



The proscenium and organ grills show the Spanish influence. A well-kept theatre, a rarity these days.

**O**n the eve of April 29, the Mt. Baker Theatre in Bellingham, Washington, celebrated its 50th anniversary. Since only silent movies had been shown during the early years of the theatre, a program similar to its opening in 1927, was planned, beginning with a medley of organ solos played by Gunnar Anderson followed by sing-along slides of old pop tunes.

A quartette of singers appeared on stage and entertained with tunes from the past movies and Broadway musicals. The classical guitarist, Tom Patterson, played solos ranging from old classics to exhilarating and tempestuous Spanish music. The program came to a close with a rousing performance by the Barber-

# 50TH ANNIVERSARY

## MT. BAKER THEATRE

The spacious lobby of the Mt. Baker Theatre at the time of the 1927 opening.



shop Chorus of Bellingham.

The story of the Mt. Baker Theatre began in 1927. William Fox had become a leading figure in theatre history and doubled the size of his movie empire by purchasing a large share of West Coast Theatres. Most large cities were monopolized by the Orpheum and Pantages Circuit, so West Coast Theatre chain decided to build an elegant movie house in a smaller city and Bellingham was chosen. This theatre would contain 2,000 seats and have Spanish architecture and old world styling throughout its interior.

The 1927 opening was a spectacular event. Ushers in tuxedos assisted local patrons and dignitaries as they entered the theatre through a lobby filled with flowers. Programs which included two pages of entertainment were given to each person. An orchestra in the pit accompanied each vaudeville act. Last, but not least, the theatre had installed a fine pipe organ and this was played during the showing of the silent movie feature.

The organ, a 2/10 Wurlitzer, Style 215, Opus 1558, was mounted on an elevator. Joy Brown and Gunnar Anderson were the original organists.

After a successful career in Hollywood as recording organist for Universal Motion Picture Studios and resident organist for the Beverly Hills Hotel in Beverly Hills, Gunnar Anderson returned to the northwest and is again organist for the Mt. Baker Theatre. From time to time he gives special Sunday afternoon concerts and has been featured on the same organ for the Puget Sound Chapter. He maintains an 80-foot music studio containing two organs and two grand pianos. He excels in both classical and popular music so his programs contain much versatility and diversified styling.

Anderson is heard weekly over KPUG radio station with his organ music emanating from the Mt. Baker Theatre. In former years, he was staff organist for KVI in Tacoma, Washington, and broadcasted daily on a large Robert Morton organ in the Music Box Theatre. He began playing in theatres at the age of 14 and later became a scholarship student at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.

The Mt. Baker Theatre is probably the only theatre on the Pacific coast which is using live organ music dur-

ing intermissions between movie features.

After all these years, this organ is still in use due to the efforts of organ technicians Dick Warburton, Buck Strickland and Jeffrey Fox. □

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE

by Lance Johnson

1. I would like to know the difference, if any, in scale and tonality between the Wurlitzer 16' Tuba Profunda and the Wurlitzer 16' Ophicleide and their extensions, the Harmonic Tuba and the Tuba Horn.

Ans. The smaller Wurlitzers used the Tuba Horn which was medium to small scaled and softer than

most tubas. The Ophicleide which was the pedal 16' extension was only slightly louder than a 16' Diaphone. It was voiced quite smooth, mellow and soft. The style 185 (7 rk.) and the style 200 used the Tuba Horn as the only chorus reed instead of the style D Trumpet. We then skip all the way up to the twenty-rank Publix No. 1 where the Tuba Horn is larger scaled and on 15 inches of wind. It is now quite a bit louder and placed in the main chamber. The Harmonic Tuba was a slightly louder rank than the ten inch Tuba Horn on small organs but was even duller in voicing due to the fact that more pipes were harmonic (double length). They were found on larger two-manual organs from ten ranks up to 13 ranks and on small three-manual organs. Tuba scales varied on various sizes of organs.

2. Is there any difference between the Wurlitzer 16' Bass and the Wurlitzer 16' Diaphone? Between the Wurlitzer Diaphonic Diapason, the Open Diapason and Horn Diapason?

Ans. The 16' Bass stop was actually another name for the 16' Diaphone. The Diaphonic Diapason meant that the upper lips on the flues were leathered and the 12 or 18 bass notes were beater generated pipes. The Open Diapason may or may not have leather upper lips and would not have a beater generated bass extension. The Horn Diapason was slightly smaller scaled and brighter.

3. I have been using 2-mil perflex for several years instead of leather on my toy counter and it doesn't hold up as well as leather. Should I try 3-mil? What is your opinion of perflex?

Ans. Perflex was never meant to be used on high pressure systems. It stretches a great deal and will loosen on blow pneumatics. Try either the heaviest grade pouch leather or poly-lon.

4. I recently examined a Wicks-Morton organ in a Denver church. I know that Wicks built organs

Gunnar Anderson at the Mt. Baker console. He played this organ on opening night in 1927 and is again playing the same organ in the same location in 1977.

