

LEONARD LEIGH PROFILE



The Only Wurlitzer on TV

Television has been as prolific in "that-away" westerns as it has been barren of programs featuring the Theatre Organ as an instrument. With everything in its favor, such as FM sound, quality transmission, even in some instances theatre organs in studios, no one seems to have realized the entertainment potential of such programming. Even the most "languid" theatre organ enthusiast would overlook the inadequacies of the sound systems in even the newest of TV sets, if they could but find such a program channeling thru the midnite sky! As a matter of fact, it might just be possible that John Q. Public might find welcome relief from all that he needs to be relieved of in TV entertainment (?) with a real good Theatre Organ Program!!!

Just dreaming of the good old days??? Not on your life, for the lucky listeners in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area can tune in Leonard Leigh on KSTP-TV, Channel 5, from 12:20 to 1:00 P.M. on Monday through Friday, or from 11:00 to 12:00 midnite on Saturdays for just that—Wurlitzer Theatre Organ Music! Also heard on Sundays from 11:30 to 12:00 P.M., "Leonard Leigh Plays" has proven to be an increasingly popular part of the station's schedule! Some of these programs are also broadcast from Radio Station KOB, Albuquerque, N. M. at about 10:00 P.M. Monday through Friday. The daytime broadcast is in conjunction with an audience-participation, whereas the evening shows are all organ music. Taste-ful settings, good camera work, combined

with excellent musicianship combine to produce a truly beautiful TV presentation!

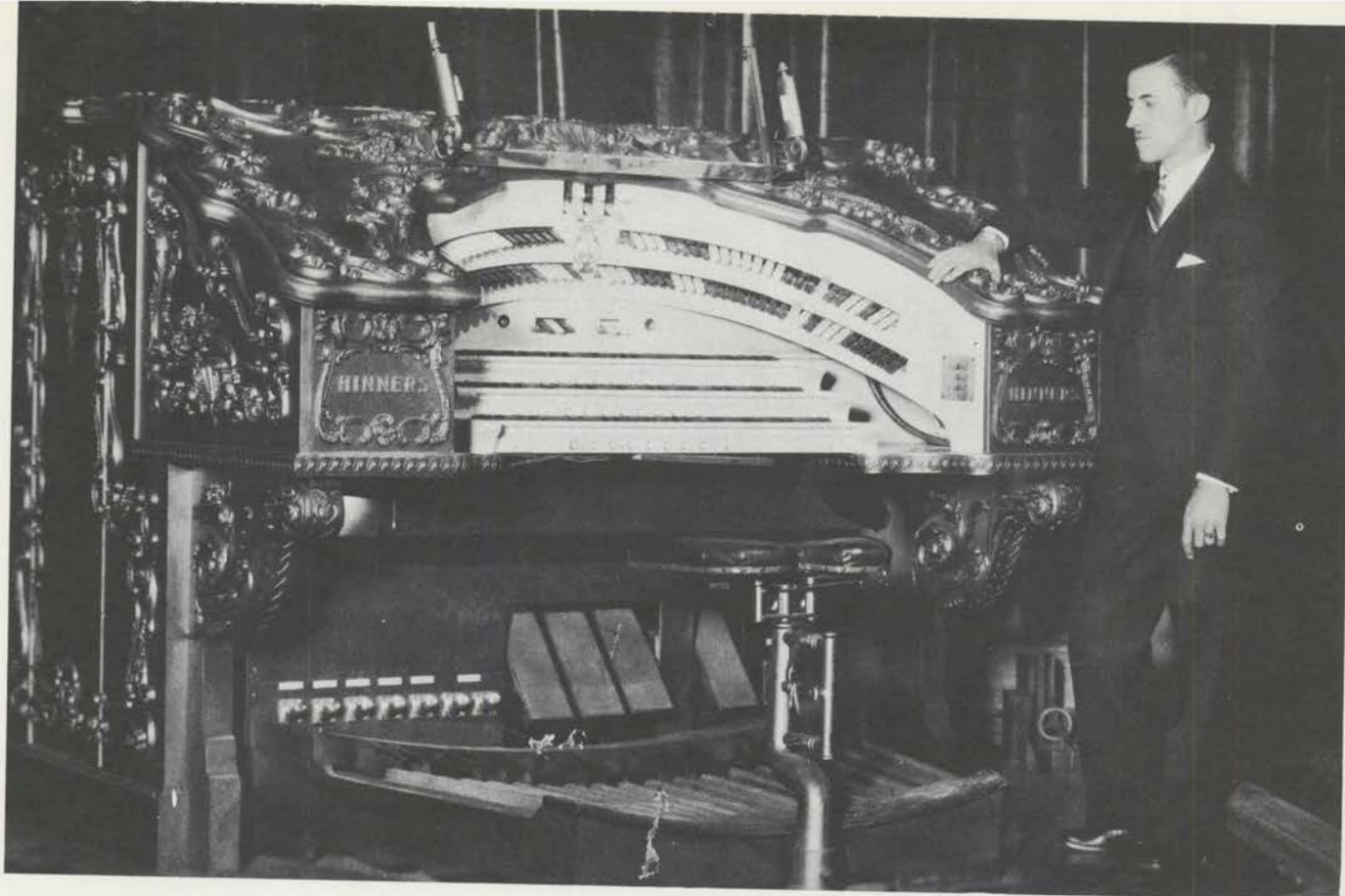
The whole project started, of course, when Leigh left high school back about 1915 to work at the Regent Theatre in Minneapolis when the regular organist failed to show up—uh huh, demon rum! To use Leonard's own words, "After six months at \$18 per week (over-paid), joined the union and got a job at the Blue Mouse Theatre in St. Paul at \$28 per. Both had 2 manual, 8 rank tubular pneumatic Kimballs. Played from 11 A.M. until 5 P.M., and being overly ambitious, managed to share the evening across from the Blue Mouse at the elegant Princess Theatre on a 12 stop Kilgen. "I got away with the two jobs for two months when the bosses found out, and I was fired from both jobs!" At the time of Leigh's engagement at the Blue Mouse, there appeared on the same program a young Russian violinist, Dave Rubinoff.

