.

Let us be even more specific. For years there has been criticism by your reviewers (and others') of organists' "departure from the melody line" in the playing of popular pieces. I know well, that particular criticism has been levelled at me several times and has more recently been applied to Hector Olivera's "Flight of the Bumble Bee." Also, for example, and I quote — "The chorus of the Vamp strays far from the original harmony." I wonder what your reviewer would make of George Shearing? And does this mean that the whole repertoire of modern jazz is to be condemned? Walter Beaupre continues the tradition. In his review of my "Pomp and Circumstance" he says "Let's not be picky about the mistakes in the verse melody line." "Let's not," I thought myself. But Walt goes on — "With four different versions, one of them must be correct!"

Heigh ho — a joke. And a funny one. Unfortunately not true. First of all, there are only TWO entrances of the verse melody line, and for technical reasons we couldn't use the recording of the second. Since the two are identical, we re-recorded the first entry and substituted it for the second. Cheating, I know, but everyone does it. Biff Buttler who did the original recording will bear me out on this. So . . . we have one page of music, used on the record twice by the wizardry of editing and studio technicians. So only one version is in fact heard. Your reviewer hears FOUR, all different. Fascinating! It says much for his powers of observation and also exposes this line for what it is. There is no place in reviewing for comedic efforts at the expense of the artist.

These pleasantries aside, now let's get down to the nitty-gritty of this article, which is my contention that theatre organ reviewers' priorities are all wrong. A recording isn't a degree thesis for an AGO Doctorate

in Organ Performance, it is aimed at the general public, it's supposed to be entertainment, not education, and herein lies the crux of my objection to what is going on these days. Critics have entirely lost sight of the purpose of organ records. They have two purposes. One, let's be honest, is to make money for the artist. The second is to entertain the public. There's no way the first objective will be achieved without the second. If records are precise academic exercises they will do neither.

Specifics aside, let us deal with these philosophies in general now. What your (and other) theatre organ critics expect of records and concerts these days seems to be absolute literalism, the so-called "deadening, stultifying literalism" that no less an authority than Harold Schonberg, music critic for the *New York Times* thinks is afflicting performances everywhere.

Mr. Schonberg is without doubt the world's most respected and distinguished (and feared) music critic, and in his article "Why should a critic follow the score?" in the *New York Times* of September 18 he addresses himself to this very problem. He makes some very valid points. "Music is more than an architectural plan . . . notation is an inexact science . . . it is the artist's job to reflect his own personality as well as that of the composer." He goes even further — "literalism is fake musicianship, composers themselves, especially the 19th Century composers, expected performers to take liberties in phrase and tempo and even, occasionally, with the text." Aha! So where does this leave you, Stu and Walt and all those of you who particularly direct your criticisms to variations from the text of Elgar, Sibelius et al? The whole crux of your reviews is that artists must stick slavishly to the text of these nineteenth century light classics. Harold Schonberg takes a score to concerts for a reason: not to see how closely musicians adhere to the score, but to see how they depart from it. "Musicians without ideas are not very stimulating musicians." How true. And in reply to the criticism of those musicians, including myself, who like to bring out records of live performances, mistakes and all, rather than studio sessions, he goes on to say "A Painter

fixes a conception forever . . . the writer is there for eternity, but the poor performer's ideas in the concert hall are a brilliant bubble that explodes upon the instant. Yes, he can make records but those are so different from what happens when stage and audience interact in a live performance. (Unless, he might have added, those records are "live" records.)

It is precisely the studio "fixing for eternity" that your reviewers seem to want. And it is precisely this living in the past that killed the theatre organ in the first place. Let's face it, if Crawford were alive today and played his beautiful sensitive ballads as he does on his records, he'd play them to the members of ATOS and no-one else. The millions of other occupants of our world would be left cold. The name of the game is entertainment. It's no accident that the theatre organ lived on much longer in England, or that Reginald Dixon is a superstar, or that pizza parlors are flourishing. The answer is that Dixon (and the pizza parlors) give the public what they want to hear, in the way that they want to hear it. It's no accident that 1000 plus people turn up at the Riviera, North Tonawanda for concerts, or that Reginald Dixon's record of "Tiger Rag" sold over a million copies way back in the thirties when a million copies was really something. Yet I'm quite sure that if it came out today and was unfortunate enough to be reviewed in "For the Records" there would be complaints about erratic tempo, racing, departure from the text, etc.

One more point. Walter Beaupre says that my version of "The Ride of the Valkyries" doesn't even have the decency to be funny. But it does, Walt, it's hysterical! Just as Hector's "Flight of the Bumble Bee" on the pedals is hysterically funny, just as Bob Ralston's "12th Street Rag" backwards and upside down is hysterically funny, just as Virgil's galloping Fugue a la Gigue is hysterically funny. We all of us laugh ourselves sick all the way to the bank! Come on, fellas, the name of the game is entertainment! The items mentioned above are pure hokum and we know it. It's a pity none of you have the imagination to realize it. Now let's leave the long faces and the scholarly assessments in the

groves of academe where they belong and recognize modern theatre organ records and performances for what they are, an attempt to bring the organ back to the public again and make a decent living doing so. You and yours have enshrined it as an art form and kept it away from the public for far too long. It's the shortest living art form in history, the Crawford style and playing the silents lasted a mere fifteen years and all that was over fifty years ago. Sure, playing the silents is an art form and should be preserved as such, because silents are no longer made. But it's also entertainment. Playing the concert circuit is show biz! If it isn't then the result is empty houses. And how many chapters are struggling to make ends meet? How many present a visiting concert organist with a handful of people huddled in the balcony of an otherwise vast and empty theatre? Think about it!

