







the **GRAND OPHICLEIDE**

Journal of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc.

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*Journal of the
Atlantic City Convention Hall
Organ Society, Inc.*

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On the Cover — Boardwalk Hall

Emerson Richards demonstrates the ergonomic design of the main console by simultaneously reaching for the uppermost keys of the top manual and the outermost stop-keys on the opposite side. In the contract, he specified that this move should be possible.

Some Personal Opinions and Hard Facts

By Stephen D. Smith and others

At the height of the touchy-feely, politically-correct era, I remember being asked by someone: “How are you, Stephen?” and when I answered something like “Fine, thanks,” they responded: “But how are you really?” This curious experience stuck in my mind — especially the emphasis on the word “really” — and, since the ACCHOS was formed, it’s an experience that has been repeated a number of times in a round about sort of way. Surprisingly often, people ask me: “What do you really think about the Atlantic City organ?” Perhaps these people imagine that there’s an official ACCHOS “statement” on the subject and that if they take me to one side I’ll depart from this agreed script. Perhaps they imagine that I’ll say something similar to city organist Arthur Scott Brook, who described the instrument as “...another of the Richards monstrosities — a magnificent organ done-to-death by a tremendous lot of absolutely useless unification.” [Letter dated March 9, 1946, to D. Stuart Kennedy] (These people are perhaps disappointed when it becomes obvious that (a) there is no official “line” for me to depart from and that (b) my enthusiasm for the instrument is as strong as it ever was.)

Whether the instrument is “done-to-death...by useless unification” is, to some degree, a matter of opinion. Anyone who has a copy of the booklet “World’s Largest Organ in World’s Largest Auditorium” (now out of print) will probably have noted how Emerson Richards stresses: “The Auditorium organ is “straight” NOT a unit organ in design.” In terms of the instrument’s 314 voices, 218 (69%) have a straight compass, while 96 (31%) are extended to provide two or more pitches. In terms of the 449 ranks,

the figures are: 353 (79%) straight and 96 (21%) extended. These figures — which, roughly, equate to two-thirds of the voices and four-fifths of the ranks being straight — hardly substantiate Brook’s claim that the instrument is “done to death...by useless unification”. (Although, in this context, the term “unit” refers to extended stops only, there are also half-a-dozen straight-compass voices that are “unified” because they are duplexed to another department, but including these six voices in the calculations would not significantly affect the outcome.)

However, in terms of the consoles, the picture is rather different because 608 (71%) of the 852 “speaking” stop-keys on the main console control unit stops, so only 29% of its registers are straight. On the smaller console, the picture is somewhat different because it has a lesser number of extended registers and is therefore “straighter”. Had the third console (reportedly to have been located on Auditorium’s rear gallery) been built, the straight/unified figures might have been different yet again. Therefore, the determination as to what constitutes straight or unified material must be based upon the contents of the pipe chambers, rather than the consoles because, as we have seen, different consoles can give different impressions whereas the contents of the pipe chambers is constant. In this respect, it cannot be denied that the vast majority of the Convention Hall organ is “straight”.

Having said all that, it is obvious that some departments were conceived specifically as unit organs, e.g. the Choir-Swell, Great-Solo, Swell-Choir, and Solo-Great, together with their duplexed Pedal registers, add up to a comprehensive theater-type instrument of 42 ranks,

plus five melodic percussions. Therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to consider the instrument as both straight and unified because, as the world’s largest pipe organ, its eclectic design is an attempt to be “all things to all men” or, at least, “to all organists”. Of course, the bottom line of all this is: If one doesn’t like extended registers, don’t use them!

When people ask me what the instrument sounds like, I say “surprising”. “Surprising” because it has a bright, warm, vibrant sound — not thick and clogging, as one might expect from an organ of that period and from stops on such high wind pressures.

Very little has been written about the tonality of the Auditorium organ. The current available information is largely confined to a sentence or two in this journal or that book giving a brief overview of a department or just a few words about some of the more notable voices, such as the 100-inch reeds. In the contract, Richards gave brief descriptions of what each voice should sound like, but it is not known how many of the stops conform to their tonal specifications. Of course, some impression of what part of the instrument sounds like can be gleaned from the ACCHOS 1998 CD recording, where even the bad tuning cannot conceal altogether the awe-inspiring and cohesive majesty that is, quite possibly, unparalleled by any other pipe organ in the world. For the time being, we can only imagine the overwhelming grandeur of the instrument when it is fully functioning.

Anyone who was around in the initial days of the ACCHOS (late 1995/early 1996 — before it was officially incorporated) might recall that the society was the result of a number of people meeting on an internet e-mail group called

The Mighty M-L's Blowers

Here is a rundown of the blowers and their capacities for the Midmer-Losh organ. The blowers are located in basement areas beneath the respective chambers:

Left Stage chamber

Blower #4
Low Pressure
125 H.P.

