

Ty Woodward

Reprinted from The Cedar Rapids Gazette

CONCERT REVIEW

Paramount Pipe Organ Creates Magical Aura

By Les Zachels, Gazette reviewer

Somehow it's a world of magic when the Paramount Theatre pipe organ rises from its lair in the pit and the console is showered with a glittering aura of iridescence. Saturday night in the Paramount this beautiful instrument awakened to thrill some 600 patrons of the annual fall CRATOS concert.

Presiding over the keyboards and pedals was a tall, dark and handsome young man who proved to be a master of the manuals. Ty Woodward, a west coast organ virtuoso, played a two-hour recital that reflected a backdrop of musical education and set him apart among performers. In addition, Woodward boasted a speaking voice of great resonance and chose his words carefully.

Meredith Willson's "76 Trombones" was a breezy opener, but George Jessel's "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers" knocked the cobwebs out of the lower woodwind pipes. "Memory," the ace hymn from *Cats*, was the blue light special of the evening with its spine tingling, haunting melodic line.

Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" elicited expressions of pleasure from the patrons. The tune was written for piano, but Woodward charmed his audience with a bizarre stop mixture that suggested happy hours on a merry-go-round. He studiously avoided that pitfall of so many keyboard artists who usually play this number at breakneck speed. Woodward's tempo was in good taste and steady as a rock.

A drastic change in format was ushered in by a silent movie of 1917 vintage. This adventure into yesteryear was a real gas, featuring Bobby Vernon and Gloria Swanson. Titled "Teddy at the Throttle," the star performer was a canine of dubious ancestry. But the real hero was Woodward on the organ bench, who played a meaningful accompaniment, punctuating the action on the screen with appropriate melodic inventions. This certainly was one of the better silent comedies that CRATOS has offered its patrons.

The Widor "Toccata" from his Fifth Symphony is one of the most challenging pieces in all organ literature. It was composed for the classical organ. The ingenious Woodward devised a means of executing this intricate score by quickly moving from one pre-set manual to another, thus changing the color and volume called for in the piece without having to change the stops.

Quantity of sound is ordinarily attained by the use of foot pedals, opening and closing the shutters. But when both feet are engaged in playing octaves, it's a clever trick to use that means to change the volume.

After a parade of popular show tunes, Woodward invited the audience to participate in a "Sing-Along." An uninvited voice intruded from the pipe chamber. That bug-a-boo of organists, a "cipher," joined in the singing. The versatile Woodward cleverly played along in the key of the "cipher," until a determined crew of CRATOS troubleshooters headed by James Olver isolated the erring pipe, which was located in the tuba section. Organist Woodward seemed quite unruffled.

Woodward brought his recital to a close with the piano teacher's special, "Turkish Rondo" by Mozart, and the spirited kickline, the "Can-Can" by Offenbach.

New Console Dedicated By Pittsburgh Area Theatre Organ Society

by Fran Verri

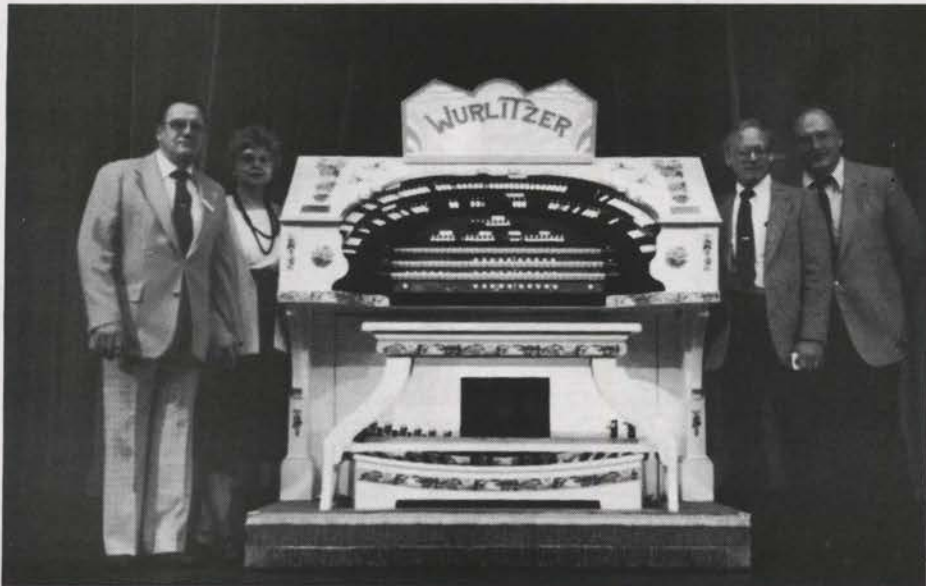
October 8, 1988, on the stage of the auditorium of Keystone Oaks High School in Dormont, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, sat a huge object shrouded with a large, black drape. At eight o'clock, emcee Fran Verri introduced the four members of the crew, Bob and Shirley Flowers, Randy Lafferty and Jay Smith, and presented each of them with a plaque that matched the console decor as a memento of the task they had just completed. The four then surrounded the enshrouded console and, with a show of bravado, unveiled their masterpiece. The long and loud ovation from the audience was their reward.

