

Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

Many thanks for publishing my article about the 1988 COS Summer Workshop. I wonder whether it might be possible to get an address correction printed in the next issue of THEATRE ORGAN — unfortunately David Lowe's address and telephone number contain a couple of errors. His address is: 18 Spruce Hills Road, Walthamstow, LONDON E17 4LD (not E18 - my fault!), and his telephone number is 01-531-4979 (I think this must have been a printing error). David has incidentally now taken over as the COS London District Secretary.

With kind regards,
Roger Hedley
35 Shaftesbury Road
WATFORD Herts WD1 2RG

Dear Editor:

My co-author, Don Jenks, and I wish to thank you for the fine way in which you presented our article, "Detroit's Magnificent Wurlitzer," in the January/February 1989 issue. However, there are some corrections that need to be made, for the record. The incorrect details appeared because we were required to turn the article around literally overnight. Verification of facts was virtually impossible.

First, the truth about the Fisher Building. In the article, we stated that architect Albert Kahn's original concept for the complex called for a building with a 28-floor central tower flanked by two smaller towers. The truth of the matter is that the 28-floor building that now exists IS one of those smaller towers. The original plan called for a 60-story central tower flanked by the two smaller, 28-story towers. When the Depression hit in 1929, plans for further development were dramatically scaled back.

The Fisher Theatre contained only 3,000 seats, not 3,500 as we stated.

The last error requiring correction is the one that raised the most hackles. Apparently, Chicago organist Arsene Siegel did NOT design the 4/34 Wurlitzer. Statements made by Siegel in later years appear to have been misleading to those who interpreted them to mean that he did design the instrument. Siegel didn't touch the organ or have anything to do with it until long after installation in the Fisher. He did, however, have some feeling for it, as he hugged the console and openly wept when he felt that he had played the instrument for the last time, following what was indeed his last concert on it at the Senate Theatre in the early sixties.

Speaking strictly for myself, and basing my opinion upon rumors that someone within the Fisher family was a serious church or concert organist, it is my belief that the eventual product was a compromise between the French orchestral instruments, such as Cavaille-Coll, and

what we know as the traditional theatre organ. While the pipework is standard-scale Wurlitzer, and the diapasons are no different than any others of the same make, the inclusion of extra color reeds, voiced somewhat louder than normal lead me to believe that someone had an idea of certain specifics that they wanted. In later years, while in concert at the Senate Theatre, organist Don Miller, who had been associated with the organ perhaps longer than anyone else stated rather clearly that the Fisher family belonged to a religious order that was fond of very, very soft music, almost meditative in nature. This would explain the inclusion of the Dulciana-Unda Maris chorus in the Foundation chamber, something that you'd only find paired in Wurlitzer church organs. Again the compromise appeared on the console, with voices separated by chamber, or division, as you would refer to it in a concert organ, using tongue tablets instead of draw-knobs. At the point in time when this instrument was manufactured, there is no doubt in my mind that Wurlitzer knew the end was coming, and, being wise and prudent businessmen, were willing to compromise on just about anything, especially on an instrument of this size. A quick look at the Radio City Music Hall Wurlitzer specification list will bear me out on that matter.

Thanks for the space for my corrections and conjecture.

Sincerely,
Scott S. Smith
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Editor:

I certainly enjoyed the great article about Don Leslie and the history of his speaker company!!

I used to own a Leslie 122r with a Hammond C-3. A few weeks ago I took delivery of a new Hammond 820 with built in Leslie.

I always wondered how the company was started. I joined ATOS just last year. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Pat Alterio
Miami Beach, Florida

OPEN LETTER TO THEATRE ORGAN:

Since my semi-retirement from full-time work in music a little more than two years ago, there have been a multitude of written and telephone reactions. The truth is that, after my answering several dozen of notes received, the point was reached at which I began to fall behind more and then more in attempting to answer the many, many kind people on both sides of the ocean who had taken time to write so generously and warmly. Finally, I've decided to ask that this be printed in THEATRE ORGAN, hoping greatly much it will be read by the many

whose wonderful notes and letters I cannot manage to answer as I surely would prefer. Some friends through the years accused me happily of being a letter writing "Olympiad", but, it's time for me to acknowledge defeat in that "marathon" and hope the editor of the magazine will have mercy on a well winded subscriber!