Left Stage chamber

Blower #5
High Pressure
100 H.P.

Left Gallery & Fanfare chambers

Blower #7
100 H.P.

Right Stage Chamber

Blower #8
100" Pressure
50 H.P.

Right Stage Chamber

Blower #2
Low Pressure
75 H.P.

Right Stage Chamber

Blower #3
High Pressure
100 H.P.

Right Center Galleries & Echo

Blower #6
75 H.P.

The total horsepower is 625. There's an additional 5 horsepower for the generator in the room below the center of the stage.

Pictured at right: A portion of the original master power control room equipment for the auditorium. The Westinghouse rotary convertor (bottom) was one of three in the control room that converted AC to DC for the organ blowers. Sadly, all this museum-quality gear has been removed and scrapped.

PIPORG-L (the "L" stands for "list", and list members e-mail their news and views on organ matters to PIPORG-L which then distributes them to all of the other members). When searching the list's archive (containing all messages sent to PIPORG-L), I came across the following messages, properly called "postings", relating to the Auditorium organ. They describe the general tone of the instrument and give an insight into some of its other aspects.

1. From Arthur Goulet, writing on October 18, 1995.

"With the vintage of this instrument, I expected a very tubby sound. Not at all! It is surprisingly bright, very clear (considering the space involved and about an 8-second reverb time) and there is a very decent ensemble (considering the few divisions operating). The Pedal division is potent and authoritative, and pretty well balanced, but some critical ranks have notes that don't play. Overall, it sounds more like a product of the 1940s-60s than the early 20th century. The console is a truly spectacular and aesthetically pleasing sight. The action is very quick and there is very little delay.

"Long ago, I read somewhere that in the organ's early days the Hall had to notify the local power company before they turned it on. [Organ curator] McGurk says that was probably true. The blowers were replaced not too long ago with two main blowers and ancillary equipment that put out in the order of 900-1,000 HP! Do they now notify the EPA? That much blower power scarcely sounds believable. I got to see these monsters while they were operating. The motors make one heck of a racket in the blower room, but there is no perceptible blower or wind noise in the auditorium. Mr. McGurk said that the organ chambers have a problem of heating up substantially as one plays, wreaking havoc with tuning, and I suspect that the problem is the lack of any significant blower room ventilation to get rid of the heat that 900 HP motors create (one HP = approx. 760 watts)."

2. From Karl Keller, reporting a visit on April 15, 1995.

"The day at the Convention Hall was an event which everyone who attended will come away from with different views. I don't think there is enough money in the world to do what would be needed. For example, it was pointed out to me that the temperature varies so much that it is next to impossible to



keep the organ in tune. The chambers in summer can get up to 100 degrees while in winter they can dip to 45 degrees. There is no way possible to control the temperature evenly during the year. The Midmer-Losh was plagued with ciphers and most of the reeds were way off tune. There is no doubt that this organ is powerful. The audience, seated directly in front of the console, was exposed to ear splitting decibels of sound/noise (take your choice). Only 141 ranks were working, some of those being the most powerful, including the Ophicleide on 100" wind."

3. From Elaine Dawson

"I second the comments of Karl Keller. The experience was more than worth the time spent getting there and listening, even to those of us who are not professionals. I was both thrilled and repelled at the same time. The wall of sound was incredible, but the ciphers and some harsh reeds made me hold my ears at times. I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

4. From Jim Weisenborn, also reporting the visit of April 15, 1995.

"The Midmer-Losh was raw power. The auditorium was vast. As we entered we were invited to sit down front, to the right of the stage, almost beneath the shutter openings. Little did we know what to expect! When the organist hit the first big chords — well, an analogy might be that of a tidal wave washing over you. I fully expected the folding chairs and the occupants to float to the back of the room. Hearing the 100" reeds is an experience that one will not easily forget. I am not one of those Post Horn/Trumpet-en-Chamade enthusiasts who thrive on loudness, but I must say, the solo reed came through clearly and simulated a trumpet. I can understand how one might need this power if the auditorium were full of shouting fans or people singing. However, before the second number began, like many others I beat a fast retreat to the back of the auditorium. Even there, with the hard surfaces and reverberation, the organ was loud! As I looked around the auditorium at the various tone openings, I could only imagine how the entire organ must have sounded during its dedication. I wondered if they passed out ear protectors!

