



THE MANSION OF 100,000 WELCOMES

by Al Sacker

Rarely is an ATOS Chapter privileged to be invited to a mansion, and rarer yet, is for that mansion to have a grande organ with two consoles! On November 6, 1977, the Southeast Texas Chapter was invited on a tour of this Georgian colonial mansion and to have open console at the beautiful Moller Pipe Organ. The story about to unfold is like a dream come true.

When Johannah Cunningham was a girl, she often used to hear her father exclaim the greeting that was the most popular in his home in Donegal, Ireland: "Cead Mile Failte — A Hundred Thousand Welcomes." That is why the greeting is carved into the doorstep of her home in Beaumont where at least 100,000 guests have been entertained.

John Henry Phelan of Charlotte, N.C. came to Beaumont in 1903 as a

manufacturer's representative for Heisig and Norvell. His soon-to-be wife, Johannah Cunningham of Chicago, was visiting her attorney brother in Beaumont at the time. In 1904, they were married and began an empire that had far reaching effects in the oil industry, even today. The original \$750.00 invested into an oil venture at the famed Spindletop Oilfield near Beaumont in 1926 turned into over \$48,000,000.00!

The story is recalled that Johannah Phelan told the young architect, Owen J. Southwell of Atlanta, Georgia, that if she ever became wealthy, he would build her dream home. When Harry gave his wife carte blanche to build and furnish a home, she spent two years planning with Southwell and Homer Fry of Boston, who designed the grounds with a Japanese sunken garden,

swimming pool, tennis courts, horse paths and walking paths, a 9 hole golf course and literally thousands of azaleas, camellias and semi-tropical plants, as well as palm, pine and oak trees on the spacious grounds. The mansion walls are 18 inches thick and the foundation can support a building of nineteen stories.

The Phelan mansion has been a show place of East Texas ever since it was built. Antique collecting practically became a vocation after a four-poster bed that was already 100 years old was purchased in New Orleans in 1904, and, through the years other antiques were acquired. A beautiful cut glass chandelier which once belonged to George Bernard Shaw now hangs in the gracious foyer of the mansion. Extensive visits to the art galleries of Europe, South America and the United States were made in



Al Sacker at the main console of the 3/27 Moller Artiste pipe organ, Phelan Mansion.

order to enhance the mansion with beautiful portraits. There were Gainesborough and Sargent paintings, Remington water colors, and furniture dating back to Louis XV. Messen and Cape da Monte china-ware filled the shelves in the court, and religious paintings of artists of the Middle Ages like Botticini's 15 Century Madonna and Child hung about a Cross of precious metal.

While the house was being completed, it was learned that an embroidery wall, begun in the first decade of the century for Empress Elizabeth of Austria, had been made available in Italy after the Empress' death. The artisans had done much work for the Vatican. Arrangements were made to have the embroidery walls and ceiling of pure silk put up in the formal room of the Beaumont mansion. Chairs and stools planned

THE PHELAN MANSION 3/27 MOLLER

GREAT ORGAN:

Open Diapason	61	Pipes	8'
Gemshorn	61	Pipes	8'
Dopple Flute	61	Pipes	8'
Dulciana	61	Pipes	8'
Violin	73	Pipes	8'
Concert Flute	61	Pipes	8'
Harmonic Flute	61	Pipes	4'
Flute Twelfth	61	Pipes	2-2/3'
Dulciana Twelfth	61	Pipes	2-2/3'
Dulciana Fifteenth	61	Pipes	2'
Dulciana Tiercena	61	Pipes	1-3/5'
Clarinet	61	Pipes	8'
Tuba	61	Pipes	8'

TOTAL PIPES 805

CHOIR ORGAN:

Vox Celeste	49	Pipes	8'
French Horn	61	Pipes	8'

TOTAL PIPES 110

PEDAL ORGAN:

Bourdon	44	Pipes	16'
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TOTAL PIPES 44

SWELL ORGAN:

