

# SHUFFLE OFF TO BUFFALO



ROBERT  
HOPE JONES



LYNN  
LARSEN



RON  
RHODE



DWIGHT  
THOMAS



DENNIS  
JAMES



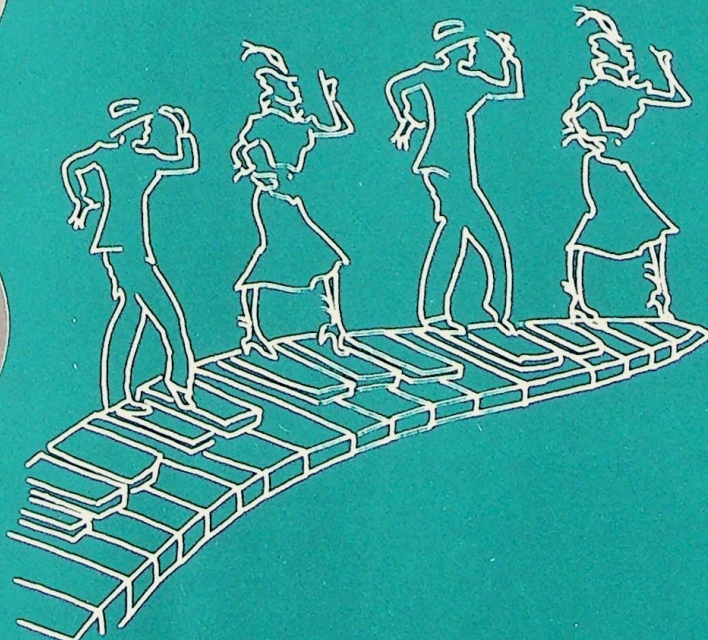
HECTOR  
OLIVERA



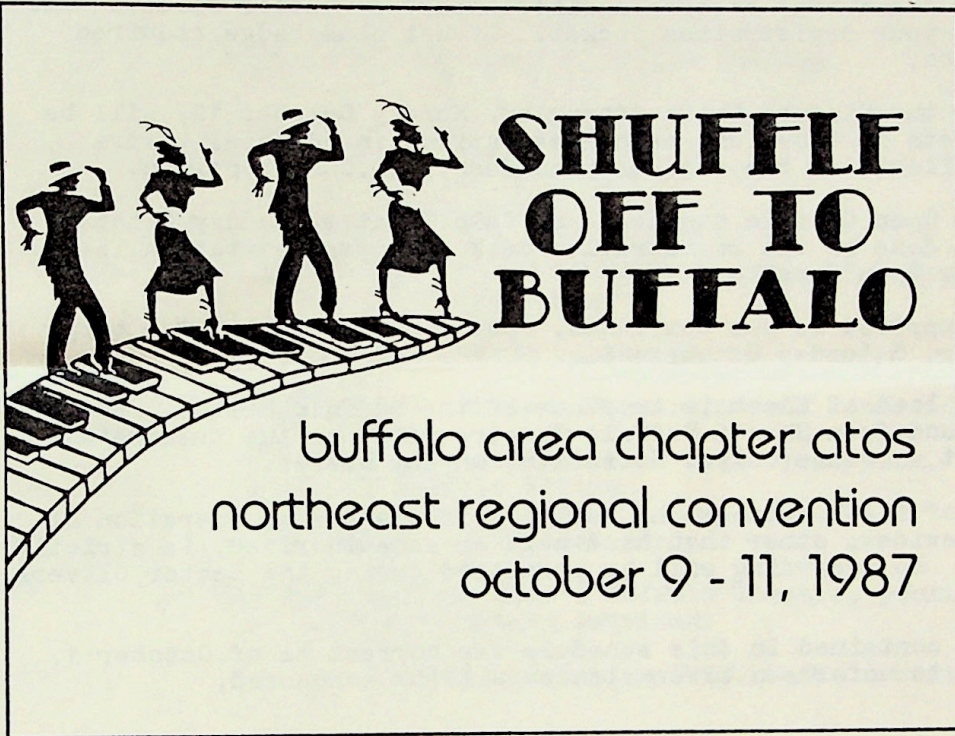
WALT  
STRONG



ROBERT  
WOLFE



- Shea's Buffalo Theatre
- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
- Auditorium Theatre
- First Universalist Church
- Riviera Theatre
- Wuritzer factory



# SHUFFLE OFF TO BUFFALO

buffalo area chapter atos  
northeast regional convention  
october 9 - 11, 1987

Shuffle Off to Buffalo  
ATOS Northeast Regional Convention  
Buffalo, New York October 9-12, 1987

#### Important Information

Registration desk at the Buffalo Hilton will be open Friday, October 9 from 2-5 PM.

Record Shop will be in operation ONLY Sunday, Oct. 11, at The Hilton, following Riviera concert and during closing cocktail party. CASH SALES ONLY.

Admission to all events is by name badge. Wear yours at all times. Tickets for the Sunday evening public concert by Hector Olivera will be found in your registration packet. Ticket plus badge required for admission.

Tickets for the Niagara Falls Afterglow, Monday October 12, will be in the packets of those who made reservations in advance. Extra tickets available at the registration desk, \$30.00 per person.

Sign-up for Open Console at Shea's Buffalo Theatre, Sunday October 11, must be done at the registration desk. No transportation is provided for Open Console.

Only meal supplied is one box lunch, upon boarding busses for trip to Rochester, Saturday October 10.

Busses will load at the main entrance of the Buffalo Hilton. Shuttle service to and from Shea's Buffalo Theatre will use the theatre's Pearl Street entrance only. No smoking on any busses.

The taking of flash photographs during performances or operation of recording devices, other than hand-held or as authorized, is strictly prohibited. No recording will be permitted during the Hector Olivera concert.

Information contained in this schedule was correct as of October 1. Changes due to unforeseen circumstances will be announced.

#### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday, October 9

2:00 - 5:00 PM	Registration desk open
6:15 PM	Load busses (7:00 last bus)
6:30 - 7:45 PM	No-host cocktail reception, Shea's Buffalo Theatre
8:00 PM	LYN LARSEN, Shea's Buffalo Theatre

Saturday, October 10

9:30 AM	Motorcoaches leave hotel (9:45 last bus)
10:00 AM	WALT STRONY, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Buffalo
1:15 PM	DENNIS JAMES with Thom Gall, First Universalist Church, Rochester
3:00 PM	RON RHODE, Auditorium Theatre, Rochester
	Return to Buffalo Hilton
8:15 PM	Load busses (8:45 last bus)
9:00 PM	DWIGHT THOMAS, Shea's Buffalo Theatre

Sunday, October 11

	Sleep in, attend church of your choice, or
9:00 - 11:30 AM	Open Console, Shea's Buffalo Theatre (no transportation provided)
12:15 PM	Load busses (12:30 last bus)
1:00 PM	ROBERT WOLFE, Riviera Theatre, North Tonawanda
	10 minute stop at Wurlitzer factory complex, return to Buffalo Hilton
6:00 PM	Load busses (6:45 last bus)
7:00 PM	HECTOR OLIVERA, Shea's Buffalo Theatre, public concert (ticket required)
10:00 PM	No-host cocktail party, Le Club, Buffalo Hilton

Monday, October 12 (Optional)

Niagara Falls Afterglow, name badge and ticket required

8:45 AM	Load busses (9:00 last bus)
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PLEASE NOTE: You may be required to show proof of citizenship at border crossings. Birth certificate or voter's registration card is considered valid proof.

Guests who will not be staying at the Hilton Monday night should allow enough time to check out and move your luggage in advance of boarding the bus. The hotel has a storage room in which to check belongings.

## Complete Schedule of Events

### Friday, October 9, 1987

- 2-5 pm Registration at the Buffalo Hilton Hotel  
6:30 pm No-host Welcoming Cocktail Reception, Petite Lobby, Shea's Buffalo Theatre  
8:00 pm LYN LARSEN, Shea's Buffalo's restored 4/28 Wurlitzer

### Saturday, October 10

- 10:00 am WALT STRONGY, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Buffalo, 5/140 Moller  
1:15 pm DENNIS JAMES with Thom Gall, First Universalist Church, Rochester, 3/13 Hope-Jones Opus 2  
3:00 pm RON RHODE, Auditorium Theatre, Rochester, 4/22 Wurlitzer  
9:00 pm DWIGHT THOMAS, Shea's Buffalo Theatre, 4/28 Wurlitzer

### Sunday, October 11

- 9-11:30 am Open Console, Shea's Buffalo Theatre, sign-up required  
1:00 pm ROBERT WOLFE, Riviera Theatre, North Tonawanda, 3/20 Wurlitzer  
3:30 pm Stop at old Wurlitzer factory complex for exterior photos.  
7:30 pm HECTOR OLIVERA, Public Concert, Shea's Buffalo Theatre  
10:00 pm No-host Cocktail Party, Le Club, Buffalo Hilton Hotel

### Monday, October 12 (optional) Niagara Falls Afterglow

Five-hour escorted tour of the famous scenic attraction, including stops on both Canadian and American sides, lunch atop an observation tower. Proof of citizenship required to enter Canada.

