

Pipes & Personalities



We Finally Did It!

by Bob Balfour
Photos by Paul Szabosick

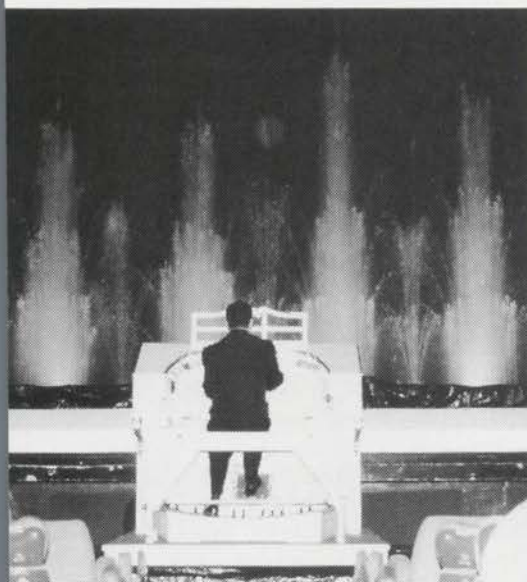
After 12 years of struggling, of putting on a new roof (\$250K), new plumbing (\$100K so far), new wiring (\$20K so far), and new sidewalks and marquee (\$100K) we finally got to the auditorium.

Scaffolding started going up in June, and a few weeks later the army of skilled craftsmen from Conrad Schmidt Studios of New Berlin, Wisconsin, arrived to undo 62 years of neglect, 62 years of grime, damaged plaster, and all sorts of assorted horrors. But thanks to the skilled leadership of project chief Mel Hultz, when the scaffolding came down in early October,

the Board, decorating committee, and the membership stood in almost reverential awe as the seats and grand drapes went back in. We still have a long way to go (carpets, upper balcony seats and fixtures), but that's for next summer.

Meanwhile, the crowds at all the shows, and our members continue to be awed by it all: "I can't believe it!" "This was that crummy old movie?" And so, at long last, the Union County Arts Center proudly presents the restored historic Rahway Theatre. I hope you are watching from above, Ben Hall. We now take our place in "An Acre of Seats in A Palace of Splendor!"

Oh yes, with the moss off the walls and grilles, the Biggest Little Wurlitzer sounds better than ever. Come visit us and see and hear for yourself.



Jean-Philippe LeTrevou

Paris, France

In preparing for Christmas holidays at the Grand-Rex, prestigious cinema in Paris where the "Dancing Waters" are now a fairy show of multicoloured fountains, they decided to add the magic of theatre organ sounds in order to enhance this performance.

December 5, Mr. Jean-Philippe LeTrevou (30), played there on his Allen ADC-4600 Theatre Organ, interludes of Christmas and Walt Disney melodies between sessions of *The Little Siren*. A large audience appreciated and enjoyed this, somehow, rare entertainment in France.

Christian LeDrappier



Restored auditorium in Union County Performing Arts Center.

Dairyland Chapter Sponsors Scholarship Program

by Gordon Schwacke

The goal of bringing talented young organists to the consoles of theatre organs is a categorical imperative if we are to assure the availability of live theatre organ music in the decades ahead. The Young Organist Competition, which Dorothy VanSteenkiste has been keeping a success, of course, is making a significant contribution toward this goal.

We think Dorothy was pleasantly surprised when she learned of another effort in this direction. Through the Dairyland (DTOS) Chapter's newsletter, BARTOLA, she learned of the DTOS Scholarship Program, which in 1990 awarded two \$500 scholarships to students of organ at Wisconsin colleges. One was awarded to Szu-Ping Chang, a graduate student in organ at Concordia University, Mequon, and the other to David Freudenwald, a sophomore majoring in economics and music at Carthage College, Kenosha.

