

METROLINA ORGAN QUARTERLY

A Publication of the METROLINA THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

April 1994
Vol. 5, No. 1

NEXT MTOS MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 9, 1994

7:00 p.m.

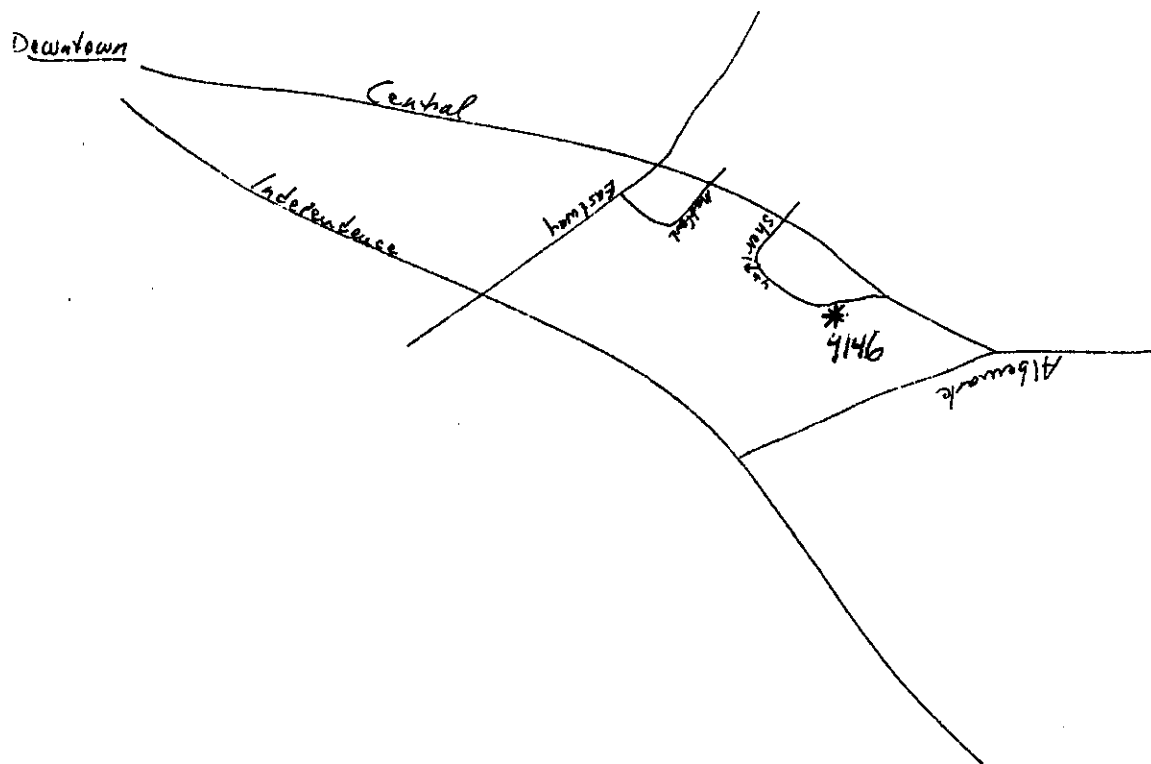
Dinner

At the home of

JOHN APPLE

4146 Sheridan Drive
Charlotte, N. C. 28205
567-1066

Sheridan Drive forms a semicircle south of Central Avenue two blocks east of Eastway Drive. No. 4146 is on the far side of the semicircle.



MEETING NOTICE

Our next meeting will hopefully be during some wonderful spring weather (personally my favorite and all too short season). If possible, try to come before 7:00 p.m. for a tour of the house and grounds, accompanied by some wonderful theatre organ music via recording.

First, we will have a business meeting to discuss plans for the year. Please bring any ideas.

Then we will watch a video titled The Fabulous Fox (1929-1963). This is a color documentary of the famous San Francisco theatre, showing its lavish decor. In addition, you will see and hear its famous organ (now awaiting installation in Glendale) played by Everett Nourse, the last resident organist at the Fox.

Coffee and tea will be provided. If you like, you may bring a dessert to share and show off your culinary skills!

John Apple

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CAROLINA THEATRE REOPENS IN DURHAM

The last remaining historic theatre in the Triangle reopened on February 2. Built in 1926, the building has been restored in its plaster and wood decor, in the lobby as well as the auditorium. Renovations have increased the seating to over 1,000, and have provided backstage facilities that will make it usable by local performing groups and larger groups such as the North Carolina Symphony.