## 1987 Regional Convention

### Planning Committee

Timothy M. Schramm, Co-Chairman  
Craig M. Whitley, Co-Chairman

Wayne M. Rettke  
Gary L. Shipe  
Laura Whitley  
Maureen P. Wilke

### The Committee wishes to acknowledge the assistance of:

ATOS Convention Planning Coordinator: Tim Needler  
ATOS Treasurer: Warren Dale Mendenhall  
Transportation Coordinator: Alden Stockebrand  
Convention Recordist: Allen R. Miller  
Convention Record Shop: Michael Mancuso  
Souvenir Booklet: Geoffrey Paterson  
Typesetting: Rhinotype Inc., Toronto, Ont.  
Printing: Sommer & Sons, Buffalo, NY  
Convention Photographer: Gary L. Shipe  
Travel Arrangements: Crockett-Hines Travel Agency  
Afterglow Arrangements: Silent Partners, Inc.  
Catering: Garvey's, Benning Foods

### Shea's Buffalo Organ Maintenance:

John Shaffer, Crew Chief  
Warren Miller  
Walter Martin

### Special Thanks to:

Harry and Dorothy Malcolm, Rochester Theatre Organ Society  
Patrick Fagan, Executive Vice President & General Manager  
Shea's Buffalo Theatre

Members of the Buffalo Area Chapter who assisted with hospitality, registration and transportation.

## Buffalo Area Chapter, ATOS

Timothy M. Schramm, President  
Harry Marciniak, Vice President  
Maureen P. Wilke, Secretary  
Henry Marten, Treasurer

Mailing Address  
Box 830, Ellicott Station  
Buffalo, New York  
14205

## Message from the Convention Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to "roll out the red carpet" and welcome you to Buffalo and the 1987 Regional Convention "Shuffle Off to Buffalo".

There are many fine theatre organ installations across the country and we feel that Western New York, by no means, should be left out. This is why we have extended to you this invitation to be with us this weekend. My committee and I have left no stone unturned in making sure the time you spend with us will be memorable and that, when you leave us, you will have a "warm spot" in your heart for Buffalo, Western New York, and their history, rich in theatre organs.

If you should have any questions or problems, please feel free to contact me or any one of my committee. We will be more than happy to assist you in any way we can.

All the organs have been tuned, the spotlights are all in place, so sit back, relax, and most of all, ENJOY!!

Timothy M. Schramm  
President, Buffalo Area Chapter

## The American Theatre Organ Society

Jack Moelmann, President  
Russell Joseph, Vice President  
David M. Barnett, Secretary  
Warren Dale Mendenhall, Treasurer  
Douglas C. Fisk, Executive Director  
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### Membership Office

P.O. Box 420490  
Sacramento, California  
95842

## Message from the President

On behalf of the officers and board of directors of the American Theatre Organ Society, welcome to Buffalo, New York and the Northeast Regional Convention "Shuffle Off to Buffalo." The Buffalo Area Chapter has been working long and hard to provide you with some great organs and organists in the Buffalo Area. There are always many people who will be up late at night making sure that the organs are in tip-top condition, who captain buses, co-ordinate events and registration, and many more who are necessary for a convention of this type to run smoothly. To all involved, we say **thank you**.

People attending a convention come from all walks of life, but there is one thing in common: the enjoyment of the theatre organ and its music. It is a time for us to renew acquaintances and to make new friends.

Thank you all for coming. I hope you enjoy the convention, and keep on supporting the American Theatre Organ Society, its chapters, its members, and its objectives.

Sincerely yours,  
Jack Moelmann, President

## Shea's Buffalo 4/28 Wurlitzer

There have been, over the years, theatre organ concerts which, through some magic interaction of time, place and performer, have become legendary. Some, indeed, have become so almost before the blowers cooled off; tape recordings pass from collector to collector in an envelope of reverence and awe, there being an awareness that the recordist that day preserved for all time a special moment that will never occur again.

The phrase "Pearl White at Shea's Buffalo" pinpoints one of these moments for theatre organ fans. One midnight during the 1964 Association of Theatre Organ Enthusiasts (ATOE) convention, that diminutive Chicago organist cut loose on the almost-forgotten pipe organ and stopped the convention cold. Part of the magic of that moment was the glorious sound of the long-neglected 4/28 Wurlitzer, patched together for the occasion with little more than love and hope by a small volunteer crew.

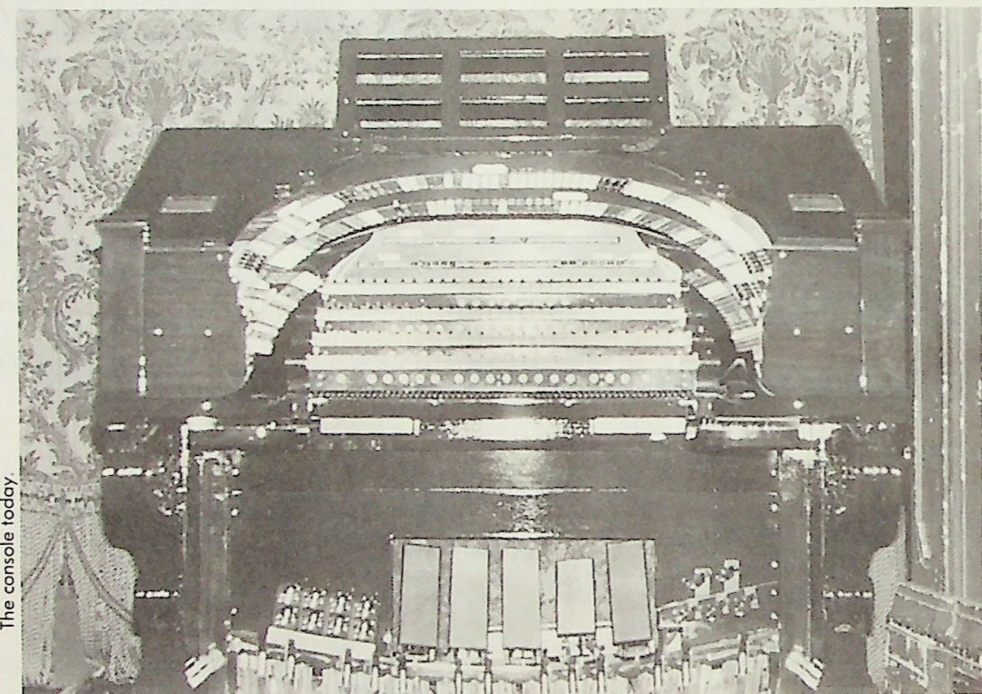
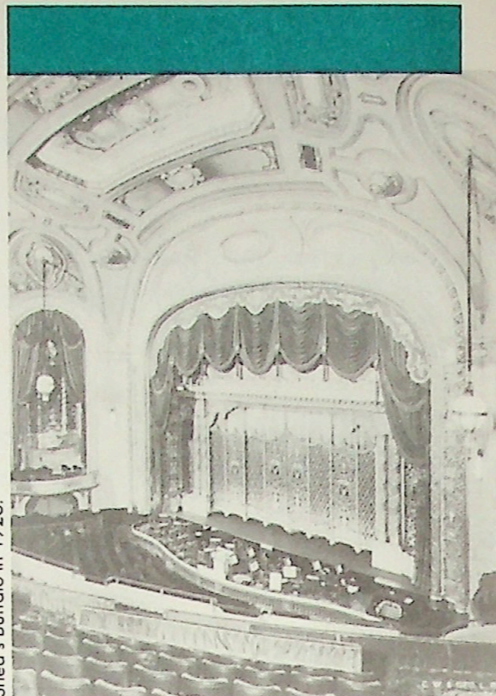
Sadly, restoration had to be abandoned and the Shea's organ lay helpless but not forgotten for ten more years, sustaining almost terminal damage in that time.

