



Plate on left jamb of the Uhler console.
(Uhler Photo)

by Lloyd E. Klos

For some time the device known as the Marr & Colton Symphonic Registrar has intrigued the writer. Very little was known about it, and as far as we know, there are only three organs in existence with workable SR's; two in Pennsylvania and one in Connecticut, and if the foregoing statement brings to light others, all to the better.

By searching through patent archives and enlisting the aid of Bill Uhler of Lebanon, Pa. and Bob Yates of Glenshaw, Pa., we were able to cull information to make a story possible and perhaps answer the questions enthusiasts had long proposed.

The Marr & Colton Symphonic Registrar apparently was the brain child of David J. Marr, president of the Warsaw, N.Y. company, and he filed for a patent on October 20, 1926 through his attorneys, Crumpton and Griffith. The serial number was 142,792 and the device was described as follows:

"The combination with an organ mechanism comprising a series of stop keys, each controlling a pre-determined selection of stops, of means for visually indicating the tone color obtained by such selections."

Reduced to its simplest form, the definition meant that an organist

could flip a stop tab labeled "mysterious", for example, when the occasion demanded it while accompanying a silent mystery movie such as *Phantom of the Opera*, and the resulting sound would create the desired mood. Several of the organ's regular voices would be wired in to the "mysterious" stop to accomplish this.

It takes considerable time between filing for a patent and the time it is granted by the U.S. Patent Office. In this case, it took almost four years, with the granting date on June 10, 1930. And when one considers that operations at the Marr & Colton plant in Warsaw, N.Y. ceased in the fall of 1932, there apparently weren't too many of the SR organs manufactured. Whoever has a working model, therefore, has a rare gem.

So, patent No. 1,762,274 was granted and the following is taken directly from Mr. Marr's description of the device, appearing in the patent information:

"This invention relates to musical instruments, and more particularly to pipe organs, one object of the invention being to provide an organ having an improved stop mechanism of such a character as to make it easy for any organist to quickly select and render the correct tone colors for any

desired musical action, mood or emotion.

"Another object is to provide such a mechanism comprising a means whereby the organist may devote maximum attention to the technical requirements of the composition being performed with a minimum amount of interruption in operating the stop keys. Another object is to provide a stop mechanism of such character that it may be easily and unerringly operated by an organist unfamiliar with the particular combination of stops connected with the stop keys. A further object is to provide an organ stop mechanism so constructed and arranged as to materially facilitate the operation of the same by an unskilled organist.

"Still, a further object is to provide an organ construction particularly adapted and convenient for the accompaniment of motion pictures, and provided with stop keys, each having associated therewith, as by means of a descriptive word or words, the corresponding tone color, so that even an unskilled organist or one unfamiliar with the organ may quickly and correctly render the correct tone colors for each sense, emotion or action portrayed on the screen in accurately timed relation with the same.

"To these and other ends, the invention resides in certain improvements and combinations of parts, all as will be hereinafter more fully described, the novel features being pointed out in the claims at the end of the specification.

"In the drawings:

"Figure 1. is a top plan view of an organ console, embodying the present invention;

"Figure 2. is an enlargement of a portion shown in Figure 1, to illustrate the additional stop keys and the indicating means for the same; and