"Unfortunately, the Midmer-Losh was in need of tuning, and I found myself gritting my teeth several times. From the size of this instrument, you wonder how they keep any of it working. There were several ciphers (no small feat to locate in a hurry) during the program, but even discounting the ciphers and the untuned instrument, I still felt that the Kimball was tonally superior. However, in all fairness, I would like to hear the instrument (if ever that would be possible) when it is tuned and both chambers are playing. It certainly did have the bass!

"I don't think that there is any question that this installation was nothing but an ego trip for Senator Richards. I can only wonder if he received a consultation fee and if he got paid by the rank.

"The curator removed two doors from the back of the console booth and we were able to walk into the console. You have to see this to believe it. As for the ease of playing the instrument, I watched as three volunteers played selections. All of the

stop tabs seemed to be within easy reach. Although, given the number of them, I don't see how anyone could find anything in a hurry. And using music, I think, would be out of the question. The only way to play this monster would be to have your piece memorized, have somebody stand out in the room to guide you on registration. This is clearly not a practice instrument!

"If ever you have the chance to view the Midmer-Losh, do it. You'll talk about it for years."

5. From Bruce C. Willis

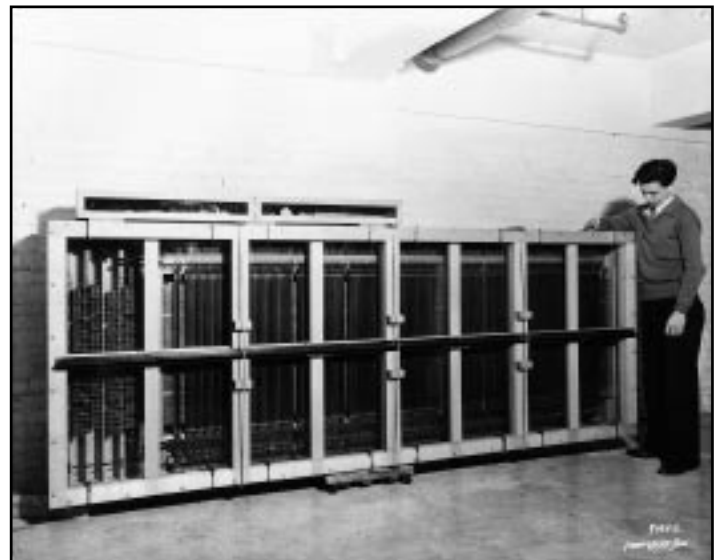
"I made a trip to Atlantic City to see the Convention Center organ in 1992. I heard one of the reed stops voiced on 100-inch wind pressure which had been restored about a month earlier and it made a very commanding sound, even down on the stage! I found the tour of the organ enjoyable and what was playing of it was badly out of tune, but you still get some idea of what the tone sounds like."

6. From Frank Vanaman

"I visited the Atlantic City Midmer-Losh in May, 1992. The first thing I saw was the 5-manual console, which is now located in the lobby of the convention hall. I found it to be considerably more attractive than the 7-manual console. The hall really is cavernous! The size of the place becomes apparent when you see staff driving around in electric golf carts!

"What struck me most about the main organ was that it was particularly loud. When I was there, they were only using the right main chamber (which contains the Great, Solo and about half the Pedal). This alone seemed loud enough to fill the hall. The upper work is loud and (when I heard it) very out of tune and the reeds the organist was using were all very brassy. The quieter stops were fairly undistinguished sounding.

"The only chamber we got into (due to time constraints) was the right main. It is spotless. Not only was I impressed with the cleanliness but also the layout. Everything is easily



A section of the main console's remote combination action. In total, the action consists of more than a dozen major components such as this.



“Keyer” relay room for the Left Stage and Left Forward chambers. This is the nerve center for the Pedal Left, Choir, Unenclosed Choir, Swell, Swell-Choir, and String I departments.



A section of the relays for departments in the Right Stage and R equipment is housed in a room above the entrance to the hall!

accessed. To get to a different level, you don't climb a ladder, you walk up a stairway with a handrail. All the walkboards are pretty much the same kind of thing, very wide and most with hand rails.”

7. From Kevin D. Chun

“The last time I was at the Convention Hall was just before the A.C. blower motors were installed. I have seen the swell organ and it is in a dusty but not abused condition.”

8. From Bob Zeman

“I heard the organ on one occasion several years ago [early 1990s]. Not knowing what to expect, I stood in the middle of the hall and waited for the organist to begin. When he did, I was immediately struck with the thought that this was the very biggest sound I have ever heard, not the loudest, mind you, but an overwhelming, all encompassing sound. Certainly the organ would have no problem at all taking a commanding position even if the hall were filled. This was when only the great and part of the pedal were operational. I can't fathom what it would be like when the whole thing was up and running!”

