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President's Message



Heartfelt thanks to Lester and Olive Pepiot for their most generous donation of the Cecil B. DeMille residence Wurlitzer theatre organ to the American Theatre Organ Society. Les and Olive, a well-known Southern California organ maintenance duo who acquired the instrument several years ago and have restored most of the chest and pipework, decided recently that they would like to see the instrument be available to more people than would be able to hear it in their Thousand Oaks home. Our present plan is to install the instrument with some augmentation in the Towe Ford Museum in Sacramento.

I'll get back to the DeMille organ later. Time for me to climb on to one of my soap-boxes again. Here we are entering the second year of the last decade of the twentieth century. The Golden Age of the theatre organ occurred 75 years ago . . . which puts the majority of us in the position of being second or third generation theatre organ devotees. What has held or developed our interest in a musical instrument that had its heyday almost three quarters of a century ago? I'm sure we all have our particular reasons for enjoying the instrument.

Is it the sound? Most musical instruments have a singular sound quality whereby the theatre organ has a multiplicity of tonal resources. Is it the music that is performed on the instrument? Certainly if you are a connoisseur of music of the twenties and thirties theatre organ concerts would be a gold mine for you . . . but on the other hand the instrument is perfectly capable of presenting music from the last half of the century. Maybe it is the artists. Certainly many artists have a devoted following. How about the technical aspects of the theatre organ? There is a multiplicity of "disciplines" necessary to keep one of these "beasts" sounding its best. Or could it be the fellowship that we all enjoy most by being with others who share a common interest? Obviously there is no single answer. The "all of the above" box would be appropriate in this case.

But wait, if we could select just one of the above which would it be? I suspect that the number one choice would be the sound . . . and that leads me to my point for today. It's time we honor those unsung heroes who work behind the scenes keeping *your* favorite theatre organ functioning at its best. We are rapidly running out of the dedicated folks who give of their time, talent, effort and, in many cases, money so that you might have an excellent instrument to listen to. Perhaps if we give more praise and thanks to these dedicated ladies and gentlemen who work on the instruments others will become interested in joining the "team."

For the crew chiefs (or whatever you call yourselves): you have the responsibility to develop your charges into an organized and productive technical crew. Be prepared for several volunteers . . . if they show up, involve them in doing something "fun." Don't give the first timers all "grunt" work or guess who will be doing it themselves after a few weeks when no one shows up! Also make sure that newly arrived crew people feel wanted and needed. Don't let a clique develop between the old and new members of a crew or the newer members might just lose interest.

To all technically proficient ATOS members, please don't treat your talent and accumulated knowledge as something personally yours and only yours. Give of yourself and your knowledge — it will do absolutely no good to you or the theatre organ world to carry your expertise to your grave. **SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE!** Without the generous giving of your knowledge it will not matter if we have one hundred thousand members . . . there will be nothing except recording to recreate the magnificent sound of the theatre pipe organ.

Speaking of donating organ parts to a deserving charitable organization . . . don't forget us . . . you know, the American Theatre Organ Society, ATOS. That's right, we are presently looking for *specific* organ parts to make some additions to the wonderful Wurlitzer recently donated by the Pepiots. While the instrument is complete in itself, it is a typical Wurlitzer residence organ which lacked some of the "goodies" that are considered necessary for a concert organ today. Among our "wish list" is included: Manual chest of 3, 4 or 5 ranks, Regulators, 8'-4" Tibia Clausa and off note chest, 8' Trumpet (Style D style), 8' Orchestral reed (Kinura, Clarinet, Orch. Oboe, etc.), Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Toy Counter. Should you have any of these parts just "lying around" why not donate them to us (IRS deductible) and help complete ATOS's own Wurlitzer Theatre Organ . . . and yes! I think we also need ATOS's own Robert-Morton and Kimball and Barton and so on!!!

Enjoy the theatre organ . . . and bake the organ crew some cookies!

John Ledwon