

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE

by Lance Johnson

Do you have any questions?

Send them direct to:

**QUIZMASTER
and Organbuilder**

LANCE JOHNSON
Box 1228
Fargo, ND 58102

Q. I recently received the specifications for a theatre organ which was a two-chamber installation. On paper, the spec read that all stops notated with an (S) spoke from the solo and all those with an (X) spoke from both chambers. My question is, how is this possible when the stops are not marked as such on the console? This was a Publix #1 model and is now in the Organ Grinder in Portland.

A. I am a little confused as to why this spec was written up this way. Usually the Wurlitzer console has a white disc above each tablet to show chamber location for each rank. The main had a plain white and the solo had a black dot in the center.

Q. I would like to know the pressures for a 4/21 Wurlitzer as follows:

A. Console, relay & switches . . . 15"
Diaphone
(some were on 15") 10"
Tibia, Main 15"
Tibia, Solo 10" or 15"
(Depends on scale)
Tuba Horn 15"

Tuba Mirabilis 15"
Clarinet 10"
Saxophone 10"
Concert Flute 10"
Solo String, Solo 10"
Solo String, Main 10"
Viol Celeste 10"
V.D.O. 10"
Oboe Horn 10"
Dulciana 10"
Vox Humana, Solo 6"
Vox Humana, Main 6"
Kinura 10"
Trumpet 10"
Quintadena 10"
Tonal percussions & traps . 15"

NOTE: These pressures will vary due to scaling and location.

The same reader asked about the chamber layout and order of ranks on the chests from front to back. This varied with each organ, depending on space and the era in which it was built. Many chambers were triangular and the layouts had to be split up to fit the chambers.

Q. Our chapter schedules "maintenance sessions" at our theatre occasionally and we all have a great time. Someone brings lunch and we stay usually until early morning. The only trouble is, we really don't accomplish much. We take turns playing the organ most of the night while most of the others just sit and listen. Many members do not show up at all because they feel they either won't

know how to do jobs or they complain of bad backs and are afraid they will be asked to lift heavy parts. Do you have any suggestions as to how to improve our maintenance sessions and get more people involved?

A. It sounds to me like you need a new crew chief. With your casual attitude as a group, you are also a prime candidate for getting yourselves thrown out of the theatre for good. Unfortunately many chapters or clubs do not have a full time professional organ builder to rely on for instruction on routine maintenance.

Your crew chief must outline in advance what type of session it will be. Will it be a work session or open console? Is there enough work for everyone to keep busy? There is nothing worse than having people show up for a maintenance session only to find work for only a few. The rest feel like fifth wheels and soon leave. It is most important that all those who come are kept busy at all times. This will prevent them from wandering in and out of the theatre and exploring.

The work session must have a plan of action very carefully thought out in advance, in fact, well in advance. The crew chief must think up jobs that each person is capable of doing. Don't assign cleaning chores to people who hate doing it and will do a

From Concerned Candidates for ATOS Director

We congratulate ATOS on its Silver Anniversary. We believe it needs these ideas to strengthen it for the next 25 years.

- New, creative, experienced Board leadership to help us look to the future.
- Immediate use of revised election rules including sealed ballots and a tally committee.
- Increased membership whose dues would support a paid *professional* administrative and publication staff.
- Timely revisions of By-laws based on a federation model with individual *and* chapter representation.
- A theatre organ museum founded on corporate, charitable, and governmental support.
- An annual playing competition to encourage new performers on the theatre organ.

Your Vote for Us Is a Vote for the Future of ATOS

TIMOTHY NEEDLER
ATOS since 1965
Past Chairman,
Central Indiana

RICHARD SKLENAR
ATOS since 1965
Past Chairman,
CATOE

— This is a paid advertisement. —

poor job. Don't ask members to hold keys if they don't know the names of the notes. Don't expect obese people to crawl under chests to repair dead notes, etc. It is best to call each person and tell them exactly what you expect to accomplish and what that person would do. It doesn't take long to find out which people learn to specialize. Don't ask people with poor eyesight to do wiring jobs. Start out by passing out a work assignment at your club meeting asking those who want to work on the organ to sign up and leave the hours that they can work and the duties they would like. Don't pressure people to work on organs if they don't like to work with their hands. Soon you will find a group in your club

**Theatre Organ Want Ads
GET RESULTS
Try One**

that you can rely upon and they will learn specialties.

