



This 1930s Wurlitzer church model console appeared in a Wurlitzer Company brochure from that period and is similar to the one now in the Fargo Theatre before the new black case was added (ala Radio City Music Hall).

The Fargo Theatre Organ

Material furnished by Lance E. Johnson

The console pictured on our cover was originally attached to the 3/8 Wurlitzer Opus 2127 (1930), a gothic-styled curved church model console in the First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

The entire organ was purchased by the Red River Chapter in 1975 to be installed in a projected Cultural Arts Center in Fargo, North Dakota. When the project was cancelled, the organ remained in storage.

In 1973, the chapter had been given access to the Fargo Theatre for the purpose of refurbishing the 2/7 Wurlitzer Style E Opus 1255 (1926) there. After adding a Moller Trumpet, and then a Post Horn, it became desirable for the organ to have a three-manual keydesk. It was decided that the chapter console and relay would be installed to give the Style E the desired versatility.

A hydraulic lift was obtained for the three-manual console and in-

stalled in pit center and the 2/7 console was moved to its original position, pit left. The installation of the lift and placing of the consoles were accomplished with the full cooperation of the theatre management.

Since church model consoles did not feature second touch, it has been added by the technical crew and now the console has all the usual theatre organ flexibility. Organbuilder Lance Johnson is credited with putting a smooth case over the church-oriented gothic cabinet. Finishing the case in gleaming black (ala Radio City Music Hall) gives the organ an outstanding visual impact.

The Fargo instrument will be eventually enlarged to fourteen ranks with stage space allocated for a 16' Wooden Diaphone. A Wurlitzer Chrysoglott was converted to a Vibraphone and is installed in an unenclosed location.

In the fall of 1974, a full scale

Silent Movie Nite was staged, and, with local TV and media coverage, a sellout box office was accomplished. Since the initial program, a total of twelve special shows have been presented, each one a complete success.

In 1980, Lillian Gish appeared on stage with the screening of *Way Down East*. Current plans call for a presentation of *Ella Cinders* with Colleen Moore, in person. Several organ programs have been scheduled using local artists and outside performers.

During the Christmas season, Fargo shoppers were invited to bring their lunch to the theatre and listen to a free noontime concert. Artists for this endeavor were usually members of the Red River Chapter.

ATOS salutes a small, but highly aggressive chapter who has accomplished much in preserving the theatre organ heritage. □