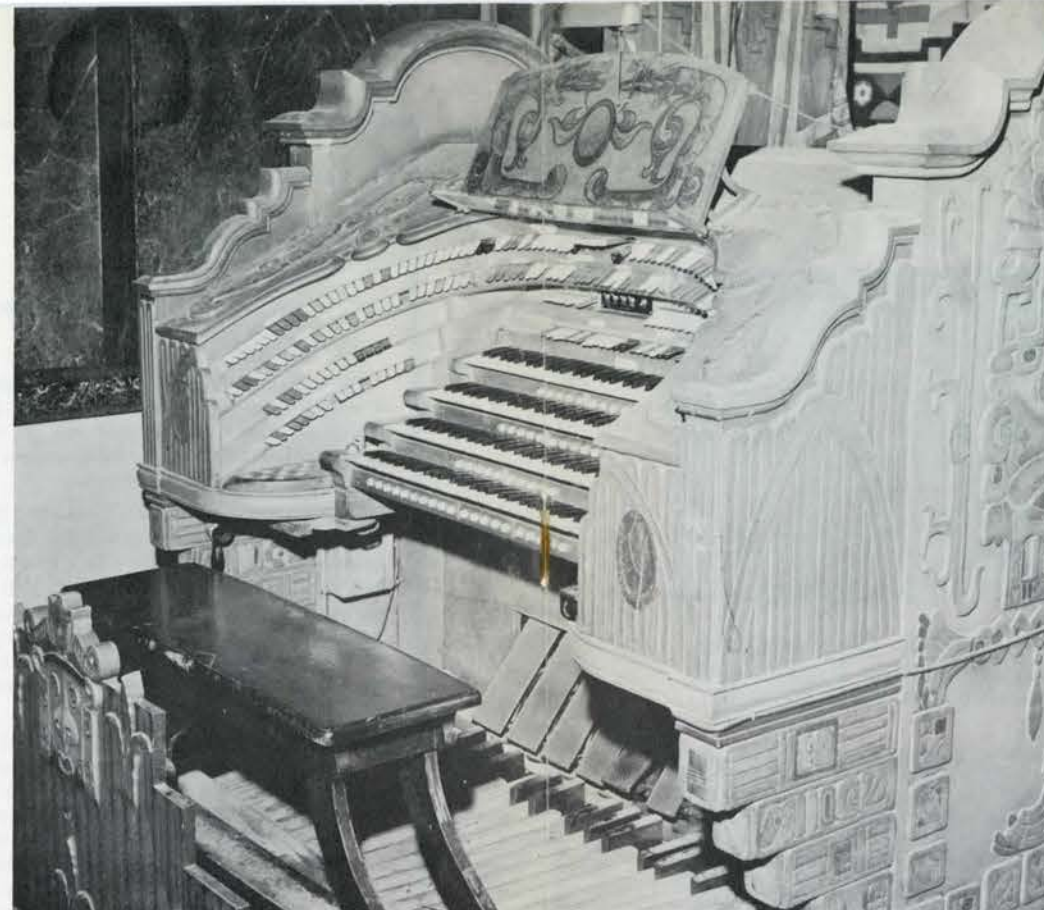
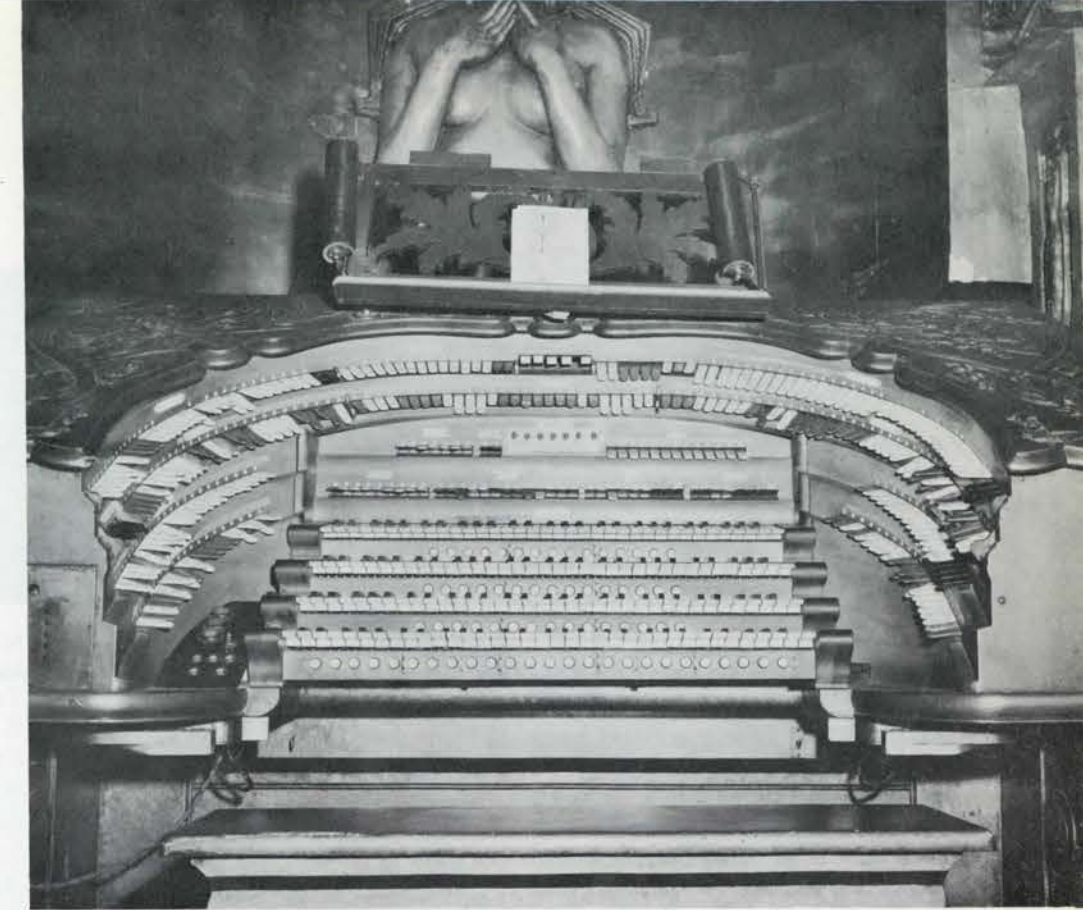


