

not mail my "two-cents worth" until this, my response to the dialogue between Mr. Berry and Mr. Weisenberger in the September/October 1984 issue.

First, I have no doubt that one can take a given whistle (or organ pipe) of some dimension, apply a slide rule, and have it wail over a wide range of wind pressure and decibel levels. I am confident that any organ man will tell you that tone, timbre and speech transients are a product of careful balance between scale, pressure, cut up, mouth width, material, shape, etc. Are we to believe that any given baroque organ can be carted to the largest outdoor arena, have a slide rule and larger blower applied, and have it sound exactly like it did in the studio?

Now, regarding Mr. Berry and the Hub Rink organ. I think a lot of credit is due to Mr. Berry here, credit which is at least 20 years past due. Mr. Berry and his recordings have exposed the non-organ-oriented layman to "popular" organ in greater numbers than anyone else, to the best of my knowledge. My blood boils when a person with limited knowledge (or limited taste) dismisses Mr. Berry by stating "He doesn't sound like George Wright," and dismisses the Hub Rink organ by stating "It doesn't sound like the — Pizza Parlor." Mr. Berry actually *created* a new kind of organ at the Hub, it just happened to have pipes. Am I alone in this observation? If more people would open their minds (and ears) they would know that Mr. Berry and his organ designing are so unique and refreshing that he, in fact, has no peers; he was and is a pioneer in this respect. Mr. Berry proved (with the Hub Rink organ) that an organ with a relatively few number of pipes playing at a high decibel level sounds nothing like an organ with a large number of pipes (pizza-style) at a similar decibel level.

Another person who is consistently overlooked by the theatre organ world is Hall-of-Famer John T. Muri. His high level of competence and professionalism is beyond reproach!

His style is probably the finest example of authentic pre-talkie theatre style remaining in the world today. While the ATOS professes to preserve history, traditions, etc., of the theatre organ, how can we ignore this living history in preference for the flashy or fleeting? Let us not forget that these beloved instruments were a part of the "show," they were never intended to *be* the show. Mr. Muri is a living remnant of the golden days of Crawford et al. I feel we should assess our direction; it is becoming more and more difficult to find anyone who will concede that Crawford was a talented musician.

I would like to comment on a subject which seems to surface periodically. Do people really think that if "Michael Jackson's Greatest Hits" are played on the local Wurlitzer significant numbers of the younger generation will suddenly be interested in theatre organ? I read this periodically in your journal. I feel that the youngsters who are truly interested in theatre organ also like the "old" music — theatre organ-era music. I feel this is why the theatre organ will live on — because there will always be

those who enjoy this type of music — not the "Top 40," ill-adapted to the theatre organ.

Now that I have probably alienated the great majority of my fellow theatre organ lovers, I can only state that my intent is solely to give credit where it is due, and to remember our roots; they are we.

Best wishes,
Gary Rickert
Oak Forest, Illinois

Dear Mr. Gilbert:

A friend here in the city subscribed to THEATRE ORGAN for me. The November/December issue arrived two weeks ago. I would think that it had been printed exclusively for me with all the interesting items in that one issue.

I live at the Flushing YMCA, directly across the street from Flushing High School. From the front steps here one can see two long blocks down to the RKO Theatre at Northern and Main, where Bernie Cowham performed. In my younger days (I was 75 on March 18) and from a neighboring town I would come to hear Bernie play. I did not know him, but I am acquainted with Lee Erwin and have met and corresponded with Don Baker.

Now think of this: Don Baker in a letter told me of beginning as a pianist at the original Flushing Silent Movie House on Main Street just two blocks from the RKO. Don Baker was here and gone by 1924 and Bernie Cowham came later in 1928 with the opening of the RKO. They did in time know each other but did not overlap while playing here.

Less than a mile further south on Main Street is the former Loew's Prospect, which had a three-manual Austin in the 1930s. Just over five years ago I went in to see what remained and the console looked like something from the *Phantom of the Opera*. The pipes were still there and Bob Atkins and Ken Ladner removed the console and what else they could and took it to Port Washington, Long Island. Later they used what they could and with another Austin console started to build the organ in Chaminade High School in Mineola, which you show on page 46 as an Austin-Morton console.