Michael Shea, an iron worker who was to become the Sid Grauman of Western New York, opened his first Music Hall on Clinton Street, Buffalo in 1882. Other theatres followed, and then the Wurlitzers. A 2/6 Style 160 was installed in his North Park Theatre in 1920. In 1922 he had 3/15 Style 260 Specials installed in his Buffalo and Toronto Hippodromes. Then, in 1925, Shea told Fanny Wurlitzer that he wanted only the best for his new showpiece on Main Street. He referred to the Wurlitzer he had just heard at the Uptown in Chicago, saying he wanted the same thing but with lots of strings. For \$72,500 he got an identical organ, number 1206, a Style 285 Special—"Special" meaning no Echo Division (what a sound that might have made!). It left the factory on November 30, 1925 and made its first public appearance on January 16, 1926 with Lloyd G. Del Castillo at the console.

Wurlitzer, who rarely tonally finished their organs, sent their two top voicers, Joseph Carruthers and James Nuttall, to finish the Shea's organ. The huge, high ceilinged interior gave them plenty of room to bring out the best in it. It was the largest in the area and its proximity to the factory made it an ideal demonstration instrument. Some say it was Michael Shea who insisted that they finish it.

One of the finest intact original movie places in the country, Shea's Buffalo is the largest and most beautiful in the state outside New York City. It was designed by C.W. and George Rapp of Chicago, with interior design by Tiffany Studios of New York. Italian marble walls and Czechoslovakian crystal chandeliers abound in the Americanized Louis XIV decor, giving it a warm and understated elegance. Built over one year at a cost of almost \$2 million, the theatre was opened with 4000 seats, has a 50' x 66' proscenium opening and is 89 feet high to the dome. Rearranged for more legroom downstairs, the theatre now seats 3184.

Shea's Buffalo in 1926.



The console today.

Friends of the Buffalo Theatre, formed in early 1975 by the theatre's then chief engineer L. Curt Mangel in an effort to save the foreclosed-upon palace, almost considered junking the organ, it was in such bad shape. But not even mushrooms growing amid plaster-filled pipes in the Solo Chamber could put them off. Memories of that glorious sound unleashed in 1964 won out, and today we enjoy the result of ten years of costly, painstaking and loving restoration carried on in sometimes less than ideal, sometimes desperate, financial and operational circumstances. Organ-builder Allen Miller directed the organ's restoration. Financial help came from federal, state and private grants from the City of Buffalo, Erie County and the Wendt Foundation.

Through the efforts of the Friends, the theatre was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

On April 27, 1984, the organ was officially rededicated with Lyn Larsen at the console and Jack Bethards and the Shea's Buffalo Orchestra on stage. Several organ concerts a year are produced by the present Shea's management, with maintenance still provided by members of Buffalo Area Chapter.

## Holy Trinity Lutheran Church 5/140 Moller

The Margaret L. Wendt Memorial Organ is one of North America's outstanding pipe organs, raising to new heights the long tradition of musical excellence established over the years at Buffalo's Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. This tradition is not by accident, as Martin Luther is quoted as having said: "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to us that we should proclaim the Word of God through music."

A long-time member of Holy Trinity Church, Margaret L. Wendt was an advocate of community involvement in the arts. It is fitting, then, that the

foundation established by her estate has donated funds over the past decade to build this organ, a tribute to which the only condition was that the very best be done for God's glory and in her memory. It was not originally intended that such a large organ be built, but the four distinct phases of the project, each begetting the next, provided opportunities to correct, rethink and perfect the instrument. That the organ is without peer in the area, if not the country, is a tribute to the Wendt Foundation, to the untiring efforts of Frederick Swann who served as a consultant for the entire project, and to American craftsmanship and artistry.

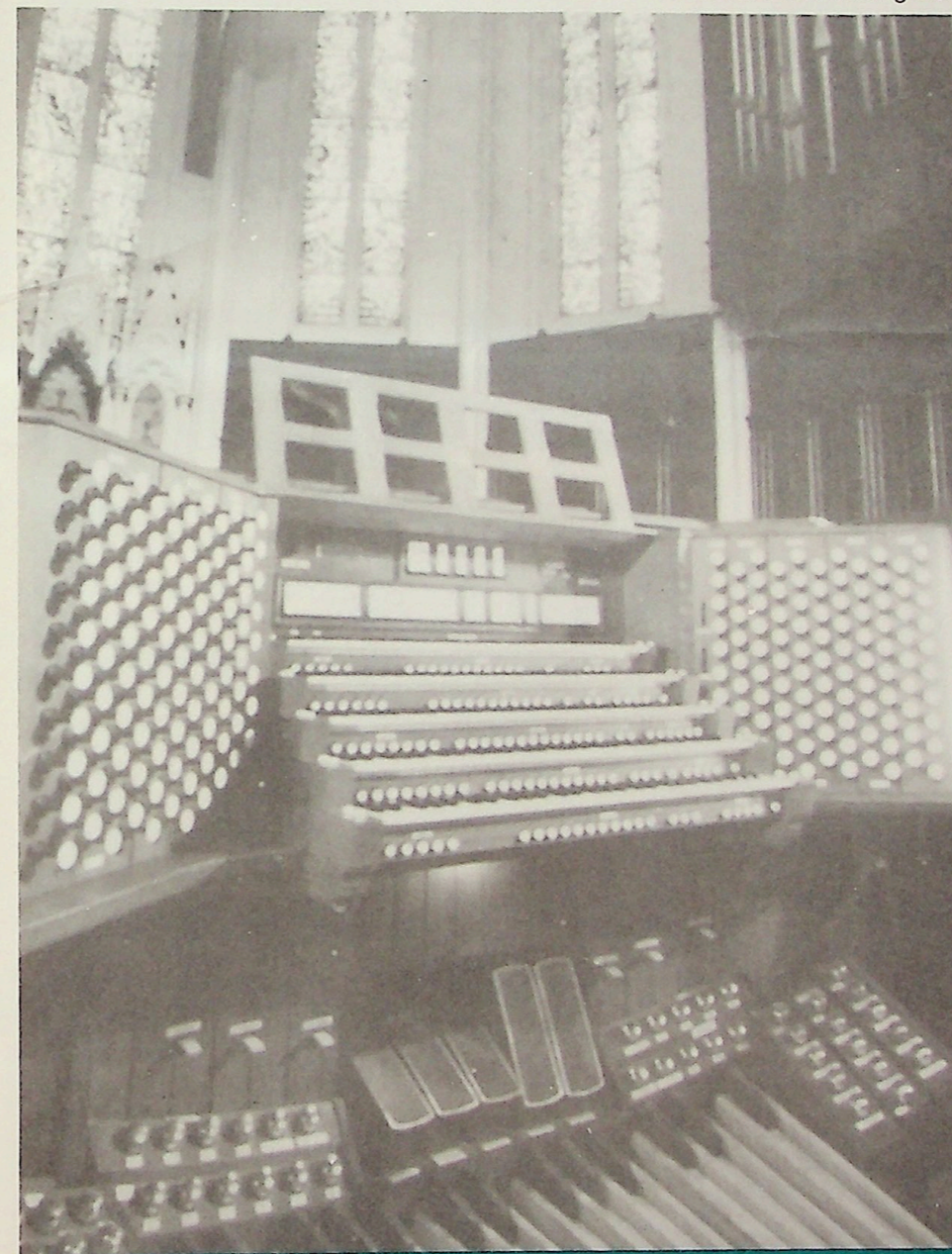
In 1977 the Wendt Foundation gave

the church a new chancel organ, a 4/80 Moller. Some of the 1949 Moller was saved, especially the lush orchestral voices of the Swell Division, but it was essentially a new instrument.

Recognizing the size and acoustics of the church and the expanding musical program of the parish, the Foundation then donated a new 2/26 Moller for the gallery two years later. Less than a quarter the size of the chancel organ, this colourful instrument is virtually as powerful because of its placement. Since the chancel console was never designed to handle a gallery organ, and as a result of many other problems which grew from two separate organs, the Van Zoeren Organ Company was contracted by the Foundation to build two new consoles and make some tonal adjustments and additions. Taking full advantage of 1983 technology, they provided solid state action and switching enabling both organs to be played as one. Tonal additions included the electronic Celestial Division, and careful attention was paid to preserving the original Moller style and voicing. Finally, in 1986 Moller executed the superb hand-carved Gothic casework (their first in 20 years) and added the Grand Choeur Division along with several other ranks.