This story actually began in 1986 when the crew decided that they needed something more than the 2/10 they had enjoyed, and they approached the board of directors of PATOS with a proposal for expanding the console. President Bob Flowers and his crew toured the country looking for a three-manual Wurlitzer console that they could use. After looking at a number of consoles, some incomplete, some overpriced, and some that were next to junk, they came home empty-handed, but not empty-hearted. Since the board's decision to go to three manuals also included a desire to increase the instrument by seven ranks, the crew decided to design a console to meet their needs.

A new, three-manual console shell was purchased from Arndt Organ Supply. During the assembling of the shell, several items including the top board, the fall board and the straight rail were redesigned and new ones were made. Then they began the task of installing new stop tabs, switches, rebuilt manuals, combination action, wiring and all the rest of what it takes to make a console complete. Everything was made to order, and when they were done, they had the makings of a console that is totally unique.

As the summer of 1988 approached, all of the console components were ready for installation, but first the unfinished cabinet had to be painted. Bob shipped it out to a furniture factory where it was professionally spray-painted. Then the decorations were selected and applied by a professional cabinet finisher. Because this console was totally new and not built by Wurlitzer, there had to be some way to identify it as a Wurlitzer, so Program Director Shirley Flowers set out to make, from scratch, a Wurlitzer sunburst music rack.

The deadline for the first concert of the season was October 8, but the work crew knew that they had to have it ready much earlier in order to work out any bugs that may occur. So, from the



PATOS crew members (L to R): Bob and Shirley Flowers, Jay Smith and Randy Lafferty proudly present their new console.

end of August to the end of September, the coming together of all parts of the console took place, and after two years and more than 1000 man-hours per crew member, the work was completed and was a total success. Only the tuning was left for the last week before the concert.

It was now time for the dedication concert by young Robert Wolfe, and as Randy Lafferty introduced this popular British artist, we knew we had a winner. Once Robert Wolfe began to play, the entire audience was his. His program was a balance of ballads, waltzes, polkas and swing tunes presented in medleys that had his listeners jumping out of their seats. During intermission, many members of the audience rushed to the stage for a closer look at the console; they were generous with their praise, and the

hub-bub in the lobby was all about the new console and the way young Wolfe was handling it, all positive, all enthusiastic, all happy. The second half of his concert consisted of more excellent stylings, many from Broadway shows, and as he concluded his program, Robert Wolfe thanked the members of PATOS for creating this new console and asked the audience for a round of applause for stage director Chuck Crouch whose elegant decorations enhanced the beauty of the console.

The evening was a complete success, and the future of our society looks bright, indeed. We do not, however, plan to rest on our laurels and are looking to add more ranks and more percussions to the organ sometime in the future.

The Hobby House Organ

by Paul Wasserman

The nameplate on the console reads: Symphonic Orchestral Unit, Built by Benj. F. LeNoir, Philadelphia, Penn.

This console, along with the relay and switchstack originally came from the Lyric Theatre in Camden, New Jersey. According to the original stopkeys, in addition to the usual array of theatre voices, this LeNoir contained a Brass Trumpet, French Horn and Kinura. The fate of the chamber contents is not known by myself, and if anyone is familiar with the Lyric in Camden, I would appreciate hearing from him or her.

Although David Junchen writes in his *Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ* (page 264): "It is probably safe to assume that theatre organs bearing his nameplate consist of Organ Supply components ..." I believe this console bears a much stronger similarity to the Meisel & Sullivan built by Gottfried (see page 315 of Junchen's book). The magnets in the console and relay/switchstack are of the same type as Page (that is, metal cap with swivel hook), if that is any indication as to the manufacturer. LeNoir may have purchased components from both suppliers. I totally agree with Mr. Junchen, however, that the quality of the LeNoir is among the finest.

The organ pipes and chests are Wurlitzer Style 185, Opus 246, shipped October 1, 1919, and installed in the Pantheon Theatre, Toledo, Ohio. According to the nameplate on the original Wurlitzer console when purchased and removed by Othedus Campbell in May 1951, it had been removed from the theatre and installed in a Presbyterian church in Tecumseh, Michigan, by the Toledo Pipe Organ Company. Subsequently, the original two-manual Wurlitzer console was unsuccessfully altered by Othedus to create a three-manual Wurlitzer, so he acquired the LeNoir console and relay.

