

ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION HALL ORGAN SOCIETY INC.
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The GRAND OPHICLEIDE

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

Issue 23

Spring 2004



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

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
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*the GRAND OPHICLEIDE is published
quarterly for its members by The Atlan-
tic City Convention Hall Organ Society,
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*Design & Layout
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On The Cover – Vibrant new painting and color illuminations now highlight the proscenium in Boardwalk Hall. The Kiosk for the 7-manual console, Right Stage and Right Forward organ chambers can be seen in the photo. Harry Bellangy took this photo in October 2001. The red, white, and blue bunting had been added for a 9/11 memorial.

First Meeting Set For New Board of Trustees

The Historic Organ Restoration Committee, Inc. has been established in New Jersey as a non-profit organization to oversee the funding and restoration of the pipe organs in Boardwalk Hall. The New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority has established a special account with \$1.17 million available to begin the process.

The Trustees will have their first meeting in Atlantic City on May 19, 2004. The Board of Directors of ACCHOS have recommended that the initial funds be divided to restore the Kimball to full playing condition and suggest the organization of a 'symposium' of qualified professional volunteers to clean and re-start the Right Stage chamber of the Midmer-Losh so that it can once again be heard as it was in 1998 prior to the hall renovation project.

Website Additions

Several new additions have been made to the website at acchos.org. Recently we received a copy of a recording of Barbara Fesmire and Lowell Ayers practicing on the Midmer-Losh organ. Barbara Fesmire became the resident organist in 1969 after Lois Miller had to retire for health reasons. There are four sound clips in the new sequence and, although the sound quality is limited, one can hear some beautiful registrations. The recording date is unknown, but likely done in the early 70s.

There is also a brief video clip of Timothy Hoag playing the Midmer-Losh organ that was recorded in November 1998 at the time the Auditorium Organ CD recording was made. This was before the hall renovation and the restoration of the original color painting in the room.

Memories

It is worth re-quoting Tom Delay's statement first published in the Spring 2003 issue of *The Grand Ophicleide*:

"It was in June 1963 that I heard Lois Miller play the Midmer-Losh. 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 "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 5 nights. I have since learned this was William Rosser.

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."

The Seven-Manual Console

By Stephen D. Smith



The Auditorium organ's main console — with its seven manuals and 1,235 stop-keys — is probably the instrument's most well known feature. Photographs of it have appeared in numerous organ books and journals. As discussed in *The Grand Ophicleide* #21 (Fall 2003 issue), it's probably not for practical reasons that there are seven manuals; it's simply due to one-upmanship and the desire to exceed the Wanamaker organ's six manuals (as the seventh manual has no speaking stops, and only four couplers to connect the Gallery organs to it).

Like many of the organ's features, this console went through several design stages before the present arrangement was arrived at. In its early days, for example, there were to be only (!) six manuals. A prototype was constructed by the Austin Organ Co. to see if would be possible to accommodate the anticipated 1,300 stop-keys. This mock-up consisted of timber "manuals," while the 10 "rows" of stop-keys were simply thin strips of wood. Most of these "rows" extended all the way round the console in a horseshoe formation, passing between the upper manual and the music desk. The furthest stop-keys on each side were to be located behind the player, at arm's-length distance.

The organ's designer, Emerson Richards seems to have thought that the theatre/horseshoe console was necessary to convince (what he called) "the average audience" that an organ was "any good." "The old type console means the old type church organ played in the old style," he wrote in *The American Organist* of May 1929. These remarks were actually made regarding the Auditorium organ's smaller console — which was, originally, to be of the horseshoe type — although, at this stage, it seems that the main console was to be of this type too. In the event, neither ended up with a horseshoe layout, despite Richards' assertion that it was "easier to sell...organ music [to "the average audience"] with the familiar music-box in view".

