



Wurlitzer furniture designers inspect the console of the Mightiest Wurlitzer before it is sent to the company's organ plant in Corinth, Miss.



Ready to roll, the console of the Mightiest Wurlitzer is prepared for shipment to Mississippi.

Behind the scaffolding, work nears completion on the expression chambers that will cover one wall of Wurlitzer Hall.



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 Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.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

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Editor
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Dear Editor:

What, *really*, constitutes theatre organ music? Is it a style, a state of mind, a location, an instrument, a personality, a type of musical selection, or what? Recent months have seen many views expressed in these pages as to just what constitutes the essence of theatre organ programming. Please let me add a few of my own.

But, before I do, let me re-state a truism: No one can legislate taste. What is one person's *Tibia* is another's *tripe*. Depending upon personality, education, degree of exposure to various styles of music, blood pressure, sugar and hormone levels, we are all different from one another. There is no way this side of the heavenly pipe chambers that everyone will appreciate a musical experience to the same degree. So, there must be room, always, for the individual differences among us. It's a free country, kids!

For some of the ranks of ATOS, the *mechanical* side of theatre organ is the chief interest. Granted, we could never dispense with their talents and expertise. But, some among them could care less for the finesse

in registration, modulation and arrangements that delights the *trained musician* who attends the same concert.

Then there are some in every audience who simply revel in hearing the same tired handful of basic musical bromides ("Lara's Theme," "76 Tombones," etc.) and who will tolerate little else. These persons sometimes assert that they go to concerts to be entertained, not educated. Perhaps a tape recording of their favorite selections would be better for them than a *live* artist, particularly if the tape were played through the pipe chambers. But a *live artist* means much more than sound *reproduction*.

Being a musician and an occasional concert artist myself, I believe that an organist who sits down at the console of a theatre organ to play for others has a unique opportunity and responsibility. Surely he *must* entertain and delight, but he can, and frequently does, painlessly *educate*. He should not, I agree, play over the heads and abilities of the average listener. ATOS is *not* AGO! A long list of classical organ works simply does not belong to the theatre organ "tradition," particularly when the organs themselves do not have the tonal characteristics to carry off that musical genre in the first place. On the other hand, I feel it is sheer idiocy for someone to write off the artist as "too classical" when the organist cuts the tremis now and then. One would think that the tremulants controlled such person's pacemaker!

One who plays theatre organ music in public should attempt to balance his selections and attempt to play something to please everyone, if possible. Perhaps the old cliché has some truth: "Something *old*, something *new*, something *borrowed*, something *blue*." Some of the finest theatre organ concerts I have ever attended had just that combination! Any true theatre organist is attempting to *communicate* with his audience, to share his feelings, his humor, his ideas, his love and joy with them. The language he uses is *sound* — musical sound. Just as we who speak the English language with one another combine words used by Chaucer and Shakespeare with words of the street people of 1970's, the theatre organist is justified in

combining the musical language of the Crawford of yesterday with the sounds of the present.

As for the debate in the most recent issue of THEATRE ORGAN: that of playing the *notes* or playing the *music*, I feel that it should be noted publically that there is an important difference between the theatre organist and the organist who performs the classics in public concert. The theatre organist must be adept at improvisation, arranging and orchestration as well as the literal art of key pushing. The presentation of real theatre organ music is an extension of the organist's personality. *What* he plays and *how* he plays it *both* constitute his art. If, however, he chooses to play classics, then he should do so, but only with the care and integrity that the classics so greatly deserve.

The theatre organist who poses as a pedagogue is a fool. However, there is no reason why he cannot still uplift and educate with the joy and enthusiasm he puts into well-practiced music. After all, an artist's program is, first of all, *his* program, for he has chosen the selections. While he must keep his audience in mind, it is true that the audience, for their part, must give him a chance. Communication is two-sided. It is the clever, unfamiliar music that gives a program its personality, while the familiar music gives a program its flow, warmth and pacing. Both are necessary.

True music is an art, not merely a business. That is true of theatre organ music as well. A true artist can create a spell that brings enjoyment, culture, happiness to those who come to enjoy, to listen and to appreciate — in short, who are willing to hear what this live, individual artist is trying to say. The occasional unreasonable crabby critic in our midst should not upset either the artist or listener, or stand in the way for the majority for whom the glorious music of the theatre organ in all its diversity is one of the delights of life in this old "vale of tears." Keep theatre organ music coming — and enjoy it!

Rev. William Edward Biebel
Erie, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I am writing to you in hopes that one of your ATOS members could

shed some light on an instrument of great interest to me. The instrument in question is the 3/11 Marr and Colton once located in the Feeley Theatre, Hazelton, Pennsylvania.

A friend of mine has a tape of Leroy Lewis playing the organ in the Feeley Theatre. This tape was made in the late 50's. The sound of that instrument has to be about the most lush theatre organ sound I have ever heard.

This past summer my friend stopped in Hazelton, Penn. on his way to the national convention. He found the Feeley Theatre all boarded up. Checking around, as near as he could determine, the organ had been removed many years earlier. It is my hope that someone might shed some light as to where this instrument went.

Thank you for your interest.