As of this writing, no information is available as to whether a theatre organ will be reinstalled. But now Durham, Greensboro, Lumberton and Winston-Salem have restored and renovated their Carolina Theatres. Will Charlotte follow in their footsteps?

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CONTEST

WIN A FREE RECORDING

As encouragement for your dues (see dues notice on separate sheet) Metrolina Chapter is offering a choice of:

1. Spectacular Theatre Organ/ Billy Nalle (a CD release of Big, Bold and Billy, a record made about 1970) recorded at the Long Island University/Brooklyn Paramount Wurlitzer.

2. Showtime, Ashley Miller at the New York Paramount, the last recording made on the Wurlitzer in its original location and made famous by Jesse Crawford.

Answer the following question correctly, choose which recording you want, and return with your dues by May 5. It will be placed in a drawing at the May 9 meeting.

The question is:

What year did the Carolina Theatre in Charlotte open?

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NEWS

We would greatly appreciate your help in sending articles of interest to be used in the newsletter. Original writing or borrowed items are welcome. Travel adventures, organ news from any source, personal opinion, criticism, argument, complaints -- anything at all.

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CHICAGO CONVENTION

by Bobby Ray:

Chicago was kind to ATOS in 1993 -- great weather, a grand hotel, impressive historic buildings as well as gleaming new ones, and an astounding variety of organs, theatres and unexpected places.

There were two beautifully restored theatres: -- The Rialto in Joliet and the Chicago on State Street, both designed by Rapp & Rapp.

In Joliet the amazing thing is that a town of its size (about 80,000 now, only 30,000 when the theatre was built in 1925-26) could have such a splendid building for any purpose. Though somewhat smaller than the Chicago, it is no less magnificent. It would be fitting for any great city in the country, including New York. Especially New York.

The restoration, finished in 1981, was by Conrad Schmit Studios, New Berlin, Wisconsin. It is complete and impeccable. And it all looked as though it had just been finished the week before. Spotless magnificence.

There were two concerts, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, with a banquet in between. The dinner, limited to about 300 with early reservations, was served in the various

lobbies. Those of us fortunate to get a table in the rotunda felt like we were eating at Versailles.

The afternoon concert was played by Simon Gledhill, on the original 4/24 Barton Grande. From Yorkshire, England, he brought a fresh style, youthful vigor, and a delightful accent to the scene. He loved the organ, and the audience loved him.

The evening welcomed Kay McAbee back to a console he had known and loved for many years before moving to Albuquerque a few years ago. In the 1950s he was involved with the Joliet crew responsible for giving the Barton a new life after years of neglect. He gave us a congenial, good-time concert.

The theatre is now used as a performing arts center.

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At the Chicago Theatre Ron Rhode got off to a rousing start, bravely played through a fairly short cipher, then was shut down when the blower collapsed during the third number. Ron coolly turned around on the bench and chatted amiably with the audience, as though it were part of the program. Most of us thought the concert was over, but after about 20 minutes the wind came back up and the show went on. The 4/27 Wurlitzer sounded great, and so was the playing.

The restoration of the Chicago is not complete. The two chandeliers that were in the main lobby are missing -- sold by the theatre owners in the 1960s. One large chandelier now takes their place. It is handsome but does not match. And there are nooks and crannies that haven't been touched, as well as various spots that still need attention. But the auditorium is splendid and the stairways wonderfully complex.

A revival of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat has been playing there since October to sell-out crowds. This should help pay off the debt and allow the job to be finished. The theatre by itself is worth a trip to Chicago, and the organ caps it off beautifully.

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A visit to the Civic Opera House brought forth a silent movie program: Buster Keaton's The Navigator ably accompanied by Dennis James on the 3/50 E. M. Skinner concert organ. It was a satisfying show, but almost overwhelmed by the Art Deco grandeur of the house.

At Mundelein - Jonas Nordwell had cipher troubles with the 4/24 Wurlitzer. Still it was a beautiful trip for those who were able to get out of bed after the late evening in Joliet.

At the Patio Theatre, Chicago's only regularly operating movie theatre with its original organ installation (a 3/17 Barton), the Young Organists Competition was yet another highlight of the convention. Surely this is one of ATOS's finest efforts, and the payoff is in hearing these young people play. (See pages from the convention program attached.)

We visited two small towns with theatres with organs, still showing first run movies: the Arcada Theatre in St. Charles, and the Tivoli Theatre in Downers Grove.

