

News, Views, and Events

EVERY ARDENT organ enthusiast dreams of the day when he can own an organ of his own and, if the urge is strong enough, will make every sacrifice to see his dream fulfilled. Like Eric Reeve, of Minot, N.D., for instance, Eric recently purchased the 2m/5r Wurlitzer, formerly located in the State Theatre in Minot. His letter should be an inspiration to any reader, to wit: "The car almost quit on me on the way over to Hallock, and lucky for me a service station attendant diagnosed the trouble as generator brushes. My mover friend loaded the organ, assisted by two farmers and myself, and it filled the van except a few boxes of pipes and the bench and swell-shade motor which went into my car. Then, just as I was leaving I ran off the road into a ditch, but luckily a farmer with a tractor pulled me back on the road. After leaving Grand Forks the gas line froze up twice. Another push. Visibility was zero at times, so rough was the blizzard. But after Devil's Lake it was clear as a bell and the next morning, with the temperature below zero, the van arrived and we unloaded into the basement cellar haphazardly. The next day I stayed home from work and loaded it into the cellar properly. I can't see how Ed Gress got a ten-rank organ in his basement and playing when I can't even get a six-rank one in. The console width and the door width exactly match up—two feet eleven inches—so there was no room to turn it and the stairs came too close to the door. He said if I took the brace off he could swing it in, but I didn't want to take the console apart because it was so cold. It was quite an adventure. I spent all day Sunday taking the console apart and putting it together again—as it was. Taken apart, the upper part of the console only just fitted through our 3-foot-minus door. I don't know what a person would do who had a smaller door as I had that console apart. I will have to resolder the pedal board contacts as this board was damaged when I was trying to unscramble all the cables and wires inside the console. It looks nice in the living room and I sit for hours admiring it and feel so good that it is really mine. Eddie Dunstetter played this organ years ago. I just hope that I can eventually get it in playable condition." (*Where there's a will, there's a way.* ED.)

Congratulations to Messrs. Hare and Bartlett on the March issue of *Theatre Organ Review*. A very attractive issue. It's a publication that certainly should appeal to a wide number of organ enthusiasts in this country. England has had a long and meritorious career in the theatre organ world and if you *TIBIA* readers are not keeping abreast of organ goings-on in that country, you are missing interesting organ lore. We are happy to have contributed something to this fine quarterly! . . . Attention Mr. James Grinstead! We're positive you will wax enthusiastic over Don Baker's recording on Lorin Whitney's Robert-Morton. Don never played better and the disc is well engineered . . . We had a piece commemorating the 10th anniversary of the *Theatre Organ Club* and *Theatre Organ Review* lined up for publication in an early issue of *THE TIBIA* but space was prohibitive. Sorry we're late on this coverage but you will find it in these pages. We just thought it well to give our readers a little background of your fine contribution to the theatre organ and its lore. . . . Here's another piece that was deleted from an earlier issue titled "Repository for T. O. Literature." The idea still stands as good so here is what we had to say:

Roy Gorish, our very able co-worker, brings up a matter worthy of consideration here, namely, that the Association attempt to collect a complete file of periodicals for use in historical research. Early issues of *The Diapason*, the *American Organist*, *The Musician*, *Etude*, *Melody Magazine* contain interesting data for the historical minded enthusiast. A library of such literature, together with sundry articles, photographs, and the like would be of immeasurable value. As Roy put it, we should "buy, borrow, or get it donated"—in any case, we need to gather together such material. So why not get started? Your Editor will take the initial step by donating his scrapbooks and photo collection to A.T.O.E. If the proposal to develop a library of organ literature meets with favor and you have material for release, kindly send to the Editor for holding and perusal until such time as a proper repository for said material can be chosen.

THEATRE ORGAN REVIEW

This is an enviable record, one that editor Frank A. Hare of this quarterly publication can be justly proud. This record of accomplishment is indeed worthy of recognition and we are grateful to Frank Hare for supplying the details which follow.