Being in the right place at the right time always helps, for the very next day he bumped into the manager of the Strand Theatre (now the Forum Cafeteria) in Minneapolis which was due to re-open after being closed during a flu epidemic, and he was hired to play a very fine Weickert-Wangerin 2 manual, 26 rank installed in 1912. This organ is now installed in a church in Waconia, Minn.—it has a beautiful Cornepean, Leigh recalls.

During the three years that followed, Leigh was among the first to enjoy the distinction of introducing community singing at the Strand. There followed a brief engagement in 1921 at the next door Garrick, now the Cinerama Theatre, the Century, from which he was called to the new and elegant million dollar Capitol Theatre in St. Paul for a two week fill-in. He stayed six years!—playing the four manual 36 rank Kilgen which boasted two 2' piccolos. The names on the spec list took up as much room as the 16' reeds it didn't have!

In 1925 someone decided that the Wurlitzer had something to be desired and the twin to this Kilgen was ousted from the beautiful State Theatre in Minneapolis where Eddie Dunstedter held forth, and in went the first Wurlitzer in the Northwest. The specs were the same as its twin Wurlitzer which replaced the Capitol Kilgen in 1927. (Both organs are Model 260, Opus 959 going to the State, and now being the major part of S. H. Cargill's Wurlitzer, and Opus 1404 going to the Capitol, and now installed in the KSTP-TV studio.) The new Capitol Wurlitzer was played by Leigh until a strike in 1928.

At about this time, Leonard was called in to make a couple of the old 78 r.p.m. records, which were produced on the old Gennett Label. No. 6300 had two organ solos, "Sailin' On," and "My Hawaiian Song of Love"; followed by #6928, which had two organ numbers with vo-



Leonard Leigh inspecting the Hinner's Unit organ (first & last try) 10 ranks.

cals, "Magnolia" and "Here Am I—Broken Hearted." Neither record sold a million copies, although copies are still to be found in several of the organ record collections around the country.

Leigh "took-off" and joined Publix Great States in Illinois touring through Rockford (Coronado Theatre, 4/16 Barton), Joliet (all Bartons), and winding up in Peoria at the Madison Theatre. "Some stockholder in the Hinner's Organ Co. of Pekin, Ill. (it might as well have been in China) was a part owner of the Madison, so a bill of goods was sold in the form of "the worst excuse for a theatre organ that I have ever seen," said Leigh. "The Main contained an Open Diapason, Salicional, Flute and Tibia. The Solo had a String, Vox Humana, Tuba, Oboe, Clarinet and Dulciana. The 16's were Bourdon and Open. I was stuck on this freak for two years!" The console was empty and very commodious, and the stage hands hid their moonshine in it! (Ed. Note: This procedure is not recommended.)

After urgent pleas, Leigh was made manager, Orchestra Leader, Organist, and production manager at the Coronado in Rockford, and for the summer of 1929 "I had a ball which ended up in a nervous

collapse!! Small wonder!!! After recovery, I was to open the new Paramount Theatre in Hammond. On the way there, a difference of opinion as to highway rights caused a nasty smash-up and as a result, I played an engagement in a Chicago hospital."