Dr. Alan Goodnow

Dear Editor:

I would like to express a word of thanks to Mr. Tom Hazleton for his concert on November 22, 1977 for LA-ATOS on the Elks Organ, and to commend him for being a most capable organist.

About the organ: it is a concert organ, not a true theatre organ, although it does have a horseshoe console. Instead of having stop tablets for each rank available on each manual, ranks can be borrowed from one manual to another by means of inter-manual couplers. The Robert Morton organ is an original installation, dating from 1926, thus, it has not been completely reworked, like many organs which have been moved from place to place, hence it requires much maintenance. Originally, there were 59 ranks, but one rank (the Tibia Molis) is permanently missing; 11 ranks are in the echo chamber, which can be played from either the main console of four manuals, or from a separate two-manual console; and the remaining 47 ranks are divided between four chambers (Solo, Unenclosed Great & Pedal, Swell, and Great & Choir).

Due to lack of sufficient maintenance personnel, the organ wasn't up to a standard of perfection, and a few ranks were disconnected for the concert. But there were still 50-plus ranks working in good shape (that's more than most theatre pipe organs ever have working, and any *good* or-

ganist *will* be able to get something good out of that much of an organ). Once again, Tom proved his excellent capability by working with the organ, instead of letting the organ work against him. He also demonstrated many capabilities of the organ, and concluded his concert by playing several numbers from the small console, which shows the beauties of the echo organ as it is played into the entrance lobby of the building, and up the main staircase.

Most unfortunately, many people who call themselves theatre organists are not true theatre organists, but only Wurlitzer organists. If it is not a Wurlitzer, they do not know how to handle it. Certainly, on an instrument the size of the Elks organ, any organist worthy of being called an organist can find something to work with. Mr. Tom Hazleton has proved that he is a virtuoso organist through his desire to perform on the Elks organ and through his capable handling of a good organ which is not a Wurlitzer.

If your club has a good organ, and it isn't a Wurlitzer (or even if it is), and you are looking for a top organist to perform for a concert, may I suggest and recommend Mr. Tom Hazleton? And thanks again, Tom, for a very enjoyable evening of listening to a wonderful organ concert.

Sincerely,
Paul Duerr
Member, Elks Organ
Maintenance Crew □



"The last mile." ATOS Vice President/Treasurer Erwin Young leaves the cockpit for the final time, July 31, 1977, after maneuvering United Flight 56 from San Diego to Dulles International Airport. Cap retired after 32 years as a pilot.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE

by Lance Johnson

- 1. I have a 30 amp modern rectifier that I use on my 3/15 Wurlitzer and I was wondering if I am overloading it? I am afraid of having it blow out and quit during a concert.**

Ans. The rectifier you refer to is slightly underrated and should handle your requirements. If it was being overloaded, you would have known it long ago with fuses being blown on the secondary side.

- 2. I have a mostly 3/15 Wurlitzer which uses a Spencer Orgoblo, 5 hp, 1200 rpm, rated at 13 inches pressure. How much can this blower be pushed? I am trying to keep the pressures down with no pipes over 8½" wind. The tonal percussions, toys and console work on static wind. I enjoy and indeed appreciate your fine column, and more power to you!**

Ans. My question at this point would be, what pressure was your organ voiced on? If you have lowered the pressure, the pipework will not blend and the tonal character will be altered. You would be bound to have many slow reeds. If you intend to keep this pressure, your blower will suffice as long as you don't add any more pipework or raise pressures. If your organ was mostly voiced originally on 10" wind, your blower would be borderline. Normally an organ of this size, especially if it had a few ranks on 15" wind, would have a 10 hp machine shipped with it.

- 3. I have a relay which is just about full, that is, the contacts at the short bar already have wires attached. I still want to add tonal percussions. What is the easiest way to do this?**

Ans. There are two methods; One would be to add more contact blocks. Unfortunately most relays don't have space. The other method would be to build a diode circuit divider by removing one stop from the contact block and wiring it to a buss bar, which forms the basis for no more than three gang switches. Each switch will have to be loaded with diodes to prevent circuit "flyback." Wire each switch to the new stops and wire stop wires to switch action magnets. It can also be done completely with solid state and eliminate all gang switches. The chest magnets on these "new" stops should also have spark suppression diodes installed to reduce current on relay contact. Diodes are available from Resiner or Durst.

- 4. When you depress a note from the keyboard, a short bar moves in the relay causing a number of contacts to be common. This then goes to the buss bars and the rank is not playing unless the switch is energized. I can't understand why you cannot have multiple contacts (several wires on one pin) in the relay. Since the short bar goes down, all the contacts are positive anyway. No one has yet to give me a satisfactory answer.**

Ans. Let me answer your question with this illustration; Let's say you have wired the lowest pedal relay note so that one contact is wired to the Tibia 8', Tuba 8' and String 8'. Now you register the pedal so that all three of these stops are on. If you register only the Tibia 8' in the Solo manual and play the bottom C on the keyboard, you will also hear the Tuba 8' and String 8' play. How? The lowest pedal relay note was energized by the low C on the Tibia which you played on the Solo. The positive impulse traveled to the relay spreader, through the Pedal Tibia 8' gang switch all the way down to the pedal relay where you wired it