

METROLINA ORGAN Quarterly

A publication of the Metrolina Theatre Organ Society

Annual Holiday Party

The annual **MTOS** party will be held
 Sunday, December 20, 1998
 5:00 p.m.
 at the home of
 Gwen and Charlie Clayton
 306 Riverton Road
 Matthews, North Carolina 28105
 704.821.9891



Again this year we are privileged to be invited to gather for food and friendship at Gwen and Charlie's house, and to be the beneficiaries of their warmth, hospitality and good cheer.

Clothing is required, eating is mandatory, dancing is optional. Pleasant company and good music are guaranteed.

As usual, you are invited to bring a covered dish of your choosing. Call Gwen or Charlie, no later than Friday, December 18, to let them know what you will be bringing.

821.9891



The 5:00 o'clock hour is suggested for those who would like to arrive before dark, and have more time for conversation. Come later if you need to or prefer to.



How to Get to Charlie's:

Go east on Monroe Road, through Matthews. At the stoplight in Stallings, turn right onto Potter Road, go about two miles and turn left onto Nelson Road. Almost immediately turn left again onto Tree Hill Road. Riverton is the second street to the right. No. 306 is at the end.

From Independence Blvd., turn right on Ridge Road, about half a mile beyond Highway 51. Then keep straight through the light in Stallings, and you will be on Potter Road.

From Providence Road, turn left on McKee Road. Turn right at the dead end at Pleasant Plains Road, and right again at the next light (Potter Road).



Jelani Eddington at Bristol

We first heard Jelani at the 1993 convention in Chicago. Allen had a particularly comfortable setup in a conveniently located room at the Palmer House. A three-manual organ was in place, and there was usually a good number of listeners to hear it played by such notables as Greg Owen, Sean Henderson, Simon Gledhill — and Jelani Eddington.

For one who looked so young (he was 19), his playing was immediately impressive — confident and musically mature. When his name circulated through the room it was understandably familiar.

(Sean was 15 at the time, and shy. Once, when the bench was empty, we managed to energize ourself sufficiently to ask him to play. After consulting his mother, he did, to everyone's delight.)

Five years later, just two weeks short of graduation from Yale Law School, Jelani took the time to come to Bristol to play for us. His concert was sponsored by the Piedmont Theatre Organ Society in the Art Deco elegance of the restored Paramount Theatre.

The selections ranged from pre-World War II songs to Johann Strauss and Ponchielli. Included were medleys by Gershwin and Bernstein, Overture to *Die Fledermaus*, Dance of the Hours from *La Gioconda*, and a good number of old and new popular songs. He even played Ted Snyder's 1923 vengeful sob song "Who's Sorry Now?"

With careful registrations and inventive harmonies, his

styling might be described as more cerebral than bombastic. But he made the most of the Paramount's excellent Wurlitzer.

The organ was originally installed in Charlottesville, then spent a considerable number of years at Elon College before coming to Bristol. We are indebted to PTOS for their installation and ongoing support of the instrument, and for the concert series they sponsor.

Bobby Ray



Tennessee Cave Crawl

Chattanooga Has More Than A Choo-Choo

By John Apple

Michael Johnston and I went to the Tennessee Organ Bash and Cave Crawl on November 7. About 35 people from as far as Charlotte and Atlanta were there. There were two theatre organ home installations which were demonstrated by open console. The time and workmanship that were involved in these instruments were evident.

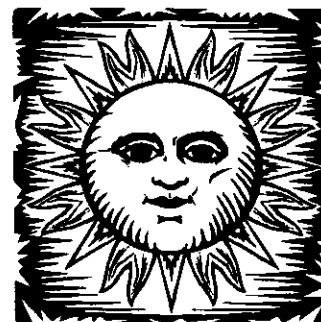
The first was a 3/12 that was expanded from a Wurlitzer Style 235 (11 ranks). The second was an Estey classical that was rebuilt as a theatre organ (sounds like the "Real McCoy"). As a curiosity, its console (a Klann) came from the Hope-Jones organ at the Baptist Temple, Philadelphia.

The 3/70 1962 Casavant in All Saints Chapel at the University of the South in Sewanee is placed in a Gothic structure from 1905. Glorious acoustics were obvious as

a student put the organ through its paces — from the Bach A minor Prelude and Fugue to the last part (Lone Ranger) of Rossini's William Tell Overture (Dudley Buck arrangement). We also visited an antebellum house that will eventually contain a theatre organ.

The cave crawl is just that! It is a visit to the Cumberland Caverns outside Chattanooga. Several rooms show that it is possible for the movement of water through thousands of years to carve out large rooms. The largest room contains a huge chandelier that was taken from the Brooklyn Loew's. It is hard to believe that it almost was destroyed by the wrecking ball!

