

Back to Organs...



ED LINK—Organ Builder

—Bachrach Photo

Edwin A. Link, famed organ builder who, with his father, fabricated theatre organs in their Binghamton, N. Y., factory during the "golden age," was on the West Coast on business for a few days late in 1967. He contacted the BOMBARDE and a brief telephone interview ensued. We were very much interested in the Link installation he is preparing for the Roberson Cultural Center in Binghamton. He was glad to answer questions.

"It's a three-manual, eleven-ranker with everything—lots of unification. Was in the Capitol Theatre in Binghamton. We sold it to the theatre about 1925, I believe."

Where is it now?

"Most of it's stashed in my garage back in Binghamton. I'm working on it, giving it a complete overhaul—right there in the garage. It's a little crowded."

Has it any special model designation—such as the numbering system Wurlitzer used?

"No—no numbers—but this is a 'C. Sharpe Minor' model."

We recalled that the well-known organist of that name once had a Link agency and some models, for which he is reported to have prepared the specifications, were named for him—"C. Sharpe Minor," which was Charley Minor's original name.

Why was he giving this instrument to the Center?

"Maybe children will have a chance to play a real organ again. These electronic organs are no more like this pipe organ than the man in the moon."

Anything unusual in the situation—in meeting an old friend—the organ?

EDWIN A.



GOES A WHOLE CYCLE

"Yes, I've gone one whole cycle in the 39 years since we built organs. From organs I went to building Link Trainers and now I'm deeply involved in under-sea exploration. Then, suddenly, back to organs again. A whole cycle."

Would he tell about prices—now and then? He would.

"We sold the organ to the theatre for about \$30,000 back in the '20's—and I picked it up for \$5,000. But it'd take at least \$70,000 to build it from scratch today. It took about nine months to build. About 150 artisans worked on it."

How many organs had the Link factory built?

"We built about 150, all told."

We wondered if the organ would be in any way altered to make it "more suitable" for a cultural center. Would it remain a purely theatrical instrument?

"Purely theatrical? That must be qualified because Link never built a 'purely theatrical' organ; they combined the qualities of a high-class pipe organ with the requirements of a theatre organ. Link builders prided themselves on not building a tin-panny theatre organ like many that were being built at that time. We put in real quality organ tones, combining them with what was needed for film playing."

You mean concert organ stops?

"Yes. For example, the Link Open Diapason is a purely church organ stop, an exceedingly large-scale, full-toned 'Open,' measuring eight feet in length at Bass C—and eight inches in diameter. The Tibia and many other stops are similarly large-scaled."

How about percussions?

"Chimes, Harp Celeste and other percussions were built by J. C. Deagan, the maker of highest quality percussions. They are the same types put in many church organs."

What percussion and theatrical effects are on the instrument going into the Roberson Center?

"Glockenspiel, Marimba, Xylophone—even a piano—and Effect Pedals for Drum, Crash, Thunder, Siren, Train Whistle, Boat Whistle, Wind—and a fire gong. They all stay."

Is the Link keying action fast?

"Link organs were quicker in response than any pipe organs built at that time—or possibly ever. This was commented upon just recently on the organ I now have playing at my home by several qualified organ builders and organists of note."

An organ in your home?

"Yes, a nine-rank Link. But that's another story."

We asked what the sponsors of the Roberson auditorium think about the organ.

"The director of the Roberson project came over to look at the organ—it was all scattered around—disassembled—and he looked kinda discouraged. But I assured him it'd work when I got through with it—and it's just about ready to go in—as soon as they're ready."

We learned that Mr. Link was an apprentice of the famed British organ builder, Frank Pilcher.

"I was his apprentice for several years. Learned tuning and voicing from him."

What use would be made of his gift by the Center?

"They plan to have concerts by great organists." Then back to a repeated "theme": "... and young people can learn on it."

The ranks of the 3/11 Link, Capitol Theatre organ in Binghamton now going into the Roberson Memorial Center in Binghamton, are as follows:

1—Open Diapason	Percussions include:
2—Tibia	1—Marimba Harp
3—Solo Violin	2—Harp Celeste
4—Violin	3—Orchestra Bells
5—Viole Celeste	4—Xylophone
6—Tuba	5—Cathedral Chimes
7—Kinura	6—Piano
8—Oboe	Stops going to 16' c are
9—Clarinet	Tibia, Diaphone, Flute
10—Harmonic Flute (Polyphone), and	
11—Vox Humana	Viole.

—Bert Brouillon



LINK-C. SHARPE MINOR Three-Manual Leader Console—one of many, up to and including a 5-manual organ, designed by the Link company. (Photo is reproduced from a Vestal Press ca.-1925 company catalog recently reprinted.)