To each of you, from the heart, please believe how great I feel gratitude for all you have said in your letter or in your telephone call. In every instance, your thoughtfulness and generosity gave this Southern Chile a Blessing and added one more happy memory. Though I've "shifted gears" in professional schedule, the fingers will stay active as long as the mind is nimble, and a less demanding keyboard life will make possible concentration on such musical whatever as give pleasure. The conviction to stop "while the meal still tastes good" had become set well before I left New York, and doing so while in top form and health means all my memories will remain golden ones . . . AND those of the audiences as well! As the great soprano Kirsten Flagstad was heard to say, "How *much* better it is being asked 'Why on earth did you retire?', instead of, why on earth *didn't* you!?"

So then, thank you greatly, once again, and for your making possible those golden years on the most golden of musical instruments! As ever, to each of you, love and "sass."

Billy Nalle
Wichita, Kansas

Dear Editor:

I was interested to read Dr. Ed Mullins' account of his recent visit to England, in the January/February issue of THEATRE ORGAN, but I hope that you will allow me to correct one or two inaccuracies.

Firstly, the Compton organ of the Plough Inn, Great Munden, has 11 ranks of pipes on 10 units and has a grand piano and Compton Solo 'Cello as well as the Melotone unit. Next, the Wurlitzer organ of the Brentford Musical Museum has 12, not 11, units.

Referring to the visit to Turner's Musical Merry-Go-Round, I can tell you that the Wurlitzer was NOT enlarged to 19 ranks on its move to Northampton; it already had 19 ranks, including the Quintadena, when it was first installed in the Paramount Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in 1932. When it was installed in Kitchen Bros.' premises in Diss it was given an upright piano which was replaced by a stage grand piano at Turner's. The Turner's additions were a variety of great-to-solo couplers, including harmonics, to give the popular "Blackpool sound," and the piano was made available on all manuals and pedals and at more pitches. A year later solid-state

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relays and multi-memory combination action were installed together with a floppy-disc drive and more thumb- and toe-pistons; a 16' T.C. English Horn was added to the great and an additional cymbal was provided.

Finally, the organ of the Kirk of Dunedin, Florida, at which my friend Nicholas Martin has played in concert in 1985, 1987, and this month, has no less than 100 ranks of pipes and not 43 as stated. It was enlarged to its present size about three years ago.

I hope that you will allow me to make these corrections through the medium of your correspondence columns. My thanks for and congratulations on a fine and enjoyable journal — keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely,
Lawrence Whitfield
Rugeley, Staffs, England

Dear Editor:

I am a retired broadcast executive and announcer with a long time passion for theatre pipe organs. I first fell in love with them as a youth in Denver. No thrill greater than watching the spotlight slowly widen on a gilt-trimmed console rising from the pit in a darkened theatre while the thundering pipes rise in crescendo. Over time, I collected every organ record I could find, and became what I considered one of the cognoscente of organs and organists. With development of high grade cassette recorders, I transferred all my records to cassettes.

I recently learned of ATOS and joined with great hopes that through the Society's magazine I might learn of recordings which I did not have. I have been truly delighted, and have already bought several new CDs and cassettes advertised in THEATRE ORGAN.