St. Charles is a pleasant town divided in the middle by the beautiful Fox River. East of the river is the Arcada, partially restored and with its 3/16 Geneva organ in good shape, and ably played by CATOE chairman, Chris Nelson. (Geneva organs were built in Geneva, another small town a little to the south.) Across the bridge, the old Baker Hotel sits on the river bank. Its 1927 3/10 Geneva is housed between the banquet hall and a large lounge, with consoles in both rooms. It was played bravely and effectively by the aging Leon Berry, who lost much of the use of his left hand to a stroke some years back.

Downers Grove is a prosperous suburb, neat and polished. The Tivoli is an unusual small theatre in the French style, well cared for. Its 3/10 Wurlitzer belongs to CATOE, and it also is well cared for. Kurt Von Schakel played a lively concert and vaudeville show, with a cameo appearance by John Muri.

The Gateway Theatre, on Chicago's northwest side, is now called the Copernicus Cultural and Civic Center, owned by the Polish Women's Club. Work is planned to restore the large atmospheric auditorium. Unhappily, the main entrance, marquee, vertical sign, and most of the lobby have been destroyed to make room for offices. The organ is a 3/17 Wurlitzer/Kimball, privately owned, and played by Dick Smith. It was played again at a Jam Session after the concert, by some very exciting organists, including a number from the Young Organists Competition. The Jam Session was reported to be one of the conventions many highlights by those who were able to stay awake that late.

The largest organ in a theatre was at the sad Congress Theatre, also on the northwest side: surely the dirtiest, most badly worn building still in use. The privately owned organ began as a 3/15 Kimball, now expanded to 43 ranks. Although in good shape, and under the capable hands of Stan Kann, it didn't sound as big and fine as some others.

The largest organ of all was the newly completed 5/79 mostly Wurlitzer at the Sanfilippo residence, west of Barrington, in a room appropriately called the Victorian Palace.

The organ was designed by David Junchen, and played by Lyn Larsen to great effect.

The old Aragon Ballroom, designed by Ebersson, is struggling along with the neighborhood. Both are trying to make a comeback. The 3/10 Wurlitzer is in good shape. Bob Ralslton, alternating with an orchestra, played for listening and dancing in a marvelous atmospheric room with strange acoustics.

Glimpsed around the corner from the Aragon was the vacant hulk of the Uptown, Chicago's largest theatre, seating 4,381 (featured on pages 40-41 of the May/June issue of Theatre Organ.) There is still some hope of restoration, but the location doesn't help.

The happiest surprise was at the Chicago Stadium. The building is old but clean. The organ is in the ceiling, which is painted flat black, making it mysterious and forbidding. There had been reports that the 6/51 Barton was in bad shape. Yes, the combination action was out, the lift no longer works, and there may have been numerous other hidden problems (it's a long time since 1929). But it was in tune, it worked well (except for one early cipher, quickly eliminated) and the sound was radically unreal. It floated down from all across the ceiling, seamless as the ocean -- huge and powerful, but well controlled. The voices were balanced: full diapasons, brilliant but not overbearing reeds, and lots in between, including a soaring solo tibia; percussions were in good shape. The huge gaudy console looks just as shown on the cover of the January/February Theatre Organ.

The power of the organ was more than adequate to override miserable acoustics and a large amount of ambient noise. We are greatly indebted to organ technician George Anderson, who has done a great job on a skimpy budget, and with little credit.

Walt Strony played the first half of the program, bringing with him his own combination action, in the persons of Chris Elliott and another famous person whose name has slipped away. They did well. Then regular Stadium organist Frank Pellico took over, and he was terrific without any combination action. Being familiar with both the instrument and the tricky acoustics was helpful. Being a good musician helped even more.

The future of the Stadium and organ is bleak. A new stadium is nearly finished across the street, to be ready in the fall of 1994. The August issue of ATOS News quotes from the Chicago Tribune the non-statement "...the present Chicago Stadium will remain standing, with its Barton organ, as long as it continues to be a profitable venture." It will remain

profitable until the Bulls and Blackhawks move to the new building next year. Like the Moller in the Philadelphia Civic Center (with both concert and theatre consoles), the Barton is all but impossible to remove. And even if it were removed, there would be no place to put it. We may have heard its last concert.

