

## JIM ORCUTT "POPS" AMONG CHURCH ORGANISTS

by Bert Brouillon

**J**IM ORCUTT became interested in theatre organs rather late in life, as ages of awakening interest go among artists of the console. He was 15. The Orcutt family had moved from home base (Tulsa, Oklahoma) to Anchorage, Alaska, because dad Orcutt got a job there. Young Jim spent his high school years there. He was always musical but his first exposure to theatre pipes took place at the Empress theatre in Anchorage. Once he had heard the sound of the 11-

rank Kimball in the theatre he knew that he had to play it, which he managed to do between 1947 and 1950.

Jim recalls that the pipework was located in the usual places at either side of the theatre's proscenium arch except for the Tuba, Tibia and Kinura—which were housed in a third chamber beneath the stage whose swell shutters opened into the orchestra pit—very near the console.

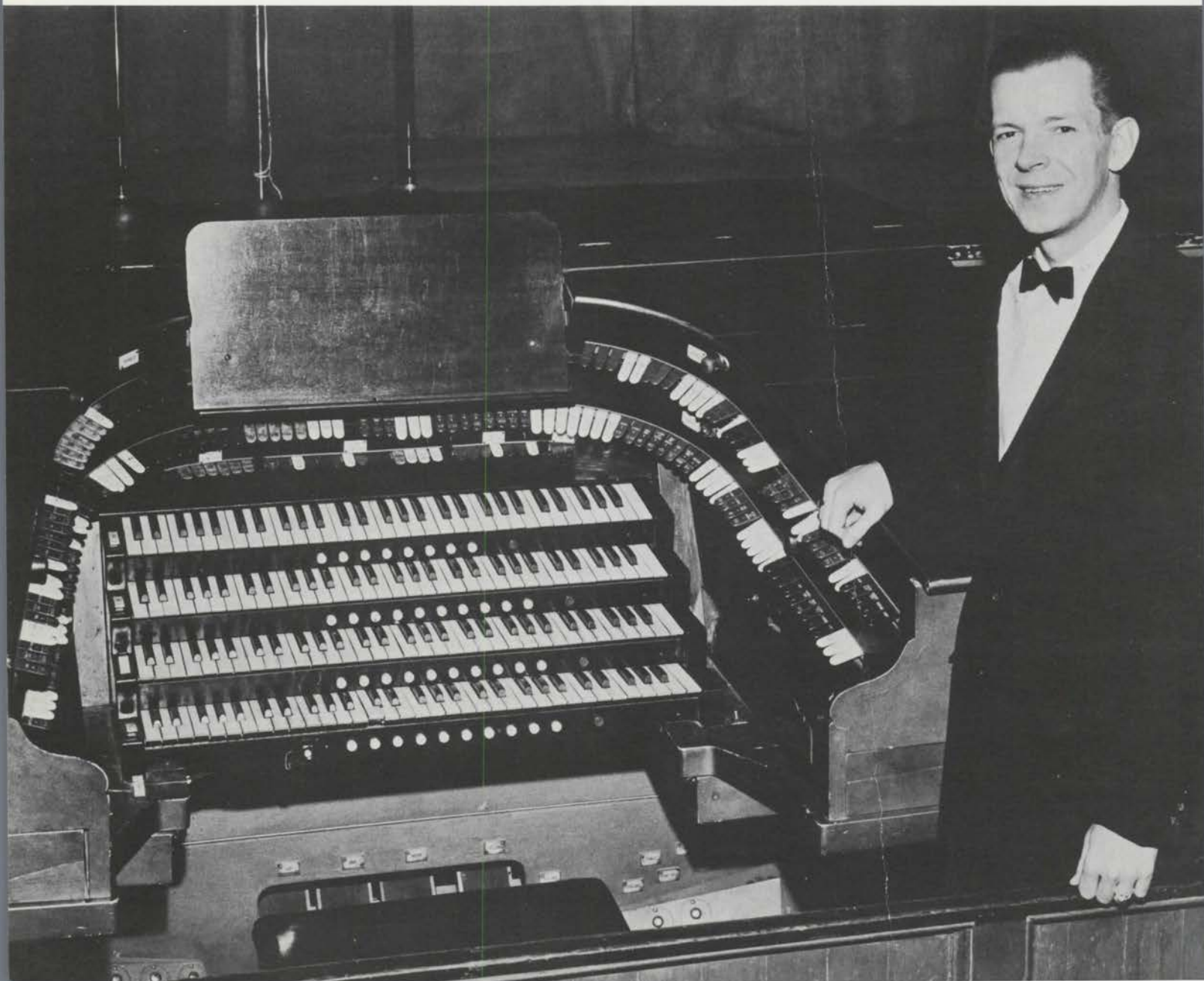
"These ranks would practically blow

the organist off the bench" recalls Jim, "if they were brought in while the shutters were open."

