



Atrium in Embassy Suites Camelback.

Phoenix Festival '89

by Walt Strony

Back in the fall of 1984, I was invited to lunch at the then brand-new Embassy Suites here in Phoenix. Upon looking around this spectacular facility, I couldn't help but think what a wonderful hotel this would be for an ATOS Regional Convention. After a few days, the idea was shared, one thing led to another, and, the rest is history.

Well, here we go again!

We are pleased to invite all of you back for the "Phoenix Festival '89" which will take place on Thanksgiving weekend 1989, November 24, 25 and 26.

Convention headquarters will be the same Embassy Suites Camelback Hotel. This hotel was so popular during our last convention, that we thought we'd be "tarred and feathered" if we didn't go back! Adjacent to the continuously expanding Biltmore Fashion Park with its numerous specialty shops and restaurants, it's in an ideal central Phoenix location.

Each room is actually a suite and has both a bedroom and living room (with its own sofa bed). There is a door between these rooms so that those who wish to "share" a suite can have complete privacy. Furthermore, wives upset with their husbands can banish them to the couch (or vice versa)!

These rooms are truly designed for a relaxing visit and for social convenience. There are two televisions and even a wet bar with refrigerator and microwave. Also included in the room rate is a "cooked to order" breakfast each day, free transportation to and from the airport, and free cocktails each evening! It's quite a bargain at our special \$85 rate per room; normally, these rooms go for almost twice as much during our tourist season.

Now that we are fully relaxed at our resort hotel, let me tell you about the exciting program. As with our last convention, each program will be a full length concert with an intermission, and will feature some of the finest theatre organists in the world playing some of the finest theatre organs in the world!

Opening the convention will be Ron Rhode, 1989 ATOS Organist of the Year, playing the 4/48 Wurlitzer at Organ Stop Pizza, Mesa. Those interested in organ statistics should take note . . . the Mesa Organ Stop Wurlitzer will have doubled in size from the last convention up to 48 ranks! In addition, there is a major project in progress to remodel the entire front of the restaurant and place the console on a turntable lift . . . I hope that the organist doesn't get too dizzy!

First Methodist Church is home to a fine three-manual Casavant Organ. Doing

the honors here will be Lew Williams. I find it most unusual that Lew has never been asked to do a classical program for an ATOS Convention. After all, he is unquestionably the most qualified of all the Phoenix organists to play such a program. Interestingly, he played a number of previous engagements on theatre organs for the AGO. Nevertheless, this will be our first opportunity to hear the "other side" of this talented man. He wants you to know that he will be playing a varied program that everyone should enjoy.

The residence of Bill and Barbara Brown will be the scene of a concert by Walt Strony (a distant relative of mine) on their splendid five-manual Wurlitzer. We are extremely proud to have this historic Wurlitzer in our Valley, for it is, perhaps, THE organ responsible for the entire theatre organ revival, with the many popular Hi-Fi recordings made by George Wright.

Since Bill sold both Organ Stop Pizza restaurants several years ago, he has lovingly devoted much of his time to rebuilding and enlarging this organ, originally from the Chicago Paradise Theatre. It now has a new Devtronix-Wilcox computer relay, a few new ranks, much new rewinding, and the console has been rebuilt with new stop actions (and, I might add, many more of them).

The 2/10 Wurlitzer in the fellowship hall of First Christian Church was installed just in time for our last regional convention. Since then, VTOS chapter members have been working steadily making a number of improvements. Recently, it was decided to install a new Z-Tronics relay in order to improve reliability. Playing this instrument will be the newest member of the "Phoenix Five," Rob Richards. Rob will be playing one of his "Fusion" concerts and, like virtually every organist set to play for this convention, is planning a special program with surprises.

On Saturday evening, we will all attend a concert by Lyn Larsen with Jack Bethards and his Big Band at the Valley of the Sun Center. Lyn will play some solo numbers, and together Lyn and Jack will perform a tribute to the Big Band era of the 1940s, including musical tributes to Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and Artie Shaw. Lyn says that he has a secret surprise planned, too. I can't wait!

The Valley of the Sun Center will look quite a bit different to those who attended the last Phoenix Regional. They have since moved to a much larger facility in Scottsdale. The Wurlitzer sounds splendid in its new setting and is greatly enhanced by its much more spacious acoustics. Lyn has been his own crew chief getting more than his hands dirty in the process. His typical week includes not only preparing his music for Sunday morning, but even getting the organ ready as well. Obviously, it's a labor of love for Lyn (or is it, love of labor?).

