

ATLANTIC  
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SOCIETY  
INC.  
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# *The* GRAND OPHICLEIDE

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

Issue 32

Summer, 2006



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Atlantic City Convention Hall  
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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.*

*Design & Layout  
Dunlap Design Studio, Inc.  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

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**On The Cover — The lights have come on again!** A new view of the Stage Right Chamber. New brighter fluorescent lighting has been installed in this chamber and now one can see much more detail in the chamber from the auditorium. See page 4 for more details.



## Number Crunching

*Some facts and figures, compiled by  
Stephen D. Smith*

The Midmer-Losh organ's main console, with its seven-manuals, has 1,235 stop-keys. This number was originally 1,234 but a Master Tremulant was added. 120 of those stop-keys are for switching the various swell boxes onto the six swell pedals.

There are 852 stop-keys for speaking registers, but 608 of them (71%) control voices that are extended. The Pedal organ is comprised almost entirely of extended and borrowed stops, with the exception of the Pedal Left's Major Diapason 16 and the seven-rank Stentor Sesquialtera, both on 20-inch wind pressure. Sixty-six of the instrument's 71 16-foot ranks are available on the Pedal — the five exceptions being the Unenclosed Choir's Quintaton, the Brass Chorus's Trombone, and the Great organ's Double Diapason II, Double Diapason III, and Trumpet.

There are ten 32-foot ranks with five flues and five reeds — the greatest number of stops at this pitch in any pipe organ. The only stopped 32-foot is the Pedal Right's Tibia Clausa; all other ranks are full length. Of the 16-foot ranks, eight are stopped, including the bass octave of the Echo organ's Clarabella. Two 32-foot registers are available on the manuals, i.e. the Fagotto (playable from the Swell-Choir and the Choir-Swell) and the Sub Principal (the only 32-foot that properly belongs to a manual department — it's duplexed to the Pedal Right).

Of the instrument's 218 straight stops, 135 of them are at 8-foot pitch. The 83 others consist of six 16-foots, 31 4-foots, a dozen 2-foots, 10 mutations at various pitches, and 24 mixture stops. These mixtures account for 130 of the 449 ranks — that's over one-quarter of the total number. There are 169 straight flues and 49 straight reeds. The only departments to have no extended ranks whatsoever are the Unenclosed Choir, the Brass Chorus, and the String III organ. The total number of voices is 314, of which 230 are flues and 84 are reeds. Ninety-six stops (61 flues and 35 reeds) are extended.

No stops have names begin with the

letters Y, L, or I — although the Tuba Imperial could be referred to as Imperial Tuba. No stop is actually called "Bourdon," although the name is used on some Pedal organ stop-keys (the Pedal Right's Tibia Clausa is engraved "Grand Bourdon 16" and the Clarabella on the Pedal Right Gallery is called "Bourdon 16"). Neither is there a Salicional, but the 4-foot register of the Swell organ's Contra Gamba unit is called "Salicet" (in the original scheme, there was to be a Bourdon on the Great and a 16-foot Salicional on the String III organ). Thirty-one stops have the word "Diapason" in their names and 13 include "Trumpet." "Flute" appears in 36 stop names and so does "Celeste." String stops include 17 Viols, 12 Violins, 11 Cellos, ten Violas, five Gambas, and the three Gamba Tubas. Chorus reeds include seven Trombas, six Trombones, five Tubas (excluding Gamba Tubas), three Posaunes, and two Ophicleides. Among the quieter reeds are six Voxes (including the Baryton), five Clarinets, four Oboes, three Saxophones, and two Krummhorns. There are 58 flute stops (excluding Tibias), of which 46 are open and 12 are stopped. Of the seven tibias, three are open and four are stopped. The compound stops number 53 and consist of 24 mixtures and 29 two-rank celestes. Additionally, there are 17 one-rank celestes (five diminutive foundations, five flutes, and seven strings).

Principals (diapasons, octaves, geigen principals, etc.) total 77 voices (24.5%) and 170 ranks (37.9%). Diminutive foundations (gemshorns, dulcianas, etc.) total 21 voices (6.7%) and 26 ranks (5.8%). Open flutes (including open tibias) total 49 voices (15.6%) and 53 ranks (11.8%). Stopped flutes (including stopped tibias) total 16 voices (5.1%) and 16 ranks (3.6%). Strings (including the Gamba Tubas) total 67 voices (21.3%) and 100 ranks (22.3%). Chorus reeds (tubas, trumpets, etc) total 47 voices (15%) and 47 ranks (10.5%). Orchestral reeds (clarinets, oboes, etc) total 25 voices (8%) and 25 ranks (5.6%). Other reeds (voxes, kinuras, etc) total 12 voices (3.8%) and 12 ranks (2.7%). The fact that the Principals make up the largest family of stops may be taken an indication of how Emerson Richards viewed the instrument

as a proper "classical" organ. However, the Strings are the next biggest group, and this shows how much influence the "orchestral" movement exerted on the scheme's design. The Flutes (open and stopped, combined) are third largest group — being only marginally behind the Strings in number.

