

ganist Nigel Ogden covered aspects of program choice and overall presentation from the console of the 3/12 Christie in the Granada Cinema, Walthamstow, whilst John Norris, principal of the Southern Music Training School, concentrated on musical interpretation and style. John Barlow, 1986 holder of the Ian Sutherland Young Organist Award, explained in depth the technicalities and problems of playing modern and rhythmical music. The Summer School also attended a concert which Barlow played at the Granada Walthamstow (with Bobby Pagan) in acceptance of his award.

The technical talk by John Abson and Dave Pawlyn included a tour of the South Bank Poly chambers; this was both impressive and educational, especially their explanation of the new Z-tronic solid-state relay system installed there. Simon Gledhill, undoubtedly one of the world's leading theatre organists, rounded off the Summer School with an explanation of some additional points regarding technique, registration and tricks-of-the-trade, ending with a wonderful performance of "Rose Marie," the whole selection having been transcribed from George Wright's arrangement and played by Simon with exquisite style which brought a tear to many an enthusiast's eye!

No one, however young or old, experienced or novice, was left out — even French-speaking Claude Monnier got on all right — and the obvious desire to learn and to enjoy was nowhere missing. Additionally, each evening was filled by less intensive organ visits. One evening was spent at Lee Valley Ice Centre (where David Lowe is organist and musical director) and another was spent at the Plough, Great Munden, which is a country pub boasting a 3/10 Compton where everyone had a chance to play the instrument, and the party ate and drank the hours away until closing time. The social side of life was not overlooked in any way, and people had a chance to play the organs at all visits. In fact, the whole Summer School was conducted in the spirit of theatre organists gaining pleasure and satisfaction from a few days in the company of fellow enthusiasts, sometimes drawn into serious matters of registration, style or arrangement, and sometimes simply enjoying a laugh or a meal with new friends, be they well-known concert performers or keen amateurs.

What is certain, however, is that organizing such an event may be a danger to one's health — if David Lowe had as much as suggested that there wouldn't be another Summer School, he would, no doubt, have been assailed by 30 very irate organ enthusiasts!

JOHN BARLOW

Jesse Crawford's Ninety-First Birthday Celebrated

The Jesse Crawford Theatre Organ Society, Ltd., held its first annual corporate dinner-meeting on December 18 at the Elks Club in Billings, Montana. The board of directors voted to apply for an ATOS charter on February 24, 1987, as that is the seventy-fourth anniversary of Crawford's first position as organist at the Gem Theatre in Billings. The new chapter's area of operation will be Montana and Northern Wyoming; however, Crawford fans everywhere are invited to join.

The group commemorated the ninety-first anniversary of the birth of Jesse Crawford, who was born December 2, 1895, and toasted his memory. President Kay Kahill played "Happy Birthday" on a Hammond organ, and a birthday cake was served.

The club was chartered as a non-profit corporation by the State of Montana in 1986 with officers Nelson A. Cahill (Kay Kahill) as President, Steve Plaggemeyer as vice-president and Dr. Edward J. Mullins as secretary. Charter memberships will be open until December 2, 1987. Write: Jesse Crawford Theatre Organ Society, Babcock Theatre Building, Box 8, Billings, Montana 59101, or phone Kay Kahill at 406/259-6111.

KAY KAHILL

Letters to the Editors

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.

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: Editor, THEATRE ORGAN
4633 SE Brookside Drive #58
Milwaukie, Oregon 97222

Dear Editor:

Enclosed is a picture of Bob Leys, who was house organist in the Capitol Theatre in Aberdeen, Scotland, and who rescued the 3/7 Astoria Aberdeen Compton some years ago and installed it in Powys Academy. Bob recently spent several weeks visiting in the United States, and one of his stops was at Bruce Williams' home in Flemington, New Jersey, where this shot was taken.

Jim Donald
Colonia, New Jersey

Dear Editor:

Bravo! Dan Bellomy's story, "There Is Only One Billy Nalle" (July/August 1986), was the best profile I have ever read in this remarkable journal.

I had the opportunity to talk with Billy Nalle in August of 1986 during an interview for *The Minnesota Daily* newspaper (University of Minnesota), and I found him to be a generous, well-rounded and delightful personality both at and away from the console.

Musically, Billy's style of playing sets him apart from the rest of the pack, which is one of the reasons why I became a fan and devout admirer of this truly gifted artist.

Again, bravo to Dan for a job well done, and to the editors, keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Kim Crisler
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Editor:

I have been a member of ATOS for over 25 years. This is my first time to write the editor.

