



By this time many theater organ music lovers have had an opportunity to hear George Wright perform on a theater organ. In a recent concert appearance in the Pacific Northwest, Wright played an electronic organ, which had been installed in a theater for the occasion. For his final encore, he moved to the theater organ, which had reposed sadly in the pit through-out the evening. The response to this bit of "real" organ music is said to have been deafening, and one can well imagine the difference between the two instruments.

Last April 21st, however, a rather unusual factor was introduced to the concert played by Wright in Fresno at the Warner Brother's Theater, even more unusual than the switch from an electronic to a pipe organ as occurred in Seattle. The 4 manual 14 rank Robert Morton in the Fresno Theater is a decidedly unique instrument, and is without a doubt, the loudest 14 rank organ that Morton ever built! In 1953 this organ was serviced preparatory to having the instrument broadcast as a regular feature of a local radio station. The console lowers on an elevator into a circular concrete enclosure, and when at the bottom of this barrel-shaped well, the sound of the organ when played was absolutely deafening.



The chambers are located under the stage, with shutter openings across the entire width of the stage. The 14 ranks include:—Tuba 16'-4', English Horn 16'-8', Open Diapason 16'-4', Tibia Clausa 16'-2', Flute 16'-2', Gamba 8'-4', Violi 8'-4', Celest II 8'-4', Celeste III 8'-4', Oboe Horn 8', Kinura 8', Krumet 8', Vox Humana 8', and Clarinet 8'. The 16' octave of the Tibia is so large that a double secondary is required in the chest to operate the pallets!

To have heard the organ in 1953 and then to have heard it as played by Wright in 1958 was to reveal a difference in the instrument almost impossible to describe. Under the command of George Wright, the organ was breath-takingly beautiful. It was obvious to the experienced listener, however, that more had transpired than met the ear. The organ which had before sounded loud and raucous, unrefined and coarse, even when in perfect tune was now smoothly beautiful. Responsible for the transformation was Dick Villemin of Porterville, Calif. Many hours of exacting work had been put in on the organ by Villemin, revoicing, refining and tuning. Changes were made in the Tibia tremolo hook-up so that the right adjustment in speed and depth were now possible. Other changes were completed in the mechanical parts, and finally, for the concert, the top half of the Tibia rank was replaced with a Wurlitzer Tibia. The results were almost unbelievable, and Villemin must be given

Close-up of the 4 manual Robert Morton console. Note three small floodlights to illuminate manuals.

credit for making the "Wonder Morton" an instrument worthy of the capabilities of Mr. Wright.

The concert included 17 numbers, three of which were medleys. From This Moment On, Edelma, This Nearly Was Mine, Duke Ellington Medley, When Day Is Done, Vanessa, Quiet Village (with friend bird) and Selections from "My Fair Lady" made up the first half of the program. After a short intermission, the concert was re-opened with Married I Can Always Get, followed by Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen, Medley of Cole Porter Hits, Roller Coaster, What Is There To Say, The Whistler And His Dog, Five Songs By Rogers and Hart, Honky Tonk Train Blues and American Bolero. The Five Songs By Rogers and Hart featured Guy Thomas, a vocalist. He did a professional job, and was very expertly accompanied by Wright.

This was the first chance for most of those attending to hear George Wright at the console of a Robert Morton. It must be truthfully stated that the Warner Theater Morton was outstanding and worthy of the talents of the soloist. It was truly a memorable evening of pure enjoyment.



Richard Villemin, the man responsible for the excellent condition of the organ.