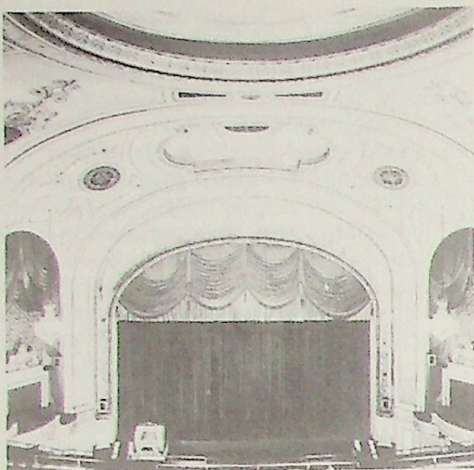
The completed organ comprises 140 ranks of pipes (108 in the chancel and 32 in the gallery), 12 electronic voices (including the Celestial Division high in the nave), four percussion stops (Harp, Chimes and two Zymbelsterns) and a Nachtigall (a bird whistle). Notable in the Grand Choeur Division is an 8' "Fistula Canora", in reality a Tibia Clausa, said to have been built by Wurlitzer in 1924 for the Regency Theatre, Cleveland. Its new name is indicative of other colourful and inventive terminology used throughout the stolist.

Holy Trinity Church, through this magnificent instrument, continues to fulfill its musical responsibility to the parish and to the community at large.



The new chancel console.

## Auditorium Theatre 4/22 Wurlitzer



The RKO Palace auditorium, around 1964.

Shipped from Wurlitzer's North Tonawanda shops on September 12, 1928, organ No. 1951 was listed as a "Special Four-Manual" and was said to have cost \$75,000 1928 dollars. Its destination was the 2916-seat Keith-Albee Palace Theatre on Clinton Avenue North in Rochester.

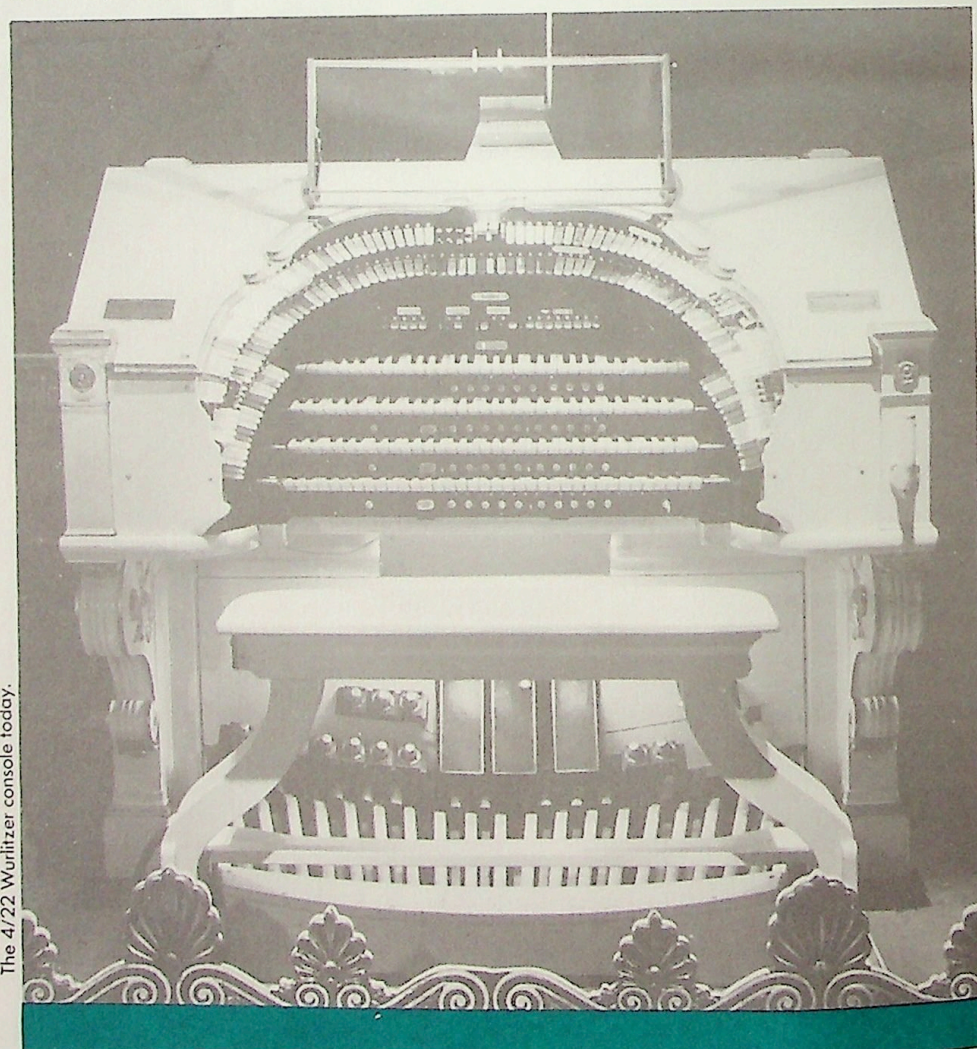
The new Palace was the Rochester stop on the Keith-Albee (later RKO) vaudeville circuit, and it opened on Christmas Day, 1928 with Tom Grierson at the console. An almost acoustically perfect house, it was decorated in lavish French style by Chicago's Grasen and Maygar. Though the organ was used extensively for spotlight solos, sing-alongs, vaudeville backgrounds and radio broadcasts, it was never used to accompany silent films in its original home.

Tom Grierson, destined to be house organist for 15 years, designed the organ's stoplist around 21 ranks, creating one of the finest ensembles ever to leave the factory.

Many popular organists of the era played there on tour, including Rex Koury, Jesse and Helen Crawford and Ann Leaf. Other more locally known organists over the years included Helen Ankner, Edward H. Graef, Dick Hull, Arlo Hulst, Walter P. Patterson and Edwin J. Werp. Used well into the forties despite the earlier passing of vaudeville, the organ became silent soon after the war and, like so many others, began gathering dust.

In May, 1960, amid the nationwide Theatre Organ renaissance, four local organ enthusiasts got permission from RKO's district manager to restore the Wurlitzer. Some 350 men (and woman) hours later, a Sunday morning gathering of theatre organ lovers heard Tom

The 4/22 Wurlitzer console today.



Grierson and the organ for the first time in 17 years. The organ, and Mr. Grierson, made their formal reappearance at the 1964 ATOE Convention; British expatriate Reginald Foort also played it on that occasion. Shortly after, the Rochester Theatre Organ Society was formed, independent of ATOE, "dedicated to preserving the sound of the 'King of Instruments'." There were 50 charter members.

March of 1965 brought with it news that the Palace was to be razed in favor of an apartment-hotel complex (which has never materialized — does this sound familiar?). Frantic months of creative fundraising activity, negotiating a new home, removal and reinstallation of the organ culminated on January 21, 1967 with the first concert in the 2574-seat Auditorium Theatre. Don Scott, a Grierson student who had played the last Palace concert, was at the console.

The house is part of the Masonic Temple and Theatre complex at East Main and Prince Streets. Designed by Osgood and Osgood of Grand Rapids and completed at a cost of over

\$2 million, it was dedicated on December 14, 1929. Over the years the theatre has been home to musicals and live theatre, travelogues, rock shows, concerts and films. The original 4/56 Skinner concert organ was relocated to a church to make way for the Wurlitzer.

Addition of a second Vox Humana and an upright piano, and replacement of the stolen Brass Saxophone with a Posthorn, brought the organ up to 22 ranks. It has gained a reputation over the last twenty years as one of the five or six finest theatre organs on the North American concert circuit. In that time, RTOS has sponsored almost 200 concerts featuring just over 100 different organists for audiences which have grown to well over 12,000 patrons a season. More than a dozen recordings have been made of the organ.

The RTOS and Temple Civic Center recently celebrated 20 years of cooperation and mutual support, a shining example to all of us, and, an association that shows no signs of wavering.

## First Universalist Church 3/13 Hope Jones



The Hope-Jones console.

The radical eccentric English organ builder Robert Hope-Jones is arguably the most controversial figure in the history of the craft. His revolutionary ideas and inventions sat his contemporaries on their collective ear and the traditionalists have never quite recovered.

Beginning with the perfection of electro-pneumatic action in 1886, this haunted genius is credited—sometimes grudgingly, sometimes with embarrassment—with horseshoe consoles, inclined manuals, second touch, stop tablets, the suitable-bass feature, silver contacts, individual swell motors, high wind pressures, reservoirs with springs, Tibias, Diaphones, orchestral voicing, the "unit orchestra" concept (not to be confused with unification) and unification. Among other things.

By 1907 he was able to garner local financial support, and some big-names for his board of directors (Mark Twain and "Diamond Jim" Brady among them), so that he could open his own shop in Elmira, New York. Up to that time he had seen enough business failure, discouragement, resentment, jealousy and suspected sabotage on both sides of the Atlantic to have made a lesser man give up in frustration.