Now recovered, Leigh returned to St. Paul to the now renamed Paramount (nee Capitol) where he played until he joined KSTP radio in 1934. The station at that time had a nice three manual Robert Morton, to which Wurlitzer subsequently added three reeds, an English Horn, a Saxophone and an Oboe Horn. The program "Dream Ship" and others of a miscellaneous nature were broadcast for many years. Leigh's other duties during his 13-year stay included direction of a 25-piece orchestra with a chorus, which was fed to NBC. "One of the singers was a \$7.50 per week show artist named Peggy Lee. This was in '38 or '39," Leigh recalls. "I am told that she does better now."

During these salad years, Leigh conducted the St. Paul Civic Opera, the Coronation during the Winter Carnival (writing all of the special music) and "generally making a nuisance of myself until 1947 when I got the big head and

allowed that Hollywood could no longer do without me! I went west—and fell flat on my face. After doing the Blondie show and a few odd jobs, I rediscovered the fact that eating IS important, and after investigation, wound up in Phoenix where I hit the jack-pot."

In Phoenix, Leonard sold and demonstrated Hammonds, became staff organist at KOOL, got a job playing the souped-up job all over town—all at once! For a change of climate and scene, Leigh descended on San Francisco, and there held forth with June Melendy at the Villa Chartier in San Mateo, followed by a stint at the Bel Aire. Returning to Phoenix, he formed a trio to play a long engagement at the Westward Ho.

At this point, Leonard turned to selling organs, and became sales manager for Baldwin for the State of Arizona. "Two years of peace and quiet on a lovely mountain-side was interrupted by my former boss and organ buff, Stan Hubbard, calling to say that he had his paws on the old Wurlitzer. Net result—back to St. Paul to make records. Score—2 on the market (RCA-Victor Alb. # LSP1665 The Mighty Wurlitzer and the Roaring Hi-Fi Twenties, and RCA-Victor Alb. #LSP1795— The Mighty Wurlitzer Re-



Leonard Leigh at the 32 rank Kilgen organ, Capitol Theatre, St. Paul, Minn. Replaced by Wurlitzer in 1927 (Top manual echo 6 ranks).



Souped up Hammond #7. Phoenix, Arizona, 1950-1952. (2 Swell Pedals—Solo thru Leslie, Acc. thru HR40.)

members the Good Old Songs). Two more are to follow, to be called "A Wurlitzer in Every Port" and "Piping Hot and Cool."

The former Capitol Wurlitzer is now rather unique in several respects. The pipes are housed in a building completely separated from the studio and console. The shutters are permanently fixed in the open position, the swell pedals operating volume controls. An elaborate microphone set-up is placed in front of each chamber, and the sound is transmitted to the organist and studio audience through a battery of hi-quality speakers, although they can be shut off, and the sound picked by the organist through earphones. When broadcast, a separate set of mikes picks up the music for audio transmission direct, rather than through the speakers. The swell pedals control the volume through all of the sound channels, in the studio and on the air.

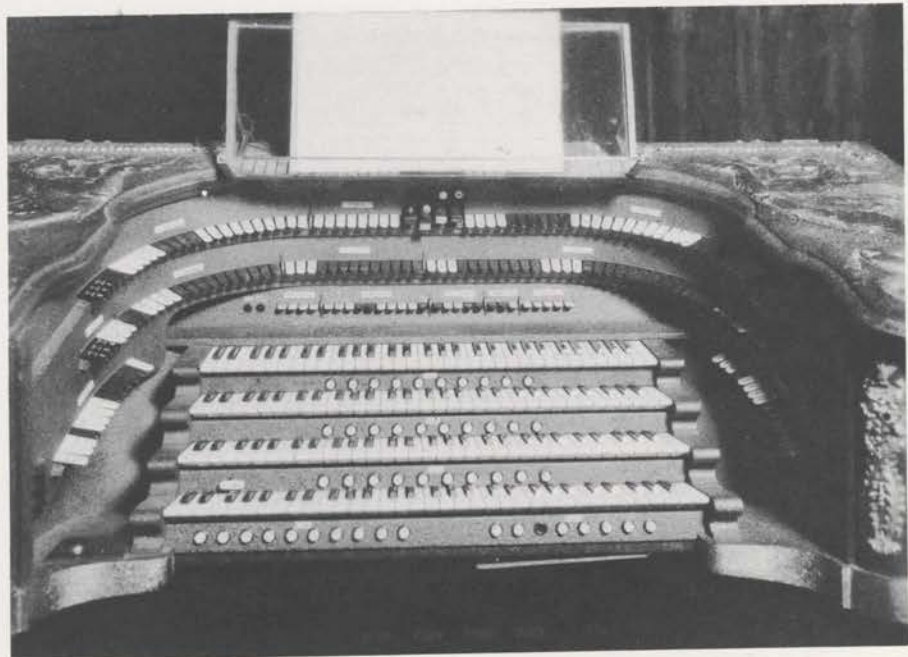
At the console, the organ sounds "live," although the sound is in some respects different from what might logically expect of such a set-up. So-called standard combinations somehow come out a bit unexpectedly changed!