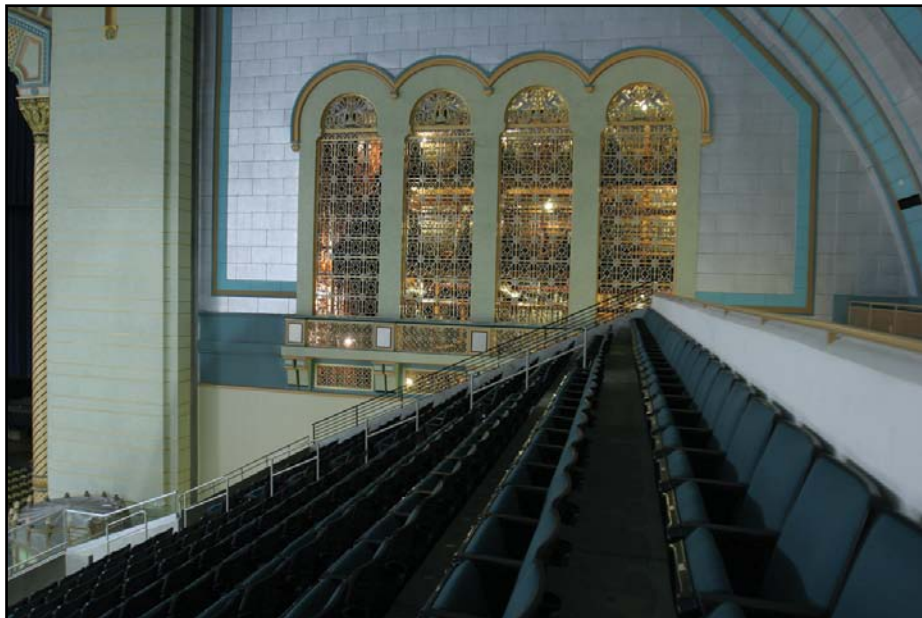
## Good News from Boardwalk Hall

There's good news from Boardwalk Hall! A visit I made to the hall on March 29th 2006 with Board Member Harry Belangy lifted our spirits tremendously. To our delight we found all of the Midmer-Losh chambers had been carefully cleaned. The accumulated dust from the hall renovation has been removed and the chambers properly sealed against further contamination entering through the grillwork in the Gallery and Ceiling chambers. The original wooden chamber doors, with sliding bolts and padlocks, have been replaced with state of the art key lock fire-resistant doors.

All of the old incandescent light bulbs in the chambers have been replaced with new high-brightness compact fluorescent bulbs. The results are amazing and visibility in the chambers has been dramatically improved.

But the most pleasant findings were in the chambers themselves. The sprinkler installation is complete and the sprinkler heads are protected by heavy gage protective cages that should eliminate accidental triggering as technicians work. As further protection against damage from sprinkler leakage, the chambers are equipped with a moisture detection system that sounds an alarm should a problem arise. The workmanship is excellent and the society has already conveyed our thanks for steps taken to protect the auditorium organ. The same can be said for conditions found in the Ballroom Kimball chambers. We're delighted to salute the New Jersey Sports & Exposition Authority for their thoughtful attention to the concerns raised by the society when code mandated installation of sprinklers in chambers became a major issue.

—Jack Clotworthy



**SEEN BUT NOT HEARD:** New fluorescent lights in the Midmer-Losh organ's Right Stage chamber mean it can be lit up like a Christmas tree! The Pedal Right's pipes — together with some of the Great organ's basses — are sited on the floor of this chamber. They occupy its entire width. The largest pipes of the 64-foot Dulzian are mitered, with their bells positioned behind the top level of the grille on the picture's left. Adjacent to these giant pipes — on the uppermost two levels — are the swell boxes for the Great-Solo Reeds, the Great-Solo flues, and the Solo organ (from left to right, when viewing the picture). Most of the Great organ's ranks are accommodated below these swell boxes and above the Pedal pipes, although the Pedal organ's trebles are also positioned here. The Grand Ophicleide, on 100-inch wind pressure, is not visible in this picture, but is sited on the right of the chamber immediately behind the grille on the lowest level. (Note console kiosk at lower left of photo.)