Now, I hope that one (or several) readers might help answer some nagging questions. While I did some research in the library recently, my wife, who also is an organ lover, idly flipped through the library's LPs and found a George Wright album which we did not have and asked if I would like to check it out. Sure that it had been poorly handled by library patrons, I was wary, but it included one of his numbers for which I had searched unsuccessfully, so I decided to take a chance. Then she found another LP which seemed interesting. It took hours to clean the disks, but I managed to make a satisfactory dub of them. The (Audio Fidelity) disc by Al Melgard at the Chicago Stadium organ was absolutely exhilarating. The organ is incredible and the organist's style delightful, as are the selections. Wanting more, I wrote Audio Fidelity begging for information on the organ and the artist and any other recordings by him, but they never answered (does ANYone answer mail anymore?). I

telephoned Chicago Stadium, but they couldn't offer any help. The record was made in 1958; nobody could remember anything about it.

So I am hoping a THEATRE ORGAN reader may be of help. I am beginning a weekly theatre pipe organ program on Prairie Public Radio this summer, using my organ tapes, interspersed with comments about the organs, organists and the music. I need more information about Melgard and the Stadium organ (Liner notes say it's the largest unit organ in the world, has SIX manuals, but lists no number of ranks), and any information about the availability of more recordings by Melgard or made on the Chicago Stadium organ. A Walt Strony Concert (which I learned about in THEATRE ORGAN) at the California Theatre in San Diego, includes "My Vision," whose composer is listed as "Melgard." Could this be the same Melgard of the Stadium organ recording?

I will be forever indebted to any readers who can offer any information. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Bob MacLeod
102 East Capitol Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

Dear Editor:

While not about to carry on for another issue the pros and cons of jam sessions, I too stand by every word regarding jam sessions at conventions. I have known some of the artists involved in sessions and they are great "ice breakers" for jam events. Anyone that knows Dan Bellomy and Tom Hazleton darn well know what spontaneity means. I also read Mr. Story's letter of the fine Phoenix Regional — which made his more recent carpings all the more ridiculous. Suffice it to say he is every bit as hard-headed about his beliefs as I am in my beliefs... touche!

An item of far greater concern and importance is the fine letter sent in by G. Mark Caldwell of Santa Paula, CA. He expresses some rather severe consternation regarding "barbs" tossed by certain segments of ATOS in the direction of the AGO.

At the 1987 LA Convention Chapter Reps meeting, Tim Needler stood up and made a remark that ATOS Chapters should try to co-sponsor theatre organ programs with their nearby chapters of the AGO. Forgive me, Tim, if I do not quote you exactly, but his statement went something to the effect "... try it. These people love theatre organ. Many may not be able to play it, but they still love it."

This past October, Sequoia Chapter co-sponsored with the San Joaquin Chapter AGO a Halloween event with Jim Riggs. For a first-time effort here, it was a rousing success. You should have heard the cheers that went out when Jim finished playing Sidney Torch's arrangement of "12th Street Rag!" Our little

chapter is enthusiastic, but no way could we make as many cheers as could be heard from that audience!

Initially, the local AGO was going to try a theatre organ event on their own, on a very poor sounding instrument. The results would not have done the theatre organ movement or the AGO's local efforts any good. After some committee meetings, a workable plan was put forth and we both were able to present a quality event. The key word is quality.

The results were so positive that both groups are going to sponsor a similar event this fall. It was a great fund raiser for both groups as well as a way of improving ties between the two organizations. In short, we all had a blast. I am certain both groups would heartily recommend efforts to jointly sponsor such programs. Number one, select a good artist, and a good instrument. The key word is quality.

"Intellectual snobs?" After the fun we all had together, I doubt any one of our group would have that thought. Perhaps we are lucky with our groups. I think not. Once a sincere effort is placed forward for such a program, self-imposed barriers dissolve.

A challenge to chapters of each group is to try it.

Sincerely,
Tom DeLay
Fresno, California

Dear Editor:

Re: "Pipes and Palaces Productions Presents BOB RALSTON In Concert at The Granada Theatre, Kansas City, Kansas." This is a great concept (at least to me) — the first of a promised series of video releases featuring the great theatre organs in the "... most beautiful movie palaces from around the world..."