9. From Allan J. Ontko

“In 1977, I had the opportunity to play the auditorium organ. Only about 250 ranks were playable, and none of the 100" pressure reeds were working. The five-manual console was stored in the organ shop and had been disconnected for some years. The seven-manual console is really an attractive piece of work, and is remarkably comfortable.

“Perhaps the most striking thing about the sound of this gargantuan organ was the Diapason Chorus. It was clean, articulate, and brilliant; there was not a trace of the windy, forced, dull quality usually associated with high pressure Diapasons. Senator Richards may have been an eccentric character, but he really knew his stuff when it came to scaling and voicing in this organ.

“I can assure you that the 64' was not an “expensive draft”. One could hear the first harmonic (32') quite clearly, as well as a few other harmonics. The most impressive thing about it was the feeling you got as the pressure waves beat against your chest cavity. The sound is far less important than the sheer sensation of this rank — when you turned it on under, say, 150 ranks of Diapasons



Installing the main console never functioned properly a adjustment. The entire act basement rooms in which



tight Forward chambers. This is organ shop.

and reeds, the whole organ seemed to spread out around you.

“The full organ sound was rich, smooth, and terrifically brilliant, but never oppressive, even though it was spectacularly out of tune.”

10. From Donald J. Vaughn

“In 1970, the Seventh-Day Adventists held their Quadrennial Church Convention in the Atlantic City Convention Hall. I was the head organist for the event and spent 10 days with the organ and the politics involved. The organ must be turned on and off by a union electrician. For several days he was always ten to fifteen minutes late and the organ went off unannounced. Not until we generously greased his palm did he show up on time. At the time, the organ still ran off the same DC electric supply that the streetcars were on. Each of the blowers had to be slowly turned on with a primitive step resister system — one at a time. It took several minutes to do this. I was told that the city trolley cars had to be shut down during this process because of the drain on the electrical power plant.

First of all, I was very impressed with the

elegance of the console. It was beautifully built with elegantly inlaid woods. The keyboards were beautifully sculpted and felt marvelously under the fingers. At the time only about half of the organ was ever turned on.

When I asked about the other half, the organ curator said, “Any organist who can’t get along with 250 ranks isn’t much of an organist.” Nothing more said!

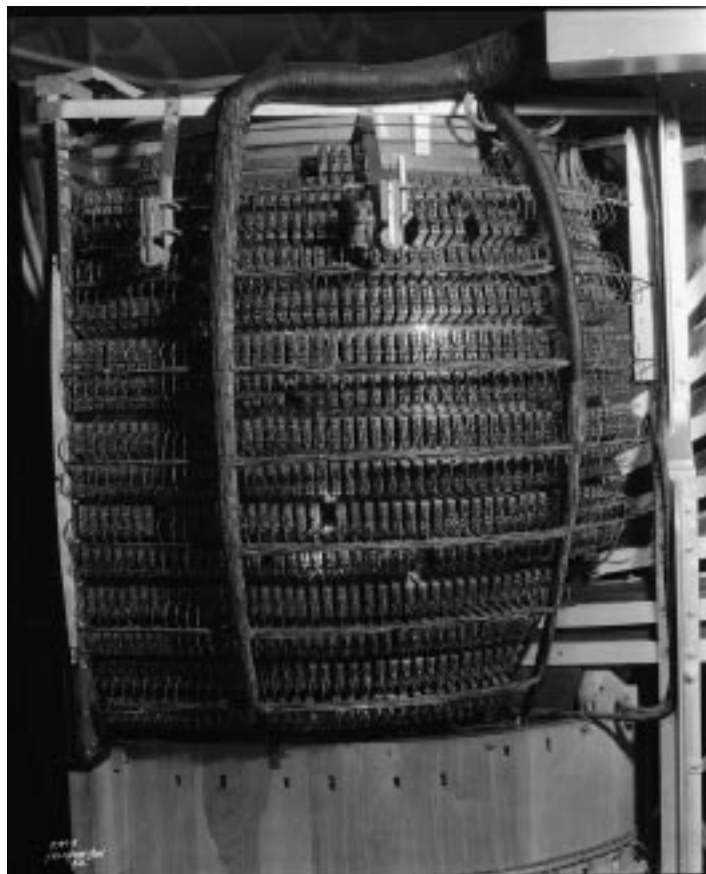
“There was no functioning combination action. There were about 35,000 people in attendance and I did accompany them on the organ. The console is a room all by itself and the stops curve around you so that you cannot hear the organ directly from the front chambers. You hear it as it reflects off the back wall, some 450 feet away. At one point, I tried the fugue from Bach’s D Major Prelude & Fugue. Starting the four-note repeating figure, D-E-F#-E, I did not hear them until several seconds later, by that time, I had lost count on how many times I had played them. Needless to say, I chose something else to play.”