This is a model of the Boardwalk Hall façade created by the Architect prior to construction of the hall. Note the wording on the façade: ATLANTIC CITY AUDITORIUM & CONVENTION HALL. This was reduced to THE ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION HALL at a point and then to BOARDWALK HALL following its renovation in early 2000.



Dave Preston, NJSEA Representative at Boardwalk Hall. Dave is like a 'Guardian Angel' for the organs. He keeps a close watch on everything and is being most helpful every step of the way.

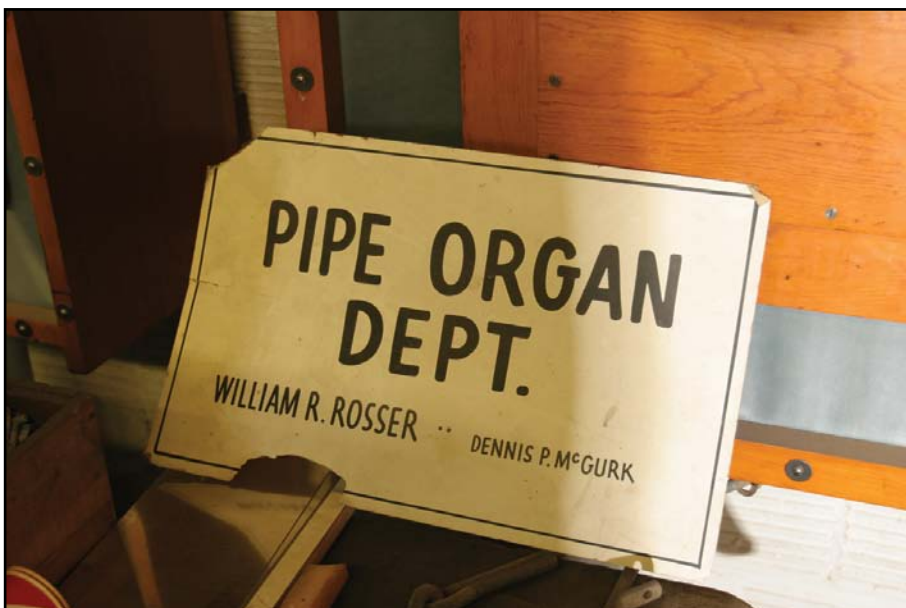




100-inch reeds in the Gallery I organ. Nearest the camera is the Tuba Maxima — the first stop in the world to be voiced on this extreme pressure.



This tuning keyboard for the first two Gallery organs is sited on the floor of the Gallery 1 organ's chamber, behind the 100-inch reed ranks. The contacts above the keyboard are simply turned to switch a stop on or off. Individual ranks of the compound stops (the Mixture Mirabilis in Gallery 1 and the Flute Mixture in Gallery 2) can also be selected.



Old sign from the days when William Rosser was Curator and Dennis McGurk his assistant (in tell-tale smaller print!)





ACCHOS Board member Antoni Scott has contributed his talent as a photographer since the founding of the ACCHOS. His outstanding images provide a valuable record of the instrument in recent years.



Gallery 1 organ reeds. Nearest the camera rank to be voiced on 100 inches of wind with plastic sheeting, is the Trumpet Mix. A great success in terms of volume, i.e. the Nevertheless, it's hard to imagine that the 16-8-8-4-4 stops wouldn't, at the very least, be of them in the Auditorium!



New moisture/water detection panel. Both organs have been fitted with these advanced detection systems.