In Elmira, Hope-Jones had a free hand. Of his organs, it is said that no

The young Robert Hope-Jones.



more beautiful examples of the craft were built than these. "Each one attested in its own way to a love and devotion for the organ which could regard nothing as too fine to incorporate in it." Unfortunately, his perfectionism often led to massive cost overruns during construction. That the Hope-Jones Electric Organ Company went on to build 18 unit organs before going under in 1911 is nothing short of a miracle.

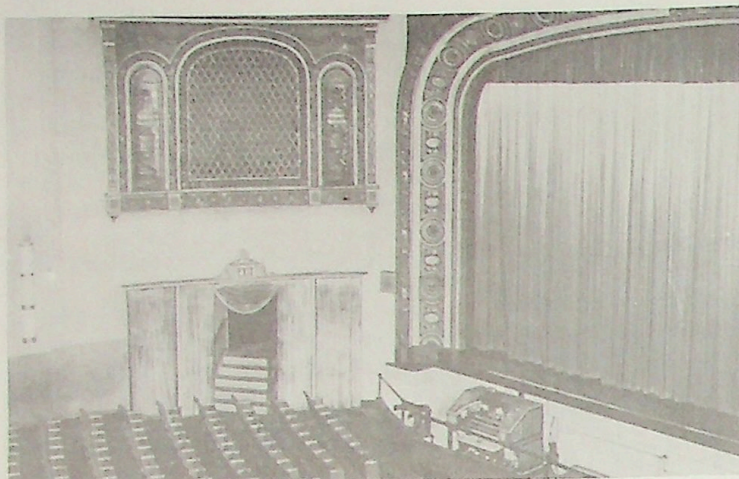
Architect Claude Bragdon's distinguished First Universalist Church in Rochester houses the second of these. The building is in the Lombardy Romanesque style and displays exquisite detail in both design and colour. It was dedicated on October 9, 1908. The four magnificent stained glass windows, considered to be among the finest examples in the country, came from the original building.

One intriguing feature of this organ was that the combination action was triggered not by the usual buttons, but by six small keys above each manual, like those on a typewriter, labelled P, MP, MF, F, FF, FFF; suitable bass was tripped on second touch. Another is the Tuba rank in its own concrete chamber: it does not speak directly into the auditorium but rather transfers its sound across panels made of drum-head material positioned in the wall to the right of the console.

A few days before Edwin H. Lemare was to play the dedication concert on October 6, 1908 the organ was vandalized. "Nearly a hundred pipes were removed, ruined and then carefully replaced" in less than an hour and a half. More closed minds commenting on Hope-Jones' ideas. Damage was repaired the day before the concert by a crew rushed from Elmira, and they stayed overnight to guard against further sabotage.

In 1937 the Wurlitzer Company renovated the instrument, moving the Diapason Phonon and Tibia into the Main Chamber and adding Chimes at the same time. So it remains virtually as Hope-Jones built and installed it. This was near the end of their theatre-organ building days and 27 years after buying the materials, patents, name and goodwill of the Hope-Jones Organ Company, and Hope-Jones himself. Wurlitzer went into full-scale production, selling to the fast growing theatre market. With less and less control over his invention, Hope-Jones became increasingly frustrated and bitter. Wurlitzer still paid him \$60 a week but he was forbidden to enter the factory or visit job sites. On September 13, 1914, in a rented room on George Street, "almost within the shadow of the First Universalist Church, which had one of his best organs", he perfected his last invention—a bizarre device which enabled him to commit suicide by gas inhalation without endangering anyone else. A gentleman to the end, Hope-Jones was buried in Elm Lawn Cemetery, North Tonawanda.

## Riviera Theatre 3/20 Wurlitzer



The Riviera in 1964.

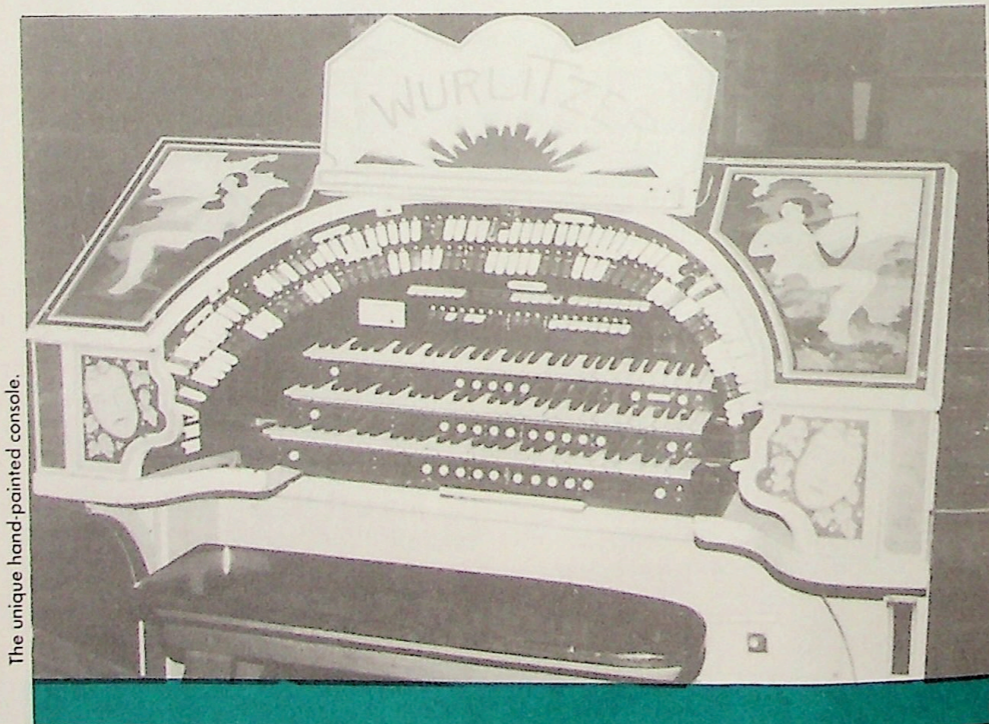
Fifteen years and fifteen hundred organs after building and shipping its first "Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra", the Wurlitzer company of North Tonawanda built number 1524, a "Special Three-manual." The console, chests, relays, traps and eleven ranks of pipes left the factory on November 26, 1926, travelled less than a mile, and were uncrated in the new 1200-seat Riviera Theatre at 67 Webster Street.

Privately owned and managed since it was built, the Riviera is of Italianate design, the most elaborate theatre in the Tonawandas. It was designed by architect Leon Lempert, who was also responsible for the Court Street Theatre (1903), the Hippodrome (1914), the Lafayette (1921) and the Great Lakes (1927). The console is unique, its case being ornately and colourfully painted with masks, scrolls and mythological figures. The present music rack echoes the British "sunburst" style rack and was donated in the mid-seventies by Albert Wright.

The organ's potential was showcased on opening night by factory demonstrator Jack Ward, later to hold many posts in New York City including relief organist at Radio City Music Hall. Like Shea's organ the year before, this instrument was finished by Wurlitzer, something they seldom did, so that it could be used as an in-theatre demonstration organ for potential buyers. Though not as big as Shea's it was 20 miles closer to the factory.

After about seven years, use of the organ as a program feature stopped and it saw only special occasion use for the next decade.

Local theatre organ buff Carlton Finch obtained permission from the theatre's manager in 1944 to restore the organ. At the time, neglect had done its



The unique hand-painted console.

depressing work and only part of the Great manual would play random pipes. Finch and his father Harry labored for months replacing, repairing, re-leathering and cleaning. By "D-Day" 1945 the organ was in good enough shape to celebrate the end of the War in Europe with the first public concert in years.

Although restoration and maintenance continued, the organ was not played in public until a series of dance parties was introduced by management in the fifties. But dancing on stage to the sounds of the mighty Wurlitzer couldn't compete with rock and roll sock hops, and shortly the instrument again fell silent.

In the early sixties the Niagara Frontier Chapter of ATOE was formed, with the Riviera as its main instrument. Several concerts and amateur recording sessions were held, but it wasn't until the 1964

ATOE National Convention that the organ began to gain new fame. Jack Ward returned to play the organ for that occasion.

Niagara Frontier Chapter took over maintenance and restoration in 1965. Investigation of the building revealed that the chamber grilles were almost entirely boarded up, and the grille cloth caked with 40 years of dirt. Their removal signalled the beginning of a transformation in the sound. Much time and chapter money has been spent to restore and enlarge the organ since then. It has increased in size to twenty ranks, and a second set of percussions and traps was installed in the pit. The chapter has sponsored monthly concerts since the mid-seventies, and several recordings by prominent organists have increased its popularity nationwide.

