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The GRAND OPHICLEIDE

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

Issue 29

Fall 2005

STEREO HI-FI STEREO SR90127

BACH ON THE BIGGEST

TOCCATA AND FUGUE IN D MINOR - WACHET AUF! - IN DULCI JUBILO - TOCCATA, ADAGIO AND FUGUE
 ROBERT ELMORE playing the Atlantic City Convention Hall organ, WORLD'S LARGEST ORGAN



MERCURY LIVING PRESENCE



the **GRAND OPHICLEIDE**

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

1009 Bay Ridge Avenue, PMB 108, Annapolis, Maryland 21403
www.acchos.org • info@acchos.org

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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.

the GRAND OPHICLEIDE is published quarterly for its members by The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc. Opinions expressed are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Society.

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On The Cover – This is the jacket for the original legendary Mercury Records LP recording made in 1956. Ironically, use of the words "Stereo," "Hi-Fi," "Living Presence," and "Bach On The Biggest" tell the tale of exactly what goes on in Boardwalk Hall when the organ is played. This recording, along with *Boardwalk Pipes* recorded on the Ballroom Kimball at the same time, are both now available on a single CD from ACCHOS or the Organ Historical Society. The original jacket notes are re-printed on page 6 of this issue.

NOW AVAILABLE

New ACCHOS
DVD
Now Available!

The Senator's Masterpiece
**THE ATLANTIC CITY
CONVENTION HALL ORGAN**



World's Largest Pipe Organ

Sights • Sounds • Stories

A Documentary Presented by
The Atlantic City
Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc.



Here are the sights, sounds, and stories of the world's largest pipe organ — an historic musical instrument of monumental proportions and a technical marvel built in the Main Auditorium of the Convention Hall, Atlantic City, New Jersey, between 1929 and 1932 at the height of the Great Depression.

Designed by New Jersey State Senator Emerson L. Richards, this extraordinary instrument has 449 ranks and over 33,000 pipes. Its eight pipe chambers are arranged in a surround-sound configuration inside one of the largest interior spaces ever created.

The organ is played from a seven-manual console located at stage left and from a movable five-manual console. Its seemingly boundless tonal resources combine with the awesome acoustical environment to produce what is perhaps the most moving and magical musical sound ever heard on Earth.

The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc., sponsors of this documentary, was founded in 1997 as a 501(c)(3) corporation and is dedicated to the preservation, restoration, and use of the organs in Atlantic City's Historic Boardwalk Hall. Information about the Society and about its books and CD recordings can be found on the Internet at www.acchos.org

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- Right Stage Chamber Tour
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- Boardwalk Pipes Exhibit Grand Opening
- Boardwalk Hall 3D Fly-through
- About the Producers

Produced by Vic Ferrer
Productions, San Francisco
Copyright © 2005 Vic Ferrer
Productions, LLC
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Convention Hall Organ Society

This remarkable documentary was created and produced by Vic Ferrer of Vic Ferrer Productions in San Francisco and represents a true labor of love. Viewers will be treated to an exceptionally well-done documentary about this great musical instrument. Please see page 8 for ordering information.

Court Cases

A Sorry Tale – But A Happy Ending?

by Stephen D. Smith

The court cases that accompanied the completion of the Atlantic City Convention Hall organ were major events which, to a large extent, defined the instrument's destiny. Why? Because they added to the festering unpopularity that surrounded the project.

That unpopularity was initiated by the Great Depression — which struck six months after work on the instrument started. This meant that the contract had been signed. When money became scarce, questions were understandably asked about why hundreds of thousands of dollars were being spent on a pipe organ. The reason, of course, was that the City, being tied into the contract, was obliged to pay for the instrument. Under the circumstances, it was decided to continue with the project and, at least, have something to show for it. The only other “option” was to pay for it and not have it built. In fact, the decision to press ahead was also sensible because it meant the cost could be spread over several years. Even so, this did not silence the instrument's critics.

If the City had simply cancelled the project, it would have had to pay Midmer-Losh the entire amount due in one fell swoop.

The court cases only added to that unpopularity and, via the newspapers, brought the matter to the attention of a wider audience. They arose because City Organist Arthur Scott Brook said that the instrument was not completed according to the contract's details. However, Organ Architect Emerson Richards had signed the Certificate of Completion at the end of 1932 stating that the instrument did comply with his specifications.

