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the GRAND OPHICLEIDE

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

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the **GRAND OPHICLEIDE**

*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 City Boardwalk Convention Hall.

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On The Cover — View inside the Right Stage chamber. This picture was taken without flash by Harry Bellangy using a Nikon CoolPix 8700 digital camera with a Nikon fisheye 180 degree converter FC-E9. Other examples of this novel imagery are in this issue, along with directions to some remarkable new panoramic imagery.

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Curator's Report



Carl Loeser

Progress continues to be made in bringing the organs back to life, and each day brings a clearer understanding of their extraordinary design and construction. Use of the words REMARKABLE and AMAZING have not been exhausted in regard to this yet.

The Right Stage chamber is back online, including the high-pressure reeds on 100" of wind. Once professionally tuned, planned in the near future, the 132 ranks in this chamber will mark a revelation, a vindication, and a triumph for the genius of Senator Emerson Richards.

This will be aided and abetted by the new acoustical setting following the renovation of the auditorium some years ago. The organ now speaks with improved clarity and definition in this great space. The reverberation time has been lowered and this, too, makes a big difference in the listening pleasure.

Work on the blowers for the M-L organ has continued, yielding positive results. The blowers for the Fanfare and Echo divisions are now functional, leaving only the Low Pressure blower for the Left Stage chamber in need of repair. Work will begin shortly to replace the worn out vibration pads for all of the blowers. Likewise, the blower rooms are scheduled to be cleaned and painted and new air filters installed.

The relay system for the Right Stage Chamber (one of four relay sections in the organ) has also been receiving attention. A thorough inspection has indicated that the contacts in this

section remain in very good condition, requiring only some cleaning and exercising to work reliably again. Both the note contacts (in the pressurized rooms) and the stop switch contacts, were designed to be self-cleaning, therefore, the more they are used the better they perform. All of this is good news, as it will allow the Right Stage Chamber to be played utilizing the existing relay system while restoration work is carried out on other parts of the organ. To give some perspective of the numbers of individual contacts in the pressurized room, there are about 13,000 for the Great Division alone. The Right Pedal, Solo, and Right Forward Chambers are also controlled from this location.

Attention has been directed at the wind chest magnets in an effort to evaluate their condition and determine if they can be rebuilt or should be replaced. Of particular interest, are the compound magnets used extensively in the organ, and the reasons some were replaced over the years. These are a fascinating study in and of themselves.

Time has been spent with the Kimball organ, planning for the renovation of the Main blower room, the installation of the Booster blower, and rebuilding the two static reservoirs in the Main blower room. A specification has been developed for a new relay system to replace the original that was removed during the building renovation. Plans for the console restoration are also being finalized.

The Historic Organ Restoration Committee has given final approval for the budgets for this project and contractual work will begin soon.

Little by little, the projects become more focused and gain momentum. Stay tuned!

Docent Tours

The monthly docent tours of the Boardwalk Hall organs continue to gain popularity. Shown in the photograph are Stephen D. Smith, ACCHOS President & Author with Board Member Harry Bellangy who organizes and conducts the docent tours on a monthly basis. Information about tours is at acchostour@gmail.com. The monthly tours may vary as they are dependent on the Hall schedule.

Organ Videos On YouTube.com

There is a growing collection of interesting YouTube videos that can be found by searching for "Atlantic City Pipe Organ." At present there are 8 videos posted. Three are official ACCHOS postings and 5 are by fans and friends of the Midmer-Losh organ (some with varying degrees of accuracy, but nonetheless heartfelt).



Stephen D. Smith and Harry Bellangy

Sunday July 1st Opening Pre-Glow Event ATOS 2007 Convention



[EXCERPT FROM A REVIEW BY ROBERT RIDGWAY AS PRINTED IN THE NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2007 ISSUE OF THE THEATRE ORGAN MAGAZINE AND RE-PRINTED WITH PERMISSION.]

Robert Ridgeway has been involved in the restoration of pipe organs for 45 years and has been a professional recording engineer for 41 years. Until his retirement in April of this year he was, for the previous 15 years, the curator of the Sanfilippo collection in Barrington Hills, IL, the home of the largest theatre pipe organ in the world and one of the largest collections of automatic musical instruments in existence. He is a member of ATOS and ACCHOS.

