

Q. What was your first impression of the Wurlitzer?

A. I arrived in Wichita about 10:30 p.m. on Dec. 5 and a half hour later was getting a preview of 'Mother.' What a thrill it was!

Q. It was in top shape?

A. Yes. however, next day (Wednesday), Mother got temperamental — one cipher after another.

Q. What caused them?

A. The weather turned dry and icy cold overnight. Not enough humidity. They raised the humidity by squirting water into the blower intake at regular intervals. Once the humidity reached the chambers and relay room, the ciphers let up.

Q. Any other technical problems?

A. No. By showtime she was in glorious voice — indeed the 'grande dame' of theatre organs. Had only one brief Vox cipher but she cleared her throat without help.

Q. Was it the first time you had played the famous Times Square Paramount organ?

A. No, I'd had the privilege of playing it as a student of Jesse Crawford in the early '30s. It sounded fantastic then and it sounds fantastic today. Smooth!

Q. What stops do you feel stand out?

A. Three lovely Tibias, and four Vox Humanas. Two Posthorns, and three of the finest Diapasons I've ever heard on a theatre organ. And some wonderful color reeds.

Q. How's the bottom end?

A. The pedal department really shakes the hall when topped off with the 32' Contra Bourdon, the Diaphone and the 32' Bombarde.

Q. It seems to have met all your concert requirements.

A. This has got to be the greatest Wurlitzer I've yet experienced. Playing it again was, for me, the purest and most wonderful nostalgia. I don't mind admitting tears came to my eyes more than once during the concert.

Q. Any comments about the installation?

A. As you know, the Century II is a tremendous convention and civic center, a huge round affair divided like pieces of pie. The Exhibition Hall, which houses the organ, is the largest cut.

Q. About how large?

A. Well, 3,000 attended the concert and they were seated at tables, not in rows of seats. Main floor and

balcony combined have over 60,000 square feet.

Q. Where are the chambers located in the pie slice?

A. Across the rear of the stage near the center of the building. There are four of them — Main, Solo, Orchestral and Brass, and they are elevated about 15 feet above stage level.

Q. What are the acoustic qualities of the hall?

A. Quite good, since the auditorium is mostly stone and concrete construction with plenty of glass and no deadening surfaces.

Q. Is the console on an elevator?

A. No, it's on a large dolly which is wheeled on stage from the left side wings. Backstage there's a special room to store it.

Q. Now, to the concert. Besides the 4-manual, 36-rank Wurlitzer there was an orchestra.

A. Yes, a 31-piece concert ensemble drawn principally from Wichita's fine symphony orchestra. It was ably directed by veteran local conductor Verne Nydegger. I can tell you this group compared very favorably with many of the excellent studio orchestras I've conducted in Hollywood.

Q. Any problems with orchestrations?

I noted items on the program such as the "Fiddler on the Roof" medley. Arrangements for a 31-piece orchestra plus organ aren't readily available.

A. The only problem was time. I wrote out all the orchestral arrangements except for the Cole Porter set. Of course I'd done most of the work before arriving in Wichita but last minute changes had me writing out conductor parts until two hours before curtain time, often during rehearsal breaks.

Q. Were you happy with the overall results?

A. Happy? This had to be an occasion I'll always remember — the thrill of a lifetime to turn around after "The Stars and Stripes Forever," played by both organ and orchestra, and find 3,000 applauding people on their feet. That was something an organist rarely experienced in the old days — believe me.

Q. How did you like Wichita?

A. It's a friendly place. I must tell you too that my visit was made all the more pleasant by the wonderful hospitality of Mike Coup, Dave Bernstorff and his folks, and the

members of Wichita Theatre Organ, Inc. They are one grand bunch.

Q. Did the premiere concert attract any outsiders?

A. Yes, organ buffs came from all over — Fort Worth, Dallas, San Diego, Los Angeles and even New York. And a special bouquet goes to young Rick Shindell, who drove down from Detroit and worked practically around the clock to help get the organ ready — with the flu, yet!

Q. Did the concert draw any press comment?

A. The Wichita Eagle reviewed the concert favorably in its December 10th issue, along with a photo of the concert poster with 'SOLD OUT' marked across it.

Q. Anything else?

A. Yes, the closing comment of the Eagle's reviewer, Joanna Wiebe — 'Mother, You're not getting older; you're getting better.' □



*Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.*

*Address: P.O. Box 1314  
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Dear Editor

As you know, but not yet all ATOS chapters, this well tremulated citizen has been engaged to write a bi-monthly column of theatre organ news for *MUSIC Magazine*. This magazine goes to 30,000 people and so obviously more than just members of the AGO in the USA and the RCCO in Canada. Readers want to know more about the theatre organ and what is happening in its use internationally and so such a column helps serve the

very motto to the national ATOS. This is why I'd like to invite all the ATOS chapters who send members occasional mailings or regular newsletters to put my name and address on their mailing lists if interested in having their special projects and occasions known to far more than just ATOS members. Four groups already are doing this and I hope the others will want to join them. For this column, there's no such thing as getting news of special importance to me "too early." The deadline I face is two full months prior to the month of issue. That carries its own message! Thank you for making this invitation known as you see fit and my good wishes.

