



# Trenton Keeps Busy

by Peter Panos

Thanks to the Garden State Theatre Organ Society, the Trenton War Memorial Auditorium has been a very busy place the last few months. The focus of the activity has been on its beautiful 3/16 Moller theatre pipe organ, formerly housed in Trenton's Lincoln Theatre. With the idea in mind of providing the community with a series of musical programs, G.S.T.O.S. Chairman Bill McKissock organized and produced a concert schedule featuring the organ in various roles.

On October 17, the series got underway with a concert and sing-along featuring past Vice-Chairman Frank Cimmino at the console. Billed as an event in the annual Trenton Folk Festival, many people attended who would not ordinarily have been aware of the organ's existence. As the afternoon rolled on, Frank had the crowd singing at the top of their lungs and enjoying every minute of his program. For some of the guests, the afternoon probably brought back fond memories of an earlier time when the instrument

was used for this very purpose in its former home.

Even before the date of the first concert, however, preparations were being arranged for the second event. In honor of Halloween Eve, a special "Fright-Nite" utilizing silent horror films was concocted. Some not-so-eager members were pressed into service as bat-makers, tombstone procurers and coffin builders. The entire orchestra lift of the War Memorial Auditorium was transformed into an abandoned graveyard complete with fallen leaves, real tombstones, dried-ice fog, an ominously open coffin and even a live broom-carrying witch! The witch, stalwart Judy Ginder, introduced the featured artist of the evening, Keith Chapman, by removing a stake from his heart. In true vampire tradition, this enabled Keith to leap from his coffin and stalk across the graveyard to

the console. And who says ATOS has no class! The audience went wild at this bit of theatre and the mood for fun was set for the rest of the evening. Attired in his vampire cape, Keith did an excellent job accompanying *The Vampire (Nosferatu)* and a Lon Chaney feature. At the conclusion of the program, an enthusiastic audience awarded the artist a standing ovation for his performance.

The most ambitious of the projects, however, would be saved for last. With a Radio City Music Hall type presentation in mind, a Christmas Spectacular was arranged featuring the 100 voice Mercer County Chorus, the Mercer Ballet Company, and former Radio City organist Ashley Miller at the Moller. Mr. Miller, a true friend of G.S.T.O.S., agreed to provide accompaniment on the pipe organ for the entire program. Many of the 1200-plus people attending the event had never heard the organ before and although they had come out of curiosity, a number would leave as true theatre pipe or-

Above photos: The Mercer Ballet Company performs "The Spell of Christmas Eve" with Ashley Miller at the Trenton Moller assisted by Patti Germain at the Allen electronic.

gan enthusiasts. As the program began, many of the young people present gaped in disbelief as the huge white and gold console came rumbling up from the pit and the theatre was filled with the joyous sounds of Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride." After several holiday tunes and an enthusiastic reception by the fans, Ashley descended to orchestra level and the Mercer County Chorus was introduced. Over the next half-hour or so, they presented the "Song of Christmas" with piano and organ accompaniment. Guest soloists and a holiday sing-along rounded out the first half of the program and earned Ashley Miller a standing ovation from the highly receptive audience.

The second half consisted of Phyllis Papa and the Mercer Ballet Company performing an original program, "The Spell of Christmas Eve," based on music by Leo Delides and Peter Ilyith Tchaikofsky. Assisting Ashley Miller with the music involved were G.S.T.O.S. member Patty Germain at the Allen electronic organ and percussionist Eric Kivnick. The audience, especially its younger members, were enchanted with the ballet, and many commented afterwards that the combination of theatre pipe organ and ballet was certainly most effective. It should be pointed out here that contributing sponsors for the event were the Mercer County Park Commission, Chopin Music Company in Trenton, and the employees of the Mobil Technical Center through a Grant from the Mobil Foundation, Inc.

Thrilled with the artistic success of this trilogy of events, Bill McKissock, Jason Taylor and their crew of organ fanatics immediately began making plans for future public events utilizing the War Memorial Organ. Among them is the G.S.T.O.S.'s gift of a free "Spring Concert" to the Trenton community in April 1977. Also the organ itself is undergoing improvement including the replacement of the original 10 hp blower motor with a 20 hp one.

In conclusion, the chapter is extremely pleased to have performed a valuable artistic service to the community of Trenton, N.J. Also, what better way is available to insure the survival of our favorite instrument. The wonderful theatre pipe organ! □



## 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 Mr. Thompson,

First, may I say that I have enjoyed THEATRE ORGAN Magazine for many, many years, and I have noticed the positive approach used in very nearly all of the articles. While I know Mr. Muri's opinions are his own and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the magazine, I was particularly disappointed, almost to the point of being appalled, reading his opinion of those organists who are playing some Bach at our concerts. I am also amazed that he would put the "Jig Fugue" and the "Prelude and Fugue in D minor" in the same sentence, let alone in the same context. Any organist who has the ability to play the "Jig Fugue" and do a good job of it, I say "Hurrah" for him and "Go to it!" People love it, because it is obvious to anyone that it takes *talent* and a lot of hard work to do it successfully.

I think, in order to advance public interest in theatre organs, we have dire need of a large percent of *good* organists who might be first musicians and second organists. Who needs mediocrity?

Keep up the good work in producing a fine magazine.

Yours very truly,  
Joel Kremer

Dear Editor:

I wish to thank ATOS for a most thrilling week, the Chicago '77 Convention. Also, a big salute to CATOE for their flawless coordination from transportation through theatres, organs, artists and all concerned.

I have only one comment to a few theatre organ artists. Please, please forget about being a comic and concentrate on being the artist you are supposed to be. There is a difference between cheap comedy and musical humor in good taste.

Sincerely,  
Lyman Nellis

Dear Mr. Thompson:

We enjoyed last months THEATRE ORGAN very much especially the MCTOS Redford Theatre article. We here in Toledo, MCTOS's neighbor, sure wish them luck. We wish to commend Motor City on their far sightedness.

Very truly yours,  
William W. Cottle

Dear Mr. Thompson:

For some time I have been considering writing you on a couple of topics, but have not gotten around to it. However, the letter from Mr. J.B. Sherk of Toronto in the February-March issue of THEATRE ORGAN magazine gave me the needed impetus.

Mr. Sherk stated one of my own thoughts much better than I could have done myself, namely, the idea that modern compositions are completely ignored in many, if not most, of the concerts I have managed to hear, whether in Syracuse, North Tonawanda, Toronto or Rochester, and at the ATOS 1974 convention in Detroit. Only one artist had nerve enough, if that is what it takes, to include a few bars of Country-Western melody and a very beautiful one, too, "For the Good Times" and that was Dick Smith. (I can hear a certain individual saying, if he reads this, "Oh, HIM.")

A few artists have played some of the new tunes like "Feelings" and "Send in the Clowns" and "Yesterdays" but this is the exception, not the rule. I have taken my two college-age children to organ concerts, and they have expressed Mr. Sherk's