Sunday morning began with the sun shining and approximately 75 eager ATOS pre-glow attendees loading onto two busses for the 2 1/2 hour ride from Manhattan to Atlantic City. The route still passes many power plants and industrial sites but New Jersey has cleaned up its environment substantially in the past decade as evidenced by many low grass covered hills upon which are seen numerous plastic vent pipes standing like sentries. These are former waste dumps and the vents are part of a methane recovery system. When you actually arrive in Atlantic City itself you see that this reclamation and revitalization process is not just confined to former manufacturing and dumping sites but to the entire city. You justifiably get the unmistakable impression that you are entering the "Las Vegas experience" on the East Coast. The famous Boardwalk Convention Hall that used to dominate the horizon is now dwarfed by towering hotels that proudly display the names of many of the world's leading casino operators.

If you have never been to Atlantic City it's hard to describe the scale of the Convention Hall and its adjacent buildings but to give you some idea the two busses were ushered into the West building and actually drove into the building itself.

This space is used for additional convention activities and is so spacious that the busses were barely noticed amidst the stacks of portable bleachers and rolls of carpet and display drapery.

Once we left the West building we walked into the lower level of the main convention hall where the original five manual portable console is on display. We all stopped to take pictures and get a closer look at the superb craftsmanship. We were directed up to the Convention Center ballroom which has now been named the Adrian W. Phillips Ballroom.

Adrian Phillips (1898-1990) was the former president of the Miss America Pageant and for over 60 years was involved with the Convention Hall and promoting Atlantic City. As an aside, his son owns the 125 rank Midmer-Losh organ from the former Atlantic City High School auditorium. It is totally restored and installed in his music room in Phoenix, AZ. The console for it is nearly identical to the portable console from the main Convention Hall.

The Adrian Phillips Ballroom is a huge room, 181 feet long, 128 feet wide, and 75 feet high with permanent seating all across the end opposite the stage. The chambers for the 55-rank Kimball organ are behind ornate grillwork on the flat

walls on either side of the proscenium opening. The 4 manual horseshoe console is located on a balcony alcove above the entrance doors. If you are facing the stage the console is on your right and on your left are large arched windows looking out upon the boardwalk and the Atlantic Ocean. Because the convention Hall and auditorium have been undergoing restoration work for the past few years the console has been covered for safety with a plywood box. One section of plywood was removed so we could see the console inside. Because we could not all go up onto the little alcove balcony we had to content ourselves to look up at the console from below. The main floor is hardwood and is large enough to easily accommodate a basketball game, banquet seating, or whatever is required in the course of running a convention facility. Our group was given a PowerPoint presentation showing pictures of the Kimball organ prior to its being covered. Charles Swisher, Jack Clotworthy, and Harry Bellangy, among others, explained the plans for the restoration of the Kimball and the giant Midmer-Losh pipe organ in the main Convention Hall. Carl Loeser has just been appointed Curator of the two organs and money to fund restoration for the first two years has been allocated.

The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society (ACCHOS) volunteers had turned on all the lights in all the organ chambers so that when we emerged from the ballroom and began walking in to the main Convention Hall we could see behind all of the grills the massive extent of the Midmer-Losh organ. Our group was then led down a hallway toward the stage where along the way we could look into two of the chambers whose doors were open. We marveled at the high pressure reeds in these chambers where each pipe was held down onto the chests with spring-like clamps. Also noted in each chamber was an individual keyboard for tuning. Above each keyboard were switches to select which rank to access. At the end of the hallway we descended two flights of stairs and came out into the giant workshop for the organ. This shop space is located on the stage floor level behind the Great Division which is on stage left, the same side where the console is located. In the center of the shop area was an enormous array of parts from the ballroom Kimball awaiting restoration. It was impossible to miss the rows of galvanized ductwork along one wall like flues from some subterranean blast furnace. These were the air lines from the multiple blowers in the basement that feed to many of the sections of the organ. Beside each duct was the destination within the instrument and the associated air pressure. If the tour thus far hadn't done so then this metal manifestation of power and complexity immediately established that this was no ordinary pipe organ.