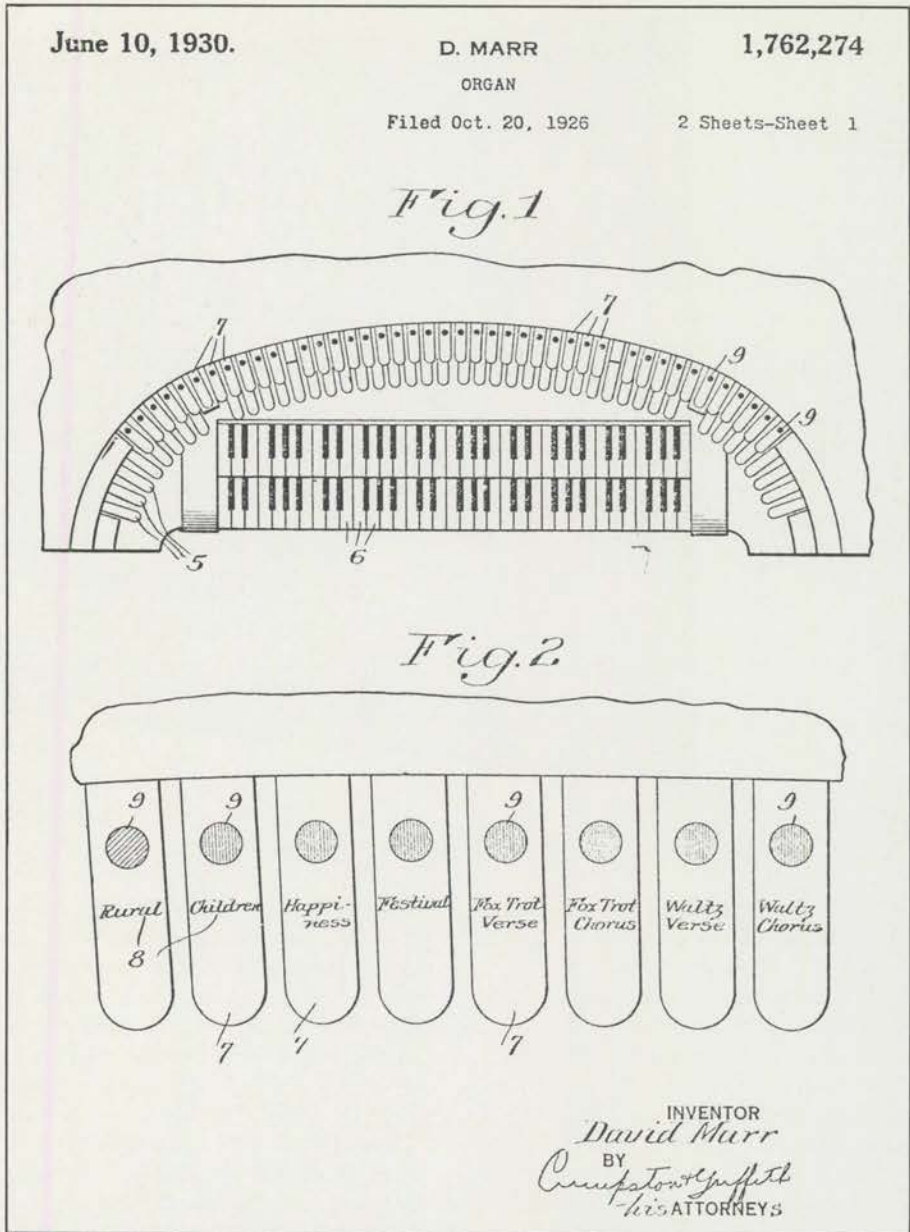
"Figure 3. is a schematic illustration of an organ mechanism embodying the present invention.

"Similar reference numerals throughout the several views indicate the same parts.

"The modern organ is commonly provided with a series of stop keys as indicated for example at 5, Figures 1 and 3, for controlling the tonal colors or combinations. Such keys, however, have been commonly unmarked or merely numbered or provided with the technical names of stops or other musical instruments, the organist having to rely upon his memory as to the meaning in terms of actual tone color of such designations, as well as the combination of stops controlled by each key, and also to distinguish between the different keys, with the result that the attention has been distracted from the performance of the composition to the operation of the stops. This has been particularly the case in the operation of strange organs and in performances by unskilled organists, and these difficulties are present to a still greater degree in playing an accompaniment for motion pictures, where the tone colors must be quickly and abruptly changed to correspond with the changing emotions portrayed on the screen.

"It has been found that these difficulties may be effectively solved by selectively grouping the organ stops to correspond with the range of musical moods and emotions and providing the console with a stop key for each combination visually marked to clearly describe the tone color of the same in terms of a mood or situation, as by means of a clearly descriptive word or words, or an appropriate color marking.

"Thus, Figure 1 shows a two-manual console, comprising keys (6). In addition to the usual series of stop



Sketches of SR stop layout as submitted in patent application.

keys for hand registration shown at 5, there is provided an additional or auxiliary series of stop keys (7), each connected as hereinafter described with a corresponding group of stops. This series of keys and corresponding stop combinations represents the full range of musical moods. Each of these keys (7) is marked with a visual indication, clearly expressing the particular shade of tone produced by the operation of the same. Such marking may have different forms, such as a word or words directly expressing the tone color in terms of a mood or situation as at 8, or color indications, such as the disks (9), conventionally lined to indicate the colors commonly used on the score to indicate the corresponding tone value. Preferably,

such indications are placed directly on the keys inwardly of the outer ends of the same so as to conveniently and quickly read by the organist.