Arcadia Roller Rink, Detroit. 4-20 Wurlitzer formerly Capitol Theater, Detroit.



Fisher Theater, Detroit. 4-33 Wurlitzer



Fox Theater, Detroit. 4-36 Wurlitzer

ORGANS OF DETROIT

By
ROGER MUMBRUE

I, like all the rest of the enthusiasts, certainly enjoy the articles that appear in the Theater Organ; however, there has seemed to be one thing missing, that being articles dealing with the theater organs of my home area, Detroit. Yes, the Mighty Wurlitzer even found its way as far north as Michigan. In fact, we even have a couple of the largest, but I'll get into those in a moment.

As far as the theaters are concerned, we have no organs playing regularly. We do, however, have two public buildings where live theater organ music can be heard, these being the Arcadia Roller Rink and Detroit's indoor sports arena, Olympia Stadium. I'll tell you more about these in a moment.

Meanwhile, back in the theaters; perhaps the best way would be to give a listing of the larger organs first and then discuss them more in detail, so here goes:

Fox Theater, 4-36 Wurlitzer; also 3-13 Moller (Lobby).
Fisher Theater, 4-33 Wurlitzer.
Hollywood Theater, 4-21 Barton.
Palms Theater, 4-20 Wurlitzer.

Arcadia Roller Rink, 4-20 Wurlitzer.
United Artists Theater, 3-17 Wurlitzer.
Olympia Stadium, 3-17 Barton.
6-Mile Uptown Theater, 3-11 Wurlitzer.
Cinderella Theater, 3-10 Wurlitzer.
Riviera Theater, 3-10 Morton.
Avalon Theater, 3-10 Barton.
Birmingham Theater, 3-10 Barton.
Redford Theater, 3-10 Barton.
Royal Oak Theater, 3-10 Barton.

