

out the program's second portion, which spotlighted him in solos on the organ."

The conductor, plus many members of the orchestra, remained to meet Hector after the concert. It was honor enough to have performed with this great orchestra, however it was an even greater thrill to have so many of his peers remain after his second half solo performance to acknowledge their delight at both his classic and theatre stylings as well.

This experience was particularly rewarding, stated Hector later. It was an opportunity for him to witness how enthusiastically an audience unfamiliar with theatre organ stylings can respond.

By playing a classic/theatre organ concert at a totally "open-to-the-public" event with a classical slant, the artist was able to present the wonderful world of theatre organ to an audience which normally would not be aware of its existence, thus expanding the vistas of the theatre organ as an art form. Well done, Hector! □

## *A Barton Is Saved*

# FLINT THEATRE ORGAN CLUB

The Capital Theatre, in the heart of Flint, Michigan, announced the closing of its doors forever with the showing of the 'last picture show' on October 2, 1976. It could no longer fight the exodus of moviegoers to the suburban theatres.

The announcement came as glum news to members of the Flint Theatre Organ Club who had spent ten years restoring the 3/11 Barton to mint condition.

The group had presented regular weekend intermission programs and monthly 'ladies day' volunteer concerts. One evening a month, members had gathered at a local restaurant then moved to the theatre following the last movie for an open console session. Suddenly this was all coming to an end.

Fortunately, Earl Berry, manager of the Capital, and Lyle Smith of Butterfield Theatres, Michigan's largest movie house chain, had always been interested boosters of the

Capital Barton. If certain conditions could be met, the organ would remain in Flint.

The scramble was on to find a new home for an 11-rank organ with toy counter. The acoustics would have to be good and it would have to be close by where it would be used and enjoyed as well as be a benefit to the community.

More good news. The Flint Institute of Music and Fred Peryer, director, wanted the organ and the MacArthur Recital Hall met all the requirements.

Hardly more than a month after the Capital had closed its doors, the great move started. Within two weeks, both pipe chambers had been emptied and all equipment piled on stage. The console, the main switchstack and two large wind-chests required professional movers, who donated their equipment for the occasion. Everything else had to be loaded manually into trucks and



### ***It's Dues Time***

See page 17  
for details on how to  
pay your dues for 1979.

***Don't Miss an Issue!***



Ron Dring, Bob Burnham and Harold Renico construct the retaining wall at F.I.M.



Harold Renico and Ted Decker hoist drywall during chamber construction.





driven over icy, slippery snow-covered streets during one of the coldest Novembers Michigan has known.

Parts were stored in the basement of Dort Music Center, home of F.I.M. until a retaining wall for the shutters could be built.

A scale model of the new chambers was built by the installation crew, with Ron Dring and Norm Lawless serving as technical advisors. The chambers were to be constructed above the dressing rooms which are part of a permanent backdrop, in an area 55 feet long, 12 feet deep and 20 feet high. Everything progressed well and the wall was completed during the Christmas holiday recess for the college.

The time had come to reassemble the Barton. Carpenters suddenly appeared to build the structure for the wind-chests. Then came installation of the windline. When it came time for the wiring and soldering, several of the women 'turned-to' and suddenly developed a "knack" for wielding a soldering iron. The blower was reactivated and the main cable wired to the console. Next, a movable platform was built so the console could be rolled from the wings to center stage for performances. This was covered with red carpet and gold fringe to match the red and gold Barton console.

The group now looks back and remembers, with a warm glow of pride, that even though the hours of work were sometimes long and tedious, there was cooperation within the ranks of the work crew and never a conflict or grumble. There was a job to be done and everybody donated their particular talents where needed.

And a *very* special relationship

Ron Dring and Bob Burnham set the retaining wall in place in January, 1977.



Velma Burnham, house organist at the Flint Institute of Music.

(Lawrie Mallett Photo)



Dennis James at the Barton console in the fall of 1977.

(Lawrie Mallett Photo)

Norm Lawless helps to install swell shades for the Barton at F.I.M.



Marv Cook (president of F.T.O.C.) and Ron Dring hoist the tremulant motor into place.





developed between the work crew and Ben and Max, the friendly custodians at F.I.M.

