ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION HALL ORGAN SOCIETY INC.
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the GRAND OPHICLEIDE

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

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1009 Bay Ridge Avenue, PMB 108, Annapolis, Maryland 21403
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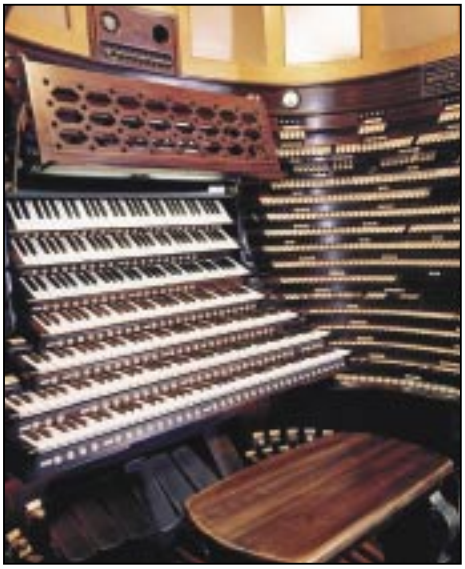

The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1997 and dedicated to the use, preservation and restoration of the organs in the Atlantic City Boardwalk Convention Hall.

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On the Cover — The 5-manual portable console designed by Senator Emerson Richards for the Midmer-Losh organ. The photo shows the third and final re-build of the console. It was nearly discarded several years ago, but cooler heads prevailed and it was saved. *Photo by Antoni Scott.*

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The Pedal Organ

by Stephen D. Smith

With a grand total of 35 stops (46 ranks and 2,709 pipes), the original Pedal organ — as proposed in the Convention Hall instrument's first contract — was to be a large affair. However, as is well known, the specifications were scaled down; both to fit the available budget and, in all probability, because the instrument would have been too big to be accommodated in the six chambers (or even, perhaps, in eight — bearing in mind that two more chambers were, ultimately, provided).

During this process of scaling down, the Pedal organ suffered considerably. Among the losses were some stops that would have been unique in the organ world, e.g. the Pedal Left's *Diaphone Major* on 100 inches of wind — at one time, the instrument's designer, Emerson Richards, was even considering a 16-foot pedal flue voiced on this pressure! Richards was almost certainly quite ruthless when wielding his eraser in the direction of the Pedal organ because its large pipes took up the most room. Indeed, the main reason for the 64-foot *Diaphone Profunda* — with its proposed scale of 40"x40" — being deleted was because he feared it would "crowd-out" the chamber.

The consequence of this particular deletion was that, ultimately, the 64-foot reed, the *Dulzian*, was moved from the Pedal Left to the Pedal Right — although, in the process and by some curious quirk of fate, its lowest 22 notes were sounded by diaphone pipes (but that's all part of another story). The *Tierce* and *Septieme* stops were also moved from the Left side to the Right. These were to make up for the loss of the six-rank *Compensating Mixture*, which, according to the contract, was to be fashioned after Audsley's specifications, i.e. arranged so that its notes became quieter as they ascended the pedalboard. This was usually achieved by gradually reducing the number of ranks, but the original stop list for the Auditorium organ indicates 192 pipes for the stop, i.e. six ranks of 32 pipes throughout. Perhaps, therefore, Richards had something else in mind for the stop (since this original stop list is, effectively, a "paper only" specification, there can be little point in dwelling on it for too long).

A summary of all the various changes to the Pedal Organ (the deletions, the moves from Left to Right or *vice versa*, the second contract, etc.) is given below.

PEDAL LEFT	
Diaphone, 32', 68 pipes, 50" wind.	Retained.
Diapason, 32', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Retained.
Quint 21 1/3', 68 pipes, 10" wind.	Deleted.
Diaphone Major, 16', 32 pipes, 100" wind.	Deleted.
Contra Bass, 16', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Violone, 16', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Tibia Clausa, 16', 85 pipes, 15" wind.	Retained, wind increased to 20".
Diapason II, 16', 85 pipes, 10" wind.	Deleted.
Tierce, 12 4/5', 68 pipes, 10" wind.	Moved to Pedal Right, wind increased to 20".
Septieme, 9 1/7', 68 pipes, 10" wind.	Moved to Pedal Right, wind increased to 20".
Grand Octave, 8', 32 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Grand Viol, 8', 32 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Major Fifteenth, 4', 32 pipes, 15" wind.	Deleted.
Stentor Sesquialtera, 7 rks, 224 pipes, 20" wind.	Retained.
Dulzian, 64', 80 pipes, 30" wind.	Moved to Pedal Right, wind increased to 35".
Bombard, 32', 85 pipes, 75" wind.	Retained; wind reduced to 50".
Fagottone, 32', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Retained.
Posaune, 16', 56 pipes, 100" wind.	Retained; wind reduced to 50".
Sub total: 18 stops; 24 ranks; 1,355 pipes.	