The bottom line of the matter was what Richards said was, in effect, “gospel” and, when the Certificate of Completion was signed, that should have been the end of the matter — there was no room for argument and no case to answer. This would be the case even if the instrument had not been completed according to the specifications. One can

only wonder, therefore, at why the matter did go to court. Of course, there were politicians and politics involved, and that's always a recipe for intrigue! Some of the powerful City Commissioners were against such a hearing, whilst others were for it. It's worth noting, however, that the courtroom drama may merely have been a delaying tactic by the City, designed to further postpone paying Midmer-Losh what was owed.

Although these proceedings are widely referred to “court cases” and although they had the trappings of a court, they were, in fact, “hearings.” This was a title of convenience which allowed matters that, ordinarily, wouldn't have been heard in court (e.g. because there was no case to answer) to be investigated. Also, and somewhat frighteningly, because it was not a court, a burden of proof may not have been required either, and this could potentially spell trouble for Richards. Despite this, there was no getting away from the fact that any such “hearing” should take as its basis “best practice” — in this case, the law (which brings us full circle because, in law, this matter would never have come to court).

We will almost certainly never know the real reasons behind what brought about these cases but one thing is known: that City Organist Arthur Scott Brook turned on Richards, his former friend and mentor, to become the chief witness for the prosecution. Whilst this may seem a dastardly thing to do, put yourself in Brook's shoes: You've been Atlantic City's official organist for a number of years and, naturally, you want to continue being so, especially as the City now possesses the world's largest organ. So, when a senior politician — one of your employers — approaches you and asks you to help the City save some money by giving a host of reasons to not pay the firm that built the organ, what do you do? The options are straightforward, i.e. (a) do as you're asked and remain City Organist or (b) possibly get fired. I venture to suggest that, under the circumstances,

any one of us would have done the same as Brook and agreed to do the bidding of his political master (or masters),

The problems that Brook faced in this role were daunting. Firstly, he had to face Richards in court. Richards was a lawyer and, therefore, on “home” ground, putting Brook at a psychological disadvantage. Secondly, Brook had to argue about the contract that Richards had devised — a contract that Richards knew inside-out, upside-down, and back-to-front. Again, Brook was at a disadvantage. There were two other sticking points for Brook. Firstly, there was nothing to say that the instrument had to be completed according to the contract — it had been devised purely for the purpose of obtaining bids from organ builders and Richards had the absolute right to change any specifications or details he wanted. Secondly, as already stated, once the Certificate of Completion had been signed that should have been an end to the matter. Brook was surely barking up the wrong tree — but at least he would get to keep his job!

To try to overcome these disadvantages, Brook quoted mind-boggling figures, organ gobbledygook, and disingenuous statements. These were tactics that confounded the minds of those not familiar with organ terminology, whilst giving the impression that Brook knew what he was talking about. He also dressed-up personal opinion as fact, in the hope that it would carry some weight.

For example, he said that a number of stops served no useful purpose. This was, surely, a matter of opinion? In another statement of opinion, he said that the instrument was four times bigger than any organist could cope with — presumably suggesting that an organ of about 8,000 pipes was the maximum manageable size (since “size” is measured by the number of pipes). He also interchanged stops (the ranks in the chambers) with registers (the controls on the console), saying that the number should be 800-plus whereas there were only 320 (so, if

you didn't know that the main console has 852 speaking registers derived from 320 stops, you'd think that there was a sizeable portion missing).

Richards was understandably furious at these flimsy claims and didn't hold back. He "made the air blue with language," reported one newspaper. Also, he threatened to "smash" the face of Brook's counsel. All of which made thoroughly entertaining newsprint, no doubt, but it did no favors for Richards, nor for the organ.

The upshot of all this travail was that the Organ Architect's signature on the Certificate of Completion was deemed to be final, binding and not open to question, discussion, or debate. There were a great number of other instances where this had been the case. The precedent had been set. Furthermore, it was decided that there would be no independent inspection of the organ, to determine — or not — the validity of Brook's claims. Brook kept his job for another decade or so, albeit presiding over an instru-

ment that he'd actually helped to make unpopular! Richards, incidentally, did not remain in office as State Senator for Atlantic County after this saga.