Other plans for this early version of the main console included a seven-octave compass for the Choir manual and six octaves for the Great and Swell (this was later amended to seven octaves for the Choir and Great, and six for the Swell). These extended-compass keyboards had been incorporated into

a number of instruments made by the Midmer-Losh firm. They were the brain-child of Seibert Losh, who seemed upset that the piano — the "upstart imitator" as he called it — had a wider compass than its far nobler predecessor, the organ. "In 1950," Losh predicted, "instruments now currently acceptable will be largely replaced by Seven-Octave instruments." It is not known if Richards was also of this opinion but he must have been pretty impressed by Losh's argument for having extended-compass manuals (but, then, it's been said that Losh could sell snow to an Eskimo). The registers for the seven-octave Choir and Great manuals are derived from various Pedal organ



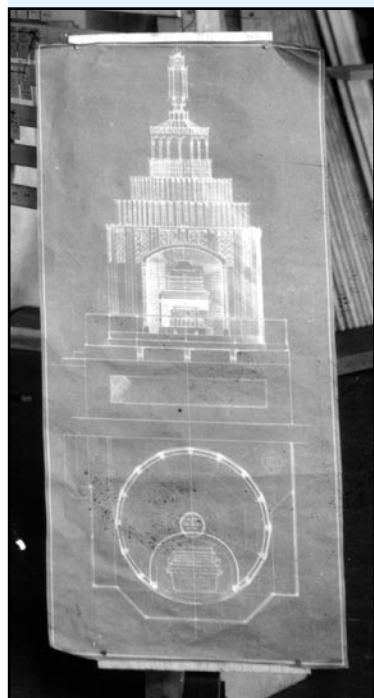
The kiosk encloses all of the equipment seen here. In the center of the picture are the treble ends of the seven manuals at their various angles. Above them are the contactors for the crescendo pedal; these are operated mechanically via the vertical wooden linkage in the center of the photograph. On the left is the back of the console's right jamb and, on the right, is the relay stack. Near the bottom corners of the picture, the edge of the kiosk's revolving dais can be glimpsed. This rotates only a few feet. The frame that supports the manuals, etc., is of aluminum.

ranks, via the Grand Choir and Grand Great departments. The six-octave Swell organ is provided with its own pipes for the top of the compass but there are no pipes for the bottom five notes (so the BBB-GGG keys will only sound notes when the Choir to Swell coupler is in use while the Grand Choir's stops are on).

The kiosk that encloses the console was designed by Otto Strack (who took over as President of Midmer-Losh, following Seibert's enforced departure). His original designs included a series of wedding cake-type tiers — the whole being located on an elevator that would disappear into the hall's sub-sub basement! In the event, neither the elevator nor the tiers made it off the drawing board. Even so, the kiosk, as built, is a large structure, which affords access to the back of the stop-keys, manuals, and all of the console's other mechanisms.

Continues on page 8

Photo of blueprint detailing original kiosk design



SPECIAL FEATURE



Main console – left jamb. The Pedal organ’s registers occupy the lowest seven rows.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Main console – treble (right) jamb. One stop-key is not shown here, do you know which it is? Answer in the next issue.

