

# The American Organist Magazine

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VOX HUMANA: Did you hear the one about...?

Please, enough already! We asked for funny stories and got deluged. Who would have thought that playing the organ was as hilarious as this? We've gotten humorous anecdotes enough for a thin book let alone a 700-word column, so we only have space for the best this month. No doubt, there will be bleak times in the future, perhaps a spate of unprofessional firings, valuable old organs relegated to the roll-off bin, or serious challenges to music-as-we-of-course-know-best by yet another cultural upheaval or technological quantum leap. So we'll hold on to the many narratives not printed here and hopefully brighten another day.

We've discreetly left out certain categories of organ-related humor here. We all seem to have stories about people who run up the middle aisle and disrobe, zimmelsterns going off during the sermon, or electronic organs picking up police broadcasts or the news at the most solemn and silent of moments. As for the wedding stories (and they are legion), can we keep them for June? Furthermore, in the name of charity, if not job security, we've omitted the many narratives concerning the foibles or failings of the clergy (including the ventriloquist) and clergy spouses! Otherwise... ready?

Douglas Kotner from Mt. Vernon, NY reports that he was playing at his parish church in an old and beaten up pair of organ shoes when a woman commented to him, "Young man, those shoes are disgusting. You should have more respect in the house of God." He replied that they were his organ shoes. She replied, "Oh, and I suppose you're going to tell me you play with your feet?"

Anne B. Warzyn from Kansas City reported that, while she was away from home, her daughter left her a message saying, "Mother, there's a program on TV called, *The Great Organ Bazaar*. I'll tape it for you." A second message followed. "Never mind. It's about kidneys!"

The following paragraph is intended for mature audiences. Parents may wish to hide this issue of *The American Organist* from young and impressionable children. Here is a clinical report from Edwin L. Stickney M.D. of Billings, Montana attesting to the range of services that musicians are called up to perform.

Dr. Stickney was playing the organ in the community church in Broadus, MT (pop. 600) when he was peremptorily summoned to the back of the church. There he found a young man whose foreskin had been caught in his zipper. No other option existed than a quick, sharp, energetic zip downward which successfully freed the offending part. He departed much more comfortably and Dr. Stickney returned to the bench. All in a day's work. While on the topic of health, George Pecoraro saved the day in New Kensington, PA when he proofread the program for the opening concert on a new organ whose cover proclaimed, "Dedicatory Rectal."

Judy Weaver from Fort Myers, FL reports that her choir director once decided the appropriate accompaniment for the Sunday anthem would be a synthesized steel drum sound plus the director's son on trombone and wife on recorder. (Judy says, "don't ask," but that sounds like some punch line right there). The keyboard was up on a step of the choir risers. Two false starts later because the sound operator forgot to punch up the keyboard, the anthem finally got underway except that, as Judy was playing, the keyboard stand began to sink. She tried to keep a grip but in the middle of the anthem, the keyboard, stand, and Judy went tumbling down the risers! The choir, trombone, and recorder pressed on as Judy picked up, reassembled, and finished the anthem. Loud laughter and giggles during prayer were the order of the rest of the morning.

David Powers of Cleveland tells the story about his 80-year old soprano who complained that the organ had been tuned in such away that she couldn't reach the high notes anymore!

Finally, for now, Carolyn Fix of Vienna, VA submitted a number of anecdotes involving the late Cleveland Fisher, an OHS stalwart and organ maintenance man. Fischer once got a call to tune a tracker organ in a small church. He found it in excellent shape and asked the organist to demonstrate what was wrong. She came in and pulled the stops out to varying lengths. Of course, the result was a disaster. When asked what she was doing, she said "setting the draw-bars." Fisher also once found a rug over the pedal board. The organist explained that it stopped the draft from under the "grating" (i.e., pedal keys). And, although, we've all found amazing things under those "gratings," perhaps only Cleveland Fisher could boast that he once found a glass eye staring back at him!

- Haig Mardirosian