

THEATRE ORGAN Report
Mike Bryant, Editor

Since the meeting last year, we have produced another six issues of *Theatre Organ*. Despite the usual challenges of soliciting interesting content, this past year we were fortunate to have several articles which generated much positive feedback.

September/October 2019 was focused on the convention held in Rochester. Don Feely's always-excellent convention review was the primary piece. As is usual for this issue each year, we expand the color from 16 to 32 pages to allow all the convention coverage to run in color. Since the illustrations run chronologically along with the copy, if we did not expand the color, at a minimum the back third of the convention would have been in black and white, which would seem to say, in effect, "this isn't as important as the rest." This issue is typically longer (72 pages) than our standard issue in order to have more than just convention coverage.

November/December 2019 contained an article on the Bluegrass Chapter, a pictorial by Jonathan Kleefield, M.D. on an "organ crawl" through Northern California—establishing that he's nearly as good a writer as he is a photographer (his photographs have made the cover of several of the convention issues), an update on the ATOS Archives, a recap of the 2019 SYA, and a technical article from Dennis Hedberg. This issue was a lower page count, which offset the overage from September/October.

January/February 2020 kicked off the promotion for the 2020 convention, and the cover featured the art-deco lobby of the Cincinnati Union Terminal (now known as the Cincinnati Museum Center) for its visual impact. Interior content detailed the convention, day by day, including a sidebar feature on Ron Wehmeier's organ and shop. The organ has been featured before, but I believe this is the first time we've had anything on the shop. Secondary features covered the Long Center and a teaser piece on John Rust and his Compton organ. Closing Chords covered two great friends of ATOS, Denver's Bob Castle and Organ Stop Pizza's Charlie Balogh. Charlie got some coverage in the following issue as well, thanks to the successful tribute day at Organ Stop in mid-January.

March/April 2020 contained a collection of convention-themed articles, including full features on the Rust Compton, and a Hauptwerk organ at Greenwood United Methodist Church which contains both classical and theatre sample sets. Bill Campbell chose to use his Directors' Corner assignment to bring us an article on locations in Southern California which were used in silent films. Bill Tandy was remembered in a Closing Chord nicely written by Scott Smith.

May/June 2020 was one of two very challenging issues due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The May/June issue is the "final push" issue for the convention, but as the board and host chapter had elected to cancel it for 2020, a good decision at a very inconvenient time (we were just about to begin layout when the decision was made), we had no substitute content, and a magazine which needed to go to the printer in just three weeks. We were starting with nothing but departmental content. Even then, Don Feely had to go back to the events calendar—the source for *Around the Circuit*— to find out what events were still on and what had been cancelled. Under normal circumstances, we begin layout in the first week of the month prior to cover date, and send the files to the printer on the first business day after the 20th in order to hit our mailing target of the first week of the cover month, and if at all possible, the first day of the month.

Jonas Nordwall stepped up with an article on the mega-organ at his church; I had some pictures from a recovery project for a client who suffered significant losses in Hurricane Harvey that I could use to build a pictorial (what was in that article barely scratched the surface); I asked Dave Calendine to be somewhat wordy in his Chairman's Message (not a problem, apparently...); and Ken Double came up with a great piece on the rebuild of the Atlanta Fox's Mighty Mo, accompanied by pictures. Fortunately, there were a lot of pictures. Lee Shaw from the Rocky Mountain chapter sent me an image of the Denver Paramount marquee at night, with the message "Stay Safe & Support One Another – We Will See You Soon" which I thought was not only visually appealing, but an appropriate message for us as well. The picture had come from the company which owns the Paramount; I contacted them for permission to use it and received permission in under 24 hours.

This issue marked the first issue completely designed by Kyle Smith, who has worked with Dannielle for quite some time and has learned our visual style so well I couldn't have told you which one of them did the work. Because of our time crunch, she put in some long days and weekends when we began feeding her material. Even though Johnson Press, like so many other companies, was working on a reduced-staff basis, we managed to get the files to them on time, and the issue mailed on April 30, one day before our "ideal" target.