Make no mistake, this unnecessary chapter in the instrument's history set the tenor for its early years. What should have been the most famous and most publicized organ in the world was largely ignored, hated even. One man went so far as to write to a local newspaper suggesting that the instrument should be sold back to Midmer-Losh and that the firm should take away the Senator with it!

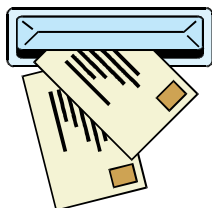
A couple of decades later, the fuss had died down but, by then, the organ had all but been forgotten. Atlantic City went into decline, visitor numbers dropped, merchants and residents moved out in droves, and the City became a shadow of its former self. The organ became an outdated remnant of a past era, of no relevance and with no interest — except from a hardcore group of enthusiasts.

Since the formation, in 1997, of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ

Society, the instrument has probably had more attention and publicity than in the preceding seven decades. Two books about the instrument and two CDs featuring it are now available and a DVD is in the final pre-production stages (I've had the great privilege of previewing this and it is a truly stunning documentary). A phrase has it that "We learn nothing from history, except that we learn nothing from history." We need to learn — and quickly — that the Atlantic City organ must never again be allowed to forgotten or ignored, as it has been in the past. Please help support the work of the ACCHOS by purchasing these products so we can continue to develop new ways of bringing this glorious instrument to a wider audience and to greater prominence.

Details of how to buy the books and CDs can be found on the back cover of this magazine. More information about the court cases, including contemporary newspaper reports, can be found in the book *Atlantic City's Musical Masterpiece*.

we get mail



To: "Stephen D. Smith
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2005
Subject: Double Languid Pipes

Dear Stephen:

You may remember that sometime ago I asked you for information on double languid flute pipes. You may have read in *The American Organist* that we have installed our first one at St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Another one is planned for the Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas.

We did a lot of experimentation. Our objective was to get a very piercingly bright flute tone that would come out above the entire ensemble. The double languid certainly did the trick. The exceptionally fast speech and very powerful tone was just what we wanted. It sounds much like a true orchestra or band piccolo. We call this stop *Obbligato Piccolo* and also play it at 1' pitch called *Obbligato Fife*.

This is strictly a special effect which the organists use in church work particularly in outlining hymn tunes and in counter melodies, etc. It's been very

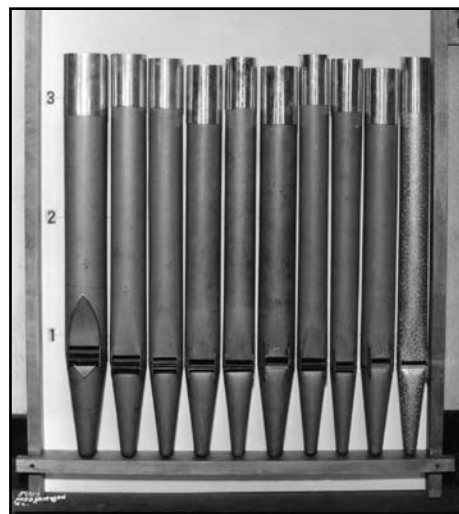
effective. It has even been used, believe it or not, with the diapasons in the Solo. The Solo division in the Houston organ has independent 8' and 4' diapasons of extremely powerful intonation and the Piccolo on top is bright enough that it convincingly adds a clean, clear upperwork effect to the two diapasons.

All in all, it has been a very successful and interesting experiment. It certainly isn't of use on most organs, but in these two special cases it has been a very valuable addition.

By the way, we have also done a lot of experiments with double languid diapasons and almost put one in the Mormon Church Conference Center in Salt Lake City. We found, however, that the tone would be better suited to a venue with more reverberation.

I thought you'd like to know that the Atlantic City organ is yet again providing inspiration for progressive organ building!

*Jack M. Bethards
President and Tonal Director
Schoenstein & Co.*



The ten-rank Diapason Chorus with various double languid pipes.

Date: Fri, 20 May 2005
From: James Lokken
Subject: Atlantic City imagination
Discussion of historic GGG compass organs sets me off on a flight of fancy, perhaps a challenge:

Suppose, just for the sake of discussion, that the 7-manual 1932 Midmer-

MAIL Continues on page 7

The Original

BACH ON THE BIGGEST LP Jacket Notes:

A Memento From 49 Years Ago...

