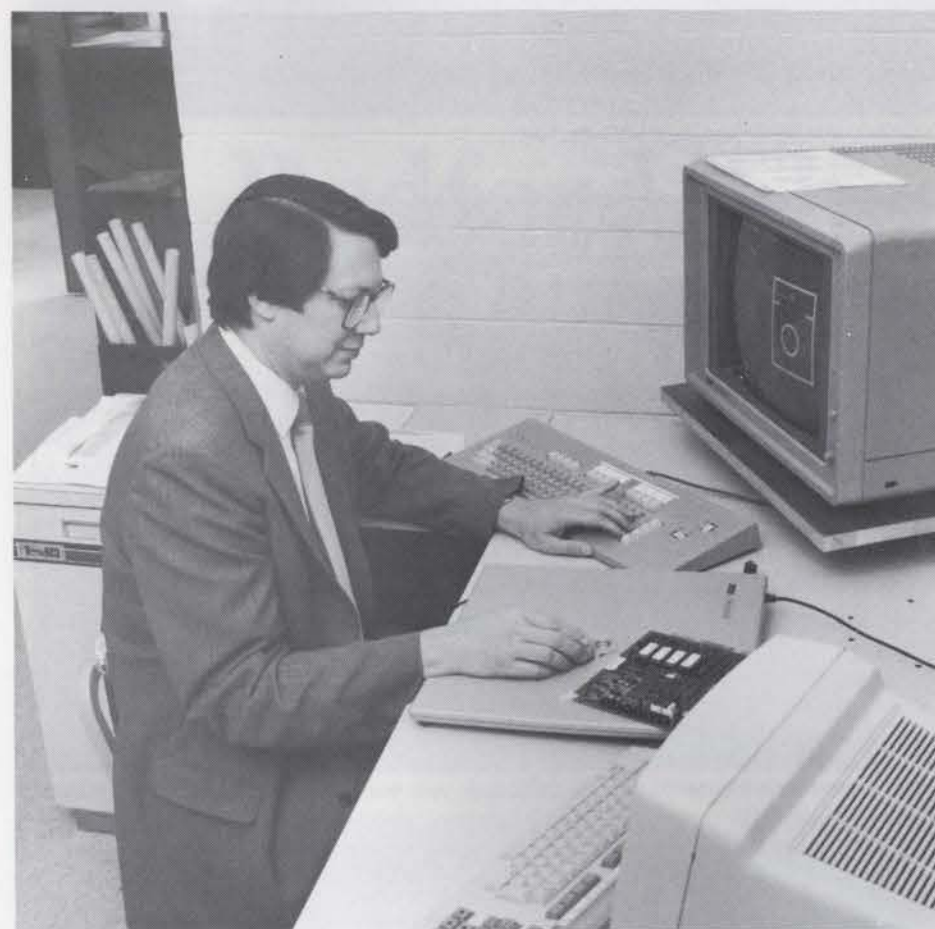


# ALLEN

## Carries On The Theatre Organ Tradition

by Fritz Krien



Dwight Beacham, noted theatre organist and engineer at Allen Organ Company, is busy doing the tonal design of a custom theatre organ using a computer. Organ pipes are blown in Allen's anechoic test chamber, with the resulting sound waves being captured by computer in digital memory. Mr. Beacham is working with that digital memory to organize it into plug-in programmable chips that comprise the tonal heart of the Allen Digital Computer Organ.

Some of Allen's top factory people are theatre organ enthusiasts. Dwight Beacham is well known for his appearances and recordings. Bob Pearce, Vice President, does a commendable job at a theatre organ console. George Knadler and Jerry Schwab, area representatives, love to play theatre organ music. A great many of Allen representatives throughout the United States and some foreign countries love to play the old favorites on a theatre organ. Though Allen has

made the big mark as the largest builder of church organs in the world, it is easy to see why they have continued decade after decade to build theatre organs using the Allen systems. They like them.

Allen is now into the second half century of organ building. It all started in 1937 when Jerome Markowitz, the founder, built his first organ using individually tuned oscillators for each note. In that same year he received a patent for the stable audio oscillator and started build-

ing organs for churches using this system. The Allen was the first commercially available electronic oscillator organ. At that time, the Hammond with its electro-mechanical system and the Everett with its amplified reed system were the only other two organs available. The mechanical and the windblown reed system are now gone from the marketplace and even the individually turned oscillator system is not long for this world. Today, the word is "digital."

■

"Allen is now into the second half century of organ building."

■

It is not surprising that it was Allen who first introduced the digital system to the organ world in 1971. In a joint venture with then North American Rockwell, a system for producing organ sound digitally was perfected. Digital systems, of course, allow far more control over the formation of wave shapes and articulations. The superiority of the instruments produced using these systems brought strong growth to Allen's operation. They have produced about 20,000 digital organs. They are found in great cathedrals throughout the world, in concert halls like Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center, The Fredric R. Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv; and in mid-1988 Allen installed a four-manual instrument of huge dimensions in the Great Hall of Wharton Center, Michigan State University, Lansing, Michigan. Inaugural concerts have called upon the talents of some of the most famous organists in the country.

### But What About Theatre Organs?

Well, Dwight Beacham is involved in upper level design decisions. His love for the theatre organ, supported by others in his organization who feel the same way, has resulted in a large percentage of the design time spent on theatre organs. This, in spite of the fact that the "market" is not supposed to be too wide. There have been articles and ads in our magazine citing some of the work. There is an organ in the College of the Sequoias in Fresno, where an actual course in theatre organ playing is presented. We have all heard about some of their major residence installations. The most recent one is the big custom theatre organ in Richard Hallstrom's home in Carmel, California, which was first played for theatre organ enthusiasts in the Scottish Rite Temple in Oakland, California, and recorded by Walt Strony. Walt has produced two recordings of that instrument — one made in the auditorium; the second in the actual home where it was installed.

■

"It was Allen who first introduced the digital system to the organ world in 1971."

■

In conjunction with their 50th Anniversary, Allen has done something which bears special attention. They came up with a commemorative model known as the ADC 4600. Many of us heard it at the ATOS Convention in Portland and then at Asilomar. Also, Dwight Beacham has a new recording out playing this instrument. It is three manuals with a big stop list, remarkable sound, and real capture action with stop moving into position. Four memories are included with the capture action. Though the "market" is not supposed to be very broad, we have learned that by early October, production was sold out through the end of 1988. It could well be that the recordings that Allen is putting out and the promotion being given to this instrument will help build interest in theatre organs, a development from which we can all benefit.



Walt Strony after his concert on the Allen Custom Theatre Organ in Octave Hall at the Allen factory in Macungie, Pennsylvania.

### The 4600 . . . a "Two-in-One Organ"

It is easy to see why the 4600 is called a "TWO-IN-ONE" Theatre organ. A stop called "Great 2nd Voicing" changes 10 stops on the Great manual from theatre organ to classical voicing. The 16' Tibia Clause becomes a Quintaten, the Tuba Horn becomes a Trompette, the Violin becomes a more broad Salicional, the 4-foot Tibia becomes a Koppelflote. The Fife 1-foot changes to a 4-rank mixture.

A second stop engraved "Accomp. 2nd Voicing" totally changes 12 stops on the lower manual to classical voicing. The instrument literally changes into a two-manual and pedal church organ with the Solo manual still available with its solo voices. Since the organ is built to AGO specifications, the organist who likes to play popular music at home can also practice and enjoy classical music as well.