

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 Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.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

(and mine) sentiments in their comments. They are not crazy about the Broadway music but tolerate it. They feel that an entire concert of it is too much for them, anyhow. By the way, they do not share my love of some of the Country-Western ballads, either, but I think the pipe organ could make these tunes even more beautiful.

My second topic is concerned with reviews of both concerts and records in THEATRE ORGAN magazine, which, by the way, I read eagerly from cover to cover each time it arrives. (Please — Topic #3 — don't take pages of even one issue to cover financial figures.) I'm just a listener, though my two children can play the organ very well, but I know what I like. I would prefer that the reviewers let me decide what I like, and omit comments like "... a critic's dream, with none of those "Lara's Theme" type repetitions," or "... after all, how many versions of "Battle Hymn of the Republic" can one absorb?" ... as far as I'm concerned, as many different ones as I can get to hear is my answer to that question. And, incidentally, just what is "... A purely vanilla selection"? Volume criticisms also annoy me, e.g., "... an especially lovely rendition until the big mass of sound near the close." I like the mighty sound of the Wurlitzer and I feel the majority of the organists do not abuse this idea. Furthermore, if a critic adores concerts where the volume never varies either way, that is certainly his right, but let him refrain from converting me to his way of thinking.

Yours truly,
Frederick W. Schamu

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I am hoping your readers would be delighted with a bizarre theatre organ experience told me years ago by the once famous silent movie organist Henry Murtagh.

I was hanging around in the Los Angeles branch of the Hammond Organ Studios, knowing I couldn't afford a pipe organ and wishing I could afford a Hammond, at that time the only plug-in made, when Henry, on the staff there since the advent of talkies, told me this true story.

He had been scheduled as featured soloist to "open" a vast brand-new

silent movie house in Portland, Oregon. The new paint was hardly dry, and the workers had just finished hanging a tremendous canvas star-spangled canopy over the entire ceiling of the auditorium, concealing the huge hole in the ceiling above which the organ pipes had been installed.

The opening-night crowds surged into the theatre, and the spotlight shone on Henry as he took his place at the big console and promptly burst into a full-throated, deafening overture. The wind from the pipes above the ceiling gushed out, filled the hastily and insecurely installed canopy like a great ship's sail, tore it loose all around, and down like a tremendous tent it came filtering, fluttering, settling on the heads of the astonished crowd, who wondered

"What the hell!" as they tried with no luck to fight the thing off their heads or get out from under it somehow.

The gigantic tent covered Henry's head too, and the big console, but he never missed a note! — played on magnificently as workers finally managed to crumple the tremendous tent up and drag it out through the front door. Then the silent picture flashed on the screen and Henry went right into his accompaniment just as though nothing unusual at all had happened. "Even buried under canvas," he told me, "the show must go on!"

Sincerely,
long-time ATOE member,
Bill Reeves

Dear Sir:

In regards to the story about the Andre Wurlitzer in Miami showing it's age, that is a lot of hooley. Bob Andre has put in a lot of hard and long hours to get that organ in the best of shape.

Recently, I made a test recording of the great Don Baker on this Wurlitzer, and Don told me that this organ is about the best he has played. In fact, I am going to record a master tape of Don in about another week. This tape will be for a record.

It just kinda tees me off to have anyone down the organ, that a wonderful person like Bob Andre has put so much hard work into. He is a perfect example as to what all ATOS members should be. He has never refused anyone who can play, to play this great Wurlitzer. My hat is off to Bob Andre and his sharing the organ with others. Lets all take a lesson from Bob, and show what ATOS really stands for.

Thanking you, I remain,
Well Organ-ized,
Max E. Schloss
Recording Engineer

Dear Mr. Thompson,

In the past three issues of THEATRE ORGAN Magazine, I have read with considerable interest, the article by Mr. Richard Weisenberger, "Organ Flue Pipes"; the subsequent letter-to-the-editor by Mr. Richard Swanson; and Mr. Weisenberger's rebuttal to Mr. Swanson's letter.

As a professional independent pipe organ voicer, I agree with Mr.

Keep in touch with the British Theatre Organ Scene!



Subscribe to
The Journal of the Cinema Organ Society,
a quarterly publication
featuring
photos, history, stoplists,
biographies and
technical articles . . .
Plus montly newsletters
of the latest theatre organ
news, events, and
record reviews.

Send \$9.00 or 3.50 pounds sterling for membership in *The Cinema Organ Society*. Includes a subscription to the *Journal* and 12 monthly newsletters.