PEDAL RIGHT	
Diaphone Profunda, 64', 68 pipes, 50" wind.	Deleted.
Diapason, 32', 44 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Tibia Clausa, 32', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Retained.
Diaphone Phonon, 16', 32 pipes, 50" wind.	Retained.
Diaphonic Diapason, 16', 85 pipes, 30" wind.	Moved to Pedal Left; wind increased to 35".
Tibia Major, 16', 85 pipes, 30" wind.	Retained.
Diapason Phonon, 16', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Principal, 16', 85 pipes, 10" wind.	Retained.
Viol, 16', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Retained.
Gross Gemshorn, 16', 85 pipes, 10" wind.	Deleted.
Compensating Mixture, 6 rks, 192 pipes, 10" wind.	Deleted.
Bombardon, 32', 68 pipes, 40" wind.	Retained; wind pressure reduced to 30".
Trombone, 32', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Ophicleide, 16', 44 pipes, 100" wind.	Retained.
Tuba Major, 16', 85 pipes, 40" wind.	Deleted.
Trumpet, 16', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	Retained.
Tromba Quint $10^{2}/_{3}$', 56 pipes, 20" wind.	Deleted.
Sub total: 17 stops; 22 ranks; 1,354 pipes.	

These savage cuts deprived the Pedal organ of 15 stops — almost half (three-sevenths, to be precise) of its 35 voices. Whether or not these deleted stops would have been of notable value to the instrument is, of course, a matter for inconclusive speculation. Although a number of softer stops (e.g. *Gemshorn, Violone, Diapason II*) were disposed off, quite a number of the louder ones went under the axe too. As a consequence of their removal, a lot of theoretical space was "freed-up" for other stops.

The change of wind pressure for some voices was probably due to a rationalization and cost-cutting process, whereby the overall number of pressures was reduced from 24 to 16. Nevertheless, the Pedal organ still possessed one stop on 100 inches of wind and four stops on 50 inches. The result of all these changes — the Pedal organ, as actually built — is shown below:

PEDAL LEFT	**PEDAL RIGHT**
Diaphone, 32', 97 pipes, 50" wind.	*Tibia Clausa*, 32', 97 pipes, 20" wind.
Diapason, 32', 97 pipes, 20" wind.	*Diaphone Phonon*, 16', 39 pipes, 50" wind.
Major Diapason, 16', 32 pipes, 20" wind.	*Tibia Major*, 16', 85 pipes, 30" wind.
Diaphonic Diapason, 16', 85 pipes, 35" wind.	*Principal*, 16', 109 pipes, 30" wind.
Bass Viol, 16', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	*Viol*, 16', 85 pipes, 30" wind.
Tibia Clausa, 16', 85 pipes, 20" wind.	*Tierce*, $12^{4}/_{5}$', 68 pipes, 20" wind.
Stentor Sesquialtera, 7rks, 224 pipes, 20" wind.	*Septieme*, $9^{1}/_{7}$', 68 pipes, 20" wind.
Bombard, 32', 97 pipes, 50" wind.	*Dulzian*, 64', 85 pipes, 35" wind.
Fagotto, 32', 109 pipes, 20" wind.	*Bombardon*, 32', 85 pipes, 35" wind.
Major Posaune, 16', 44 pipes, 50" wind.	*Grand Ophicleide*, 16', 85 pipes, 100" wind.
	Trumpet, 16', 97 pipes, 20" wind.
Sub total: 10 stops; 16 ranks; 955 pipes.	Sub total: 11 stops; 11 ranks; 903 pipes.
Grand total: 21 stops; 27 ranks; 1,858 pipes.	