The Robinson Cleaver Theatre Organ Club was founded May 22, 1938 as "The Robinson Cleaver Radio Club." It was common

practice back in those days to favor leading organists in Britain with "fan" clubs and it was inevitable that Robinson Cleaver who was rising rapidly to fame would be so favored. The instigator behind it all was Ralph Bartlett who contributes regularly to *THE TIBIA* and whose brief biography appears elsewhere in this issue.

The first meeting of the Club was a visit to the old B.B.C. Theatre Organ in September of 1938 followed by visits to the Granada, Tooting, And, in 1939, a meeting at Town Hall at Woolwich with music by a famous band plus Reginald Dixon on the Hammond and Robinson Cleaver on the concert organ. Later in the year the war broke out and many members left for the Services. This necessitated a suspension of the Club activities until the cessation of hostilities; and in 1946 it was reorganized and meetings resumed at the Tooting, the Ritz, and in other cinemas, concert halls, ball rooms, and organ factories. Sundry social meetings in London and Leeds.

Although other organ fan clubs were formed or reformed after the war, none survived for long, and the club, realizing in 1950 that times had changed, decided to embrace all organists, yet still retain the name of its President—thus "The Robinson Cleaver Theatre Organ Club." Today this group caters to the entire theatre organ field and leading organists from all parts of the country are invited to take part in its regular activities.

In 1947 this Club started issuing a quarterly magazine known as the *Theatre Organ Review*. It started originally as purely a Club magazine, but today only a minor amount of space is devoted to reports of Club activities. In spite of increasing costs, the circulation of this excellent quarterly has steadily increased and the number of pages has been doubled. Eric Atkin, the original Editor for some three years, was joined by Frank Hare at the start of 1950 and this team worked together until the end of 1955 when Mr. Atkin found it necessary to resign. Mr. Hare has no fear that the supply of material on such a specialized subject as theatre organs will be wanting, and he is confident, in view of the steady stream of contributions reaching his desk, that the *Theatre Organ Review* will continue well into the future. Again, hearty congratulations to Editor Hare and honorary Secretary Ralph Bartlett for beautiful performances. We wish them increasing success during the next decade and trust that their magazine will reach an ever-growing number of theatre organ enthusiasts.

ORGANIZING IN CHICAGO

Your editor spent several days in the "windy city" to get the latest facts on feeding baby pigs, chickens, and bacteria in the paunch of a cow and, last but certainly not least, to see what's going on in the organ world. A highlight was an evening with Al Melgard and his daughter June at the Stadium (the night of the Fulmer-Robinson fight) at the conclusion of which Al said, "Mel, there's the bench. Sit down and play a tune." And there I sat at that 6-manual console with over 38,000 pipes overhead a half a block away wishing that a miracle would happen. It didn't, but it was an experience. The night previous, an extended lunch and chat with Bill Knaus at the Baldwin Piano Company to have a gamut of organ music from its inception and use in the church to ballrooms and theatres. Bill, you know, is one of those versatile organists who plays the organ in his local church on Sunday mornings, demonstrates Baldwin organs during the week, and his recordings at the Trianon Ballroom Wurlitzer are well known to record collectors. Then a meeting with Kay McAbee at the "House of Organs" (Allen) where Kay demonstrated the new Allen organ with an invitation to visit the Paramount at Aurora after midnight. Reggie Foort, busy as usual, extended an invitation to dine at his home with his charming wife and daughter—another unforgettable experience when Reggie recounted some of his experiences in England. Although the hour was late, Reggie insisted on driving me to the Hilton. Oh yes, Reggie is planning another recording session with Emory Cook! And, last but not least, a very pleasant rendezvous with F. LeRoy Nelson, top flight Hammond organ ace, in the foyer of the Conrad Hilton where he has played regularly during the past 14 years. A synopsis of his career as an organist would include 12 years with Balaban and Katz (Casimir Theatre, The Oriental, Bell Park, Belmont, and others), organ recitals over radio stations WGN and WCFL, a one-year stint at a roller rink, and some sessions at the Chicago Stadium, in addition to serving as church organist and choir director and as a member of the faculty of the Cosmopolitan Chicago Conservatory. Yes, we did learn that the bacteria in the paunch of a cow must have their vitamins and minerals! A great week mixing business and pleasure—with a raincheck on the trip to Aurora with Kay McAbee.