

Los Angeles Convention's

TEN "NEW" ORGANS

by Ralph Beaudry

"LA's the Place" where ten "new" organs are being prepared for the 1987 Convention. Chapter members are busy perfecting these installations for your pleasure next June 21 to 27. The most famous of these instruments is the former Foort/BBC five-manual Möller (the world renowned "traveling organ") now installed in its permanent home in Pasadena Civic Auditorium. The story of this organ will appear in the next issue of THEATRE ORGAN.

In this article we will present brief histories of the other nine instruments. All conventioners will hear the organs installed in the Orpheum Theatre, Founder's Church, Bay Theatre, Wilshire-Ebell Theatre and the Crystal Cathedral. Four of the instruments, however, are in private homes and will be heard by those who select one of the optional tours.

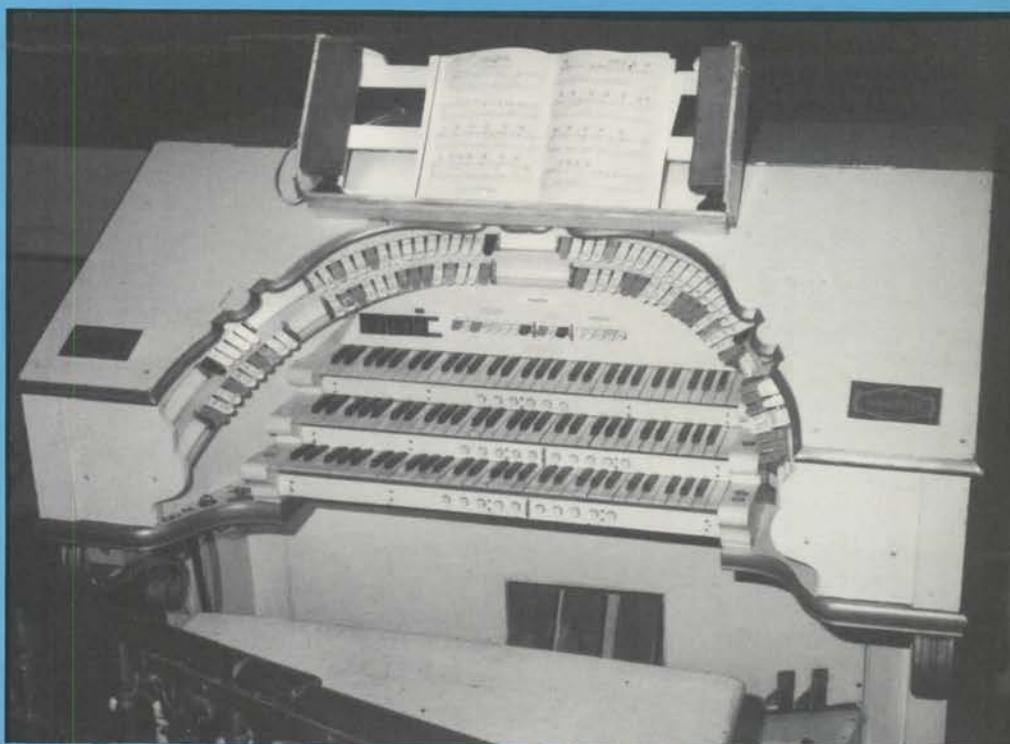
In addition to these, Convention '87 will feature concerts on the magnificent organs in San Gabriel Civic Auditorium, San Sylmar's Tower of Beauty, the Old Town Music Hall and the Simonton home.

Orpheum Theatre's 3/13 Wurlitzer

Sure to be among the greatest experiences of Convention '87 will be the performances on the Orpheum's 3/13 Wurlitzer. Like the theatre itself, the organ is in its original, unaltered condition. Although it was installed in 1928, two years after the theatre opened as a two-a-day vaudeville house, the sound is perfectly enhanced by the 2200-seat auditorium.

Henry Murtagh was the first house organist when the organ was used to augment the orchestra and to play intermissions. As far as the records indicate, the Orpheum never showed silent films; in fact, the house closed in mid-December 1929 for the installation of sound equipment and reopened as a first-run movie house on December 25, 1929.

Vaudeville returned in 1932, but it was only a few months later that RKO Circuit did not renew its lease, and the house closed until late 1933 when Sheril Corwin (of Metropolitan Theatres) leased the building and reopened with a program of two feature films and ten acts of vaudeville . . . all for 25 cents! Live



Orpheum Theatre's 3/13 Wurlitzer.