"The operating mechanism for the stop keys is shown diagrammatically in Figure 3 as composed of devices which are individually well known in the art. Thus, each auxiliary key (7) has a rear arm (10) of conducting material connected in circuit, as by means of a wire (11) with a source of power (12). This key end, in rising as the key is depressed, contacts momentarily at 13 with spaced contacts (14). The latter are connected with a magnet (15) in the "off" switch. This magnet raises its armature controlling the usual valve port by which the wind in the valve pneumatic (16) is exhausted. The col-

lapsing pneumatic lowers a double valve (17) so that the wind passes through a channel (18) into a large pneumatic (19).

"When a stop key (7) is fully depressed, its end (10) breaks connection with the contacts (14) so that magnet (15) is de-energized with the result that valve (17) is again raised by its inflated pneumatic (16) and the wind passes from the large pneumatic (19) through the channel (18) into a box (20) having a bleed hole (21) controlled by a regulating block or choke (22). The regulation of this choke block varies the amount of opening of the bleed hole, and governs the speed at which the larger pneumatic (19) is exhausted.

"The large pneumatic (19) carries a contact (23), positioned to engage with a cooperating contact (24) when the pneumatic is inflated. Contact (24) is connected with a wire (25) with a magnet (26) in the "off" machine (27). When pneumatic (19) is inflated, magnet (26) is energized with the result that the valve (28) of the "off" machine is lowered and wind is admitted from the "off" machine through a channel (29) to pipes (30) and (31) leading to the stop key "off"

pneumatics (32) and (33) respectively. These pneumatics, of which there is one for each registrator stop key, pull all of these keys "off" except the one depressed to cause the operation.

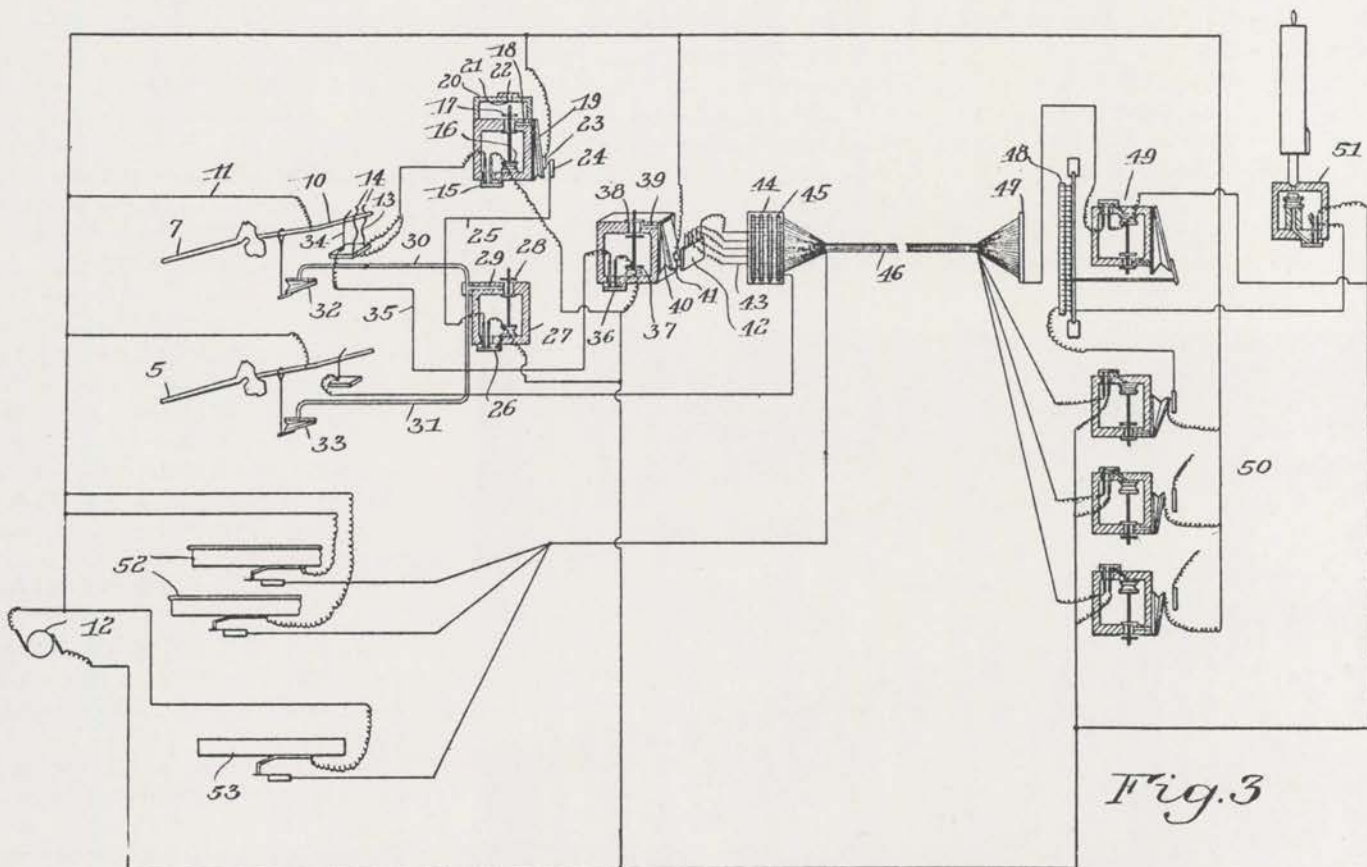
"When the auxiliary stop key (7) is fully depressed, its end (10) engages also with a contact (34), thus sending current through the wire (35) to the relay magnet (36). This raises the magnet armature controlling the usual valve for exhausting the pneumatic (37) so that valve (38) is lowered, transmitting wind through passage (39) to a contact pneumatic (40). This pneumatic carries a contact (41) which, upon inflation, engages a cooperating contact plate (42) to which are connected the stop wires (43) leading to the combination board (44).