Although these messages are reproduced without



combination action. Sadly, this precision-made equipment was nearby pipes carrying steam and hot water upset its delicate mechanism was ruined by the hurricane of 1944 which flooded the shop where this equipment is housed.



If you think that the 619 stop-keys on the main console’s right jamb are bewildering to behold, then take a look at the wiring behind them!

comment, some remarks are necessary in order to clarify a few points and make some minor corrections.

In posting #1, Arthur Goulet writes: "I read somewhere that in the organ's early days the Hall had to notify the local power company before they turned it on." This is probably a reference to a letter from William Barnes to Henry Willis III, dated March 25, 1930 (which appears in Charles Callahan's book *The American Classic Organ — A History in Letters*). Its main subject was the experimental 100-inch pipes, and Barnes says, "By calling up the power house and notifying them that they are going to start the blower [for the 100-inch wind]..." It is unclear if this is a reference to a power house in the city or to a local generator room in the building, but the answer may be given by Donald J. Vaughn in posting #10: "The organ must be turned on and off by a union electrician." So, perhaps the reason for "calling up the powerhouse" was to ask for someone to start the blower?

Also, the Hall originally had three rotary converters to change AC power to DC for the organ's blowers and other equipment in the hall. This is most likely the 'powerhouse' reference. Certainly, electricians I have explained this story to can see no technical reason for notifying the city's power station or electrical authority. Tales about the city's streetcars having to be stopped while the organ's blowers were started are probably an extension of the "calling up the power house" theme, and it therefore follows that there is no truth in them. They are merely 'urban legends'.

[Editor's Note: Dennis McGurk recently confirmed by telephone that he would call the engineer for the rotary converter room in the basement of the hall to make sure the converters were running before he started the organ blowers. This was the normal procedure in all the years prior to 1990 when the new AC motors were installed on the blowers.]

The total horsepower of the new motors (mentioned by

Goulet) for the seven blowers is actually 625. All seven blower motors have been replaced with AC motors. This was done around 1990.

The renovations to the hall have reduced the reverberation time from 8 seconds to a more comfortable level. Accurate measurements will be made in the near future; however, those who heard the right chamber run up in October 2001 were greatly impressed with the reduced reverberation time and the improved clarity of the organ in the hall.

The time lag (mentioned by Donald Vaughn in posting #10) from pipes in the Chambers nearest to the console is negligible. However, from the other side of the Auditorium there is indeed a noticeable delay in sound reaching the console (the departments in the Left Stage chamber were playable at the time when Vaughn was there).

Karl Keller noted temperature variations in the hall. A new computer-controlled HVAC system has been installed in the hall that will make it possible to achieve far better tem-

perature control throughout the year.

Sam Hovsepien — a technician with the Midmer-Losh firm — had this to say when Nelson Barden interviewed him in 1983:

"In playing the organ, there was quite a time lapse for the sound to get back to the console, but the effect of the distance was beautiful. It was like a big wave here, then a small wave back there, and another over there. It was stereo par excellence in a big way. It came from all directions.

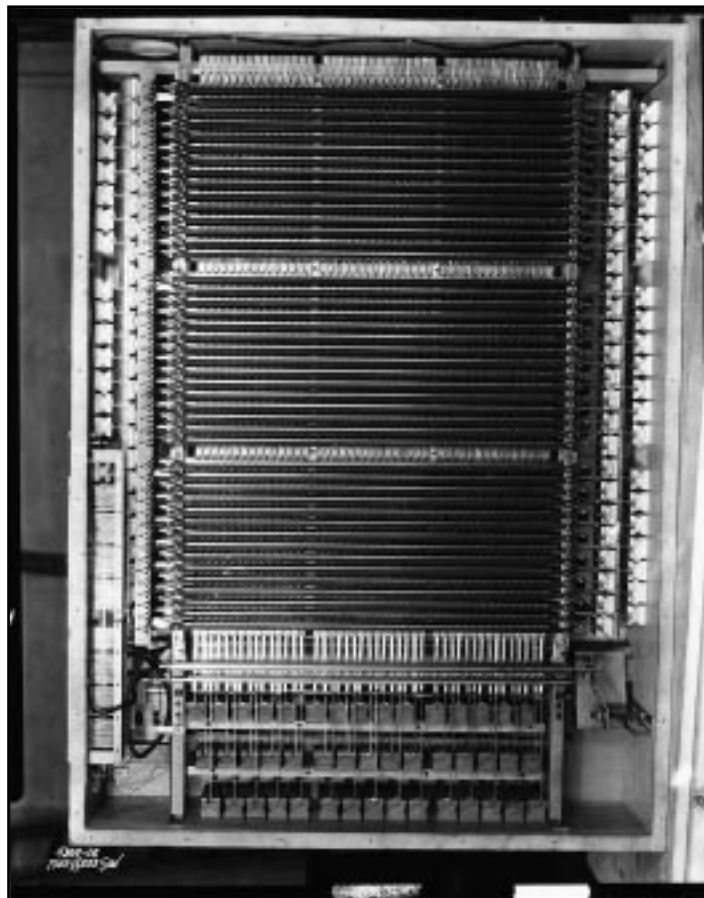
The perception of volume — in terms of a sound being loud or quiet — is largely subjective and, of course, based upon previous experience and other considerations. While there is little doubt that the Auditorium organ is loud, personally I tend to agree with the statement by Bob Zeman in posting #9: "...this was the very biggest sound I have ever heard, not the loudest, mind you, but an overwhelming, all encompassing sound."