Another change occurred in 1982 when Buffalo impresario Edward H. Bebko (son of organist "Doc" Bebko) bought the theatre. The soon-implemented policy of organ solos before weekend film showings dramatically raised attendance. A fresh maintenance crew, and continuance of this policy augmented by monthly concerts for the now-independent Niagara Frontier Theatre Organ Society have once again made the Riviera a Wurlitzer organ showplace.

## The Wurlitzer Factory

You see the ten-storey tower and the name at the same time through the trees in the distance as you drive North on Niagara Falls Boulevard. Run down, barely maintained as a warehouse and small business centre, the sprawling brick, concrete and glass building appears deserted. The ultimate irony is the dealer who rents space on the ground floor, from which he sells Lowrey organs and Chickering pianos. Those who are aware of its former life can only think "how sad".

The original factory was built around the turn of the century by the DeKleist Musical Instrument Company to build organs for the three merry-go-round

didn't realize at the time that the large movie theatres were coming. Their first job was to build an organ originally contracted by Hope-Jones for the Hotel Statler, later Hotel Buffalo. The first recorded all-Wurlitzer contract was shipped October 14, 1911 to "Dr. Woodward's" in Cincinnati.

In two years with Wurlitzer, Hope-Jones wasted over \$200,000 dollars with his erratic, eccentric methods and his obsessive perfectionism. Wurlitzer wanted to get on with building organs and see some return on their investment, but no policies or orders or threats could keep him in line. Finally barred from the factory at full pay, Hope-Jones grew



The tower from the main drive in 1987.

manufacturers in North Tonawanda. The Wurlitzer family was selling musical instruments in Cincinnati at the time. They got DeKleist to make player pianos using their wooden cylinder organ players and these later evolved into the paper roll players we know today. Business expanded into other automatic musical instruments, and in 1909 Wurlitzer bought the manufacturing business from DeKleist. Fanny Wurlitzer moved to North Tonawanda to take over the factory.

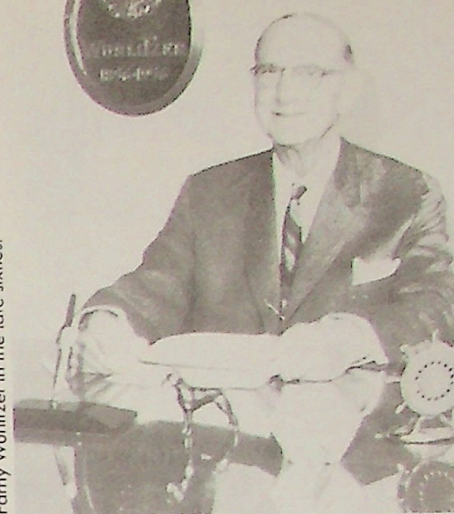
About a year later, Robert Hope-Jones approached Fanny Wurlitzer about taking over his Elmira pipe organ company, then in receivership. After thorough investigation, Wurlitzer put Hope-Jones under contract and closed the deal with the receiver in May 1910. They never used the Elmira plant.

Intending to build organs for churches, hotels and small theatres, Wurlitzer

restless. David Marr, one of his proteges from England, offered him a spot in his new company, Marr and Colton, in Warsaw, New York. Hope-Jones was quickly reminded of his contract to Wurlitzer. Frustrated and depressed, he committed suicide. The factory had shipped only 42 "Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestras".

From 1911 to 1943, 2238 complete organs left the factory for locations as close as the Riviera Theatre and as far away as New Zealand. Aside from the U.S. and Canada, organs went to Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland, India, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Scotland, South Africa, Spain and Sweden. Production peaked in 1926 when 303 organs — almost one a day — left the factory. Though manufacturing stopped in 1934, parts were used to assemble a few new organs and to

Fanny Wurlitzer in the late sixties.



rebuild repossessed ones. Number 2238, a 3/10 Style H was shipped to station WGR/WKBW in Buffalo on October 27, 1943. It was, in fact, made from a 1925 Style F repossessed from the Rialto Theatre in Lockport.

Except for keys, blowers, some pianos and percussions, and the mixtures for two of the Radio City organs, Wurlitzer made all of its own pipes, chests, consoles and other components. This was unusual for theatre organ builders.

In later years the factory made juke boxes and some electronic organs. The latest model was premiered at the factory's circular Melody Fair annex during the 1964 ATOE Convention. Fanny Wurlitzer, who never had an organ in his home, died in 1972. Shortly after, the company abandoned its sprawling North Tonawanda factory in favor of DeKalb, Illinois. The ghosts of the stately main drive and gates are still there. The crumbling entrance fountains and the fading tower sign with its funny capital "T" only hint at the past. An overgrown railroad spur still runs alongside the rotting shipping dock.

Robert Hope-Jones is buried a short distance away in Elm Lawn Cemetery, an enormous granite cross, inscribed only with dates of his birth and death and that famous signature, marking his final resting place.

## Dennis James and Thom Gall



Dennis James is dedicated to furthering public interest in the theatre pipe organ and to the continuation of the theatrical traditions of organ performance. Since his professional debut at the 1967 ATOS Convention at the age of 16, he has played nearly everywhere pipe organs are to be found, from the fabulous movie palaces throughout the United States to the most prestigious concert halls of

Europe.

Dennis James was named "Organist of the Year" by ATOS in 1985, acknowledging a career filled with outstanding contributions to the preservation and presentation of theatre pipe organ entertainment.

He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in concert and church organ performance under Dr. Oswald Ragatz at Indiana University's School of Music, while at the same time becoming a popular young artist on the international theatre organ circuit. Since 1975 he has been resident organist of the Ohio Theatre in Columbus, now a national landmark performing arts centre. He was organist for the world tour of Abel Gance's "Napoleon" in 1981, playing the Coppola score with orchestras in 20 cities, and he has played a pivotal role in the international revival of silent films with live music.

ATOS and AGO conventions, records, TV and radio broadcasts, inaugural concerts, design consultation—Dennis has done it all. When not playing the organ, he is performing ragtime on

piano, or chamber pieces on harpsichord, clavichord, recorder and glass armonica. His performances with lyric tenor Thom Gall harken back to the Victorian-era traditions of recital presentation.

Thom Gall has appeared as tenor soloist with the Columbus, Mansfield and Lima, Ohio symphony orchestras, the Ohio State University Orchestra and the Cantari Singers of Columbus. He has sung under the direction of Robert Shaw, James Levine, Margaret Hillis, Norman Luboff and Robert Page. Thom has been appearing in concert with organist Dennis James since 1981.

Thom Gall has had a varied career that includes producing, directing, writing and announcing in addition to his musical performances.

## Lyn Larsen

There cannot possibly be a theatre organ fan alive who has not heard Lyn Larsen. His name is known wherever the instruments are heard or played and chances are, if he's not played it, someone whose style has been influenced by him has.

Named "Organist of the Year" in 1984 by his peers in the American Theatre Organ Society, Lyn continues to gain in stature as a premiere theatre organist world wide, as evidenced by his successful tours throughout England, Europe and Australia. The first theatre organist to record a compact disc for a national company, Pro-Arte, Lyn now has several in release, one of which attained position in BILLBOARD magazine's top ten. Plans are being made for more. Besides the CDs, Lyn has made over 30 albums and cassettes. In his recordings, he has displayed his talents not only as an excellent theatre organist, but as a composer and arranger. His most recently published work is "The Lyn Larsen Theatre Organ Collection".

California born, Lyn Larsen began piano lessons at the age of three and by



seven he was tackling the organ. Later, his interest turned to the theatre pipe organ and he made his debut in 1964 with a performance at the historic Wiltern Theatre in Los Angeles. As the

rebirth of the theatre organ continues, Lyn has rededicated many restored behemoths such as the Chicago Theatre and our own Shea's Buffalo Theatre. He has performed numerous times with the Jack Bethards Orchestra at the Oakland Paramount, California, and other "bring 'em to their feet" performances in Detroit, Ft. Wayne, Wichita, Chicago and other cities across the country.

Other notable appearances include the Hollywood Bowl, Radio City Music Hall, a duet concert in London's famous Royal Albert Hall with world class organist Carlo Curley and the late Pierre Cochereau of Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris.

Besides performing everywhere an organ beckons, Lyn's other related talent finds him in demand for his advice and consultation in the tonal design and layout of both new theatre pipe organ installations and the restoration of historic instruments all over the United States.

Presented in cooperation with Musical Contrasts, Incorporated.