There were a lot of those Austins in smaller theatres, but they could never be completely removed because as I am told the windchests were built right into the theatre chambers. At Port Washington's Beacon Theatre the Austin was restored briefly by Atkins, Ladner and others, and Mrs. Atkins would play on it briefly Saturday nights between movies. She could never play very long because the projectionist would demand overtime if the second show went beyond midnight. In time the Beacon was "triplexed" and the Austin boarded up completely, never to be heard again.

Flushing High School across the street has a 3/34 Möller concert organ which I saw being installed in 1926 when I was a school kid and stayed after school to watch the erectors work. It had a stop tab engraved "Resultant 32." It has gone to wrack and ruin by this time, but the open console is still there, visible through the auditorium doors. Also the pipes.

Who else but me would know that in by-gone days the New York Board of Education had the money to install 21 pipe organs in the city's high schools? There were Möllers, Esseys, Wurlitzers, Skinners and others, and not one remains playable.

In "Nuggets from the Golden Days" there is a reference to Bernie Cowham. The daughter of George Harvey, Queens Borough President, was in my English class. Dr. Janes (not James) was principal and I remember him. Just two days ago I showed the magazine to Mr. Laurence Halleran, a bank vice president whose deceased uncle is mentioned as requesting a song from Bernie Cowham. That Mr. Halleran was in his time Mr. Real Estate of Flushing, New York.

Now Officer 1492, whom we all saw on the corner and knew was, of course, called "Chris Columbus." Mr. Arnold Gessner, a retired Flushing jeweler, told me that "Chris" probably saved Gessner's life many years ago by grabbing a runaway horse and stopping him as he was about to corner young Gessner. "Chris" was Italian and lived in Whitestone. He died about ten years ago. I saw the obituary, but don't remember his name.

You mention theatre organists named Baker. I knew or met two other Bakers but they were AGO members. Walter Baker who gave recitals on the relatively new Möller 4/72 at St. Paul the Apostle Church at West 59th Street and Columbus Avenue, near Lincoln Center. Dr. Robert Baker, formerly of Union Theological Seminary and now head of the School of Sacred Music at Yale in New Haven, gives recitals on the great Aeolian-Skinner in Woolsey Hall.

Of course, we know these great organs have mixtures and several ranks each, metal and wood that are genuine 32' stops and are giants by comparison with the theatre organ, but are they as much fun to play?

Has anyone mentioned that the present world's three largest organs are within 200 miles of each other? John Wanamaker's in Philadelphia, Atlantic City Convention Hall and West Point Chapel. West Point has in recent years exceeded the great organ at Passau, Germany.

Yours very truly,
George O. Smith
Flushing, New York □

Lance Johnson's Troubleshooting Guide Quiz Question

You find that you have a dead note on all stops on the middle F of the Accompaniment manual. Where would you look for the cause of this dead note?

Answer on page 56.

Questions and Answers

Lance Johnson will answer readers' technical questions by telephone. He can be reached at 701/237-0477 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time Monday through Friday, or in the evening from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at 218/287-2671. □

Because of his impressive performance during *Articipation*, Neil Johnston II was asked to play his Technics organ for the Christmas shoppers at Crossroads Mall in Portage on December 7.

A few members made the trip to the Detroit Theater Organ Club for the Lyn Larsen concert on December 8, as guests of Ken Butela. Others were occupied that same afternoon at the State Theatre in Kalamazoo where an Old-Fashioned Christmas Show was being held, sponsored by the State Theatre Vaudeville Association. Bill Mollema was at the console of the 3/13 Barton that day. Bill has helped restore and maintain the organ for the past 25 years. He and John Catherwood will continue their care of the organ even though the theatre has changed owners.

An evening of lively organ music was provided by Father James Miller on the Rodgers Custom 340 theatre model at the Sturges-Young Auditorium on December 10. Neil Johnston was master of ceremonies and Neil II was invited by Fr. Miller to play some numbers for us during the second half of the program.