(Zimfoto)

4/31 John Brown Cook Memorial Wurlitzer.

(Zimfoto)



entertainment was featured at the Orpheum until the end of the forties when the theatre went to an all-first-run movie policy. Today, like most of the movie houses on Broadway, the Orpheum shows Spanish-language films and is one of the more successful movie palaces.

Since this theatre is one of the few in the country which still retains its opening-night splendor, a few words must be said about its architecture. The Orpheum was designed by noted architect G. Albert Lansburg. Its style has been described as "Francois I." Gothic arches abound, but be sure to note the fan-vaulting used under the boxes, the bronze and crystal chandeliers and the five stained-glass panels under the balcony.

4/31 John Brown Cook Memorial Wurlitzer

This organ was a gift from Marian Miner Cook to the Founder's Church of Religious Science which is located in the Wilshire district of Los Angeles. It was dedicated in July of 1984.

The organ did not come from one specific theatre but was assembled of the finest parts of a number of instruments. The tonal design and layout were done by Lyn Larsen and Ken Crome. Unlike some theatre organs in church installations, this instrument has all the usual tonal and non-tonal percussions.

The auditorium, which has a balcony, holds 1594 people in theatre-type seats. The organ chambers are in the front of the room on both sides of the pulpit and choir, and the console is usually positioned "house left." The organ also boasts a *Trompette en Chamade* mounted over the lighting booth in the rear of the auditorium.

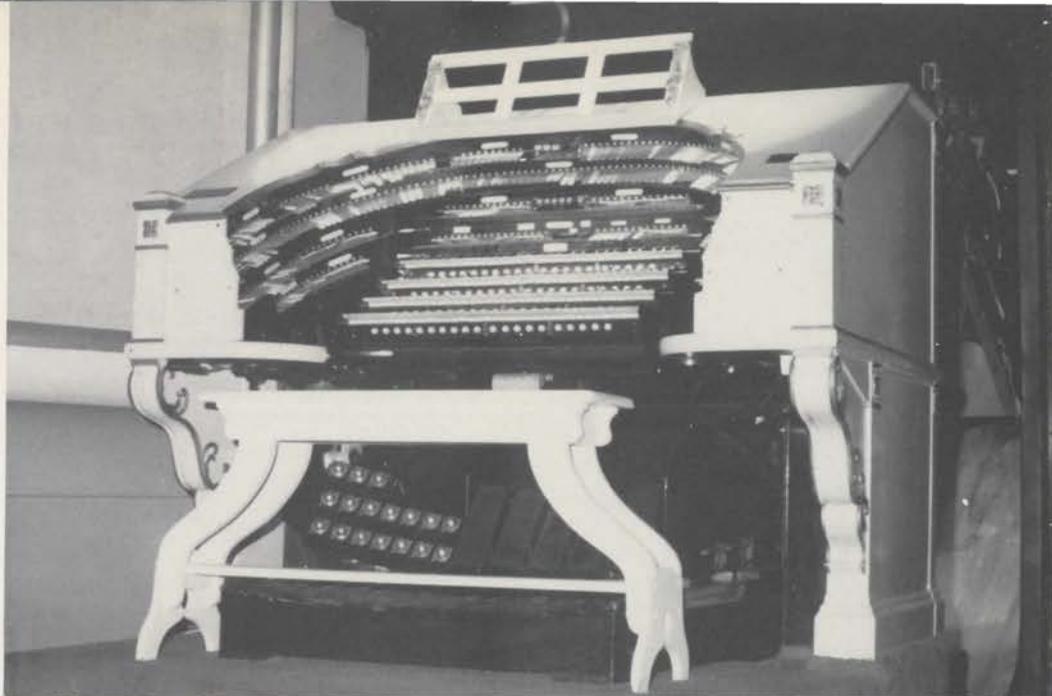
4/42 Wurlitzer in the Bay Theatre

Although this installation had not been completed for the 1979 Convention, the former, and much expanded, New York Paramount Studio Wurlitzer is now fully installed and playing. It is Opus 196, installed in the Paramount Studio in 1928, and is the only Wurlitzer designed with 20 pistons on each manual! Originally the organ had a slave console so Jesse and Helen Crawford could practice their duets (this slave console is being installed as a second console on the Oakland Paramount organ).

In 1956 Dick Loderhose removed the organ from the Paramount Studio and installed it in his home on Long Island. At that time he dubbed it "The Crown Prince of North Tonowanda!" Ann Leaf premiered the organ in its new home in October 1958.

