

# Twenty Years of RTOS Auditorium Theatre Concerts

by Lloyd Klos

On January 17 there were 1702 in attendance at the Auditorium Theatre to observe the 20th Anniversary of concerts there, sponsored by the Rochester Theatre Organ Society. Aply led by Paul F. Doering, the Anniversary Committee worked nine months on the project. This writer participated in two TV spots on Channel 10, and coverage by other media also heralded the event. Organist of the evening was Don Scott, protege of Rochester's Mr. Theatre Organ, Tom Grierson. Appropriately, Don had played the opening concert at the Auditorium on January 21, 1967.

Following intermission, former RTOS director and program chairman Don Hall was MC for a segment of recognition. Accompanied by his usual cornball humor, he summoned five of the original "Founding Fathers" to the stage: Stuart Moffatt, Jess Littlefield, Frederick Dise, Clifford O'Kane and Rita Becker. Three others, Daniel and Oline Schultz and Dan Suter were unable to be present.

The names of 50 charter members were read, and a sprinkling of those present stood to applause. A plaque was presented to Temple Civic Center's Board Chairman Raymond Beardsley and Auditorium Theatre General Manager John Moriarity recognizing 20 years of RTOS-TCC liaison. It will be mounted in the inner lobby of the theatre.

An anecdote contest supplied stories of humorous, embarrassing and unusual happenings to RTOS during the past 20 years. Following the final organ number, an on-stage reception was held featuring a cake shaped in the form of a theatre organ console. Those who held original shares of RTOS stock, issued in 1965 to save the organ, and those who had printed programs of the initial concert in January 1967, were presented souvenir buttons.

It was in May of 1960 when Daniel and Oline Schultz, Jess Littlefield and Lloyd Klos secured permission of RKO District Manager Jay Golden to restore the Wurlitzer, Opus 1951, in the Palace Theatre. About 350 man-hours later, a concert was held for some early-Sunday-morning enthusiasts, featuring Tom Grierson, the house organist for 15 years.

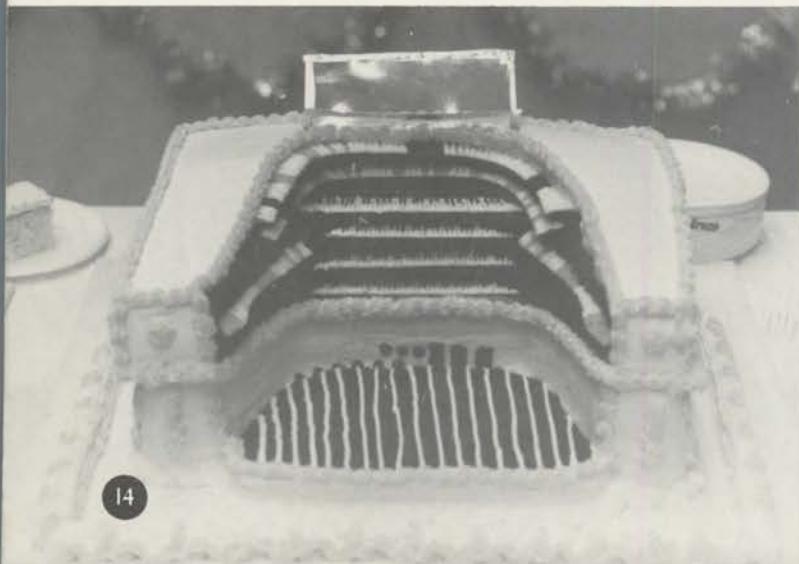


Scores of RTOS members and guests mingle at the backstage reception.

(Gale E. Smith photo)

A console cake which was the highlight of the backstage reception. (Gale E. Smith photo)

RTOS President Harry Malcolm (L) presents 20-year commemorative plaque to TCC Board Chairman Raymond Beardsley (C) and Auditorium Theatre General Manager John Moriarity. (Gale E. Smith photo)





Master of Ceremonies Don Hall (L) and organist Don Scott. (Gale E. Smith photo)

The little group continued to hold informal concerts at the Palace on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Following the 1964 ATOS National Convention in the area, it was decided to organize a formal club to hold monthly concerts from September through May, to issue a newsletter (*The Blower*) and to promote the cause of theatre organ and its music before the general public.

In March 1965 it was announced that "The Showplace of Rochester" would be razed to make way for an apartment complex, but the idea never materialized and the site is a parking lot today.