If you have never seen or heard the Auditorium organ, make an informed opinion of it by taking Jim Weisenborn's advice (posting #4) "If you ever have the chance to view the Midmer-Losh, do it."

Now that Boardwalk Hall has re-opened, guided tours of the building are possible (call 609-449-2046 to make arrangements), although, at present, these tours do not include the organ. The ACCHOS hopes that organ tours can commence again later this year. While you're in Atlantic City, don't forget to visit the ACCHOS exhibit on the second floor of the Ocean One shopping mall, located just a couple of blocks from Boardwalk Hall.



Footnote: For those with internet access, information about the e-mail list PIPORG-L, which is owned and operated by Ben Chi and David Kelzenberg, can be found at: <http://www.albany.edu/piporg-l/> Similarly, details of another list, ORGUE-L, run by Brian Styles, can be found at: <http://www.mrc-bsu.cam.ac.uk/ORGUE-L/>



The main console's combination action—of which this is a part—remembers which stop-keys are in what positions. Thus, when a piston is pressed, current is sent only to those stop-keys that need to be moved in order to realize the piston's setting.

Pipe Organ Artists and Recording on the Edison Label

By Richard D. Densmore

(This Article has been published by the Association for Recorded Sound Collections: ARSC Journal, Volume 32, No. 1, Spring 2001, pages 28-43. The complete article can be found on the web: <http://homepages.bw.edu/~rdensmor/EdisonOrganArticle/>. The following excerpts from the article are reprinted here with permission.)

Pipe organ enthusiasts have long been an active component of the record buying public. Among early attempts to meet this interest was the Phonograph Division of Thomas A. Edison, Inc. (hereafter the Edison Company), which was run almost at the level of micro-management by Thomas A. Edison, the original inventor of the phonograph.

In 1877 Edison invented the first phonograph, which etched sound waves into a grooved cylinder wrapped in tin foil. Edison immediately foresaw many commercial possibilities for this recording device, which he would later proclaim to be his favorite invention.

By 1910 Edison was the only major company still issuing cylinder recordings, with sales dropping precipitously. Behind Mr. Edison's back, some of his engineers began developing a disc machine. When they showed him an early prototype, Edison quickly took leadership of the project and spent the next two and a half years and three million dollars developing the Edison Diamond Disc phonograph. This machine, introduced in late 1912, played 10-inch diameter, quarter inch thick, vertical cut discs using a reproducer with a diamond stylus connected by a woven silk cord to a diaphragm composed of 40 thin sheets of rice paper laminated together.

Frederick Kinsley became the first and most prolific recording artist of the organists to be issued on the Edison label. Born in 1886 to a musical family in New Haven, Connecticut, Kinsley began piano study at age 6 and was considered a prodigy.

On June 14, 1924 Frederick Kinsley

recorded for the first time for Edison, performing four pieces: "Prelude in C Sharp Minor, Op. 3" (Rachmaninoff), "Liebestraum" (Liszt), "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise" (Seitz), and "Poor Butterfly" (Hubbell).²³ This first session took place at the Hippodrome Theatre, using the theatre's three manual, seven rank organ that had recently been enlarged from two manuals and five ranks by the instrument's builder, Midmer-Losh, Inc. All four pieces recorded at this session were accepted and released by the Edison Company. However, the Hippodrome was found to be unsatisfactory as a recording venue, probably because of scheduling constraints and the fact that the organ was buried under the stage.