Since the unveiling of the mammoth organ at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, the largest organs of the century have been designed and built in the United States. In 1917 the St. Louis instrument was transported to Philadelphia where, like Jack's beanstalk, it grew and grew into even more gigantic proportions until it finally made its debut in John Wanamaker's department store.

Containing five manuals, 232 stops and 18,000 pipes, it weighs over 375,000 pounds. According to statistics found in the booklet issued when the Wanamaker organ was first installed, "more than 120,000 feet of lumber were used in its construction. Total space occupied by organ and blowers" 118,602 feet. The blowers furnish an aggregate column of air at varied pressures of 20,800 cubic feet per minute. The incandescent lights strung along the organ chamber would light the streets of a small town. The largest pipe is of wood, 32 feet long, 27 inches wide, and 32 inches deep in the middle, and weighs 1,735 pounds. It is so large that two men can crawl through it, side by side, on their hands and knees." Even this giant instrument is second in magnitude to the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ recorded on this disc.

In 1929 Senator Emerson L. Richards, a prominent New Jersey lawyer, politician, engineer and organ architect was commissioned to design the organ that was to have its home in the new \$15,000,000 Atlantic City Convention Hall. The architectural immensity of the world's largest convention hall staggers the imagination. It occupies four city blocks, a thirteen-story building could be set upon the floor and not touch the roof, and even a Mickey Mantle could not bat a ball from the stage into the rear gallery.

Senator Richards realized that only an instrument of heroic size and power could fill the five and on half million cubic feet of space in an auditorium seating 42,000. No orchestra however large could do the job. Confronted with acoustical challenges of such titanic proportions, he proceeded to design an organ of unprecedented dimensions. The final outcome of this four-year undertaking was the construction of the world's largest organ.

The Atlantic City Convention Hall organ contains seven manuals and 1,250 stops, and can produce the greatest volume of sound ever heard on a single instrument, equal to the combined volume of twenty-five brass bands. A total of 33,000 speaking pipes are connected to the console by means of electric wiring that could go around the earth five and one half times at the equator. The largest pipe in the organ is also the largest pipe in the

world: the low 'C' of the 64-foot Diaphone Profunda, The pipe is 10 inches square at the base and 36 inches square at the top. It was cut from a 785-year-old Oregon fir tree. The twelve pipes that make up the lower octave of this stop contain over 10,000 square feet of lumber (a total of 225,000 feet of lumber was used in the entire construction. Wince the low "C" vibrates only eight times per second, the tone is felt rather than heard, but it supplies a solid foundation for the entire Pedal Organ. The smallest pipe is a quarter of an inch long and its vibration frequency is above 14,000 per second.

The organ pipes are located in eight grill-screened chambers. The electrical relays and other mechanism occupy an additional twelve rooms. Eight motors with a combined total of 395 H.P. drive the great blowers that supply the wind to the pipes – a far cry from the days when man power was employed to operate the bellows, one man to each pair of bellows. (Even in the fourteenth century, organs required a prodigious amount of wind' the old organ a Halberstadt, Germany necessitated twenty-four pairs of bellows.)

The Atlantic City organ comprises 455 ranks of pipes, the number in each rank varying from 32 in the pedal to 61-121 on the manuals. Special electrical mechanisms for controlling these included remote controls, relay controls, combination actions and pneumatic actions. The huge organ was built by Midmer-Losh, Inc. of Merrick L.I.

When the mobile sound truck rode up the ramp and into the Convention Hall on the morning of November 23, 1956, Mercury's classical recording team was faced with one of its most challenging tasks; namely, the application of the LIVING PRESENCE STEREO recording technique to an organ and auditorium of Brobingnagian size. Men were dispatched skywards to suspend ropes and pulleys from the roof for the purpose of attaching three microphones. Then Robert Elmore began to rehearse while the electronic equipment was being checked. In a monitor room to the right of the stage, the musical staff listened for balance, clarity and definition, and relayed comments to the truck. Several changes in microphone placement were made before the desired balance was achieved – a delicate, painstaking operation.