The reason why some Pedal stops ended up with an increased number of pipes was because they were made available on the extended manuals — via the seven-octave "Grand" departments — and therefore required a compass of 85 notes for each register. All of the Pedal Left stops (except the *Major Diapason* and *Stentor Sesquialtera*) are available on the Grand Choir and most of the Pedal Right's (except the *Tierce*, *Septieme*, and *Diaphone Phonon*) are playable from the Grand Great. These departments, as originally conceived, were to borrow stops from a number of locations around the organ but, in the event, it was the Pedal department that provided the vast majority of their registers (the Grand Great has one register derived from the Great organ's Principal unit). This was, in part, due to the fact that Seibert Losh wanted to place the Pedal organ's resources at the disposal of pianists — without them having to resort to using the pedalboard — if they were asked to deputize for the organist. It's partly for the same reason that the Choir and Great manuals possess piano-like compasses.

The Pedal Right is the home department of the *Grand Ophicleide*, the world's loudest organ stop. It speaks on 100 inches of wind and its power is, frankly, frightening, but it is well suited to the vast proportions of the Convention Hall's main auditorium. Most of the other stops in this department are voiced on 30 inches of wind, whereas the majority of stops in the Pedal Left are on 20 inches. These pressures are, of course, somewhat astounding but, after a while, one seemingly becomes immune to them and realizes that, actually, they're necessary in a room of this size. The stops produce the sound that's expected of them and they do the job that they're supposed to do — regardless of their wind pressures. The real genius of Richards's specifications for these stops is that he seems to have got it "just right" — although how much of this was due to luck and/or judgement and/or trial-and-error is unknown.

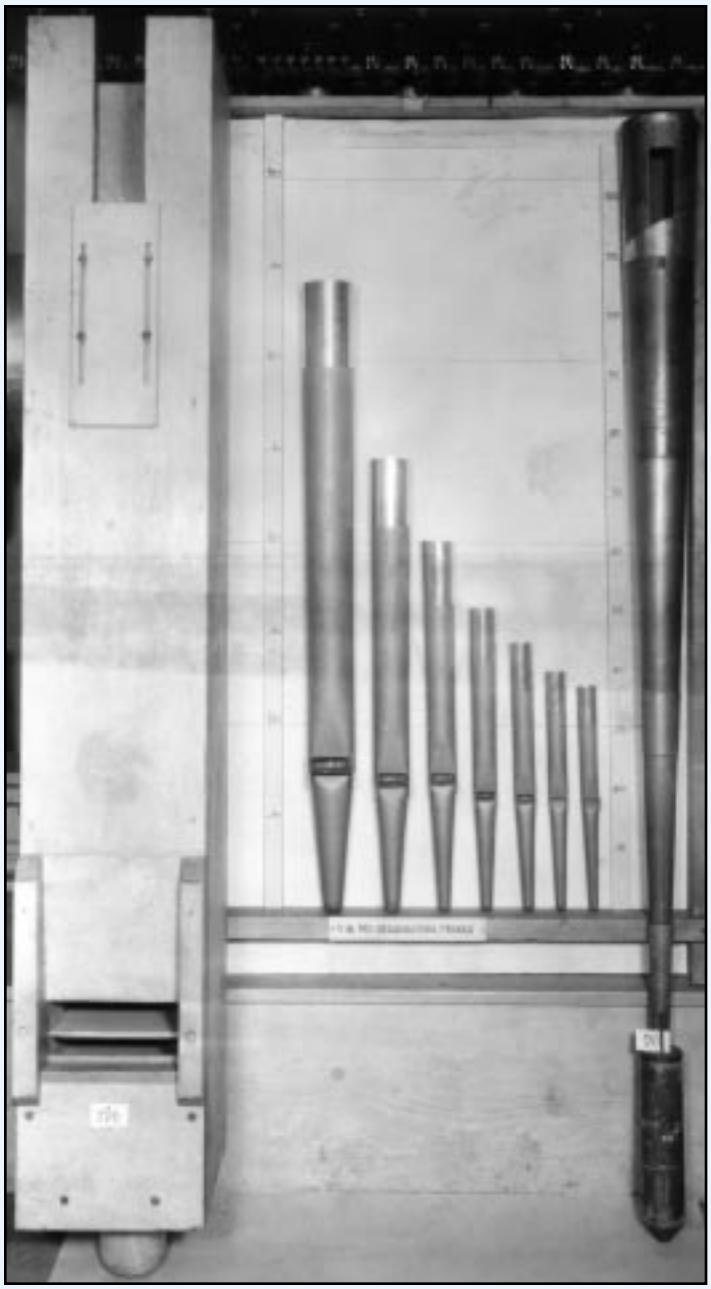
The foundations of each side of the Pedal organ are quite obvious. The Pedal Left's *Major Diapason* — stop #320, the last voice to be added to the instrument — is, in reality, just another version of the Pedal Right's *Tibia Major*. There are similarities, too, between the *Tibia Clausa* and the *Viol* stops on their respective sides. A metal *Diapason* on the Pedal Left is almost matched by a wooden *Principal* on the Right, and there are 50-inch diaphones on both sides.