Subsequent recording sessions by Kinsley in January and June of 1925 utilized two different Midmer-Losh theatre organs erected in the Midmer-Losh factory located in the Long Island town of Merrick. Midmer-Losh was a very reputable organ builder, counting among its installations numerous fine church organs as well as theatre organs. In the early 1930's Midmer-Losh would become famous as the builder of the world's largest pipe organ, installed in Atlantic City's Convention Hall. Six pieces were recorded over two days in January 1925, and 24 pieces were recorded over six dates in June 1925. The success of these recordings prompted A. L. Walsh, a manager of Edison recording operations, to write the following memo to Thomas A. Edison, stressing the demand for organ records and requesting that an organ be installed in Edison's Columbia St. (West Orange, NJ) recording studio:



Edison Cylinder No. 5316 (end view) and container cover noting: "Frederick Kinsley on the Midmer Losh Pipe Organ"

June 29, 1926.

Mr. Thomas A. Edison:

SUBJECT: We need Organ Records

I am receiving a tremendous number of requests for Organ Records of popular selections to be sold at \$1.00. This demand has been so persistent and widespread that I am firmly convinced that I could do nothing more important to our record business than to issue such records, particularly as Victor is making a big hit with such records at 75 cents.

I am informed by Walter Miller that you told him to cut out Organ Records for this year. I should like to ask you to reconsider this matter.

First, bear in mind that I am never going to let my enthusiasm carry me away to a point where I ask for extravagant expenditures.

We can have a splendid Organ put in the Columbia Street Studio for thirty days at a cost of \$1,000. If it works out alright we can buy this Organ for \$6,500, and have the \$1,000 installation charge credited.

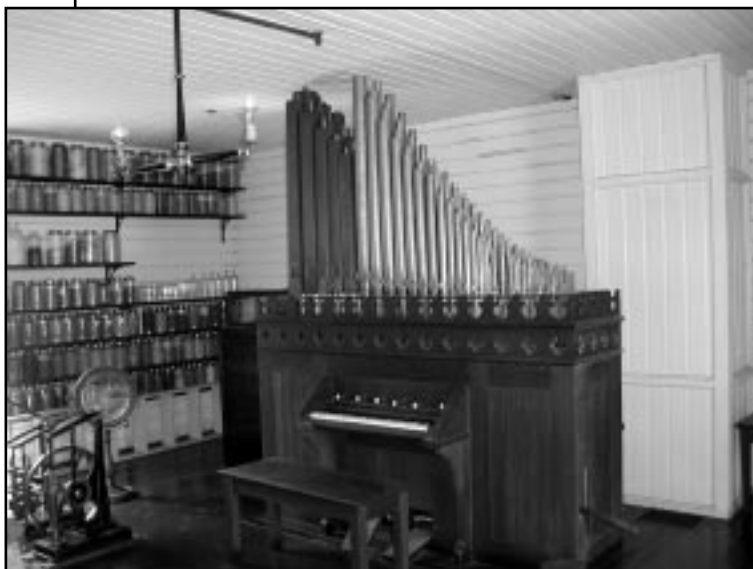
Now that is a lot of money, but it is really only the cost of twenty double-faced Fox Trot Records, and in about a year and a half, at most, we could issue that many popular Organ Records and give the Trade what they want and what they can sell.

I don't care about making up a lot of Organ Records in one month because I want to make, on the Organ, red hot selections while they are popular, and I see no way to do this unless we have an Organ at our disposal at all times.

We can make these records so that they will not blast, when played with the Dance Reproducer, if we just eliminate that very heavy bass pipe which really does not add anything to the performance but only clutters it up.

Furthermore, think of the use I can make of this Organ for Long Playing Records. Nothing is more popular over the Radio than Organ-recitals, and we can do some slick work in this respect for Organ enthusiasts.

A. L. Walsh



Replica of Edison's original Roosevelt organ in his laboratory
Photo by Ben Chi; Used with permission

As a result of this request, a "specially built" three manual, seven rank Midmer-Losh organ was installed in the Edison Columbia Street recording studio in the first week of November 1926. This organ was a conservatively voiced theatre organ that could also be used to play "classical" and church music. Starting in December 1926 through March 1928 Kinsley recorded for Edison on a more frequent and regular basis.

text from an Edison Disc Record Release Weekly bulletin promoting Kinsley's organ records to the Edison dealers

Just a Word or Two about Organ Records

Until recent years, the pipe organ was used chiefly in churches and large auditoriums, and was a more or less "classical" instrument. Since its adoption by the movie theatres, however, it has found a new place in public favor, and has become one of the most popular of musical instruments. The nation's annual bill for organ music is said to be now many millions of dollars.

The universal appeal of the organ is no doubt due to its great range and versatility, which enable it to give utterance to almost every conceivable human mood and emotion. This, incidentally, is the secret of its success in keeping up with the rapidly shifting scenes of the movies; and it is also the reason that organ records of popular music, though comparatively new in the phonograph world, take high rank today among the best sellers.