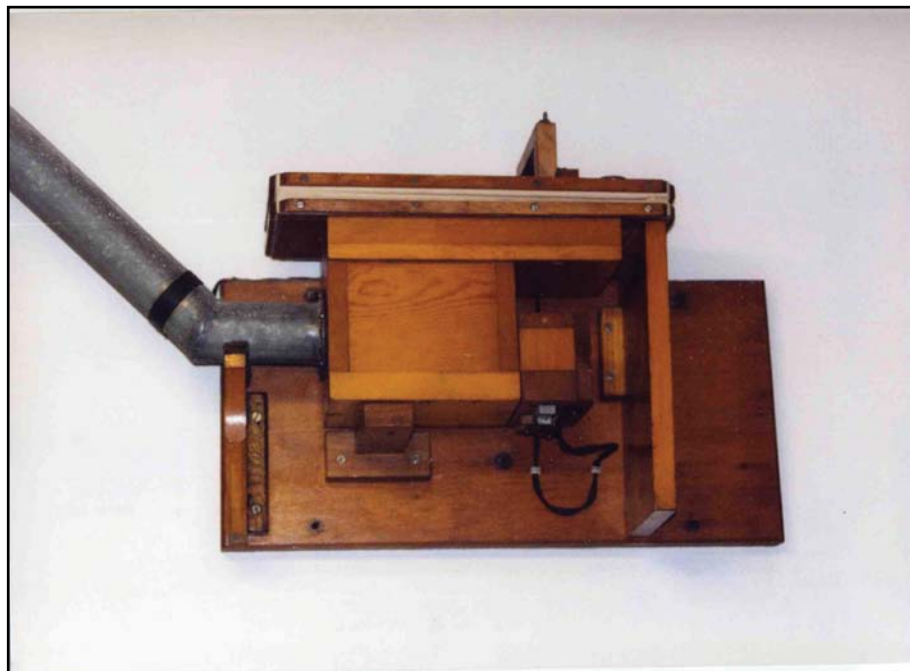
Dave Preston points to a moisture detection cable in the Right Stage chamber. The story is told that a worker had a bead of sweat from his brow drop on the cable and the alarm went off!



The boots of the 64-foot Dulzian on the floor of the Right Stage corner of the picture, is DDDDD (pipe length: 56-8/9), with a 1/2 by-semitone thereafter. The resonators do not stand on the floor of the chamber, adjacent to their respective pipes, but on 35 inches of wind.



is the Tuba Maxima - the world's first complete  
In front of it, near the grille which is covered  
irabilis. These ranks were not deemed to be a  
they didn't turn out to be as loud as expected.  
the barrage of sound they produce from their  
least, turn the heads of people seated in front



Can you guess what this is? It is the tremulant for the Vox Humana on the Kimball organ which got mounted on a wall outside and behind the left chamber.



ght Stage chamber. At left, in the  
h the pitches ascending semitone-  
the top of the boots but are also  
e boots. The Dulcian rank speaks



Original identity card in the Gallery I chamber.



# we get mail



Have you guys thought about moving the organs and the hall before the restoration? I think that there is a high risk of the hall being flooded in the future due to rising sea levels caused by climate change (melting ice caps in this case) as the hall and the organs aren't much above sea level.

Ross McNellie  
Scotland



Every time I turn around, someone is claiming to have the "biggest" organ in the world. Whether you measure "biggest" by the number of pipes, the size of the pipes, the number of stops or number of ranks, someone is making a claim. Claims are made for the biggest "church" organ, the biggest "concert" organ, the biggest "theater" organ, the biggest "residence" organ, the biggest "playing" organ and the biggest two manual, three manual, four manual, five manual, etc. and the biggest "pipes and digital" organ, and so on.

Fortunately, there is only "one" biggest organ and thanks to Curt Mangel, the second largest organ in the world is all but 100% functional.

Antoni Scott



Forty-five years ago, when I was managing Luigi's Gondola Room, the noted jazz organist Earl Grant was booked in the nightclub for a week's engagement. In a discussion with Grant during the week, I told him about the Convention Center's organ and he asked if could have the privilege of seeing it. I called the gentleman who was in charge of the organ and he said he would not only be delighted to let Grant see the organ, he would allow him to play it, as he was a fan of Grant's. So I traded a comp to the show for a visit to the organ. When Earl Grant sat in the seat and started to test the various pipe groups and sounds, he had tears in his eyes. He said the greatest thrill of his life was playing such a marvelous organ. He thanked me profusely for arranging this experience. Unfortunately, Earl Grant died just a few years later.

All of this brings back the thought that it is a sin to allow this musical instrument to remain silent. Let's have several big events in Boardwalk Hall to raise some of the funds necessary and then ask the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority to use the \$750,000 per year they no longer need to spend

on the Miss America Pageant to aid in this most worthwhile project. It is time to breathe life back into the world's largest pipe organ, right here in Atlantic City.

Pinky Kravitz

*[Pinky Kravitz has been an Atlantic City journalist for over 30 years and is a well known radio personality on WOND - 1400 AM in Pleasantville, New Jersey]*



Dear Mr. Swisher:

I e-mailed you a few weeks ago about acquiring a CD of the Auditorium Organ Atlantic City. Well it arrived today and what a brilliant CD it is too!! The best CD I have ever bought, that's for sure. My 13 yr old Autistic son thinks it's great too. He loves the Blowers the 100-inch Tuba and especially the 64-foot!!

Abide with me has become a daily routine with all the rest! At this rate it will be worn out soon. I never comment on CD's I buy, but this one deserves a special thank you for making it. What a shame one can't get great CD's like this one in England.