Still, some influential voices has come forth in support of the old stadium. Michael Jordan (Sports Illustrated, 6/1/92): "I love it. The mystique. It's old-fashioned basketball. I love tradition." And Bill Bradley ("Life On The Run", 1976): "Most arenas in the league are modern structures built in the path of urban growth. Chicago Stadium is a relic from the past. Built in 1929, it stands like a mountain of Depression concrete, in the center of urban decay. [The urban decay had not abated in 1993.] Inside the stadium, things look as if they hadn't changed for twenty years....The old pipe organ with its red and white ornate wood decoration high above the visitors' end soon will be raised into position and the organist will play the national anthem."

Presently the organ is used regularly for Blackhawks games. Bulls' fans don't like it. Ersatz is writ large in the land.

April 1994 - Latest news is that the old Stadium will remain through the 1996 political conventions.

The convention as a whole was well managed, with few glitches. Getting 750 people on and off buses for seven days is no small task. It was none other than CATOE chairman Chris Nelson who was the head bus wrangler -- a stressful job well done.

And Chicago is a nice place to visit.

PATIO THEATRE

The Patio Theatre opened in January, 1927 with 1200 seats. The building anticipated the success of talking films by not having a stage, although the traditional theatre organ was installed to accompany any silent film. The three manual, seventeen rank Barton was restored by Bill Rieger, who now owns the instrument.

The Patio is the only regularly operating movie theatre in Chicago with its original organ installation.

The console is its original gold color and sits atop Dan Barton's ingenious no-excavation lift.

RICH LEWIS

(Grand Winner - Young Organist Competition - 1992)

Rich Lewis, 18, is a graduate of Newark High School in Newark, Delaware, and made his contest recording on the 3/42 Kimball at Dickenson High School.

Rich's parents first realized his talent when he would sit and pick out simple melodies on his mother's Lowrey spinet. This led to lessons at age six, through which he learned the basics. As his interests grew and changed, Rich left the organ and tried his hands at other instruments including the clarinet and violin.

When he heard the Dickinson Kimball in 1988, he fell in love with the theatre organ. He immediately began organ/piano lessons and joined the local ATOS chapter organ crew.

Because of the lack of instructors in the area, Rich is primarily self-taught. In high school, he played clarinet, harpischord, and sang. Rich performs frequently in his church.

Solo Chamber Ranks:

Tibia 16'
Solo String 8'
Solo Vox 8'
Oboe Horn 8'
Saxophone 8'
Trumpet 8'
Quintadena 8'
Glockenspiel
Xylophone
Vibraphone

Main Chamber Ranks:

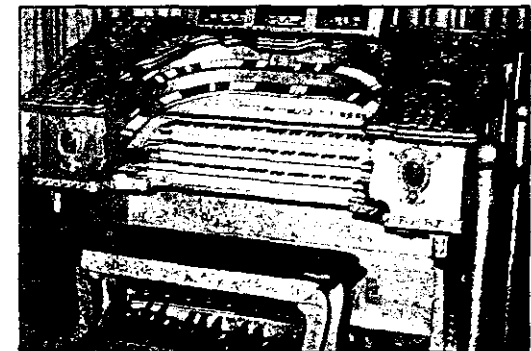
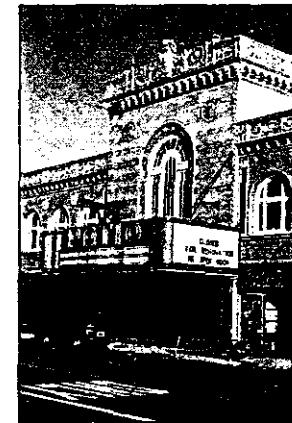
Diapason 16'
Concert Flute 16'
Tibia 16'
Tibia Minor 8'
Clarinet 8'
Violin 8'
Celeste #1 8'
Celeste #2 8'
Main Vox 8'
Chrysoglott

Organ Crew:

Bill Rieger, Crew Chief
Jim Nibbe
Jerry Kochka
Val Escobar, deceased



Rich Lewis



Patio Barton Console

Young Organist Competition Winners - 1993



SUSAN LEWANDOWSKI

Junior Winner

MOTOR CITY THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Susan Lewandowski, 14, sponsored by Motor City Theatre Organ Society, is a student at Lamphere High School in Madison Heights, Mi. She is an honor roll student and participates on the cross country and track teams. Susan began studying theatre organ at the age of 10 with Melissa Ambrose. Her interest began when her parents introduced her to the theatre organ at Pied Piper Pizza Peddler Restaurant in Michigan.