There have been examples of well-carried out sessions in many instances. One member in the Chicago area trained another member to be a plumber's helper and they completely overhauled the plumbing in the dressing room complex.

People who enjoy interior decorating can restore dressing rooms. Machinists and auto mechanics can repair lifts. Set realistic goals each time and work to accomplish them. Leave the fun at the console until the

work is done.

Another good point is for the chapter to invest in tools that can be left in the theatre. Then, whoever is first to arrive can begin work immediately. In larger theatres, it is well to purchase an intercom for talking between chambers, and from chambers to the console. Each chamber should have a tool rack containing a small and large flat-tip screwdriver, pliers, soldering iron, test wire and drop cord light. Much time is lost in running around trying to find tools during organ servicing.

In conclusion, if your group does not have an organ builder to supervise restorations and maintenance, please write to me and I will try to find one in your area. □



EXPRESS YOURSELF!

Have you ever been to an organ concert where the artist's styling was good, yet the performance left you unexcited? There are two causes of this — bland registration and lack of expressive mood changes. Wise use of the expression pedal can add lots of color to an otherwise dull program.

In *Pipe Organ Registration*, author Jack C. Goode tells the history of expression pedals (or swell shoes). Liturgical organs that were built before and during the time of J.S. Bach were unenclosed. (The pipework was not encased, and many of today's instruments use this idea for certain divisions of the organ. Aside from church organs, the pizza installations often expose the percussions.) As musical history progressed through the Romantic period, more gradations of tone were needed that changing from one rank of pipes to another could not provide. Hence, organ-builders began to enclose their

pipework and placed shutters, venetian-blind style, on the outside to control the volume from the chamber to the listener.

Theatre organs normally have several swell shoes, or pedals. Each particular installation varies from the next. A theatre organ will normally have a swell pedal for each chamber, a general, for all chambers and a crescendo pedal. (The crescendo pedal adds stops gradually and is always on the extreme right. Don't use it to control volume.) You may find another to control percussion volumes, or a master swell pedal whereby other swells may be coupled onto one shoe. In the case of most electronic organs, however, one doesn't have much choice — there's only one for the entire instrument. If you're blessed with a console that has two, one will generally control the tibias while the other takes care of the rest of the organ.

When playing the organ, your right foot should be on the volume pedal — toe to press down for added volume, heel to pull back for less volume — at all times. If you're seated properly at the organ (in the middle, firmly on the bench, and where your left foot can move from C to C smoothly) your balance should be better with the right foot on the expression pedal. If there are two, straddle them, placing your foot between the two.

Many organ teachers have seen varied and sundry uses for this pedal, but most students like to beat time with their right foot. Being as

the foot is on the volume pedal, this habit can be musically disastrous. Many years ago, Don Baker toured the country for an electronic organ firm, giving a combination of concerts and workshops. In one of these workshops, he dealt with this subject. The key to what he said was this: as the melody line of the music goes generally upward, the volume should increase; as the music goes down, so should the volume. It's a good rule to remember. Also, unless you're on the last phrase of the song, leave yourself somewhere to go. (If you're already playing "loudest," you can't end in a climax.) Music is composed in phrases, and each should be contoured in expression. Learn control. Gradual increases and decreases are much preferred over sudden changes.

Once you've learned the notes, learn the music. Analyze what you would like to get across from the first note to the last. Your listeners will hear the whole package, not each note or phrase as you, the player, concentrate on what comes next. Keep your listeners in mind and express yourself — and the music — accordingly. Sometimes it may help to tape yourself and then, *objectively*, listen to it and make improvements on what you hear. Don't, however, mentally play the arrangement while listening to the tape; that will defeat your purpose. Controlled, but wise, use of the volume pedal will help you to make music.

Here's to improved self-expression through music! □