

This Church Prefers Theatre Organ

It isn't often that we hear of a theatre organ going into a church as a fully-loaded theatrical instrument and not some sorry excuse of a "re-built" theatre organ adapted for church use. The First Baptist Church of Salinas, California, wanted a large theatre organ and that is exactly what they now have.

First, let's go back to 1936 when the church had just completed build-

ing a new edifice. The late Merle Wharton (father of one of the church's current organists, Shirley Hansen) was on the new church music committee. Without question, he knew the new building must have a pipe organ. In June, 1937, the church purchased Wurlitzer Opus 209 from Oakland's Park Theatre. A Style 135-B, with added Dulciana, it was stripped of all percussions, ex-

cept the chimes, and the piano-style console was replaced with a Wicks-Morton console, and the organ generally adapted for more churchly use. Installed by a Bay Area duo, Martin and Fallis, the little instrument was, with these changes, a more musical instrument than in its previous home. Yet, due to a terrible installation, the organ had a buried, muffled sound.

By 1976 the church was again in need of another sanctuary. In this new building, great care was taken to design a good chamber with maximum egress. Opus 209 sounded much better in its new home, but it was still just 5 ranks trying to cope with a very active music program. As if this were not enough, the organ had to deal with an acoustically "dead" 500-seat auditorium.

Bert Robinson and Tom DeLay undertook the job of moving the instrument to the new church. The music committee could not budget for releathering or enlarging, and by late 1978 it was obvious — more than ever — the original 1919 zephyr would function no longer. In December of that year, while work was being organized to restore and enlarge 209, an extraordinary even occurred. The church received the donation of a complete 3/20 Wurlitzer.

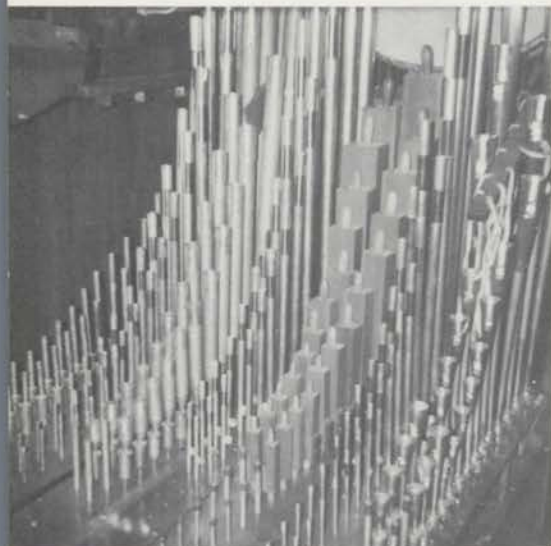
*Information was supplied by
Fran Aebi, ATOS charter member
and Tom DeLay, ATOS*

A view from the sanctuary. The grillework at top of the picture houses the organ chamber on an unusual three-level configuration. (Ed Avila Photo)





The Isis, Denver, Tuba Mirabilis on 25" wind pressure. (Tom DeLay Photo)



The solo division houses the Musette, Gamba and Celeste; Isis, Denver Clarinet; Flute Celeste, Voix Celeste, and French Trumpet. Not shown, Oboe Horn. (Tom DeLay Photo)

ATOS member Shirley Hansen entertains members of congregation before services with an all request program of standards, oldies, showtunes or whatever you'd like to hear. (Ed Avila Photo)



The 3/20 had been built-up over the years by charter ATOS member Francis Aebi, Jr. His initial organ purchase was the Hotel Fresno (Fresno, California) 2/5 Wurlitzer in 1956. The 3/20, a mostly composite unit, has a varied history. Included are a complete Style D, Opus 1127, from the Appleton/State Theatre in Watsonville, California; the aforementioned Hotel Fresno Style 100-special Opus 620; and a standard Style 100, Opus 1036, from the Grand Theatre in Beloit, Kansas. A new solid-state relay and Wurlitzer-style console shell, with solid-state components, was built by Wicks. The console, while appearing "Wurlitzer-standard" in terms of the shell, is quite different in stoprail layout. It is equipped with one very wide, single main stoprail and shorter, side stop bolsters. The backboard currently contains a large row of 34 tremulant, general, and second touch stopkeys. Eventually, all thirteen couplers will be removed from the main stop bolster and placed in a centrally located second stop rail on the backboard. This will provide for more unification on a stoprail where space is at a premium. All stops appear in the standard Wurlitzer order.

