

A WURLITZER SPEAKS AGAIN IN COLORADO

by Edith W. Maddy

Have you ever heard of a bull in a china shop? That was the position of a Denver couple, faced with a huge Wurlitzer—and only a small apartment for it!

During the war they had bought a four-rank photo-player, a Morton with a Glockenspiel. R. C. Maddy, a portrait photographer, had haunted an organ-service agency for years, hoping to someday own an organ. Then, one day, back in 1945, he was pleasantly surprised when Fox Intermountain called saying, "The Mayan Theater is being remodeled and the organ will be eliminated. Do you want that Wurlitzer?" Here was the opportunity of a lifetime! But where to put it? Certainly not in a small city apartment! But, being a true "organ nut," Maddy went down—"just to look at it"—and bought the organ. This Style F, 2-8 Hope-Jones Wurlitzer Unit Orchestra had been installed in the Fox Theater in Astoria, Oregon in 1917 as a new organ, and brought to the Mayan Theater on South Broadway in Denver in 1926.

The theater management insisted that the console must be removed immediately to prevent those who were remodeling from cutting the cables. This was done, and the next two years were spent by the professional photographer, in his spare time, removing pipes, cutting and tagging circuits. If you had been standing in the alley near the back door of the theater some morning at about 4 a.m., you might have seen a couple drive up—obviously in a hurry—he in worn out pants—she in ancient slacks—rushing to the door where the janitor let them in. As they started up the rickety ladder to the organ chambers, he called to them, "Better watch it, Mrs., that ladder ain't too safe." But they scarcely heeded him—time was too precious, for there was much to do before seven o'clock when they must leave to get ready to open their studio.

Maddy knew the organ contained flute, viol, celeste, diapason (8 ft.), bourdon (16 ft.), clarinet, vox, tibia—but his wife was surprised at how quickly the terms—16 ft. diaphone, ophicleide, and kinura became familiar to her, too. She was also fascinated by the beautiful Chinese gong, the bass drum, the Tom Toms, and the toy counter with its usual



The pride and joy . . . atop the three-step riser.

traps and effects. Maddy explained to her about the tuned sleighbells, the 49-key marimba, the amazing chrysoglott, the xylophone, glockenspiel—but she was really thrilled when she saw the complete piano—sans keyboard, of course. "Oh, I know those beautiful chimes will have a place in our future livingroom," she announced. All these materials, removable by hand, were temporarily stored in their garage.

Many Sundays were spent answering ads for a small, acre plot. Then, one day, they saw a pool, cattails all around it, on a run-down farm—but, there were forty acres connected with it! However, in spite of the size, they had almost decided that this could become the final resting place for the organ—when the realtor came back, saying, "That woman over there wants this forty acres for riding stables." Very disappointed, they drove home. When the phone rang the next morning, they could hardly believe the realtor when he said, "The woman could not qualify for the purchase. Do you still want the property!" Again, they had to make a quick decision! This time they found themselves with heavy down-payments, and heavier installments—on a forty acre farm, five miles from Denver! However, prevailing conditions convinced them that the Denver Metropolitan area would boom, and that this would be a good investment—which it proved to be.

The old City Hall in Denver was being torn down, and they were able to select full dimension materials as it was being razed. It was difficult, during the war, to get good building supplies,

and they were fortunate to get perfectly dry beaming for supporting the necessary spans and weights.

Now came the Thrills and the Problems!!—designing the house for this monster!

The acreage was beautifully located in full view of the snow-capped Rockies. They dreamed of a lake, someday, where now was only mud, muck, and a small, trickling stream. This required much time, dredging, creating an island, building a dam. Even in those days (1947) bulldozers came at \$100 per day!

A huge, L-shaped living room was designed. Since Denver has almost daily sunshine, principles of solar heating were used, making it unnecessary to install a furnace. This was accomplished by heavy insulation in ceilings, walls, and large glass areas, and by heat pipes in the floors. White ceilings reflect light onto black walls—which absorb it. The black of the walls is relieved by black-and-gold Japanese grass-cloth, and by gold carpeting and drapes. The livingroom is divided by three long steps which give extra height for the bourdons in the room below the console, and adds to the attractiveness of the livingroom.