I missed Lloyd Klos' "Nuggets from the Golden Days," and I hope you do not intend to drop it. This man has meant so much to theatre organ through the years, and this organization was founded because of nostalgia for good theatre organs and the organists who played them. I've done my share and enjoyed every minute of it.

I attended the Richmond Convention and



Joe Dorsey of Garden State (left), Bob Leys from Aberdeen, Scotland, and Bruce Williams, owner of the 3/10 Wurlitzer. (James C. Donald photo)

enjoyed all who played. I see no need of ever adding a bass guitar, etc., to any of the organists' programs. This has been advocated by some, but I would not want to see it "across the board" for ATOS.

I am 71 years of age, a life member of 50 years of the Nashville Federation of Musicians, and I would like this letter to be printed as I feel that many must feel the same as I do. Thanks for a good magazine. We enjoy it.

Sincerely,
George Jackson
Marietta, Georgia

(Note: We have no intention of dropping "Nuggets" from the journal; however, there may be times when space limitations necessitate omitting them from a given issue. Ed.)

Dear Editor:

I am writing to ask if you or any of our members know whether the music of the great Jeanette MacDonald/Nelson Eddy musicals (*Bittersweet*, *Maytime*, etc.) was ever published in book form as is now done with Broadway/movie musicals? If so, I would appreciate the name and address of the publisher so I might obtain copies of same.

Thanks,
Paul E. Brownell
R.F.D. #1

Hoosick Falls, New York 12090

(Can anyone help Mr. Brownell?)

Dear Editor:

I would like to purchase stereo LPs of Mighty Wurlitzer organ music that used to be played in the old movie palaces. Could you please advise what is available and the cost?

Jerry Brekke
Showboat Cinemas
Box 807

Mandan, North Dakota 58554

(Can anyone help Mr. Brekke?)

Dear Editor:

As a neophyte in rebuilding and re-leathering a Wurlitzer, I stumbled upon some techniques that might be helpful to others. When re-leathering our church's Wurlitzer (ex-Columbia Square in Hollywood), I had one chest standing on its side. After taking out the secondaries, there was a great amount of glue residue which I tried to scrape out. After a few tries, I decided to try moisture. I took some old towels and wet them and laid them on the glue. I had to add some water occasionally. After the glue was thoroughly soaked, the chests cleaned up nicely with a cabinet scraper (a straight-edged piece of steel). Incidentally, there weren't any dry glue flakes around to try and clean out. The glue did get into the air holes, but this was easily picked out.

When I took out the secondaries, some wood tore up, but MINWAX Wood Filler proved to be an excellent material to fill the holes. It works easily, sets up fast and can be scraped or planed level.

I bought a Style D and found that someone in the past had glued the primaries to the boards without any gaskets (Ugh!). It was impossible to take these out without tearing

wood from the board onto which they were glued. I used a very fine-bladed saw on my table saw and sawed them off, cutting into the board as little as possible. This left a thin layer of wood on the blocks. I put one primary block into a pot of boiling water, and very quickly the wood came off and so did all of the old leather. I put all of the blocks from one row into the pot, and all came out as clean as could be with no need for time-consuming sanding or scraping. The water caused no damage to the blocks.

I have not tried any of these water methods on white glue, but I think they would work. They might take a little longer, however, as white glue is water resistant but not water-proof.

I hope that if persons of more experience see dangers in these procedures they will make their opinions known.

Sincerely,
Lee M. Sundstrom
Fillmore, California

Dear Editor:

I heartily agree with Dave Junchen's article on Tibia tremolos, and with Jim Martin's statement in the same issue that "what works for a particular installation is the best rule to follow." I would like to add a few observations of my own, however, as I can't help but notice over the years how the tremolo speeds have been getting slower and slower. If you listen to the old George Wright recordings, you notice that they are much faster than in the more recent ones. I must say that I heard one during the '84 Convention in Cincinnati that was so slow that the Tibia tremolo was a rhythm you could beat time to — that one is a no-no. I certainly hope it will be corrected.

A tremolo in theatre organs should never be a rhythm, but should be a beautiful vibrato as in all musical instruments. Likewise, overly fast, too deep tremulants on raspy reeds are positively hideous, if not horrible. The closer you come to adjusting tremolos to what you hear in a pops orchestra is the best rule to follow.

A bit of help I need is in setting the thinner tremos so they will start. I work on a Robert-Morton that has a Saxophone and want to get the vibrato thin, otherwise it whines on one note more than the others. In another area it is absolutely essential that the Tibia have the deepest tremolo by separating the Tibia from the bright stops. What, however, do you do when the Tibia is winded together with an Orchestral Oboe and Kinura, and you are not allowed to change the way the chests were set? Perhaps the pros who work with these instruments might share with us their views on speeds and depths of tremolos.