This installation also contains some rare pipework. The Clarinet and Tuba Mirabilis are from Denver's late Isis Theatre. Built in 1915, these two ranks are the oldest in the organ with the Tuba sitting on its original chest. The Tuba has its own independent blower and is voiced on 25" wind pressure. The Clarinet was

purchased from George Wright. The Wicks Organ Company built the 16' String extensions, French Trumpet, Gamba and Celeste. Schopps built a fine Wurlitzer-scaled Musette. Plenty of pedal is available with five ranks going to 16'. In the specifications list, there will be noted an abundance of accompaniment ranks. These are essential in a church installation. All Wurlitzer percussions, traps and effects are included.

Due to space limitations and chest design, the installation is all in one large chamber. This is basically as it was in the Aebi home. The installation is the liturgical equivalent to a proscenium installation; not unlike the Byrd Theatre in Richmond, Virginia. There are three shutter openings; the solo on the left; the main in the center; and the percussion on the right. Of the seven tremulants, only the ones for the Clarinet and Vox are in the chamber. All other tremes are enclosed in acoustically isolated locations.

The original 2/5 chamber (the 2/5 organ was sold to ATOSer Bert Robinson) was enlarged by contractor Jim Hoffman. He also oversaw the construction of the sheet lead-lined tremulant rooms. The actual installation was carried out by Fran Aebi, Bert Robinson and Tom DeLay. Nearly all of the windlines were built by Wayne Ernest.

This has been a very long and difficult installation. All but five ranks had cables that were too short and had to be spliced. To install the two ranks of 16' strings required one day's work of engineering and rigging. Winding took at least three months. All told, it was nearly one and one-half years from the removal at the Aebi residence to the completed church installation. A good portion of the time was spent solving problems encountered in the triangular chamber with the floor on three levels. This triangular shape no doubt acts as a giant acoustical horn, without parallel walls to create that acoustical problem known as "standing waves." The sound really "gets-out." A comment was made that one can look up at the chamber and practically "see" the sound coming out! The instrument is now undergoing the final stages of finishing and tonal regulation.

Tom Hazleton dedicated the or-



Tom Hazleton after the organ dedication, June 29, 1980.

(Elbert Dawson Photo)

gan on June 29, 1980 in a fine evening program. The program contained most elements of music, classical, standards, show tunes and hymns. True to his reputation for good musicianship, Tom brought out the best in the organ and a packed sanctuary was properly in-

doctrinated to real theatre organ.

Hopefully, the instrument will be used for recording purposes, concerts, church functions and the general enjoyment of all people, which, after all, is what these mighty machines were designed for in the first place.

SPECIFICATIONS

MAIN

Vox Humana 16' tc-4'
Tibia Clausa 16' tc-2'
Trumpet (style "D") 16'-8'
French Trumpet 16' tc-8' (Wicks)
Concert Flute 16'-1-3/5
Flute Celeste 8' tc-4'
Chrysoglott

BRASS

Tuba Mirabilis 16' tc-8'
English Horn 16' tc-8' (Moller)

PERCUSSION

Glockenspiel
Xylophone (single stroke or re-it.)
Chimes
Traps and Effects

SOLO

Musette 8' (Schopps)
Gamba 8' (Wicks)
Clarinet 16' tc-8'
Gamba Celeste (Wicks)
Salicional 16'-2'
Voix Celeste 16'-4'
Oboe Horn 8'
Aeoline 8'
Dulciana 8'

FOUNDATION

Horn Diapason 8'-4' (Wicks)
Quintadena 8' (Wicks)

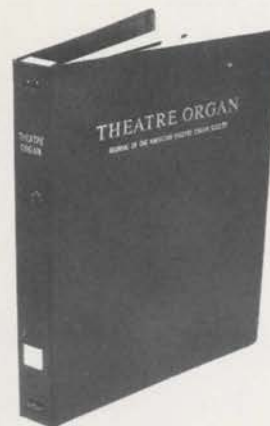
TREMULANTS

Main
Solo
Tibia Clausa
Brass
(English Horn no trem)
Foundation
Clarinet
Vox Humana

SEATTLE

26th ATOS ANNUAL
CONVENTION
Wednesday thru Sunday
July 1-5, 1981

The hotel organ had a standard Style 100 stoplist, Flute, Salicional, Vox Humana, Chimes, to which the factory added an Aeoline and Oboe Horn. Along with a 2' string fifteenth thrown in for good measure, the straight-consoled 2/3 was now a "mighty" 2/5! □



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