

# THE JOHN BROWN COOK MEMORIAL WURLITZER AT FOUNDER'S CHURCH

by Stephen Ross and Chris Elliott

This is no ordinary church installation. And this is no ordinary church! What is installed in Founder's Church of Religious Science (not to be confused with Scientology) is one of the most unique and largest instruments of its type in any church in the United States — a gorgeous, theatrically voiced Wurlitzer pipe organ in full bloom! Actually, the



Console of the 4/31 Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ in Founder's Church.

*(Stephen Bramall photo)*

Church of Religious Science and the theatre organ have a closer association than many people realize.

Religious Science is based upon the interpretive writings of Ernest Holmes, a prominent figure in the New Thought movement of the early 1900s. Much of today's affirmative-thinking philosophy, including that of Nor-

man Vincent Peale, is influenced by Holmes' writings.

Ernest Holmes came to Los Angeles in 1912 and established a large following on the lecture circuit, eventually requiring larger and larger auditoriums to accommodate his growing audiences. During the 1940s and '50s he headquartered Sunday mornings at the Wil-

View of Founder's Auditorium from the balcony.

*(Stephen Bramall photo)*





tern Theatre where Gaylord Carter played the 4/37 Kimball. Other notables from the organ world who knew Holmes were Irma Glen, who played for his radio broadcasts, Richard Simonton (a founder of ATOS) and the famed Jesse Crawford. In fact, it was Dr. William Hornaday, minister of Founder's Church, who officiated at Crawford's memorial service in 1962. And thus it was with great enthusiasm that Founder's accepted Marian Miner Cook's gift of a Wurlitzer organ in 1984 to honor her late husband, John Brown Cook.

The new organ at Founder's represents the finest parts of a number of instruments. While the majority of pipework is Wurlitzer, the organ contains a Lieblich Tibia, Horn Diapason and Horn Celeste by Murray Harris, a Stopped Flute from Hall and a Pedal Tibia built by Wicks. The Muted Viols are an extremely rare Wurlitzer sound and were found on very few of their instruments; the pair in Founder's came from the Stanley Theatre in Pittsburgh.

The tonal design and layout were the work of Lyn Larsen and Ken Crome. Crome Organ Company restored the organ and then installed the completed instrument. Working with Ken Crome were Steve Hansen and Richard Schroeder. Bill Splane designed and built the multiplex relay system, and the combination action was done by Al Young. As a final step, the instrument was tonally regulated by Lyn Larsen and Mr. Crome. This last procedure alone represents over 200 hours of work.

The auditorium in Founder's Church, designed by noted Los Angeles architect Paul Williams and dedicated in 1960, can accommodate 1500 in comfortable, theatre-style seating. The Wurlitzer replaced the original pipe organ and, as there were two ample chambers, was accommodated perfectly. The only structural changes required were the enlarging of Main and Solo chamber tone-openings and new windlines to each chamber. The previous organ had individual blowers in each chamber, but the Wurlitzer has a massive 30-horsepower blower from the Criterion Theatre in Los Angeles and a smaller, step-up blower to feed the 16' wood Diapason pipes.

The only items retained from the original organ were a Maas-Rowe electronic Vibra-Chord and the *Trumpet en Chamade* (which was revoiced by the Trivo company prior to installation with the Wurlitzer).

The organ as donated was equipped with a three-manual console. However, before the donation was finalized, a four-manual console, originally from the Norshore Theatre in Chicago, became available. The church promptly purchased this, and Mrs. Cook gave the three-manual console to the Valley of the Sun Religious Science Center in Phoenix, Arizona, where Lyn Larsen is Musical Director and Organist.

Founder's instrument contains an abundance of warm, pretty sounds which are useful for accompaniment of both choir and soloists as well as for greater registration variety in solo organ selections. For accompaniment, the build-up is unusually complete

## CHAMBER ANALYSIS

### John Brown Cook Memorial Wurlitzer

RANK NAME	PITCH RANGE	NUMBER OF PIPES
<b>Main Chamber (left):</b>		
Tuba Horn (15'')	32-8 (lowest 12 notes electronic)	85
Open Diapason	16-4	85
Horn Diapason	16-4	85
Horn Celeste	8	61
Tibia Clausa (10'')	8-2	85
Clarinet	8	61
Viol d'Orchestre	8-2	85
Viol Celeste	8-4	73
Oboe Horn	16-8 (lowest 12 notes electronic)	73
Quintadena	8	61
Stopped Flute	8-2	85
Concert Flute	16-2	97
Flute Celeste	4	61
Vox Humana	8	61
Violone (Pedal only)	16	24
String Bass (Pedal only)	8 (electronic)	25