Our group made its way out onto the vast Convention Hall stage where we were able to see the console up close. The console is located in a round enclosure. The two front doors had been removed so that the playing area was exposed making it easy to see the fifteen rows of stop tabs on either side of the unusual configuration of seven keyboards. This organ has four 61 note keyboards one 73 note keyboard and two 85 note keyboards plus the normal 32 note pedal board. Even with such a formidable array of keyboards and stops it was obvious it had been laid out very ergonomically when it was designed.

You can easily reach all the stops and playing surfaces with out being over 6 feet tall or having to engage in undue gymnastics. There are doors on the sides of the enclosure which permit access into the back behind the keyboards and stops. It is interesting that the entire stop action mechanism has always been all electric as opposed to either pressure or vacuum pneumatics. The wiring is exceedingly neat and runs in bundles across the stop action. It joins the wiring from the keyboards and makes its way up and across the ceiling of the console enclosure, becoming increasingly larger as it goes. Everywhere that we were able to inspect we could not help but be impressed by: a) the neatness of the installation, b) the fine craftsmanship of the chests and pipework, and c) the mind-numbing scale of the whole instrument and hall.

We were all encouraged to go into the Great Division and be suitably awed by the size of the full-length 64 foot pedal stop; one of only two in the entire world (the other one is in Australia). You can see through a thick glass window into the mechanism and appreciate the massive proportions of the valvular reed assembly inside. Because of the extensive renovations that have taken place in the hall no electrical power has been connected to any of the blowers for several years and we were not able to actually hear the organ. We all felt like Lilliputians as we toured this Gulliver-sized installation. The sight alone of this array of over-sized components was able to conjure in the minds of many what a staggering impact this instrument must have had in its heyday. To cite one example to consider, the relays are so immense that you actually enter them through airlocks, much like an Austin Universal Windchest, to troubleshoot malfunctions and to make repairs.

As an aside I have to tell you that to experience this thunderous musical wonder is indescribable. I was fortunate to be able to hear it played in the early 1960s when several hundred ranks were still operating. I have never heard anything with which to compare it. If you combined the sound of the old Chicago Stadium Barton, the Wanamaker organ,

and the loudest fairground organ you ever encountered, each playing full tilt with the swell shades wide open, it still would not come close to the visceral impact of the Midmer-Losh sound rolling around in the vastness of the Convention Hall. As daunting a project as this restoration might appear to many, this is an instrument that MUST be restored. I can assure you, without contradiction, that there is NO musical instrument on earth that can compare to it.

Several ATOS visitors posed by the console or seated at it. The volunteers of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society are to be commended for the excellent way in which they not only showed off the organ but were willing to answer questions, make themselves available, and discuss the future plans. Additionally they provided each visitor with a copy of the wonderful pictorial essay *The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ*. This 112 page hardbound book contains dramatic black-and-white photographs that were taken by Fred Hess during the construction of the hall and organ installation which enable us to more fully appreciate the scale of this initial project. We then went out onto the boardwalk where we were able to enjoy a delicious lunch at one of the beach establishments operated by the Trump Organization. They had closed off this particular restaurant exclusively for our group and made available, at a substantial discount, an excellent luncheon. The Atlantic City volunteers made certain that all the ATOS guests went away well fed and with a greater appreciation for the sleeping musical giants that are silent within that building but which will rise, like the Phoenix, once again. I would encourage every ATOS member to sign up to become a supporter of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society. For a more comprehensive background and information you can visit their website: www.acchos.org.