Kind regards and many thanks again for producing such a must have piece!

Bernadette Rampton



*From THEATREORGANS-L email list:*

Date: Wed, 24 May 2006 13:34:35 -0400

From: John Vanderlee

Subject: ACCHO Organ

.....perchance to dream...

I took my wife and my mother to the former AC Convention Hall last Saturday to see and enjoy Andre Rieu and the Johann Strauss Orchestra. While that incredible and MOST enjoyable performance requires a chapter of its own, I was struck by the new look of the Hall.

Outside, the most obvious thing is the gleaming new roof, but it is the new inner look that has become truly breathtaking. Between a fresh paint scheme, some reconstruction, new seating, and state of the art sound and light, this enormous space has truly taken on a look of new grandeur.

Having seen it years before on several organ crawls, its

*Continues*



appearance was then tired and dingy. I had even heard that Trump wanted the real estate!

Now I can only imagine what it might be like if that organistic 8th Wonder of the World could speak again in that breath-taking space. I am aware that the organ was forced to silence by some aspects of the re-construction, but hopefully that is a temporary condition until the ACCHO Society can bring about the forces to once more bring out the jewel in this crown.

And yes, I am a supporting member of ACCHOS and cheer on those good people who may some day bring this dream to life. (I only hope it is in my life time ;-)

If there was ever a worthy cause in the organ-ic world, this has to be it.

John V



Date: Wed, 24 May 2006  
From: Roylance Sharp  
Subject: Re: ACCHO Organ

John:

I second your thoughts. That monster of an organ should be preserved. I was given a chamber tour many years ago and I just thank my lucky stars that no one turned the organ on while I was admiring that rank of 64's. Let's hope it speaks in the not too distant future. It truly is the "King of Instruments."

Roy Sharp/Mansasota/NYTOS



Date: Wed, 24 May 2006  
From: Terry Charles  
Subject: Re: ACCHO Organ

Wow — John, thanks for a great insight into the present state of the ACCH!

I was fortune MANY years ago to play it — never will I get that sound out of my mind!

TC



Date: Thu, 25 May 2006  
From: "Julien Arnold"  
Subject: RE: ACCHO (*bless you!*) Organ

Yes, I thought it was just one man's

excess....until I read the book. It was built for a purpose, to fill the 'room' with musical sound in days before sound amplification might have been able to do it.

Certainly no orchestra could have done it, so an organ was designed, and it HAD to be big.

Go and buy the book (the one with text) and see why this organ must be restored. The book with the photos is also good.

Yes, I (here in Australia) too am a member of ACCHOS, and hope to get to hear the organ restored.

Cheers,  
Julien



Date: Wed, 24 May 2006  
Subject: Re: ACCHO (*bless you!*) Organ

I seem to hear the refrain from that great song from *Damn Yankees*: "A Man Doesn't Know What He Has Until He Loses it ..."

We simply *cannot* lose it. For the sake of tomorrow's generation.

pk



And there are always those saying: It can't be done. Bull!! ACCHOS has a host of believers. It is just a matter of time and finding the right backing. Some Daddy (or Mommy) Warbucks out there could be persuaded. They need to be found. That is the challenge. Even if restored, this organ may not get routine usage, but it would work again. It could play again. Even once a year would be an event not to be missed. It would send the message that some Americans DO treasure their treasures. Has anyone contacted Mr. Packard to learn what moved him? Is there a history with Mr. Trump? Did anyone actually TRY to contact the Gates' foundation? or Steve Jobs? The Kresge Foundation? What if Andre Rieu was asked? - he espouses that all light classical music is wonderful and puts it on with a show exceeding all expectations. How would any of these people like to be immortalized with such a project? Just some food for thought...

John V

Date: Wed, 24 May 2006  
From: "Paul-Wesley Bowen"  
Subject: RE: ACCHO (*bless you!*) Organ

It must be done, it can be done, it will be done. Great motto. And yes, a friend of mine (shall remain nameless) had the education and charm to go into the "deep pockets" offices and get good donations. A lot of them are really happy to donate, just as Carnegie, but they need to know it is there and that it is a good cause. It will take someone who knows how to present the project in a manner the "deep pockets" people are looking for.

As to the organ itself, I do like the history that has been told so far, but has anybody gotten around to the little sidelines of the history, i.e., that there was a bit of hanky-panky going on behind the scenes that landed that beautiful beast in AC? The little I was told by a knowledgeable person was quite entertaining. Or the anecdote about some people in the 64" pipe chamber when they played the first note, only it didn't work. One of the attendees commented, "Nice wind tunnel."