"This combination board comprises the usual stop spreader (45), connected by wires through the main cable (46) with the stop spreader (47) at the organ end to which all the stops are wired. At 48 is the usual switch and at 49, the switch action, which parts, together with the various solo accompaniment and pedal relays indicated generally at 50 and the pipe chest (51), are well understood in the art and require no further description.

At 52 are shown the solo manual keys, and accompaniment keys, and 53 represents the pedal keys which are connected in the usual manner and likewise require no description.

"The invention thus provides an organ console with a stop key for each of a complete gamut of tone colors, each key marked with a rod or words or with a color to clearly describe its particular tone in terms of a corresponding mood or situation. By mood or situation is meant, of course, the mood, emotion, action or situation desired to be expressed. Of course, an organist may select and combine the stops with the different keys to suit his particular taste, and such a stop key system greatly reduces the attention which must be devoted to it at the expense of proper handling of the technical difficulties of the composition being played. Such an arrangement, moreover, largely solves the problem of playing unaccustomed organs, and the difficulties of unskilled organists, and greatly facilitates the manipulation of the stops in the difficult work of accompanying the rapidly changing moods of motion pictures.

"Thus, even an unskilled organist,



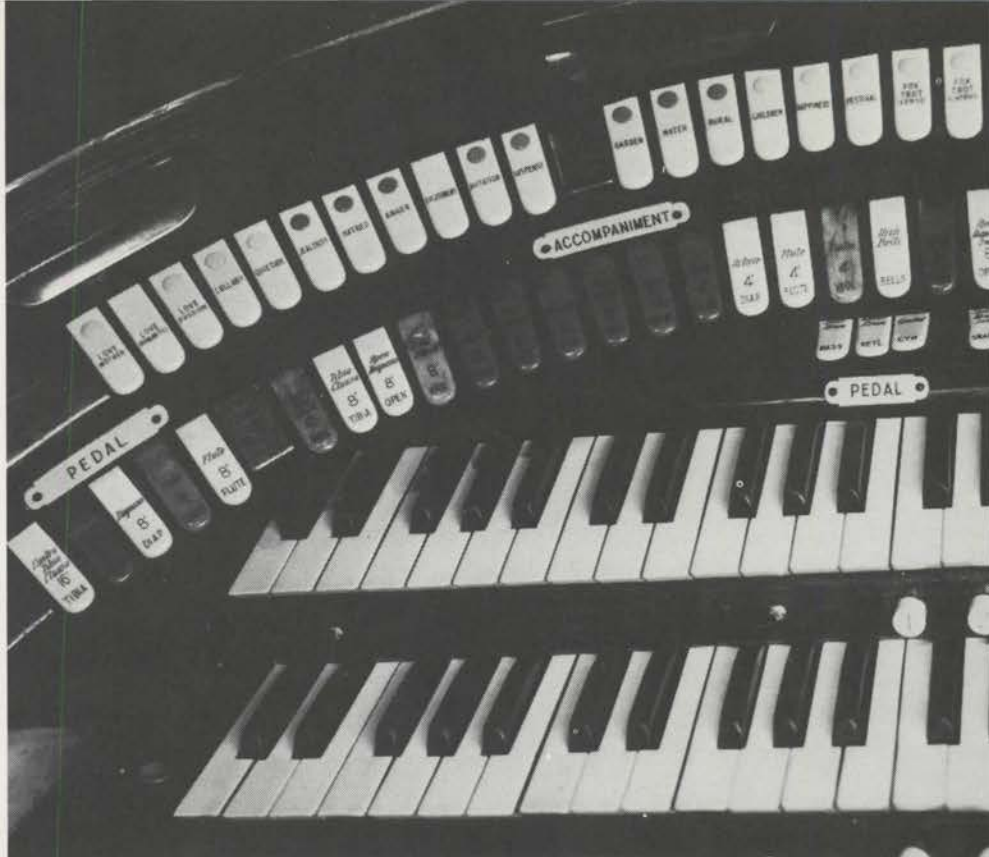
Sketch of interior mechanism of Symphonic Registrator as submitted in patent application. Parts are described in the article.