The organ contains the original seven ranks: Tuba, Diapason, Cello, Viol d'Orchestre, Flute, Clarinet and Vox Humana. As the transition from theatre to church organ had resulted in the loss of the percussions and traps, a Wurlitzer Harp, Orchestra Bells, Xylophone and Tuned Sleigh Bells were added. Othedus also acquired a Marr & Colton Tibia Clausa, Chimes and traps from the Tivoli Theatre in Mishawauka, Indiana.

Othedus and his wife, Hilda, purchased the house next door to their residence in Toledo and installed this conglomeration in it. They called it their Hobby House. When the house was purchased, it was a one-story, five-room dwelling with a basement to which they added a second story for pipe chambers.



LeNoir console in Hobby House in Toledo.

Hobby House continued

After completely re-leathering their Wurlitzer, it was installed and its progress recorded with a Stereo Realist Camera. I now have the complete collection of 3D slides.

Othedus was a charter member of ATOE and a contributor to the Round Robin letters originated by Alden Miller of Minneapolis. I have the collection of copies from these letters. Apparently, stoplists obtained from organ crawls in the remaining theatres were the major information exchanged during the period of 1950-55. Although Hilda worked many long hours side-by-side with Othedus on the organ, it was not her "cup of tea" but her husband's obsession, and that was fine with her.

When an article about Othedus, Hilda and the organ appeared in the Toledo Blade on September 18, 1958, I called to ask if I could visit them. They welcomed me into their home, and I welcomed the opportunity to work on and learn about all the intricacies of theatre pipe organs. The Campbells and myself, along with my wife whom I married in 1960, remained close friends until their passing, Othedus in May 1981 and Hilda in August 1983.

Fortunately, I was able to acquire Hobby House, and I immediately began to rearrange all the reservoirs, traps, tremulants, chests and pipework to facilitate tuning and maintenance. The blower was moved from the garage to the house. Since Othedus had completely stripped the relay of all wiring to install and rebuild it, new cables between switchstack and relay had to be made and installed. At the time of his death, he had wired 21 switches (wire by wire) to the relay. Since February of 1987, I have installed 18 more (prestrung) cables, making a considerable improvement in the sound and versatility of the instrument.

Because I live 17 miles from Hobby House, the Wurlitzer does not receive the attention and maintenance it so badly needs, but with the help I have received from the Toledo Area Theatre Organ Society, every push of the START button seems to bring more life and versatility to the installation. When I thanked President Evan Chase for his particular help and attention in tuning, he immediately replied, "That's what we're here for!" Perhaps more of us could recapture that spirit of dedication to the mighty theatre organ and each other in our common bond to preserve the King of Instruments.

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**REMEMBER
TO VOTE**
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Othedus Campbell at his LeNoir console.



Chamber view of LeNoir organ.

CHAPTER CORRESPONDENTS — PLEASE NOTE

To help ease the burden on the editorial staff of THEATRE ORGAN, please observe the following: Type all copy, double-spaced, on letter size (8½" x 11") white paper, leaving 1¼" margins on top, bottom and both sides. Do not use erasable paper. Please include your name, address and telephone number. Type photo captions on Scotch (3M) Post-it Note sheets (#654, 3"x3" or #655, 3"x5") and attach to BACK of photo. DO NOT use any kind of tape or rubber cement to attach captions to photos, and DO NOT attach photos to sheets of paper.

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Lee Erwin Goes to Paris

In THEATRE ORGAN-101, the student should learn the necessity of keeping passports current. But, for Lee Erwin it was a forgotten lesson, thus adding another detail to a flurry of last minute activities created by his accepting an invitation to play at the American Film Festival in Deauville, France.

The honor of being selected to play at the prestigious, 14th annual, ten-day festival could not be turned down by Lee even though he had not completed all of the shows of a ten-week silent film series at the great Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. He would have to leave immediately after the last performance at the cathedral.

The festival's theme at Deauville was Oscar Winning Films. *Wings*, the first movie to win this award (1927), was to be featured and introduced by its star, Buddy Rogers. Buzz Aldrin, one of the first astronauts to walk on the moon, thus winning his "wings," also would be there. An elegant, proper-sounding score was needed, so Festival Director Ruda Dauphin called Paramount for references. They assured her that Lee Erwin would give a great performance, and one in keeping with the dignity of the festival. Anyone who has heard Lee's scores for films knows that he certainly didn't flunk FILM SCORING-101.

At the Deauville Festival, American films, in four theatres, were screened twelve hours each day. All were recent releases but for two silents. The screening of *Wings* took place in the big theatre at the Deauville Casino, with illuminaries such as Claudette Colbert, Ann-Margaret, and other film stars in attendance. A quote heard that evening: "In such an atmosphere, it seems obvious that even television, as often predicted, will never diminish the lure of films."