After reading the brochure (I still have it), I immediately sent for this promised delight.

It is an unfilled promise, a disappointment. Bluntly, it is bad! One half is piano music; the organ renditions are ho-hum, and the promised pix of the theatre total, maybe, two minutes, mostly fuzzy, indistinguishable or, taken out of context, hard to place, within an architectural concept. The promise is an outright lie. I've been had — 60 minutes of tripe.

I don't recall THEATRE ORGAN ever reviewing an organ video. It would please me, if the reviewer agrees with my critique, to save fellow members from wasting a substantial sum.

Sincerely,
Irv Glazer
Springfield, Pennsylvania

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Opinions expressed in this column are those of the correspondents, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the policies of ATOS or THEATRE ORGAN. Letters concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are welcome. Unless clearly marked "not for publication" letters may be published in whole or in part. Address: Editor, THEATRE ORGAN, 4633 S.E. Brookside Drive, #58, Milwaukie, Oregon 97222. Phone: 503/654-5823.

public again than Co-Patron of T.O.S.A. New South Wales, Ian Davies. Ian, by now a veteran of the Australian theatre organ scene, had played the closing concert on this instrument when it was at the Capital. Ian commenced his musical career prior to the second world war and until the mid 1950s had held a number of residencies at Melbourne cinemas — particularly the Hoyts chain. Ian brought up the impressive white and gold console on the lift which is located in front of centre stage. The enthusiastic, capacity audience responded well to Ian's breezy and melodic opening selections. Melbourne organists Tony Fenelon and John Atwell then commenced the rest of the event consisting of solos and duets with a large Kawai Grand Piano on stage to use with the organ.

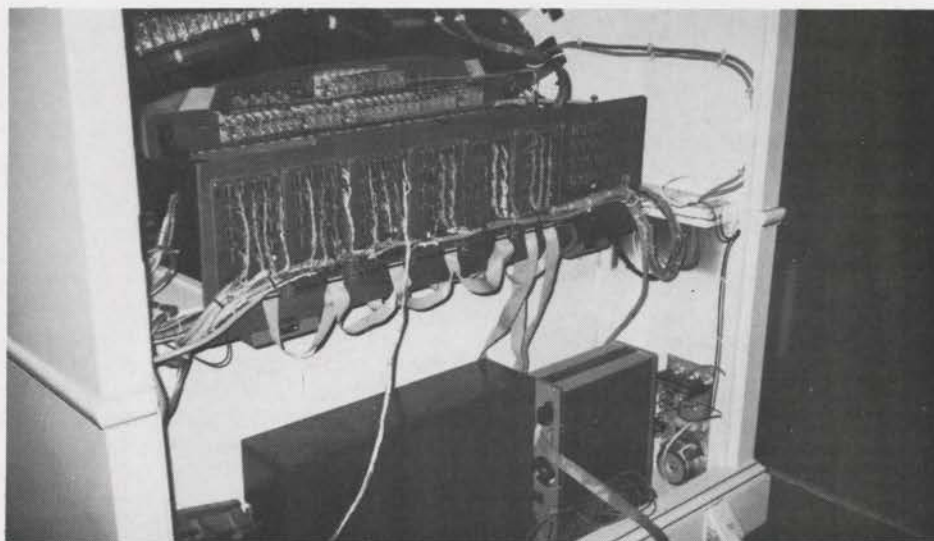
Because of the interest in the event it was decided at concert-planning stage to carry the event onto the following day and present two more leading artists on the Sunday afternoon. Another feast was at hand, this time with young Sydney organist Margaret Hall and Neil Jensen, resident organist of the Orpheum Picture Palace, Cremorne Sydney.

Altogether it was a wonderful weekend of music presented by the five organists. The Orion Centre is a great new venue for the lovers of theatre organ and, as the Mayor of Canterbury said in the opening speech, "The Wurlitzer is the Orions Jewel in the Crown." This was, indeed, true.

