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President's Message



AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

In these days of endangered this and that it might behoove us to look closer at some of the things and people that we hold dear to our hearts and see how they fare in our increasingly complex world.

First, and in my humble opinion, the most important, the vanishing breed of competent organ technicians. I'm not talking about the hobbyist or technically competent amateur but rather the professional organ builder. While the theatre organ world is fortunate to have several of these "endangered technicians" presently available, most of them are in their middle years and will be retiring in the next twenty to twenty-five years. Unfortunately, I don't see too many young people in their twenties taking up the organ building trade. This will cause problems for the theatre organ before too long. We need to do for the young technician what we are beginning to do for the young organist . . . come up with an apprentice program (with the help of the present professionals) which can assist young people in finding the profession and developing the skills to become competent to carry on the trade.

Second, the vanishing breed of the competent musician. While we may have been given a temporary reprieve on this one for the next twenty years or so, we must locate the additional concert locations and build the concert circuit in order to make the young musician look to the theatre organ as a viable way to make a living commensurate with the tremendous hours of preparation that go into becoming and maintaining concert status. Presently, being a musician, let alone being an *organist*, is not a viable profession for the majority who would choose it. Music is a great avocation but a rather "iffy" way to make a living.

Third, the theatre organ itself. We've done quite well on this one. Every year more organs are going into public halls and auditoriums. You, both as individuals and as a part of the American Theatre Organ Society, can be righteously proud of your part in insuring that these unique and remarkable instruments are *being preserved* right now, today. However, it's not enough to just put an instrument in a building . . . it must be accessible, contracts must be written that guarantee adequate concert/practice time and a reasonable cost to the promoters, whoever they may be.

Fourth, and last, YOU. Yes you, the most important link in the chain that holds the theatre organ world together. You also are an endangered species. The majority of the membership of the American Theatre Organ Society are in that period of life now referred to as the mature generation. Many of you folks were fortunate to hear the theatre organ in its original home. This encounter had a profound effect that has followed you to the present. Unfortunately, for the past several decades this encounter has been lacking to all but a few. You who saw the light or are seeing it now need to make sure that the present younger generation has at least the opportunity to "see" and experience the sound of the theatre organ and to react accordingly. More on this next time.

Don't forget the Fabulous Detroit Convention coming up in July . . . spread the word, enjoy, prosper and good health!

Sincerely,
John Ledwon



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