

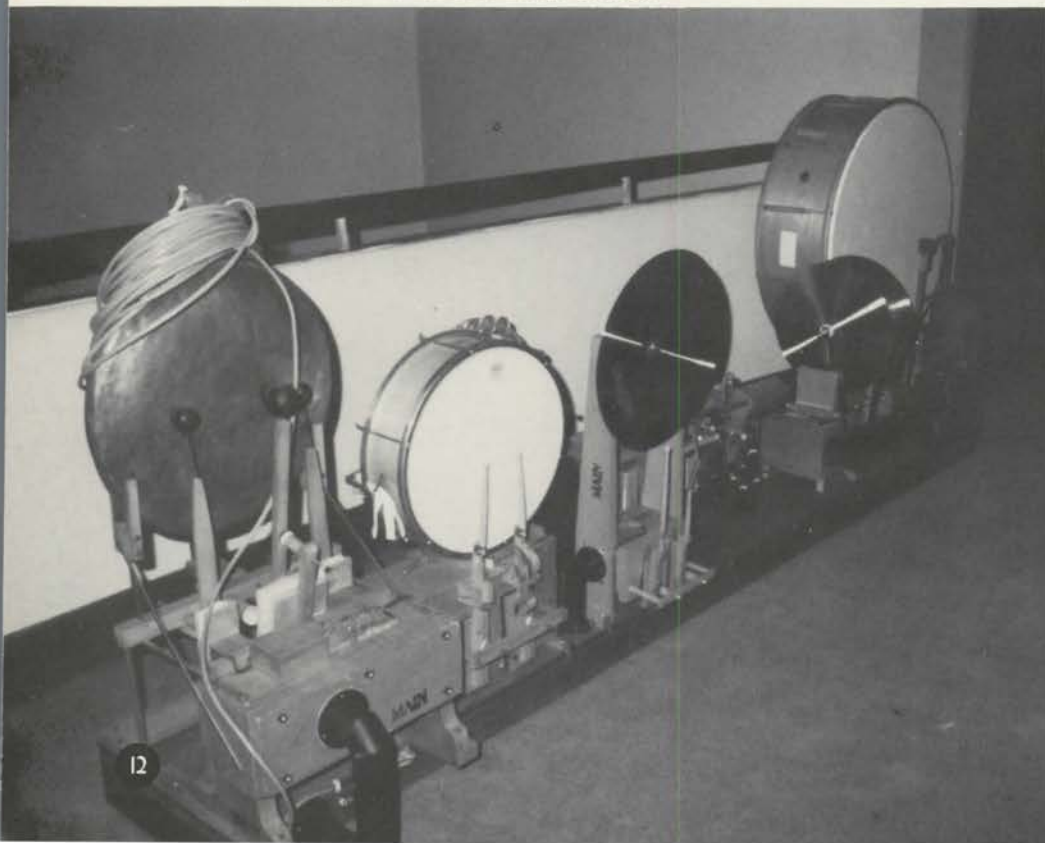
from the softest Muted Viol (and Celeste), Concert Flute (and Flute Celeste), Horn Diapason (and Horn Celeste) to the Oboe Horn and Quintadena. This provides a tremendous range from very soft to *mezzo-forte*.

The Pedal department, too, has much to choose from, not only for weight but also for good definition and *mezzo-forte* texture. This applies to 16' tone as well as 8'. The 16' Dulciana provides the softest sound before moving to the Bourdon, Violone and Oboe Horn. These, plus the 16' Metal Diaphone, provide a great foundation. For better response and definition of pitch, most of the 8' octaves are wound off-trem. Each chamber has the equivalent of a loud and a soft Tibia. The Solo houses the large scale Solo Tibia Clausa and the smaller Murray Harris Lieblich Tibia. A small, stopped Flute functions as a softer, contrasting color to the Main chamber's 10" standard Tibia.

The organ was dedicated on July 15, 1984, in a program featuring Founder's Cathedral Choir and George Goulding, the church's previous Organist and Music Coordinator. Lyn Larsen was heard in a concert sponsored by the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society later that month. After a tenure of thirty-five years Dr. Goulding retired in April 1985 and Stan Kann served as interim organist until Chris Elliott came on staff as full-time organist in July 1985.

