



AMERICAN THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY

Report to the ATOS Board of Directors

TO: ATOS Board of Directors

FROM: Ken Double, Bob Evans, Allen Miller, and Tyler Morkin

DATE: January 20, 2010

RE: ATOS Archives and Library Relocation Project

It seems so long ago that we ventured down the path of exploring a new location for our ATOS Archives and Library (hereinafter referred to as “the Archives”). Few Directors could have predicted the amount of time needed to carry out this project in proper fashion. We applaud the entire Board of Directors for the work completed on this project, all of which has been directed towards the betterment of our organization and the long-term welfare of our Archives.

As we know, the Archives must be moved from Joliet, and our challenge as a Board is to determine the location that can best serve the needs of ATOS and its Archive. To answer that question, it is critically important to understand the purpose of the Archives. First, the Archives are a repository for the history of the theatre organ that protects relevant material from being lost, damaged, or destroyed over time. Second, the Archive should serve an important research function by being available to the greatest number of people with the greatest ease of access. Finally, among our stated corporate purposes is to further public appreciation of the theatre organ with an emphasis on education. One of our most important goals is to bring the theatre organ to younger generations who can perpetuate the instrument for the future. Our archival material should therefore be readily accessible to members of that younger generation, including students who are interested in researching and learning more about our art form.

Early in the discussions concerning relocation of the Archive, a recommendation was made to move the material from Joliet to a warehouse storage facility near downtown Chicago. In an effort to explore fully a number of reasonable alternatives prior to making a decision, we have closely considered four additional locations:

The University of Oklahoma (Norman, Oklahoma)
The University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Michigan)
Eastman School of Music (Rochester, New York)
Westminster Choir College (Princeton, New Jersey)

At the request of Chairman Mike Hartley, Bob Evans and Allen Miller traveled to University of Oklahoma (OU) in Norman, Oklahoma in November 2009. Bob and Allen's visit to the University was for fact-finding purposes to explore the campus and gain knowledge of OU's academic programs. OU has recently become a noteworthy University for its emphasis on theatre organ pedagogy and preservation.

In addition, Ken Double and Tyler Morkin explored the possibility of locating the Archives on the campus of the University of Michigan (U of M). Making a joint visit to the campus, Ken and Tyler met with Steven Ball, who is actively involved as faculty in the organ department. While not established to the same degree as the theatre organ curriculum of OU, U of M encourages the teaching of theatre organ inclusively with other organ performance styles, allowing students to place emphasis in the area of theatre organ study if desired.

Finally, Tyler explored two additional Universities suggested by fellow Directors and staff members. These two Universities, Westminster Choir College and the Eastman School of Music, were contacted. Unfortunately, officials at these Universities provided little in response.

University of Oklahoma

Bob Evans and Allen Miller had the opportunity to visit the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. Dr. John Schwandt, an ATOS member and tenured professor at the University, is the head of the American Organ Institute (AOI). Under his leadership, the organ program (which includes significant instruction about the theatre organ), has grown exponentially during the past few years.

Bob and Allen visited with Dr. Schwandt and inquired about the AOI and various aspects of the accreditation of the program and the existence of a defined curriculum for both the performance and technical aspects of the organ. OU has long maintained a program in organ performance. Even prior to Dr. Schwandt's arrival, the University featured a degree program in organ performance. Dr. Schwandt's vision represented a marked change of direction, however, in that he felt it necessary to include all aspects of the American organ as part of the organ curriculum. Specifically included within that curriculum is the study of the theatre organ—a first at any University for nearly 90 years.

Shortly after Dr. Schwandt's arrival, he arranged for the acquisition of the Moller Symphonic Organ formerly installed at the Philadelphia Municipal Auditorium. Fourteen ranks (affectionately known as the "Mini-Mo"), fully unified on a smaller 3-manual Moller horseshoe console, are currently playing in the Catlett Performance Center. Plans are well underway to install the complete instrument within the coming years.

Importantly, "Mini-Mo" is the only theatre pipe organ presently playing on a University campus anywhere in the world. In this respect, the AOI is truly unique in its support of the theatre organ. "Mini-Mo" has been featured in 18 public presentations since February 2009, with two silent movies, classical and theatre organ concerts, and a presentation of *Peter and the Wolf* for over 2,400 school children. The organ is used for interdepartmental classes as well. Bob and Allen visited an acoustics class from the physics department where the Moller was used to demonstrate different acoustical effects. This inter-disciplinary approach introduces the theatre pipe organ to many young people who would otherwise never have this opportunity.

Equally unique is the technical component of the AOI curriculum. All organ students participate in technical training at the fully-functioning organ shop that is part of the University campus. It was in this very shop that students helped to rebuild “Mini-Mo” that has been heard by thousands of individuals today.