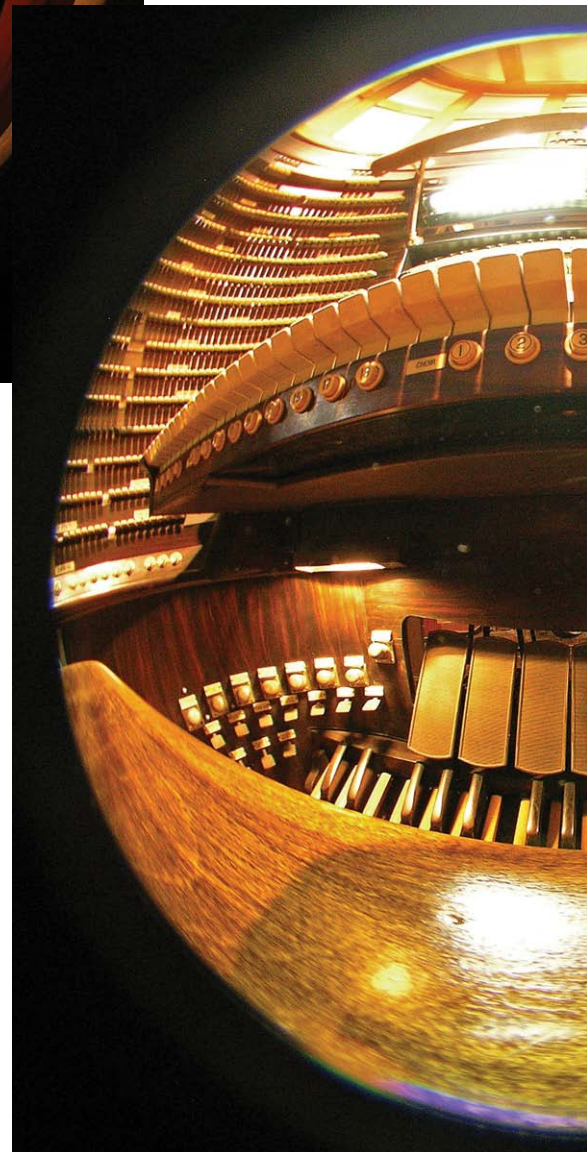
We thanked our gracious ACCHOS hosts and boarded our busses for the ride back to Manhattan in time to shower, grab a quick meal, and then head off to the official opening concert program, Walt Strony performing at Radio City Music Hall on the 4/58 Wurlitzer.

360° Panogro

A series of four remarkable, navigable, acoustic spaces in Boardwalk Hall, acchos.org/html/gallery.html. The photos were taken by Harry Bellangy, who is the Manager of the Music Department at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. The photos are available in Quicktime that can be viewed with four full screen versions that can be controlled with + / - signs, one can zoom in and out and moving the mouse allows full 360° rotation. Vertical movement up and down is also available. The photos show the Main Auditorium, the 7-manual Organ Stage chamber, and the Ballroom.



The intriguing “fish-eye “ photos shown here and on the cover were taken by Harry Bellangy on February 1, 2008 using a Nikon CoolPix 8700 digital camera without flash and a Nikon fisheye 180 degree converter FC-E9.



Graphic Imagery

Navigable 360° views of the organs and
are now available at <http://www.acchos.org/html/gallery.html>.
These images were created by Edward
List Art Center Multimedia Lab at
Rhode Island. There are low bandwidth
set to full screen viewing, along
with soundtracks. Using the Shift/
arrow keys to zoom in or out. Clicking in the image
provides 60° views at various rates of speed.
Soundtracks are also available. There are views of
the Left Console, a portion of the Right
Console, and the Organ Console, all of which are
available.



*Do check the remarkable navigable panoramic imagery at:
<http://www.acchos.org/html/gallery.html>
and have some fun!*



THE CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEW
VITAL ORGANIST

Paul Jacobs can shake the rafters – and your soul

By Justin Davidson

THIS REVIEW IS WELL WRITTEN, THOUGHTFUL AND IS A VERY GOOD READ... THINK WHAT THE MIDMER-LOSH WILL EVENTUALLY SOUND LIKE AND HOW JUSTIN DAVIDSON MIGHT REVIEW IT!!

(Re-printed courtesy of New York Magazine)

If you happen to be walking down West 46th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, and you catch incense mingling with the scents of scorched street-cart lamb and exhaust, you might follow your nose into the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, a startlingly huge neo-Gothic pile. On the morning I visited, what sunlight made it past the thicket of Times Square skyscrapers flowed through the stained-glass rose window, mixing indigos and reds with the iridescent chords of the organ. Paul Jacobs, a cherubic virtuoso seated beneath the forest of pipes, was practicing the music of Olivier Messiaen, who imagined heavenly choirs not as quartets of simpering putti but as great flights of seraphim, blaring their rich, dark fanfares. Masses of sound swirled and beat against the vaults. Brassy harmonics ricocheted around the nave, traveled down the columns, along the floor, and up through my feet. This is music that was meant to reach the spirit by coursing through the flesh.