The organ is featured prominently in the activities of the church, and Chris Elliott's Wednesday evening concerts and Sunday morning preludes are advertised on Dr. Hornaday's daily radio broadcasts. Chris plays the organ for twenty minutes before each Sunday morning service, and for a thirty-minute concert (in true theatre organ style) each Wednesday just prior to the 7:30 evening service. □

Partial view of trap assembly prior to installation in Main chamber.



THE CARE AND FEEDING of ORGAN soloists in 1987

by Walt Strony

A number of years ago, John Muri wrote an article on this same topic in which he offered suggestions for the benefit of committees inexperienced at sponsoring concerts and, at the same time, lamented some of the conditions under which he had performed. There was much food-for-thought in Muri's writings, and they were among the most interesting items to have been published in this journal.

The theatre organ has come a long way since Mr. Muri's article appeared in the February 1973 issue of THEATRE ORGAN. Gone are the days when traveling theatre organists slept in theatre lobbies, shaved in public toilets and played concerts under worklights. Many concerts are now being sponsored by performing arts associations, and ATOS chapters have, by and large, become very professional in their presentations. However, I (and all of my colleagues) have encountered a number of situations which have inhibited performance and turned what might have been a great show into a mediocre event,

so this is my contribution to today's committees.

There have been times when things have gone wrong and most of the audience was unaware . . . "You were really professional in the way you covered things up!" is an oft heard comment. However, there are people who DO notice problems, and we must ALL strive for perfection in our concerts. Certainly, things do go wrong that are uncontrollable. I've had regulators blow right in the middle of concerts; complete combination actions that, for one reason or another, stopped working properly at concert time, and I'm sure that some of you will remember the 1979 Los Angeles Convention when I was attacked by a moth. Although these things are largely beyond our control, we still need to do our best when presenting the theatre organ to the public . . . its very survival is at stake!

Let me begin by saying that most good performers are perfectionists — they want to do a good job, want the organ to work reliably and to sound its best, want the audience to be happy and, finally, to make the sponsoring group look good. After all, if they succeed in all these things, they may be invited for a return engagement! These things are all possible, and my suggestions here are designed to help all those groups out there who wish to produce successful concerts.

When you initially contact an artist about the possibility of his performing for you, be sure that he understands everything about the event — the exact date and time, the size and condition of the organ and all other pertinent information. Will there be movies or sing-alongs? Will he be expected to provide these or will you? And once you have agreed upon a fee and obtained approval from your board, confirm it with the artist immediately — he should never hear about these things through any grapevine! Finally, there should always be a written contract!

When the artist arrives in your city, be certain that someone is available to pick him up at the airport. Although there may be times when he has family or close friends in your city and will want to make his own arrangements, let this be his choice. If he does need someone to take him around, make sure that the same person can be available during the entire duration of his visit. This is extremely important if a good working relationship is to

be established. Besides, there are many emergencies that can and do arise, and it can be a real comfort to the artist to know that someone is willing and able to help at all times.

Some organists prefer to make their own hotel reservations, but often they will be unfamiliar with your city and will need your suggestions — they may even ask you to make the reservations. These things should always be discussed with plenty of advance notice. On staying in private homes, some organists prefer this, and others prefer the privacy of a hotel. Again, let the artist make this choice.

When the artist is finally settled, the real work starts. Your liaison person must see to it that the organist is fed, is taken to the theatre for practice and whatever else is necessary. Do not make lunch or dinner plans without consulting him as he may wish to visit friends or relatives — each artist is different. On the other hand, please don't just dump him into a hotel room without any help. I have stayed in hotels which were nowhere near a restaurant and have had to walk what seemed like a mile in foot-deep snow just to find a coffee shop — and don't forget that some of us "sunbelt" organists don't own a heavy winter coat or snowshoes.

As for practice time, each artist has different needs. I prefer to have five or six hours of uninterrupted time, but I know some performers who need more and some who want very little time. Some of this time may be the day before, and some on the day of the concert, but it is essential that the artist be returned to his hotel by late afternoon and have time to rest and mentally prepare for the program. And, please, don't have your entire chapter there during his practice time. I recall one engagement where I was picked up at the airport and immediately whisked to the theatre where at least fifty people were eagerly awaiting an impromptu concert. Certainly, some artists have their egos stroked by these things, but in reality they are a waste of time — one has only so much time to prepare for a concert, and it's impossible to get intimately familiar with anything with fifty people watching! The only people who should be present during practice time are those who are technicians or theatre employees. Cleaning crews or others who make loud noises should do their thing before or after the practice session. I sometimes have had to endure the sound of a vacuum cleaner at close proximity while getting acquainted with a rather distant and somewhat buried theatre organ.