playing a strange organ to accompany a motion picture film, upon a sudden change in the action or situation as, for example, the portrayal of a riot scene, does not have to first translate this situation into the technical terms of the usual organ stops or to recollect and select combinations of the same, but may immediately press a stop key marked "riot" or with some other word directly and immediately expressive of the particular tone color desired, which may thus be unerringly and readily produced in an appropriate and well-balanced tonal combination. The invention thus greatly facilitates the playing of an organ particularly as an accompaniment for the rapidly successive scenes of motion picture projection, especially by an unskilled organist or one playing an unfamiliar organ.

"I claim as my invention:

"1. The combination with an organ mechanism comprising a series of stop keys, of an additional series of keys for controlling selected groups of stops controlled by the stop keys of said first-named series, the keys of said last-named series being provided with visual indicating means inherently expressing the tone color produced by the operation of the keys of said additional series.

"2. The combination with an organ mechanism comprising a series of stop keys, of an additional series of keys for controlling selected groups of stops controlled by the stop keys of said



Left side of the Uhler console. SR stops (left to right) are Love (Mother), Love (Romantic), Love (Passion), Lullaby, Quietude, Jealousy, Hatred, Anger, Excitement, Agitation, Suspense, Garden, Water, Rural, Children, Happiness, Festival, Fox Trot (Verse), Fox Trot (Chorus) and Waltz (Verse).
(Uhler Photo)

first-named series, the keys of said last-named series being each provided with a color marking, and also with one or more words inherently expressing the tone color produced by the operation thereof.

"3. The combination with an organ mechanism comprising a series of stop keys each controlling a predetermined selection of stops, of means for visu-

ally indicating the tone color obtained by such selections.

"4. In an organ mechanism, a series of stop keys for controlling certain stops, an additional series of keys, means whereby said latter keys control selected groups of stops actuated by said first-named stop keys and means for visually indicating the tone color produced by the operation of each key of the said additional series of keys.

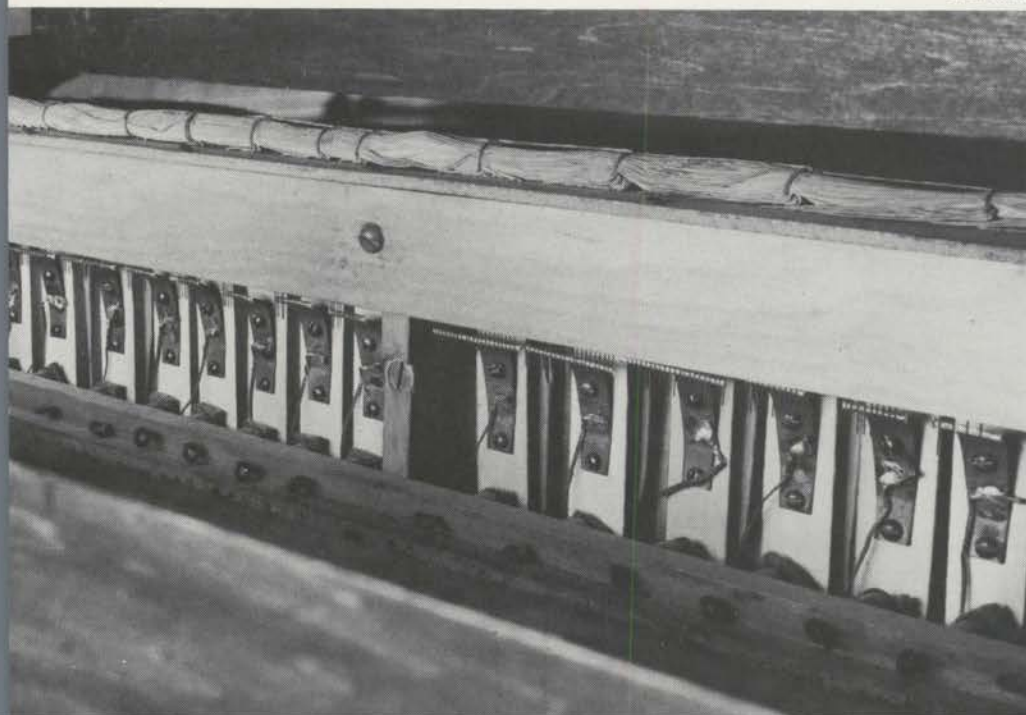
"5. In an organ construction, the combination with a multiplicity of organ stops, of a series of combination stops each operatively connected relatively permanently to a plurality of selected organ stops, and means on each combination stop for indicating visually by mere inspection the general tonal characteristics of the plurality of organ stops connected to such combination stop."