Jacobs, who claims to be 30 but must surely still get asked for I.D. at bars, does not at first appear capable of making this ecstatic noise. He talks in slightly formal circumlocutions. He dresses like a reverend of his own private order, in a solid-color collarless shirt (imperial purple, when we last met), pants from a black suit, and shiny black shoes, which he changes to soft-soled organ shoes for work. But he has zeal, technique, and fathomless stamina. No sooner did he graduate from the Curtis Institute of Music than he performed an eighteen-hour marathon of Bach's complete organ works. From memory. Then, a few years later, he did the same for the measly nine hours Messiaen wrote for the instrument.

Jacobs undertakes these iron-man feats partly to overcome the instrument's reputation for sanctimonious fustiness. An organ concert in a church barely makes it onto the radar of many music aficionados, which only shows how compartmentalized taste has become. (Though Jacobs allows that many organ recitals are, in fact, bad.) St. Mary's Aeolian-Skinner is one of many great organs in New York,

but both of our major concert halls—Carnegie and Avery Fisher—lack one. Jacobs is fond of pointing out that until the industrial revolution, the pipe organ was humanity’s loudest and most intricate invention. Even that claim, though, makes it seem like a relic of a more primitive age. It’s nothing of the kind, not when it’s played the way he does.

The concert, a few days later, was a comparatively lightweight affair, a performance of Messiaen’s last work for organ, *Livre du Saint Sacrament*, from 1984. The church was nearly full. With little to watch, a few people stared up at the vaults, as if to see whether the roar caused any tremors. One man wept. Another bobbed with closed eyes and a placid grin. A woman stretched out in an empty pew.

In the abstract, I’ve always had trouble with Messiaen—too doggedly Catholic, too overweeningly mystical, too obsessed with notating birdcalls. And yet, that weirdly luminous clangor of his always winds up stirring me. This time, it happened again. Jacobs’s playing amplified the score’s expressive range—the joyful murmurs of prayer; the awe in the section called “The Source of Life,” where high, fluting phrases coalesced above a sea of lapping tremolos. No twentieth-century composer described the life of the soul more vividly. When the resurrected Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, the movement began with the mumblings of the mortal, broken by an explosive crescendo. Resurrection became a violent event, a great tearing free from natural law.

The evening culminated with the magnificently unhinged “Alleluia,” a teeming upward rush of notes spilling into a great, thick chord that Jacobs struck with the force of a pile driver, beating again and again until it broke onto one last column-rattling low tone. The audience had been asked not to applaud at the end, and so, when it was all over and the stones had stopped their trembling, everyone rose in silence and shuffled out into the profane electric night.

(Above) Old ad for the Stanley Theatre Kimball Organ; (below) Early photo of the Ballroom Kimball console — source unknown.



The Stanley Theater

A Young ACCHOS Correspondent from Scotland

Two years ago we received this email from Ross McNellie when he was 16 years old:

----- Original Message -----

Subject: cd`s & dvd`s
 Date: Tue, 21 Feb 2006 23:18:48 +0000 (GMT)
 From: ross mcneillie <ross_mcneillie@yahoo.co.uk>
 To: info@acchos.org

i have just received my CDs of the organs and i want to congratulate you on making such wonderful recordings and the making of "the senators masterpiece" as it contains a wealth of information about the organs and now i can only look forward to visiting in the future. I am 16 years old and live in Scotland and i was completely fascinated with the organs; it's not just a treasure to the United States of America, it's a treasure to the world and i think everyone should at least pay some attention to the instruments and get them back on their feet. If i ever won the lottery i would donate all my winnings to the renovation of these magnificent organs.



Over the years, the emails have continued and matured. Here is the story today in his own words. Don't miss viewing his link at the end of the article:

I am now 18 years old and live in the small village of Dalrymple in Scotland. I am a huge fan of the Midmer-Losh pipe organ.

