

RTOS



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

**Rochester Theater Organ Society
(RTOS) — Rochester, New York
716/544-6595**

The club kicked off its twenty-first concert season on September 22 at the Auditorium Theatre, with David Reese at the 4/22 Wurlitzer. The 1456 concertgoers saw a pizza parlor organist who specializes in rhythmic numbers to get the crowd tapping its feet. Among those of noteworthy interest were "Puttin' on the Ritz,"

"Hot Dog" and "Hot Peppers," the last a novelty number which was popular in the accordion era of the thirties. To accentuate the piano, the artist performed sprightly numbers led by "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Chloe," "It All Depends on You," and the famous "I Wanna Be Loved by You," immortalized by Helen 'Boop-a-Doop' Kane, were interspersed. Three California numbers wound up the regular program, with "In the Mood" given as an encore.

On October 20, pizza parlor organist, Dan Bellomy, made his first appearance before 1247 at the Auditorium. The program was larded with "progressive jazz" treatments of numbers from the forties and later. Highlights were "Cosi-Cosa" which is remembered from the Marx Brothers' film *A Night at the Opera*, the Eddie Dunstetter signature tune, "Open Your Eyes," and a cute limerick on Billy Rose and Sally Rand.

LLOYD E. KLOS □

play and look past our faults is not the easiest thing to do.

"There was a tendency to get wrapped up in the Posthorn, but at the console you couldn't hear what we heard in the back of the auditorium (I played it myself at John Cook's request). The balance of their programs were well presented and it got better toward the end.

"Certainly the next areas to improve on are orchestration, combination piston timing, tonal identification, song authenticity and other areas that will come in time.

"Most important is getting to an instrument and listening. That is where our concerts, chapter meetings and organs to play on and recordings and practice become a must, not a privilege.

"Theatre organ **cannot** be preserved in a museum mentality and it is therefore the foresight of the national officers, and those of us at the local level, who saw to it that an event like this took place, that need to be applauded in this case.

"My only suggestion is that from here on in, it become a MAJOR EVENT, NOT an option.

"That feeling of truly being supported is so necessary, against the chemical (drug) world our young people are being sold. When you don't feel that inside it makes the job we organists do that much harder."

I know from my own experience that being supported by a tremendous organization and my folks gave me much more determination to play well and live an honest life on top of it all.

I agree that there could have been many things that would have made the young artists concert better. But, for the first time, at least they got a good instrument to help them, one that didn't quit on anyone, and a real chance to show what they could do. We owe the theatre organ a bright future.

I'm sure future young artists concerts will improve as suggestions like this are given. It would be nice to have a "lesser-known artists" concert at the conventions, too. There are many of us who would choose to play a short program who are not as well known as others. Yet we do our work unsung on theatre organs all across the country.

The theatre pipe organ was a hundred years ahead of its time. The full potential of the instrument has yet to



Letters to the Editors

Letters concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are welcome. Unless clearly marked "not for publication" letters may be published in whole or in part.

Address:
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Opinions expressed in this column are those of the correspondents, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN.

Dear Sir:

I fully agree with Lowell Ayars in his comments about the young artists concert at Indy '84. Here was a good opportunity to change the all-historic image of the theatre pipe organ into an instrument dealing with the present and the future, as with other musical instruments.

But it was an option and thus the bulk of the members never got a chance to hear the new artistry that awaits their ears.

Of course, the artists also lost out on possibly being heard by chapters looking for new talent to bring to their instruments.

I am not putting down the history. It has given us much talent and know-how to those who carry on. But we must teach new people to carry on theatre pipe organ as an everyday instrument, not one of just the past. If we make the same mistake as some of our classical people do, we will send theatre organ the same way as the movie palaces we threw away.

I'd like to repeat a report I gave for the *Eastern Pipes* of Eastern Massachusetts Chapter, September 1984. This is a portion of what I wrote: "It would be very unfair to say that one of the players was better than the others. To have the courage to get up and



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be realized. By bringing new people to the instrument and bringing the instrument to young people (via electronics when necessary) we will be truly living up to our motto "To preserve the theatre pipe organ through exchange of information" and teaching (if the media would let us) a whole new generation how to play and care for our theatre organs. That's what we're doing in Berlin, New Hampshire. We are teaching a new generation how to restore and preserve the theatre organ. Next we are going to teach them to play it. It's as simple as that.

In the meantime, we applaud the national officers and others of the local level who took this small yet giant step forward for our favorite instrument. Theatre pipe organs forever.

Sincerely,
Robert K. Legon
Malden, Massachusetts

Dear Bob:

We who like to record at convention concerts wish to express our appreciation for the privilege. However, this is the first convention where we were compelled to pay for the privilege. No one seemed to be checking who was recording, nor were we given any special attention. At the final concert "Wanda" surprised us by having a special space reserved for us. Our special thanks to Wanda.

Much of the same equipment was visible, but more and more of the Sony WMD6 Walkman series appeared. We still have with us those who only change a tape after one side comes to an end and quickly reverse the tape to continue, all with excess noise. Too bad they don't take the time to learn how to do a good job and obtain a good recording. We had a few more of the "Boom boxes," the

most out-of-place recorder one could use.

Best regards,
Len Clarke
Park Ridge, Illinois

To all the members and staff of ATOS:

We had a concert in our ORPHEUM THEATRE on Sunday, October 14. We had Lillian Gish up here for her 88th birthday and had a silent movie of her on a screen and used our theatre organ. I wish to thank all of you for your support of this event, which I will never forget. We had a full house and Frank Mankin played the organ. It was a great job. We intend to have more of these concerts with organ. At any time anyone wants to see our beautiful theatre all are welcome. Being a ATOS member for some time, I am really proud of all members. Your support is always welcomed.

Yours truly,
Gordon MacDonald
Vancouver, B.C. □

Organists Bob Vaughn and Jonas Nordwall at the Avenue Theatre Wurlitzer, April 8, 1984. Vaughn cued silent films on this instrument for 16 years. (Ed Mullins photo)



PIPES & Personalities

Final Curtain for Avenue Silents

The 3/16 Wurlitzer in San Francisco's Avenue Theatre was silenced December 31, 1984, when the theatre ceased operating as a silent film repertory house. Operator Geoffrey Hansen notified the late Ben Levin's family that because of current downturns in the small theatre business, operation would not continue after the end of the year.

Inability to come to agreeable terms with the new owners, unsuccessful efforts to purchase the building, high operating costs, competition from cable television and video tapes, and a recession and instability in motion picture exhibition were several of the reasons for closing down. The organ has been put into storage until another suitable location can be found.

Nor-Cal Chapter ATOS held a final concert meeting there on November 18, with Jim Riggs as concert artist. Riggs recently recorded his new album, "Top Hat," on the Avenue Wurlitzer. The record album is destined to become a collector's item.

The house was originally equipped