

BACK TO THE FUTURE: THEATRE ORGAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

**A transcript of the contributions to the Cinema Organ Society
Symposium on Audience Development**

Victoria Hall Saltaire, February 20th 2010

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THE CINEMA ORGAN SOCIETY SYMPOSIUM ON AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

After years of “talking about it”, David Lowe, John Leeming and the officials of the UK’s Cinema Organ Society organized the first round-table discussion on the future of the theatre organ with a major focus on audience development.

The event was well-planned, and invitations were sent to organ concert presenters across the UK. Not knowing exactly what to expect, the presenters had in mind a group that might number 15 or 20. In a most pleasant and exciting development, more than 80 representatives made reservations for the event, a very good sign that concert presenters take this topic very seriously.

American Theatre Organ Society President and CEO Ken Double was invited to act as keynote speaker and chairman of the afternoon, which included presentations from 10 others, including:

Organizers David Lowe and John Leeming

Walter Baker, representing the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust

John Heslop of the Northeast Theatre Organ Association

Gordon Whitehouse of the COS Midlands and Wales District

Simon Field, COS Sales Officer, presenting a paper on behalf of the Scottish Theatre Organ Trust

Len Rawle and Ian Ridley of ATOS London and South of England Chapter.

A most interesting part of the proceedings included two presentations from organizations that are NOT presenters of theatre organ concerts, but nonetheless look to promote their interests to the public, and thus shared the common goal with the organ presenters. Matthew Feldwick is an accountant for the University of Winchester, and is an official with the Twyford Waterworks, an historic site in Great Britain open for tours by the public. Matt Stroh, a consultant for a major accounting and management company, is the volunteer marketing director for the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway System, a steam train line.

The list of speakers concluded with a presentation by Tim Wardley of the Leisure Industry and the Red Brick Barn, Compton organ at Rochford, where Robert Wolfe and other well known organists are heard regularly.

Although there were common themes presented and repeated throughout the five-hour long event, each individual speaker brought distinctive ideas about promotion, marketing, attracting new patrons, concert presentation, and more.

Ken Double, President and CEO, American Theatre Organ Society

Ken Double's keynote speech focused on the fact that there indeed IS an audience out there to be tapped. He referenced pop singers Michael Buble and Harry Connick, Jr. as examples of artists today who are presenting "the standards" and drawing huge crowds.

He then labelled violinist Andre Rieu as "Our Hero" in that Rieu presents and programs precisely the types of music played at theatre organ concerts - light classics, Strauss, Broadway, ballads - and packages it with dancers and singers, and performs at the largest theatres, arenas and outdoor venues in the world before hundreds of thousands of ticket buyers.

Double focused on the "theatre organ - plus" theme, suggesting that something more than just theatre organ, be it vocalist, band, pianist or instrumentalist, might help "sell" the concert idea. He also offered the idea that exposure of the instrument other than simply the concert format can also be helpful, as long as the organ is presented with first rate artists and performers.

Other highlights of the conference included discussions on the following topics.

The Basics:

- Pay attention to the "newcomers." One group has made it policy that its Board Members and leaders can NOT congregate amongst themselves at concerts, but instead must mingle with the audience, especially the "new faces" to make them feel welcome. This is an interesting twist on making a good FIRST IMPRESSION, in that we know the organ's first notes can be impressive, but the actual first impression comes when a new audience member first walks in the door;
- What in politics we know as "Exit Polling," we need to be conscious of at our concerts. Those same "newcomers" listed above should be sought out AFTER the concert to gather impressions and to be sure they are aware of the next event;
- "Banner advertising," which could include large outdoor signage at the venue promoting the next event, or large and very visible indoor signage that promotes the instrument and events, can be a relatively inexpensive method for marketing events;
- Paying more attention to the "atmosphere" at a program. Is the public address system set properly? Is someone designing lighting and other effects to the best advantage? Is the MC or compere qualified to properly address the audience, and thus set the mood for the audience? If we are presenting professional entertainment, it must be packaged and presented in a professional manner.

Going outside our 'own little sphere'

- There are arts organizations and other groups also seeking to attract an audience, and sometimes there is "strength in numbers." How might we work in tandem with these groups to help each other promote our programs?
- The subject of bus touring groups provided for an interesting exchange focused on how best to approach these touring groups and get them to start attending programs. The initial basic idea was to invite a consortium of tour company

representatives to an event tailored specifically for them, i.e. short concert, tour of the organ, Q and A session, and discussion about ticket discounting for group tours.

Making 'gold' out of those unused tickets

- Provide small blocks of "free" tickets occasionally to hopefully develop interest in potential newcomers;
- Partner with Rotary, Kiwanis or other civic-minded organizations by providing them tickets to either sell or distribute;
- Find a charity or other group - example: a Humane Society group or animal shelter - and offer them a block of tickets to sell and either keep the money, or keep a large percentage of the dollars (60-70%??) as a fund-raiser for themselves, with the goal in mind of making this an annual event.

Some other ideas discussed, all with differing degrees of merit, included:

- Invite local government officials, and always have a block of tickets available to them (10 or 12 tickets). One never knows when the presenting group might seek financial or organizational support from local government;
- Develop relationships with local media outlets, and be sure that for each concert, the publicity material has a "hook" or unique angle from which a writer or publicist might create a story;
- Begin a more focused effort on the technical side, since as we know, the artist has nothing to play and the audience has nothing to hear if the technicians are not there to make the organs play, and play properly;
- If the budget allows, it might be helpful to approach a professional PR or advertising agency for ideas and support in exposing theatre organ to a new audience;
- And that the definition of "new audience" wasn't necessarily "young people," as much as "new" people, even if in their 60's or 70's. ANY ticket buyer is welcome.

A long list of interesting topics was discussed during lively "Q and A" sessions throughout the afternoon, with agreement on some ideas and disagreement on others. The bottom line was that each presenting group represented at the event left with a host of good ideas, some the most basic and simple concepts that can be introduced to their concert presentations at no cost, and possible great benefit.

At the conclusion, there was immediate talk of a follow-up event in the future to track the success rate of some of these ideas, and focus again on how best to bring the theatre organ to a wider audience.

Our host at Victoria Hall was the Northern District COS Secretary Godfrey Nield. His role in organizing the event was critical in making sure the format was followed, and the hall was ready for the event. In addition, his wife Ruth along with Gail Sudall, Robert Sudall and others provided lunch and refreshments throughout the day which helped make the event a success.