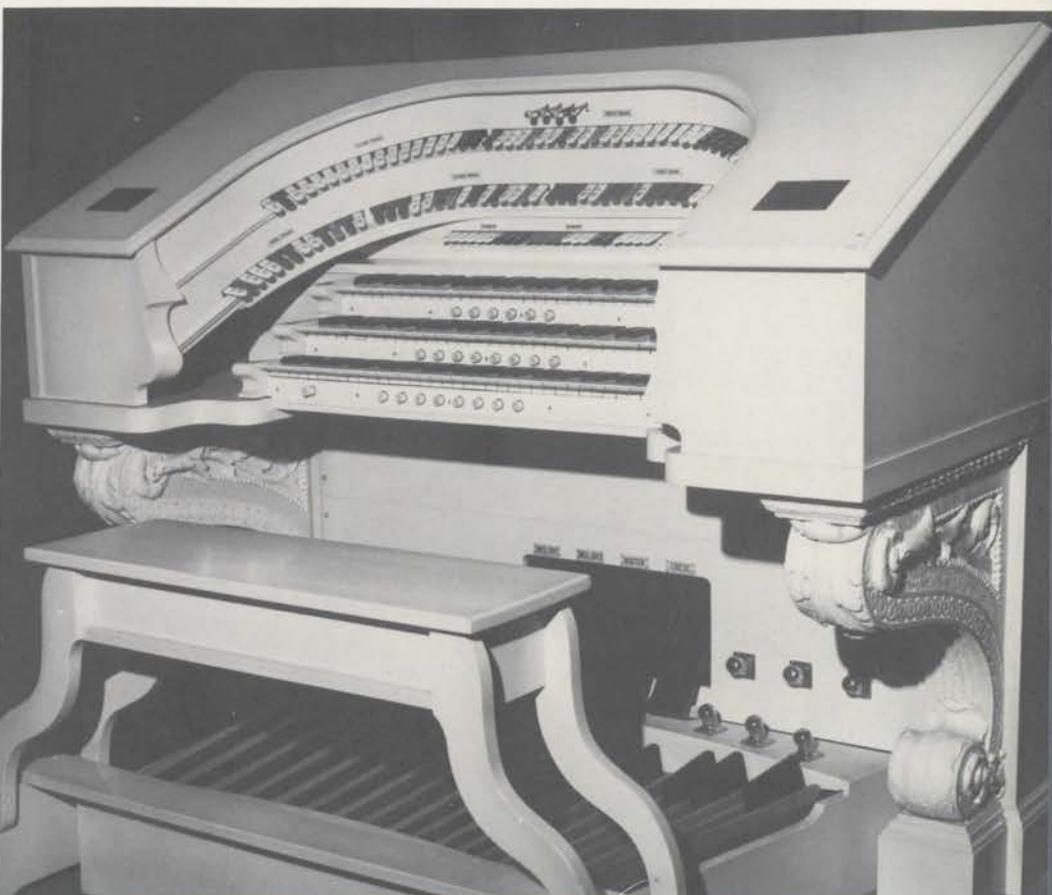
Dick purchased the Bay Theatre in 1976 and began remodeling it to accommodate the organ.

Over the years some of the best-known names in theatre organ have recorded this instrument: George Wright, Don Baker, Lew White, Fred Fiebel and Dick Liebert, while it was still in the Paramount; Tommy Sheen, John Seng, Don DeWitt, and Reginald Foort, while it was on Long Island. Loderhose also recorded it under his "professional" name, Dick Scott, while it was on Long Island.



4/42 Wurlitzer in the Bay Theatre.

(Zimfoto)



3/13 Barton in the Wilshire-Ebell.

(Preston J. Kaufmann photo — B'hend/Kaufmann Archives)