#### Chrysoglott

#### Vibra-Chord (Mass-Rowe)

Bass Drum/Tympani, Crash Cymbal, Tap/Brush Cymbal, Chinese Gong, Snare Drum, Tambourine, Castanets, Wood Block, Finger Cymbals, Triangle, Wind Chimes (prepared for), Sizzle Cymbal (prepared for).

#### Solo Chamber (right):

English Horn	8	61
Trumpet (Brass)	8	61
Tibia Clausa (15'')	16-2	97
Lieblich Tibia	8-2	85
Saxophone (Brass)	8	61
Kinura	8	61
Orchestral Oboe	8	61
Musette	8	61
Violin	8-4	73
Violin Celeste	8-4	73
Muted Viol	16-4 (lowest 12 notes are Dulciana)	85
Muted Viol Celeste	4	61
Vox Humana (Solo scale)	8	61

Xylophone, Glockenspiel, Cathedral Chimes, Harp/Marimba

#### Unenclosed:

Trumpet-En-Chamade	8 (in rear of auditorium)	61
Pedal Tibia	8 (in front of Main chamber)	32



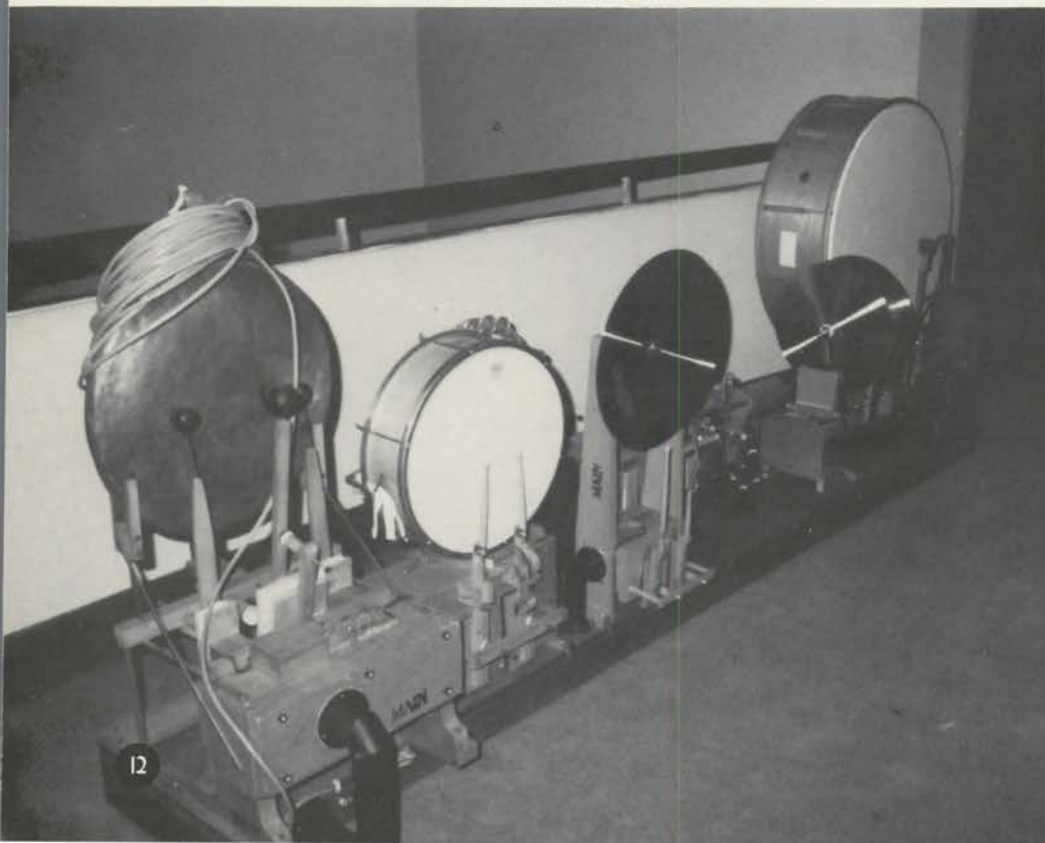
from the softest Muted Viol (and Celeste), Concert Flute (and Flute Celeste), Horn Diapason (and Horn Celeste) to the Oboe Horn and Quintadena. This provides a tremendous range from very soft to *mezzo-forte*.