The distinguished organist, Robert Elmore, who made his LIVING PRESENCE STEREO recording debut playing the Ballroom Organ at the Atlantic City Convention Hall (SR90109), was born in Ramaputnam, India, of missionary parents. His musical education was begun at the age of six in Lincoln, Nebraska. Three

years later, he took up the study of the organ. From 1926-1933 he studied organ, piano and composition with the Italian composer and organ virtuoso Pietro Yon. He received his Bachelor's degree in music at the University of Pennsylvania in 1937. Elmore pursued his musical studies in England where he won degrees at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Organists.

Since the Thirties, he has concertised throughout the United States and Europe, and has performed on all types of organs ranging from the Baroque to the latest instruments. Elmore is also prolific composer of organ works as well as for symphony orchestra, chorus and the stage. (His Fantasy on Nursery Themes is part of the recital recorded on the Ballroom Organ.) He is presently organist and choirmaster of the Central Moravian Church of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and heads the organ department at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. He was formerly organist and music director at Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia for seventeen years.

Four of Bach's best know organ compositions are heard in the world premier recording of the Atlantic City Convention Hall organ. They are the popular Toccata in D Minor (BWV565) which has become famous through Tausig's piano arrangement and Stokowski's orchestral transcription; two beloved Chorale-Preludes "Wachet Auf" and "In Dulci Jubilo" and the monumental Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C (BWV 563). In the Toccatas and the magnificent formal perfection of the Fugue to the noble spaciousness of the Chorale-Preludes, the limitless scope of the Eisenach master is clearly revealed.

HI-FI FACTS

Because of the unusually long reverberation period of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Auditorium, special care had to be taken to achieve maximum clarity of detail without at the same time sacrificing any of the majestic grandeur of the halls' acoustic. While the Chorale-Preludes presented no exceptional problems, the other works are replete with cascading runs and rapid thundering progressions. It was imperative to reproduce these passages with speckles articulation. Wilma Cozart was the recording director for these sessions. Harold Lawrence the musical supervisor. C.R. Fine was the engineer and technical supervisor; and tape to disc transfer was made by George Piros.

N.B. There are a few factual errors in the above essay. Anyone who can find and correct all of them will receive a free CD of Bach on the Biggest & Boardwalk Pipes. Email info@acchos.org.

Pipe Organ Renaissance

The pipe organ pendulum is swinging dramatically. Pipe organs are suddenly appearing in orchestra halls in the United States, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and Europe not including university and college campuses.

In the United States, per the chart below, there are three organs before 1990, four in the 1990s, and fourteen since 2000. This is truly a remarkable phenomenon.

CITY	ORGAN	DATE	RANKS
1. MIAMI – CARNIVAL SYMPHONY HALL	MANDER	?	108
2. ATLANTA – SYMPHONY CENTER	DOBSON	2009	88
3. NASHVILLE – SCHERMERHORN SYMPHONY HALL	SCHOENSTEIN	2007	65
4. ORANGE COUNTY, CA – SEGERSTROM HALL	FISK	2007	53
5. SAN LUIS OBISBO, CA – SIDNEY HARMAN HALL	FISK	2007	53
6. PHILADELPHIA – VERIZON HALL KIMMEL CENTER	DOBSON	2006	125
7. BOSTON – SYMPHONY HALL	AEOLIAN-SKINNER 1949	2004	75
8. LOS ANGELES – WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL	GLATTER-GOTZ/ROSALES	2004	109
9. MADISON, WI – OVERTURE HALL	KLAIS	2004	72
10. CLEVELAND – SEVERANCE HALL	E.M. SKINNER 1931	2001	94
11. JACKSONVILLE, FL – JACOBY CONCERT HALL	CASAVANT 1912	2001	97
12. PORTLAND, ME – MERRILL AUDITORIUM/CITY HALL	AUSTIN 1912	2000	103
13. SEATTLE - BENAROYA HALL	FISK	2000	76
14. CHICAGO – ORCHESTRA HALL	MOLLER 1981	1999	59
15. WASHINGTON, DC – THE KENNEDY CENTER	AEOLIAN-SKINNER 1971	1997	76
16. DALLAS – MEYERSON SYMPHONY CENTER	FISK	1992	84
17. NAPLES, FL – PHILHARMONIC CENTER	CASAVANT	1990	59
18. MILWAUKEE – UIHLEIN HALL	AEOLIAN-SKINNER 1969	1984	65
19. SAN FRANCISCO – DAVIES HALL	RUFFATTI	1984	147
20. NEW YORK CITY – ALICE TULLY HALL	KUHN	1974	86

Notes: 7. Boston: renovated by Foley-Baker; 10. Cleveland: renovated by Schantz; 11. Jacksonville: re-installed by Quimby; 14. Chicago: renovated by Casavant; 15. Washington: renovated by Lawless; 18. Milwaukee: renovated by Austin

MAIL Continued from page 5

Losh in Atlantic City were restored and fully functional in all eight chambers. (www.acchos.org has a full description with photos.) Suppose that you had a chance to play it. In that vast space, on that enormous instrument, what would you play and how would you approach the task?