Billy Nalle  
100 La Salle Street  
New York 10027

Dear Sirs:

I am taking the opportunity to use this means of extending my warm greeting to my many friends in Wichita, Kansas.

In my greeting is a most sincere "Thank you for your hospitality" and for all your love and kindness to me. My visit in Wichita was wonderful and a memorable one for me.

I also wish to comment and compliment each and every one of my dedicated friends who had a part in arranging for the festive occasion. You are all to be congratulated.

It was a delightful privilege for me to be present at the Restoration and Dedication of the Paramount Wurlitzer Organ which had been under the constant care of my beloved husband Dan Papp for the past 38 years in New York City. Needless to say hearing Rex Koury play it brought to mind many pleasant memories of the past.

With my very best wishes that the years to come will fulfill your fondest hopes and bring you all much happiness, I am

Sincerely yours,  
Theresa Papp

Dear Sir,

Your interview with Sid Torch was wonderful. He was without a doubt, *the* stylist in the old country. The other one was Quentin Maclean whose playing to movies was head and shoulders above anyone else over there.

Torch was first to discover how to use the organ really orchestrally and his use of the brass at Marble Arch and

Edmonton were inspiring to say the least. He was a concert pianist of impeccable technique prior to this. Many pianists changed to organ but without the imagination such as he possesses.

He was the George Wright of the thirties. Both Torch and Jesse Crawford were not orthodox organists in the sense of the word. They were successful despite this because they were not frightened to experiment, not being bound by academic do's and dont's.

I also enjoy the contributions of John Muri. He always talks horsensense and how right he is the way the movie industry has hit an all time low. The same applies to conditions in the old land.

Sincerely,  
Reginald Stone

Gentlemen:

I am especially interested in the article on Sidney Torch and the interview with him; the reason being that I carried out the tonal finishing on this organ, and voiced some of the flue stops. I should mention the reference is to the Regal Edmonton.

Your readers may be interested in the following account of my experiences with this particular organ. The late Herbert Norman (grandfather of the present John Norman) was interested in this organ and spent much time on the design of the Trumpet, and the Saxophone. The Trumpet was fitted with Cavaille-Coll type shallots, a generous scale giving the typical French spread, and brightness of tone. The Trumpet was voiced by Arthur Rundle (now in his eighties) the last of the Rundle reed voicers. His grandfather Edwin Rundle voiced the reeds for Sidney Town Hall. Jack Rundle (Arthur's father) also voiced reeds for the Regal Edmonton. The Saxophone was fitted with reeds an exact copy of the real Sax and the reed bodies differed very little in scale, and the stop was of short compass. Mr. Herbert Norman arranged for a saxophonist first to play in the voicing shop in an effort to achieve a worthwhile copy of the real Sax.

The tuned Bird Whistles were lots of fun. After working on them all night, the front of me was soaking wet where water had splashed out of the bath the pipes were contained in. The tuned Bird Whistles being the same

principal as used by Thomas Dallam for the organ he built for the Sultan of Turkey in 1599. Incidentally this organ had a "Toy Counter" and a player action, (self player). To get back to Edmonton, Mr. Torch was an extremely nice fellow to work with. I well remember his remark when something did not come up to his expectation, he would say "it does not mean a thing."

The ACC was situated in the upper chamber, which being on the large size the tone tended to stay some-what in the chamber. After hearing it for the first time, Mr. Torch said "it does not mean a thing" so I had to get to work to "push" the tone, even to the extent of fitting rollers to the stopped basses.

My impression was, that this was the first organ that Mr. Torch had played on, and we were amazed at his dexterity, and original approach. I still have some of the 78 English recordings. The passages where the tuned Bird Whistles are used, warbling over the Tibias, are akin to the Cymbelstern of classic organ. In all truth we can say that the tuned Bird Whistles are the Cymbelstern of the theatre organ. This statement will cause the trackers to flutter.

The organ was installed by Fred Ulrich; now deceased. This same gentleman installed the Regal Marble Arch. Maybe someone can tell me where the organ went to. I helped Robert Lamb with the tonal work on this organ, and Quentin M. MacLean in a brochure entitled "A Modern Concert Hall Organ" writes in a foreword "The organ at the Regal, Marble Arch, is to my mind one of the most characteristic creations of that great artist, Herbert Norman, and as such it commands the respect and admiration of all organ lovers."

The great interest in the cinema organ, and its history, is most rewarding. If one is not aware of the good things in the past, how can one be sure of what is good today.

Sincerely,  
Hugh R. Turpin

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