What also helped draw the sizable crowd was the "outside" programming for the weekend. Saturday night after the seminar, organist Phil Kelsall played for dancing at

Victoria Hall on the 3/11 Wurlitzer; also that evening, Carlo Curley was presented in concert at the Cathedral; and Sunday afternoon, Ken Double performed at Victoria Hall as well. Many attendees booked hotel accommodations in order to attend all events.

Ken Double said that ATOS can learn from this experience, be it presenting similar events at convention gatherings, or starting to organize regional events for local chapters to attend so that these important ideas can be discussed and implemented. As this event's title suggests, it is all part of the "Theatre Organ in the 21st Century."

David Lowe, COS Vice-Chairman and Trustee

with input from John Abson and John Leeming

1 Introduction

Declining audiences at many (but not all) venues - why? What can be done to reverse the trend? What can we learn from the successful venues? Need to agree / understand

- the product or service that is on offer
- the target market / audience

Easy... but is it?

1.1 Definitions

Member: Anyone who is an organ society member

Enthusiast: Anyone who regularly attends theatre organ concerts and events, not necessarily a member.

The general public: The rest of the world!

2 The offering

- The theatre pipe organ and its music
- Entertainment
- Nostalgia

Which comes first?

How do we package this to be attractive to the market?

Note:

- In the COS mission statement 'For those interested in organ music as entertainment', 'music' comes before 'entertainment'!
- Nostalgia? Declining? Still great interest in, for example, Cliff Richard and the Shadows 'final tour' and big bands – both with heavy emphasis on 'memories'.

2.1 Image

In the USA

- Theatre organ has higher cultural importance, as part of the heritage of the Nation
- People from all social backgrounds embrace and enjoy this concept
- Many music lovers in the USA are comfortable with the instrument and its artistry
- Significant interest in the theatre organ by some very wealthy people.

In the UK:

- Many music lovers would say that the theatre or cinema organ was about as far down the musical hierarchy as it could be, if they knew what one was. Why?
- No significant interest in the theatre organ by the very wealthy.

The Blackpool connection:

- The 'Blackpool style' of playing is still very popular amongst theatre organ audiences
- At many venues its best players attract the largest audiences
- Many still associate the theatre organ with Blackpool.

However

- the downmarket image of the town may put off some people by association
- the style of playing is said to be the easiest theatre organ style to do badly.

Dilemma

Do we continue to promote the 'connection' with the (town of) Blackpool at the risk of putting off at least some of our new audience, or do we continue to emphasise Blackpool Tower because many of our present audience members are attracted by it?

2.2 Types of event

Concerts

SUNDAY AFTERNOON concerts evolved out of the traditional COS/TOC 'meetings'. They:

- enable members (and others) from a wide area to attend
- are friendly, informal, and socialising.

Some elderly people are reportedly reluctant to venture out after dark, although this doesn't seem to be a problem with other concerts, and interests such as bingo or dancing.

EVENING CONCERT 'Gala Night' – more formal. Suggested formats:

- Theme such as 'Music from the Shows', 'Stage and Screen' or 'Film Night'
- More than one organist
- Organ plus a vocalist
- Organ plus instrumentalist/combo
- Organ plus big/swing band
- Organ plus brass band
- Organ plus choir

- all designed to attract the music as distinct from the organ lover

Dances

- With Records/DJ, small combo or de-luxe full band.

Silent films

- Popular in the States
- Nostalgia/history/heritage
- Artistry (the actual accompanying)
- Entertainment (the film itself)
- Novelty
- Trendy
- A different and distinct audience
- Show a good well-known film plus a really top class player
- Promote the film not the player!

Special Events

- Visits or special events for influential people and groups such as local councillors, politicians, voluntary sector, related interest organisations (eg the local Organists' Association).

Members' events

These give the member something extra, something special – a sense of belonging, a reason for joining the Society. For example:

- Informal concerts / meetings
- Social members evenings, e.g. record and slide evenings
- Open console evenings, sometimes with a short demonstration from a volunteer professional or gifted amateur.
- Garden parties, boat and coach trips, conventions and special weekend events.

Member involvement

- Encourage members to attend public concerts and events.
- Offer members a discount on normal concert and event prices
- Members are 'special' (no members = no Society)
- Make them feel welcome.

2.3 Concert presentation

- Friendly greeting at the door, minimal queuing, ease of purchasing tickets (advance reservations?)
- Social occasion, relaxed atmosphere
- Smartly turned out officers (name badges?)
- Officers ready to spot newcomers, chat with audience members, receive suggestions, etc.
- Background music at the start, interval and end?
- Compère: is one necessary? Needs confidence and good microphone skills
- Public address – good quality sound
- Lighting – use of floods and spots.
- Video projection – useful for advertising forthcoming events, too
- Interval refreshments – quality, speed and efficiency
- A raffle? Good fund-raiser but can downgrade the atmosphere
- Get the best out of the artist(s) with adequate undisturbed rehearsal time, refreshments etc.
- Repertoire/programming – should the artists be advised what the audience expects, or the audience exposed to the artist's choice?

- Programme – details of the artist(s), concert programme (if available), information about the organ and the Society, forthcoming events, news snippets. Sold or free?
 - Photo call after the concert
 - Chamber tours (if possible)
 - Sales and membership stand
 - Concert Length: are some (many?) concerts too long?
 - Transport – buses, trains, and car parking (with maps?) can be highlighted in publicity
 - Concert frequency: Four a year? Monthly? Weekly?

2.4 Pricing policy

- Enough to cover costs, what the market will stand, or a bit of both?
- Consider people on low or fixed incomes, but also the need for income to run the organ and venue.

3 The market

Existing concert audiences tend to be mainly

- Theatre organ enthusiasts
- Over 60s attending for nostalgic or social reasons

Many participants may have little general musical interest. Will this audience profile continue? Can our new audience be those who might enjoy our kind of music but played on the theatre organ.

3.1 Existing

Theatre organ enthusiasts/lovers, regular attendees, our core audience.

3.2 Future

Those who enjoy light and popular music; and already attend events of a similar nature such as

- Musicals
- Popular/light classical orchestral concerts
- Brass band
- Big band/swing
- Jazz
- Dance – declining interest?
- Silent/classic films – growing interest?
- Nostalgia.

4 Selling

Proactive marketing/promotional/publicity officer is important. Events need to be ‘sold’. Get ideas from others. Sell the music, as well as the organ. Identify interest groups. We are in the promotion business. What is ‘special’ about each event? Promotion costs money.

4.1 Promotion

‘Friends of’

- Could a ‘Friends of...’ group be valuable for:
 - fund-raising
 - social/members events
 - outings, visits

- cementing ties with the locality
- relieving the local team of some duties?

What might the Friends receive?

