

The *Real* Crawford Special

by Douglas Marion

Theatre Organ buffs have long recognized that the basic theatre organ has at least one rank representing each of the six tone colors required to provide good combination possibilities. These are the diapason, flute, tibia, string, brass reed and color reed. The Wurlitzer Style D is just such an organ. Most organs larger than this provide more ranks still falling within the six tonal divisions. A Style E adds a second string rank, a Celeste; a Style F adds to this a second reed, the Clarinet. A Style 235 of 11 ranks has yet another string, and two more color reeds, the Orchestral Oboe and the Kinura.

Thus on the six basic tone colors, Wurlitzer as well as other makers built their tonal structure. Even the renowned 4 manual 36 rank Wurlitzers, of which 5 were built, were designed on this principal. For many years these remarkable instruments, the first of which, Opus #1458, was installed in the New York Times Square Paramount Theatre, have been popularly referred to as the "Crawford Special". This is undoubtedly due to the fact that this outstanding and famous theatre organist reached the apex of his theatre playing career on this instrument.

One of the really great opportunities to establish facts regarding the Crawford Special were the conversations with Crawford during the final years of his life. His answer to the question, "Jesse, did you design the Paramount Theatre Organ?", was "No, I did not. I specified only that the organ was to include certain ranks; the three Tibia Clausa, certain of the string and diapason ranks, and the four Vox Humana."

To the next question, "Well, do you know who did design it?", he replied, "No, someone at the Wurlitzer factory made up the specifications. Contrary to common belief, I did not specify that the organ was to have such ranks as the musette, the French horn, the Dulciana and some of the other ranks that were included. These ranks, the entire stoplist as a matter of fact, would have been hard to improve upon. The final result was very satisfying to me. I enjoyed playing the organ as it included the ranks I did specify as well as the many others that the factory put on the organ."

"Well, Jesse," I asked, "did you actually design any of the Wurlitzer organs?". His reply surprised me as well

as the others in the group. It established which of the Wurlitzer organs was the real "Crawford Special", as he stated, "Yes, I designed the Publix #1 organ at the request of the theatre chain." He continued, "They wanted an organ designed that would be suitable for their deluxe houses soon to be built. It was several years before they became known as the Publix #1 organs, the first being simply noted a 4 manual 20 rank special model. They specified that it must be a four manual organ for prestige, and that the cost must be kept down. The result was the organ as we know it today; 20 ranks which included two Tibia Clausa, two Vox Humana, and a Brass Saxophone and Brass Trumpet as well as the other more or less standard ranks found on the 3 manual 15 rank organs which were the largest standard models built in volume up to that time."

(Ed. note: Crawford was referring to the Wurlitzer Style 260).

The next question was obvious. "Jesse, why did you *not* include the English Post Horn which seems to be the only important rank missing from the design of an organ this size?" His answer is a classic. "To protect the patrons from the organist." He continued, "The English Post Horn has a



Opus No. 1848, shipped to the Minnesota Theatre in Minneapolis 2/14/28. This is one of two Roman style consoles built, the other going to the Toledo, Ohio, Paramount Theatre. The piano was installed in the Solo Chamber — whereas most were installed outside the shutters. This organ has the single row of stop tablets on the front rail and is now installed in the Reiny Delzer residence in Bismarck, North Dakota.

definite musical place in theatre organ playing, but it is grossly abused by most organists who do not know when *not* to use it."

Research and studies indicate this superbly designed organ was installed in some of the finest theatres ever built. The first of the series was designated as a special 4 manual, some were listed as "260 - 4 manual" and fourteen were shown as Publix #1 or Style 270. One was shipped as a Publix #1 Special.

The factory shipping list includes them as follows:



Opus No. 2170, a French design console, was shipped to the Odeon (Paramount) Theatre in Manchester, England, on 7/14/30. Clearly visible are the six stops added as a second row of tablets. The four black couplers were moved up from the bottom row, and the Vibraharp and Vibraharp Dampers stops were an added feature on the later issues of the Style 270.