Continued from page 5

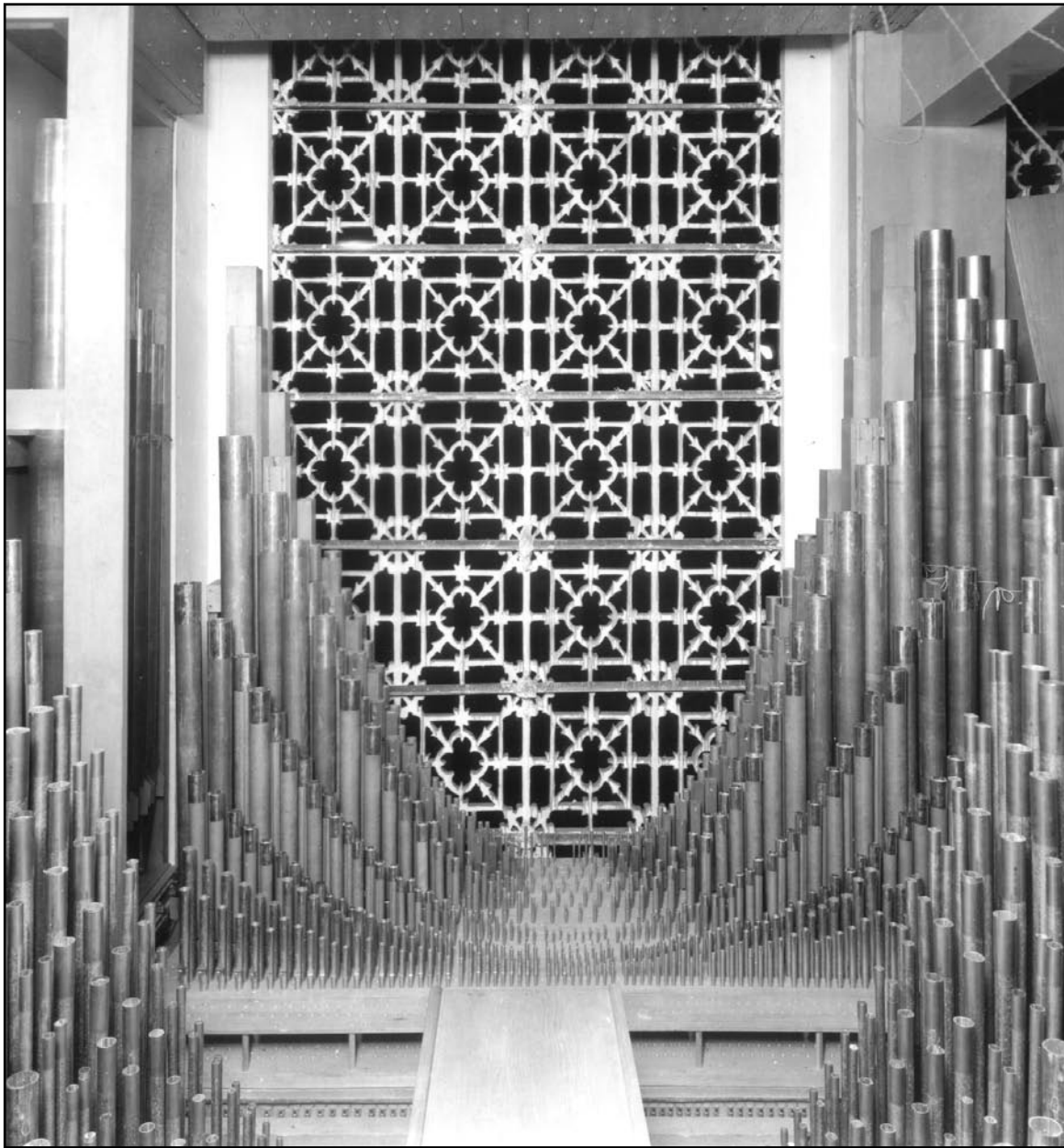
Registers on the left jamb are for stops on the left side of the Auditorium, except the Pedal Right, the first two Gallery organs, and the String II organ. Registers on the right jamb are mainly for stops on the hall's right side, except for the Choir manual's various departments. The jambs have been described as being like two halves of a sphere which almost cocoons the player. This arrangement ensures that the stop-keys at the extremities of top, bottom, left, and right on each side are within easy reach. Likewise, the angle of the stop-keys becomes more raked as the rows ascend, to ensure the engraving on them is visible to the organist. Stop-keys controlling voices on 100-inch wind pressure have a red jewel set in them and 50-inch stop-keys have a green jewel.

Indicators illuminate when any of the 100", 50", 64', or 32' stops are in use. Other indicators are provided for the two reversible sforzando pedals and for the crescendo pedal's four settings. There are 168 thumb pistons, some of which operate couplers and/or Pedal stops on second touch. The second touch feature can be cancelled by means of rocking tablets. Other rocking tablets silence the 100", 50", 64', and 32' registers without moving the stop-keys.

A complete description of the console — and its smaller sister — is given in the book *Atlantic City's Musical Masterpiece* (see back page for purchase details).