The Pedal organ is, of course, part of the "core" of the instrument. The manual "core" departments are the Choir, Unenclosed Choir, Great, Brass Chorus, Swell, and Solo organs — a total of 139 stops or 207 ranks. Of these, 13 are extended. However, when the Pedal's stops are added to the equation, the total number of stops increases to 160 (234 ranks) and the number of extended stops rises to 32. This is because 19 of the Pedal organ's 21 stops are unified — the Pedal Left's *Major Diapason* and *Stentor Sesquialtera* being the only straight stops. Obviously, this difference in the ratio of straight stops and extended stops on the manuals and on the pedals is somewhat stark. However, it should be noted that that the Pedal organ was merely a product of its generation and of the thinking of that generation. Richards did later state that the Pedal organ would be "straighter" if he had the opportunity to design the Convention Hall organ over again but, of course, the space consideration would still be a limiting factor.

Despite the overwhelming use of extended stops on the Pedal, its potency should not be underestimated. It certainly shifts some air, but there is clarity of tone as well as "boom." Anyone who has heard the 1998 CD recording of the instrument will realize how authoritative the Pedal organ is — and that's with only half of its stops working! This is why the CD carries the warning: "Playback volume should be carefully controlled to avoid amplifier and/or loudspeaker damage." This warning will have to be given more prominence if the instrument is recorded when the Pedal Left section is working too — with its *Diaphone*, *Bombarde*, and *Major Posaune* stops, all on 50 inches of wind!

However, "building 'em big and blowing 'em hard" is only part of the reason for the Pedal organ's presence in the building. Another consideration is that the chambers allow the sound directly into the room. Yes, the pipes are in chambers, but they have ample tone openings to allow the sound out and they're not tucked-away around a corner somewhere, like so many other organ chambers are. [It's true that deep frequencies "travel" better and further than high ones, but the difference in output from an organ in a corner chamber and the same instrument in a chamber that speaks directly along its building is startling.] Then, of course, there's the fact that there are no obstructions in the hall to impede the sound's progress along the room. All of these factors — in addition to the scales, voicing, and wind pressures — "assist" the Pedal stops (and, of course, the rest of the instrument too).

On the seven-manual console, the Pedal organ's registers are supplemented by borrowing almost every manual 16' stop on the instrument. The result is a Pedal organ comprised of four distinct departments (Pedal Left, Pedal Right, Pedal Left Gallery, Pedal Right Gallery) which, between them, possess 36 16-foot flues and 30 16-foot reeds! In total, this main console has 261 stop-keys (including couplers, second touch registers, etc.), on the Pedal organ — which makes it, by far, the instrument's biggest department.



Clockwise, from top left: **Pedal Left pipes, left to right: Diaphone (30"x30" scale at 32'), Diapason (24" scale at 32'), Diaphonic Diapason (14" scale at 16'), Bass Viol (7"x9" scale at 16'), Tibia Clausa (13"x16" scale at 32'), Bombard (24"x24" scale at 32'), Fagotto (two pipes) (8" scale at 32').**

Pedal Left Pipes, left to right: Major Diapason (20"x24" scale at 32'), Stentor Sesquialtera (7 pipes) (#42 base scale), Major Posaune (9" scale at 16').

Pedal Right pipes, left to right: Tibia Clausa (24"x30" at 32'), Principal (11 "x13"at 16'), Viol (#40 scale at 16'), Bombardon (24" scale at 32'), Grand Ophicleide (15"x15" scale at 16'), Trumpet (8.5" scale at 16'), Dulzian (27"x27" scale at 64'), Tibia Major (19"x20" scale at 16').

Pedal Right pipes, left to right: Diaphone Phonon (24"x24" scale at 16'), Tierce (#32 scale at 12-4/5'), Septieme (#40 scale at 9-1/7').