There are quite a number of smaller organs, to be sure, but I won't go into them here. As usual, the larger theaters and organs were to be found in the downtown houses. However, many of the theaters outstate had organs too. The majority of these were Bartons with a few Kimballs thrown in for good measure. These were smaller instruments, not over 13 ranks. The largest of these is the 3-13 Barton in the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor, Michigan. There was one major exception to this rule; that being the 4-15 Page installed in the Michigan Theater in Flint, Michigan. This was an unusually well unified organ of 206 stops. It was

removed last summer by Robert Howland, who is finishing his new home where the organ will be installed. A rank list appeared in the Summer issue of the Theater Organ.

The Fox Theater and its Wurlitzer are certainly something to stir the imagination of any red-blooded organ enthusiast. The theater is huge, as its seating capacity is nearly 6,000. The stop list was thoroughly covered in Judd Walton's article on the San Francisco Fox, so I'll just mention the differences in installation. The main console rose on an elevator in the orchestra pit, but years ago was moved to right of the stage where it rests on a platform about three feet from the floor. The organ is being maintained, although not in perfect shape. It is played for Good Friday services held in the theater. I believe the second console is still operative, although it is now stored in the basement. The tales are still told of the fun that Jack Franz, the organist, had with the second console on Halloween. He sent the main console up from the pit with a skeleton riding the bench, bathed in a

green spotlight, while he played his solo from the second console.

The 32 foot diaphone is located in a chamber on the left side of the theater. Unfortunately many of these are in poor adjustment rendering the set unusable, but they are still connected, and a real novelty to hear. Apparently they were extremely effective as the management still tells of the plaster they have loosened and the glass they were supposedly capable of breaking. The percussions are, for the most part, installed in chambers on the right hand side of the stage.

The organ in the Fisher Theater is even more unique, possessing many qualities unfamiliar to the usual Wurlitzer style. The Fisher Theater is very ornate; complete even to a small waterfall in the lobby. It is patterned after an Aztec temple. Although small in seating capacity (2700 seats), it has a huge ceiling. The basement stairways appear to be entrances to a dungeon, and the wall brackets as torches mounted on the wall. The theater is kept in a very fine state of

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Hollywood Theater, Detroit. 4-21 Barton.

(Continued from page 17)

repair. The organ has played publicly from time to time, so has been kept in reasonably good condition, the only real problem is the replacement of magnets (they are late style black caps), which burn out in quantities.

The Fisher organ is complete with a grand piano, which due to the size of the theater, can be heard well. The most peculiar feature of the organ is its unusual stop arrangement, although there were a few others built along this fashion. On any one manual the stops are grouped by chambers, of which there are four. Of course, this makes the organ easy to play in a "straight" manner, however it is hard to find your favorite tibia or string combination as you may have to reach to up to four different locations to find the stops. I'll write the rank list.

Note especially the many celestes. This gives a particularly fine string chorus.

orchestral chamber

trumpet	Foundation Chamber
open diapason	
orchestral oboe	diaphonic diapason
kinura	tibia clausa
string	gamba
string celeste	gamba celeste
saxophone	harmonic flute (4 foot)
oboe horn	
French horn	Main chamber
coranglais	tuba horn
quintadena	clarinet
quintadena celeste	viol d' orch.
	viol celeste
	krumet
	salicional
	voix celeste
	concert flute
	vox humana
	dulciana
	unda maris

Solo chamber
tuba mirabilis
English horn
open diapason
tibia clausa
vox humana

The Arcadia Roller Rink contains the 4-20 Wurlitzer that was once heard in the Capitol Theater, Detroit. It is a twin to the organ in the Palms, which is no longer playable, and is minus the brass sets of pipes. Arcadia is not a large rink, but very live as rinks go, so the playing conditions are almost ideal, the delay in response being small, but with a long reverberation time. The organ is played nightly by "Wild Bill" Holleman and is a real thrill to hear. Bill, being the avid enthusiast that he is, did the only natural thing, and added a post horn to the organ.

The United Artists' Wurlitzer is much like the Richmond Mosque in stoplist, however the theater is much smaller. It no longer is usable due to the addition of a Todd A-O screen. (Somebody

should shoot the guy who invented sound movies and wide screens.)