Main console – front view, showing the pistons, indicators (at sides of Fanfare manual), and rocking tablets (adjacent to Solo and Fanfare manuals).



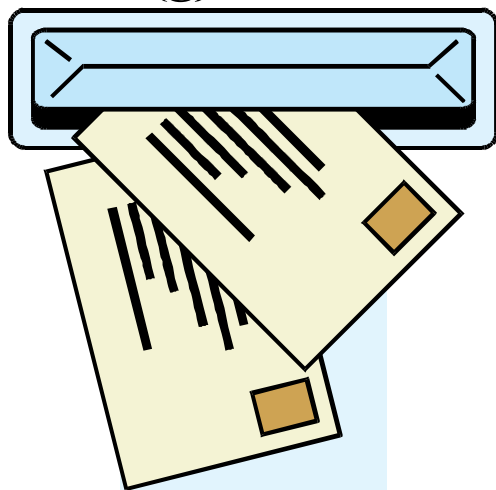
It may come as a surprise to learn that the entire rationale behind the “core” of the Convention Hall organ can be summed up by looking at the stoplist of just one of the instrument’s departments. Even more surprisingly, it’s one of the smallest departments and its stops are voiced on the organ’s lowest wind pressure.

The department in question is the Unenclosed Choir (Quinton 16, Diapason 8, Holz Flute 8, Octave 4, Fifteenth 2, Rausch Quint 12-15 & 19-22, pictured above adjacent to grille). It is this tiny department that encapsulates the message Emerson Richards was trying to put across to the American organ world at the time. That message was about the need for tonal cohesion and harmonic structure. In a phrase, “proper choruses,” Richards said the Unenclosed Choir was to be a “little Great organ...similar to the Silbermann organ familiar to Bach.” Of course, “proper choruses” were nothing new; they had been

included in organs for decades. However, that was in the past, and Richards and a growing number of other organists considered that the organ had gone off its tonal tracks since then. “Proper choruses” were out of favor; while an ever-increasing variety of flutes, strings, and diminutive reeds — usually at 8-foot pitch — were the vogue.

The Convention Hall instrument was to be the world’s largest organ and it would probably be the most publicized too. What better place could there be to make such a statement? The problem was that there were so many statements and so many attractions, that the Unenclosed Choir’s message was all but lost! Despite this, that message did, finally, get through. However, it wasn’t because of the Unenclosed Choir alone, nor was it due solely to the efforts of Richards — although he undoubtedly took a leading role in changing opinion and, thereby, preparing the way for a return to “proper choruses.”

we get mail



I got the CD, and was astonished to hear it. The transfers are excellent, Robert Elmore plays up a storm, and the organ sounds splendid. This is not at all what I heard in 1957 from the Mercury mono LP played on a bottom-of-the-line turntable.

Congratulations and many, many thanks -- this recording is a highly significant historical document, and everyone involved deserves a great deal of credit for producing it.

*Cheers,
Nelson Barden*

Hey, I will seriously think about supporting your organization; especially since you are hoping/planning to continue to restore the 'fabulous' hall organ. I purchased your last CD and found it quite interesting...organ needs tuning! (as your jacket notes indicated!) and missing notes need to be found and replaced! I enjoyed the CD even with all the attendant conditions. Would you have any input as for a possible total repair/rebuild of the entire organ? I realize that there are a myriad of things that this job entails, but I hope for the best! The sound that this organ emanates is a lot better than the old Chicago Stadium organ, but still doesn't sound like any other Theater or church or concert organ! (That's why it is rather special!). Let me know what's going on and I'll write more later.

And just an additional note: you are correct in stating that not many home sound systems can reproduce the sound that the 64' Principal creates!! I just had popping speakers, rattling dishes and vibrating parts in the room where I tried to listen to the organ! (I used a total of 3 different types of subwoofers at the same time, still couldn't reproduce anything close to the original sound!)

