

THE CURTIS SESQUICENTENNIAL ORGAN

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Four manuals and 162 ranks. Quite an organ! No, it's not a theatre organ like those in which we are primarily interested, but it is a beautiful orchestral organ with tonal percussions; one which is threatened by the forces of "progress."

The instrument is Austin Organ Company's Opus 1416 (1926), installed in Irvine Auditorium of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. It was originally built at a cost of \$150,000 for the Sesquicentennial Exposition, held in Philadelphia

to mark the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Austin built and installed the organ in just six months!

The Exposition was not a financial success and closed in November 1926. About a year later Cyrus H. K. Curtis, founder of the Curtis Publishing Company, was persuaded to buy the organ from the city and donate it to the University. The purchase price was a small fraction of its original cost.

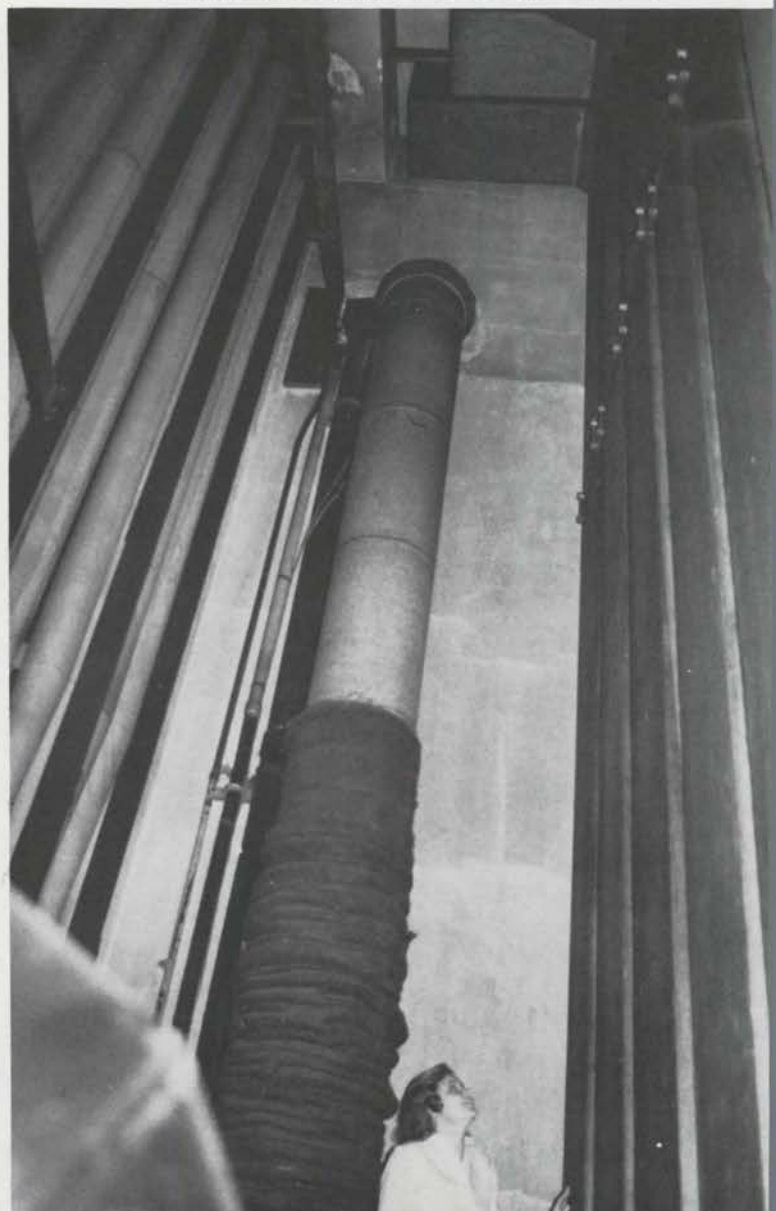
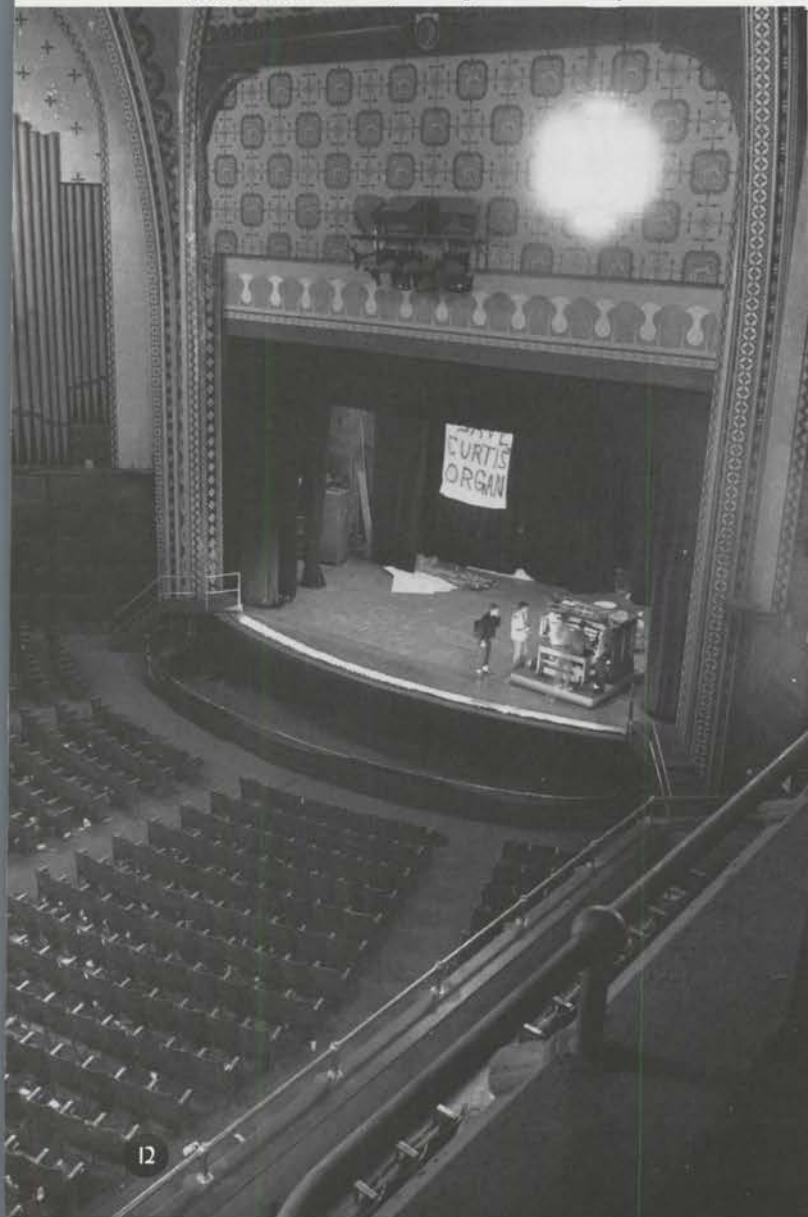
At that time the Irvine Auditorium,