- Preferential Booking for all events
- A local newsletter
- An invitation to join the organ team for a glass of wine during the interval
- Pre- or post-concert reception?

Professional Marketing

Try approaching local marketing people to see if they will help.

Advertising/Notification

Paid

- Newspaper advertising
- Other society programmes e.g. amateur operatic societies and theatrical groups
- Slides on screen at cinema/theatre
- Posters
- Banners outside or near the venue
- Car window stickers
- Leaflets
- Mailing and email lists

Free

- Organ newsletters and websites
- Other similar interest groups' publications
- Local newspapers – Press release
- Local TV and radio
- Local 'what's on' guides
- Word of mouth
- Exposure to the organ (open days, demonstrations, group visit etc.)
- Promotion at previous events.

Posters

- In the venue, shop windows, supermarkets, libraries, tourist information centres
- Council premises, churches, other local attractions,
- Pubs, colleges/schools, retirement homes, visitor centres.
- Members' homes and workplaces

Promotion ideas

- Local connection of organist or others in the show
- Sponsored young organist
- Honours the organist may have received
- First appearance here of this organist
- Return appearance by popular demand
- International artist
- Radio and recording artist
- Organist is famous for
- Organist is from a well-known venue

- First concert after organ refurbishment, etc.
- Don't undersell!

Distribution

- Publicity machine should be cranked up well in advance.

Free tickets

- Can be given to the media, poster displayers, etc.
- Two-for-one offers?

Local Schools and Colleges

- Departments of music, media or business and marketing. 4.2

Sponsorship/partnership

Develop sponsorship with local businesses or media players?

Joint concert promotion

- Free tickets given to local organisations which can then sell them to their members retaining the proceeds for their own funds. Leads to increased audience size (which provides for a better atmosphere) and the possibility that some guests will return to future concerts

- Arrangements with coach companies, tourist guides, heritage steam railways and similar to tie in with group outings and public promotions. Also consider retirement homes, community groups, etc.

Len Rawle, ATOS London and South of England Chapter

presented on his behalf by Ian Ridley, chairman of the ATOS London and South of England Chapter

For the past 4 decades preservationists have kept theatre organs alive, but what is it that is necessary to attract a future public to the 'King of instruments'?

A singular answer is obvious! We have to present a 'show that appeals'; with all the 'detail' we already know that implies. Before shaping up 'the show', one must first identify the audience. e.g. What strata of society are we aiming at? Are we aiming at elitism and specialisation? or do we seek to appeal to the masses?

Secondly we must find ways of 'resonating' with our public. In other words we need to identify what they might best appreciate from us. We then have to express this in words known as a 'strap line'.

One's strategy must be so simple as to be easily understood. If, for example, your marketing strap-line is "organised to promote the organ as a means of entertainment", this sets in place the concept of promoting our favourite instrument to a wide audience. Importantly everything else that comes under committee consideration needs to support such a strategy. If one's marketing strap-line were to be "...dedicated to promoting excellence in organ performance" or "...preserving music of the past" audience size and character would be different. Marketing strategy therefore has a direct bearing on the subject under discussion today. It needs to be clear, understood and promoted at all times. We at ATOS – London, have long since passed through the years of only appealing to organ enthusiasts.

Although we have an inner group of dedicated enthusiasts with varying individual interests, we have, since the early years at 'Wurlitzer Lodge' in Northolt aimed to present 'a form of entertainment'. To this end we have championed both solo organ performance by established organists, the Young Theatre Organist of the Year competition and the inclusion of supporting acts from time to time. This basic concept has led to a lot of diversity not to mention fun, friendship, much useful exchange of information and a better understanding of the theatre organ. We all know of other successes around the country where something other than a standard theatre organ presentation has pulled in meaningful crowds. Nigel Ogden and a choral society not to mention organ accompaniment of silent movies the comedic activities at Rye and various Christmas concerts immediately spring to mind. But do you really want to deviate from the exclusive type of concept many are used to and which are relatively easy to organise? It takes a lot of organising to move into the much more involved world of 'theatre'. Maybe, for some, if not all of us, small is beautiful. The decision surely depends on the level of professional skills and energy that is available. The initial question to be answered is therefore what does each and every society or group want for itself? Secondly, examine how many are needed to achieve a worthwhile result before finally deciding to push ahead.

KEEPING THINGS IN BALANCE

This is an important consideration especially where finance is concerned. If too much is expended on restoring and installing organs, this might leave little for other important aspects of running a production company, for believe me this is how we all need to view ourselves. Our London ATOS Chapter has successfully installed, tuned and up-graded our organs at virtually no cost. We have also maintained several others on the same basis. The vast majority of our work has been voluntary, thus leaving accumulated funds for contingencies such as we now face at Barry.

CORE AUDIENCES

Consider for a moment that most of our greatest classical organs are featured on just a handful of occasions in the year. It seems that one good concert can last many an individual a very long time. Maybe the bulk of a new theatre organ audience should be viewed in a similar way rather than us becoming obsessed with everyone coming month by month. My own Chapter of ATOS is known as being amongst the most successful and I am happy to share with you some of our experiences. In truth, the ATOS in the UK was really formed by the TOC and COS. At the time, they felt they simply did not have the energy to become involved in sharing knowledge and artists from abroad. We were in fact actively encouraged to do our own thing by these two friendly societies and so started the long running series of evenings at Wurlitzer Lodge, Northolt. These quickly led to the most famous organists in the world playing for our chapter at various theatres we hired here in the UK. Lyn Larsen, Hector Oliviera, Ashley Miller, George Wright, Searle Wright, Dennis James, Tony Fenalon, and so many more helped us establish how worthwhile it was significantly to expand our horizons. As you witness this weekend, other groups now feature overseas artists.

Similarly our creation of the 'Young Organist of the Year' Competition broke new ground and again the rest is history although it has to be said it is a mightily expensive operation and it does not attract a large audience. It is our audience we feel is far and away our greatest asset. Whether they are our small hard core of followers or the once a year visitor, we try our utmost to give them all an individual welcome and help them understand what we are all about. Media advertising is becoming increasingly difficult if not impossible to justify unless it is 'pure editorial' but even that is hardly worthwhile in some areas, such is the decline in newspaper sales.

The important thing always to recognise it that Word of Mouth is by far the most effective medium. Indeed we occasionally challenge our audience to accept that it is part of their duty as a member to accept they should introduce at least one new person during the year.