The musical variety of the organ, ranging from deep bass growls to high treble notes fine as cobwebs, with swift changes in tempo and volume, is not the easiest thing for phonograph recording and reproduction. Not all companies have dared to try it; and some who have tried it, though using great organs and master organists, are yet able to produce only a fair imitation of organ music, scarcely distinguishable from orchestra records, lacking the overtones that give life to music, and marred by metallic twang and clatter.

Here is a great opportunity for the Edison Dealer. For the EDISON, faithfully recording always just what it hears, reproduces the true organ voice in all its fullness and variety. Make this comparison for your customers: play an Edison organ record with the diamond; then play the same selection on a needle record, and let your customer judge. If he knows how a real organ sounds, he won't have to look at the record label, nor use his imagination, to tell which record reproduces the organ, and which one imitates it.

Edison organ records are made in our studio, on our own specially built Midmer-Losh Pipe Organ, played by Frederick Kinsley, organist of New York's famous "big" theatre, the "Hippodrome." These records not only sell themselves: they sell Edison Phonographs as well. Use them generously, and see how your list of proud owners will grow.



View of Edison's original laboratory with the Roosevelt organ against the rear wall.

Dr. Rollo F. Maitland recorded for the Edison Diamond Disc label in 1927 and 1928. All of his recordings for Edison were done on the Midmer-Losh organ in the Edison Columbia Street recording studio. Dr. Maitland was prominent both as a classical organist and as a theatre organist. Born in 1884 near Williamsport, PA, Maitland received his first musical instruction from his father. His only organ teacher was Dr. David D. Wood, an early proponent of Bach's organ music in America. Maitland was also a professional violinist. He earned fellow and choirmaster certificates from the American Guild of Organists, and headed the organ department at the Philadelphia Musical Academy, where he had earned his doctorate. In his career he performed major recitals and radio broadcasts on some of the country's largest and most famous instruments, including the Wanamaker organ in Philadelphia, and the Midmer-Losh Atlantic City Convention Hall organ. He composed numerous organ and piano pieces, as well as anthems and songs. He died in 1953 at the age of 68.

One of the most colorful personalities to record on the organ for Edison was Mr. C. Sharpe Minor. Charles Minor was by all accounts a great showman and one of the better known theatre organists in the 1920's. He cleverly borrowed his mother's maiden name (Sharpe) to create an eye-catching name for theatre marquees. Mr. Minor reportedly was able to play with lightening speed, even when in an inebriated state. In 1925 Minor entered into a business affiliation with the Link Piano Company of Binghamton, NY, manufacturers of orchestral pipe organs. They began offering a series of Link-C. Sharpe

Minor Unit Organs for theatres. Minor toured extensively with a "portable" Link 3 manual, 8 rank organ. In 1929 he opened a studio in Los Angeles where he gave lessons and broadcast organ recitals using a three manual Robert Morton organ. As late as the 1950's he issued a long-playing record of electronic organ music,

C. Sharpe Minor recorded only two numbers for Edison, in April 1927 at the Sanford Theatre in Maplewood, New Jersey. A 2 manual, 7 rank Wurlitzer organ was used. Earlier that same month and also in February 1927 Frederick Kinsley had recorded for Edison at that same theatre. From July through December 1928, Henrietta Kamern recorded on seven different occasions for the Edison company, on the Möller Organ at Loew's Rio Theatre in New York City. Simultaneous recordings (electrical) on both Diamond Disc and needle cut were apparently made of a few of the selections.

The final organist to record for Edison, just a few weeks before the company closed shop, was Warren Yates. Mr. Yates, a local New Jersey theatre organist, was born in 1888 in Brooklyn, New York. His mother provided his initial music lessons. He became a church organist at the age of 16 in Brooklyn. By 1920 he was a theatre organist and was named chief organist at the Branford Theater, in Newark, New Jersey. He also performed at theatres in Paterson, NJ and in Washington, DC. He performed on the air over radio station WODA in Paterson.

The Edison Company ceased all recording operations on October 19, 1929, and Mr. Yates' record, though manufactured, was not officially released before the company went out of business. A few copies of the record exist in private collections, however.

Thomas A. Edison was a technical genius with admittedly conservative, provincial and, at times, eccentric musical tastes. Nevertheless, he produced thirty-four organ Diamond Disc records that, almost eighty years later, are still very playable and highly collectible. These records give us an excellent idea of what the organs and organists of the time sounded like, and the kind of music that was popular on the "King of Instruments" during the "Roaring Twenties".

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Compact Disc Recording

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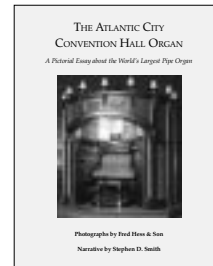
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