The instrument is an early Kimball, built before Kimball had caught onto all the Hope-Jones refinements. Therefore, they provided the 2-deck console with a roll-top console covers, same as they did for their church organs.

"It was the finest theatre organ in Alaska," says Jim, "and it was performing like new the last time I played it in

Jim when he was playing the Robert Morton at the Tulsa Ritz a few years ago. The organ is long gone.



1950." The organ has since been moved to a university auditorium.

On graduating from high school, Jim decided to try his musical luck "down South," so he gravitated to Chicago where for nearly nine years he played Hammonds in the local gin mills. While there he acquired a circle of musician friends which include Eddie Osborn, Leon Berry and Leonard Clarke, all of whom later became ATOers.

But despite the excitement of big city living, Jim missed the scene of his boyhood so he decided to visit Oklahoma just to relive some of the scenes and events of his earlier years. When he got to Tulsa he knew immediately that it was where he wanted to settle, to take root. Tulsa has been his home ever since, although there have been frequent excursions forth when Jim played with a travelling dance band which specialized in one-night stands all over the South-West. On most of these Jim played some brand of electronic, usually a Hammond. In fact, his first job during his return to Tulsa was playing a Hammond in Danner's Cafeteria where he competed with the percussion of crockery for a year and a half. But there were other compensations; one was a gorgeous and large (4-manual, 18-rank) Morton at the Tulsa Ritz theatre with which Jim soon struck up a friendship. He started playing it at public events for which the auditorium was rented and was, in fact, the last organist to perform on it publicly. That was for the Tulsa Town Hall meetings held there. It has since been sold and removed.

Jim has some vivid recollections of the travelling dance band years. "I suppose I worked every city in the mid-West with a population of 20,000 or more. I ended up in Texas, playing for the Hilton hotels—for nearly four years."

With all that hectic experience behind him, Jim returned once more to Tulsa with determination to stray no more. He wanted to settle down. There were a few club dates but the pickings were rather slim. Jim had to make a decision. All his adult life he had made his living playing music—but now the opportunities were too few if he were to continue eating regularly.

So Jim got himself a job, the first he had ever had outside of playing, at the Jenkins Music company, demonstrating and selling musical instruments. He was pleased to learn that he had the knack. His friendly, upbeat way with customers made sales. That was just over a year ago and he's still at it. However, bigger things were looming on the horizon for Jim Orcutt.

For some time Jim had noticed a new building going up on South Sheridan Street. When completed it had the appearance of a very modern dwelling,



The console is located in a reasonably 'traditional' spot for theatre consoles. There are left and right chambers, well above console level.

or even a "way out" motel. But it turned out to be a church, the Cathedral of the Christian Crusade, and Jim learned that there would be a pipe organ installed—and that the building had been designed for such an installation. The edifice was the dream of the church's pastor, Rev. Hargis, and Hargis took keen interest in the organ.

Lorin Whitney was commissioned to locate a suitable organ and the one selected was in a theatre in Steubenville, Ohio—a late 3-10 Robert Morton installed there in 1928. The instrument was first shipped to Los Angeles where Whitney could supervise the rebuilding. It was understood from the start that this organ was not to be emasculated into a pseudo church organ by tamer pipe substitutions for the more theatrical ranks; it was to retain all its theatrical qualities. That's the way Rev. Hargis wanted it.

Phil Wellington did much of the preventive maintenance work and when it came time to move the organ to Tulsa, Don Kohles went along to assist in the installation.

Jim Orcutt is happy in his work because it puts at his disposal a fine 10-rank Robert Morton. He plays noon pop concerts three days each week.



What they found on arriving in Tulsa was a 500-seat auditorium with excellent acoustics. It had been designed with broadcasting and recording in mind. The organ installation reflects the care with which the building has been erected. The tremors and other unwanted noises generators are isolated in sound-proof compartments beneath the chests in both chambers. The result is quiet chambers.