Susan has participated for the past four years in the Young Theatre Organists Competition sponsored by the Motor City chapter and each year won first place in her division, and this year was named over-all winner. Susan has performed for the members of the DTOS, the Wolverine Chapter, and Motor City TOS. A very active young student that volunteers her services regularly in the various organ societies.

Susan plans to pursue a degree in music. After college graduation she would like to perform all over the country and share her musical talent with others.



OVERALL WINNER

CHRIS MC PHEE

WINNER - SENIOR DIVISION

AUSTRALIA/FELIX CHAPTER

Chris McPhee, sponsored by the Australia/Felix Chapter, is 19 years old and is employed by Australia's largest Building Society, working in the Treasury Department. He is also studying Financial Markets.

Chris began learning electronic organ at the age of nine studying through the Australian Guild of Music and Speech, gaining Associate Diploma (with honors) in 1992.

He achieved full marks for Matriculation Music Performance and Theory through the South Australian Education Department in 1990. He was awarded the Royal School of Church Music Scholarship in 1992 (classical pipe organ.) He was introduced to theatre organ four and a half years ago.

Chris has performed in several theatre organ concerts. He recently travelled to America to pursue theatre organ interests. Chris is Vice Patron of the Electronic Organ Club of South Australia and he enjoys listening to all types of music from rock to classical.



MARK HAWN

Intermediate Winner

VALLEY OF THE SUN CHAPTER

Mark Hawn, sponsored by Valley of the Sun Chapter is an 18 year old student and has just been accepted to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he will be majoring in Music Performance.

Orill Dunn is responsible for his love for theatre organ. He started taking lessons from him in 1982 when he was seven years old. Later, as his skills developed, Orill took him to the Coronado Theatre and let him play the 4./17 Barton. From that time on it was meeting other organists and getting to play a variety of different theatre organs in his area.

At the age of 16 his family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada and he began classical organ instruction with Tim Harvey, Southern Nevada Music.

He was fortunate to receive a scholarship from ATOS last year with which he obtained coaching from Walt Strony in Phoenix, Az. Walt's vast knowledge of music and outstanding abilities as a professional theatre organist helped him prepare for the competition.

Mark would like to be a professional theatre organist and share his love for theatre organ. He would also like to start a theatre organ chapter in Nevada.

AGO 1994 SUMMER RECITAL SERIES
(All at 8:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted)

- May 29 Trish Parker at Covenant Presbyterian
1000 East Morehead Street
4/84 Aeolian-Skinner, 1952, 1962
2/34 Schlicker, 1974
- June 5 Andre Lash at Dilworth United Methodist
605 East Boulevard
3/47 Visser-Rowland, 1993
- June 12 Lee Northcutt at Covenant Presbyterian
- June 19 Ben Hutto at Christ Episcopal
1412 Providence Road
3/43 Gabriel Kney, 1979
- June 26 7:00 p.m. at Myers Park Presbyterian
Elizabeth Miller and
Hymn Festival with organist John Ferguson
2501 Oxford Place (at Providence Road)
3/68 Casavant Freres, 1961
- July 3 7:00 p.m. Carillon recital
First Presbyterian, Belmont
- July 4 8:30 p.m. Carillon recital at Covenant Presb.
- July 10 David Rider at Calvary Church
Highway 51 at Rea Road
5/205 Moller, 1990
- July 17 Ginny Kittle Holt at First Baptist
301 South Davidson Street
3/67 Casavant Freres, 1989
- July 24 John Chappell Stowe at Myers Park Baptist
1900 Queens Road
3/45 Aeolian-Skinner, 1952
- July 31 4:00 p.m. Evensong, Royal School of Church Music
Myers Park Baptist
- August 7 Robert Smith at Christ Episcopal
- August 14 Monty Bennett at Calvary Church
- August 21 J. T. Ellenberger at First Baptist
- August 28 Daniel Hannemann at St. Martin's Episcopal
1501 East Seventh Street
3/44 Goulding & Wood, 1992

CALVARY RECITAL SERIES

Friday, May 27
8:00 p.m.

Joyce Jones
Professor of Organ, Baylor University
Tickets \$7.

Friday, September 30
8:00 p.m.

Hector Olivera
Tickets \$7.

Sunday, November 27
6:00 p.m.

Dan Miller
Christmas Concert
No charge

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New Organs

Greensboro College: 3/28 Fisk, Op. 102
Dedicated September 1993

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Greensboro
3/25 Schantz, 1994