With the exception of some modern ballads, our favourite instrument is seldom seen as a suitable medium for presenting today's music, particularly that enjoyed by teenagers. If we were to engage with distortion guitars and heavy-handed drummers, we would probably lose all our over 50 year old audiences. My suggestion is that we continue to concentrate on the fact that there is a 50-60 year old group coming through annually. I personally absolutely deplore the argument that our audiences are dying off. Of course they are, they always have and always will do, it is nature. So to is the increasing

population of the UK and the number of 50 - & 60 year olds. We simply need to organise ourselves to go out and meet them. It is easy to create a new audience.

Pretty well every locality has church groups of older folk. Similarly libraries and tourist offices will know of local groups in the over 45 year old bracket. These might for example include aerobics classes, over 50 clubs, Bowls clubs, U3 2 (University of the third Age), Walking and hiking groups, debating groups, historical societies, Age-Concern. These groups exist Nation-wide and I can all but guarantee the leader of the first local group you approach about coming along for an evening's 'musical' entertainment will say "what a good idea for a night out" and "I didn't even know we had such an instrument in the area". A 14' long banner outside our Leisure Centre which simply says 'Wurlitzer Concert this Saturday' 7.30pm, is displayed for just a week before each concert. It really does work. The organ by the way is not promoted as the ATOS Wurlitzer, rather it is 'The Woking Wurlitzer'. It is situated in Wurlitzer Hall in a well trafficked building – cunning eh!

If one expects the public to come out for the night, not only has the event to be seen to be value for money, but the place has to be warm and inviting in its atmosphere. The bland school or village hall, in which no effort has been paid at decorating a plain stage or subduing hard lighting, is hardly likely to attract. There is bound to be a lady in your regular audience prepared to arrange at least a few stage flowers, even if they are artificial.

The more volunteer helpers the better for if nothing else, they add to the size of the regular audience. At Woking up to 10 of us gather 3-4 hours ahead of concert time to prepare the many aspects of our show. Hard work it certainly is but the attendant atmosphere makes for a fine team spirit and regular attendance. Once the doors open we have a policy whereby unless it is absolutely necessary to talk to one another, committee members individually circulate with the audience as it arrives, during the interval and at the end of the concert. No one wishes to witness a committee in conclave. It materially helps retain customers if there is a personal word of welcome, comfortable seats, warm room, sensible volume of both the organ and the PA even subdued yet 'safe' lighting also helps set the atmosphere. A friendly and individual "Goodnight" to everyone as they leave is generally well received? ...Even 'Easy-Jet' offer that for free! By the end of the performance it should be the sum of many parts that sends one away happy. That surely must be the object of the entire theatre organ presentation if 'entertainment' is your 'key-word'.

My early work accompanying Catherine Drummond on Saxophone, John Mann and Tony Fenalon on piano and various members of the Nat West Jazz Band, not to mention various close harmony groups and more recently a Euphonium virtuoso and some gifted teenagers on Flute, Clarinet and piano may be remembered by some. Whenever I have travelled to Australia or New Zealand the good sized audiences at each venue owe a great deal to the local dance group, the Marimba Band, the local opera singer, a pianist, the School String section or whatever. Such an additional item helps create that all important element 'variety' within the show. Chances are that the supporting artists also bring with them additional members of the audience.

Our own Christmas Concerts at Woking have featured up to 30 artists taking part and we pack out both performances. There is also the amazing appreciation of the organ in the CAMRA Beer Festival where the Wurlitzer, rather than the featured bands, is the main attraction in a hall packed to bursting with 35 – 45year olds as we go through 'The last

night of the Proms' routine....It sows seeds and immediately introduces new members to our monthly audiences. It also gets the theatre organ talked about and is even on U-tube worldwide. Recently at Old Windsor the modest Compton supported by a Brass Duo attracted the largest audience for some long time. Following an event aimed at Rotarians, a specially themed concert event within the Rye Oyster Festival is also attracting a different section of the public to take an interest in supporting the Wurlitzer. St Albans Museum used not to draw an audience in August, but since the Wurlitzer, the Hammond, the Grand Piano, the Rutt and a Yamaha Electone are presented equally throughout the evening in a sort of 'Keyboards Galore' presentation the audience levels have been every bit as good and even better than in some other months. A silent movie at Clevedon recently packed the cinema.

Let us not forget Thursford where a Christmas concert on the organ alone might attract 500 if you are lucky. In contrast, their world class Christmas show - in a remote industrial building for goodness sake - with 200 or more other artists around the Wurlitzer brings in packed houses totalling 10's of thousands to their twice daily performances for 3 months of the year – This is one way of becoming a millionaire if you did not know it.

I have yet to enjoy Simon Gledhill and his traditional Jazz group but he for sure would not continue with it if he were not more than happy with the end results. At the 'Capri' in Adelaide the same combination with Chris McPhee at the console also has the till ringing fast and furious and the memorable Lyn Larsen performances with Jack Bethards orchestra, also some with a jazz band all speak volumes for the High entertainment value and large audiences that result.

WHAT WE DO, DON'T DO AND WOULD LIKE TO DO

1 At Woking we have a subterranean sports hall with no stage yet we create the illusion of a bijou theatre.

2 We create our wonderland for the night with an illuminated Wurlitzer sign at the pay desk, art-deco banners around the hall, professionally fitted out notice board, fine lighting, fine tuning for each concert. We also install a well-balanced PA system and a multi-camera video presentation set-up that is operated by professional media people working on a voluntary basis.

3 Over the 15 years we have been at Woking we have steadily increased and up-dated both the organ and our facilities. Currently the console is stripped down for preventative maintenance and a face-lift.

4 Hard work ensures we maintain good audience levels at Woking. We value the help given by other groups in mentioning our events. In particular the spectacular success we had with the Raising the Tooting Wurlitzer project. We are of course keeping our eyes and ears open at Tooting, Kilburn and Harrow.

5 We have 4 'friends' involved in distributing hand-outs of future concerts

6 We provide interval refreshments

7 We always start our concerts on time and run 50 minute halves

8 We vary the styles of playing we present

9 As in the Isle of Man we have provided viewing panels to the chambers thus ensuring the organ is not misunderstood as being simply the console. Well that is mostly the case. We recently had someone who said "...oh really, I thought all those pipes were part of the hall heating system".

10 On an increasing scale we would like to continue to introduce other entertainment factors.

AND FINALLY

May I, through the medium of my Chairman, Ian Ridley and on behalf of the London and South of England Chapter of ATOS wish the COS every possible success with the recently announced Troxy project in Stepney. It is a major undertaking.

One thing is however guaranteed, this impending transplant of a magnificent Wurlitzer will, as the title of your conference suggests, 'take us back to the future'.