In addition to running a studio, carrying out houseplans, there came the problem of removing the organ. There was only an 18-inch door in the theater through which to remove a 5-horsepower organ! For months Maddy wrestled with this problem. Finally he decided that the only solution was to dismantle

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the blower completely, even to removing steel bands on the frame. Then he proceeded to crush the case completely—and removed it through the 18-inch door!!

Work on the house was progressing. The problem of moisture coming in (the lake was less than forty feet from the house) was solved by keeping the organ room above lake level, and by subterranean drainage system. Thus moisture has not been a problem.

Then came the day of removing the "remains" from the theater. A transfer company brought two trucks at midnight to the theater, at the end of a show. Various tackles were secured to overhead beams above the stage. The heavier parts, including chests, relay cabinets, piano, were lifted out from the two chambers and swung onto the stage. Maddy had previously been informed by the theater management that neither he nor they would be allowed to open the stage curtain. A unionized stage employee would have to do it—at the minimum pay scale from midnight to vacating the theater at 6 a.m. This regulation was complied with—though reluctantly. By six o'clock, just as the sun came up, everything was loaded, and a five-mile drive brought it all to its temporary resting place in the future studio of the new house.

What a pile of junk!! A friend said, "Maddy, you're either a fool or a genius!"



She flirts with the photographer (Mr. Maddy is the photographer).



Maddy makes like he is tuning. Shown are ranks: viol, celeste, clarinet, diapason, flute, vox, tibia, kinura, marimba-harp, tuned sleighbells, and a tiny glimpse of the tuba in extreme rear.

An opening had been left in a large picture window through which the console was brought, and placed in a central position of the livingroom.

Now came two years of slowly, slowly planning and placing the organ parts. Friends, shaking their heads, wondered about this home! In those days, organs were uncommon in a home. Few people knew about this one, and the problem-filled days Maddy spent alone, trying to

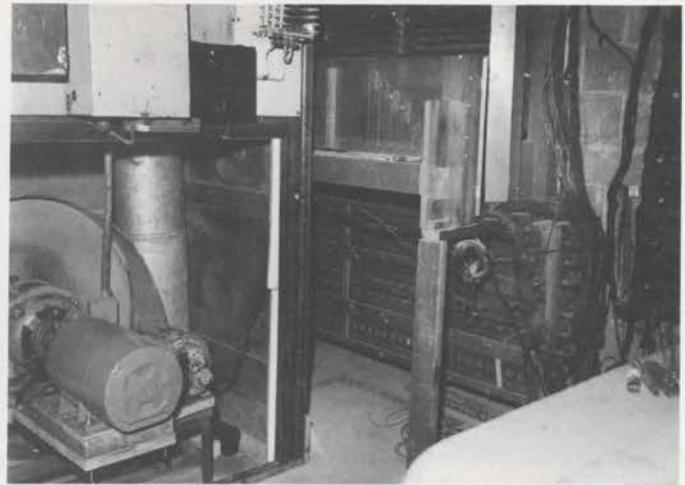
solve the countless problems about an instrument which was new to him—but about which he learned much—the hard way! While he was struggling with the "innards" of the organ, his wife spent days scraping off many layers of mutilated effects of cigarette burns on beautiful mahogany of the console. After removing several layers of finish, it was decided to paint it—an attractive black satin, matching the walls, and thus bringing out the design made by ivory keys of the two manuals. The beautiful chimes did find a place in the livingroom—on either side of the fireplace. Maddy was still faced with two especially difficult problems—beating the blower back into shape—and operating a 5 H.P.-3-phase motor with no available 3-phase supply. But where there is a will . . . The final appearance of the blower gives no evidence of the "organectomy" performed! The second problem was more serious. He designed a starting torque, provided by designing a suitable phase-shifter which cut out through a set of pneumatic mercury switches. At present a 5 H.P. single-phase motor mounted in line, drives the blower and provides a happy, final solution to the power problem.