Around 3 years ago I was reading through the Guinness Book of World Records when an article caught my eye. It briefly described the Worlds largest pipe organ in the Atlantic City Convention Hall. I just had to find out about this, so I looked on the Internet and found the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society. After listening to the mp3`s on the site I was hooked and I listened to them almost every day. I never thought I would like music from a pipe organ, but the Midmer-Losh changed all that. Its sound made me realize what the pipe organ can do. It is powerful and bold; its bass is deep and the combinations of sounds are nearly limitless.

Soon enough I was teaching myself how to play the pipe organ at my local church on a small 10-stop Scovell & Lewis organ. Its sound wasn't anywhere near as big as the Midmer-Losh, but it did the

job for almost one year until I got my own Compton.

I am self-taught and the only "lesson" I have ever had was at the Wurlitzer organ at Clydebank town hall, and it was from Donald Mackenzie, who is the organist at the Odeon Leicester Square in London.

As an 18 year old I stand out from the crowd when at organ recitals. Very rarely I see some near my age at a concert; most of the time I am the youngest there, then the 2nd youngest person could be around 40. A lot of people my age aren't interested in pipe organs at all - they prefer to listening to Techno, Hip Hop and Rap, but it doesn't make them go WOW. Trying to get someone my age to listen to a pipe organ live is very difficult; you almost have to drag them in (I think I might resort to this at some point) to a church to listen. When all the guns are blazing on a pipe organ it makes them go WOW. It completely changes their point of view on the instrument from "dreary church and the dreary old organist in the corner" to "WOW, I love it, play it again." It is essential for the pipe organ's survival in the future that we expose young people to the pipe organ. It is also essential that for the survival of the theatre organ that we play more modern music; almost

anything will work with some arrangement. If an orchestra can do it, so can the organ.

I think that the Midmer-Losh is the perfect converting machine for people my age. I'd love it at some point in the future if Boardwalk Hall could be filled with 13,000 teenagers and the Midmer-Losh played for them. How many of them would want to hear it again and how many would be converted from Eminem to Bach and Gigout? I'd say at least half of them would be hooked.

So I say, when you next attend an organ recital, go out on the street and get as many young people in there as you can.

Ross McNellie - December 2007

Here is the link to Ross McNellie's website and the new collection of never-before-seen photographs of the Midmer-Losh organ in Boardwalk Hall that he personally assembled and posted in a clever and fascinating way:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rossmcneillie/sets/72157602455998626>

Ross McNellie plans to use his computer and internet skills to kindle interest among the younger generations around the world about the wonder and excitement of the Midmer-Losh pipe organ.



Invitation to the dedication of Boardwalk Hall



Lois Miller

Lois Miller was the Boardwalk Hall organist for many years, circa 1940-1958. Her outdoor nightly concerts/sing-alongs on the Hammond at Heinz pier were legendary.

Noted Atlantic City Historian, Allen "Boo" Pergament writes: "I heard her perform many, many times. She always had a gracious and dignified air about her.

She was extremely talented and always dressed eloquently. Regards, Boo"

Please see Issues Nos. 9 & 10 of the Grand Opicleide for further details. (PDFs available at www.acchos.org in the NEWS section.



This well-lit old photo of the console has recently surfaced. Its source is unknown.



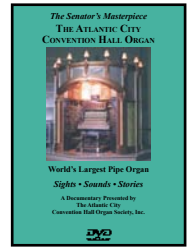
Beatles ad from 1964

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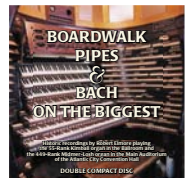


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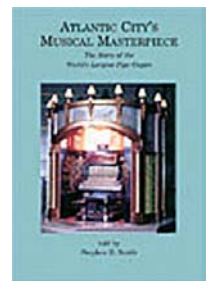
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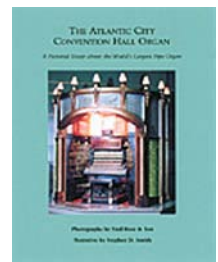
Photographs by Fred Hess & Son

Narrative by Stephen D. Smith

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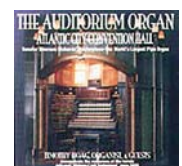


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