

# THE NEW ORGANIST

## POPs FOR KIDS

Irene J. Shaw

*POPs for KIDS*, the Children's Pipe Organ Project sponsored by the Wichita AGO Chapter, continues to build new relationships in the community. Although most pipe organs are located in churches, many are not. Since Wiedemann Hall, Wichita State University, houses a fine Marcussen organ, it affords a unique opportunity to showcase the pipe organ as the King of Instruments. This has opened doors beyond the scope of demonstrations in churches for church groups (although this is a prime responsibility of church organists).

Robert Town, professor of organ at WSU, has cooperated with this venture by giving organ demonstrations for all kinds of groups. This began with demonstrations for piano students brought by their teachers, then expanded to include joint demonstrations for school groups, with Irene Shaw (*POPs* chairman) providing commentary throughout.

Three years ago, Marilyn Killian, a respected musician-clinician-educator in the area, organized the Wichita Community Children's Choir. Singers are selected by audition. The group has quickly acquired recognition for quality performances. At the beginning of its second season, Irene contacted founder-director Marilyn Killian and visited about ways our programs could work

together. She welcomed the idea of including works with organ accompaniment. "Jubilate Deo," by J.H. Roman, was performed by the choir at its spring concert, with Anna Jeter accompanying on the organ. The group gives pairs of concerts, the first of which was scheduled at Friends University (with electronic organ) and the second at Wiedemann Hall. John Leavitt was invited to perform *Scenes of Childhood*, which was commissioned by the chapter for its 40th anniversary.

After the dress rehearsal, Robert Town and Irene Shaw gave a pipe organ demonstration for choir members and parents and grandparents. The enthusiasm of that group was heartwarming. What a wonderful way to inspire and inform young musicians about the pipe organ. A handout, "Fun Facts About the Pipe Organ," which included general facts about pipe organs, and specific facts about the Marcussen, was given to each listener. This has now become an annual affair, with a different organist showcased at each spring concert.

Word of the organ demonstrations has spread. The organ is regularly demonstrated at summer band camps, where young musicians share the stage with the Marcussen organ all week and finally have a chance to

learn about it and hear it. Last summer, Vernon Nicholson (who has assembled high school choirs to tour in Europe every summer for many years) requested an organ demonstration on the stage at Wiedemann Hall, where the group rehearses before going on tour.

It is hoped that TAO readers will be stimulated to look around their own communities to find new ways to bring the pipe organ to new audiences.

For information about *POPs for KIDS* materials, contact Irene Shaw, 316 Cardinal Lane, Wichita, KS 67230-7109.



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