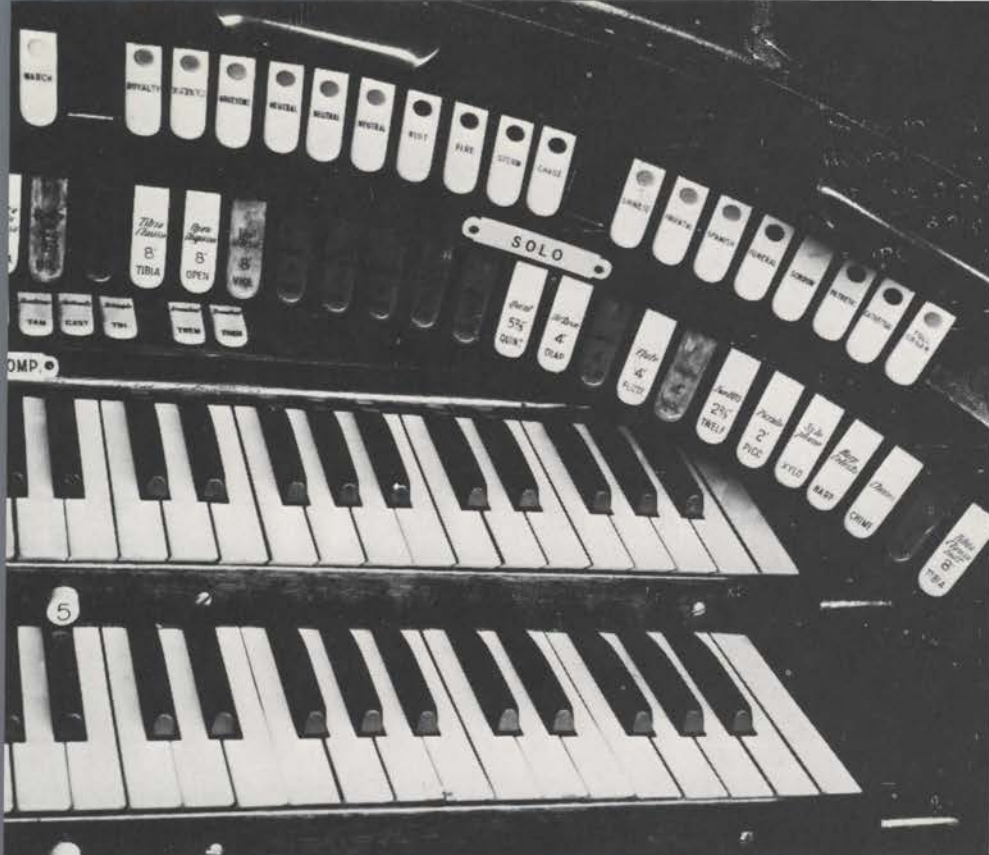
DAVID J. MARR

Much of the foregoing sounds like a definition of a Rube Goldberg creation, but all is necessary when seeking a patent.