The KSTP organization is to be commended for their excellent judgment in

programming the Mighty Wurlitzer as a regular TV and Radio feature, and Leonard Leigh need not take a back seat to any contemporary organist in his precise and spirited display of organ artistry. It is a beautiful sight to see on a TV

screen, and the many close-ups of his hands on the keyboards, combined with the sound of real theatre organ music, provides a thrill that many had thought was long gone from the American scene.

The specifications of the organ as now installed are as follows:—



Barton 16 ranks, Coronado Theatre, Rockford, Ill., 1929-30.

KSTP WURLITZER. STUDIOS OF KSTP-TV, MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL, MINN.

MAIN CHAMBER	Compass	Pipes	Pres.	Pedal	Accomp.	Acc 2T	Great	Gt 2T	Solo
Open Diapason	16-4'	85	10"	16-8-4'	8'	8'	16-8-4'		8'
Tibia Clausa	8-4'	73	8"		8-4'		8'		
Salicional	8-4'	73	10"		8-4'		8-4'		
Viol d'Orch	8-2'	85	10"	8'	16-8-4'		16-8-4-2'		8'
2 rank Viol Celeste	8-4'	73	10"	8'	8-4'		8-4'		
Clarinet	8'	61	10"	8'	8'		16-8'		
Bourdon Flute	16-2'	97	10"	16-8'	16-8-4- 2 2/3-2'		16-8-4- 2 2/3-2-1 3/5		
Vox Humana	8-4'	61	10"		8-4'		16-8'		8'
Vibrachord		44			16-8'		8'		
SOLO CHAMBER									
Eng. Post Horn	8'	61	10"				8'		8'
Tuba Profunda	16-4'	85	10"	16-8'	8'	8'	16-8-4'	16'	16-8-4'
Brass Trumpet	8'	61	10"				8'		8'
French Horn	8'	61	12"			8'	8'		8'
Tibia Clausa	16-2 2/3	97	12"	16-8'	8-4'	8-4'	16-8-4-2 2/3'	8'	16-8-4'
Oboe Horn	8'	61	10"		8'				8'
Brass Saxophone	8'	61	10"		8'	8'	16-8'		16-8'
Orch. Oboe	8'	61	10"				8'		8'
Kinura	8'	61	10"		8'		8'		8'
Triangle						X			
Chimes		25					X		X
Xylophone		37					X		X
Tuned Sleigh Bells		25			8'		X		
Marimba-Harp		49			8'		8'		
Glockenspiel		37					X		X
Bells (Re-It)		37					X		X
Piano	16-4'	85		16'	8-4'		16-8-4'		
Mandolin Att.					X				
Snare Drum-Persian Cymbals*					X				
Chinese Block-Cymbal*					X				
Tom Tom-Bongo Drums*					X				
Castanets					X				
Tamborine					X				
Bass Drum				X					
Kettle Drum				X					
Crash Cymbal				X					
Cymbal				X					

Couplers—Solo to Great 8' 2 T, Solo to Gt. 16-4', Solo to Acc. 8', Gt. & Acc. to Ped 8'

Note: Crescendo Pedal as was.

Tremolos-Solo-Tuba-Tibia
6 on 5 Main-Vox & Tibia II
tabs.

*these 3 tablets serve
double duty thru toggle
switches placed at left
of Accomp. manual.

Toe Pistons—
1. Maracas
2. Chinese Gong
3. Boat Whistle

Master swell pedal is now for control of Solo gain control.

Solo swell pedal is now for control of Main gain control.

Main swell pedal is now for control of All percussions (Piano-Toy c. etc.)

Piano sustain button on former master ped. also controls Vibracord sustain.

Feeds from gain controls are reversible to feed TV or Radio as well as monaural, to either.

Organ is heard in TV studio over 160 watts of speakers with gain control and head phone plug.

Console is semi-portable, being mounted on platform.

Both chambers and pick-up chamber and percussion section are air-conditioned and humidified. Temp. 79°, Hum. 37%, year round.

Originally an 8' Dulciana was in the Main. replaced by second Voix Celeste which was connected to first V. Cel. Dulciana Tabs were used for second tibia on new chest.

Solo Quintadena replaced by Eng. Post Horn. Drawn on Clar. tab on Solo—On Bourdon tab on Gt. French Horn installed on new chest in Solo chamber—drawn on Quintadena tab on Solo-4' Dulciana tab on Gt.—Clar. tab 2nd Touch on Acc.

Reverberation is added to output by mechanical means since studio is acoustically treated for voice. Rev. point is 2.5 sec. for average use, adjustable at will.

New blower is 10 hp—all pneumatics have been recovered.