Don Hyde, Chairman and Trustee, Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust

The LTOT has 2 venues which are regularly used for concerts, Stockport Town Hall and the Heritage Centre, Peel Green, Eccles.

At Stockport we have the ex Free Trade Hall 4/20 Wurlitzer while at the Heritage Centre we have a 2/6 Wurlitzer which was originally installed in the Trocadero Cinema, Liverpool.

Some advertising takes place at each location; which gives details of forthcoming concerts at both venues. We have in the past placed adverts in local papers in the Stockport area, these were costly and had minimal impact on attendances, some advertising is also done at the Town Hall itself using posters and a moving sign near to the entrance.

The Trust purchased the Heritage Centre (formally a Sunday school annexe) in 2003 and following extensive refurbishment opened its doors for the first concert in January 2006. The building consists of 2 floors; the ground floor is an auditorium in the style of a 20/30's cinema and the lower floor contains a theatre organ museum and the organ chamber.

The Trust holds weekly concerts at the Heritage Centre on Wednesday lunchtimes with a different organists performing each week. Initially, to spread the word as quickly as possible, we had an A4 double folded leaflet printed which was distributed locally, using shops, door to door delivery, libraries etc. In order to distribute these leaflets to a larger area we employed a delivery company to display copies of the leaflet across their network of outlets, these included hotels, tourist information offices, restaurants, cafes, garden centres etc, this was only done for a limited period due to the costs involved.

As we have a museum at the Heritage Centre we have close links with Salford Museum services and have attended various functions which they have organised where we can promote our organisation and the concerts at both venues. Each year since we opened we have been involved with the Heritage Open Days; this gives us an opportunity to promote each others events and costs us very little.

Shortly after opening we started to take bookings for 'Private Functions'. These are visits by local organisations, clubs etc who come to the centre for us to give them a presentation about theatre organs. A presentation usually lasts for 2 hours and consists of the following:-

- A brief history of theatre organs,
- The various sound effects that the organist can use when accompanying silent movies and suitable music played on the organ to demonstrate them
- A tour of the organ chamber
- A short video showing the centre at various stages of refurbishment
- A short silent movie with organ accompaniment
- A few general tunes, including hymns, to show the versatility of the organ
- A short sing-a-long.

This is a typical example of a presentation; however it can be tailored to suit the specific needs of the particular group attending.

These functions have become very popular with very little advertising being necessary, the Wednesday concerts and the private functions seem to cross advertise for each other. Here are a few examples of the type of groups who have attended.

- The National Trust.
- Ladies Guilds.
- Church Groups.
- Probus.
- Local History Society.
- University students.
- The North West Film Archives.

In order to attract a wider audience we are now beginning to try and use the organ with other instruments, such as flute, piano accordion, piano, performing either solo or as duets.

As the internet becomes more popular we have started to use it to advertise events to our members and other members of the public who wishes to leave us their email address. It has also been used for mail shots and our regular News Letter. About 30% of our members receive their News Letter in this way which saves on postage costs and the manual effort associated with it.

In general terms we have found that the best form of advertising is word of mouth. It is the most effective from both the cost point of view and the overall results.

John Heslop – Chairman, North East Theatre Organ Association**Some thoughts from a Concert Promoter's Point of View**

Introduction: David has kindly asked me to discuss the way the North East Theatre Organ Association has developed its operation at Howden le Wear, also to consider some of our successes (and failures!) over the last 24 years and what lessons we feel we have learned during that time:

Background: In 1976, when we were having great difficulty in finding a suitable hall in which to re-house our Wurlitzer, we held a fund-raising concert at the Trinity Methodist Chapel in Howden le Wear, near the town of Crook, at which our long-standing member and regular contributor to T.O.C. & C.O.S. meetings in the North East, Norman Green, played the very pleasant Nelson organ and accompanied Baritone Tom Simmons.

At this point in time the Chapel was about to close and it was suggested by Eric Lee – a little tongue in cheek I think – that if we bought the building it would solve our problem. The first reaction was, unsurprisingly, “we can't afford it”! Then we started to consider the possible benefits of having our own premises, so Joe Marsh, Joe's dad (Joe Snr.) and myself sat down to discuss the practicalities of fitting the (then) 3/11 Wurlitzer into the building. After a lot of measuring, drawing and tutting we concluded that it was possible and there would still be room for a few people as well!

After even more hair-tearing and a bit of financial wheeler-dealing, we at last took over the keys to the building in March 1977. From the outset of the project we agreed that we had to aim for as high a standard as was realistically possible (within our practical and financial capabilities) and we aimed to apply this philosophy to the organ, the building, the ancillary items such as tickets and programmes and to the presentation of concerts.

A great deal of unseen thought and planning went into the work which took another nine years to complete. This work included adaption of the building to house the organ pipework and percussions, blower, relays, console lift; adding an emergency exit, tea room, and toilets to the building; altering and updating the heating system, building a projection / control box for films, slides, sound and lighting control; installation of speakers and sound system; provision of a three-phase power supply; new wiring throughout the chapel & extension; new lighting and emergency exit signs; decorating; collection, renovation and installation of seating; and finally the minor job of renovating much of the organ and then re-installing it in a completely different layout to the original installation in Bradford.

What have we done in order to make our events as attractive as possible to visitors? (and let me add here that we most certainly don't make any claim to be better than other venues – indeed we are very aware that we can learn a lot from other people's ideas, as well):

1. We publicise events through as many channels as we can (more about this later)
2. Purchasing of tickets is made as simple and convenient as possible

3. We aim to make people feel welcome, be they regulars or one-off visitors, with someone on the door at the beginning to greet people and also at the end of the concert to say 'goodbye' and, incidentally, get some useful feedback as to whether they enjoyed the concert and what was good or bad

4. We try to have a hall that is attractive, comfortable, clean and warm in winter (very occasionally too-hot in summer, but aircon is a bit ambitious for the rare times this happens!)

5. We want to keep the organ in good condition – yes, it is 80 years old this

year, but organists and audiences alike should be able to expect an instrument where (almost!) everything works, which is well regulated and adjusted and which is pleasing to the ear and straightforward to play

6. Backup facilities: Being an electro-mechanical device the old adage that 'if something can go wrong, then it will' certainly applies. It isn't a practical option to have spares for every item which may fail (that means having a spare organ!) but we keep some spare circuit boards for the Uniflex system, spare power supply units and a spare computer ready-loaded with software to provide some degree of security. A small Uninterruptible Power Supply unit feeds the computer and the 'logic' power supply unit and protects them against disruption by short-term power 'dips' (a common problem in a country location).

