

Directors' Corner

■ Jim Riggs

Wow! What an exciting time this is for ATOS! When I started reading THEATRE ORGAN in the early 1970s (by way of a subscription at the Oakland Public Library, donated by "Tiny" James), organs were still being ripped from theatres right and left, and meaningful preservation was almost unheard of. Now, we have first-quality instruments going *back* into theatres and an interest in historic preservation not previously seen. To me, this indicates a growing *sensitivity to the art*, and that can only be for the best. Right now, ATOS (and the entire theatre organ art form) is poised on what I call "the second Renaissance."

Let me explain. First, you have the days when theatre organ was new; the "Golden Age." It was the era of Sidney Torch, Lew White and Jesse Crawford; they were among the most popular performers of their day and the theatre organ and its music was an important part of popular culture. Then came the 1950s, Hi-Fidelity and the birth of the ATOE; the "first Renaissance" of theatre organ was at hand. This was a troubled time, as well. Remember, it was fairly easy to save a theatre organ by installing it in one's home. However, such was not the case for the grand movie palaces; just look around and see how many of *those* are left today.

Now, on the verge of the 21st century, theatre organ has never been in a position of more potential, nor has the ATOS been better poised to help it along. I'm pleased to be involved with two projects that hold great promise for the future of our art: the ATOS Endowment Fund and TOPS (that is, Theatre Organ Programs for School children).

You'll be reading a lot about the new Endowment Fund in the next year. It's just now being structured, but when its all in place and producing revenue, the national ATOS will be in a position to provide help to chapters in a material way never before possible. This Fund will have a continuing, positive impact on theatre organ well into the next century.

The TOPS project involves the creation of a standardized theatre organ program to be presented to school children. Aimed primarily at 9- to 11-year-olds (and requiring cooperation between your chapter and your local school district), it will be a complete program where, in the classroom, children learn not only about the theatre organ, but how it related to silent films, movie palaces and to the music and entertainment industries of the 1920s. The curriculum concludes with a live performance

that includes theatre organ solos, a bit of vaudeville, a sing-along (using songs the kids already learned in school!) and a short silent comedy. This program is modeled after the highly successful Charlie Chaplin Festival presented by the Cedar Rapids Area TOS.

Is this a good time for ATOS? You bet! The growing movement towards intelligent preservation and re-placement of organs in theatres, coupled with your generous donations and bequests to the Endowment Fund, and the gentle, entertaining introduction to theatre organ for young eyes and ears via the TOPS project, will all help to bring about the "second Renaissance" of the theatre pipe organ.

■ Paul Quarino

First, I wish to thank all of you who voted for me for another term on your board of directors. I look forward to working for you.

While in San Francisco during the convention, three of us from the Journal staff, Editor Grace McGinnis, myself and associate editor Tom DeLay, made a side trip to Salinas and spent a most pleasant and informative afternoon with former staffers George and Vi Thompson. George gave me one of the copies of a computer print-out, made in 1980 shortly after the roster had been transferred from the old handwritten card files. This is a big help for me when I am asked to confirm charter memberships which may be in question.

I am still receiving material from around the country and am filing it for future reference. There are many stories in our society that will make good reading as we begin to record our history. Please continue to send any historical information you find. Thanks.

Paul Quarino
3140 S.E. 90th Place
Portland, Oregon 97266



Left: George shows Paul how it really was done. Right: George and Grace share editorial ideas.



Left: Longtime friends Tom DeLay and George. Right: Vi, the heart of the Thompson household.

Electronic Theatre Organ Owner Group Alive and Well!

After the convention last year in Indianapolis, an Electronic Theatre Organ Owners Group was formed headed by Jack Moelmann, then Past President and now a member of the Board of Directors. It started out slowly with only 9 members as of January. Additional announcements of the group were made in the Journal and the results were very encouraging. By the time of the ATOS convention in San Francisco, there were 105 members who had written to Jack indicating an interest in the group. During the fantastic convention in San Francisco, a time was scheduled for the group or those interested in the group to meet. There was standing room only. Another 50 people provided their names to be added to the list. So as of the end of July, total membership was at 155. Information has been sent to each of them listing organs which people have and their names and addresses and other news items about new products, modifications which can be made, etc. The greatest thing that has come out of the formation of the group is an interchange between members of like organs on changes and improvements which they have made in the hope that these changes can be made to their organs as well.

The goal of the group is to foster an interchange between electronic organ owners, to provide information on improvements which can be made the most current trend being the addition of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) to an electronic organ which provides the capability to add external devices which can produce almost any sound imaginable. Hopefully we will be able to obtain real pipe organ sounds from electronic samples of outstanding pipe organs in the country. We also hope to have some space in THEATRE ORGAN dedicated to products, technology, and other items of interest to electronic theatre organ owners. Remember, most of the ATOS membership probably has an electronic organ at home although everyone would certainly like to have a real pipe organ. The logistics, space limitations, expense, and constant care and feeding usually make this impractical.

Yes, the Electronic Theatre Organ Owner Group, a special interest group in ATOS IS ALIVE AND WELL AND GROWING. If you desire more information or want to be placed on the mailing list for this group contact Jack Moelmann, P.O. Box 165, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois 62225 or call 618/632-8455.