

pulled a notable switch; it replaced its October annual meeting with an organ concert played by Billy Nalle on the "Dowager Empress."



Lyn Larsen. "Handsome, charismatic and talented" says our Man of the Year. (Bill Lamb Photo)

Our Man of the Year, Lowell Ayars reports going to the Dickinson High School in Wilmington, Del. to hear George Wright on October 5th, only to learn that George was hospitalized with pneumonia. His pinch hitter was Lyn Larsen and it was announced that anyone wanting their money back could go to the box office. Of the large audience, only two couples left, and Lowell says they really missed some fine playing: "I have never heard Lyn play better. Oh, to be young, handsome, charismatic and talented."

We know what you mean, Lowell. Besides, Lyn plays pretty good, too. □

### Season's Greetings

to all our  
A.T.O.S. FRIENDS



The Rochester  
Theater Organ Society

Dedicated to preserving the sound  
of the "King of Instruments"

# THE ORGAN CONCERT

by Billy Nalle

Complaints from some concert situations about lack of attendance have brought me to some observations born of research and experience since ATOS was founded twenty-five years ago. The fundamentals essential to presenting successful theatre organ concerts are exactly the same as apply in other major music fields. Unfortunately, coming to appreciate and honor these fundamentals has been a far slower process than known where the other major musical instruments are concerned. No person deeply believing in and caring for the welfare of theatre organ has escaped encountering an isolationist mentality which wants everything to remain static. The resulting slow suffocation now is showing its effects in several locales at both ends of the concert hall, at the console and at the box office.

To return theatre organ to the entertainment mainstream, *everything* on both sides of the footlights must be totally professional. Now, individual and group activities on a hobby basis provoke from this chile of God a "Yeaaa Team!" However, standards in every field are defined by the highest quality of a commodity presented in highest quality terms. Unfailingly, the highest professional standards in planning and performance are the best and strongest insurance for the continuance and strengthening of the hobby groups. Some of them still have not learned this after a quarter century.

A successful theatre organ concert series, or occasional concert, draws the public directly relative to the *appreciation* of adult musical fare by the sponsor, *professionalism* in planning, promotion and production, and the *musicianship* of the artist. That these fundamentals still are on the firing line after many years makes plain that too many concert sponsors and players in this field are not teachable. Further, no group which harps constantly on giving the public history lessons will draw serious support. Today, people have available in quantity and variety the finest musical fare presented in finest terms, with no nonsense. Right here is the crux of the matter, the blind spot shared by too many sponsors and players alike: The instrument is put *before* the music, which is the proverbial cart before the horse.

Support is built on what the theatre organ was created to *do*, make *MUSIC!* When all efforts are invested in presenting the finest *music* in the finest *musical* terms, support will follow and the instrument will take care of itself. Only we theatre organ buffs can love the instrument for itself and endure the wallowing in throbbing cascades of ill-tremulated sounds accompanied by breastbeating. The public has no interest in all that! Either it is irritated by such, or, at best, considers it quaint. *What* the theatre organ can provide uniquely and magnificently, *Music*, if it is top drawer, will move and win and draw those in the "outside world."

There are some places setting a good example on the international scene. One of the best is found in mid America, in Wichita. Here, in a city of 275,000 and far from the largest metropolitan areas, Wichita Theatre Organ, Inc., from its initial concert eight years ago, has put the chief emphasis on *musical* product in professional terms. Pricing of tickets, promotion, production, selection of artists and avoidance of too frequent public presentations are in accord with the standards which obtain in the other music fields. Even when competing events or/and bad weather have occurred on concert evenings, the audience never has been less than 1,200. The high majority of concerts through the years have drawn from 1,500 to 2,000 plus. WTO retains ownership of the organ while operating via a businesslike contract with Century II Center. All concerts for the public are in the evening, usually Saturday, giving people at a distance sufficient time for travel. That people drive and fly various distances to the concerts every year, in itself, speaks for itself. Early and late, alpha and omega, *Music* is the paramount consideration.

*Appreciation* of, and insistence on, adult musical fare by the sponsor.

*Professionalism* in planning, promotion and production.

*Musicianship* of the artists selected.

Wherever these are honored, no one needs to worry about theatre organ. You win the world to a musical instrument by its *music* . . . and by nothing less than, nothing other than, its music! □