

# Random Notes on a Job Well Done!

by Geoffrey Paterson

If the notion behind ATOS national conventions is that members have the opportunity to get together for several days of friendly socializing and note-comparing around a scheduled core of concerts played by some of the best organists in a variety of styles on a selection of local instruments (pause for breath), then the Detroit '82 convention was an unqualified success. There were the usual mutterings from those who have been through the organizational and operational nightmares of ATOS conventions that this or that could have been



The Motor City convention crew, taken at one of the regular morning strategy sessions.

(CN)

done better or faster or more efficiently — indeed there is always room for improvement and learning from past mistakes or disasters. But the overall impression was that the reported 698 registrants had a ball.

To Convention Chairman Jim Boutell and Associate Chairman Marjorie Muethel, hats off all over

Photos by  
Rudy Frey (RF)  
and  
Claude Neuffer (CN)

the place. They and their legions of advance organizers and on-site green-vested workers did a magnificent job. Sure, there were a couple of disasters and things did not always run as smoothly as hoped, but considering the fact that most of the team was non-professional and all were volunteers, it was indeed a first-class production all the way.

Special thank-you's should go to the Detroit Theater Organ Club, owners of the Senate Theater and its Wurlitzer, and to the Detroit Theatre Enthusiasts, who maintain the huge



Registration Room, organized for efficiency.

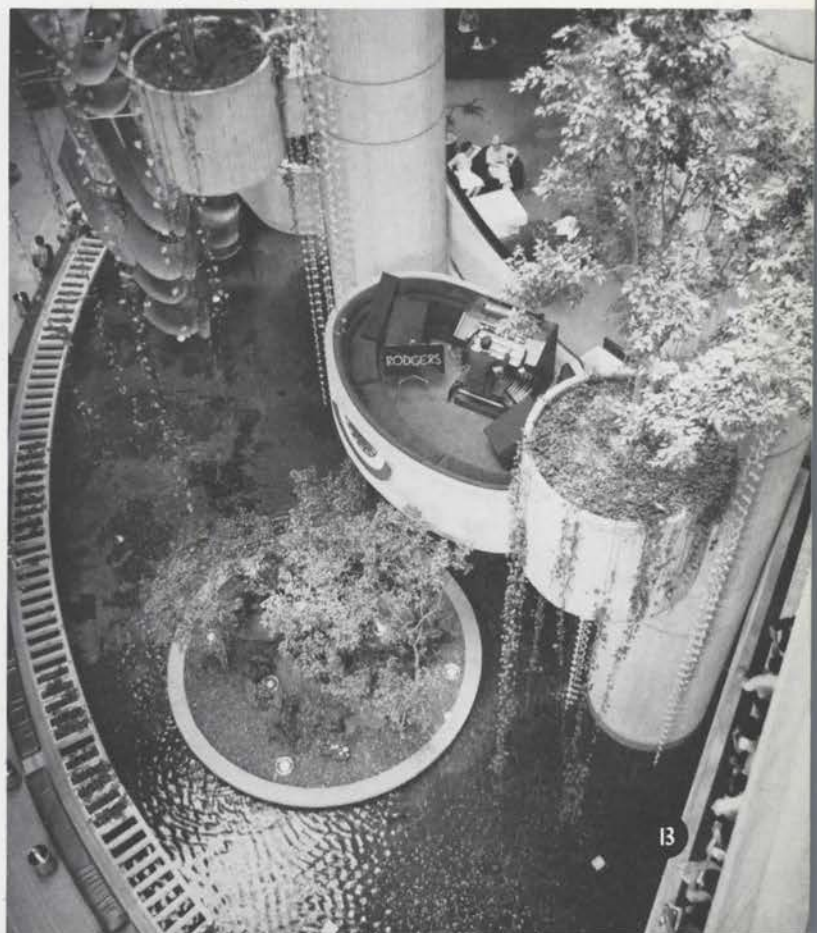
(CN)

THEATRE ORGAN photographer Rudy Frey and Staff Assistants David Palevich, Diane Bellamy, Edwardo Garcia, and David Martin.