7. We try to adopt a 'professional' and 'organised' (usually!) but fairly informal approach to presenting a concert

8. Having a concert programme with the organist's biography, detailed concert programme and an opportunity to publicise future events, sales goods, etc., is of interest to the audience and provides a (modest) source of additional income

9. A lot of time (and money – with a little aid from the lottery 'Awards for All' scheme) has been put into improving the sound, lighting and projection facilities in our hall. We have always tried to have lighting which is fitting and complementary to the music and having the ability to present silent movies, slides and Powerpoint presentations increases flexibility, variety and interest for the audience

10. We find that selling ice-cream in the interval is both popular and generates useful income (this is in addition to the usual teas and coffees)

11. We have taken the view that playing background music before a concert and during the interval is not necessary, as it gives the ears a rest, but I fully appreciate that audiences at other venues may have different preferences

Marketing the Organ: This is the big question faced by us all and without large corporate budgets this takes a lot of work and is almost certainly going to need our collective attentions more and more in the future. (Although obviously not applicable to all venues!): The Wurlitzer brand is still a marketable commodity - people still know it from the Tower Ballroom, Thursford, etc., and even those who don't may well know it from juke boxes and vending machines, so we do need to capitalise on this brand awareness.

We should also bear in mind that the percentage of our audiences who remember the 'heyday' of the theatre organ is now very low and will soon be non-existent, so we need to invent a new audience and appeal to that audience.

We publicise our organ and events in a number of ways:

1. We publish a full-colour 1/3 A4 Annual Programme of Events and these are distributed via the COS Newsletter (incidentally COS membership is less than 50% of what it was when we started sending these out – a sobering thought); copies are sent (twice/year) to the Durham County Libraries section who distribute copies to all branch libraries in the county; supplies are sent to Tourist Information Offices, Museums, Railway Preservation Groups and other visitor attractions in the Region.
2. The N.E.T.O.A. web site provides an international forum for publicising our events, points of contact and information about the organ and the Association.
3. We have worked hard to establish contacts with the local and regional press and find them willing to publicise any special events, we try to get regular events listed in local press 'what's on' listings and also local radio, where possible. The press are always looking for a new 'angle' and giving them that 'angle' can be challenging.
4. We encourage local / regional organisations (Womens' Institutes, Rotary clubs, church groups, work related and retirement groups, musical and social clubs, etc.) to visit the New Victoria Centre and we run a number of special events for such groups during the course of the year, when they can learn about the history of the theatre organ in general and our Wurlitzer in particular, be shown video of the organ chambers and building of the organ and, of course, hear it being played. We find that these events are very useful for raising awareness and every event brings sales of CDs and other items, usually also we gain several new Members and new concert ticket sales. The ability to promote events of this kind at any time is probably the biggest benefit of owning our own premises.
5. We programme a number of Visitor Days on Saturdays in the summer months when we encourage the general public and family groups to visit us for a short (about 1 hour) programme of organ music and information. We find this generally beneficial, but take-up is variable and publicity needs reviewing / improving.
6. We have run a few events for residents of retirement homes and if we can get a few bus / mini-bus loads in at the same time, this is very worthwhile and we are looking to develop this further.

Establishing contacts with various organisations:

1. Local Councils: We have established useful contacts with both councillors and full time officials (such as the Tourism Officer). This has resulted in a number of visits to see the Wurlitzer by organisations and visiting groups from around the UK and abroad. A charity concert was held on behalf of the Chairman of the local council and civic dignitaries invited from around the region. All of these events have helped to raise the profile of our venue.

2. Local / Regional QUANGOs and groups relating to voluntary organisations and Charities can be a useful source of contact for publicity, amenities and grants.

3. Local musical organisations (choirs, brass bands, organists & choirmasters Organisations, etc.) are worth talking to and useful advice can be gained.

4. Local and regional arts organisations have listings of concerts and events and can also provide advice on contacts.

Things we want to examine for the future / do more about:

1. Development of technical skills. We are all aware of the need for more competent players of the theatre organ and we need to continue to encourage development of such talent, but we also need a sound technical base to ensure that the skills of maintaining and regulating the theatre organ are passed down and that we can continue to enjoy instruments of a high standard.

2. Programme Content. Like it or not, programme content **MUST** appeal to new listening generations (BUT – I don't think this necessarily means that the content has to be 100% new, so long as it's well balanced, well played and entertaining). A young helper with a group of retired visitors said to me one day: "what a fabulous sound, but isn't it able to play anything new?" Good question. The structure and musical content of many concerts I hear is virtually un-altered from 50 years ago (or longer) and I think we can learn a lot from concerts given in other musical spheres such as brass bands and especially choirs, who have some superb and very clever modern arrangements to work with.

3. In years gone by, theatre organists were household names through regular broadcasts, but nowadays very few are known to the general public, so a poster proclaiming 'Reginald Bloggs at the Might Wurlitzer' is pretty meaningless. Who is he and what is he going to do with the Wurlitzer?? Perhaps 'The Genius of Johann Strauss and Friends featuring Reginald Bloggs playing the Wurlitzer Theatre Organ' conveys more of what may be expected to a potential 'punter'. We have, in the past, held a 'Last Night of the Proms', which was very successful and are looking at other 'themed' programmes, perhaps a Viennese concert, music from the movies (a la John Wilson Orchestra at last year's Proms), etc., could create special interest and give an opportunity for some extra publicity and to attract new audience members.

Many concerts I hear are similar in structure and the same old music comes around time and time again. I think we all know the Gershwin selection with the easy bits from 'Rhapsody in Blue' at the start and finish and a random selection of tunes in the middle. (Incidentally, I love Gershwin, but...). I feel that venues need to discuss musical content with organists to ensure a truly 'varied' musical season and this means that organists, in turn, may need to plan ahead more and dig a little deeper into their repertoires, rather than just churning out 2 x 55 minutes worth of whatever comes to mind on the day. It is a fact worthy of consideration that most organists don't have a lot of time to attend each others concerts, so logic dictates that they won't necessarily know what other people are playing – this, to me, reinforces the argument for better concert planning all round!

4. Developing joint ventures with other groups and organisations (preserved railways / transport groups, brass bands, choirs, etc.) can be both enjoyable and bring in new blood.

5. Links with tourism organisations have brought some benefits in terms of visitors and is an area we are continuing to investigate.

6. Local Schools which have a musical tradition (particularly those that have a chapel with organ) may be a source of possible interest. Production of 'Teacher Packs' could be worthy of consideration.

7. Link-ups with tour operators to bring in coach parties, perhaps in conjunction with other local attractions. Having our own premises enables us to hold events at almost any time with minimal restrictions.