Pedal Right pipes, in situ.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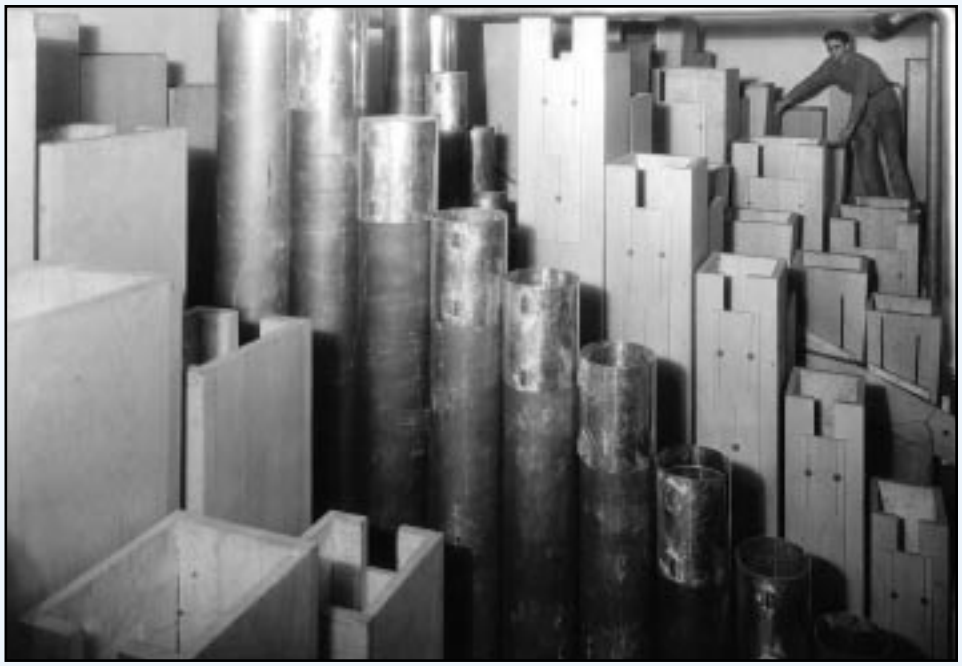

Shock and Awe

The television show *Ripley's Believe it or Not!* is preparing a story featuring the Midmer-Losh organ in a segment about three of the world's largest musical instruments. They have asked to use the home video made by John Ledwon. John, Tom DeLay and friends visited the Convention Hall in 1997 and were given a tour by Dennis McGurk, the curator at the time. While in the pipe chambers, those present were constantly heard expressing "shock" and "awe" on the video at what they were seeing in terms of scale, craftsmanship, and beauty of detail of the pipework. This rare and interesting footage is being considered for a limited release on DVD for historical purposes.

Recordings

from the Collections of the University of Pennsylvania Archives

ACCHOS has just been granted a special license by Universal Music Services to replicate the original Mercury recordings of *Bach on the Biggest* and *Boardwalk Pipes* onto CD recordings for fund-raising purposes.

These recordings were made in 1956 by Mercury Records and are legendary as the only professional recordings ever made of both organs in Boardwalk Hall. *Bach on the Biggest* was recorded on the 449-rank Midmer-Losh organ and *Boardwalk Pipes* was recorded on the 55-rank Kimball organ in the Ballroom. Robert Elmore was organist on both albums.

Bach on the Biggest includes the Toccata & Fugue in D Minor, Wachet Auf!, In Dulci Jubilo, and the Toccata, Adagio & Fugue in C. Wachet Auf! makes stunning use of the Grand Ophicleide, one of the four stops on 100" of wind.

Boardwalk Pipes includes (Sousa-Elmore) The Stars & Stripes Forever, (Kreisler-Elmore) Stars in My Eyes, Caprice Viennois, The Old Refrain, Liebesfreud, (Elmore) Fantasy on Nursery Themes, (Kramer) Eklog, (Weaver) Squirrel, (Boex) Marche Champêtre, (Clark) Trumpet Voluntary.

The process of restoring these unique archival recordings to CD format will take a few months. We are not able to accept advance orders at this time. A notice will be sent when the CD recordings are in print and available for purchase.

Ballroom Organ Rehabilitation

The New Jersey Office of Historic Preservation in the Department of Environmental Protection advises that the NJSEA now plans to rehabilitate the Ballroom Kimball pipe organ as a first measure in the restoration of the Boardwalk Hall pipe organs. Plans are being made and will have to be approved by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the National Park Service before work will begin.