Our final activity for 1985 was the annual Christmas party on December 15. It was held in the board room at McLeier Oil, Inc., in Kalamazoo. The program featured Christmas selections by Mike McLeier and Ken Butela at the console of the Conn 653 which is a custom installation including two additional speakers and four sets of pipes. Ken accompanied a Christmas sing-along, and the 31 people who attended enjoyed an abundance of tasty refreshments during open console.

L. DIANA HASKINS

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We survived our first regional convention over the Thanksgiving weekend, and had a good time doing it! We hosted about 300 or-

gan enthusiasts from 24 states, Washington, D.C., and Edmonton, Canada. Artists included Tom Hazleton and Walt Strony in concerts at the Organ Stop in Phoenix, Lowell Ayars at the First Christian Church Fellowship Hall installation, and Lew Williams at the Bill Brown residence organ. Ron Rhode performed at the Mesa Organ Stop, and Lyn Larsen and Carlo Curley presented a duo concert at the Valley of The Sun Center. Some of

Please vote. Your **BALLOT** is in this issue.

the organists participated in a Saturday morning panel discussion which included an interview with Hall of Fame organist Betty Gould. Conventioneers enjoyed a bit of Old West with a Sunday night dinner at Rawhide, an authentic 1800s town. Our regional convention was so successful that we were able to donate \$1000 to the ATOS Young Organists Competition.

Our December meeting and Christmas party was held at the home of members Glen and Barbara VanDiver. Following a potluck dinner, Walt Strony played songs of the season on the VanDivers' theatre organ. Some of our members then participated in open console.

We finished 1985 on a positive note, and we look forward to 1986 with a lot of enthusiasm.

MADELINE LIVOLSI



Christmas at the Byrd Theatre was spectacular this year. Thousands of gold lights decorated the auditorium from dome to floor, and two ten-foot gold trees filled with hundreds of lights were on each side of the stage. All of these lights were "tied in" with the blue footlights giving a most beautiful effect when the house was all in blue. The show started with some exciting holiday music on tape which

ended with a great crescendo. House organist Lin Lunde came in on the final chord, swelling the organ to its full brilliance making a wonderful transition as the Christmas lights came up. David Barnett stepped on stage and made a snappy introduction of Lin Lunde, David Newman at the piano and tenor Chuck Rhode (Ron's brother). Chuck, David and Lin rendered a couple of Christmas numbers; then the console sank to picture level, the lights went down and "A Christmas Song Fest" came on the screen as the curtain went up. The sing-along ended with "White Christmas" led by Chuck Rhode, David at the piano and Lin at the Wurlitzer. This was followed by a Bugs Bunny cartoon and finally the movie *White Christmas*. The film had not been seen in a theatre for 25 years and was greeted as though it had just been released. It was a new print and everything about it was excellent. The show ran for three days, December 13 to 15, with two matinees. The crowds were excellent; the evening shows sold out. Radio advertising really pays off! All who were involved in this show, even the projectionist, were club members.

On December 20 our annual Christmas party was held at the home of David Barnett who owns a fine little 2/8 Wurlitzer. Everyone had a great time and, considering the first snow of the season, the turnout was not too bad.

Paul Harris and his crew are busy re-covering the regulators on the Byrd Wurlitzer. One is finished, and there are seven to go. It takes about 20 hours to cover one of these huge pieces of equipment, and Paul and his crew deserve a great deal of credit for their work.

Although our chapter is new to ATOS, we were founded in 1957 as the Richmond Organ Enthusiasts Club. The club has been very active since its conception. In the last three years we have presented six silent films at the Mosque Theatre and at the Byrd and have featured nationally known organists. Our club maintains the Wurlitzers in the Mosque and Byrd Theatres.

MILES RUDISILL

TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE QUIZ ANSWER

Question from page 40.

If all stops are dead, then the relay note is also dead. Check for malfunctioning relay action. □

Don Baker
"Mr. Theatre Organ"

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