Blessings, P-W Bowen



*From Pipeorg-L*

Date: Tue, 6 Jun 2006  
From: Tim Bovard  
Subject: Re: Oboe Gamba & cupped languids

...Final note: the Atlantic City Convention Hall Midmer-Losh organ contains numerous sets of flat-fronted metal string-reed pipes as described by the originator of this thread. Also the 3 wooden "Gamba Tubas" in that organ — these nearly defy description. I was privileged to clean/restore a sample Gamba Tuba pipe for the ACCHOS Ocean One Mall historic display...if you could listen thru the hiss from the barely-squeezed compressed air nozzle (the only thing we had in the shop capable of enough pressure to make the pipe sound) it was a truly magnificent "honk".

Cheers all.  
Tim

## Review

### THE ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION HALL ORGAN: THE SENATOR'S MASTERPIECE.

San Francisco: Vic Ferrer Productions, 2005, DVD \$19.98 [available from the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society <http://www.acchos.org>].

With this expert video product, the organ preservation movement takes an immeasurably valuable step forward. As the first slide says, the video is dedicated to preservationists everywhere. For too long, however, many have viewed preservationists as an idiosyncratic lot of amateur enthusiasts, concerned more about a self-declared agenda than the real common good, oddly tinkering with faded artifacts which have long since outlasted their authentic worth to society as a whole. To view but a video chapter or two of this visually sumptuous, expertly crafted production is to understand that the traditional assessment is wholly mistaken. The effort underway to restore the world's largest musical instrument, the Midmer-Losh organ of what is now Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, commands the serious attention of the leading figures in organ building, just as the creation of this Herculean instrument consumed similar figures eighty years ago. To see names like Nelson Barden, Jean-Louis Coignet, and Jack Bethards lending approbation and leading the cheers implies the magnitude and significance of the instrument itself and its value as an artifact worthy of preservation in a setting unlike any other.

Since the Boardwalk Hall organ is not playable, much of the video is a series of headshots and voice over a series of rostrum camera shots of old still images. Vic Ferrer contributes expert editing and flow. His background audio comes from the last recorded performances on the Midmer-Losh (from 1998, prior to the devastating effects of the hall's restoration on the one remaining main chamber in operation) and otherwise appropriately symphonic instruments. This background score includes a fair share of show tunes and standards and contributes to the comfortably familiar impression that lingers with the viewer. This is a documentary style

that we know and anticipate, much like Ken Burns taking a nostalgic look back at baseball. It is noteworthy not because the primary concern of this review should be proficiency in visual media production, but because of its mood and the promise that this polished production holds for outreach. When Vicki Gold Levi, Atlantic City historian, speaks, when, in an added special feature, a representative from Bally's hands ACCHOS treasurer, John Clotworthy, a check for \$10,000 to begin research into restoration, when we see videos of school aged children touring the organ chambers, then the cultural blockade between the organ community and the rest of society begins to efface.

Curiously, that fissure between the worlds of art and politics corresponds neatly to the circumstances under which Senator Emerson Richards began the odyssey. As numerous speakers proclaim, the tradition of organs in municipal spaces was nothing new by the time that the Atlantic City Convention Hall and its organs were conceived in the 1920's. But the scale of things, the political wallop of it all, and the placement of the instrument within a palace of economic might and large-scale entertainment were certainly beyond anything experienced before or since. In one trivial sense, several of Ferrer's scenes insinuate an apt metaphor – no other hockey rink has ever heard organ music like this! The catalyst, naturally, was State Senator Emerson Richards. We mainly remember Richards as the *Deus ex machina* of the project, the New Jersey politician who could pull the strings, cut the contracts, and divert the cash from the city coffers into the hands of his organ builder of choice, Seibert Losh. And, one wonders, how much of that reputation was furthered by the seminal portrait cut over and over in the classic William Barnes title, *The Contemporary American Organ*. But, as the video documentary makes clear, the Convention Hall organ offered both Richards and Losh the opportunity to rise above their conventional reputations and expectations, to aspire toward higher artistic ends.

Richards, it turns out, was a legitimate organ expert, a consultant who had studied the organ in meticulous detail, who understood the classic principles of the instrument as well as the full flowering

of its symphonic, theatrical potential. As the grainy clips of home videos (included among the bonus tracks and mainly shot by ACCHOS members during visits about a decade ago and prior to the restoration of the hall and its rebranding as "Boardwalk Hall") vividly chronicle, the instrument is not exclusively an agglomeration of extreme-pressure brass stops, layers of sizzling, chronically out of tune strings, and crashing basses. Indeed, there are moments when we hear delicate, clear ensembles, foundation stops of nobility and uncontaminated tone. The Boardwalk Hall organ, we can tell, is a real organ. Richards, it would seem, wheeled, dealed, and dreamt real art.