Bill Uhler acquired his Marr & Colton from the Academy Theatre in Lebanon, Pa. in 1966 (See June 1972 Theatre Organ). Bob Yates' instrument is not a "pure" Marr & Colton. The pipe work is Wurlitzer, obtained from

Partial view of Symphonic Registrator cable and switches in back of the console. The stops consisted of varying numbers of voices. Switch on right (Oriental) consisted of 4 voices; next stop (Chinese) called for ten.
(Uhler Photo)





Right side of the Uhler console. SR stops (left to right) are Waltz (Chorus), March, Royalty, Mysterious, Gruesome, Neutral, Neutral, Neutral, Riot, Fire, Storm, Chase, Chinese, Oriental, Spanish, Funeral, Sorrow, Pathetic, Cathedral, and Full Organ. (Uhler Photo)

information he provided and the schematic I had been able to trace from my instrument, I was able to draw a block pattern which overlaid on my original pattern and thus find which cables from the SR to hook up to the various ranks.

"I believe the list to be very close to the original M&C hookup, since in my organ, the cables from the SR switches were not cut at the switches, but at the terminal board. Which means that the 40 SR switches terminated in 34 cable ends, each of which was connected to various SR switches. This sounds confusing, but I trust THEATRE ORGAN readers will get some idea of the problems we had in readying this device to playing condition."

The Marr & Colton Symphonic Registrator was a great idea. It is regrettable, however, that the device wasn't available in the early twenties instead of the early thirties when talkies were coming to the fore. It would have made better organists out of mediocre or poor ones. □

Pittsburgh's Roxian Theatre. The console, however, was destroyed in the 1936 flood. "In looking for a Wurlitzer console," Bob says, "I happened upon the Marr & Colton with the SR, which was too fascinating a console to pass up for the sake of purity to Wurlitzer. It has adapted quite well to my relay and pipework."

When Bill and Bob acquired their instruments, the SR combination wires were cut on both. There is a row of 40 SR tabs, situated above the regular stop rail on each console. If the owners only had a set of wiring instructions! Several Marr & Colton men were contacted, but were of no help.

In August 1972, Bob was traveling in New England and stopped at the Felice home in Manchester, Conn. Here is a Marr & Colton with workable SR, which Mike Foley helped install in 1959. Bob and his wife spent over three hours, tracing wires and as a result, both Uhler and Yates have consulted each other and have wired in their devices.

Bill says, "I cannot give enough credit to Bob Yates, without whose efforts and information, this project would not have been completed. He and his wife traced each combination from the switchboard. Thus, with the

Bill Uhler's console. The 40 Symphonic Registrator tabs are on the upper stop rail. (Uhler Photo)



Following are the various combinations of voices as they are heard on the Symphonic Registrator section of the 2/6 Marr & Colton Organ formerly in the Academy of Music, Lebanon, Pa. The SR stops are listed in the order that they appear on the console from left to right.

Symphonic Registrator Stop	Organ Divisions		
	Pedal	Accompaniment	Solo
LOVE (Mother)		Tibia 8 Vox 8 Tuba 8	Tibia 16 Violin 4
LOVE (Romantic)		Flute 4	Vox 16 Tibia 8 Diapason 8 Piccolo 2
LOVE (Passion)	Contra Tibia 16	Vox 8 Tuba 8 Flute 4	Tibia 8 Tuba 8 Flute 4
LULLABY	Flute 8		Tibia 8 Vox 8
QUIETUDE		Vox 8	Tibia 16 Flute 4
JEALOUSY	Cello 8	Contra Viol 16 Flute 4	Tibia 8 Diapason 8 Quint 5-½
HATRED	Contra Tibia 16 Cello 8	Tibia 8 Violin 4	Tuba 8 VDO 8 Flute 4
ANGER	Contra Tibia 16 Cello 8	Tibia 8 Violin 4	VDO 8 Tuba 8 Flute 4
EXCITEMENT	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Cello 8	Tibia 8 Flute 4	Diapason 8 Quint 5-½ Flute 4 Violin 4
AGITATION	Cello 8	Tuba 8 Vox 8 Flute 4	Vox 16 Vox 8 VDO 8 Violin 4
SUSPENSE	Flute 8 Cello 8	Vox 8 Tuba 8 Violin 4 Flute 4	Quint 5-½ Violin 4
GARDEN		Violin 4	Tibia 8 Vox 8 Piccolo 2
WATER			Flute 4 Piccolo 2
RURAL		Flute 4	Tibia 16 Piccolo 2
CHILDREN		Flute 4 Orchestra Bells	VDO 8 Kinura 8 Flute 4 Piccolo 2