Sprinkler Systems

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs has decreed that the organs must be fitted with fire-suppression systems. These systems are now being very carefully considered after some considerable attention was paid to the issue in the press. ACCHOS has been advised that a full opportunity will be given for review and comment on the proposed installations in order to protect the organs and without interfering with required ongoing maintenance and restoration work on both organs possible.

ACCHOS Board Member and photographer, Antoni Scott, playing the organ during the 1998 recording sessions. ***Staff photo by Vern Ogrodnek, Press of Atlantic City.***

A portion of the left toe studs. Numbers 4 and 7 look like they were used often.

The original blower control panel for the Midmer-Losh organ located on the wall to the left of the kiosk.

The original DC generator for the Midmer-Losh organ. It is located in the blower room for the Right Stage chamber. The new AC motor was installed about twelve years ago.

ACCHOS member Nicholas Gregory from West Yorkshire in Great Britain kindly sent the interesting original check dated February 12, 1924 shown in the photo, which was drawn on the Boardwalk National Bank, payable to John Wanamaker in Philadelphia. At first glance, one would think this is a personal check; however, John Wanamaker passed away in 1922, and this was more likely a check made to the department store. Using an online inflation calculator, this would have been equivalent to $60 in 2001.


No. 6 Atlantic City, N.J. 2/12 1924

The Boardwalk National Bank

Pay to the order of John Wanamaker Phila Pa $ 6 00

Six Dollars Dollars

6.00

Relatively little historical information has been discovered about the organists who played the Boardwalk Hall organs. Lois Miller is the best known personality. Emerson Richards hired her after hearing her play the organ on the Million Dollar Pier (now Ocean One Mall). After the 1944 hurricane that ruined the combination action, organ curator Roscoe Evans did all of her registration by hand during performances. Lois Miller was hall organist until 1958. It is said she was on the bench for 25 years, indicating that she began as organist in 1933.

Recently, Antoni Scott scanned a slide he took in 1972 of another organist. After circulating it the following information showed up:

(From the desk of this country's pre-eminent historical sleuth,Tom DeLay, comes the answer to the riddle of who the blond woman is playing the M-L in Antoni Scott's 1972 photo.)

Who is the new Mystery Organist?

…It is Barbara Williams who played the Midmer-Losh after Lois Miller retired. Barbara played for numerous conventions including one of the national political circuses. She played for a Kiwanis convention in the late 70s.

It was in June 1963 that I first heard Lois Miller play the Midmer-Losh. I related this story to Dave Junchen — he wished I had told him this well before he published Vol. I of *The Encyclopedia Of The American Theatre Organ*!

The first night of the 1963 Kiwanis Convention, Lois Miller played the organ as a church organ. This was the second pipe organ I ever heard. Might as well go for the best! Lois played Mallotte's "The Lord's Prayer" during the first night's proceedings as this was also a memorial for passed-on Kiwanians. There was a fellow helping her register the organ on all five nights. I have since learned this was William Rosser, the organ curator at the time.

Anyway, *The Lord's Prayer* kept building and building and ***building.*** At the "For thine is the glory…" the big reeds were gradually added into the already thundering organ (I am getting emotional just remembering it). By the near end, the 100" reeds were bringing the roof down. I was absolutely awestruck. As a 9-year-old kid, I was hooked. I looked over at my mother — she had tears streaming down her face. That was the first I learned of the emotional impact of music and the organ.

The remaining nights, the organ was played by Mrs. Miller as a theatre organ with all sorts of pop and show tunes. *That* was something I had *never* heard an organ do!

It would be 35 years before I saw/heard/played this magnificent organ again. I hope I get to hear it restored one of these years.

—Tom DeLay

Note: On page 6 of the Fall 2000 issue of the Grand Ophicleide (No.6), ACCHOS member, Bill Bardell's 1969 photo of Lois Miller at the console is shown. It was taken during the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biologists Convention (FASEB). He wrote:

"I'll tell you this – she was as elegant a lady as you'd ever hope to meet when we spoke. I was certainly in awe, and not just with her playing. She exuded class. And self-confidence. I stood there waiting her play – for several days, in fact. I'd get there early on purpose, partly to check out my competitors' booths, mostly to experience the organ. The sheet music in the rack is Herb Alpert's 'This Guy's in Love With You,' 'Up, Up, and Way,' and 'The Odd Couple.'"