We learn something about Seibert Losh too. For decades, the commonly remembered portrait of this otherwise forgettable, mainly local organ man was that of an eccentric looking face with its prickly barbs of hair, bad haircut, and odd spectacles. But the measure of the artisan is in the doing. As the talking heads tell us, although otherwise a grade B organ builder, Losh and his little company did splendid work on this job... and perished in the effort.

How ironic then, that this consuming passion would topple so many attached to it. Losh's little shop on Long Island sank as a consequence of the huge losses on the Convention Hall organ and of Richards' prevailing changes to the contract that usually meant additional stops added at no additional charge. The Great Depression trampled Atlantic City, and Richards. Losh, too late, sued the city for money owed him. Though he won the suit, his firm went under. Losh died. The organ itself suffered damage beginning with flooding from a hurricane in 1944, and ultimately the ravages of leaks, dirt, neglect, and aging. As is so often the tale, ham handed "improvements" to the facility came at the expense of the organ. Installing air conditioning prior to the 1964 Democratic Party Convention meant severed wind lines to the chambers flanking the side galleries. Efforts to "protect" the remaining playing portions in the stage right main chamber meant laborers climbing through the organ to hang plastic, meanwhile crushing pipes and allowing concrete dust from demolition into the organ. That was the end. Clearly,



the rough history of the world's largest musical instrument was but a portent of the decline of the city itself, an effect that lasted decades.

What remains now is the hope of resurrection. In an era where Atlantic City has been "rescued" through its consumerist reinvention as a place of corporate play, power, and glitz, is there room for such an expensive, old-tech toy as this? That is the decisive question, and the question that must be unsnarled in order to find the wherewithal and talent to return this landmark to playing condition. The obvious ironies surface. Who is today's Emerson Richards? Do the right-minded have the political clout? Who are the Siebert Loshes? Will they survive the effort?

But, there is reason for optimism, even the glowing optimism voiced in the video. Resurrection has happened elsewhere. Boardwalk Hall itself has been beautifully restored and is in operation for the purposes it was conceived. The lovely 55-rank Kimball organ (also designed by Richards and also the concern of the AC-CHOS) in the Boardwalk Hall ballroom, is set for restoration (after workers there simply cut cables and disabled the relay during building renovation). The Organ Historical Society has awarded both instruments citations.

But perhaps the greatest cause for optimism is this video itself. Such an eloquent piece focused on the pipe organ ought to evoke notice by the community at large. One can hope that some wide distribution of this disc can stir up awareness, curiosity, and ultimately, support. And that widespread awareness must include the secure recommendation here that this readership ought to step forward with its patronage, buy the disc, and play it for others including those not in the organ community.

As a footnote, the special items on the disc include not just the home videos from various organ visits and tours of the chambers (with the audio of the amazed exclamations of the visitors' at seeing things like pipes on 100 inch wind pressure bolted into place so as to keep from being launched out of their holes!), but a trailer to an upcoming video (in 2007) about organ preservation, entitled "Enduring for a Reason." No doubt, it will

be another important document that ties together our past and our future.

— Haig Mardirosian

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## REVIEW FROM PIPORG-L

Date: Sun, 23 Apr 2006

From: Mike Gettelman

Subject: "The Senator's Masterpiece"

You all may remember the report I sent to the List about my experience at Cleveland Public Hall when the organ was made available to the OHS to survey and evaluate. While I was there I met Vic Ferrer who is a recording producer out of Hollywood California who also happens to be a studied organist and serious pipe organ enthusiast. If Vic's name seems familiar to you it may be that you have heard about his DVD entitled *The Senator's Masterpiece* which is a documentary about the Atlantic City Convention Hall organs.

While I was talking to Vic in Cleveland I mentioned that I had seen his DVD in the OHS catalog and had every intention to buy it when my organ fund had a sufficient balance in it. Vic surprised me completely by whipping a copy out of his camera bag and saying, "Here, enjoy." I thanked him and assured him I would and then got on with the more immediate task of looking over the Public Hall organ from top to bottom. I was greatly impressed with Vic's efforts to film as much as possible because it is not easy to haul the goodly weight of professional camera equipment through an organ whose chambers are packed as tight as sardines and are stacked on several levels that take you more than 70 feet above the stage floor. I look forward to seeing the results of that filming and am sure it will be terrific.