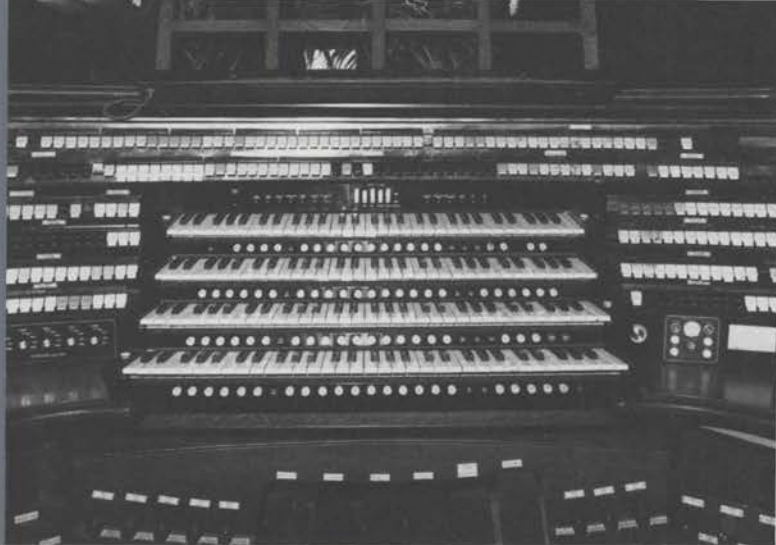
designed by the firm of Horace Trumbauer (who also designed the Keswick Theatre in Glenside, Pennsylvania), was under construction and could be modified to accommodate the organ. The dedication of the building was delayed almost four years because of the modifications and the installation of the instrument.

The entire instrument was located on one side of the Main Exposition Hall at the Exposition, which largely accounted for the very short installation time there. But Irvine Auditori-

View of Irvine Auditorium, with organ console on stage.