Don Thompson

(Harold Schonberg's article quoted by special permission from the *New York Times*.)

*REVIEWER'S COMMENT.* The above is the permissible roar of the reviewed player who feels he has been wounded by adverse comments on a part of his offering, while completely ignoring the favorable remarks covering most of his selections. Don's charges of pedantism and frowning on new and different approaches in arranging are somewhat refuted in our comments, for example, on Reggie Foort's ninth chord harmonization of the trio of "Stars and Stripes Forever," or our appraisal of Billy Nalle's "All the Things You Are" which Billy conceived as a neat little piece of counterpoint in the J.S. Bach style. To say they strayed far from the original text is understatement. It isn't the carefully prepared arrangement that may bring adverse comment but the obvious moments of indecision, over emphasis on a secondary voice, momentary breaks in tempo, the wrong chord in an ordinary run through, the feeling that the player has worked himself into a musical cul-de-sac — the reviewer must call them as he sees them, in fairness to readers. These conditions arise most frequently in pops or standards when Don tries to "wing it," rarely during a classical selection for which he's

using the printed music. Don is an exceptional reader of music.

Don has often been at odds with our reviews (there are four of us) of his many records, even to the extent of writing to the editor in an effort to prevent the publication of a review that might not be as favorable as he would like. True, he has been a critic; we recall his review of a record for another publication, a record which had a painted-over label (the mag's policy). Don gave it the highest rating, and it turned out to be one of his own records. (Could he really

fail to recognize his own playing?) We can't compete with that style of review, nor would we want to.

In 20 years of reviewing organ records for publication we have dealt with the work of nearly all who have made records. That includes the great names of today and yesterday (including those old fogies Don doesn't feel could make it in today's scene). Not one of them complained about our treatment of their groovings. So, congratulations, Don — another "first."

Seriously, a review is bound to be

subjective, even when prepared by up to three reviewers, all trying to be objective. Our effort is toward stimulating interest and discussion, and the incoming flow of mail indicates we succeed. As Don points out, his object in releasing records is to make money. He may rest assured that there is no evidence that negative review comment, even in large doses, ever affected the sale of an album. So cheer up, Don, and keep making money.

W.S. Green □

## Carl Greer Inn Changes Again

Those who attended the 1975 National Convention will remember Clyde Derby and the Sheraton Inn, as well as the former Seattle, Washington, Music Hall 4/16 Robert Morton theatre pipe organ. A lot has happened to the Inn and its first organist since that memorable day of 1975.

The Inn has had a series of owners and operators since its builder, Carl Greer, sold it several years ago. Simply stated, mismanagement caused a temporary closing of the doors and a silencing of the organ. The maintenance of the latter was sorely neglected and at the last it was mute.

Original owner Greer purchased the remains from the bankruptcy court, did some refurbishing and reopened the establishment on a limited basis. He found a new owner in James E. Richmond, a San Francisco Bay Area businessman, and now a member of Sierra Chapter.

Mr. Richmond hired veteran hotel manager Tom McMillan to reestablish Sierra Inn as an entertain-

ment center for Sacramento. A change in management and ownership of yet another Sacramento hotel had made longtime organist Evelyn Osburn, Mr. McMillan and a fine little orchestra available.

The establishment will be completely refurbished. The coffee shop is to be expanded but, there will be no formal dining room as in the original plan. The now barren inner court, encompassing the swimming pool, will become an atrium, a place of greenery. Local organ man Don Dingler has been hired to rework the ailing Morton. On September 24 and 25 the instrument was "showcased" to those chapter members and friends who could be reached by telephone. The main artist was former Radio City Music Hall organist Jimmy Paulin, Jr. Showcase it he did, along with Evelyn, Emil Martin and a few more chapter members. Jimmy was hired to play the 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. spot Mondays through Thursdays. Evelyn plays from 4:30 to 7:30 Tuesday through Saturday. The Alan King Orchestra plays Friday and Saturday nights. The response to all these fine musicians has been great — slow at first for the pipe organ but that condition has improved greatly.

Original organ maintenance man Don Zeller has been hired to handle the chores of keeping the Robert Morton going.

Theatre pipe organ lovers owe a great deal to Mr. Richmond, Mr. McMillan and all those who have a hand in the operation of the Sierra Inn. Members of the American Theatre Organ Society are encouraged to make themselves known and to

patronize this establishment when they are in the Sacramento area and have need of public accommodations.

Clyde Derby is seriously ill and unable to play the instrument he loved and nurtured through its initial installation and a few trials and tribulations thereafter. The Sierra Chapter has honored Clyde for his part in preserving the theatre pipe organ and its sounds with a scholarship. Letters and cards from his friends are most welcome: Mr. Clyde Derby, 3506 Morrow, Sacramento, CA 95821. He is seriously ill and has been for almost a year. It is a sorry thing to say, but only a miracle will return him to the bench — that is the one thing more than one of us wants to see. He was, more than anyone, responsible for Sierra Chapter's formation. Always ready and willing to help in chapter affairs and the same goes for his beautiful wife Kathy. The scholarship, in Clyde's name, is to be awarded in 1978 to a Sacramento Area music student. □

Sierra Inn owner James E. Richmond (left) talks with organist Evelyn Osburn on the still-to-be-refinished dance floor at Sierra Inn. This is the Sacramento area's largest dance floor in regular use. Evelyn introduced her "March of Dimes March" during an informal get-together of Sierra chapter members and friends at the former Carl Greer Sheraton Inn.



Evelyn Osburn at the console, with Jimmy Paulin (right center) and Don Zeller (extreme right), who maintains the 4/16 Robert Morton pipe organ in the Sierra Inn. Sierra chapter members are in the background.