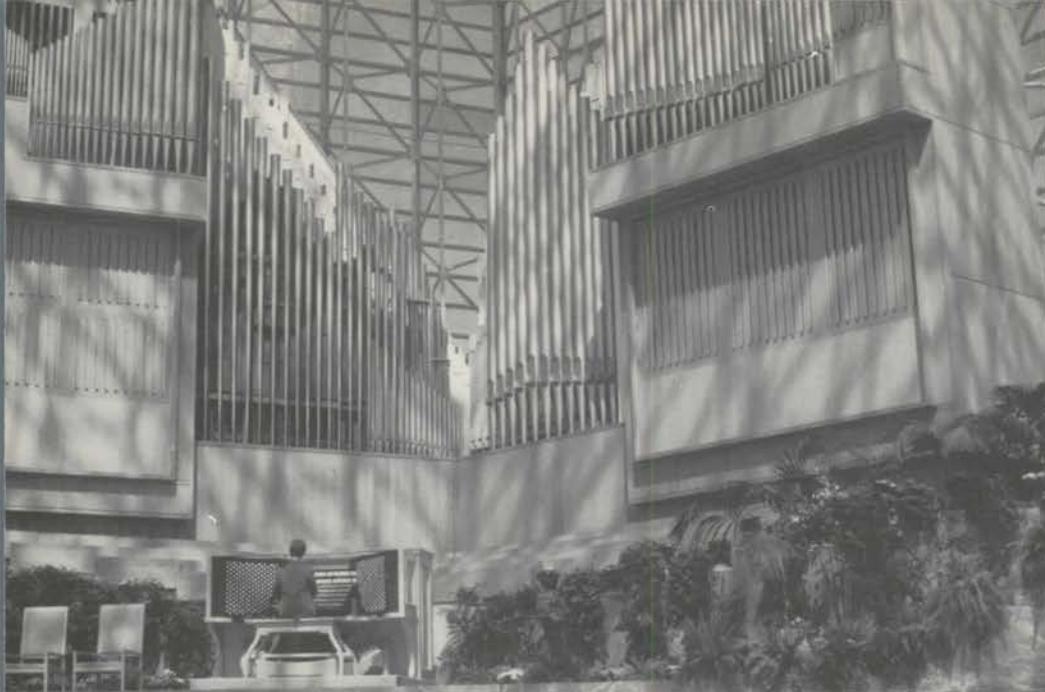
3/13 Barton in the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre

The LATOS-owned Barton was originally installed in 1927 in the National Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as a 3/10. It was one of the approximately 40 organs built by the Wangerin Organ Company for the Barton firm.

The organ was removed from the theatre by an organ buff in 1965 and subsequently installed in a commercial building where it remained until sold to the Junchen-Collins Organ Company in 1977. It was to be installed in

a Montreal pizza parlor; however, the restaurant was never built, and the instrument was donated to the Kingston Theatre Organ Society which sold it back to Junchen-Collins.

When Dave Junchen moved to California, his organ firm was bought by Burton A. Burton and operated as a part of the Casablanca Fan Company until that business closed its organ department, at which time the organ was donated to LATOS. After keeping it in storage for a year, LATOS negotiated for its installation in the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre, and



5/223 Ruffatti in the Crystal Cathedral.

(Zimfoto)

Walt Strony played the gala premiere performance in November 1984.

5/223 Ruffatti in the Crystal Cathedral

This is the seventh largest organ in America and the largest west of the Allegheny Mountains! The present organ was developed in three increments. Ruffatti built the first Crystal Cathedral organ in 1977 in the former sanctuary (now the Arboretum where we will have dinner before the concert). This was an organ of 94 ranks. When the 100-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ, which had been installed in Lincoln Center in New York City in 1962, became available, it was purchased by Garden Grove Community Church. Finally, 29 new ranks were added by Ruffatti to complete this five-story installation.

In addition to the main part of the organ facing the congregation, the west balcony contains four ranks of the Fanfare Trumpet, the south balcony houses the antiphonal organ of 43 ranks (including two of the 32' ranks as well as the Celestial organ and, horizontally, the Millennial Trumpet), while the east balcony has three additional *Trompettes en Chamade*. It should be noted that the main organ has four 32' stops for a total of six 32s on the instrument.

The organ was designed by the late Virgil Fox (who played the dedicatory concerts for the first two Community Church of Garden Grove's organs). This instrument, usually referred to as the Hazel Wright organ, was dedicated on May 7, 1982, by Pierre Cochereau and Ted Allen Worth along with a symphony orchestra conducted by Cochereau's son, Jean-Marc.

The building itself has a curtain wall made up of more than 10,000 windows which are two-feet high and six-feet long. The cathedral seats 2890 and the doors, which open behind the pulpit, are 90' tall; overall, the cathedral stands 128' high, is 207' wide and 415' long; it is designed to withstand winds up to 200 mph and an earthquake of 8.0 on the Richter Scale! The organ console is the largest ever

built and contains over 350 drawknobs; its general pistons (of which there are 20) have quadruple memory for a total of 80 general pistons — all in addition to the many other controls operated by toe or thumb.

3/17 Rodgers in the Bob Power Home

Although built by Rodgers, the Bob Power organ was designed in tonal specifications and console layout to be a Wurlitzer 260; in fact, a 260 Special as a piano and Post Horn were added to the specifications.

