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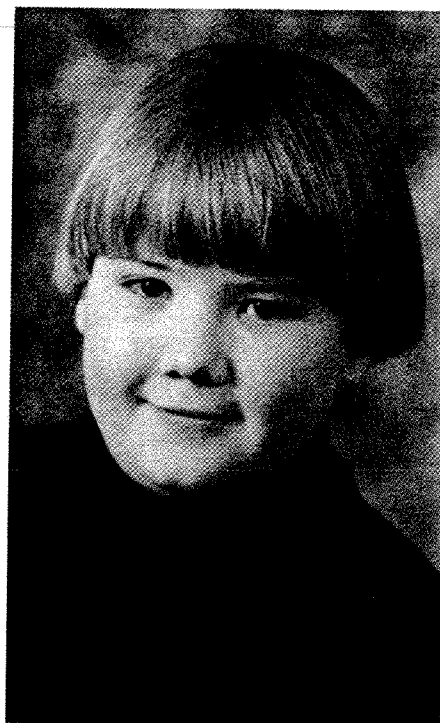

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POE 2003 ATHENS, OHIO

Parker Ramsay



WHEN I first came to the Pipe Organ Encounter at Ohio University, I was astounded there were other kids my age and a little older that wanted to study the organ. I had a BLAST! The kids there were smart, funny, and loved music. We had all been studying organ for different lengths of time. Two students had barely touched the organ, while one had been playing for five years and was working on the Widor *Toccata*.

At the POE, I heard many different kinds of organ music. I heard everything from the Bach E-minor "Cathedral" Prelude and Fugue to Charles Ives's *Variations on America*. The teachers at the POE played a recital almost every night. I loved hearing so much organ literature! The last recital was by Tom Trenney performing a theater-organ accompaniment to the silent movie, *The Phantom of the Opera*.

The teachers gave lessons and lectures, and led small masterclasses. They taught us how to play hymns appropriately, along with basic and advanced organ technique. They tirelessly taught us as many facets of organ playing as they could in one week. One of the teachers, Elizabeth Claar, taught us about sitting on the bench, position of the spinal chord, and balance of the head.

We were taught a lot about the organ itself. We learned the difference between flue and reed pipes. We learned about organ maintenance and tuning pipes. One day we went to Columbus, Ohio, to visit the Bunn-Minnick organ factory, to hear one of the ten largest tracker organs in the U.S., and to see a theater organist improvising on popular Italian tunes as an introduction to the classic film, *The Godfather*. On the same trip, we went to the original Wendy's to grab a burger and fries.

The variety of organs we were able to play was wonderful. I played both tracker and electropneumatic organs, thus discovering my personal preference for tracker organs. The smallest organ I played was a two-manual, eleven-stop tracker. The largest was a four-manual, electropneumatic organ.

The information and products the teachers gave us were wonderful. They gave us organ trivia cards and some booklets on several organ companies. They also gave us the chance to play "Organ Jeopardy" to see how much we had learned. On the trip back from Columbus, we took a test to compete for a contestant spot in the game. I was one of the nine contestants and one of the three finalists. I won second place. My prizes were compact discs of compositions by Franck, Jiří Ropek, Bach, Reger, and Vierne.

Along with all the wonderful things that I have already mentioned, Athens, Ohio (the small town that surrounds the university), was a lovely place. Athens has some fine shops and restaurants within walking distance of the campus.

One night we were really bored, but realizing that we had all brought our hymnals, we decided to stage an informal hymn sing. We came from a variety of denominations; we were Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, and one Presbyterian (me). Once our hymn sing began, we figured out that all the tenors had different hymnals and therefore different tenor parts were often heard. We soon discovered that there were three of us currently studying voice. We were the "three southerners." I was from Tennessee, Kim was from Kentucky, and Jonathan was from West Virginia. All three of us knew the Andrew Lloyd Webber "Pie Jesu" from the *Requiem*, and we sang it together. Fortunately for us, the night of singing was a rousing success, thanks to our two POE dorm monitors, Ohio University student Leslie Dowler and Joe Causby from Appalachian State University, who were fabulous sight-readers at the piano. (Once again I heard my teachers' voices in my head reminding me that sight-reading practice is essential.)

I had an altogether fabulous time at my first POE. I hope to have a good time again this summer. I am extremely grateful that the AGO sponsors POE weeks so that students my age can learn so much in such a short amount of time, study with terrific teachers, and make new friends with the same interests. Special thanks to Paul Barte of Ohio University, the other faculty (Tom Trenney, Kent Stearman, Brian Bailey, Dianne Maynard-Christiansen), the Southeast AGO Ohio Chapter, and the churches of Athens, Ohio, that made their instruments and facilities available to us. So many people worked so hard to make sure we all enjoyed a great week.

Parker Ramsay, age twelve, the youngest member of the Nashville AGO Chapter, lives in a small town in Middle Tennessee. He is an organ student of Wilma Jensen and studies piano, harp, voice, and advanced music theory under the auspices of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He won the Tennessee Music Teachers Association elementary division composition competition, and the Music Teachers National Association southern region elementary division composition competition in December 2002, for which he was recognized by a joint resolution of the Tennessee Legislature. He was enrolled in the 2004 Pipe Organ Encounter in Atlanta, and looks forward to the POE planned by the Nashville Chapter for summer 2005.