Mr. L. Hudson
The Cinema Organ Society
22, Oakwood Close
Chase Road, Southgate
London, England N14 4JY

Swanson's letter completely. However, I would like to add one more point. It should be noted by all that the information given in Mr. Weisenberger's article does not prepare the reader for pipe organ voicing, as the tone of the article may imply.

The first draft of this letter was an involved critique of the article. I realized after living with my letter for a few days, that this type of input is not productive in the overall sense. Indeed, a misdirection of energy.

Like Mr. Swanson, I too am concerned that articles dealing with technical facets of the pipe organ be authored by professionals. And further, those who possess knowledge and experience in *all* forms of organ construction so as to give the articles the perspective which is essential when discussing the highly specialized field of theatre organ construction. Lance Johnson does a fine job with his "Questions & Answers" and "Pipe Organ Quiz" columns. The article, "A Layman Looks At Pipe Scales" by Mr. Ben Levy was superb. (Even though the title states he is a layman, he was quite accurate.) Scaling, and the relative mouth dimensions is perhaps the most illusive concept for the beginner to comprehend. And, it's undoubtedly the aspect of pipe organ construction which contributes the aura of Divine Mystery. Articles dealing with sound and it's illusive and evasive qualities would be a good follow-up to this article. And, it would help to guide the curiosity and enthusiasm of such people as Mr. Weisenberger in more appropriate directions.

I sincerely hope that Mr. Weisenberger is not discouraged by the negative reaction he has received from his article. I'm sure that his calculations were well thought out, and that he submitted the article with only the best of intentions. However, he is unaware (through lack of exposure,) that his analysis of the pipe organ is somewhat afield of what pipe-created sound is all about. As I mentioned a moment ago, the organ industry, (and especially the fantasy world of the theatre organ,) has an aura of mystery about it. I'm sure I speak for many builders in the United States when I say that there are no devine mysteries.

Mr. Weisenberger should not con-

HELP ORGANize TOLEDO

•
Send donations
to
TATOS, INC.
P.O. BOX 6896
TOLEDO, OHIO 43612

cern himself with applying scientific formats to organ building, before attaining a solid education in the existing science. I think he will be fascinated by the sufficiency he finds.

My best to all who make the THEATRE ORGAN Magazine the fine journal it is!

Yours truly,
Stephen L. Adams

Dear Mr. Thompson,

As a member of ATOS, I am writing about a continuing event which might be of interest to the Society's membership. It involves the carrying on of a very old tradition in a very new environment. In what I believe to be a first for modern movie theatres, an electronic theatre organ has been placed in a new cinema and is being played regularly between movie performances.

Through an arrangement between the Wurlitzer Music Stores, Inc., of Indianapolis and the General Cinema Corporation Theatres at Washington Square, a Wurlitzer electronic theatre organ has been

YOU CAN HELP THE MOTOR CITY CHAPTER BUY THE REDFORD THEATRE

Mail your tax-deductible contribution to:

MOTOR CITY THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 40716
REDFORD, MICHIGAN 48240

placed in a 475 seat modern cinema showing first-run motion pictures. The association began in June, 1976, and continues to the present. Much of the credit for the continuing success of the arrangement must be given to Mr. Julian Mitford, manager of Cinema I and II. He is a most interesting and innovative person who managed theatres in England for many years before coming to the United States. Under his progressive management the organ music has become a regular feature at no increase in cost to the movie patrons.

I have been privileged to be the organist at Cinema I since the start of the program. I must say that I am firmly dedicated to the restoration, preservation and entertainment on theatre pipe organs wherever possible. They are a valuable American heritage which must be preserved. I realize, however, that there are several generations of young persons who have never experienced live theatre organ music in a theatre setting. The modern cinema structures of steel and concrete have a minimum of space, are without stages, and have only the barest of decorative enhancement. The automated facilities as well as the atmosphere seem to preclude the romantic environment of the old movie palaces. I was quite pleasantly surprised to learn that the audiences, predominately young persons, thoroughly enjoy the "live" theatre organ experience and request many old songs far removed from the present generation. Over 15,000 persons have been entertained since June, 1976, and their enthusiasm keeps the arrangement continuing.

I sincerely hope that the enthusiasm I have seen for theatre organ music in the modern audiences will continue and will motivate them to seek out and support theatre pipe organ music.

Musically,
Donald I. Craig, Jr.

P.S. Mr. Julian Mitford is a most interesting person with many interesting experiences to relate about his English past. He may be reached at:

Mr. Julian Mitford
Manager, Cinema I and II
Washington Square
10202 East Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46229
(317) 899-4100

□