Whatever the answers are, they are all intended to contribute to the sound we call "theatre organ."

Sincerely,
Robert Legon
Malden, Massachusetts

Dear Editor:

Enclosed you will find two pictures that I took while visiting a friend in Pennsylvania. If you will note, both of the bottom bases supporting the lights are made from the top cap-

housing of a Knetic organ-blower bearing block. Amazing what one can do with old pipe organ parts. These were made by ATOS member John Warner of Harrisburg.

Robert Cowley
Springfield, Ohio



Bottom bases on both items are made from organ parts. (See letter from Robert Cowley)

Dear Grace:

While the recent discussion about tremulants, in the "Letters to the Editor," has been a bit heated, it is good to see some exchange of ideas happening. Referencing also Dave Junchen's timely article on tremulants, I might be able to clear up a couple of points.

First, when one writes a technical article, especially about something as esoteric as tremulants and wind systems, there is always a possibility that someone will take something out of context and regard it as "gospel." When I read in "Tote" Pratt's letter that I had recommended replacing wood wind-trunks with 4" conductors, I rushed for my article to see exactly what I had said and in what context.

My article was about dividing wind systems, and a means of doing this easily within the original Wurlitzer manifold. The specific example was one commonly found where six ranks in the main chamber are on one chest. I showed a means of dividing this into three separate wind systems; that is, the six ranks would thus be on three regulators and affected by three tremulants instead of one.

The change requires adding at least two new wind feeds. Since none of the wind systems or rank combinations I showed would require more than a 4" or 5" diameter feed line, given normal length runs from the regu-

lators, I recommended also replacing the wood duct. The temptation would be to use the original wood duct for the Diapason and Flute in the example shown, and this can work, but replacing the wood duct with a smaller (but ample) conductor would give better results. The photo accompanying the article showed the rear solo chest at Shea's Buffalo. Readers may want to check the September/October 1984 issue of THEATRE ORGAN, page 59. The ranks on this chest are (from L to R): Orchestral Oboe, Trumpet, Tibia, Solo String and Vox Humana. The original wind system posed two problems: the Tibia and Solo String were winded together, both on 15" wind. This included all offsets, even the 16' String! The String reiterated with the Tibia tremulant on, all the way down to 16 feet, and even the oldtimers we talked to remembered this rank as being "ugly."

Another unusual situation existed in that the Orchestral Oboe and Trumpet were on 12" wind, not the usual 10" for the Oboe and 10" or 15" for the Trumpet that Wurlitzer might otherwise have used on an instrument of this size. I suspect that economy and space directed the compromise. Fortunately, this gave us a 12" supply which would have a tremulant more suitable for the String and a reasonable pressure for this rank. The original winding was 4-1/2" diameter as shown, not 4" as "Tote" assumed. Most likely a 4" line would be sufficient to feed these three ranks, but there is certainly no problem with a 4-1/2" line. Also in the photo, one can see a wood "cap" temporarily covering the 2-1/2" Tibia tremulant feed hole. This was done to keep out dust and dirt during rebuilding. The Vox has the usual 2" tremulant feed from this manifold.

Since conductor is not available in half sizes, my general recommendation was for 4" or 5" duct. These sizes will feed reeds and smaller scale flues such as strings, Horn Diapason, Quintadena or Concert Flute in the range found on Wurlitzer manual chests. A 5" line will feed an Open Diapason and Concert Flute, for example, and a 4" line will usually feed three ranks of reeds or strings.

One should not get the idea that I advocate replacing the wood trunk with a 4" windline in all cases. I do think that, in some cases, where four or five ranks are being fed from a wood trunk, it would be an improvement to run a 6" conductor from the regulator through three elbows into the side or cover of the manifold. So often the wood trunk is oversized and too short to give a good tremulant without resorting to extreme amounts of weight on the regulator.

"Tote" mentions testing for ample wind by leaning on the bottom octave. The bottom octaves of the ranks mentioned are not on the main chest, so this is not an accurate test. A better method is to play ten notes from tenor F up, with couplers on if possible. This must be done with the tremulant running. Does the trem speed slow or stall?

If necessary, two parallel windlines can be run to gain volume in less space, but both lines MUST be IDENTICAL in length or the tremulant won't know what speed to run. I would

thus caution against attempting this.