Opus #	Style	Theatre	City	Shipping Date
1123	SP-4M	Capitol	Detroit, Mich.	8/4/25
1148	260-SP	Palms State	Detroit, Mich.	9/2/25
1262	260-4M	Masonic Temple (Oriental)	Chicago, Ill.	1/29/26
1267	260-4M	Tower	Chicago, Ill.	2/6/26
1275	260-4M	Belmont	Chicago, Ill.	2/20/26
1295	260-SP	Congress	Chicago, Ill.	3/18/26
1305	260-4M	Howard (renamed Norshore)	Chicago, Ill.	3/29/26
1315	SP-4M	Granada	Chicago, Ill.	4/12/26
1538	260-4M	Hippodrome (not installed — shipped elsewhere)	New York, N. Y.	12/16/26
1783	SP-4M	Alabama	Birmingham, Ala.	11/11/27
1819	270	Paramount	Seattle, Wash.	12/23/27
1831	270	Publix	Portland, Ore.	1/25/28
1848	270	Minnesota	Minneapolis, Minn.	2/24/28
1930	270	Publix	Knoxville, Tenn.	8/11/28
1931	270	Empire Cinema	London, England	8/11/28
1987	270	State	Melbourne, Australia	10/31/28
1988	270	Czestochowa	No. Tonowanda, N. Y.	10/31/28
2005	270-SP	State	Sydney, Australia	12/17/28
2006	270	Publix	Toledo, Ohio	12/18/28
2009	270	Regent	Melbourne, Australia	12/22/28
2120	270	Paramount	Manchester, England	7/14/30
2122	270	Paramount	Denver, Colo.	7/23/30
2125	270	Palace	Dallas, Texas	8/16/30
2139	270	Elephant & Castle	London, England	10/11/30
2164	270	Paramount	Oakland, Calif.	7/28/31

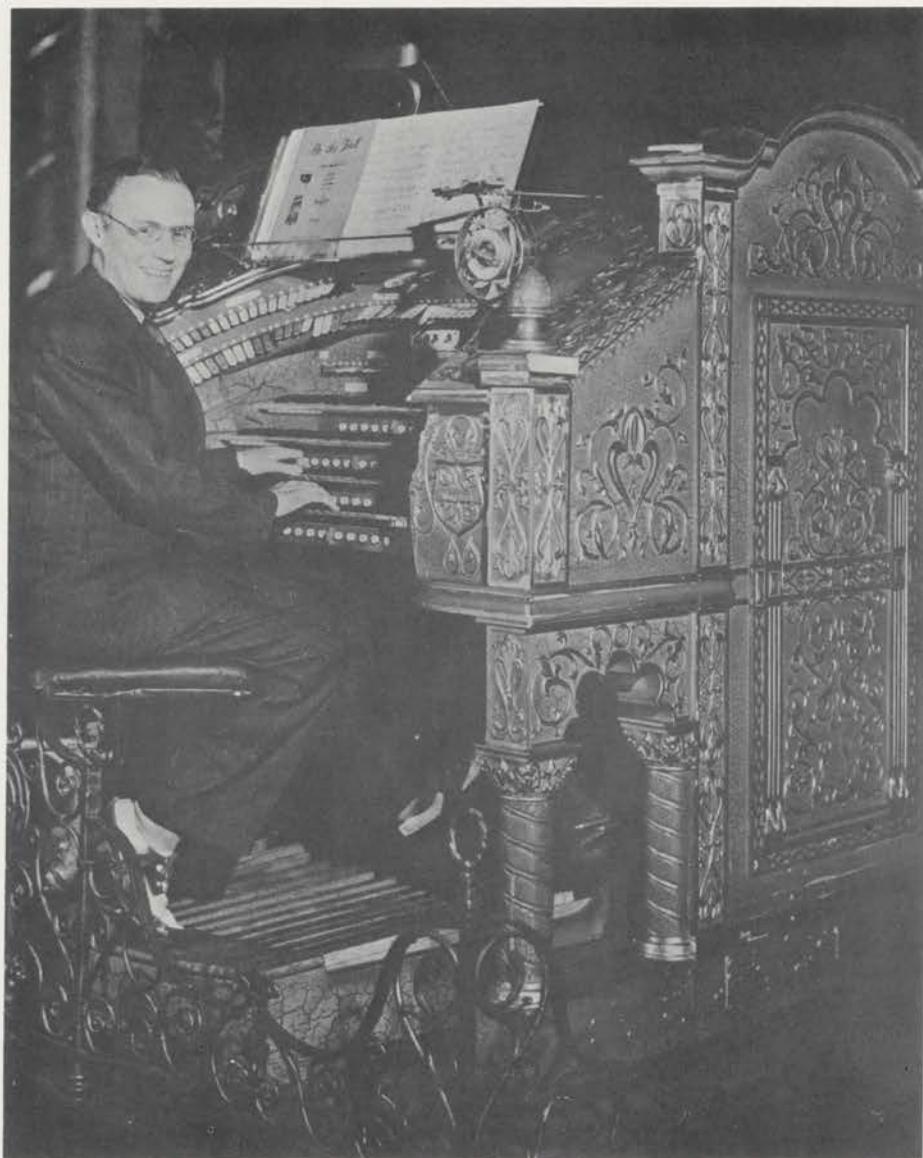
(Ed. Note: The Publix #1 models are also known as the Style 270. Opus 2120 shipped to Manchester, was shipped as a standard Style 270. According to Frank Hare of the English publication, Theatre Organ Review, the specifications of this instrument were changed at the request of the organist Charles Saxby about 1947 or '48. At that time, the Solo Vox Humana was replaced by an English horn built by the English pipemaker, F. J. Rogers, Ltd. The necessary change in the stop tablet thus desired resulted in the removal of *all* of the stop tablets which were ground down and re-engraved. Thus the very non-standard appearance of the console.)

