

Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor:

We just arrived home and couldn't wait to publicly express our thanks to the Sequoia Chapter for hosting a fine regional convention during this past weekend (October 18 thru 22) in Fresno. Our accommodations at the Holiday Inn Centre Plaza were first-rate. BRAVO and thanks to Tom DeLay and Dave Moreno for their meticulous and loving care of the various organs. The artists are to be congratulated for their performances, WELL DONE! Bus transportation and scheduling also was very comfortable and handled with the greatest of ease.

As Tom casually mentioned to us, "I decided to throw a party and two hundred ninety-one members responded to hear "my personal favorite organists!" For those who didn't attend, to coin a phrase, "a good time was had by all!"

Finally, our personal best wishes to the entire Sequoia chapter membership for continued success in your future theatre organ endeavors.

Sincerely,

Jim Koller, VOX CATOE Editor

Cyndae Diaz

Evanston, Illinois

Dear Editor:

First may I thank you for publishing my letter a few issues ago requesting information regarding organs and organists in the Hartford, Connecticut, area of sixty years ago. I received several replies and much information.

The reason for this letter is to relate some experiences with information obtained in THEATRE ORGAN magazine. The most recent is in connection with a note in a recent issue to the effect that pipe organ music may be heard on WPLM, Plymouth, Massachusetts. First, I wrote to them for time information and then I checked with my barber, who turns on WPLM six days a week and who has never heard any organ music on the station! So much for that. It's primarily a Jazz Music Station, and very popular with we older listeners. (The local Radio Shack, too, has it on practically all day).

The second episode happened five or six years ago, when, while visiting Dallas, I called two numbers suggested in an article regarding organs in the Dallas area. The article mentioned some scheduled public concerts, and the first number elicited the comment that they knew of no concerts in the area. The second number was that of some church group, and they, too, were puzzled by my query. Wonder where these numbers originated?

Well, the next time in Dallas, I'll *really* make some calls and track things down!

Pipe organ music on radio stations is practically non-existent, in at least this area. The last time I heard such a broadcast was in about 1960, from a small station near Taunton, Massachusetts.

Thought you'd be interested in learning my experiences!

Yours truly,

Selwyn P. Miles

East Orleans, Massachusetts

Dear Editor:

In the past I have written the occasional letter in reply to queries in THEATRE ORGAN and now wonder if I in turn could ask for some assistance.

In the days when I was broadcasting for BBC Radio Manchester with a weekly programme of theatre and electronic organ music I used to delve into the vast record archives and feature some early LP recordings. Granted many of them were electronic organ stars and I appreciate that THEATRE ORGAN does not usually concern itself with these instruments. However, space permitting, I would like to ask readers if they have knowledge and whereabouts, possibly even addresses of the following personalities. Chances are some are no longer alive.

Earl Grant: An organist/pianist who recorded for the Brunswick label in the 60s.

Jackie Davis: Famous Hammond jazz organist on the Capitol label. **Lenny Dee:** Capitol and MCA records. Believed to be in the Florida area working clubs. **Eddie Layton:** Mercury label. Hammond organist **Dick Hyman:** Numerous recordings with his Trio or as solo on Baldwin electronics and Lowry organs. **Rosemary Bailey:** Theatre and electronic organist. Was a studio guest of mine one time and also did a short tour for Hammond organs in the UK. **Marie Kumagai:** Came over to the UK to take part in one of the early Manchester Organ Festivals. Lost track of her and have not read anything about her for quite some time.

Glenn Derringer: Believed to now be with Hammond organs on the research and development side.

In the theatre organ field I have some recordings of which little is known about the artists, and in some cases the organs used. For instance **Ivan Ditmars** and **Alex Lasker** who made an LP entitled "5002 Pipes." I also came across one by a **Glenn Osser** who doubled up with **Bobby Hackett** on trumpet. The organ is unspecified and Osser I have never heard of to this day.

And whilst on this mystery trail, is there

anyone who could track down an organist who left these shores many years ago in order to take up a teaching post in a University. He was a negro by birth and made many recordings on early Hammond organs, and also broadcast from the BBC theatre organs. His name was **Fele Sowande** and I have an idea he may be in the Ohio area. We used to correspond, but all of a sudden his letters ceased to arrive, and I would love to re-establish contact with him in view of the fact some years ago selected tracks on which he appears as accompanist to singer Adelaide Hall, were re-issued and I have a spare copy that he might like to receive.