On the same note, making any kind of branch off of a windline, especially a tremulant line, is asking for disaster. This goes for hooking up two tremulants with a "Y" or "teeing" a trem off two chests as "Tote" has written about. Perhaps this is why so much time has been spent trying to get the tremulants "right" on this organ. If a tremulant affects its rank(s) in a musical way, most organists will not ask for it to be changed, so why have two tremulants? I can cite two organs which have been played in concert by dozens of organists who have never asked for tremulant changes. If it works, don't fix it!

The point which is often ignored is that the tremulant is only part of a complete wind SYSTEM which includes blower static pressure. I have recommended a minimum static pressure of 50% greater than the weighed pressure. Dave Junchen's article makes a similar statement without being so specific. With less static, the tremulant is often anemic, and the regulators will not work correctly with weights piled on them. One alternative to adding weight is to lengthen tremulant and/or feed lines. Usually this improves the tremulant, as "Tote" stated, but in the case of a Tibia tremulant, usually will still not give the characteristic "bump" in the wind which gives Tibias the sound most enthusiasts adore.

"Tote" Pratt never states what the Emery static is, but makes many absolute statements which would depend on this. If the Emery is working with low static, most of his remarks would be correct. However, the long trem lines recommended will spell failure in most installations, and I know of many where lines longer than 14' simply didn't work. Dave Junchen, myself and others have proven this. Manual chest feed line length is important and affects the trem depth and waveform at the chest.

Weights on tremulants do not equate with weights on regulators. After adjustment, adding weight to either will generally make the tremulant heavier, but both do not create the same tremulant waveform at the chest. The MUSICAL effect is far different! Dennis Hedberg correctly points this out.

Some technicians may find that they like the sound they get from having no weights on the regulators and will even insist that no weights ever be used. I can tell you that, so far, every major Wurlitzer that I have seen which has been either recorded or widely heard and reputed to have excellent Tibias or tremulant regulation has had weights on the regulators. Are these technicians suggesting that the instruments we all like the sound of most are all wrong? One technician who insists on no regulator weights also publicly scoffed at "what Lyn Larsen refers to as 'puppy-dog's breath' Tibia tremulants," yet that sound is exactly the musical effect most organists and listeners want to hear!

Regarding Pratt's and Junchen's articles, the size of tremulant and the height of adjustment relate directly to the wind pressure. A larger tremulant requires higher pressure to operate properly. The small Wurlitzer trem

was usually found on Voxes and on smaller chests or ranks which did not require a heavy tremulant, such as reeds (Tuba Horn). Small tremulants naturally beat faster and require much more weight for slower speeds. At some point, the small trem isn't large enough to support the weight, and only a large trem will do.

The valve-rod length adjustment will compensate somewhat for pressure variation — the higher the pressure, the longer the rod, is the general rule. This is related to the "folds" in tremulants with stiff rubber cloth. Since lighter cloth generally works much better with changing temperatures, and is highly recommended, the adjustment has less effect than it would have with heavy cloth which folds into the bellows. This may explain why small tremulants seldom work well on pressures over ten inches.

Dave Junchen may find that he usually winds up with the inlet slide on his tremulants wide open, and they ARE a potential source of air noise. However, a properly adjusted wind system can be made to operate extremely well with the tremulant adjusted at less than maximum. Generally, if a Wurlitzer tremulant has to be opened to the point where the cover bobs up and down, or has to be left slightly ajar to work, something is not optimum. The Shea's Buffalo organ, highly regarded by those who have played and heard it, has most of its tremulants set at about half open. These tremulants have a wide range of adjustment, yet the wind is steady enough with the tremulants off for successful classical playing. (David, please don't throw those tremulant gates away — they may be needed in the next installation.)

All of us who have been successful with tremulants have gotten there by lots of experimentation over many years of working on many organs. As we find things that work, we apply them to successive installations. Since there are so many factors involved, some not so obvious, we each tend to develop our own methods which at least work for us. The best we can do is pass our experience on to others for consideration.

I recall "picking the brain" of Bert Clough who installed many Wurlitzers in New England. I had hoped to get the inside "dirt" from an original "expert." Bert said that more often the tremulants didn't work when originally installed, and that they changed windline lengths and fiddled with them until they got them to run. He told me, "If they ran at all, we left them!" Bert said that, in 1927 and 1928, they were lucky to get the organs tuned before opening night, or before they had to go on to the next theatre. Since some of this still exists in church organ building today, I believe every word.

I hope Dennis Hedberg will add his information on tremulants to what has already been written. This is probably the most important aspect of whether a theatre organ sounds good or not, and is still the weakest area in a great many installations.

Most sincerely,
Allen R. Miller
Glastonbury, Connecticut □