The only other playing organ in the city is also unique to some degree, that being the 3-17 Barton in the Olympia Stadium. The unique feature is that the stadium seats 14,000 people, and the organ is not amplified. Surprisingly the volume is adequate, but of course it must be played nearly wide open, with the pipework on very high pressure.

The last of the larger organs is the Barton in the Hollywood Theater. It is quite playable and used occasionally. Although the Bartons were quite common in this area, I understand they were scarce in other parts of the country. Hearing one Barton is not quite the same as hearing them all. They produced some very fine organs and others not quite so good. For a given size of organ, they were often quite lush, and very beautiful in the hands of a person aware of their tonal possibilities.

Now that I've told you of the organs that aren't playing, maybe I should mention the ones that are—those being the organs in homes. There are 16 theater organs in homes here, and one in a private school gymnasium. However, the hobby is quite recent as only three of the organs have been in since before 1950. Claire Dunham's 2-8 Wurlitzer has been playing since 1930. Several of the sets were purchased directly from Wurlitzer. Clare has moved the organ three times around Detroit. Once he lived in an apartment house and had the blower in the basement with the wind line running up the side of the building. As you guessed, this arrangement didn't last long, so he moved it again. The moving presented much more of a problem to Claire than to the average person as he doesn't have a car. Professional moving was expensive, so he moved it in the only way he could. (Hold your breath.) He moved the entire organ in the side car of his Harley Davidson motorcycle, which he still owns. You can imagine the number of pieces that the organ would contain the size to fit in a side car of a motorcycle and the number of trips it took him.

The largest organ in a home in Detroit will be Robert Howland's 4-15 Page, or 4-16 with a newly acquired celeste string. There is one 3-14 Wurlitzer and then my own 3-13 Wurlitzer. Nat Brown, the owner of the 3-14 Wurlitzer has one of the Robert Morton v'oleon's that was mentioned in Vol. II, No. 4 of the Tibia, although it isn't quite in playable shape.

You can imagine how quickly any available theater organ is snapped up with such an enthusiastic group of theater organ lovers waiting. In fact, this is why there is no point in listing the size of all the home theater organs here in Detroit; by the time this letter reaches you, several of them will have added several ranks.

THE WURLITZER FACTORY SHIPMENT LIST.

Through the kind cooperation of Mr. Farny Wurlitzer, Chairman of the Board of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda, New York, A.T.O.E. in this issue presents the first installment of the now famous "Wurlitzer Installation List," as it has come to be known. Actually a record of factory shipments, it was started by W. Meakin Jones. Mr. Wurlitzer in a letter addressed to President Judd Walton, who completed the negotiations, states, "I am enclosing herewith a typewritten copy of the small memorandum book that Mr. W. Meakin Jones kept of the shipments made of the Wurlitzer Hope-Jones organs. This list starts with shipments made after October 14, 1911.

Now there were 3 organs shipped prior to that time. You will notice they have no dates on them. The reason for this is that these were shipped before Mr. Jones joined our organization, that is, Mr. W. Meakin Jones joined it.

In many of the designations it merely shows the city and the type of instrument that was shipped. The reason for this is that the organs were shipped to our own stores and then sold by the store to the theatres or other institutions.

Wherever we knew what it was the information was inserted later on.

If you have any questions to ask about this list, please write me. Now, this list runs through 1920. From then on there was another record kept and that we will have photostated because it is possible to do that. This original small book was not legible enough to photostat. The last list which will be photostated goes through 1943.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Farny W. Wurlitzer.

After considerable thought on the matter, the editorial staff of THEATRE ORGAN have decided to present the list to you with no corrections whatsoever. There are errors in it which readers will be quick to discover. Attempts have been made by several persons to bring the list up to date with corrections, but it is almost certain to have some error in it even though every effort might be made to make it perfect. For instance, Opus No. 1982 is listed as delivered to Mill Valley, Georgia, when actually it was shipped to Mill Valley, California. While these errors are not excessive, it will give an opportunity for some sleuthing on the part of everyone. Up-to-date information on the final or present disposition of these instruments will be compiled by A.T. O.E. as received from our readers and published from time to time. So here we go—have fun, and watch for succeeding issues!