July/August 2020, which you may have received (operative term is "may." I can't control the US Postal Service) is a sad issue. Not because of any shortage of content (we have two great feature pieces – a biographical piece on Dwight Beacham, and an in-depth article on the Kimball organ in Portland's Cleveland High School), but because of the number of Closing Chords. For the first time in my memory, we have six Closing Chords, including "Uncle Phil" Maloof and Gus Franklin. This does not count Ken Crome, who passed away on May 1. We will be doing an extensive Closing Chord for Ken in the September/October issue, which will also be dedicated to him.

Looking forward, every other year I go out to other printers for bids on our work. Printers in the middle part of the country have an edge when shipping and mailing costs are factored in, as a majority of our mailing goes periodicals class. In that class, the cost to mail a piece is dependent on both weight and distance traveled. The farther it goes, the more each ounce costs us. This puts mailers on the coasts at a disadvantage. If we were large enough to use multiple regional printers, as many magazines do, having them around the country would benefit us greatly. But we aren't big enough to do that.

Nevertheless, we do look at options. So far, no printer has been close enough to Johnson Press's cost, even before mailing costs are factored in, to make further discussions worthwhile. There is also a value to the working relationship between Dannielle and Johnson Press, which is very close and efficient. All that said, we still go through the exercise. This year, though, I have delayed what is normally a Springtime exercise into the fall. The pandemic-caused changes in workload have just made it impractical for me to do otherwise.

I'm going to ask the board to approve covering the banquet cost for Dannielle and Kyle at the 2021 convention in Indianapolis. They are an essential part of the team which produces the Journal, and they should be recognized by the members in attendance. If the board declines, I'll cover the cost myself, but this is something I think absolutely deserves to be done.

We're trying once again to resurrect a feature which used to run in the days of the legendary Stu Green, then called "Vox Pops." We've tried and failed a few times in the past to get this off the ground, but I'm

reluctant to concede that particular horse is dead, so we'll keep whipping it at least once more. Vox Pops, by the way, is what we now call a department for a member to write a guest editorial. We're going to call the resurrected version "Tidbits" and scatter them around the issue, rather than try each issue to fill up a full page or two with them.

No task is totally without challenges (you may read that as a euphemism for "problems" if you wish) and editing the Journal is no different in that regard. To cite a couple of examples...

It is absolutely like pulling teeth to get some directors to submit assigned Directors' Corner pieces at all, let alone by deadline. I send out the assignments for the year shortly after the July board meeting, when we have the new board seated; I send out reminders to those who are due for publication in the next issue a full month before the deadline. And still, I'm lucky if I even get a response saying "Sorry, I just got sidetracked." I believe that many directors simply don't respond to ATOS e-mails at all. You know who you are, and I'll wager I'm not the only person you ignore. I won't embarrass you by calling you out by name—yet.

You may have noticed a lack of board meeting minutes summaries over the past several issues. I have requested that approved meeting minutes be e-mailed to me in Word (or other word-processor) format, not PDF. I cannot edit a PDF, which means I would have to recreate the document in summary form. So far, I have not received a single set of approved board meeting minutes in any format, let alone Word, and what is on the website is PDF.

I haven't had any feedback from members asking, "Where are the board minutes summaries you used to print?" Perhaps the members (a) don't care about the board minutes or (b) are perfectly content to go to the website to read the full versions – which would be excellent news, if we have a way to track it.

If you want board meeting summaries in the Journal, start sending the fully approved and updated minutes to me as requested – in Word or another common word-processor format.

Taking the year as a whole, I think under the leadership of Chairman Dave Calendine and the rest of the board, the organization is in good shape. I appreciate the support I've received from the leadership, and I think we've overcome some pretty major challenges (once again, that euphemism thing...) and delivered on our commitment to provide the membership with a very high-quality publication on time and on budget (below, most years).

I look forward to another successful year.