On the other hand, a competent person who knows your instrument WELL should be in attendance at all times. There have been occasions when I was left totally alone in a theatre with locked organ chambers and have practiced ballads with Post Horn ciphers. One time the entire organ went dead and there was no one available to help, so all I could do was spend the remaining two hours in the lobby looking at the concession stand. Although this competent person should be in the theatre building during rehearsal time, he shouldn't be so close as to distract the organist. The best thing for him to do is bring a good book and relax in the lobby or back of the theatre.



Walt Strony

Many instruments today have electronic capture combination actions and the organist won't need any help setting pistons. However, the majority of our instruments still have their original setterboards and an assistant is sometimes needed to set pistons, although some organists prefer to manipulate those "diaper pins" by themselves. Some like to set the pistons first thing and make changes as they go along, while others like to familiarize themselves with the organ before setting pistons. Once again, be aware that each organist has different priorities.

The organ should be in tune before the artist practices. I know that some prefer to tune their instrument on the afternoon of the concert so things will be perfect. That's fine. The thing we don't want is to encounter the ranks that have been racked yesterday and have not been tuned yet. I played one program where the last pipe had been put in just as I arrived to practice, and the ranks were more than just a bit out of tune — they were miles off! It is quite impossible to play an organ when you push a G on the keyboard and a C# plays. My personal preference is to have the organ tuned before my first practice session and to have the reeds and trebles touched up on the afternoon of the performance. By the way, no tuning, please, while the audience is filing into the auditorium.

If a movie or sing-along is to be part of the show, you will have to screen them for the organist at least once. I have played more than one show where the film was either out of focus or even broken, or where the song slides were upside down or in the wrong order. These are things that can really hurt the quality of a performance.

Now, on the subject of eating before a concert — most of my colleagues cannot eat a meal before an evening's performance as the "butterflies" are just too much. There may be one or two who are not similarly affected, but I don't know them! You must discuss this with the organist and, if necessary, find out which restaurants will be open (and for how long) after the concert.

When the organist arrives to play the concert, insist that he hand you a list of his selections in the correct order they are to be played, then try to have someone reasonably

artistic doing the lighting who will be able to respond appropriately to the music. This can add a nice touch.

The dressing room is a most important place for your artist — it is here that he must compose himself, dress, make certain that his appearance is okay and, most important, RELAX. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that one be provided. It should be backstage and away from the audience and should, at the minimum, have a mirror with adequate light, a chair, a table and a pitcher of ice water. There should also be a private bathroom nearby. Some venues do even better than this — they keep a complete drug store, a fully stocked refrigerator, fresh flowers and even baskets of fruit. Even though those things are not necessary, they can put the artist in a wonderful frame of mind, and that can't do anything but help him with the concert!

During intermission someone should be responsible for seeing that the artist has some type of beverage waiting in the dressing room. Some like coffee or cola while others cannot handle the caffeine and prefer juice. This can be worked out with the artist on the morning of the concert. No visitors or "old friends" should be allowed in the dressing room before the performance or during intermission unless specifically cleared by the artist. Limit visitors to those connected directly with the performance.

When the concert is over, you may wish to have the artist pose for photos and sign autographs. He may then need a ride back to the hotel or to the restaurant for some food. Don't be disappointed if he is tired and does not feel like staying for a long time at the reception someone planned for after the concert. Believe it or not, playing a concert is very strenuous work, and if your artist is exhausted, you should understand.

Payment should be made immediately after the concert. It is also desirable to settle any record sales before the night is over. If this is not possible, the check should be mailed to the artist within a few days. It may be true that volunteers are doing the work, but it is important to bear in mind that the organist is making his living from this work, and he needs money to pay his bills just like everyone else. Imagine if your employer told you he would send your paycheck "when he had time?"

Finally, don't forget to see that he has a ride to the airport!

A quick word about conventions — even though there are many artists to be cared for, each of the above steps should still be taken. Conventions should feature the best of the best, and everything which is done to make the artist feel comfortable will ultimately be a feather in your cap!

Now that your concert is over, you will probably need a vacation. But just think . . . you have helped to organize a successful concert . . . you have heard some wonderful music . . . you may have made a new friend . . . and many people will have been made happy by such a positive exposure to the theatre organ. How can you do better than that? Good luck, and thanks for reading. □