

Schober Organ Notes No. 102

April/May 2007

Disclaimer: We accept no responsibility for any unfavorable consequences resulting from following our advice

OVERTURE

Hope you are all well and ready for a great summer. I'll be heading for Vermont where I still have loads of work to do on the addition to my house before order is restored to my papers and life.

In the meantime, if you have a story for Organ Notes about anything at all, please send it to me. Right now it is hard for me to do research or projects for stories, so often O.N. is just a couple of pages, as it was when originally conceived. I do want to keep interest in our newsletter going and right now I need your help. How about describing how you got interested in Schober organs. Where and how you bought it. The ease or difficulty of assembly. The use of it over the years. Problems with it. Its present condition. Or the story of your life, including your Schober story? Many members are converting to modern electronics. We have had several articles on this and, in the near future, Charles Witherell will finish and send me his story of a conversion to Miditzer computer-derived organ system. If you are doing a conversion of some sort, even if it has been featured in Organ Notes before, please do a write up about it and share with our other members. AK

THE SCHULMERICH CHIMEATRON (From 10/69 catalog page 16)

A genuinely authentic chime effect is often useful in church services, and there are some people who enjoy chimes in an organ at home, although we feel, quite honestly, that the musical benefits of the ChimeAtron in the home do not justify the cost. This unit (which is not a kit) made by one of the best known chime manufacturers in the world and widely used on pipe and electronic organs of all kinds, has 25 special metal alloy rods carefully tuned and voiced to produce genuine church-tower chime sounds.

The rods are struck by electromagnetic hammers actuated from a small keyboard attached to the front of the organ. The vibrations are detected by individual pickup coils, amplified, and reproduced through the organ's own amplifier and speaker system. They can also be fed to amplifiers and speakers in a church tower.

The ChimeAtron is meant to be added to the Recital Organ. Electrically, it can also be added to the Theatre Organ (or any of the others) but we cannot furnish instructions for mechanical placement of the keyboards.

PLEASE NOTE: If you wish to add the ChimeAtron to a Recital Organ which has or will have a Combination Action, the right cheek block of the console must be specially cut. You must request this special cut when you order.

(From 12/74 catalog):

The ChimeAtron is, frankly, very expensive. We make it available because many people are extremely fond of chime sounds -- and, of course, many churches feel they must have chimes. We do not believe that for most people the expenditure justifies their musical usefulness.

As you can see, Schober was not pushing this unit. However many Schober builders opted for it.

These units originally had a tube preamplifier and later a transistor preamplifier. I have the schematic for both and the installation instructions. If you need them, please get in touch with me. AK

Here are some questions and answers about the ChimeAtron that may be of interest (from the web).

***Q: My problem is that now that it is working again, it is obvious that the Chimeatron is not in tune with our organ (which is a bit flat at A437), nor even within itself. An octave on the keyboard is quite badly out of tune. Anyone know how this can be? Are the chimes not precise enough to be in tune over an octave? Is there a remedy for this? It would be wonderful to be able to play this with the organ, as I presume it is meant to be. Any help/suggestions/advice much appreciated.

A: Chime rods (little bells) and or Tubular chimes whether it be Maas-Rowe, Schulmerich do not go out of tune unless they are severely bent, broken or otherwise, or someone has been in there with a file and seriously goofed them up. Temperature does NOT effect chimes. However temperature GREATLY affects pipe organ pipes. A change in air temperature which changes the density of the air affects the tuning of organ pipes. If there are voices in the organ which were not voiced correctly when the pipe ranks were installed they can easily go out of tune in many different directions rather than moving together either sharp or flat. When was the last time the organ was tuned? It should be done at least every 6 months by a qualified tuner/voicer. I'd have the organ checked.

Q: Thanks for the reply. The organ is tuned regularly. What really puzzles me is that the chimes are not even in tune with themselves, i.e., an octave on the Chimeatron keyboard is out of tune with itself.

A: When you say that an octave is out of tune with itself, do you mean the entire second octave is sharp or flat to the first, or is it random? Have you compared each note of the chimes to a single note on the organ? Are you hearing "beats" between the chime and the organ or between the two chime notes?

I am assuming that you know this, but in case you don't -- a "single" note on a chime rod (or carillon bell) is a complex combination of tones. These component overtones are brought into an exact relationship with the strike tone or "note" of the rod during the tuning process. Nonetheless, they are very prominent and can present an impression of out-of-tuneness when combined with other notes. In a Chimeatron, the rods have a hum tone located a minor-sixth below the strike tone, and also an overtone an octave above that (a major third above the strike). There are also fifths and octaves present. In a sense, every note is a complete major chord. As far as hearing beats between two chime notes, if any of the overtones are a few cents away from perfect, they may produce beats when an octave is struck. If you are hearing beats between the chimes and the organ, perhaps the tempered thirds which are part of the chime's tuning are beating against the untempered thirds which are part of the overtone structure of the organ pipes. That, I believe, is why certain stops sound better with chimes than others . . .

As the previous post indicated, it would be very unusual for rods such as these to go out of tune unless they have been somehow brutalized! One more thought -- although it's a long shot. Do the notes in question seem close to the right pitch or are they in "left field"? Are they all sounding with equal clarity and relatively even sustain (the chimeatron has dampers so you need to hold the keys)? I am wondering if something in the suspension of the chimes is not right, and maybe you're actually getting some isolated overtones, like lightly touching a guitar string to produce harmonics. The rods in a Chimeatron are in what is called free-free suspension, meaning that both ends of the rods are free to vibrate. Make sure that they are not touching the backboard from which they hang. Also, check that the locking plate is fully retracted (there are two screws accessible from the front of the instrument. They are marked "Pack-Unpack." They

need to be FULLY turned in the "unpack" direction!).

Hope something in here helps! The chimeatron is a very nice sounding instrument and it would be great if you could use it again! I have worked with orchestra chimes and I have found that many times it is the strong harmonics that make the fundamental sound out of tune. Don't know if this is what you are experiencing or not. ***

I have had some contact with Schulmerich. I must say they are very helpful. Here is a contact at Schulmerich: Bob Caffrey bobc@schulmerichbells.com Phone: (800) 772-3557 X-143

Now that I mentioned Schulmerich and the fact that they are helpful, I have also had dealings with Maas-Rowe, another big manufacturer of Chimes. Their units are called Vibrachime. I have quite a bit of literature, service information, etc., on several of their units. I had some dealings with them, trying to get parts, etc., and they are not helpful and nasty. AK

ADS

Disclaimer: Any deals, making of payments, receipt of payments or verifications are strictly your responsibility.

Recital Schober

FREE -- A Schober Recital with all options available in the early seventies. Free to anyone who would pick it up and put it back into working order. Located in Snellville, GA (about half way between Atlanta and Athens). Contact: Troy Carter Phone: 770-972-0397 (home) 770-972-1703 (work) Email: carter5797@bellsouth.net, mhl2113@yahoo.com

FREE -- Schober Recital in reasonable condition, free to anyone willing to pick it up or pay for shipping. In Terrace, B.C. Contact: Tony Jones Phone: 250-635-4722 Email tgjones@telus.net

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Schober Organ Orphans' Web Page: <http://www.cloud9.net/~pastark/schober.html>