The Oriental Theatre organ #1262, Chicago, Illinois, which was shipped on 1/29/26 and built to this specification, was probably one of the first ornate consoles built by the Wurlitzer Company. It appears to be a scroll console, but has the dashboard type illumination. As so often seems to be the case with Wurlitzer specifications, not all of these organs followed the original 20 ranks design. Some had 21 ranks, and others had various changes in specification.

Many of the elaborate French, Roman, Modernistic and other specially designed consoles were supplied with these organs. Although there are no records available to substantiate the information, it is reliably reported that these "\$100,000 Mighty Wurlitzers" sold on a special contractual arrangement for far less than the reported \$50,000 retail price for a Style 270 in 1927. Abrogation was attempted by several of the theatres on the contracts for the last few organs delivered in the United States, due to the introduction of the "talkies", but all contracted for were delivered.

The specifications were strangely different on the various Opus numbers, some having Tibia Twelfths and Tibia Piccolos (2'), others without this unification. So far as is known, all of them omitted the Oboe Horn and Quintadena from the Great manual, but included it on the Solo. Some of the last built included the Chrysoglott Vibraharp and Dampers attachments, with six short stops added on a second row above the usual straight single bolster front board that prevailed on the others. Most included 10 pistons for each manual with ten for the pedal stops located under the Accompaniment keys to the left of the manual pistons. Second touch was included to provide Master Pistons and Pedal Masters.

There were usually two chambers, with some percussions located in un-



An early Crawford Special is Opus No. 1783, shipped from the factory 11/11/27, to the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham. It's a French console design with a Moroccan motif. The organist is Stan Mallotte.

