

Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

The Organ Loft program, central New York's long-running organ music radio broadcast, produced and hosted by myself, celebrated its 27th anniversary on April 23. The 27th anniversary actually focused on another anniversary, the 30th, of Ye Olde Pizza Joynt, the granddaddy of pizza parlors, and the first to feature a theatre pipe organ.

The salute to Ye Olde Pizza Joynt ran for two consecutive Sundays and featured a history of the parlor as told by Joyce Henningsen plus highlights of the first recordings made on its Mighty Wurlitzer with Bill Langford at the console. The second part featured the fine stylings of its newest staff organist, Jerry Nagano, on current recordings of the Pizza Joynt instrument.

Happy 30th, Ye Olde Pizza Joynt!
Happy 27th, Organ Loft!

Sincerely,
Don Robinson
Utica, New York

Dear Editor:

While I realize that I may be considered somewhat of a Johnny-come-lately, having joined ATOS and Dairyland Chapter in 1982, I am, nevertheless, a complete pipe organ NUT. And I make no distinctions; I am equally enthralled by the majesty of the cathedral sounds heard on Michael Barone's "Pipedreams" as I am with my treasured recordings of Leon Berry and Lenny Dee (circa 1940s). As far as I am concerned, anything that will put more wind through more whistles is all to the good, whatever!

Now for some local news. Fred Hermes, well-known to the theatre organ scene, is the owner of a bodacious bunch of whistles presently installed and playing in the Avalon Theatre at 2473 South Kinickinnic Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53207. It is a three-manual hybrid (mostly Wurlitzer) now at 20 ranks and still growing, with Z-Tronics relay and combination action. It is played at least once a week for Avalon patrons as part of its daily operation as a full-time movie house. There are also concerts featuring such artists as Walt Strony, Father Jim Miller, and Dwight Thomas plus other types of live entertainment.

Gary McWithey has recently been appointed house organist at the Avalon, and he intends to provide an overture program every Saturday from 6:30-7:30 before the first evening film showing. Many Dairyland members and others provide the same service on some other days. I am honored to have been appointed by Fred Hermes as official organ custodian, and we would like to extend

an invitation to any and all to see, hear and play the Avalon's theatre pipe organ. You must, however, make an appointment well in advance if you wish to play the organ. It can be available to you at any time that does not conflict with the daily operation of the theatre. Please contact me if you are interested. My phone number is 414/744-8582.

Sincerely,
Phil Marten
211 East Howard Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53207

Dear Editor:

In the past few months I have dreaded the mailman delivering my THEATRE ORGAN. Why? Almost every issue there is a story about an organ being sold and sent overseas. Please don't think I am prejudiced. If the case were that these organs were a dime a dozen, we could afford to sell them and spread the organ music around, but this is not the case! The organs that are left, especially the larger installations, should be considered a National Treasure.

Are we not concerned about our up and coming young organists? Where are they going to hear the organ for the first time? If all the organs end up in foreign lands, how can these young people get the experience?

I strongly feel that no more organs should be sold out of the country. In the Want Ads there is always a theatre crying out for a donation of an organ or a purchase, but we know these organs always go to the highest bidder — what a shame that these treasures are being spirited out of the country by those who claim to love the theatre organ.

So, what's next? Radio City to Russia? Chicago to Chile? the Castro to Cuba? Please, I implore the owners of any installations to keep them within a domestic flight away. Think of the future — the kids may never get the first wide-eyed thrill of that console rising up from the depths of the pit. I would hate to see the role of ATOS reduced to that of a travel agency arranging trips to see what used to be here.

Sincerely,
George Worthington III
Bricktown, New Jersey

ATOS Archives/Library

Vernon P. Bickel, Curator
1393 Don Carlos Court
Chula Vista, CA 92010
619/421-9629

Dear Editor:

Mid-Florida Chapter is proposing to install a Don Baker Memorial Organ in Lake Brantley High School. On April 29, Don played a concert here to show the folks at Lake Brantley what a theatre organ is all about. This was one of Don's last concerts.

The Lake Brantley auditorium is a 867-seat venue that is state-of-the-art in every respect. The architect, knowingly or unknowingly, provided enough loft space for a large, two-manual or small, three-manual instrument. With the loft and blower space already existing, there will be very little work in the way of construction to accommodate the organ.

Although there is not a signed contract in hand, Mid-Florida Chapter has been negotiating with the school for nearly a year, and we are just waiting to finalize arrangements on our end of the project before we present the contract for signatures. It needs to be noted that the school is not bearing any of the costs for this project and will not have any ownership of the instrument.

The organ will be owned by Mid-Florida Chapter and will be professionally rebuilt and installed. We have decided on this route to guarantee that the installation will be of the highest quality and worthy to be a memorial for Don. A cast-bronze plaque dedicating the organ to Don's memory will list individual contributions of \$1000 or more.

We are very enthusiastic about this project as Don was very excited about being part of getting a theatre pipe organ in a high school in his own back yard. At this time, a specific organ has not been chosen, and if there is any ATOS member or chapter that has an instrument which would be suitable, we would be interested in talking to them. Any persons having questions or information about an organ may contact us at 407/870-7861.

Donations may be sent to:
MFTOS, Don Baker Memorial
Organ Fund
1216 Chelsea Place
Orlando, Florida 32803

Thank you for your interest and support.
Clifford R. Shaffer, President
Mid-Florida Theatre Organ Society

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.

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