Lieblich Gedeckt	97	Pipes	16'
Horn Diapason	73	Pipes	8'
Salicional	73	Pipes	8'
Vox Celeste	61	Pipes	8'
Viole d'Orchestre	73	Pipes	8'
Oboe	73	Pipes	8'
Vox Humana	61	Pipes	8'

TOTAL PIPES 511

ECHO ORGAN:

Muted Viole	73	Pipes	8'
Viole Celeste	61	Pipes	8'
Echo Flute	73	Pipes	8'

ECHO PEDAL:

Bourdon	44	Pipes	16'
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TOTAL PIPES 251

Harp	61	Bars	
Chimes	21	Tubes	
<i>(In Echo Organ)</i>			
Couplers	26		

Note: Organ is equipped with a reproducing player action.

TOTAL RANKS: 27
 TOTAL PIPES: 1271



Two-manual console in Chapel plays the echo organ controlling four ranks of pipes. The console features nine couplers.

The echo organ can also be played from swell manual of the main organ.

for the ill-fated Hapsburg family complemented the wall's decor.

There were many unusual rooms in the Phelan mansion, upstairs and downstairs, as well as the basement (that, too, was unusual, as Beaumont is only 24 feet above sea level, and "homes" do not have basements in Southeast Texas), but perhaps the most unusual room of all was the Music Room. That room boasted of two concert grand pianos, a golden harp and a fine Moller Pipe Organ. From the ceiling hung two massive Czechoslovakian cut glass chandeliers, and the chairs were red velvet tapestry with woodwork in gold leaf.

The other most unusual room in

the mansion was the Chapel on the second floor. There, among all the beautiful religious paintings and the Altar with the gold vessels used for the religious service, was the other Moller console that operated on the Echo Division of the grand organ.

Fifty years ago when the Phelan mansion was built, it cost \$250,000. If the mansion was built at today's prices, the cost would have been at least a 500% increase over the prices then — \$1,500,000.00 excluding land and furnishings.

It was in this surrounding, rich in the cultural background of the Western world, that the Phelans lived. Thousands of East Texans and their friends from all over the world have enjoyed the beautiful Phelan mansion. At their bequest, the mansion was gifted to the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Incarnate Word who now use the mansion as a convent. Where once was a nine hole golf course, is now a huge seven story, St. Elizabeth Hospital. The former Japanese sunken garden has been filled in for parking area, alas, the swimming pool too. But, the mansion grounds are still intact, exactly as it once was. The Southeast Texas Chapter has been granted permission to "take over" and maintain the magnificent Moller Pipe Organ with its two consoles and its re-producing player, in return for the privilege of having future meetings and recitals in the former mansion of the Phelan family which may be starting on its second 100,000 welcomes. □



ANN LEAF IN VANCOUVER — The 3/13 Wurlitzer in the Orpheum Theatre, Vancouver, B.C. came to life under the nimble fingers of Ann Leaf on February 11 and 12.

Playing two concerts, each program selection was an arrangement by Ann. Except for her theme "In Time," there were no duplications in the two performances.

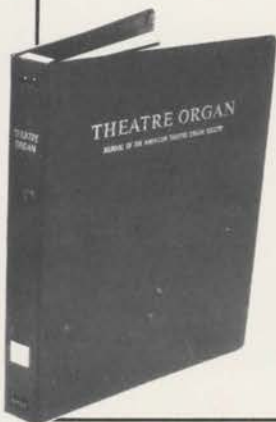
From the newspaper reviews it would seem that "Little Organ Annie" swept the critics off their feet. One review indicated the writer could not find enough superlatives to properly describe the performer or performance.

The Leaf program was the second of a series being produced by Herbert L. McDonald of Vancouver. The first of the series featured Reginald Foort (see THEATRE ORGAN, February, 1978).

The Ann Leaf programs were taped by Frank Killinger of Doric Records and recordings will probably be released later this year.

Mr. McDonald has announced that Rex Koury will appear at the Orpheum on April 29.

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