Larry Snodgrass

I have been a lover of pipe organs since I can remember. Recently, I discovered your awesome site on the internet and ordered some of your CD's. As I sit here in my office I am being "blown away" by the music and the immensity of the ACCH Organ. I wish I had a ton of money to donate to the upkeep / salvaging of the organ. As a matter of fact, now that I am older, I wish I had studied organ. What a fulfilling life that would have been. I envy those who are able to play this (and any) organ and fill my heart with awe. I am filling out the donation form and mailing what I can ASAP. Thanks for your website and may God bless you and the organ.

William G. Martin

I am a new member of the ACCHOS (Benefactor). I love organ music. I love to hear the heavy organs from all over the world. I love to imagine what it must be like to play such a soul-stirring instrument. But of all the organs have heard, the ACCHOrgan moves me most. There is something about the history of the organ and a sense of sadness that so much of the organ has been lost to aging and lack of proper care. As I listen to the CD (almost daily) I try to imagine what it must have been like to hear the entire organ in its prime. I feel the Dulzian. I hear the straining pipes recently renovated and find myself lost in an almost sublime state of mind. Gosh, I love it. Thank you. Thank you for your work. The organ sends its thanks, too, through those of us have been lifted by its soulful sounds. If there were a way to raise money to repair it totally, I would do it.

Sorry, I digressed from my original reason for the email: It would thrill me (and many others, probably) to actually see a great organist like Timothy Hoag or Stephen D. Smith actually working the manuals and pedals. Have you ever put out a video or DVD of the organ being played? I would be first in line to purchase one. Just a suggestion.

Thanks again for taking care of the organ. I come home from work every day and unwind with the ACCHOrgan. My friends and family can't quite understand it. But, gosh, I love it.

William G. Martin

Hi, we purchased your CD of the Great Auditorium Organ about a year ago. We are listening to it Right now! AND Still ABSOLUTELY LOVE IT!!!! Thank you So Much!!! For all that you do!! FOR Saving Music!! Beautiful absolutely Beautiful!!! We Love it to this day and always will! I can't say enough about it! Such a magnificent instrument!!

Thanks Again!!

Dave and Matt Lefavour

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

would You be as kind as to tell me the approximately shipping costs to send the two ACCHOS CDs to Berlin, Germany?

Yours sincerely

Bernd Casper

PS: Please forgive me, I can't write anything other, as I'm a kind of paralysed about the woeful fate of this monumental instrument, which is doubtless part of the cultural heritage of mankind... I just gave a trial to find some innervating words for You, nevertheless I'm speechless. Please keep overcoming all the oppositions You are going to meet and save this irrecoverable organ for next generations, whose appreciation for the glory of this organ will be renewed. Please always draw confidence, there are many many young people all over the world who feel with You and give You positive energy to fulfill the daunting task!

The Almighty be with You, help will come with certainty.



TEST YOUR ORGAN TRIVIA KNOWLEDGE

(answers below)

1. Who invented the swell pedal?
2. What organ firm invented the Erzähler?
3. What organ builder introduced the "Barker Lever"?
4. In what church did Virgil Fox play for much of his life?
5. What famous composer (1865-1935) served as municipal organist for San Francisco?
6. Where is the Holtkamp factory?
7. What is the purpose of "nicking" a pipe?
8. What is the largest free work for organ by JS Bach?
9. Name the church where Cèsar Franck played for 30 years.

Answers

1. Abraham Jordan (1712); 2. E. M. Skinner; 3. Cavaille-Coll; 4. Riverside Church, New York City; 5. Edwin H. Lemare; 6. Cleveland, Ohio; 7. to eliminate chuff; 8. Toccata and Fugue in F Major (BWV540); 9. St. Clotilde

Membership

Yearly ACCHOS membership dues are:

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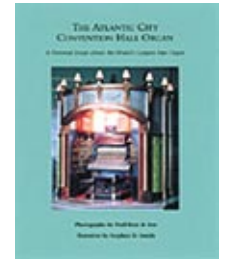
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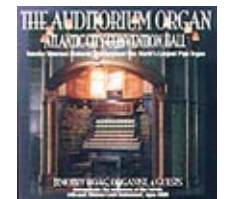
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