Lyn Larsen at the Rodgers organ in the atrium of the Westin Hotel.

(CN)





"General" Fred Page and his crew of Bus Captains, at the Michigan Theatre.

(RF)



Editor Bob Gilbert responds to a question during the Chapter Representatives meeting.

(CN)



Most of the Registration Room staff, smiling and helpful.

(RF)

Loading buses at the Renaissance Center.

(CN)

Lance Johnson leading the Technical Session, July 5.

(CN)



Fox Wurlitzer and help operate the theatre, for making these two superb instruments available to us. Neither group is officially affiliated with ATOS.

\* \* \*

The official registration package presented to us in a logo-emblazoned plastic bag (just the right size to carry all those new records home in — a clever idea) contained the handsome souvenir book, a handy pocket schedule (the most essential item in the kit), an envelope containing all the proper event tickets (in order!), address cards for new friends, an official badge, a schedule of store and registration room hours, general information sheets that spelled out explicitly the answers to most-anticipated questions, pizza menus, pamphlets, a McDonald's coupon (which assumed you could find the place in that labyrinth of concrete and glass) and expense record cards from American Airlines. The crowning touch was a wonderful four-color *cloisonné* lapel pin of the convention logo which was, and is, a "precious souvenir."

As an independent member — one with no chapter affiliation — my official badge had only my name typed on it. When I asked the nice lady behind the typewriter if she would be kind enough to type "Toronto, Ontario" beneath it, as that is where I live, she asked what chapter I was with.

"Well, none, actually."

"I'm sorry, but we're only supposed to put on chapter names."

"But I don't *have* a chapter."

"Sorry. Maybe you can write it in by hand."

"But it won't be as neat as if it were typed."

"Sorry, only chapter names."

She was being so nice about it I hesitated to ask whose ridiculous instruction it was, but she was adamant. I got

around it by quickly becoming a member *ex nihilo* of the new Kingston T.O.S. Chapter (which had yet to be announced). This she duly typed on my badge. So everyone thought I was from Kingston.

Judging by the number of others who had hand-printed their home towns on their badges, this was not an isolated case. Nor-Cal, take a note.

\* \* \*

The seventy-floor Westin Hotel is the hub of the stunning Renaissance Center hard by Detroit's international waterfront. The sheer size of this complex of office towers, shops, restaurants and parking garages is staggering. The five open levels of its circular atrium core are laid out in such maze-like fashion that trying to get from point A to point B was like plotting a Queen's move in a game of three-dimensional chess. I was still tending to walk in huge circles for days after I got home.

\* \* \*

The official souvenir book was an elegant piece of design and writing, complete with letters of greeting from Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and Michigan Governor William Milliken. The deep blue foil-stamped

cover on a stock that had a leather-like texture was perfectly matched to the ink color inside — and for once blue photos actually looked all right.

The one omission, and a fairly serious one I think, was of organist biographies. These were perhaps left out for reasons of space or cost, but some people didn't have a clue who some of the organists were, where they were from or what they did besides play the organ. As it remains, they are just faces in an otherwise incredibly informative book.

\* \* \*

The record room was a veritable warehouse of theatre organ merchandise — heaven for the die-hard fan and collector. In addition to a staggering and constantly-changing display of records — to buy one of each would have cost hundreds of dollars — there were back issues of THE-ATRE ORGAN on display for ordering (and that was a staggering display in itself; if you haven't already ordered what you're missing, do so now!), reprints of organ catalogs, books on theatres and organs, sheet music, Tibia-pipe and Wurlitzer-tag tie pins, train whistle pipes, tapes of the various concerts and even paper fans for those hot, muggy bus rides.

The record-autograph session before the banquet was a happy inclusion, too.