This is an annual event that always includes the cave, but different organs. You owe it to yourself to go next year. Musical fun and fellowship (even the sighting of deer) are to be had by all.



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Theater Organs & the AGO

[A letter reprinted from *The American Organist*
November 1998]

I was fortunate enough to attend the National Convention in Denver this past summer and eagerly anticipated the closing concert at the Paramount Theatre. Imagine my disappointment when we were deprived of hearing the fine Wurlitzer played with anything approaching the level of the musical excellence that we had heard during the week.

I am deeply saddened that the theater organ continues to be the "ugly stepchild" for many traditional organists. Few seem to comprehend that it is a completely different instrument, built with a different concept of use, tonal design, and mechanical function. All those who played were good sports to say the least, but were obviously devoid of any functional knowledge of the Wurlitzer. (No, an English Horn is not a Cor Anglais, there is no principal chorus, and that second touch is a surprise, isn't it!)

Why would anyone think that we would be interested in sitting around and watching our fellow organists have a little "open console" party. We came to hear the organ played by a professional theater performer (the silent movie was by far the most entertaining event of the evening). Did we learn nothing from the fiasco at Radio City Music Hall in New York in 1996, when we suffered through abysmal presentations by Mrs. Bach and Peter Schickel (often funny, but not at Radio City!) and heard valiant but poor attempts at performance on Wurlitzer's Magnum Opus (again, the movie was the only saving grace of the evening).

There continues to be a general level of contempt for the instrument and those who play it. In my

own city of El Paso, we have been saddled with a recent "restoration" of the city's III/15 Balaban III Wurlitzer by a firm known for building tracker-action organs. Imagine, if you can, a theater organ with severe under-winding, nonfunctional tremolos, and a list of other problems a mile long.

In truth, the theater organ can be a great ambassador for the organ community. The instruments are once again gaining in popularity. Witness the phenomenon of the Organ Stop Pizza restaurant in Mesa, Ariz., which serves as many as 2,000+ patrons a night! We should be taking advantage of people's interest in any organ. Please, people, love them or hate them, but realize that theater organs are instruments unto themselves and that the artists who play them are artists indeed, and both are worthy of our utmost respect.

John Hutchinson, Dean
El Paso AGO Chapter



Organ Historical Society

The OHS catalog has become a good source for theatre organ recordings. It features six-and-a-half pages of CDs. To get a catalog, contact OHS at:

Box 26811
Richmond, Va. 23261

804.353.9226
Fax: 804-353-9266

e-mail:
catalog@organsociety.org

Members get a discount.



Smithsonian

Please read the important and promising cover story in the current *Theatre Organ* about the progress on the installation of the Lowell Ayars organ in the Smithsonian's Museum of American History — a Wurlitzer for the nation.

The ATOS Board has authorized a \$50,000 grant, contingent on matching funds from other sources. It is hoped that these sources will include ATOS chapters.

At the brief business meeting during our December 20 gathering, a proposal will be made that **ATOS** make a contribution to this notable cause. If there is agreement, an appropriate amount will be decided upon.

Also, there will be discussion of the possibility of contributing additional CDs and videos to the public library.



Carolina Theatre

On December 14 City Council will vote on whether to extend for another year the option to purchase the theatre. The option, originally held by the Keith Corporation, is now held by the Arts and Sciences Council, with a purchase price of \$1.2 million. This is less than the market value of the land.

The plan is to include three members of the Carolina Theatre Preservation Society on a task force which will determine the future of the theatre over the next year.

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Noted

The Phoenix Group, represented by Michael Vance, has presented an elaborate counter-proposal, which would drastically alter the interior of the theatre. **MTOS** supports the CTPS plan.

Please keep abreast of these happenings, as covered by local media, and let us know your opinions and feelings. **MTOS** members Charlie Clayton, John Apple and Paul Gelslechter are on the CTPS Board.

A new brochure from JAV Recordings shows a nice juxtaposition on the cover: Timothy Smith at the console of Riverside Church in New York, and Lyn Larsen at the New York Paramount console, now in Wichita. JAV labels them "Two of New York's Most Famous Pipe Organs."

Dr. Smith keeps good company.

The Riverside recording is described as "showcasing the new acoustical environment and the recently-installed *Tuba Mirabilis*."

JAV is a new label, located in Brooklyn, and specializing in famous organs of New York.

For more information, call toll free:

1.888.572.2242



Chapter dues: \$15.00 per year
If you have not paid, please send check payable to
MTOS to the return address below.



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First Class

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