Any readers (or even the artists) who can assist would they please do so by writing to me at the following address. Thanking you in anticipation.

Sincerely,

Alan A. Ashton

1. Acresfield Road

Middleton, Manchester M24 2WT,
England

Dear Editor,

I was delighted to read Edith Rawle's letter in the September/October issue of THEATRE ORGAN, in which she pledges support for other theatre organ groups in Britain. This new policy comes as welcome news to many London Chapter members, who were beginning to feel a little embarrassed by our Chapter's apparently isolationist way of working.

However, it is interesting to note two things: Firstly, Edith mentions thirteen local groups, yet she manages to avoid referring to those with any degree of affiliation to either of the British national societies — this is a bit like discussing the local theatre organ scene in the USA without mentioning ATOS Chapters. Secondly, of the thirteen groups listed, she gets the names of more than half of them wrong!

I don't wish to ignore the excellent work done by our Chapter over the years, but I just wish I had more confidence that the reality matched the spirit of the letter.

John Leeming

London, England

Dear Editor:

In response to the Letter to The Editor from Tom DeLay concerning the venue of the *Dead Poets Society*, it was filmed entirely in Delaware. St. Andrews School is on the outskirts of Middletown. The Everett Theatre was built in 1922, replacing a burned-out Opera House. The current organ in place is an electronic. Originally, there was a pipe organ that was

(continued on page 29)

Letters To The Editor

continued from page 6

given to the local Methodist Church in the late 30s. No one remembers what happened to it when it was replaced. In the theatre, under the stage are still some of the ducts and the pipe loft is still in place. It would be great if at some point we could replace the electronic one with an "Original."

The non-profit group, Associated Community Talents, Inc. (A.C.T., Inc.), that has owned the theatre for almost ten years has ongoing restoration projects. The acoustics in the theatre are almost perfect — at least they seem to impress the knowledgeable people who come in.

In the fly area, we found two backdrops from the 20s — hand-painted canvases — one is a street scene, the other is a garden gate. We also have in storage the original frontal curtain with a black velvet border and applied satin flowers. This is not in use at the present time, but we hope to restore it soon.

Our presentations have included *The Student Prince*, straight stage dramas, concerts and many variety shows featuring local talent. We also show movies at least one weekend a month.

It would be great if someone would come along and offer us a "Ben Hall" at some point. We do have several accomplished organists in our area.

Sincerely,

Ellen Combs Davis, Executive Secretary
A.C.T., Inc.
Middletown, Delaware

Dear Editor:

Is a US postage stamp showing a colorful theatre organ console an idea whose time has come? Several years ago some ATOS members wrote to the Postal Service in Washington about such a stamp and received polite, noncommittal replies. Postal authorities respond only to concerted efforts by thousands of letters and petitions. Anyone interested?

Your truly,

Phil Yankoschuk
Bayside, New York

Dear Editor:

During the 1930s the two best theatre organists on the radio were Fred Feibel and Ann Leaf. They broadcast daily on the Columbia Broadcasting System 4/21 Wurlitzer in the Organ Studio of the New York Paramount Theatre. One of their announcers was Bert Parks! If someone could contact him, he might have some interesting stories and even pictures.

Just a thought.

Al Hermanns
Clearwater, Florida



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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CLOSING CHORD

W.C. 'Chuck' Schrader

Charles Schrader, 69, longtime member and Past President of Delaware Valley Chapter, passed away in September following a heart attack. Schrader led the successful campaign to save the Keswick Theatre in Glenside and founded the Glenside Landmarks Society, which succeeded in having the theatre designated a national historic landmark. The group also raised \$15,000 to keep the theatre afloat until it could be purchased by a private partnership that reopened the theatre in 1987.

After the theatre was saved, Schrader became its most dependable caretaker, supervising electrical, plumbing and roofing repairs. Love of the pipe organ and service to Delaware Valley Chapter occupied a major portion of Chuck's life.

Prior to the funeral service, a one-hour program of organ music was played on the three-manual Schantz by organist/friend Biff Claflin.

"Phoenix" Walt Strony's First Digital CD Recording of incredible power and dynamics-captured on the Krughoff's 4/33 Wurlitzer at its finest !!!



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