32' Double Open Diapason. Low C pipe weighs 1100 pounds.





Console of the Curtis Organ at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.



Austin Universal Windchest for the Great and Swell divisions.

um was designed to house an organ of moderate size in chambers on either side of the stage, and thus it was necessary to locate most of the Curtis organ elsewhere in the building. Upper galleries on the sides of the auditorium, originally intended for seating, were converted to house the organ, with only the larger pedal pipes located in the original chambers. The console was placed in the orchestra pit.

Apparently, maintenance of the organ was minimal during its first 30 years in Irvine, necessitating a major overhaul in the mid-1950s. Funds were provided by Mary Curtis Zimbalist, daughter of the donor, and the work was done in 1958-59 by Brantly Duddy and coworkers for Austin Organs. Maintenance was again neglected and the organ was unplayable by the early 1970s.

The Curtis Organ Restoration Society was founded in the 1970s as a student activity to assist the University in restoring and maintaining the organ. The Society is now composed of administrators, alumni, faculty, students, professional organbuilders and concerned friends of the instrument. Funds were raised to pay for professional rebuilding of the console. Volunteer help has been re-leathering the organ (an earlier restoration used Perflex, which has had to be replaced), and it is now almost fully restored to its original tonal and functional state.

Tonally, the Curtis organ is typical of large concert organs built in this country in the 1920s, and it is one of the few to survive intact. It bridges the gap between the classical organ and the theatre organ. Like most organs of its type, it is made up largely of ranks of 8' pitch, with little unification or borrowing in the manual divi-

sions. Each manual division has a complete 16'-8'-4' reed chorus of independent ranks, and several orchestral stops (strings, imitative flutes, reeds, etc.). The Great, Choir and Swell divisions have independent 4' and mutation ranks. Especially interesting is the String division, containing 26 independent ranks — 20 of 8' pitch (three 16' extensions for the pedal), three of 4' pitch and a three-rank mixture — which can be played on any manual and is enclosed in its own chamber.

A 40-hp Spencer blower provides wind at 7" and 10" to the instrument, with an additional 2-hp Spencer boosting the 10" wind of the Solo division to 20" for the Tuba Magna 8'-4' rank. All of the organ, except those pipes in the original chambers, is winded from Austin Universal Windchests. The chests are enormous, measuring approximately 35 x 20 x 7 feet! (For a recent fundraiser, a cocktail party was held inside a chest!)

When the console was rebuilt in the '70s a number of features were provided which were not in its original design. Included among these are many functions controlled by 45 toe studs, five expression pedals which can be assigned to any division except the Great (unenclosed), a Great-to-Choir transfer reversible by which the functions of the Great and Choir manuals can be interchanged, and the Auditorium's Schulmerich carillon can now be played from the console. The rebuilt console was mounted on a movable platform on the stage, with sufficient new cable (supplied by Bell Telephone) to permit moving it to any part of the stage.

In September 1984 plans were announced by the University to gut the

interior of Irvine Auditorium and reconstruct it at a cost of \$10 million to provide a small recital hall, offices and rehearsal and practice rooms for the Music Department. This would mean scrapping the organ!

The Curtis Organ Restoration Society immediately sought expressions of support for its efforts to save the organ and building, as well as contribution of funds. The Organ Historical Society, the Theatre Historical Society, the American Guild of Organists and the Delaware Valley Chapter of ATOS have given support and encouragement. Pledges of substantial funds have been received, which must be matched by the Restoration Society. As a result, the University Provost has said that the University would restore both the auditorium and the organ if the Society can raise \$1 million.

Persons wishing to contribute, or to express support, may address: Kevin Douglas Chun, President, Curtis Organ Restoration Society, 2031 Locust Street, Suite 1502, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103.

Later this year a symposium on orchestral organs is to be held in Irvine Auditorium. This will include several workshops, a Benefactors Dinner served in one of the windchests to donors of \$100 or more, and close with a theatre organ concert and vaudeville show featuring Don Kinnier at the console. Thomas Murray of Yale University will be making a recording of the organ in the near future.