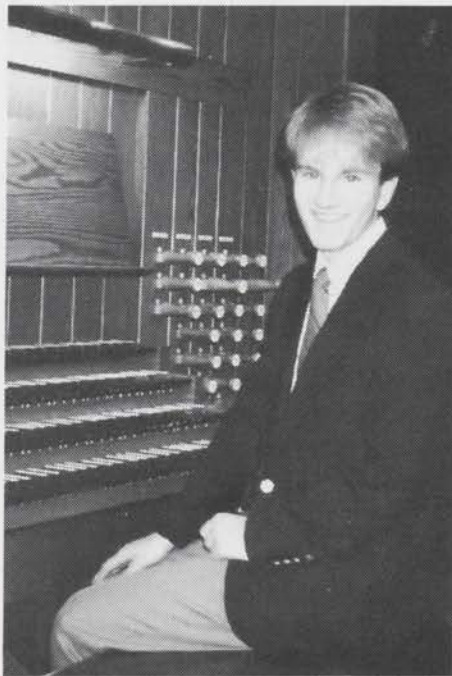
We've not yet met Ms. Chang, but hope that we will shortly. We have had the pleasure of meeting David and of enjoying his very considerable talents at the console of the Mighty ... no, not Wurlitzer this time, Casavant Tracker at Carthage. He was a hit in a cameo appearance with some classical numbers at our social there. On that occasion DTOS invited him to experience the theatre organ by trying the Avalon Theatre Wurlitzer when the house is dark. Of course, our hope is that, when he does, he will be bitten by the theatre organ bug!

Nominees for scholarships are submitted by the head of the music department of Wisconsin colleges with whom Scholarship Chairperson Bob Leutner communicates. The Scholarship Committee then submits its recommendation to the DTOS Board for approval. The DTOS Scholarship Program, initiated in 1972, has awarded some \$5,700 over the course of the years.

Almost without exception, today's artists at the theatre organ console have a foundation in classical organ, and DTOS hopes that its contribution, through the Scholarship Program for college level students of organ, meaningfully complements the ATOS Young Organist Competition.

All inquiries regarding membership matters should be addressed to . . .

DOUGLAS C. FISK,
Executive Director of ATOS
P.O. Box 417490
Sacramento, California 95841



David Freudenwald, winner of Dairyland Scholarship.
Gordon Schwacke photo

Recording An Organ Concert

by Harry Heth

Here are some things to keep in mind should you want to record a concert or at a convention.

1. Because of the non-profit, tax-exempt status of the American Theatre Organ Society, recordings made at ATOS sponsored events are for your own home use, not for distribution, sale, or profit.

2. Be certain that you have the permission of the artist. All concerts at an ATOS convention have the implied consent of the artist unless there is an advance notification that no recordings will be permitted for a particular concert. The following has happened (the names have been changed, but the scenario is true): John Doe played a concert at the Bijou Theatre in Gotham. A year later, he was playing another concert there. After the concert, he was asked by Ms. Organlover to autograph a cassette of his playing. It turned out that his previous concert had been recorded, the tape copied and sold. John had not approved the recording, the copying, or the marketing of the tape. While his playing was masterful for the original tape, the copies were produced on very economical equipment and were in no way up to the quality of his professionally produced recordings. He was not only being represented by a marginal product, but was being deprived of his deserved royalty on the sale of the recordings.

3. Learn and understand your equipment so you will be able to operate all functions on your equipment in little or

no light, and without intruding on the enjoyment of the concert by those who are sitting near you. Once you have set your recording level, leave it alone; let the artist control the dynamic range of your recording. If you must use a flashlight, be certain you have a small unit with a red lens as a red light is far less distracting than a white light in a darkened theatre.

4. Do not assume the presence or availability of electricity in a theatre or auditorium. Be absolutely certain that you have sufficient battery power and reserve. Practice with your equipment to know how long you can record on a set of batteries.

5. Most artists have an intermission anywhere from 45 minutes to one hour into the concert. Learn to flip your cassette over during applause so you don't miss any of the program and you do not disrupt the program for those around you. Be sure to start each concert with a fresh cassette. Monitor your recorder and if it appears you are about to run out of tape, very quietly stop your recorder so the sound of the auto stop mechanism will not be in competition with the artist. Analog cassettes are now available which will go for fifty minutes per side. Let your recorder run; if you start and stop the tape during the concert, you are bound to lose the first few notes of each selection and generate undesirable noise. When you get home, you can edit your tape. It is better to get too much than to miss the beginning of a selection and degrade the performance for those around you.

6. Equipment/microphones obstructing the view certainly diminish the enjoyment of the concert for others. Most people prefer to place the microphones at chamber level which generally means working from the balcony.

7. If you experience operational or equipment failure during a concert, resist the temptation to become repair engineer on the spot; wait until intermission or the end of the concert to affect the repairs.