In the spring of 1977, Mr. Peryer asked Bob and Velma Burnham to look for an artist-in-residence for the 1977-78 season. For eleven years, Velma has served as staff organist at the Capital Theatre playing Saturday and Sunday intermission programs. Throughout the years of escorting Velma to and from the theatre, Bob had developed a special affection for the Barton. Though many artists were considered, their thoughts always came back to Dennis James as the one who would be able to "bring it all together."

Dennis agreed, knowing it was his responsibility to show the people of Flint what theatre pipe organ was all about. And this he did, during the one-week visit each month for seven months from November through May. It proved to be a grand awakening for theatre organ lovers of Flint.

Velma Burnham is presently house organist at F.I.M. Bob now serves as coordinator between F.I.M. and the Flint Theatre Organ Club and was the one who accepted the responsibility for moving the organ to its present home. Both are now members of the Activities Board at F.I.M.

The Flint Theatre Organ Club can now say they are the first to offer instructional opportunities to the community within a college complex, through a series of private lessons, workshops, concerts, sing-alongs and silent movies with organ accompaniment. This has been made possible by a grant awarded by the Mott Foundation for an artist-in-residence at the Flint Institute of Music.

Although not affiliated with ATOS, about half of the Flint Theatre Organ Club members are individually active in the Motor City Chapter.

Not unlike a fairy tale, with everybody living happily ever after, this story, too, has a happy ending. Although forever is a long time, F.T.O.C. members are thankful that their Barton is in a position to teach the coming generation a very important part of this country's history — the theatre organ, its music, and the enjoyment of playing, listening and preserving its sound. □

# TRASH

by John Muri

You can't tell about word-meanings. Much of the time you have to guess. We are now assaulted by locutions like "real bad, real cool" and hyperbolic adjectives like *fantastic* and *fabulous*. If everyone who uses them is correct, we must be enjoying the greatest musical age the world has ever seen. The current devotion to a mangled construction of the adverb *hopefully* shows that many, many people are carried away more by the sounds of words than by sense. When reading some of our concert reviews, we have to guess at what happened; so much is left unsaid, merely suggested, or expressed ironically.

There need be no equivocation about musical trash, offal, detritus, refuse, or junk, whatever you call it. For a long time, so-called purists have been calling theatre organs, their players, and their music trash. We have shrugged off the words of Dr. Audsley and E. Power Biggs (who is reported to have called the theatre organ "a vulgar instrument.") If the latter did so, he was blaming an inanimate object, while what he should have been blaming were irresponsible, over-enthusiastic, and tasteless players. He would have done us a service by defining his adjective, had he cared to do so. The word *tasteless* is continually bandied about in "legitimate" musical literature.

What is good taste? Briefly, we might say it consists in expecting or asking no more of an instrument than it is capable of producing adequately and pleasingly, if not completely. But what do we mean by those last three adverbs? The endless excoriation of Vox Humanas and tremulants by purists who never fail to include those devices in their organ specifications is indicative of a singular inconsistency, to put things mildly. One doesn't blame a trombone for being a trombone, even though it can't sing the highest,

sweetest melodies. Nobody expects it to.

Some theatre organs can be said to have been thrown into their chambers, but this can be said of church as well as theatre work. I know many in which large blocks of electrical connections were left unsoldered. You couldn't always blame the organ manufacturers, though, when they were pressured into getting the instruments working without enough time to finish the installations. Many organs were "thrown" in because of the demands of theatre owners who wanted organ sound for opening performances. Many organs today are in bad condition, with their owners complaining about the lack of economic return or of time needed to do a good piece of work. I have heard a hundred excuses why organs are in junk condition: poor health, no money, no time, etc. The "legit" theatre organ in first-class condition is a rarity. There are at least three organ owners who persist in offering organ shows (I can't call them concerts) on instruments that hang together by "baling wire and a prayer."

The main weakness of theatre organs has been their lack of enough stops to create more than a few interesting tonalities. A related weakness is a frequent lack of good foundation tone, despite the insistence of organists on playing heavy works, like Bach fugues, on organs too small or too ill-voiced to produce more than a travesty of performance. When appropriate music was used, some fine playing could be done on small instruments, that most theatre organs were inadequately serviced added to the critics' dislike and the organists' discomfort. The careless, hasty way in which many organs were installed, jammed into inaccessible chamber-space, made them trash from the beginning. One could only sympathize with the people who had to play and service them. As for the organs being over-balanced