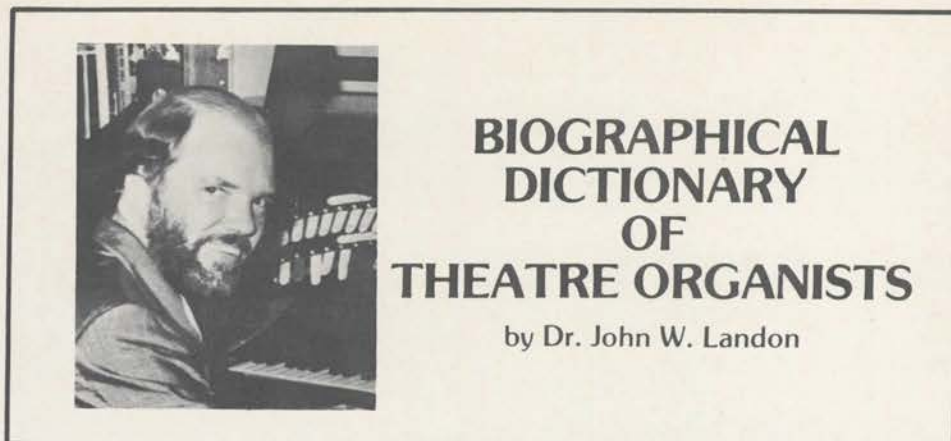
RTOS was determined to save the Wurlitzer! The 150 members issued \$1 shares of stock in "musical nostalgia," sold cookies, illustrated books on the Palace, and a recording of the organ. They also held benefit concerts and garage sales until their goal of \$10,000 was achieved. The club was fortunate to find a repository for the instrument, the Auditorium Theatre. Its classic organ was removed and went to a church. After months of adapting the chambers, installation and enlargement of the organ (Post Horn and piano added) under the supervision of Danny Schultz, the first concert was held on the now 4/22 Wurlitzer on January 21, 1967, with Don Scott as the artist.

There have been 193 RTOS-sponsored concerts since that date by 104 artists of local, national, and international repute.

The society also maintains a 3/10 Wurlitzer in the 400-seat Eisenhart Auditorium which lends itself to silent film festivals, social affairs and intimate programs. Our membership has stabilized at the 1550 level, and the number of people necessary to conduct the affairs of the organization ranges from 50 to 75, depending on the type of concert or program being produced.

Looking to the future, we are certain that as long as both venues continue in operation and competent artists continue on the circuit, and if the supply of willing, dedicated workers continues, the success of the Rochester Theatre Organ Society is assured. □

MAY/JUNE 1987



## BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF THEATRE ORGANISTS

by Dr. John W. Landon

### CARTER, GAYLORD

Gaylord Carter is among the best-known theatre organists on the concert circuit. Born in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1905, he spent his boyhood in Wichita, Kansas. His family had come to this country to open a conservatory of music in Wichita, and his father took a post as church organist.

When Gaylord was sixteen years of age, the family moved to Los Angeles. Carter soon obtained an after-school job playing the organ for silent pictures. In 1926 he took his first important post as organist for Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles. Carter played other theatre engagements at the downtown Paramount, United Artists, Warner's Hollywood and Egyptian Theatres in the Los Angeles-Hollywood area. He also played the Seattle Paramount Theatre. By 1935 he was becoming deeply involved in radio broadcasting. He played for such radio shows as "California Melodies," "Hollywood Hotel," "The Packard Show," "The Second Mrs. Burton" and "Breakfast in Hollywood." He will always be associated in the public mind with the "Amos and Andy Show." For seven years he introduced the show playing "The Perfect Song," which was its theme.

Carter was on active duty with the Navy in WWII. Since then, he has been busy with radio and television work. He has been associated with the major networks in such programs as "Bride and Groom," "The Hal Sawyer Show," "The Big Payoff" and "Glamour Girl." The very popular Pinky Lee Television Show also featured Carter's artistry. In addition, Carter has found time to do some church organ work.

In recent years, Carter has toured the country accompanying silent films in his famous "Flicker Fingers" presentations of Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Douglas Fairbanks and others, a series of top-flight, action-packed movies, and they continue at present. He began these presentations in 1961.

Carter has played at several American Theatre Organ Society conventions and has an increasing number of long-playing and stereo records to his credit.\*

\**Biography from: Landon, John. Behold The Mighty Wurlitzer; The History of the Theatre Pipe Organ. Greenwood Press, 1983.*

### CARTER, GEORGE B.

Organist of the Park Theatre in Newburgh, New York, in 1924.

Gaylord Carter