The organ operates on 15" wind pressure except for the Tibia which had a tendency to "squeal" on 15" but sounds lush and mellow on 13". Jim fully appreciates the care which went into the organ. He says, "The ranks blend well; the reeds are beautifully voiced. And there's enough power in those ten unified ranks to literally "blow the roof off." It's in perfect shape in every way—and it's kept that way." But we are ahead of our story.

All of a sudden the organ installation was finished and the minister put out a call for applicants for the job of staff organist.

Jim Orcutt arrived to find the place literally crawling with applicants. Auditions had been set up for one every half hour, stated the bulletin board—and the first name on the list was—Jim Orcutt!

Jim swallowed hard and approached the console. He hadn't actually played pipes much since those town meetings at the Ritz, but, like the Ritz organ, this was a Morton console and Jim knew how to get around on it and also what kinds of sound to expect from the semi-circle of stopkeys before him.

He started to play. He liked the sound and warmed up to the instrument. The little body of auditioners made no sound and refrained from asking for requests. Jim was a little alarmed at the seeming

*(Continued Next Page)*

## Jim Orcut, continued

lack of interest, especially when the end of his half hour approached—with no audible results.

But when he finally stopped, the minister walked down to the console and his smile was encouraging. "I've cancelled the rest of the auditions—you've got the job," he told Jim. "Your first appearance will be at the grand opening of this church—next week."

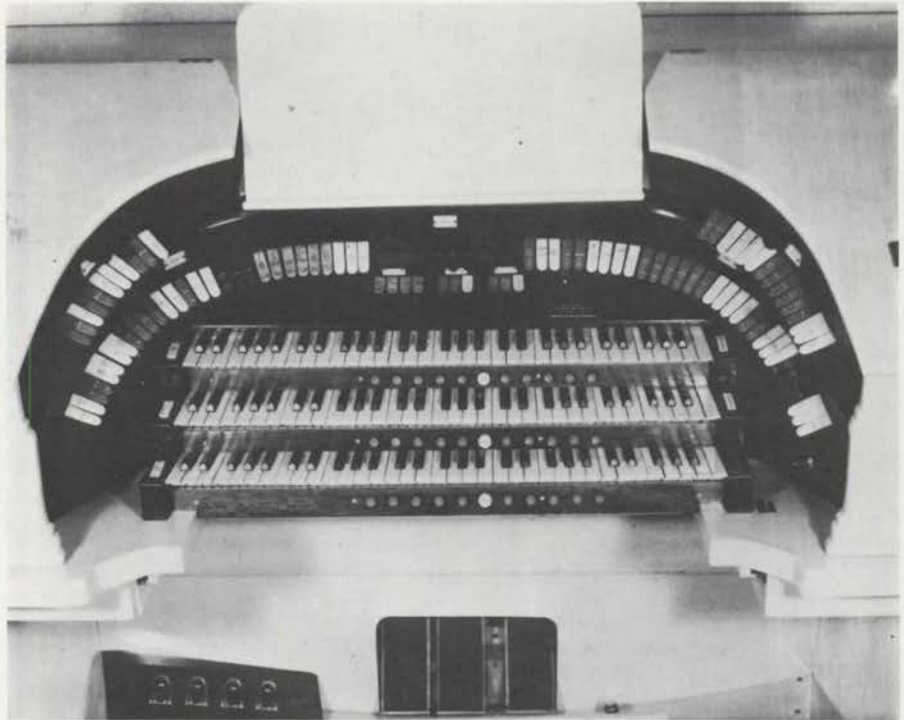
Orcutt has been hard at it, ever since. Rarely does one encounter a church job which includes such a range of music. Not only does he have a fine theatre instrument on which to perform but the music bill-of-fare is anything but the usual round of overworked hymns. For example, he plays a 30-minute noontime program of "pops" which is open to the public on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. This is in addition to a demanding schedule of TV and radio programs which include the organ. The church packages religious programs which are heard on 700 stations during the week and on more than 900 on Sundays. Most include the organ. "Is it possible that this organ is heard by more people than any other theatre organ?" queries Jim Orcutt.

Jim's first big "solo" spot came on December 16 last when he put on what will be an annual event, a Christmas concert of both carols and pops. It was a two-night affair and when it was over, Jim had played to nearly 1000 organ enthusiasts, including a solid representation of ATOers. On Saturday night he asked those who would like to examine the organ to remain after the concert and enought wanted to "give it a try" to keep Jim in the church until 2:30 AM! But no one seemed to notice Jim's yawns during the three Sunday services which followed in a few hours!