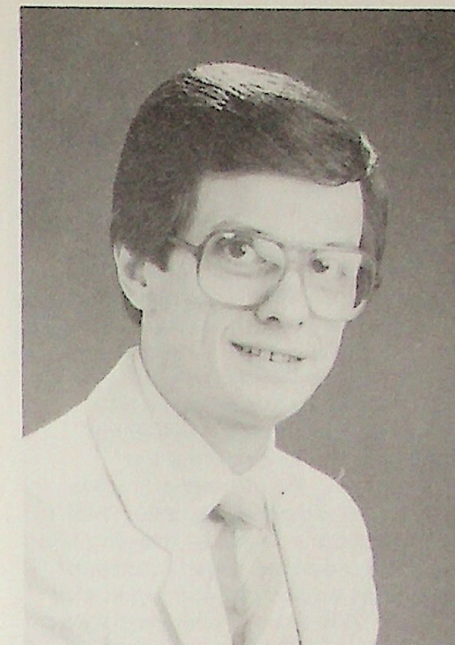
## Hector Olivera

1987 marks Hector's 36th year of professional organ performance. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1946, he started playing the pipe organ at the age of three, was appointed organist for the Church of the Immaculate Conception two years later and, by the time he was six, had entered the Buenos Aires Conservatory to study harmony, counterpoint and the fugue.

At age 12, Hector became the youngest student to enter the University of Buenos Aires and, at 18, was appointed head of the organ department. He was not only being featured regularly on radio and television, but had performed over 350 public concerts and recitals.

In 1965 he was offered a scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music in New York City, where he continued his organ studies. He also studied privately with Dr. Vernon de Tar.

Hector's introduction to theatre organ in the early seventies led to his filling in for the scheduled organist at the 1972 ATOS convention, playing the 2/8 Wurlitzer in the Tivoli Theatre, Frederick,

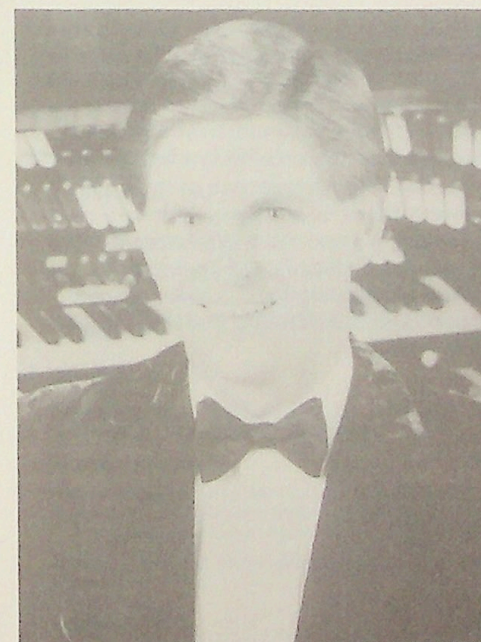


Maryland. Since then he has pursued parallel careers as a classical and theatre organist, made many brilliant recordings on both types of instruments, and toured extensively around the world evoking ovations wherever he plays.

In his desire to bring more music to more people, and realizing that many arts groups do not have concert halls with organs, Hector has assembled a nine-manual-plus-pedals instrument he calls "The O-1 Orchestra." This instrument is said to be capable of reproducing the sound of any musical instrument known to man. Olivera and his O-1 Orchestra have entertained audiences from Constitution Hall in Washington, DC, to an unforgettable outdoor performance at Balboa Park in San Diego, California. He was awarded the first ATOS Award of Special Merit in 1986 for his creativity and ingenuity in developing and constructing the instrument.

Hector Olivera may be contacted through:  
Music Productions International, Inc.  
1285 Forrest Ellis Road  
Douglasville, Georgia 30134  
(404) 949-3932

## Ron Rhode



With a background of popular piano and classical organ, and three years toward a Bachelor of Music Education degree at St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa, Ron Rhode moved to Arizona from his native Illinois in mid-1973 to become the associate organist at Organ Stop Pizza in Phoenix. He was featured artist at Organ Stop, Mesa, from its opening in June, 1975, until November, 1986. Currently he is demonstrator and sales agent for Rodgers Organs in Arizona.

During his career as a concert and recording artist, Ron has performed on most of the major theatre organ installations throughout the United States. He has also played before audiences in Canada, Australia, and England. As well as the many concerts each year, Ron has six theatre organ recordings to his credit.



## Walt Strony



Walt Strony made his first ATOS convention appearance at the Chicago Stadium in 1969. He was 13 years old. Since a more formal concert debut at age 18, he has won a tremendous following throughout the world for his superb playing. He has appeared in programs from coast to coast and has also performed extensively in Japan, Australia, England and Canada.

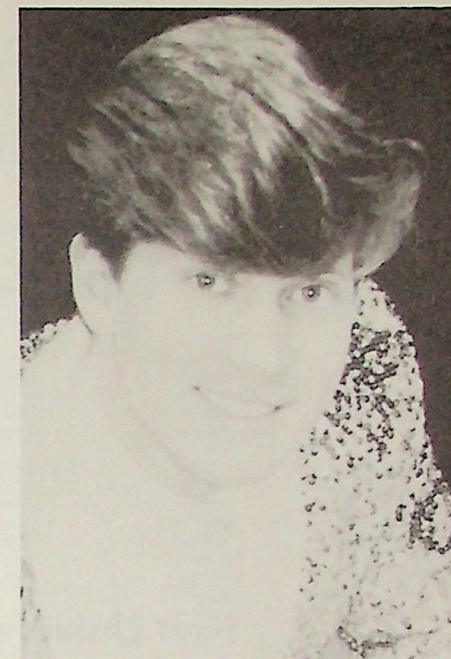
Born in 1955, Walt grew up in the Chicago area and began music lessons at the age of seven. His theatre organ teacher was the late Al Melgard, who for 45 years was the master of the six-manual Barton organ in the Chicago Stadium, and a foremost theatre organist during the instrument's golden era. It was Melgard who sparked Walt's interest in theatre organ by allowing him to try his hand at the huge instrument.

Walt also studied classical organ with Herbert L. White at the Sherwood Music School, Chicago, and was coached by Karel Paukert at Northwestern University, Evanston. He also studied piano with Giulio Favario, associate conductor with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

His six recordings have each been highly acclaimed. Besides his concert schedule, Walt is featured at Organ Stop Pizza in Mesa, Arizona where he performs on a large four manual Wurlitzer. In addition he works with the Allen Organ Company in Phoenix, and is organist and choir director at Augustana Lutheran Church.

Strony has become one of the few younger theatre organists who has developed a style uniquely his own. While looking backwards respectfully to the masters of the theatre organ tradition, he manages to look forward with a refreshing approach in all his musical arrangements. It is a style that is inventive, harmonically interesting, and above all, right for today.

## Robert Wolfe



Watch Robert Wolfe work out at a console and you will half understand why he has earned himself the sobriquet "The Wizard of the Wurlitzer". Listen to what he plays and you will understand completely.

For the past several seasons Robert has dazzled North American audiences accustomed to lush, denser fare with immaculate technique producing extraordinary sounds. He is a top exponent of the "Blackpool Style", originated more than 50 years ago by the late Reginald Dixon; a style copied, popularized and ultimately made legend on the ballroom Wurlitzers in that famous British seaside resort; a style which still packs 'em in over 'ome and packs 'em in over 'ere, too.

In 1977, sixteen-year-old Robert first played the Tower Ballroom's world famous Wurlitzer on a regular basis. Four years later he became resident for the Thursford Collection, and they have since devised a multi-million-dollar video and light show around him and their Wurlitzer. Robert has broadcast many times on BBC radio and television and

on Dutch radio. These, along with countless recordings in England and the States, have helped make him a celebrity with the general public in Britain, something rare to theatre organists nowadays.

One characteristic element of the Blackpool Style is to play in medley form; Robert Wolfe has honed this to a fine art with a sense of style and vitality. His return to North Tonawanda promises to set feet tapping all over the house.

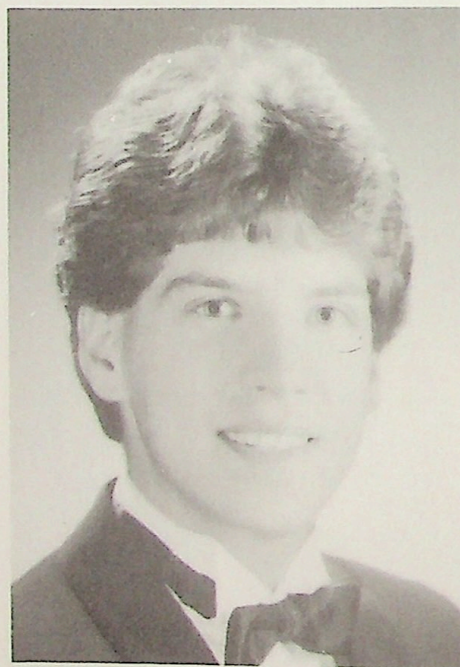
## Dwight Thomas

Dwight Thomas is a native of Marysville, Ohio. He began piano study at a very early age. His family moved to Indianapolis shortly after and he later continued his piano studies with Nancy Neimann. The first time he heard a theatre organ, he was fourteen, and the sound made a lasting impression. The next year he began classical organ study with Nancy Neimann in Shelbyville, Indiana.