The Pedal department, too, has much to choose from, not only for weight but also for good definition and *mezzo-forte* texture. This applies to 16' tone as well as 8'. The 16' Dulciana provides the softest sound before moving to the Bourdon, Violone and Oboe Horn. These, plus the 16' Metal Diaphone, provide a great foundation. For better response and definition of pitch, most of the 8' octaves are wound off-trem. Each chamber has the equivalent of a loud and a soft Tibia. The Solo houses the large scale Solo Tibia Clausa and the smaller Murray Harris Lieblich Tibia. A small, stopped Flute functions as a softer, contrasting color to the Main chamber's 10" standard Tibia.

The organ was dedicated on July 15, 1984, in a program featuring Founder's Cathedral Choir and George Goulding, the church's previous Organist and Music Coordinator. Lyn Larsen was heard in a concert sponsored by the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society later that month. After a tenure of thirty-five years Dr. Goulding retired in April 1985 and Stan Kann served as interim organist until Chris Elliott came on staff as full-time organist in July 1985.

The organ is featured prominently in the activities of the church, and Chris Elliott's Wednesday evening concerts and Sunday morning preludes are advertised on Dr. Hornaday's daily radio broadcasts. Chris plays the organ for twenty minutes before each Sunday morning service, and for a thirty-minute concert (in true theatre organ style) each Wednesday just prior to the 7:30 evening service. □

Partial view of trap assembly prior to installation in Main chamber.



# THE CARE AND FEEDING of ORGAN soloists in 1987

by Walt Strony

A number of years ago, John Muri wrote an article on this same topic in which he offered suggestions for the benefit of committees inexperienced at sponsoring concerts and, at the same time, lamented some of the conditions under which he had performed. There was much food-for-thought in Muri's writings, and they were among the most interesting items to have been published in this journal.

The theatre organ has come a long way since Mr. Muri's article appeared in the February 1973 issue of THEATRE ORGAN. Gone are the days when traveling theatre organists slept in theatre lobbies, shaved in public toilets and played concerts under worklights. Many concerts are now being sponsored by performing arts associations, and ATOS chapters have, by and large, become very professional in their presentations. However, I (and all of my colleagues) have encountered a number of situations which have inhibited performance and turned what might have been a great show into a mediocre event,

so this is my contribution to today's committees.

There have been times when things have gone wrong and most of the audience was unaware . . . "You were really professional in the way you covered things up!" is an oft heard comment. However, there are people who DO notice problems, and we must ALL strive for perfection in our concerts. Certainly, things do go wrong that are uncontrollable. I've had regulators blow right in the middle of concerts; complete combination actions that, for one reason or another, stopped working properly at concert time, and I'm sure that some of you will remember the 1979 Los Angeles Convention when I was attacked by a moth. Although these things are largely beyond our control, we still need to do our best when presenting the theatre organ to the public . . . its very survival is at stake!

Let me begin by saying that most good performers are perfectionists — they want to do a good job, want the organ to work reliably and to sound its best, want the audience to be happy and, finally, to make the sponsoring group look good. After all, if they succeed in all these things, they may be invited for a return engagement! These things are all possible, and my suggestions here are designed to help all those groups out there who wish to produce successful concerts.

When you initially contact an artist about the possibility of his performing for you, be sure that he understands everything about the event — the exact date and time, the size and condition of the organ and all other pertinent information. Will there be movies or sing-alongs? Will he be expected to provide these or will you? And once you have agreed upon a fee and obtained approval from your board, confirm it with the artist immediately — he should never hear about these things through any grapevine! Finally, there should always be a written contract!

When the artist arrives in your city, be certain that someone is available to pick him up at the airport. Although there may be times when he has family or close friends in your city and will want to make his own arrangements, let this be his choice. If he does need someone to take him around, make sure that the same person can be available during the entire duration of his visit. This is extremely important if a good working relationship is to