The organ technical curriculum is in its second year of review. Final approval is expected to be received at or near the end of the next academic year. In the meantime, the organ students receive their degree through the Liberal Arts program and/or other existing degree opportunities. After talking with students, faculty members, and the leaders of AOI, it is evident beyond any doubt that the American Organ Institute will flourish for years to come.

Regarding the possibility of relocating the Archive to OU, we discussed that the collection would likely be stored for the time being. The contents would, however, be inventoried during the unloading process. University-owned space can be made available for the collection upon donation. The permanent on-campus home for the ATOS materials is more than suitable. The University has an established protocol for acceptance and receipt of collections. This protocol is organized, efficient, and consistent throughout the institution’s vast collection.

While some have questioned whether ATOS should retain ownership of the Archives, it is important to note that ATOS currently stores its archival collection under less-than-ideal circumstances, including high temperature and varying humidity levels. It is also unlikely that ATOS could ever devote the resources for full-time (or even part-time) library services sufficient to maintain the Archive at a level that could be provided by a top-tier research University.

The University of Oklahoma library system contains over 5 million volumes and ranks 2nd in the Big 12 and 27th out of 113 academic research libraries in North America. Included among its collections is one of the most prestigious collections of rare manuscripts, art, and artifacts in the world. All of the resources of a professional archival environment will ensure that our collection will be effectively preserved and available for the maximum number of people for generations to come.

If housed at OU, the ATOS Archive will be available for use by students, faculty, and researchers. Most of the current collections are contained in the various library buildings on campus and are all searchable using an online database. The ATOS Archive would eventually be digitized and placed online as well, which will make it easily accessible to anyone throughout the world.

Without a doubt, the University of Oklahoma handily exceeds any other University in terms of its tangible, demonstrable commitment to the theatre organ. No other University in the world can surpass, let alone equal OU’s achievements in this regard. Given the enormity of the AOI endeavor as led by tenured Professor Dr. Schwandt, it is clear that OU is firmly dedicated to the AOI and to the art of the theatre organ for the future.

For these reasons, we strongly recommend that OU be considered for the relocation of our Archive.

University of Michigan

Ken Double and Tyler Morkin visited the main campus of the University of Michigan in December 2009. Steven Ball, who is an assistant professor as well as the staff organist at the Michigan Theatre, provided a tour of the campus, outlining his vision of obtaining the ATOS Archives for the University. Steven also provided a brief tour of the Stearns Collection, which is a University-owned collection of historic musical instruments, of which Steven is the director. Steven's excitement about the ATOS Archives is plainly evident, with long-term and short-term plans for housing, cataloging, and display already in mind. Steven completed his undergraduate degree at the University in organ performance with an emphasis in theatre organ studies—a first for the University.

Steven reported that the University views the theatre organ as “a branch of the larger history of the organ.” As such, according to Steven, the University has not been actively pursuing theatre organ pedagogy in the same way as OU. Organ students have the opportunity to place emphasis in theatre organ studies, utilizing the partnership that exists between the University and the Michigan Theatre, which is approximately one mile from the center of campus.

Steven envisions the ATOS Archives as beneficial to the University by allowing students, as well as the general public, access to the material for research purposes. Material from the Archive would be catalogued and entered into the University's library database system, allowing online searchability of archival material from anywhere in the world. A large quantity of University library material is available through Google Books—an online database of print material that has been digitally converted and is fully searchable from the Internet. According to Steven, the University was among several institutions to assist Google in the creation of this service.

Steven indicates that space is not immediately present on the campus of the University. There is, however, a climate-controlled warehouse not far from the University where the archival material might reside until a home is identified at some point in the future. Steven would like to have a separate, publicly-accessible building in which to house the Stearns Collection and also hopes to acquire the original Fisher Wurlitzer (currently located in the now-closed Senate Theatre), for installation in the museum.

When asked about University support, Steven remarked that most of those who are integral to this decision at the University are amenable to this opportunity. Steven indicated that he has secured the support of the Dean of the College of Engineering, who would like to use a University-owned instrument and ATOS archival material as tangible examples of historical engineering practices.

Ken and Tyler's visit to the University concluded with a visit to the now-closed Senate Theatre in Detroit. Steven invited the Dean of the College of Engineering to the Senate for a first-hand look at the potential benefits of securing this historic instrument and installing it on the University's campus.

Overall, the visit to the University of Michigan made clear that the University could be a viable option for the Archives. The location of the ATOS Archives at the University could benefit ATOS, particularly if the University supports theatre organ to the degree suggested by Steven. As such,

it is our recommendation that the Board also consider the University of Michigan as a possible location for our archival collection.