The engineering of the instrument took seven months plus an additional 18 months to fabricate, install and voice. In the years since its installation in the Power's home, Lee Haggart, Harvey Heck and Lee Sundstrom have contributed their electronic and pipe knowledge to bring the instrument to the peak of perfection in pipe-like sound.

The "C" and "G" notes of each rank in the famous Kearns/Carson organ were recorded, and the Power organ then had each



3/17 Rodgers in the home of Bob Power.

(Photo courtesy of Bob Power)

rank adjusted to the quality and volume of the pipe sounds. The glockenspiel and non-tonal percussions on the instrument are real. Unlike its pipe counterpart, this organ has tremulants with separate controls for the Tibia, Vox, Post Horn, Tuba, Clarinet, Strings, Main and Solo. Most recently, two Vox Humanas and a Brass Saxophone have been added.

During the seventies Lyn Larsen, Rex Koury, Maria Kumagai and Larry Vannucci issued recordings made on this instrument, and most recently George Wright recorded his "42nd Street" album on the Bob Power organ.

3/29 Wurlitzer in the Ledwon Home

John Ledwon's first organ (the nucleus of the present instrument) was the Style 235, 3/11 Wurlitzer from the Lyceum Theatre in Duluth, Minnesota, which he acquired when he was 15 and installed in his parents' Canoga

John Ledwon's 3/29 Wurlitzer.

(Zimfoto)



Park home.

When John planned his new home in Agoura during the late 1960s, he intended to enlarge the organ and build his home around it. He decided to make it 26 ranks and, of course, that required a much larger console.

The present console came from the Paramount Theatre in Middletown, New York, and John solved its limitations by putting 18 of the ranks on the stoprail and having an eight-rank ancillary division which could be "coupled" to any manual.

The organ was to have been presented during the 1979 Convention, but the Agoura/Malibu fire in October of 1978 burned first his home and then, from a smoldering pile in his destroyed bedroom, rekindled and broke through the firewall into the Solo chamber. Every pipe over 4' was destroyed. Even the console, at the farthest end of the living room, was damaged by smoke, water and heat. To rebuild, John acquired new ranks (many from the Avalon Theatre in Chicago), completely refinished the console into its present black and gold, and installed a Trousdale relay system.

The restored organ played in October of 1982. The console now controls 29 ranks and an 8' Steinway grand (which also survived the fire). John's chamber installation is somewhat unique in that the chests are set into the floor with the pipe toes at floor level, and all servicing is done from the basement where the regulators and tremors are also located.

The most recent improvement to the organ has been the removal of the glass panels, which were designed for chamber viewing from the living room, and the installation of glass swell shades in their place. You will note that the glass shades are mounted vertically, but the original wooden swell shades behind the grillwork are horizontal.

4/26 Wurlitzer in the Dollinger Home

This organ is the culmination of Dr. Malin Dollinger's dream of having a theatre organ in his home. He began assembling the instrument in 1973 with the purchase of the Wurlitzer from the Royal Theatre in Kansas City, Missouri, and continued the following year with the purchase of the former Indianapolis Circle Theatre Wurlitzer which had been in the Gaines Antique Shop in Beverly Hills.

The console is one of the two that were built for the Brooklyn Paramount Theatre. Over the years, other ranks have been added to the instrument, including a Brass Saxophone and an English Post Horn.

The organ has the usual tuned and untuned percussions and also features a Steinway Duo-Art piano which is playable from the console. Because the Dollinger home is a landmark structure in its area, special care was taken to fit the organ into its two chambers without substantially altering the building.

4/18 Wurlitzer in the Sargent/Stark Home

Designed to be the equivalent of a Wurlitzer Style 260, the nucleus of this organ came from Santa Monica's Criterion Theatre. The

organ differed from a 260 in that it has a Cor Anglais in place of the Quintadena and also a "floating" three-rank Echo division.

Recently a four-foot Principal and a three-rank mixture have been purchased and will be added to make the organ capable of playing either theatre or classical music.

Since 1981, when the installation was completed, two recordings have been made on the instrument as well as many radio and television tapes which have been broadcast around the world. Gaylord Carter has scored a number of silent films for the home videotape market using the Sargent/Stark organ. □



4/26 Wurlitzer in the Dollinger home.

(Photo from Dollinger Collection)

4/18 Wurlitzer in the Sargent/Stark residence.

(Preston Kaufmann photo)