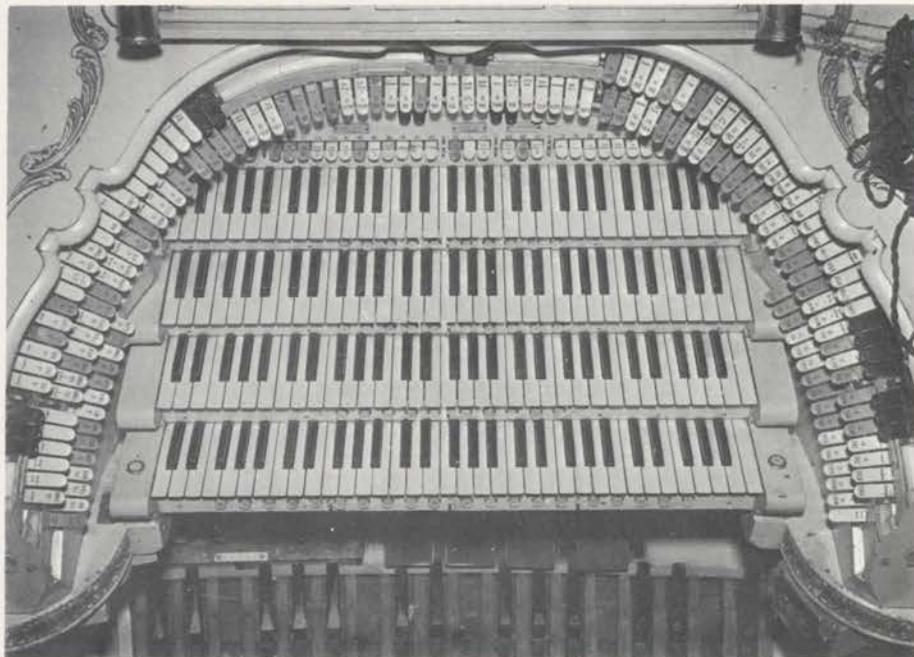
SPECIFICATIONS OF PUBLIX #1 WURLITZER SHOWING ULTIMATE STANDARD STOPS											
CHAMBER		MANUALS & PITCH OF STOPS DRAWN									
MAIN	COMPASS	No. of PIPES	PRES.	PEDAL-23-1P 10 Pistons	ACCOMP-39-13S-1P 10 Pistons		GREAT-54-4S-1P 10 Pistons		BOMBARDE-26-3S 10 Pistons		SOLO-25 10 Pistons
Tuba Horn	16'-4'	85	15"	16, 8, 16P	8	8s	16, 8	16s	16, 8, 4	16s, 8s	8
Diaphonic Diapason	16'-4'	85	15"	16, 8	8	8s	16, 8		16, 8		8
Tibia Clausa	8'-4'	73	15"		8, 4	8s, 4s*	16, 8, 4	8s	16, 8, 4		8
Solo String	8'	61	10"	8	16, 8	8s*	8		8		8
Viol D'Orchestre	8'-4'	73	10"	one stop (8)	8, 4		8, 4, 2		8		
Viol Celeste	8'-4'	73	10"	(8)	8, 4		8, 4		8		
Clarinet	8'	61	10"	8	8		16, 8				8
Bourdon-Flute	16'-2'	97	10"	16, 8, 4	8, 4, 2-2/3, 2		8, 4, 2-2/3, 2, 1-3/5		8		
Dulciana	8'	61	10"		8						8
Vox Humana	8'	61	6"		8, 4		16, 8, 4				8
Chrysoglott-Vibraharp		49			x		x				x
SOLO											
Tuba Mirabilis	8'-4'	73	15"	8		8s	8		16, 8, 4		8
Brass Trumpet	8'	61	10"				8		8		8
Tibia Clausa	16'-2'	97	15"	16, 8	8, 4	8s, 4s*	16, 8, 4, 2-2/3, 2	8s	16, 8, 4	8s	8, 4
Oboe Horn	8'	61	10"		8		8				8
Solo String	8'	61	10"		8	8s*	16, 8		8		8
Orchestral Oboe	8'	61	10"				8				8
Kinura	8'	61	10"				8				8
Brass Saxophone	8'	61	10"	8	8	8s	16, 8				8
Quintadena	8'	61	10"		8		16, 8, 4				8
Vox Humana	8'	61	6"		8, 4						8
Xylophone		37				xs	x		x		x
Glockenspiel		37				xs	x		x		x
Bells-riet Glock							x				x
Chimes		25				xs	x				x
Marimba		49					x				x
HARP							x				
Master Xylophone		37					x				x
Piano		85		16	8		16, 8, 4				8
Sleigh Bells		25					x				
COUPLERS				A8, G8, S8	A4, S8	S8s, S8p	G 16, G4, S8	S8s, S8p	G16, G8, S8		
Bass Drum				x							
Kettle Drum				x							
Crash Cymbal				x							
Cymbal				x							
Triangle						xs					
Mandolin					x						
Snare Drum				x	x			x			
Tambourine					x						
Castenets					x						
Chinese Block					x						
Tom Tom					x						
Sand Block					x						
TREMOLLO-9											
Main				Vibraharp			Right levers for: Thunder				
Solo				Chrysoglott Damper			Grand Perc. Crash				
Tibia Clausa(S)							Grand Reed Sforzando				
Vox Humana				3 swell pedals			Grand Cymbal Crash				
Tuba							Sound Effects Buttons		s - Second Touch		
Diaphone & String				1 Crescendo Pedal			Bird Whistle		p - Pizzicato Touch		
Tuba Mirabilis							Boat Whistle				
Tibia Clausa				3 Swell Coupler Switches			Fire Gong				
				3 Swell Indicators			Triangle				
							Surf				

enclosed positions in front of the chambers, although this feature varied greatly in the various installations; some had all percussions enclosed. The Main Chamber contained —