How did Jim Orcutt do on his first big concert? Those who are extremely curious may purchase a 4-track stereo tape of the performance recording for \$5.00. Those less curious may be willing to take the word of the *BOMBARDE'S* record reviewer who went over it with a fine-tooth comb in the April issue of this publication. The review included purchasing information. And we have word that a disc recording of an entirely different program played by Jim will soon be available. It's a cinch that the name "Jim Orcutt" will soon be a household word among organophiles.

Today, Jim Orcutt is a happy man. He is one of a handfull of organists who make a career of playing on pipes—although Jim continues as a music merchandiser at Jenkins. "It's something to do in my spare time," he quips.

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Closeup of the console. That large 'combination button' operates a buzzer to the recording booth.

### STOP LIST OF ROBERT MORTON THEATRE ORGAN OF THE CHRISTIAN CRUSADE, TULSA.

#### PEDAL:

Ophicleide  
Diaphone 16'  
Bourdon 16'  
Tuba 8'  
Diapason 8'  
Tibia Clausa 8'  
Flute 8'  
Cello 8'  
Clarinet 8'  
Diapason 4'  
Pedal 8' Coupler

#### PEDAL 2ND TOUCH:

Chimes  
Bass Drum  
Tympani  
Cymbal  
Crash Cymbal

#### ACCOMPANIMENT:

bourdon 16'  
Contra Viol 16'  
Tuba 8'  
Diapason 8'  
Tibia Clausa 8'  
Concert Flute 8'  
Violin 8'  
Celeste Violin 8'  
Kinura 8'  
Clarinet 8'  
Vox Humana 8'  
Orch. Oboe 8'  
Concert Flute 4'  
Violin 4'  
Kinura 4'  
Twelfth 2-2/3'  
Piccolo 2'  
Chrysoglott  
Xylophone  
Chimes  
Snare Drum  
Tambourine  
Castanets  
Tom Tom

Wood Drum (Block)  
Sleigh Bells  
Accomp 16' Coupler  
Accomp 4' Coupler  
Solo 8' Coupler  
Pedal to Accomp 8'

#### ACCOMP. 2ND TOUCH:

Tuba 8'  
Diapason 8'  
Tibia Clausa 8'

#### GREAT:

Ophicleide 16'  
Bourdon 16'  
Violin 16' TC  
Tuba 8'  
Diapason 8'  
Tibia Clausa 8'  
Concert Flute 8'  
Violin 8'

Celeste Violin 8'  
Saxophone 8' (Syn.)  
Kinura 8'  
Clarinet 8'  
Vox Humana 8'  
Orch. Oboe 8'  
Tuba 4'  
Tibia Clausa 4'  
Flute 4'  
Violin 4'  
Celeste Violin 4'  
Kinura 4'  
Vox Humana 4'  
Twelfth 2-2/3'  
Piccolo 2'  
Tierce 1-3/5  
Chrysoglott  
Orchestra Bells  
Xylophone  
Chimes  
Great 16' Coupler

#### SOLO:

Tuba 8'

Diapason 8'  
Tibia Clausa 8'  
Concert Flute 8'  
Violin 8'  
Celeste Violin 8'  
Saxophone 8' (Syn.)  
Kinura 8'  
Clarinet 8'  
Vox Humana 8'  
Orch. Oboe 8'  
Tuba 4'  
Solo 16' Coupler  
Solo 4' Coupler  
Great 8' Coupler  
Solo Unison Off  
Tremolos:  
Left  
Right  
Tibia Clausa

Vox Humana  
Expression Pedals  
Left  
Right  
Crescendo  
Ten Pre-sets for each manual  
Four toe pistons for pedal  
Storzando toe piston  
Great 4' Coupler  
Accomp. 8' Coupler  
Pedal to Great  
Great Unison Off

#### GREAT 2ND TOUCH:

Ophicleide 16'  
Diaph. Diapason 16'  
Tibia Clausa 8'

## GEORGE WRIGHT RETURNS TO PORTLAND NOV. 4th

George Wright will play a return engagement on the fabulous Wurlitzer 3/13 in the Portland Oriental Theatre on Saturday night November 4th. at 8:30 PM.

Last May, George made his first appearance in Portland, with many fans coming from Seattle, Tacoma, and San Francisco to hear him. All seats will be reserved for the Nov. 4th. concert, priced at \$3. Reservations may be made by writing to Bill Peterson, 565 N. Portland Blvd. Apt. 101; Portland, Oregon 97217. Tickets will be mailed out October 1st.

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