8. Be absolutely certain that any loudspeakers contained within your equipment are completely disabled during the concert. Feedback, howls, and screeches are not appreciated.

9. It is possible to team up with another person who is going to be recording the concert. In this way, you can share in the set-up/tear-down activities and if your equipment is less sophisticated, obtain a line level output from your partner's recorder to the line level input of your recorder. In this way, you will be able to get a better recording with less effort and confusing clutter. Alternatively, you can agree to work with a partner and then copy your desired tapes at a later time.

It WILL Happen In Monterey

Over the last 20 or so years, thousands of electronic organ folks have flocked to Pacific Grove and the Asilomar for the annual Home Organ Festival. Perhaps some of those folks ventured into nearby Monterey.

The historic city of Monterey traces its roots back 200 years. It annually draws thousands of tourists in addition to those who wander in from the Home Organ Festival. Perhaps some of the visitors have noticed a big, grand, white facade of what is obviously a 1920's movie palace. The State Theatre (formerly Golden State Theatre) is an operating movie house in control of United Artists. The magnificent theatre had its balcony tripled in 1976, but still retains all of its former glory — if a bit tired. Designed by Reid Brothers, the circa 1600-seat house originally contained a 2/8 style F Wurlitzer, opus 1334. It was removed in 1953 by Bob Jacobus for his Vellejo home. In 1965, Bob reluctantly decided to sell the organ, selling it to Napa resident Ken Ensele. Mr. Ensele still owns the organ, having it in a specially designed building near his home now in Oregon.

A group of theatre, music, organ, architecture, and performing arts people have banded together to form State Theatre Preservation Group. The goal is to see the house secured for use of a civic nature, restored to its original configuration. The group has a newsletter with frequent updates on the project. More recently, a Wurlitzer organ was offered to replace the long gone style F. The proposed Wurlitzer was also originally a 2/8 update of the earlier style F; a style 200-special opus 1887. This Wurlitzer also came from a



Looking up toward the Main organ chamber. The three-story high organ grilles are a commanding feature of the auditorium. A portion of the "sky" and ceiling canopy can be seen above the chamber grille. The proscenium arch is to the right.

Reid Brothers-designed theatre, the San Francisco Parkside/Taraval. The organ has been mildly enlarged, using all Wurlitzer components and is a 2/12 plus couplers.

When the State opened in 1926, it may well have been the only theatre in California to have had a two-manual organ installed on a hydraulic elevator. The theatre, while atmospheric, is not a typical atmospheric with drifting clouds and twinkling stars. A large simulated canopy covers the courtyard/auditorium with bits of sky visible above the high side walls. These walls are full of Castilian arches, windows, columns, and balconies. An elaborate color scheme, vines, and indirect lighting completed the illusion of sitting outside. The house is magnificently intact, though the majority of the walls have been unsympathetically painted out by drab coats of paint. Even the original

orchestra pit is intact.

The STPG is steadily gaining momentum with Articles of Incorporation filed with the State of California. Earlier this year, the group received tax exempt status and may now legally solicit memberships. Further information can be obtained from Martin Schmidt at 408/624-4695 or Jim Toy at 408/373-0137.

Memberships can be obtained in several different levels: Student/Military \$10, Regular \$25, Sponsor \$50, Patron \$100, Benefactor \$200, and the ever hopeful — Other . Those interested should mail a check at the level of their choice to State Theatre Preservation Group, 395 Del Monte Center, Suite 140, Monterey, California 93940.

This is a magnificent movie palace that should be preserved and we hope any interested ATOS members might be able to help.

Tom L. DeLay

OFFICIAL NOTICE

to:

Members of the
American Theatre Organ Society

FROM:

Laurel Haggart, National Secretary

SUBJECT:

Notice of Annual Meeting

DATE:

March 1, 1991

The Annual Meeting of the members of the American Theatre Organ Society will be held on Tuesday, July 9, 1991, at the Berkeley Community Theatre, Berkeley, California, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

AMERICAN THEATRE
ORGAN SOCIETY

Laurel Haggart, National Secretary

1991 San Francisco Convention RECORDS STORE

Interested performers, artists and associations,
send inquiries to:

DON MARX

1420 Creekside Drive, No. 11
Walnut Creek, California 94596

415/937-3337