8. Film Events, featuring popular or classic films with organ intermissions may attract new audiences and, of course, silent movies accompanied by the theatre organ provide a unique experience.

The above 'thoughts' represent some of our experiences, ideas and aspirations for the continued development of activities at the New Victoria Centre at Howden le Wear. I would like to thank the Cinema Organ Society for having the foresight to arrange this event and taking a very positive step towards ensuring a meaningful future for the theatre organ.

Gordon Whitehouse, COS Midlands and Wales District Secretary.

Gordon started his presentation by saying that he was delighted to be part of the seminar and hoped that his short presentation would offers some positive insight into the subject of this conference, that of concert attendance numbers.

Over the years, Midlands & Wales District have enjoyed the loyalty of their concert-goers with an average attendance of 140 on the 1st Sunday in each month for their organ concerts. It was as a result of this, that Gordon was asked to give the presentation and explain the reasons for the ongoing success and popularity at the Fentham Hall concert venue with its Compton Organ.

From the various comments received from the regular audience and new visitors alike, it was obvious that the committee were doing something right! However, they felt that it would be wrong to base a presentation on personal thoughts and so at the seasons opening concert on January 3rd 2010, a 'Spot Survey' of 46 people taken at random was carried out, this was representative of approximately 1/3 of the average audience. The survey posed 12 questions listed in no particular order and requested a rating of between 1 & 10 (ten being the highest) indicating the importance to the individual of the features listed together with any optional comments. Names & addresses were not requested.

At this point in the presentation Gordon then took on the role of a concert-goer and informed the conference of what the typical audience at Fentham Hall expected in order to make a good afternoon's entertainment.

- A pleasing venue easy to get to with good directions and ample parking
- A warm welcome on arrival, resulting is a good first impression
- Nice to observe Concert team approach / friendly attitude / dress code
- I would like to see professional concert presentation / stage dressed?
- I wish to hear good music played well by competent organists.
- Video/Screen observing the playing technique is an advantage.
- Interval refreshments served quickly in a friendly and sociable manner.
- I would like to be approached by the team as to my enjoyment of my visit!
- Second half of the concert equally enjoyable, made new friends!
- Time taken to answer/explain the history and workings of the organ.
- On my departure, "team" enquiring of my enjoyment and a possible return visit.
- I have enjoyed my visit, the venue, the concert, the music, the people.
- Most important of all, I was made to feel welcome amongst like minded and friendly people in a social atmosphere whilst paying a realistic admission price for a well presented theatre organ concert much enjoyed. If you continue this practice I will return, bringing others with me.

Conclusion :

- Professional attitude and concert presentation makes visitors feel welcome.
- Talk and chat is good PR!. Leave the visitor wanting more.

Ian MacNaught , President, Scottish Cinema Organ Trust .

Promoting Concerts at Pollokshaws

Attendance at Concerts

- Our numbers at Pollokshaws seem to be stabilising at 180 -200.
- This is due to continual active publicity and promotion.
- Stop doing this, even for one month, and the numbers drop immediately.

Ideas we've put in place which appear to be making a difference:

Publicity

- Large banner attached to the Hall fence on the Monday before the following Sunday concert. Just saying "Wurlitzer Organ Concert here next Sunday at 2.45pm."
- Ensuring everyone who leaves a show has a current concert diary.
- Flyer posted to members a week before a concert.
- Posters displayed in the hall.
- Pre-booked tickets sold for the next concert. (If people buy and don't turn-up, at least we have the money)
- Free adverts in all the local newspaper 'What's on' sections.
- Occasionally in our regular newsletter, saying that we are running at a loss and can't continue for long without our member's support.
- My latest idea is a "Three for Two". If the people buy two tickets for the next show we'll give them one free which must be used to bring a guest.
- Highlighting the following concert at the interval and close of show.
- Having a supply of tickets available for the Hall staff to sell during the week.

Matthew Feldwick, Twyford Waterworks, Hampshire.

Marketing the Theatre Organ in the Twenty First Century

Marketing is a complex subject and the success or otherwise of a marketing campaign depends on a seemingly bewildering array of variables ranging from local demographics to national legislation. However, by applying academic theories of a 'Marketing Mix' an attempt can be made to identify a marketing style for success through an objective view of the main variables that bears on a business.

Until around ten years ago it was commonly agreed that the most comprehensive way of judging a 'Marketing Mix' was to apply what is known as the '4p's':

- Product
- Price
- Promotion
- Place

By investigating each above segment, working out the strengths and weaknesses, a coherent plan for marketing could be produced.

These '4p's' do have a serious drawback in that they are rarely suited for the service sector and could only loosely, in the application of the theatre organ, be applied in a meaningful and workable way. A newer approach, pioneered by the University of North Carolina's Bob Lauterborn, describes the marketing mix in terms of '4 c's':

- Consumer
- Cost
- Convenience
- Communication

To this I have added a fifth:

- Change

I shall take each one of these in turn to explain the nature and role of each term and why there is the need to adopt these techniques.

Consumer (Product)

The old approach was to create a product, usually to a high standard, to create sales. There is the product, an organ concert for example, and this needs to be sold to the customer. It is not enough to say 'we have a wonderful organ; come and listen to it' there now needs to be a consumer approach to creating the product. This is done by comprehensive market research, not looking for improve your product but asking you customers what product they would like. There is also the important issue of defining who your customer is – is it the general public, your current audience, yourselves or perhaps all three?

Cost (Price)

A cost based approach to your product gives a far clearer indication to the 'real' price. There are plenty of other costs to consider when making the decision to attend a theatre organ event. Not only is there the ticket price but what about the cost of travel; of car parking? Then there is the meal or snack as your audience makes its way to or from your venue – how much does this cost? Most importantly is the cost of time and the opportunity cost. This latter point is the lost opportunities the audience member has by attending your event and whether any of these opportunities are seen to be of greater importance than the event. Examples would include going shopping, watching football or anything else!

It must also be remembered that a low price does not indicate quality, even if quality is provided. Prices should reflect the market rate for the type of event. A special event should be reflected in a special price.

Convenience (Place)

The place of the event was always problematic. It is not easy to move a theatre organ to different locations. However, if the notion of place is widened to that of convenience there is room for lessons to be learnt. Convenience is such factors as ease by which your customers can do business with you. Such factors can include the following:

- event times and dates
- purchasing of tickets
- ease of obtaining information

The example of TESCO is pertinent here. In the past decade they have realised that their large stores are missing out on a segment of the market and in recent years have launched TESCO Metro convenience stores that draw on the brand name.

