

Rocky Mountain Regional:

A WINNER!

Friday

As the huge 737 began its glide into Stapleton Airport, the pilot cheerfully announced that snow was expected — up to eight inches — in Denver over the weekend. Impossible! Patti Simon herself had proclaimed that it would not snow in Denver in October, and we were reassured when we noted that rain was lightly misting the windshield of our taxi as we rode to the Marriott Hotel. Of course, Patti was right, and this was going to be a wonderful weekend.

And wonderful it was!

A cocktail party at the hotel was prelude to the opening concert, and warmed by the welcome extended by Rocky Mountain Chapter's hosts and hostesses, we did not mind the rain at all as we walked the three short blocks to the Paramount Theatre. Sounds of Ragtime music drew us into the lobby where we found Denver's Dick Kroeckel at the grand piano literally playing up a storm. As soon as the more than 400 attendees were seated, a barbershop group, the Mountainaires, played "singing ushers" with a harmonic rendition of "Hi, Neighbor" that reinforced the aura of hospitality. A dapper David Love then appeared onstage and graciously welcomed us to the "Regional in the Rockies" before introducing Jim Riggs, opening artist for the convention. Jim's concert sustained the we're-glad-we're-here feeling, and once again reminded us how fortunate we are to have artists of such high calibre and instruments of such quality for our listening pleasure.

An unusual surprise awaited those who had elected to attend the post-concert Jam Session — we were to ride double-decker busses to the Organ Grinder. What an adventure! We learned that sight-seeing from the "second story" is not without its price in stability, especially when turning corners. The Jam Session was opened by petite Patti Simon who is a staff organist at the Organ Grinder. Her vivacious and sprightly style set the tone for the other participants who followed: Ed Benoit (also a staff organist there), Warren Lubich, Don Feely, Melissa Ambrose and Kevin King. Jam sessions are always fun, and this one was no exception, and it was still raining when we returned to the hotel sometime after midnight.



Double-decker busses were our transportation to the Organ Grinder for the late-night Jam Session on Friday.

(Don Zeller Photo)

Members of the Convention Committee pose with "Dolly Deco" during the Gala Artist Reception on Sunday night.

(Don Zeller Photo)



Saturday

By Saturday morning, however, the pilot's prognostication had materialized — it was snowing. Because of the weather, the busses began loading a bit earlier than scheduled for the ride to Colorado Springs, and we appreciated the security of the large, comfortable tour busses as we noted cars which had slid off the highway along the way. The roads were fairly clear, though, by the time we reached the Mount St. Francis Convent where Paul Quarino reminded us musically that this was going to be a "Great Day!" And a great day it was! Following Paul's inspiring concert, the busses "detoured" through the Garden of the Gods before delivering us to the Colorado Springs City Auditorium where we lunched to the music of Ray Young at a 3/8 Wurlitzer augmented by a jazz combo. Our next stop was the Air Force Academy for a

concert in the Cadet Chapel, an awesome glass and steel building which houses a 3/79 classical organ. Joseph Galema's memorable program demonstrated the multifaceted nature of this instrument in its unique setting. As the busses headed back to Denver, we felt that no amount of white precipitation could detract from the musical magic we were experiencing.

And it didn't!

After dinner we walked to Trinity Church, a three-block hike back into another century, where Keith Chapman presided at the 1888 Roosevelt pipe organ. Mr. Chapman's artistry was so effective that we were still glowing when we returned to the hotel — this gentleman is truly one of the best!

And this had most definitely been a great day!



Jim Riggs at the console of the Denver Paramount for the opening concert on Friday night. (Don Zeller Photo)

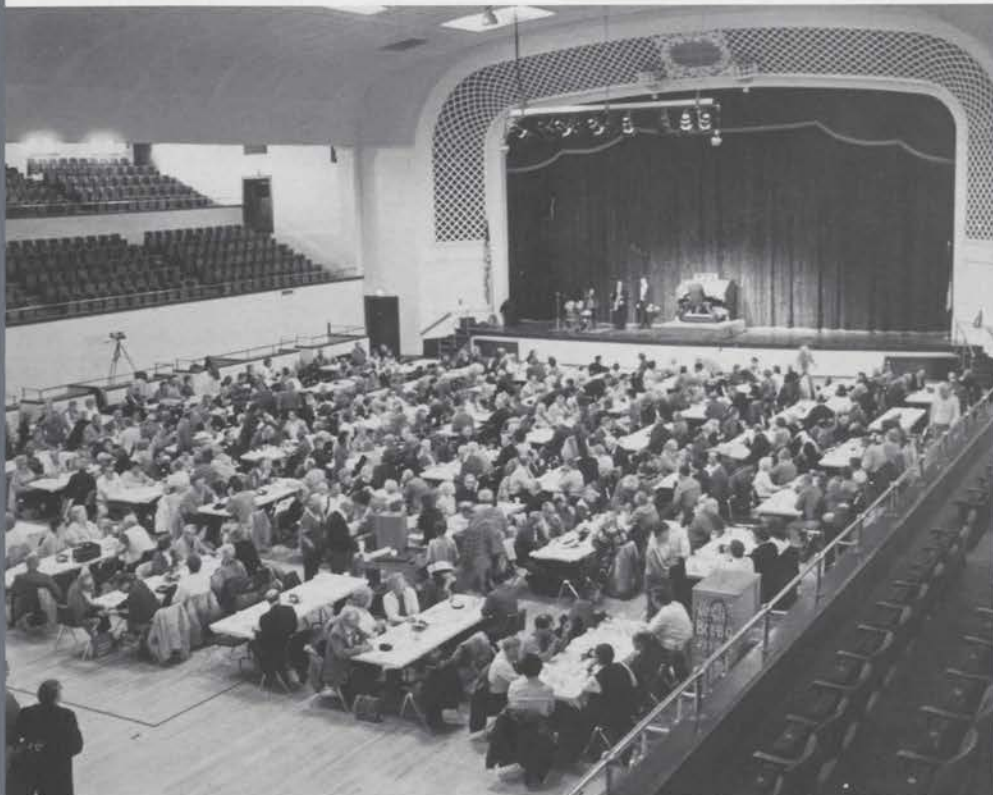


Ray Young and jazz combo at Colorado Springs City Auditorium where convention lunch was served. (Don Zeller Photo)



