

Wonder Morton to be Restored For New York Convention!

The four-manual, 23 rank "Wonder Morton" in the former Loew's 175th Street Theatre in New York is coming back to life after a long snooze under a concrete blanket. The good news was announced at press time by Claud Beckham, New York Chapter's indefatigable Fabulous Fifteenth A.T.O.S. Convention Chairman.

"The New York Theatre Organ Society has signed a contract to undertake complete restoration of the organ," said Beckham, "with Peter Schaeble spearheading the technical end of the job and Lee Erwin as tonal and artistic consultant. The results have every reason to be superb."

The contract was signed with the United Christian Evangelistic Association, Inc., new owners of the theatre. Under the leadership of the Rev. Frederick J. Eiderenkoetter, II, better known to nation-wide radio audiences as "Reverend Ike," the magnificent theatre is being refurbished to serve not only as a place of worship but as a cultural center. Already the job of re-lamping the thousands of cove lights that make this one of the most spectacular theatre auditoriums in the country is under way, and the concrete slab, which has covered the orchestra pit and console elevators for more than twenty years, has been removed.

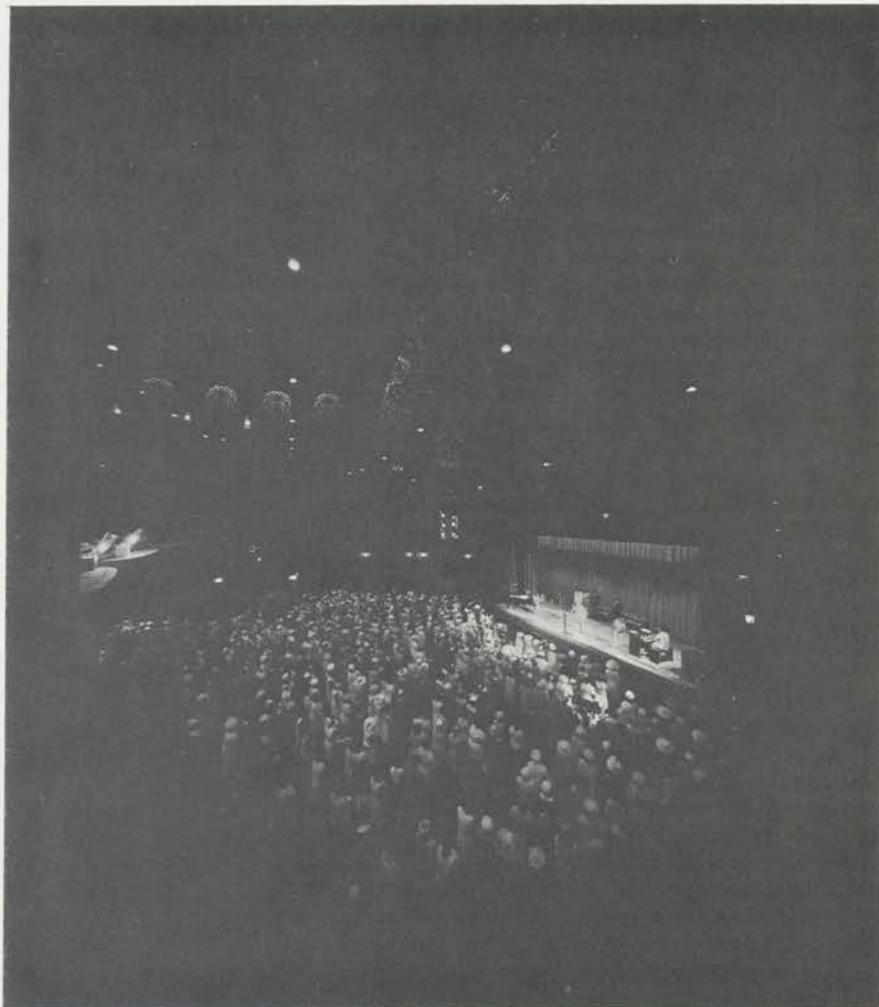
The theatre, which opened on February 13, 1930, was the final link in the Loew's chain of "Wonder Theatres" — the super-deluxe houses strategically placed around the New York metropolitan area that included Loew's Paradise in the Bronx, Loew's Kings in Brooklyn, and Loew's Valencia in Queens, and Loew's Jersey in Jersey City. All had almost identical 23-rank Robert Morton organs with splendidly rococo consoles. The familiar appellation, "Wonder Morton," was not dreamed up at the Robert Morton factory, but rather originated with the "Wonder Theatre" designation of these five theatres. "The Kilgen Company had first dibs on the title," points out Ben M. Hall, archivist of such trivia, "and had been turning out 'Kilgen Wonder Organs' for some time. But these five Robert Mortons certainly deserved the name; they really were wonderful."

The choice of Peter Schaeble to di-

rect the restoration is a happy one. Schaeble owns a Wonder Morton himself, the instrument from Loew's Valencia, and knows the innards of the beast with the certainty of a surgeon. (The Schaeble Morton will be another Convention attraction, as will the instrument in Loew's Jersey, providing Conventioneers with a unique opportunity to hear and compare the sounds of three of these great organs). Lee Er-

sification, being a monument to eclectic orientalia. A notable feature is the filigree treatment of the walls and ceiling, illuminated from behind by changeable colored lights. The organ console is finished in tones of polychrome gold.

First organist at Loew's 175th Street was Lloyd "Wild Oscar" Hill who opened the house with "Radio Antics — An Organ and Song-Fest Novelty." Present house organist for the United Christian Evangelistic Association is a New York Chapter Member Jimmy Paulin. Jimmy is currently making-do with a Hammond. "But," says he, "just you wait until that Robert Morton is going. Then you're really going to see some action around here!"



Home of the Robert Morton.

win, whose recent Concert Recording, "Sounds of the Silents," is one of the great organ records in recent years, is a tonal perfectionist who also knows how organs work — a rare quality in a performing professional.

The Theatre was designed by Thomas Lamb in one of his most flamboyant moods. Architecturally it defies clas-

To which all Convention-bound organ buffs add a fervent "amen!"

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