The performance of *Wings* went flawlessly, resulting in a standing ovation for Lee Erwin, but the trip to Deauville did not. The flight to Paris from JFK Airport in New York was delayed 6 hours! So, Air France served dinner at 5 a.m. (New York time) and breakfast at 4 p.m. (Paris time); then a zig-zag in a limousine through Paris rush-hour traffic, and finally a two-hour drive to Deauville. But Lee and the driver, with a mixture of French and English managed to pass the time enjoyably.

Once jet-lag, rehearsals, meetings and the performance were over, Lee could then relax at an enjoyable, after-theatre dinner. Seated next to Mr. and Mrs. Buzz Aldrin, Lee had the pleasure of hearing first hand about Aldrin's moon landing and his recent theories on space travel.

Spending a few days in Paris after the film festival, Lee visited with Jacqueline Marchal and her husband, Giuseppe Englert. Jacqueline is the daughter of the famous French organist, Andre Marchal, who taught Lee as his first American student in Paris. Giuseppe Englert is a well known composer with whom Lee has worked on electronic and computer music, both here in the United States and in Europe.

Having taught electronic music at Lehman College in New York, Lee's fascination with the subject continues with his elaborately outfitted studio. Lee contends that the theatre organ has come full circle, and is now being reborn in this electronic age by combining components such as he and technician Donald Schwing have done in their studio to produce the exact tonal colors of the orchestra. That is precisely what the Wurlitzers, Mortons, Barton, and other theatre organs were created to do back in the '20s.

Enter to ELECTRO-MUSIC-101.

Marlin Swing

Embassy Theatre Organ Restored by J.K. Aikman Company of Indianapolis

"It's really quite magnificent looking," said Gail A. Milne, general manager of the Embassy Theatre Foundation in Fort Wayne, Indiana, as she proudly eyeballed the newly renovated four-manual Grande Page Organ console.

Just out of the workshop of the J.K. Aikman Company in Indianapolis, the 60-year-old instrument is once again the centerpiece of the Fort Wayne movie palace now used as a civic Performing Arts Center in Indiana's second largest city.

In just under 100 days the Aikman Company, with foreman Carlton Smith, completely restored this console. The work included stripping nine coats of original paint and replacing it with an ivory finish, restoring and gold-leafing the ornamentation, replacing the original wind action with new Peterson stop actions, installing a Trousdale multi-level combination action, creating an exact reproduction of the original bench, and adding a "Second Touch" to the new pedal board.

"The organ is now up to matching the capability of the best organist we can bring in," said Milne. "With the improvements, it's going to be much more lively." The organ is used for silent movies, solo organ concerts and other special events at the Fort Wayne theatre.

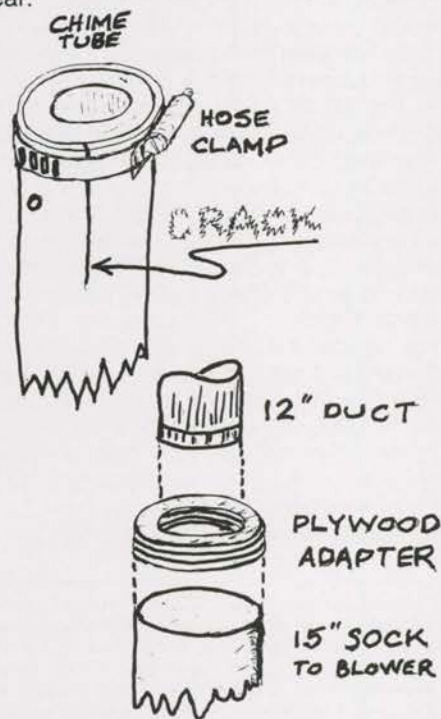
The J.K. Aikman Company is a six-year-old firm that specializes in restoration of theatre and classic pipe organs. In addition to renovation and restoration of consoles and entire instruments, the Indianapolis-based company also rebuilds components and has developed a Sosteneuto switch, specially designed for Wurlitzer expression shoes.

The firm also services the instruments at the Indiana University and DePauw University Schools of Music and is currently restoring an original Wurlitzer church installation in Anderson, Indiana. Another project involves directing the volunteers and supervising the installation of a 3/24 Wurlitzer in the auditorium of Manual High School in Indianapolis.

Hints From Hugh

CRACKED CHIME QUICK-FIX

When installing a chime tube that had, sometime during the last sixty years, developed a hairline crack near the top end, I sought expert advice on proper repairs to cure its dull thud. And I plan to follow the advice — some day. But for right now I find that the get-by method shown draws no complaints from a tin ear.



AN ADAPTER RING'S THE THING — if you're frightened by the shop charges for having a transition section made for your windline. Here's how you can couple a 12" duct and the sock from a 15" blower outlet. Cut three rings of 3/4" plywood — glue 'em together — and shellac. Make the circular cuts with your router (or cultivate a friend who owns one). Fasten the adapter on the metal pipe with silicone caulk and three screws driven from the inside.