Information for this article was obtained in part from an article by Benjamin R. Epstein in the May, 1982 issue of *The Diapason*, and is used by permission. □

Specification of the CURTIS SESQUICENTENNIAL ORGAN

Irvine Auditorium, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Austin Organ Company, Opus 1416 (1926), 162 Ranks, 10,731 Pipes,

<p>GREAT (Unenclosed)</p> <p>16' Violone Dolce 8' First Diapason 8' Second Diapason 8' Viola Da Gamba 4' Principal 2-2/3' Octave Quint 2' Fifteenth IV Mixture (12, 15, 17, 19)</p> <p>(Enclosed)</p> <p>16' Bourdon (ext.) 8' Third Diapason 8' Fourth Diapason 8' Fifth Diapason 8' Flauto Major 8' Bourdon 8' Doppie Flute 8' Clarabella 8' Harmonic Flute 8' Violoncello 8' Gemshorn 5-1/3' Quint 4' Octave 4' Hohl Flute 4' Harmonic Flute V Mixture (19, 22, 24, 26, 29) 16' Double Trumpet 8' Tuba Magna (Solo) 8' Trumpet 8' French Trumpet 8' French Horn 4' Clarion Tremolo 8' Harp 8' Chimes (Solo) 8' Marimba Harp (Solo) Great to Great: 16', 4' Great Unison Off Swell to Great: 16', 8', 4', 2' Choir to Great: 16', 8', 5-1/3', 4' Solo to Great: 8', 4' String Div. to Great: 8'</p> <p>SWELL (Enclosed)</p> <p>16' Bourdon 16' Gemshorn 8' Open Diapason 8' Diapason Phoson 8' Horn Diapason 8' Geigen Principal 8' Rohr Flute 8' Melodia 8' Flute Celeste II 8' Viola Da Gamba 8' Viole D'Orchestre 8' Viole Celeste III 8' Salicional 8' Voix Celeste 4' Principal 4' Travers Flute 4' Flute D'Amour 4' Violina 2-2/3' Twelfth 2' Flautina 2' Fifteenth 1-3/5' Seventeenth 1-1/7' Twenty-First 1' Twenty-Second V Mixture (Collective: draws 12th, 15th, 17th, 21st, 22nd) IV Mixture (19, 22, 26, 29) 16' Contra Fagotto* 16' Vox Humana (1-rk. ext.) 8' French Trumpet* 8' Cornopean 8' Corno D'Amour 8' Oboe 8' Vox Humana II 4' Clarion* 4' Vox Humana (1-rk. ext.) Tremolo Swell to Swell: 16', 4' Swell Unison Off Choir to Swell: 16', 8', 4' Solo to Swell: 16', 8', 4' String Div. to Swell: 8'</p>	<p>CHOIR (Enclosed)</p> <p>16' Contra Gamba 16' Double Dulciana (ext.) 8' Open Diapason 8' Geigen Principal 8' Stopped Diapason 8' Quintadena 8' Concert Flute 8' Flute Celeste 8' Chimney Flute 8' Gemshorn 8' Gemshorn Celeste 8' Viole D'Orchestre 8' Viole Celeste 8' Dulciana 4' Principal 4' Flute D'Amour 4' Dolce (ext.) 2-2/3' Twelfth 2' Super Octave 2' Flageolet 2' Dulcet (ext.) 1-3/5' Seventeenth 1' Dulcinet (ext.) III Mixture (Collective: draws 12th, Sup. Oct., 17th) 16' Baryton 16' Trombone 16' Bass Clarinet 16' Cor Anglais (ext.) 8' Tromba 8' Orchestral Horn 8' Cor Anglais 8' Clarinet 8' Orchestral Oboe 8' Vox Humana 4' Tromba Clarion Tremolo 8' Harp (Great) 4' Harp (Solo) 8' Chimes (Solo) Choir to Choir: 16', 4' Choir Unison Off Great to Choir: 8' Swell to Choir: 16', 8', 4', 2' Solo to Choir: 16', 8', 4' String Div. to Choir: 8'</p> <p>TROMBONE CHORUS (Enclosed)</p> <p>16' Trombone 8' First Tromba 8' Second Tromba 4' First Clarion 4' Second Clarion</p> <p>SOLO (Enclosed)</p> <p>8' Grand Diapason 8' Flauto Major 8' Gedeckt 8' Concert Flute (Choir) 8' Gross Gamba 8' Gamba Celeste 4' Flute Ouverte 4' Flute D'Amour (Choir) 2' Concert Piccolo 16' Tuba Profunda 8' Tuba Magna 8' Harmonic Tuba 8' French Bugle 8' Hunting Horn 8' French Horn (Great) 8' Bell Clarinet 8' Clarinet (Choir) 8' Cor Anglais (Choir) 8' Orchestral Oboe (Choir) 4' Tuba Clarion Tremolo Chimes 8' Harp (Great) 4' Xylophone 4' Carillons 4' Glockenspiel 8' Marimba Harp Schulmerich Carillon Solo to Solo: 16', 4' Solo Unison Off Great to Solo: 8' Choir to Solo: 8' Swell to Solo: 8' String Div. to Solo: 8'</p>	<p>PEDAL</p> <p>64' Resultant (from 16' 2nd Diap. and 16' 2nd Bourd.) 