

Eddie Weaver CONCERT at the Byrd Theatre

Eddie Weaver greets audience at the Byrd Theatre - Top. Weaver accompanies the Wurlitzer on the violin - Center. Bob Coulter, popular manager of the Byrd Theatre is seen at the far right wondering if he can squeeze in all the waiting customers - Bottom.

-Photos by Ray Brubacher

by Ray Brubacher

Richmond, Theatre Organ Capital of the World, was the scene of the first in what we hope will be the start of a series of outstanding theatre organ concerts to be held at the Byrd Theatre. On Saturday evening, July 25th, Richmond's most outstanding musical personality, Eddie Weaver, played the first formal organ concert ever to be held in recent years, in this theatre. Eddie had already achieved wide recognition with his past series of concerts at the Mosque, a few blocks from the Byrd, and this was his first go at the Byrd organ in concert medium. Eddie has been organist at the theatre ever since his retirement from the Loews Richmond, where he was organist over a period of twenty-three years. When the post of organist at the Byrd fell vacant due to the untimely death of Harold Warner, Eddie took over as master of that wonderful organ, and what a master he is!

At 11 p.m., the house lights melted away and as the spotlight brightened, the theatre was filled with the thrilling sound of the organ. As the console ascended from stage center (the Byrd has no orchestra pit), Eddie was sprawled out across the bench half asleep, whereon when the console elevator stopped, he then announced that he had been there since the first show, waiting for all this to happen. After several more remarks that had the audience literally in stitches, Eddie began with a selection which included the Gershwin "Rhapsody In Blue" with the piano part played on the grand piano in the left gallery of the theatre. The enraptured audience numbering about seven hundred, then was treated to two orchestral operatic selections, the Waltz and Angel's Chorus from "Faust." Later on in the program, Eddie got off the console and announced his intentions to do a couple of duets with organ and violin. Upon picking up the instrument and bringing bow down on the strings, the organ began to play and throughout the selections, there was never a variance in tempo or beat. This, of course, brought the house down in a thunder of applause, and after this one could hardly ask for more. Then after a few more numbers, we were interrupted by an itinerant popcorn vendor dressed in old time clothing, selling his wares among the audience. Eddie persuaded him to assist him at the organ to lead the singing for the song slides. Eddie had selected some of the funniest and



more popular slides one could hope for, and again the audience went into hysterics over the "tongue twisters" which were always included in every old time organ sing session.

Then, Eddie reached down into the depths below the organ console and came up with - you guessed it, a beetle wig, and of course, all of the musical effects associated with that group of artisans. Then came a spirited medley of string band music, done so well, that it has become one of Eddie's trademarks, one which he is always asked to do at every program. After some more audience participation for "Chatanooga Choo Choo," Eddie took the console down to picture level, for the final event of the evening, a showing of "Whispering Whiskers" starring Andy Clude and Snub Pollard. We were very privileged to be able to obtain a 35 millimeter print of the very funny film, one which is not too long, but gives the maximum amount of entertainment and is side splittingly funny all the way through.

After the film, Eddie closed the program with two more selections, and as he reached the final four bars of "I'll See You Again," he arose from the console and disappeared off stage in the fading glow of the spotlight while the organ finished his theme. No amount of continuing applause could coax him back to the console for an encore, but everyone I know, felt that they had heard not just another good organist, but one who besides being one of the finest theatre organists in the world, also makes you a part of his program, and not just another spectator. This is one reason and just one reason only why Eddie Weaver will always be at the top of our list in this area. Our thanks to him for another solid, musical performance.

The concert was presented by the Byrd Theatre, the Richmond Organ Enthusiasts Club, and the Potomac Valley Chapter, ATOE. Our thanks go to all who helped out to make this concert a success, especially to Don Malkames, of New York, who provided the film, and to Eddie Weaver's very talented daughter who assisted and helped the big Wurlitzer to play by itself.



Bombardier Editor Stu Green in disguise at the Hoberg Electric Organ Festival.
—Photo by Ida James

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ATOE Chapter News

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WOLVERINE CHAPTER OF ATOE FORMED IN MICHIGAN

Michigan, with the Detroit area alone having probably the highest concentration of home theatre organ installations in the nation, has formed a regional chapter of the ATOE after nearly nine years of effort. With over fifty ATOE members in the state of Michigan already on the 1964 Roster, the new chapter has increased this total by eight with its formation. The organizing group for the Wolverine Chapter provided twenty-six signatures to its letter of petition for a Chapter Charter. Some of the eighteen already established ATOE members, who participated in organizing the Wolverine Chapter, are among the earliest members carried on the ATOE lists from its formation in 1955.

Chicago in '65

The name Wolverine was chosen, since it is universally recognized as identifying the state of Michigan. The organizing members of the new chapter have been drawn from the Eastern, Western and North Central areas of Michigan as well as from the Detroit area. The Wolverine Chapter intends to extend its activities throughout the whole state, rather than remaining Detroit-based. Various state centers, with adequate theatre organ facilities, have offered to participate in the Wolverine Chapter's scope of activity. The organizing members decided to limit chapter membership to a total of fifty, at the present time, because of the physical restrictions of some of the theatre organ facilities which will be used in the immediate future for chapter activities. Most of the state ATOE members who were contacted regarding the formation of the Wolverine Chapter, responded with enthusiasm and signed the letter of petition for a

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