

Newport News, Va.

Virginia Theatre Barton Work In Progress

Installation of the 3-manual, 10-rank Barton organ formerly in the Paramount Theatre, Newport News, Virginia, is progressing at a very rapid pace in the spacious confines of the Virginia Theatre, the Alexandria Amusement Corporation's flagship theatre. The company is sparing absolutely no expense to insure an installation of topnotch professional calibre. The chambers have been completed, including a spacious bass and percussion chamber as well as separate main and solo pipe rooms. Two ranks, a 16' Tuba Mirabilis and 16' Open Grossflute, formerly in the Loew's Palace Theatre, Washington, D. C., are to be unenclosed at the rear of the theatre to be used for special effects. The console has been placed on a moving platform behind an ornamental grillwork at the left of stage. When in use, the grillwork will raise and the console platform will roll out onto a platform similar to the installation of the Music Hall organs.

The console is currently undergoing complete rebuilding under the capable and meticulous supervision of Paul G. White, already well known in this area for his work with many area theatre organs. The blower is being installed in a soundproof room at the rear of stage in order to insure quiet operation. It is hoped that the organ will be playable for the Christmas holiday season, and the way progress is going, this hope is fast becoming a reality. Watch THEATRE ORGAN BOMBARDE for progress reports on what promises to be one of the most talked about organ installations in theatre organ history.

—Ray Brubacher

Seattle, Washington

Balcom-Vaughan to Rebuild Wichita-Paramount Console

William Bunch, President of Balcom and Vaughan, leading Seattle pipe organ builders, last week confirmed the signing of contracts under which his firm will build a replica of the fire-destroyed Wichita Theatre Organ, Inc., former New York Paramount console. Terms of the contract call for exact duplication of original Wurlitzer standards in nearly all phases of the work, with a few slight changes in stop-list unification projected. In future issues, TOB will feature running word-picture reports on progress.

Jolly Old, England

ORGAN NEWS from Cheshire

Theatre Organ Activity in this area reached its peak on the 21st of January, when the Theatre Organ Club met at the Odeon Ex-Paramount in Manchester to hear the Publix No. 1 Wurlitzer (4-20) Job 2120, which is now the largest remaining pipe installation in Europe in a theatre. The organists were Doreen Chadwick, Charles Sutton, and Gerald Shaw. One thousand people attended and not only did we cover our expenses, but made a small profit besides, which will be devoted to having some magnets rewound, as this organ is prone to suffer "dead" magnets. The meeting was featured on radio and television, and the theatre management was pleasantly surprised to find that they too had made a modest profit from their sales of refreshments.

This organ is broadcast regularly and is also played in public every Saturday night and Sunday mid-day, and has never been out of use since it was installed. It was rebuilt in 1947, when the solo Vox was replaced by an English-made English Horn (if any American reader wants to donate a Wurlitzer Post Horn we'd love it!) and the console specification was revised. When the orchestra was sacked about this time, legend has it that the console was tarred and feathered, so that the stop keys all had to be re-engraved, so they are not standard Wurlitzer.

Last year I devoted all my lunch hours to the redecoration of the console in white and gold and it looks lovely; this year I have been in the chambers replacing magnets, resoldering wires in the relays, and cleaning all the switch stacks. We have one problem: there are some console faults, but to get at them we cannot! The Publix No. 1 "horse-shoe" does not appear to swing back like other Wurlitzers I have met, and all the piston action appears fixed, so that repairs are impossible unless one actually dismantles the console. *Have you any readers with experience of the Publix console?* By the end of this year I hope to have restored the organ to almost 100% condition. It is under a tuning contract, but this does not allow for many repairs, so this is the reason why I am tackling it with, I am glad to say, the cooperation of the management.

I feel responsible for the new lease of life given to the Metro, Johannesburg, South Africa organ. I was there on business, and of course, as a good enthusiast made some inquiries about the organs there (see my article published in *Theatre*

Organ Review). Having traced Dean Herrick, I persuaded him to come to the Metro, which was his first visit there for 14 years. The organ could not be played because of a cipher, but after I had left I received a letter from Dean which told me that he had become interested in the organ again, had bought the Metro job and a new house to go with it! Since then work has proceeded steadily and last year I had the tremendous pleasure of hearing the Metro organ playing better than ever in Dean's house. In addition, he has just started broadcasting the organ again on a twice weekly basis for fifteen minutes a time. Although the organ was not supplied with a piano, it now has two! Dean has fitted an upright in the chamber and has a Steinway grand alongside. I am hoping that before long an L. P. will be available.

We were honored before Christmas to have a visit from Dick Simonton to whom we showed the Paramount organ, and we were very glad his operation was a success.

I was pleased to see that my letter on Jardine organs was published in the October issue. What I should have mentioned about this company and failed to do, was that in their files they have written contracts from Hope-Jones himself, as in his pioneering days he sub-contracted a lot of his work. Jardines are a very old established company and did quite a bit for him. Any enthusiasts visiting Manchester from the States (not many do, I regret to say, as it is an industrial town although it has some beautiful country round about) can visit the Jardine factory if they contact me—indeed, if I am not abroad travelling I am quite willing to act as an unpaid guide to the organs of all sorts round about, not to mention the "Queen Elizabeth slept here" type of house!!

Talking of Hope-Jones, I forgot to mention in my last letter that at our meeting at the Odeon, Manchester, we had with us Mr. Gerald Hope-Jones, a grandson of Robert and still living in the Liverpool area. He is a keen follower of the theatre organ.

In conclusion I would like to say how much I enjoy reading THEATRE ORGAN/BOMBARDE. With every good wish to all readers from this side of the pond.

—John Potter
Altrincham, near Manchester
Cheshire, England