Communication (Promotion)

Promotion was about telling your customers about your product whereas communication is interacting with customer – it is a two-way thing. This communication needs to take place at all levels and has to engage all media and technology to put the message across. Leaflets and posters still work well but only as a part of a wider communication portfolio including:

- Internet (including social networking sites)
- Traditional methods; such as telephone and address for correspondence
- A physical presence in suitable locations

In short, the answer is not to miss a trick. If there is the space for revealing your event to your customer then it should be taken. If another organisation is doing something perceptively well, copy their ideas, if not, avoid these ideas or adapt them to something which will work.

Change

This is the hard but change is always required. Every product, in theory, has a life-cycle and in order for events to be a success they need to change and adapt to the market and those factors we have already mentioned. Change can sometimes be hard to start although small changes can be made which may not be that noticeable; perhaps a new way of selling tickets. There is nothing wrong with experimenting or trying something that may not have worked well in the past again. New ideas may or may not work but unless they are trialled there is no way of knowing for sure.

Tim Wardley, The Red Brick Barn, Rochford, Essex

The Red Brick Barn is an interesting case in point with regard to the theme of today's conference, of how to attract more people, and younger diverse audiences to the world of theatre organ music.

My association with heritage preservation over the past 30 years has encompassed many spheres, including ship preservation, seaside heritage, theatres and cinemas, and, of course the theatre organ.

Britain's national pleasure steamers Waverley and Balmoral, and paddle steamer Kingswear Castle draw many parallels to the world of theatre organs, insofar as they are unique examples of history that were once prevalent in the lives of many people. The passage of time has meant that the days when steamers were a familiar sight at nearly every seaside resort offering daytrips is a fading memory, and one must be of an advanced age to recall the natural association of the product, in exactly the same way as one must be of advancing years to recall theatre organs in their traditional homes of the Art deco picture palaces.

During my years of involvement with the Waverley, the National Piers Society and other heritage bodies, many strategies have been utilised to target new generations of visitors, and today the ships are enjoyed by families and people of all ages. Likewise with our seaside Piers, which were once a "must have" for any seaside resort worth it's salt, they have had to adapt to changing times and public tastes, and have evolved to offer a diverse range of amenities and facilities to attract the modern visitor, as well as retain their heritage value. I soon began to realise that the strategies employed by skilled marketers to encourage new generations of passengers to discover the delights of traveling aboard historic ships, or go promenading down seaside piers can also be applied to the theatre organ.

Whatever the attraction, people's expectations these days are high. They demand high standards of comfort, presentation and entertainment. Above all, they expect an experience in exchange for parting with hard earned cash. I have extensively travelled the country sampling many organ venues as a "customer", and taking away both the positives and negatives to incorporate into our Rochford blueprint.

On a visit to the Red Brick Barn the experience begins when you enter the driveway, long before you take your seat for the concert. Clear signposting, ample car parking within yards of the doors, clean accessible toilet facilities, and a pleasant environment greet you.

Everything is planned on one level, with no stairs to negotiate, ideal for disabled access. There is always a warm welcome. Everyone is personally greeted as their ticketing arrangements are sorted, and are shown to the auditorium.

The stage is fully dressed with house tabs, and mood lighting to create a pleasant, welcoming atmosphere with background music. A personal welcome is always extended by the Compare. Throughout the performance the ambience is enhanced by subtle lighting effects which compliment the organists style. Feedback from the audiences have

enabled us to learn what additional effects enhance the visitors experience, and which become distracting or intrusive.

We have undertaken a deliberate policy of involving the audience as much as possible in the "theatre organ experience" by ensuring that as much of the organ is on view as possible. The toy counter, traps and chimes are illuminated and can be observed working.

Our policy is to ensure that artists fully engage with our audiences, as we believe that an organist should be as entertaining in personality as in professional prowess. Audiences these days seek to be entertained at every level. Interaction is positively encouraged between the volunteer staff, artist, and audience at every opportunity. Time is always made for people to ask questions, look around, chat with the artists and volunteers, take pictures, and become involved. Nobody is ever pressured to leave hastily at the end of a concert, and very often there will be genial conversation between the artist and visitors for up to an hour after the concert. By making our philosophy "arrive as our audience..leave as our friend", we have maintained capacity houses over the 6 years of public performances.

Marketing is an important yet costly strategy in getting the message out to the public, but there are ways of mitigating the expense, and ensuring maximum coverage to as diverse range of potential audience as possible. Local radio, television and newspapers are always seeking interesting local stories for topical programmes and events guides. We have developed very close relationships with our local media, who are happy to publicise our events in features with a heritage perspective which are of interest to their listeners and viewers, and which promote both the preservation aspect of what we do as well as what we offer the public. A few well placed complimentary tickets can produce some valuable co-operative agreements.

In order to appeal to as wide a range of people as possible, we have a deliberate policy of not publicising an "organ concert". Instead the media focus on the complete experience the visitor will enjoy on a visit to the Red Brick Barn, and will often be headlined, for example, as, " a magical musical experience", or " a magical afternoon of musical memories featuring the Kingsway Compton". The emphasis is then directed towards encouraging the public to sample a new, different, and exciting experience, which has a broader appeal than "organ concert". By this method we have succeeded in encouraging some families, and members of the 50-60 age bracket, with the corresponding welcome average age drop of the audience.

Marketing requires great skill. A potential customer will be grabbed by your headline banner, and then read on. If you get your headline wrong, you lose the potential attention of your customer, and the rest of your advert is wasted. Likewise, with radio and television, the attention span of an advert or feature is around 2 seconds. In that time, the potential customer will have determined if they have interest in your product, or whether they choose to ignore your pitch. So first impressions and mission statements are vital to the success of effective advertising.

Additional ways we are exploring to broaden the appeal of the theatre organ include utilising the organ in conjunction with other musical genres. It has been long known that electronic organ concerts attract a different audience to theatre organs. We will be

experimenting with putting on concerts featuring artists who play both kinds of organ, thereby appealing to both camps. We have also been approached by jazz and dance bands keen to utilise the theatre organ in their musical fayre, and we will be looking at exploring these possibilities in the future. At Christmas, we regularly introduce an element of variety into our shows, including pantomime, choirs, and other novelty acts, which prove extremely popular with a different audience to the traditional theatre organ customer. We firmly believe that diversity, and utilising the theatre organ in roles other than as a stand alone instrument are viable ways of introducing the organ to new audiences.

Attracting more diverse audiences as our traditional markets contract requires great product marketing skill, high standards of presentation and facilities, and thinking out of the box. To us at Red Brick Barn, the theatre organ is the tool to provide an entertainment experience, not just an organ concert. We look forward to welcoming you to our experience soon!