\* \* \*

Speaking of buses, the hard plastic seats and lack of air-conditioning on all but two of them were quite miserable when travelling some of the longer distances we had to go. Especially in the heat and humidity of that week. I, for one, would have been quite happy to fork over the extra \$10 or \$15 with my registration to have been assured of air-conditioned highway coaches with those big, soft reclining chairs. Nothing makes a herd of people impatient and irritable faster than a hot, stuffy bus with rock-hard seats.

A nice touch, though, on most of the bus rides was the travelogue provided by the Bus Captain, which helped us out-of-towners to know a little more about Detroit and surrounding areas.

\* \* \*

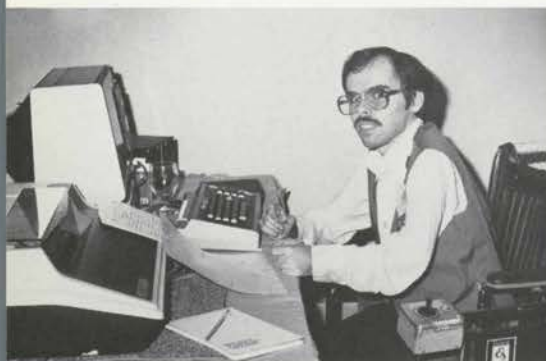
Display rooms were set up in the hotel by Rodgers, Kawai/Conn, Allen and Kimball — though there never seemed to be a representative in the last room. There was always a

The Record Shop — a busy place. (RF)





Photographer Claude Neuffer catches up on sleep. (RF)



Don Martin, of Motor City, kept the registration records on his computer. (RF)



Reception Desk in the lobby of the Westin Hotel. (CN)

A bus load of happy but tired conventioners.



milling through, and there are some very talented amateurs in our ranks!

Rodgers also set up an Olympic 333 model in one of the cantilevered concrete pods next to the main escalators in the vast atrium. Played two or three times a day, mostly by Lyn Larsen, it gathered a fair audience each time. Not just ATOS people either, but office workers, tourists, Martins and telecommunications conventioners and, especially, lots of young folk.

\* \* \*

Few of the concerts ran anywhere near the anticipated ninety minutes — certainly not in terms of music played — though one concert threatened the possibility of going all night. Some organists talked almost as much as they played. While there was no clock-watching as such, there was an underlying sense of being rushed; get 'em in, play the concert and get 'em out. The element of relaxation was overshadowed by scheduling and distances. There was always a bus to catch. Perhaps this is a problem with-



Motor City member David Martin and the replica in wood of the convention logo which he made. (CN)

(RF)

out an easy solution, but around the third day it was starting to show.

\* \* \*

Somehow, the term "Pre-glow" has always sounded a little silly. "After-glow," a term coined, I believe, for the 1970 New York convention, implies a cooling-down event after a hot week of concerts, like the warm coals of a dying campfire. To be in the correct metaphor, it seems the other end should be called a "Pre-ignition." In musical terms, "Prelude" would do just as well. One awaits Nor-Cal's nomenclature with breathless anticipation.

\* \* \*

On several occasions some anonymous person would get up to announce something, or reference would be made to someone well-known locally. The identities of these people would remain a complete mystery to those of us from out of town. It is a minor point, to be sure, but introductions of such unknown persons would do much to put their comments, or references to these persons, into context.

\* \* \*

By and large the quality of the instruments — at least from the listener's chair — was excellent. With two exceptions, neither in MCTOS jurisdiction, they were all in good regulation, good voice and good tune. One should expect nothing less at a national convention, and we were not disappointed.

\* \* \*

The schedule was hectic at times, but generally was well-spaced with social events and non-concert venues. Things like the opening cocktail party, jam sessions, the Belle Isle picnic, the Bob-Lo Boat cruise, Stroth's Brewery tours, the zoo, the magnificent Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, the banquet — one could go on and on — were nice breathers from what seemed an endless string of concerts. Motor City Chapter: Bravo!

To those who missed it all, you can probably still get a super deal on an official souvenir mug. □