Jonas Nordwall will be our "guest" in this convention of Phoenix resident organists. This will be the first meeting of this dynamic musician and the Mesa Organ Stop Wurlitzer; the result should be full of musical fireworks!

There are two optional events planned. On Friday evening, there will be one of those famous jam sessions at Organ Stop Pizza. We expect a number of organists to be in attendance, so this event promises to be memorable. A pizza buffet will be included in the cost for those with late-night munchies.

On Sunday evening, we will all have a chance to privately party together at Yesterday's Restaurant. This unique restaurant features organist David Lindsay and his staff of young entertainers. David hails from the Philadelphia area, and I must say that his repertoire of popular music is phenomenal. And on top of that, he always knows the verse, too. This promises to be a fun evening with more surprises planned. You may even hear some of our featured organists show off some of their other unusual talents!

A convention like ours is unique in that most of our organists are intimately familiar with the instrument they will play. Indeed, many are already planning and rehearsing their programs.

This means that you, the listener, can expect some of the best convention programs possible. We have made it our goal to see that when you leave Phoenix, you will have had a great time, heard some excellent organs, and heard some of the best theatre organ performers alive today.



Mesa Organ Stop 4/48 Wurlitzer.

Unfortunately, there's one catch. Because of seating restrictions, we must limit attendance to 400 people. We don't want you to be disappointed, so send your registrations early! See you in November!

PHOENIX FESTIVAL '89 SCHEDULE

FRIDAY

Morning: Check-In and Registration

Afternoon: Ron Rhode at
Mesa Organ Stop

Evening: Lew Williams at First
Methodist Church.

*Optional Jam Session at
Mesa Organ Stop*

SATURDAY

Morning: Group A -
Rob Richards at First
Christian Church

Group B - Walt Strony at
Brown Residence

Group C - Free Time

Afternoon: Group A - Free time

Group B - Rob Richards at
First Christian Church

Group C - Walt Strony at
Brown Residence

Evening: Lyn Larsen with Jack
Bethards and his Orchestra

SUNDAY

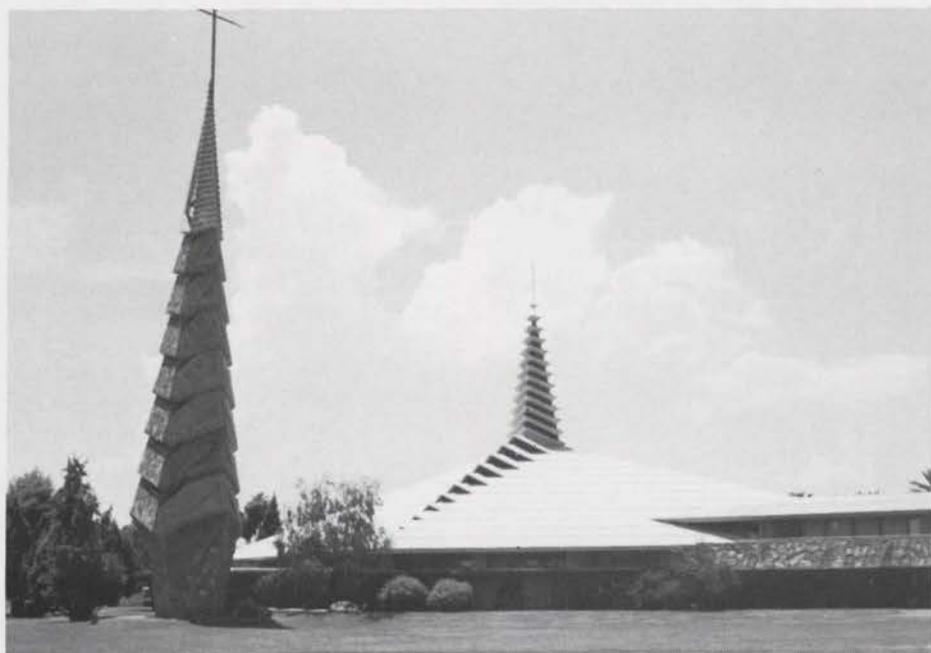
Morning: Jonas Nordwall at
Mesa Organ Stop

Afternoon: Group A - Walt Strony at
Brown Residence

Group B - Free time

Group C - Rob Richards at
First Christian Church

Evening: *Optional dinner at
Yesterday's*



First Christian Church, home of two pipe organs! Of course, we will be hearing the Wurlitzer. Building architect was Frank Lloyd Wright.