Due to many pressures in my personal life I not really had time to view *The Senator's Masterpiece* DVD until recently. When I did I discovered that the aging DVD player in my computer was not up to the task. After discussing this with Vic in several emails and phone calls, he sent me another new disc to see if that was the problem. Turns out it was not, and another DVD player was needed. I finally bought one this weekend and experienced

*The Senator's Masterpiece* in its entirety and was blown away by it.

The main documentary opens with a cartoon that took me quite by surprise. It shows a young fellow entering a large auditorium where after he pulls a curtain down on the stage is confronted with a giant display of pipework. As he stands there in wonderment suddenly the pipes erupt in a giant full organ chord which literally blows him back. When the chord stops his face is full of an ear-to-ear smile and he jumps for joy. This cartoon could easily have been taken from my own first experience with a pipe organ when I stood before the Great Organ behind the facade at Severance Hall and experienced the giant "C" chord that announces the organ's entrance into the Maestoso movement in Saint Saen's Organ Symphony. Already I felt a personal connection to this DVD.

The Documentary section contains many interviews with different people associated with the efforts to preserve the Convention Hall organs and it was great to put faces to the names I had heard so often before. I gave me a sense of awe to hear Barbara Owens, Jack Bethards, Stephen Smith, Curt Mangel, Scot Hunington, and others describe why the pipe organ attracts people so strongly to it. Again I felt a personal connection as much of what they said describes the exact reasons I fell in love with the instrument as well. They also tell why these particular pipe organs are so important to the tradition of American pipe organ building and why we must make every effort to preserve these one of a kind instruments for all future generations to enjoy and learn from. The Documentary section of the DVD takes you through the entire history of Convention Hall and the construction of the organs there. You see the giant pipes that were all hand made as well as all the different equipment that was needed to control such a complex and gigantic scale organ. If the DVD contained only the documentary it would be well worth the price of purchase and a must have for anybody interested in the pipe organ. But it goes much further in its "Special Sections" and for me these sections contain the most amazing footage on the DVD.

The documentary section has constant background music coming from

REVIEW *Continues on page 12*

recordings of the Midmer-Losh but if you want to experience the real visceral sounds that this instrument is capable of, select one of the "home movies" that document past visits to the instrument where it was toured through and played. Visit both organs when a good deal of the stops were up and playing. The Ballroom Kimball is nearly as amazing as the Midmer-Losh. Hear the giant pedal voices of the Midmer-Losh demonstrated one at a time and in ensemble. Listen to the high pressure stops fill the auditorium and then hear the lush sounds of the many, many strings. The many trumpets, both brass and common metal give the organist more choices than can be imagined. When you put it all together it is a total wonder. Hear some amazing impromptu performances by some amazingly skilled performers.

One of the real joys for me was David Scribner's home movie record of his time spent there with Tim Bovard and others. I have heard Tim talk about this experience over the years but it was spectacular for me to actually be there with him and David as they not only played the instruments, but did some work on them to improve the condition. A good deal of their time was spent on the Ballroom Kimball and this was before the cables were cut silencing it ever since.

I could go on and on, but for the sake of brevity let me close by urging everybody who has not gotten a copy of this amazing and thrilling DVD to drop what you are doing right now and order it. I'm sure you will be as amazed and delighted as I am. I don't know how anyone could come away from the experience without gaining a total enthusiasm for these instruments and the place they live. They embody our heritage in the organ community and everyone who loves the pipe organ needs to do all they can to ensure their preservation and restoration.

I close by thanking Vic Ferrer and all the others who worked so tirelessly to bring us this DVD experience. If you own Stephen Smith's book *Atlantic City's Musical Masterpiece* this DVD is the perfect way to expand your experience beyond the words on the page and let the senses of movement and sound complete your journey around and through these pipe organs that are almost unbelievable in their scope, scale, and history. It is really remarkable that they exist at all.

All My Best  
Mike Gettelman

From: "Michael Bell"  
Subject: Re: [Pipechat] ACCH developments  
To: <pipechat@pipechat.org>

Well, maybe we're not all that far away....

All we have to remember is "Wanamaker Grand Court Organ." That instrument is just as big if not a little bigger (rankwise at 461 ranks) than Atlantic City. Fifteen years ago, that organ was essentially unplayable. However, with some funding and a lot of love, the organ is now fully functional and is benefitting from a thorough, ongoing restoration. Atlantic City can enjoy the same benefits. It'll take work, but if Wanamakers can do it, then we easily can.

—Michael

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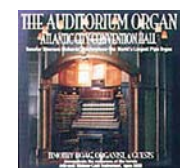
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