Keep in mind that Choir and Great have a 7-octave compass, from CCC. Swell has a 6-octave compass from GGG. The other four manuals, whose names I don't recall, are conventional 5-octave compass from CC.

The concept of this instrument is

unquestionably orchestral. The late Edwin Lemare, Virgil Fox, George Wright, and a number of others would no doubt have had a glorious romp here. But somehow the building and instrument, by their grand scale, seem to present an unusual challenge. How would one find musical uses for the extended compass keyboards, the remote Gallery, Fanfare and String divisions, the ten 8' Open Diapasons on the Great?

Certainly this could be played in theater organ style. It's a lot more, however, than a theater instrument, and it cries

out for a bolder musical imagination.

Given the cost not only of renovation and reconstruction, but also of time for tuning and rehearsal, the grand vision of Senator Emerson Richards may never be fully realized. Perhaps it was an enormous boondoggle of the Great Depression. But what possibilities it presents! What a marvelous surround sound track it could create for the next George Lucas film!

Jim Lokken
San Francisco

Late News Update

The Trustees of the Historic Organ Restoration Committee met in Atlantic City on September 28 and approved an initial restoration plan developed by the Restoration Committee of the Organization. Plans first call for the restoration of the Ballroom Kimball organ. More details will be published in the Winter issue of *The Grand Ophicleide*.

The companion Mercury LP album recorded on the Ballroom Kimball. Digital image graciously provided by Antonio Granone from Florence, Italy.



The Senator's Masterpiece: The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ

A dramatic DVD video documentary about The World's Largest Pipe Organ containing sights, sounds, and stories about the Midmer-Losh Pipe Organ in Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall.

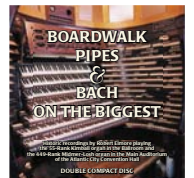
Price: \$19.95 (plus S & H)



Boardwalk Pipes & Bach on the Biggest

Compact Disc Recording
The legendary Mercury recordings digitally re-mastered in stereo featuring the Ballroom Kimball and Midmer-Losh organs, played by Robert Elmore

Price: \$15 (plus S & H)



Atlantic City's Musical Masterpiece

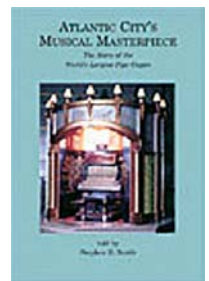
The Story of the World's Largest Pipe Organ

By Stephen D. Smith

500 pages, 7" x 10" cloth-bound volume

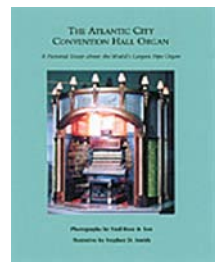
A complete illustrated history of the Midmer-Losh Pipe Organ

Price: \$25 (plus S & H)



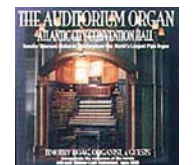
The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ

A Pictorial Essay about the World's Largest Pipe Organ
Photographs by Fred Hess & Son
Narrative by Stephen D. Smith
112 pages, 95 black and white photographs of the Midmer-Losh organ
Cloth-bound volume 11 1/2" x 13"
Price: \$25 (plus S & H)



The Auditorium Organ

Compact Disc Recording
1998 demonstration recording of the Midmer-Losh pipe organ
Price: \$15 (plus S & H)



The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ

An Introduction to the World's Largest Pipe Organ
60-page illustrated booklet
Price: \$15 (plus S & H)

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<http://www.acchos.org/html/store.html>
or call the Organ Historical Society at 804-353-9226 to place an order. Digital designs on T-shirts, mugs, and more at: www.cre8ivitee.com