

May we introduce . . . FRANK PERKO III

Theatre organ devotees are always pleased to present new talent, and this past year a young man, 13-year-old Frank Perko of Pueblo, Colorado, has been performing for enthusiastic audiences in his home town and in Denver. Last summer he proposed, planned and, in October, presented a concert which raised funds to help save the 65-year-old 4/58 Austin pipe organ in Pueblo's Memorial Hall. As a result, \$1225 was donated to start the "Save Pueblo's Pipe Organ" fund.

Frank's October concert, for an audience of over 450, was played on a Hammond Elegante in the Scottish Rite Temple in Pueblo, and his selections ranged from "I Love to Hear You Singing" to Bach's "Prelude in C" to "How Great Thou Art." His encore, following a standing ovation, was a patriotic medley which ended with the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." His performance was commended by Conductor Gerhard Track of the Pueblo Symphony, who noted that "Frank is really a great talent. He gave a truly professional performance."

Frank Perko's devotion to theatre organ began when he received a Conn spinet organ for his ninth birthday. His first teacher was Wynn Wood of Pueblo. Although his parents weren't sure, Frank says, that he would "stay with it," he did, and today plays a Hammond Colonnade at home. He has also, under the tutelage of Ed Benoit of Denver, learned to play the Mighty Wurlitzer in the Denver Organ Grinder where he was presented in concert last May.



Frank Perko at the console of the Denver Organ Grinder Wurlitzer where he was an occasional performer last year.



Frank with his good friend, Elmer Wells at the Denver Organ Grinder. Wells was the late Glenn Miller's teacher.

Benoit, who is quite proud of his young protege, says that Frank would often ride the bus from Pueblo to Denver on Friday nights and spend weekends with the Benoit family while studying, practicing and occasionally performing publicly on the Organ Grinder Wurlitzer. Last January, Frank was presented with his own key to the Organ Grinder organ by Jerry Forchuck and, according to the Perkos, this was "like giving a 16-year-old the key to his first car. Frank was ecstatic."

Young Perko participated in a program at the Denver Paramount Theatre last May to benefit a restoration project for that theatre, and Frank says it was that performance which inspired his October concert in Pueblo. A second benefit performance in December by Frank at the Scottish Rite Temple in Pueblo, this time for the Animal Welfare Society, emphasized Christmas music but included some Big Band favorites and the modern "Flashdance."

Frank Perko attends Pitts Junior High in Pueblo where he plays trumpet in the concert band. He is quick to assert, however, that theatre organ is his first choice, and his dream is to play the Wurlitzer in Radio City Music Hall. From all that has been happening in Colorado this past year, and from the initiative and imagination shown by this young man, it would seem that his is not an impossible dream.

Frank E. Perko III can be reached at: 94 Radcliff Lane, Pueblo, Colorado 81005, 303/566-0037.

GRACE E. MCGINNIS □