November and we in Australia again had the pleasure of a national tour by Dennis James and singer Thom Gall. Dennis can always be relied upon to provide us with something different musically. We were not disappointed. I attended the Melbourne concert which took place at the Moorabbin Town Hall with its 4/21 Wurlitzer. Both artists were in top form and, judging from the applause, the audience loved the performance. Reports received from the other States where they performed indicated the same enthusiastic audience response. Dennis had the honour of being the first overseas organist to be featured at the Orion Centre Wurlitzer. He praised this organ. We look forward to the next visit of these two gentlemen.

In Perth, Western Australia, organ-builder John Parker will be spending time bringing their 3/10 Compton to top concert form. This is the venue of the 1989 T.O.S.A. National convention. The privately owned ex-Metro Theatre Perth Wurlitzer is also being used and a few interesting additions are being made to this instrument.

Presently the only major organ renovation here is occurring in Melbourne. This is the three-manual Compton of presently 10 ranks which is planned to be finished as a 13-rank instrument. My next contribution will feature news of the National Convention.



A state-of-the-art console interior — the Orion Centre organ.

Letters To The Editor *continued from page 7.*

Dear Editor:

My hat's off to Dan Story for his letter which appeared in the July/August issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

I agree wholeheartedly with Dan that jam sessions should be a time for EVERYONE to play — especially THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER PLAYED THAT PARTICULAR ORGAN. Good or bad, it can be a very moving experience for someone to sit at the console of a good pipe organ. Many people have only played on small electronics. Those people will develop greater appreciation for both the instruments and the artists after playing a real pipe organ. Enthusiastic members are members who stay in ATOS and help get new members!

At the Los Angeles convention, I ran the jam session. About 35 people played the Orpheum organ in a three-hour time period. There were no professionals. Everyone had a good time; there was a lot of good talent and a lot of new talent.

It seems the ATOS board is always asking for ways to increase membership and develop new talent. How do you ever expect to find new talent if new talent never gets to be heard?

Here are some suggestions for the ATOS — from the local chapters all the way up to the national convention.

1. Let people play the organs. Too often organs are locked up except for concerts. "It's our baby. Someone might break it." I say BULL! More organs have probably rotted away from lack of use than have ever worn out from being played. Not to mention the all too common "dead note" (a result of contacts corroding where as regular playing would keep them wiped clean.)

2. Have real jam sessions so you can find new talent and keep the interest of the members. So someone is a bad organist. At a jam session, they will only be bad for one song, then someone else will play. Who knows, they might become good. Plus, playing a real pipe organ be-

fore an audience might just be the inspiration that person needs.

3. There is a "Young Organist Concert" at the national convention. What about the old people? At a convention, have a few jam sessions that pick the 5 to 10 of the "best of the unknown artists" for a special "Amateur Night". Why should young organists be the only unknown talent to get recognition?

4. Play the organs at every available opportunity. If the organ is in a theatre, why not let the best of the local talent do intermission music? If more people hear the organs, more people might join ATOS. 99% of the population doesn't know the difference between a theatre organ and a shopping mall-so-called thing being sold as an organ. It's no wonder the word ORGAN makes so many people want to throw up — they never heard a real one!

5. CAMEO Sessions are still fine — just don't misrepresent them as JAM sessions.

I must complain about one more aspect of the conventions which has disappointed me at every convention (no, I'm not going to mention that there are too many classical concerts, even though there are). Why is there no display area for all of the different organ parts suppliers? All we ever see is Allen and Devtronix. A convention should be a place for EVERYONE to display their wares, pass out catalogs and (\$\$\$ yes \$\$\$) take orders! All other types of conventions have dealer show rooms. With organ parts often difficult to locate, a show room must be considered essential towards keeping the organ business going. And maybe, just maybe, more organs would be better maintained if people knew where to get the right parts and could discuss their problems with the vendors.

Hoping for a better ATOS,
Patrick Lajko
Seattle, Washington