Symphonic Registrator Stop	Organ Divisions		
	Pedal	Accompaniment	Solo
HAPPINESS			Flute 4 Violin 4
FESTIVAL	Contra Tibia 16 Cello 8	Vox 8 Violin 4	Tuba 8 Vox 8 Quint 5-½ Flute 4 Violin 4
FOX TROT (Verse)	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Cello 8	Vox 8 Flute 4	Tibia 8 Vox 8 VDO 8
FOX TROT (Chorus)	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Cello 8	Tibia 8 Vox 8 Flute 4	Vox 16 Tibia 8 Vox 8 VDO 8 Tuba 8 Flute 4 Piccolo 2 Xylophone
WALTZ (Verse)		Vox 8	Tibia 8 Quint 5-½
WALTZ (Chorus)	Cello 8	Vox 8	Tibia 16 Vox 8 Violin 4
MARCH	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Cello 8	Tibia 8 Vox 8 Flute 4	Diapason 8 Tibia 8 Vox 16 Vox 8 Kinura 8 VDO 8 Tuba 8 Quint 5-½ Flute 4 Violin 4 Piccolo 2
ROYALTY	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Diapason 8 Tuba 8 Cello 8	Tuba 8 Diapason 8 Flute 4 Octave 4 Clarion 4	Vox 16 Diapason 8 Tuba 8 Quint 5-½ Octave 4 Clarion 4 Piccolo 2 VDO 8
MYSTERIOUS		Tuba 8 Violin 4	Tibia 8 Quint 5-½ Flute 4
GRUESOME	Contra Tibia 16	Kinura 8	Vox 16 Diapason 8 Quint 5-½
NEUTRAL-1	Cello 8		VDO 8 Vox 8 Violin 4
NEUTRAL-2	Flute 8	Vox 8	Tibia 8 VDO 8

Symphonic Registrator Stop	Organ Divisions		
	Pedal	Accompaniment	Solo

NEUTRAL-3	Cello 8	Tibia 8 Vox 8	Vox 8 VDO 8 Quint 5-1/2 Violin 4
RIOT	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Diapason 8 Tuba 8	Diapason 8 Octave 4	Tibia 16 Vox 16 Vox 8 Diapason 8 Tibia 8 VDO 8 Tuba 8 Quint 5-1/2 Octave 4 Violin 4 Clarion 4 Piccolo 2
FIRE	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Diapason 8 Cello 8	Vox 8 Diapason 8 Tuba 8 Flute 4	Vox 16 Diapason 8 Tibia 8 Vox 8 VDO 8 Tuba 8 Quint 5-1/2 Flute 4 Violin 4 Twelfth 2-3/4
STORM	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Diapason 8 Cello 8	Vox 8 Diapason 8 Tuba 8 Flute 4	Vox 16 Vox 8 Diapason 8 VDO 8 Tibia 8 Tuba 8 Quint 5-1/2 Flute 4 Violin 4 Piccolo 2
CHASE	Contra Tibia 16 Cello 8	Octave 4 Flute 4	Tibia 8 VDO 8 Violin 4
CHINESE	Cello 8	Flute 4	Vox 16 Vox 8 VDO 8 Kinura 8 Quint 5-1/2
ORIENTAL		Tibia 8	Vox 16 Tuba 8 VDO 8
SPANISH	Cello 8		Vox 16 Vox 8 VDO 8 Quint 5-1/2 Flute 4
FUNERAL	Contra Tibia 16	Tibia 8	Flute 4
SORROW	Contra Tibia 16	Vox 8	Tibia 16
PATHETIC			Vox 8

Symphonic Registrator Stop	Organ Divisions		
	Pedal	Accompaniment	Solo

CATHEDRAL	Contra Tibia 16 Flute 8 Diapason 8	Tibia 8 Diapason 8 Octave 4 Flute 4	Vox 16 Diapason 8 Tibia 8 Quint 5-1/2 Octave 4 Flute 4 Piccolo 2
FULL ORGAN	Contra Tibia 16 Diapason 8 Flute 8 Tuba 8 Cello 8	Contra Viol 16 Tibia 8 Diapason 8 Tuba 8 Clarion 4 Violin 4 Octave 4 Flute 4	Vox 16 Tibia 16 Diapason 8 Tibia 8 Tuba 8 VDO 8 Quint 5-1/2 Violin 4 Flute 4 Octave 4 Clarion 4 Piccolo 2

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