32' Double Principal (ext.) 32' Contra Violone (ext.) 32' Contra Bourdon (ext.) 16' Diaphone 16' First Diapason 16' Second Diapason 16' Metal Diapason 16' Violone 16' Gamba (Choir) 16' First Bourdon 16' Second Bourdon 16' Dulciana (Choir) 16' Lieblich Gedeckt (Swell) 16' String Celeste IV (from String Div. & Choir) 10-2/3' Gross Quinte (ext. 2nd Bourd.) 8' Octave (ext. 2nd Diap.) 8' Principal (ext. Met. Diap.) 8' Gross Flote (ext. 1st Diap.) 8' Flauto Dolce (Swell) 8' String Celeste III (String Div.) 8' Violoncello Celeste (Solo) 8' Dulciana (Choir) 5-1/3' 5-1/3' Twelfth (ext. 2nd Bourd.) 4' Octave Flute (ext. 2nd Diap.) V Mixture (12, 15, 17, 19, 22) 32' Contra Bombarde (ext.) 16' Bombarde 16' Trombone 16' Trombone (Trmb. Chrs.) 16' Contra Fagotto (Swell) 16' Bass Clarinet (Choir) 16' Tuba Profunda (ext. Solo Tuba Magna) 8' Tuba Magna (Solo) 8' Tromba (ext. Trombone) 4' Tuba Clarion (ext. Solo Tuba Magna) 4' Clarion (ext. Trombone) Pedal to Pedal: 10-2/3', 8' Great to Pedal: 8', 4' Swell to Pedal: 8', 4', 2' Choir to Pedal: 8', 5-1/3', 4' Solo to Pedal: 8', 4'</p>	<p>STRING (Enclosed)</p> <p>8' Viole V 8' Celeste V 8' Viole III 8' Celeste III 8' Viole II 8' Celeste II 4' Viole III III String Mixture (12, 15, 17) Tremolo String Organ (Collective: draws all String Div. stops)</p> <p>REVERSIBLES</p> <p>Pistons and Studs: Choir to Great 8' Swell to Great 8' Solo to Great 8' Great to Pedal 8' Choir to Pedal 8' Swell to Pedal 8' Solo to Pedal 8' Reeds Off 16' Manual Stop Off 16' Couplers Off Tutti I Tutti II Zimbelstern</p> <p>Pistons Only: Choir to Swell 8' Swell to Choir 8' Solo to Choir 8' Great to Solo 8' Choir to Solo 8' String to Solo 8' Crescendo Pedal I Crescendo Pedal II Solo Off Cresc. Pedal Glockenspiel Reiteration Choir/Great Transfer Master Swell General Cancel (2)</p> <p>Studs Only: 32' Double Principal 32' Contra Violone 32' Contra Bourdon 32' Contra Bombarde</p>																											
			<p>CONSOLE FEATURES</p> <p>20 General Pistons (16 duplicated by toe studs) 10 Divisional Pistons for Great, Choir, Swell, Solo and Pedal. Pedal pistons are duplicated by toe studs. 3 General Coupler Pistons</p> <p>OTHER</p> <p>Divisional Cancel Bars Div. Cancel Bars Defeat Expression Pedal Selector Dials</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Division</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Location</th> <th style="text-align: right;">Wind Pressure</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Great (all)</td> <td>West Upper Gallery</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Swell</td> <td>West Upper Gallery</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Choir</td> <td>East Upper Gallery</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Trombone Chorus</td> <td>East Upper Gallery</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Solo</td> <td>East Upper Gallery</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tuba Magna</td> <td>—</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>String</td> <td>East Upper Gallery</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pedal</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Divided between left and right Pedal chambers.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* Replaced during 1958-59 restoration.</p>	Division	Location	Wind Pressure	Great (all)	West Upper Gallery	7"	Swell	West Upper Gallery	7"	Choir	East Upper Gallery	7"	Trombone Chorus	East Upper Gallery	10"	Solo	East Upper Gallery	10"	Tuba Magna	—	20"	String	East Upper Gallery	7"	Pedal	Divided between left and right Pedal chambers.	
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