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For immediate release:

ATOS BOARD APPROVES NEGOTIATIONS FOR NEW LOCATION FOR ARCHIVE
Six-month Study Produces Recommendation to Begin Discussions
with the University of Oklahoma, American Organ Institute

At its recent Mid-Year Meeting of the Board of Directors, the American Theatre Organ Society board voted to approve a motion to begin negotiating with the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma, as a possible new site for the ATOS Archive and Library.

Representatives of the board were involved in a six-month study, culminating in a six-page document with the recommendation eventually approved by the board. That six-page document is attached herein.

The study involved five possible locations for the archive, which must find a new home. The current location, in the Rialto Square Theatre building in Joliet, Illinois, will soon become home to an expanding local college facility, forcing ATOS to act on moving the collection.

The five locations included: storage space in a warehouse-turned-office-building southwest of downtown Chicago; Westminster Choir College (current home of the OHS archive); the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York; and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The decision to turn to the University of Oklahoma, and begin negotiations, was made for one major reason: the university, through its American Organ Institute, provided an overwhelming set of advantages unmatched by the other options. These included:

- the advantages of a major research university;
- professional library services readily available;
- access of students, professors, scholars, ATOS members and the general public;
- the ongoing success and growth of the AOI and the organ program at OU;
- the marriage of this collection with the theatre organ studies in place for OU students.

Negotiations will focus on several issues including eventual ownership of the collection, the task of cataloging and filing the collection, the opportunity for digitizing the collection for eventual access via the internet, and what might happen in the unlikely event that OU would no longer want the collection, and thus ATOS' right to reacquire the materials.

ATOS charter member and board member Allen Miller will head the committee negotiating the terms of the arrangement, which could result in ATOS making a donation of the collection. Key for ATOS in all of this will be the eventual "partnership" nature of the agreement, with ATOS retaining a degree of involvement, access and potential management aspects of the Archive and Library.

Said Miller, "The presentation made to Bob Evans and myself during our visit to Norman, Oklahoma, just blew us away. Dr. John Schwandt and his staff, along with representatives of the administration and library services, were prepared, engaged, inviting, and eager to bring this collection to the University of Oklahoma." Miller added, "The other options were worth exploring and offered certain advantages, but nothing presented or discussed provided the advantages of OU. The choice was clear."

An interested observer in this process has been ATOS Hall of Fame member, past ATOS President, longtime board member, and former *Theatre Organ* editor Vern Bickel. Personally involved in the collection and its survival and growth, Vern offered his insight that "a proper university setting, with the advantages of professional library services, is the ideal setting for this collection so that it can be cared for using the latest archival storage techniques. All material must be cataloged and the list made available on the Internet. Any contract must include a statement that makes it clear, if in the future, the receiving institution should no longer be able to care for the ATOS materials they will be returned to ATOS."

Allen Miller's committee will begin negotiations with representatives of the University of Oklahoma as soon as possible with a recommendation to be presented to the board on or before the Annual Meeting at the Seattle convention in late June.

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