He became associated with the Paramount Music Palace in Indianapolis in January of 1982 and began theatre organ instruction with John Ferguson, who was then music director of Paramount. By September of 1982 Dwight started playing at Paramount as associate organist.

That same year he began classical organ study with Dorothy Scott of Indianapolis. At Butler University in 1983 he studied with Dorothy Munger majoring in piano pedagogy. In 1987 he was graduated Cum Laude.

During his early college years he took a position with East 91st Street Christian Church of Indianapolis as organist and is still there.



In 1986 Dwight was the winner of the American Theatre Organ Society "Young Organist Competition" and was featured in a cameo appearance at the society's 1986 National Convention in Richmond, Virginia in a concert with Lyn Larsen. This is his first solo appearance at an ATOS convention.

Dwight is presently a graduate student at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana preparing for a master's in organ and church music studying under Marilyn Keiser.

## Where They Were

by Charles Stein

Downtown Buffalo in the twenties featured five major theatres. Three are now major parks and parking lots. Only Shea's Buffalo remains.

**A Shea's Hippodrome (1914)**  
(later Center)  
3/15 Wurlitzer, Style 260 Special, #0585  
Shipped from factory September 29, 1922

Organist: Albert Hay Malotte  
Theatre demolished; site awaits further development  
Organ removed long before demolition; first went to private home in Niagara Falls, Ontario; now in Florida.

**B Loew's State (1921)**  
(later Century)  
3/17 Moller, Opus 2888; moved to Memphis, 1926  
3/22 Moller, Opus 4318; installed 1925

Organist: Julia Dawn  
Main entrance was on Mohawk St. Later, a Main St. entrance and lobby were added which brought patrons into the theatre at lower box level, house left.  
Theatre demolished, along with remaining parts of the organ.

**C Lafayette (1922)**  
3/15 Wurlitzer, Style 260 Special, #0501  
Shipped from factory January 10, 1921

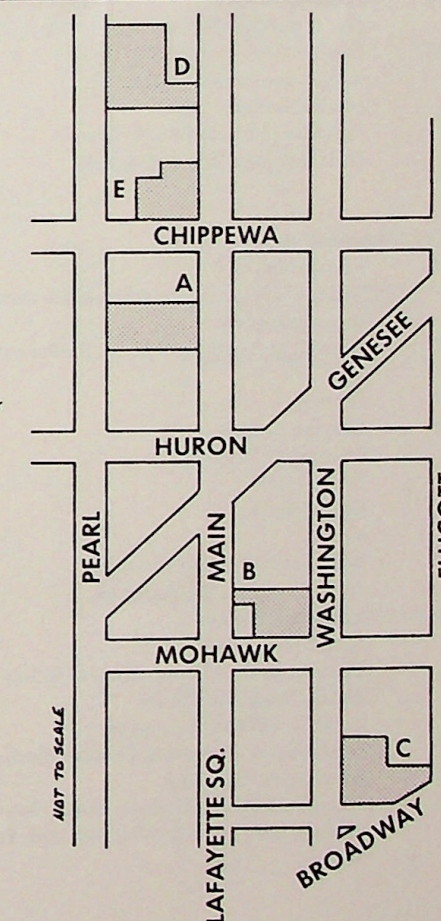
Opened by C. Sharpe Minor  
Organ went first to a home in Cleveland; later to a Pizza Parlor. Brass Trumpet now Trompette en Chamade in Buffalo's Temple Beth Zion.  
Theatre is now a parking lot.

**D Shea's Buffalo (1926)**  
4/28 Wurlitzer, Style 285 Special, #1206  
Shipped from factory November 30, 1925

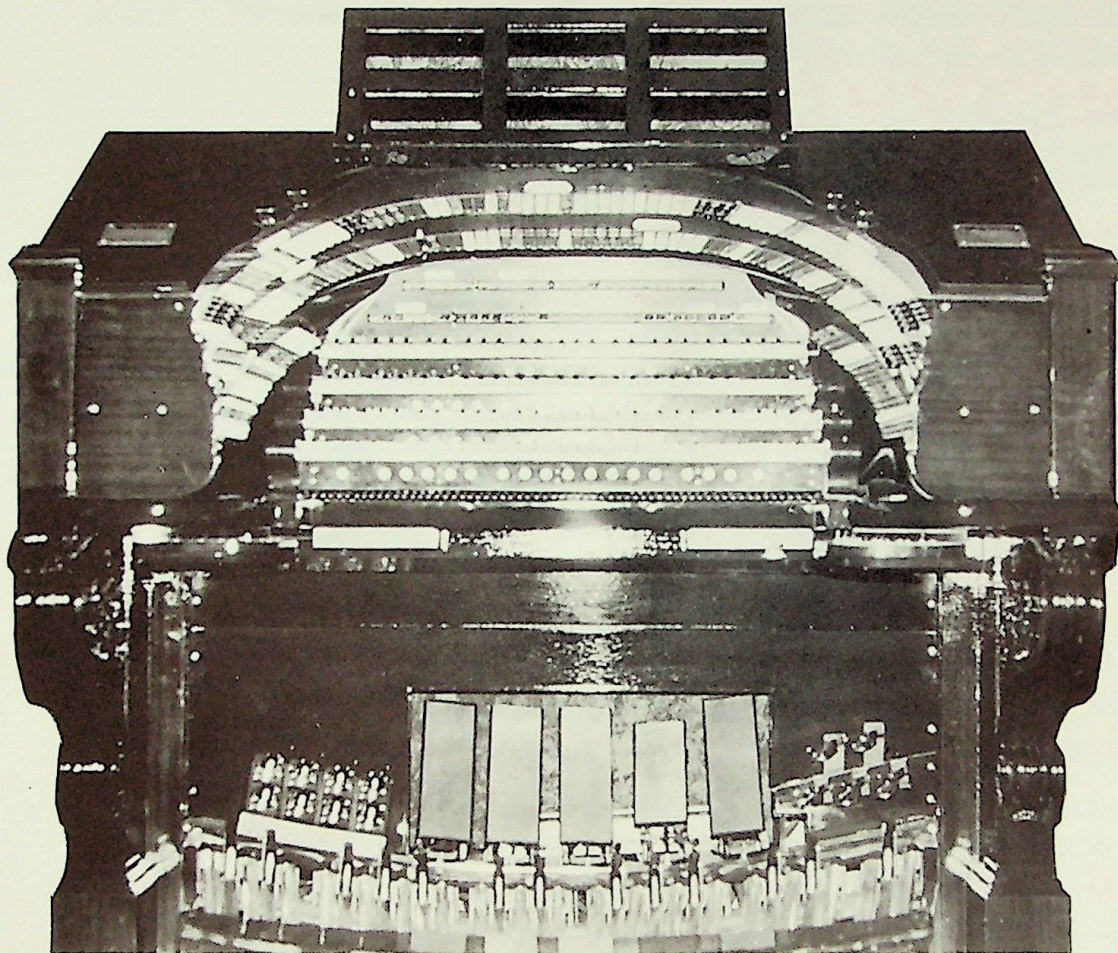
Organist: Lloyd G. Del Castillo  
Jesse Crawford engaged to play for 2 weeks in 1937 for the 11th Anniversary  
Henry Murtagh had longest tenure  
Art Crosson was last organist before organ was shut down in 1941

**E Fox Great Lakes (1927)**  
(later Paramount)  
3/11 Wurlitzer, Style 2355 Special, #1616  
Shipped from factory April 16, 1927

Organist: Carl Coleman  
Auditorium demolished; now a park. Lobby is intact but boarded up; popcorn still sits in machine; grand staircase terminates in a cinder block wall facing Chippewa St.







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**Sunday, January 31 at 2:00 p.m.**

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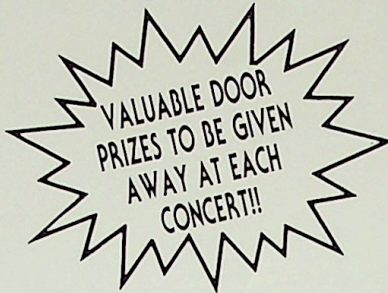
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