

LETTERS

FROM READERS

Dear 'Tiny':

We greatly enjoy "Theatre Organ" and "The Bombarde" and look forward to the arrival of both publications. The staffs of both magazines are doing a wonderful job, and I'm sure a few words of appreciation and encouragement from the members will be appreciated by those who do the work.

I was especially interested in the remarks by "Buck" Price in his letter to the editor which appeared in the last issue of Theatre Organ. His statement that of the 120 volunteers who are operating the full-size steam railroad near Miami, three are A.T.O.E. members, came as a surprise to me, as in my contacts with railroad buffs and organ enthusiasts, I've found the percentage of railfans who are organ nuts and organ fans who are also train nuts to be higher than only 3-to-120. It is actually amazing to find so many people with these dual interests. Several months ago, mention was made in the National Model Railroaders' Association publication about one of their members who was an organ enthusiast, and letters were received from NMRA members all over the country who were also interested in "The Mighty Wurlitzer" and other pipe organs. The editor was surprised at the magnitude of the response.

During the national A.T.O.E. convention in L.A. back in 1962, I was discussing this rail-organ interest with E. Jay Quinby, and he offered the explanation that perhaps these folks were just people who liked the finer things in life!

"Buck" Price's comment about his "dry run" to Atlanta to hear Big Mo in the Atlanta Fox, only to get there when organist Bob Van Camp was awsy on vacation, sounds like something that would happen to me. Once my wife and I went to Pittsburgh, Pa. just to ride the streetcars, and when we got there we found no streetcars running due to a motormen's strike. Sob!

Regarding Maurice Scharman's letter to the editor about pipe organs versus electronic organs, I'd like to comment that a pipe organ is the real thing, whereas an electronic organ is only an imitation. Some makes of "plugs-ins" are better imitations of a pipe organ than other makes, but still, they are just imitations. I happen to have such an imitation in the form of a 3-manual Artisan which I built. Mr. Scharman and other ATOE'ers are welcome to come up and play it if they are able to find Summit. If any prospective visitors will drop me a card, I'll be happy to give directions on finding Summit and even dust off the Artisan.

Sincerely,
Chard Walker

Dear Editor:

I just finished reading the letter in the latest Theater Organ Vol. 6 No. 4 by Maurice Scharman, and I'd like to have a few words in this direction too. First of all--about electronics; I owned 3 of them. Now I've got a little 2m 3R Wicks--not a theater organ at all, but very classic in styling. Still, with the tremulant adjusted rather broadly, it is surprising how nice the thing sounds on pop tunes, even though the pipes are all exposed--no swell boxes at all. I'll have more to say about this a bit further along.

First, though. Do we all live in the past like Mr. Scharman says? Maybe so, but we must be careful that our crystal ball is not made of rose colored glass. Not all the theater organs of the great heyday were that good.

Me, I was brought up in Brooklyn, and a nickel would take you on the subway to hear the Wurlitzer in the NY Paramount. Great it was. But a trip to Manhattan was something special, even for the nickel. Most of the time, I attended Loew's Boro Park theater. The organ? A 3 manual Moller--a dismal, droning affair that would have been in perfect harmony with a funeral parlor. How they ever came to build that for a movie house is beyond me. Then there was Loew's 46th Street--originally named the Universal--and its organ was, I think, a Wurlitzer John Gart played there at one time, and maybe he can corroborate this or maybe he feels differently about it. But as Wurlitzers go it was far from mighty--either it was too buried in its chambers, or it was lacking in speaking stops, but it seemed to me that every organist that played it found it necessary to use percussions all the time--you simply couldn't hear the flues at all. The xylophone was fully capable of drowning out the full organ.....!

Now, I like to read the Theater Organ along with the rest of us. But I only own a little 2 bedroom, 1-story house, and I simply couldn't afford to remodel the whole thing to hold a 16 rank Wurlitzer, even if I could afford the Wurl! And I suspect this goes for most of the members of ATOE.

Well, now, you play a record of a theater organ in your living room, even with a 60 watt stereo at full blast, and then an airplane goes overhead and drowns the whole thing out, and you realize that you can, very easily, simulate all the grandeur of the theater organ on a much smaller scale--and this is the answer to Mr. Scharman....

This is not to say you must accept the electronic as a substitute--far from it. The idea is simply to adapt the pipe organ to conditions--to scale down the entire sound.

Now, you can't very well do anything much about an existing Wurlitzer voiced on 15 inches. BUT--and this is the big but--you can see on the back cover of this issue that a certain electronic sells for \$4950 and up--and I suspect the one they show is very much UP!

My little 3 rank Wicks costs less than, that brand new from the factory.!

Some day I will do away with a small bedroom closet and add 2 more ranks--a tibia and a reed, and then I will have the best of all possible combinations--a classic organ and one which can also do some theater effects. Maybe a few little gizmos as a toy counter--they don't take up much room.

No--it won't be a "mighty Wurlitzer"... it'll be a theater organ scaled down to the size of my living room...much nicer to listen to than any electronic.

I'm glad it isn't a Wurlitzer, in fact. Because Wicks direct electric action is much quieter than Wurlitzer's and never needs re-leathering--even in this Florida climate. It's been here 3 years now and hasn't developed a single cipher nor a single dead note. Every key, every pedal, every stop tab works, every time! Who else can make this claim?

Then too, if you're willing to eliminate couplers--and on a fully unified instrument of 5 ranks, who needs couplers?--there is a great big saving. You simply don't need a relay at all. You just need a batch of stop switches which go right in the console. And this console, incidentally, is just 2 inches bigger than my last Hammond console was (an RT-3 Concert model, the biggest Hammond ever made).

What I'm getting at is that we don't have to live in the past, and we don't have to bid up the last few Wurlitzers to astronomical prices and we don't have to settle for second best. For less than it would cost to build an addition to the house to hold a Wurlitzer, you can get a new theater organ built, scaled to living room size sound, and the real McCoy!

Incidentally, there are other advantages to modern design. On my Wicks, you don't hear the blower or the regulator or the trem. They are there and they work, but they are completely silenced. And this little 3 ranker blows on ¼ horsepower-plugs right in the light socket--just like an electronic. Ha!

Best
John S. Carroll

P.S. speaking of old timers--does anyone know what ever happened to one Maizie Peralta? She played theaters, and was my first teacher--at Wurlitzer's NY store.



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