Eastman School of Music

Professor David Higgs from the Eastman School of Music was contacted about the possibility of housing the ATOS Archives at the University. Professor Higgs expressed some interest in this endeavor. However, the questionnaire we prepared and sent to him was never completed or returned. Unfortunately, little concrete evidence was provided by University officials in support of its candidacy. In view of the lack of information from Eastman officials, we recommend placing greater weight on the other options discussed in this report.

Westminster Choir College

Professor Ken Cowan from the Westminster Choir College at Rider University was also contacted about the possibility of housing the ATOS Archives at the University. Professor Cowan expressed interest in this endeavor. However, our questionnaire was never completed or returned, and little concrete evidence has been provided by the University in support of its candidacy. In view of the lack of information from Westminster Choir College officials, we recommend placing greater weight on the other options discussed in this report.

Location Comparison Matrix

The following matrix is a side-by-side comparison of the information received regarding each option discussed above.

Location Comparison Matrix

ATOS Archive and Library Proposed Location Page (1)	American Organ Institute/ University of Oklahoma	Warehouse Location Chicago, IL	Eastman School of Music Rochester, NY	University of Michigan Ann Arbor, MI	Westminster Choir College Princeton, NJ
Availability of theatre organ instruction	Yes. Students can engage in direct theatre organ instruction. Performance degrees require a theatre organ recital.	Not available/applicable.	No information provided.	Students can place emphasis on the theatre organ.	No information provided.
Integration of technical programs into curriculum	Yes. Complete organ shop with restoration projects and local organ service on campus. Students are required to participate.	Not available/applicable.	No information provided.	No, but various classes are taught from time to time, with future expansion in the planning phases.	No information provided.
Use of an existing theatre organ on campus	Yes, owned by OU and has been used for teaching and multiple concerts.	Not available/applicable.	No information provided.	No, however a Barton organ at the Michigan Theatre is approximately one mile from campus.	No information provided.
Type of theatre organ installed	3/14 Moller ("Mini-Mo"), part of larger 4/86 instrument (ex. Philadelphia Mun. Auditorium) to be installed.	Not available/applicable.	No information provided.	None on campus. 3/13 Barton in Michigan Theatre. Prof. Ball would like to secure Fisher (Senate, ex. DTOS) Wurlitzer.	No information provided.
Number of students using theatre organ for instruction	19, in a combination of organ performance and engineering.	Not available/applicable.	No information provided.	Undisclosed.	No information provided.
Public exposure or access to theatre organ by non-organ students	18 public concerts, silent movie, plus interdisciplinary classes (acoustics, physics, etc.)	Not available/applicable.	No information provided.	The Barton organ is played before most venues at the Michigan Theatre, allowing first-time exposure to many students/residents. The Engineering College is also interested in a partnership with the organ department.	No information provided.
Other public exposure	4-manual theatre organ console on display for viewing at all events in Lobby.	Not available/applicable.	No information provided.	Silent films, departmental concerts.	No information provided.
Storage Environment	Archive materials would be kept in climate-controlled facilities. Material would be part of University library system.	Climate-controlled warehouse environment	No information provided.	Temporary climate-controlled storage facility until final move to a museum-type building in conjunction with the Stearns Collection	No information provided.

ATOS Archive and Library Proposed Location Page (2)	American Organ Institute University of Oklahoma	Warehouse Location Chicago, IL	Eastman School of Music Rochester, NY	University of Michigan Ann Arbor, MI	Westminster Choir College OHS Princeton, NJ
Access to materials	Open to students or public with ID card. Will be online	Access to the general public would require ATOS establishment of policy and appropriate controls.	No information provided.	Open to students and the public under control of the University	No information provided.
Inventory system and timeline	Inventory during unloading process with cataloging to follow.	ATOS would need to develop its own system and timeline.	No information provided.	Inventory/cataloging process could begin immediately, even in temporary location	No information provided.
Existence of searchable database	OU maintains a current database of all archival materials. ATOS material would be integrated into searchable database.	ATOS would need to develop its own searchable database system.	No information provided.	U of M maintains a library database system. Some materials are also available through Google Books.	No information provided.
Existence or expansion for location of Archive	AOI will house Archive upon donation. Expansion is under consideration.	Building designated.	No information provided.	A building for the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments is planned.	No information provided.
Permanent Loan or Donation	Donation	ATOS ownership	No information provided.	Donation preferred	No information provided.
Initial and permanent storage space	University space available for use upon donation	Building designated	No information provided.	Temporary warehouse storage initially until final move to permanent location with Stearns Collection	No information provided.
ATOS involvement and existing ATOS members at or near location	ATOS as consultant. 3 members in or associated with faculty. Sooner State Chapter in the Oklahoma City area	ATOS operated. CATOE and JATOE in greater Chicago area.	No information provided.	ATOS as consultant. Several ATOS members located in the Detroit metropolitan area. Motor City Chapter.	No information provided.