

The Editor Notes . . .

WHAT IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO as the "Golden Age of the Theatre Organ" ended more than a quarter century ago with the advent of sound motion pictures. As a consequence, many organists were forced to seek other pursuits as a means of livelihood. Organ consoles were covered with canvas and the instruments permitted to fall into a state of practical disrepair or sold and reassembled in private residences, in places of public worship, or in sundry auditoria. The early years of radio broadcasting were marked by many organ programs variously announced "Organ Echoes," "Console Airs," "Organ Melodies," "The Organ Speaks," "Pipes of Melody," *et cetera*. A prominent Chicago organist, now deceased, broadcast two one-hour programs daily for several years! Today, comparatively few live organ programs are available to an organ-loving public. Organ installations in broadcasting studios suffered no less a fate than their counterparts in the theatres. For over a decade few commercial recordings of theatre organs have been released by recording companies. To the younger generation, at least, the various electronic instruments have become practically synonymous with the pipe organ and there is certainly no dearth of such recordings in record shops everywhere and many of which are represented on the record jacket as the genuine instrument. Lastly, it may be pointed out that a goodly number of people have not the slightest idea what a theatre organ is or sounds like.

LIGHT ON THE HORIZON

The advent of high-fidelity recording techniques has stimulated interest in recording the theatre organ. Already a number of excellent discs have made their appearance and many record shops report difficulty in keeping adequate stocks on hand to meet popular demand. A surprisingly large number of organ enthusiasts have assembled unit organs in their homes and there are undoubtedly many others who are developing similar projects.

"ENTHUSIAST" DEFINED

The dictionary defines an "enthusiast" as one who is "carried away by his feelings for a cause—a zealot, fanatic, devotee." I recall a friend who pointed out that his concern for the theatre organ had long ago transcended the "interest" stage and suggested that the words "infatuation" or "obsession" would more aptly describe his love of the organ. For he who embraces the "King of Instruments" as his favorite source of musical inspiration there can be no half-way point in his ardor for the organ. He recalls with nostalgia the many hours spent watching his favorite organist at the local theatre during the days of silent pictures. Perhaps it is the memory of the radio broadcasts of organ programs emanating from an organ studio, perhaps the thrill of listening again and again to certain treasured recordings. To such enthusiasts there can be no true substitute for the theatre organ.

The cessation of organ activity in the great theatres of the land and over the air waves merely served to stimulate, or whet the appetite as it were, of a group of men devoted to the organ. Prominent among these men was Alden Miller, a railroad employee of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Some years ago he engaged in the pursuit of collecting memorabilia relating to organs, organists, and recordings and he authored a newsette, at first in the form of a round-robin letter, which was variously known as the "Kinura," "Ophicleide," "Unit Orchestral Theatre Organ Magazine," "Diaphone," "Tibia" and, currently, the "Kinura Theatre Organ Digest." It was only a matter of time before the need for a national organization and a magazine devoted to the theatre organ became apparent. The idea met with approval from all quarters. "By all means, let's see what can be done—this is what all of us have dreamed of for years" expressed the consensus of the group. Thus was born "The American Association of Theatre Organ Enthusiasts" and its official publication, THE TIBIA. The fruition of a pipe dream!

We hope that this, the first issue of THE TIBIA will contribute in some measure to your own particular zest for the theatre organ. The Editor will appreciate knowing how best to serve your interests. Let us hear from you and we will strive to do our best.

The Cover . . .

is a reproduction of the cover of the first magazine published for the American Association of Theatre Organ Enthusiasts by Radio Magazines, Inc., in the Fall of 1955. It is reprinted here in celebration of ATOE's Tenth Anniversary.

The cover and many of the pages of this issue are taken from the first eight issues of THE TIBIA in an attempt to chronicle some of the early history of ATOE.

The masthead on page 1, Volume I of the TIBIA indicates that our old friend Dr. Mel H. Doner, of Winona, Minnesota was the Editor. Roy Gorish, Asst. Editor, and C. G. McProud of Radio Magazines, the Publisher.

We do not generally believe in editorializing, but we feel that the editorial on this page, even though written over ten years ago is certainly worth repeating, especially the definition of an "Enthusiast". Thanks Mel, for saying it so well.

We wish to express our thanks to Radio Magazines, Inc., Henry Schober, President; C. G. McProud, Secretary, for allowing us to reprint the original material used in THE TIBIA magazines. If the name Radio Magazines has a familiar ring to it, we might help your memory by telling you that they are probably best known for their authoritative HI-FI magazine AUDIO.