The 1969 photo seems to counter Miller's reported 1958 retirement, but the actual facts here are a bit fuzzy. One wonders whether it was Lois Miller or Barbara Williams who played the brief scene exit passage on the Midmer-Losh in the 1972 film, *The King of Marvin Gardens,* starring Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern, and Ellen Burstyn. The registrations seen in the film look like those of Lois Miller; however, Barbara Williams could have used them too.

(Reprinted from *Theatre Organ Summer 1964* page 21, Vol. VI No. 2)

DELAWARE VALLEY CHAPTER

by Edger W. Plesser

Delaware Valley Chapter members had the unusual opportunity last November of hearing Miss Barbara Fesmire, daughter of Laura T. Fesmire, Delaware's secretary, play the huge Midmer-Losh 7m/455r organ in Atlantic City Convention Hall, New Jersey. This is one of two exceptionally fine instruments in the building. The other, located in the ballroom, is the largest and most complete theatre organ ever built, having four manuals and 55 ranks – but more on this one in a future article.

Barbara Fesmire at the console of the Midmer-Losh organ in Atlantic City Convention Hall.

Beauty and the Beast

Only a real musician and a master organist can hope to control the vast resources of this famous organ. The console is designed so that the organist finds every control within reach. From this giant "brain" the tone of over 33,000 speaking pipes is controlled.

At this fantastic console Miss Barbara Fesmire rendered a recital for the Delaware Valley chapter last November.

Barbara, who is as pretty and charming as she is talented, was born May 5, 1943 and began her musical career on the piano at the age of five. At the age of 13, she began studying at the WurliTzer Organ Studios, but her natural talent for the instrument demanded a more advanced type of instruction to fully develop her musical aptitude. So in 1957 she enrolled as a pupil of ATOE's Leonard MacClain and has been studying organ techniques with this renowned organist and teacher ever since.

At the age of 15 Barbara became assistant organist at Chambers-Wylie Memorial Presbyterian Church and the following year she was organist and accompanist to the choirs at Lower Moreland High School.

At 16 she was appointed organist for the Rotary International Conference at Atlantic City, New Jersey. Barbara is presently house organist at the Sedgwich Theater in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and teaches both organ and piano.

we get mail

It is very nice to hear that work is still being done to refurbish a Grand Old Lady.

As I was growing up in Atlantic City I became aware of the organ in the Convention Hall quite by accident. My father was a teacher in the Atlantic City School System. Once a year the state held a teachers' convention at the hall with all sorts of exhibits and my father would let me tag along as he new I was interested in all sorts of things.

At the time I was very interested in snakes and things of that sort and there was a company there that dealt with things for biology teachers. While visiting these exhibits someone began playing the organ. I went off on my own on one such visit and found the source of the sound.

I was fascinated by all the buttons and keys to say the least. At that point in time I had been taking some music lessons so I understood basically what was going on with the instrument. I asked a lot of questions about an organ and how they worked through my church organist. So the following year when I went back to the convention I went directly to find the organist. I was very fortunate to be given a tour of inner workings of the instrument and allowed to go back to see more as I had befriended several of the stagehands who worked at the Hall. To say the least to a youngster this was an amazing site. How all of this could be operated from one location was beyond my understanding.

I got to listen to the organ a number of times while in Atlantic City. I also learned while attending high school that very often when something went wrong at the hall they would sometimes come to the high school and rob parts from the organ in the auditorium.

I would guess that outside of the simple wonder of seeing and hearing this instrument that by the way at that time was under-funded for repairs, was meeting E. Power Biggs. I got to sit with him at the console and reach up and turn several pages for him while he rehearsed.

I remember it being played for the 1964 Democratic Convention. I can also remember that you could hear the organ while standing on the Boardwalk in front of the Convention Hall.

I got to play the organ in the ballroom my senior year in high school as I was the back up organist for our graduation. As you are aware it was installed about the same time as the larger one.

Bill Vogt
Stage Manager
Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra

Membership

Yearly ACCHOS membership dues are:

Regular $20 • Contributor $40 • Donor $75
Supporter $100 • Benefactor $250 • Sponsor $500
Life Membership $1,000

Overseas Regular *membership is $30 to defray postage costs. Please make checks payable in your currency to ACCHOS and mail to:* **Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc., 1009 Bay Ridge Avenue, PMB 108, Annapolis, Maryland 21403**
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