16' - 4'	Diaphonic Diapason (Wooden Diaphones 16' Octave)	15"
16' - 4'	Tuba Horn (Ophicleide)	15"
8' - 4'	Tibia Clausa (large scale)	15"
8'	Clarinet	10"
8'	Vox Humana	6"
8' - 4'	Viol D'Ochestre	10"
8' - 4'	Viol Celeste	10"
8'	Solo String	10"
8'	Dulciana	10"
16' - 2'	Bourdon - Flute	10"
In the Solo Chamber were planted —		
8' - 4'	Tuba Mirabilis	15"
16' - 2'	Tibia Clausa (large scale)	15"
8'	Vox Humana (2" Diameter Low C)	10"
8'	Kinura	10"
8'	Solo String	10"
8'	Orchestral Oboe	10"
8'	Oboe Horn	10"
8'	Quintadena	10"
8'	Brass Saxophone	10"
8'	Brass Trumpet	10"

The percussions almost always included a Piano, Marimba, Master Xylophone, standard Xylophone, Glockenspiel, Chrysoglott, Cathedral Chimes (24 note), and the usual toy shelf and traps.

It is to be regretted that these "Crawford Specials" had such limited use, due to their relatively late arrival on the scene. They were produced over a short 6 year span, but happily some are still playing in theatres today. A few are installed in residences, one of the best known being that in Reiny Delzer's in Bismarck, North Dakota. Ornate, tonally complete (English Horn ?), large and prestigious, they were a credit to the Wurlitzer name, proof of the Crawford artistry, and worthy of the theatre marquee's largesse. "The \$100,000 Mighty Wurlitzer"!!!! □



(Above) Opus No. 2170, Manchester, England, showing stop tablet layout. Note non-standard engraving on the stop tablets.

(Right) Opus No. 2164, shipped to the Paramount Theatre in Oakland, California, on 7/28/31. The last Publix #1 built for a theatre in the United States. A Modernistic console design, one of six known to have been built for three- and four-manual Wurlitzers. Pushbuttons on the left front plate control the elevator; those on the right the turntable which rotated about 180°.



Closing Chord

The following persons associated with the organ world passed away during 1969.

ROLAND POMERAT

Born in Holyoke, Massachusetts, in 1903, Pomerat studied at the Lloyd del Castillo Theatre Organ School in Boston before starting a six-year career as a theatre organist at the Springfield (Mass.) Paramount. When theatrical opportunities folded Pomerat turned to church organ work. His last position was as organist at Rice University, Houston, Texas. He died in Houston on September 12. Pomerat never lost interest in the theatre organ and could be seen at Southern California organ concerts, including the ATOE convention in Los Angeles in 1968. He was a devout ATOER. A story about him ("A New England Organist Reminisces") appeared in the October 1968 issue of TOB.

WESLEY B. TOURTELLOTTE

Tourtellotte was also born in Holyoke, Mass., and played in both churches and theatres in New England before moving to Southern California in 1927 where he became known as a theatre organist. Turning later to church work, he is best remembered for the organ scoring he did for the Disney version of "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" a few years ago. When Captain Nemo played Bach on the horseshoe-drawknob console in the submarine "Nautilus," the music was dubbed by Tourtellotte who played it on the huge straight organ at his Sunday church job. He died on March 18 in Los Angeles. He was 76.

ARTHUR F. HUNTINGTON

Art Huntington was an organist in the early days of radio and is best remembered for his broadcasts from station WQR in New York. He retired in the 1950's. He died at the age of 82 in Brooklyn.

MRS. DAVID J. MARR

The widow of organ builder David Marr (Marr & Colton Organs) died at the age of 84 in Warsaw, New York, on April 22. Mrs. Marr emigrated to the United States

from England in the first decade of the century with her husband who was associated with Robert Hope-Jones. When the Hope-Jones Organ Co. at Elmira failed, Marr decided to start his own factory and selected Warsaw. During his busiest years Marr lived in it to the end of her life. Mrs. Marr lived in it the end of her life. Mrs. Marr was always interested in organ building, often helped her husband wind magnets. He died in the early '50s. The Marrs are survived by three daughters.

DANIEL L. PAPP

Dan Papp was sent by Wurlitzer to supervise the installation of the New York Paramount 4/36 organ when the house was built in 1926. He also was in charge of the 4/21 studio Wurlitzer on the ninth floor. He agreed to remain at the Paramount indefinitely to keep the instruments in shape for a particularly demanding organist named Jesse Crawford but he had no idea that it would be a lifetime job. He remained continuously at the Paramount until October 1962 when a heart condition forced his retirement. He died on October 10th at his home in Linden, New Jersey.