A man was hired for a day to assist in setting the heavy chests, the relay cabinets, the piano, and in mounting the various percussions. Over the years, again in spare time, there were the jobs of running and soldering the tagged circuits—and finally—mounting the hun-

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"And the chimes just fit the fireplace"



Blower after "Organ-ectomy"—in line single phase mortar relay cabinet and part of junction board.

dreds of pipes. Then—at last—came the thrill of turning on the blower—and getting results from the keyboard!! True, there were still hundreds of dead circuits—but that, too, has been solved through the years.

An organ club (A.T.O.E.) was formed in Denver, with Duane Searle as its current president. Due to an article appearing in a Sunday supplement of a Denver paper, club members heard about this organ, and Maddy received

many helpful hints and encouragement. Activity in the local barbershop singing group brought quartettes, as well as groups of seventy-five or more at a time—all singing around the organ. As director of a church choir, Maddy often invited this group to sing around a theater organ, for a change.

Now, in 1966, should you wander from the beaten, battered boulevard up a winding, crooked lane—through a fifteen-year growth of trees, you would

find yourself surrounded by a green oasis, called "Bit O'Sea Park," now well within the exploded Denver Metropolitan area. You would come upon a quiet, home-made lake, reflecting before you the grandeur of Mt. Evans to the west—and beside it an unusual, home-made home—all of which owes its being to a theater organ—twenty-one years ago doomed to a junk-heap—but which speaks again—another small, but Mighty Wurlitzer!!

WURLITZER, 2-8 Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra, Style F. Installed originally, 1917, Astoria, Oregon, Fox Theater. Moved 1926 to Denver, Colorado, installed Mayan Theater (Fox Intermountain). Removed 1945-48, presently in operation in home of R. C. Maddy, 1819 South Sheridan Blvd., Denver, Colorado.

SPECIFICATIONS

as taken from the Console

PEDAL

Ophicleide 16
Diaphone 16
Bourdon 16
Piano 16
Tuba Horn 8
Open Diapason 8
Tibia Clausa 8
Clarinet 8
Cello 8
Flute 8
Octave 4

SECOND TOUCH

PEDAL

Pedal Traps
Bass Drum
Kettle Drum
Crash Cymbal
Cymballs
Triangle

ACCOMPANIMENT

Contra Viol (10C) 16
Vox 16
Piano 16
Tuba Horn 8
Open Diapason 8

Tibia Clausa 8
Clarinet 8
Viol d' Orchestra 8
Viol Celeste 8
Flute 8
Vox 8
Piano 8
Piccolo 4
Viol 4
Viol Celeste 4
Flute 4
Vox 4
Piano 4
Twelfth
Piccolo 2
Chrysoglott
Marimba (Harp)
Snare Drum
Tambourine
Castanets
Chinese Block
Tom Tom
Mandolin

SECOND TOUCH

Tuba Horn 8
Open Diapason 8
Clarinet 8

Cathedral Chimes
Xylophone
Triangle
8 Combination Pistons

SOLO

Ophicleide 16
Contra Viol (Ten C) 16
Tuba Horn 16
Open Diapason 8
Tibia Clausa 8
Clarinet 8
Viol d' Orchestra 8
Viol Celeste 8
Flute 8
Vox 8
Clarion 4 (kinura)
Octave 4
Piccolo 4
Viol 4
Viol Celeste 4
Flute 4
Twelfth
Fifteenth
Piccolo
Tierce
Marimba (Harp)

Cathedral Chimes
Sleigh Bells (tuned)
Xylophone
Glockenspiel
Chrysoglott

8 Combination Pistons

TOYS

Bird Whistle
Steam Boat Whistle
Hoof Beats
Door Bell
Auto Horn (antique)

Cow Bell

CONTROLS

9 toe pistons
2 Pedal Pistons
3 Swell Pedals
5 H.P. 3-Phase-Single
Phase Orgablo

TREMULANTS

Main
Solo
Vox Humana
Tuba

FOOTNOTES ON MADDY STOPLIST

After the removal of the organ from Astoria, Oregon to Denver in 1926, someone was instrumental in swapping the entire upper extension of the tuba rank, as located on the main chest, for the kinura. This replacement is still indicated by the tuba and Ophicleide tabs on the console and the 4 ft. clarinet tabs on the solo. The tuba still remains by separate chest as a 16 ft. extension. It is indicated on the solo and pedals by the 16 ft. ophicleide.