

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Gentlemen:

It was most interesting to read letters from fans of P. Hans Flath, organist - till his death - for KMBC, Kansas City. Mr. Keilhack is correct that KMBC's organ was a Robert Morton. However, I recall Mr. Flath saying it had come from a residence or studio, and the organ's light tone and moderate volume would seem to indicate some such origin.

The KMBC organ possessed a second 2-manual movable console to facilitate program accompaniments. I can remember some programs I listened to simply for the organ fill and themes. At one time, Mr. Flath teamed up with Leigh Havens, possibly still in Kansas City, on a program called "Twin Organs." It featured not only organ duets, but also piano and organ numbers.

Mr. Flath's 25-minute program at 11:05 each night was "must" listening

for myself and friends up until the demise of the pipe organ. Occasionally after that, transcriptions of his pipe organ programs were interspersed with live programs on the Hammond. Mr. Flath's style was uniquely matched to his pipe organ, being light, airy, uncomplicated, and quite different from most other T.O. styles.

May I take this occasion to compliment your "Question and Answer" man? These columns have been of utmost interest. Your writer has not only much authoritative information but writes very well besides. Would he like to come forward for a bow?

Hal M. Davison  
Washington, D.C.

(Editor's note - Former ATOE President Judd Walton has provided most of the answers to questions submitted by our readers.)

## An Open Letter to ATOE Members

With this letter a challenge is hurled to the AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF THEATRE ORGAN ENTHUSIASTS. The time is ripe for this, the only National theatre organ organization, to set up a STANDARDS COMMITTEE for the organ industry. All major organ manufacturers are considering, or already marketing, a line of "Theatre Organs" (the quotation marks are significant). Many mistakes have been made and more will be made. Guidance is sorely needed.

Probably half of the ATOE membership are blinded by their enthusiasm for the authentic theatre pipe organ.

They must be made to realize that the Electronics Industry has the potential to build instruments that are MIGHTY, GREAT and GRANDE. The organists in ATOE seem more aware of this situation than the non-organists.

When the electronic theatre organ is perfected may depend in great measure on ATOE members. If there is help, the time when satisfactory instruments become available can be shortened. The period of development has only begun.

What standards should be set? What should be left to the manufacturers' ingenuity? It takes, as we all know,

take place. Mr. Link Sr. and his crew were to be on hand for the dedication, and after several careful hours readying the organ for the big day they had retired to their hotel for a good night's rest. Fate stepped in, and that very night California was shaken by a mild earthquake. Next morning the Link crew went to the theatre to make a few last-minute adjustments, only to discover that many good-sized chunks of ceiling plaster had been dislodged into the organ chambers and had all but filled the open resonators.

Many famous persons in the movie world were to be on hand for the opening. Therefore, to save the reputation of the Link Organ, putting the instrument in shape was mandatory. The feverish activity of the next few hours can be well imagined. It is reported that the organ was ready for the first cue on time.

Sales of the Link Unit Organ con-

tinued to grow until the advent of sound movies, which, together with the stock market crash of 1929, sounded the death knell of the Link Pipe Organ factory. This combination of events removed the Link family from the field of music.

The Link name did not pass from the manufacturing picture, however, as it is now well known as the developer of the famous Link Aircraft Trainer. Models now designed for the space age are gaining favor as did the first trainer models. These ground-training machines were partially born on principles originally utilized in the company's automatic piano and pipe organ construction. E. A. Link Jr. can take the lion's share of credit for the success, through a perseverant belief in this twentieth century invention, as well as in his current exploits into the development of advanced under-water diving apparatus.

much more than a "horse shoe console" to qualify an instrument as a theatre organ. However, electronic techniques can produce worthwhile effects not possible in the original theatre pipe organ. Where should the line be drawn? What is an Entertainment Organ and what is a Theatre Organ? There is confusion: shall the Theatre Organ be traditional with the "gimmicky" reserved for the Entertainment Organ? Certainly, the AGO has had an important part in standardizing the Classic Organ.

We have all faced the embarrassing moment when seated at an unfamiliar instrument with non-standard (is there a standard?) pedal placement. Physical design of the console is an important consideration. You can think of many more. Color coding of stop tablets should be uniform. Manufacturers justify their choice by, for instance, the statement that "Podunk Theatre Organs had purple piccolo tabs in 1924". What that is traditional can we consider to be standard? Perhaps we should look to the later WurliTzer and Robert Morton techniques?

ATOE members - think it over - then let your Board of Directors know how you feel. Shall we help the industry so that we both can be proud? Shall we ignore them so that we both shall be ashamed of the term "theatre organ"? Let's hope that, some day soon, we will see manufacturers advertise their instruments with "meets ATOE standards of design"!

Dewey Cagle

*Have something on your mind? Why not write a "Letter to the Editor"? Do it now!*

## NEWS AND VIEWS (continued)

what happened to the organ in the Paramount Theatre (Shea's Great Lakes) Buffalo . . . It seems that Brother Redmond was there this summer to see a show and like any good organ enthusiast went down to inspect the orchestra pit and found it empty . . . C'mon, you Buffalo members, give a helping hand . . . Brother Redmond also says that while in Cleveland this summer, he attended a theatre showing the "West Side Story", and upon entering the theatre heard organ music which certainly did not sound like a theatre pipe organ . . . Upon entering the auditorium and looking down to the stage he saw a small electronic organ which made him feel like a child finding no presents under the Christmas tree . . . we wonder how many times this happens ? ? ? ? . . .

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