Paul Quarino at the Mount St. Francis Convent. This organ was installed by Pikes Peak Chapter. (Don Feely Photo)

Luncheon concert at Colorado Springs City Auditorium. (Don Zeller Photo)



Keith Chapman at the console of the 1888 Roosevelt organ in Trinity Methodist Church. (Don Zeller Photo)





San Francisco's Warren Lubich pipes us to the busses on the steam callope in the Organ Grinder parking lot on Sunday morning. (Don Zeller Photo)



Jonas Nordwall at the Denver Organ Grinder 4/37 Wurlitzer. (Don Zeller Photo)

Sunday

Sunday morning was clear and cold, and it was nice to climb into a warm bus for the short ride to the Organ Grinder to hear Jonas Nordwall at the 4/37 Wurlitzer. Even had there been a blizzard, Jonas would have melted the snow with his brilliance and his rendition of "Finlandia" a la Nordwall. Traveling north to Fort Collins provided time for visiting and relaxing before lunch in the Lory Center at Colorado State University. The view of the Rockies from the dining room added a spectacular dimension to the good food and fellowship that prevailed during lunch. Patti Simon provided the afternoon's music on the 3/19 Wurlitzer in the Lory Student Center. Patti has a refreshing style that is both animated and imaginative, and a smile that would defy any snow to fall.

We were back in Denver in time for a leisurely dinner before returning to the Paramount for the Grande Finale featuring Lyn Larsen and Ron Rhode at the twin consoles of the Paramount Wurlitzer. Piano music in the lobby was played by Ed Benoit, and a good-size crowd nearly missed out on their seats because they stayed so long to listen.

After opening with a rousing college fight song, the dynamic duo recreated the type of program that made Jesse and Helen Crawford so popular in the 1920s, and the large, enthusiastic crowd was absolutely delighted. This was clearly an excellent choice with which to conclude the concert schedule.

The last event on Sunday night was a gala reception for all of the convention artists in the Grand Ballroom of the hotel. A stunning statue of Dolly Deco dominated the scene and threatened to steal the show from the guests of honor.

Patti Simon at the Lory Auditorium Wurlitzer at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. (Don Zeller Photos)



Convention Chairman David Love watches benevolently as conventioners enjoy lunch at Colorado State University. (Don Zeller Photo)

Convention committee members dressed in the styles of the 1920s were easy to spot during the weekend. (L to R) Dorothy Retallack, David Hagerman, Martin Meier, Priscilla Arthur, Chairman David Love, Steve McCormick and Louis Retallack. (Don Zeller Photo)



Monday

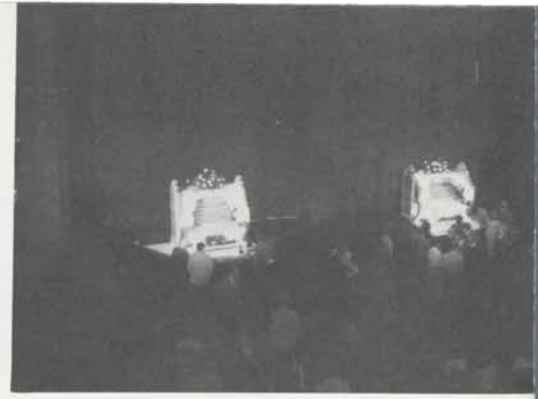
The Afterglow on Monday consisted of tours of residences to hear mini-concerts on excellen. home installations. Each tour included three of the five available homes. At Priscilla Arthur's we heard Jane McKee Johnson at the console of a 2/10 Wurlitzer. Dr. Bruce Belshaw performed on his 3/22 Wurlitzer, and Joel Kremer played his 4/28 Hybrid. John Lauter entertained at the Riser residence where there is a 3/22 Wurlitzer, and young Melissa Ambrose was featured on the 3/10 Wurlitzer in the home of Dee Williams. This was certainly an excellent culmination of

a convention that was first class all the way. Even if it did snow!

Afterword

Convention Chairman David Love, Rocky Mountain Chapter Chairman Patti Simon, Martin Meier of Pikes Peak Chapter and all of those hard-working, charming, hospitable, members of both chapters who were responsible for this rollicking romp in the Rockies deserve highest accolades for what will surely be remembered by the 400 attendees as one of the merriest, madcap, musical events of the decade.

In spite of the snow. □



Lighted consoles at the Paramount await the arrival of the Larsen/Rhode duo. (Don Feely Photo)



Ron Rhode and Lyn Larsen at the Denver Paramount.

(Don Feely Photo)



Ray Gorish, one of the founders of ATOS, visits with Priscilla Arthur and Martin Meier. (Don Zeller Photo)

Joel Kremer (left), Dr. Bruce Belshaw (right), Melissa Ambrose (left) and Jane McKee Johnson (right) were Afterglow artists on home installations. (We regret that a photographer was not present at the Riser residence so organist John Lauter is missing from the pictures. Ed.) (Don Zeller Photos)

