

The Relay

TO THE EDITOR: Gress versus Maclean!

Since Quentin Maclean, in his excellent article in the latest *TIBIA*, takes some well-aimed potshots at Jerry Critser and myself for our findings while in his delightful native land, I thought it only proper to do a little rebutting.

To dispute the historical facts with someone who had so much to do with their making would be the height of folly. I can only say that we used the best information we could unearth in preparing the article.

However, if the "Anglicised Wurlitzer" is really a myth, how is Mr. Maclean to explain the striking difference we immediately noticed between the English Wurlitzers and those here in the United States? Perhaps, rather than being the result of deeds of commission, it came about because Messrs. Pearce and Wright were too content to take the stock Wurlitzer instruments as they came. After all, a major tonal change can be brought about in any organ by such simple causes as a difference in wind pressures of a mere inch or two, or a little extra weight on top of a reservoir. In a Wurlitzer, the regulation of the tremulants is another crucial factor. Given the same organ, two expert finishers can produce entirely unlike results simply by their regulation of the strength, quality and balance of the various ranks.

By "lushness" we referred not to the proportion of Tibias and Flutes in the stoplist, but to the tonal warmth and vibrancy of the whole ensemble. Important considerations in producing a "lush," over-all result include the adjustment of the various wind pressures, the building acoustics and shutter openings, the amount of weighting used to provide inertia on top of the reservoirs, and the tremulant settings. One of the "lushest" organs it has been my pleasure to play is the Detroit Fox instrument — and as can plainly be heard on the records, even the English Post Horn is quite "rich and lyrical."

In closing, it may be noted that the Meakim Jones' list proves beyond any doubt that the Trocadero organ is a Style 270 Special, not a Publix No. 1. Only two other 270's were built, both for Australian theaters, so it would hardly be accurate to refer to the Troc as a stock American Wurlitzer. The Publix No. 1 model, of which the Paramount, Manchester was one example, was a popular American stoplist, with installations at Denver and Oakland actually listed as Publix No. 1's and upwards of a dozen others simply called "Special 4 Manual" in the list. It contained:

| Main | Solo |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Tibia Clausa 8' - 15" | Tibia Clausa 16' - 15" |
| Diaphonic Diapason 16' - 15" | Quintadena 8' |
| Concert Flute 16' | Solo String 8' |
| Dulciana 8' | Tuba Mirabilis 8' - 15" |
| Viol d'Orchestre 8' | Trumpet 8' |
| Viol Celeste 8' | Oboe Horn 8' |
| Solo String 8' | Saxophone 8' |
| Tuba Horn 16' - 15" | Orchestral Oboe 8' |
| Clarinet 8' | Kinura 8' |
| Vox Humana 8' - 6" | Vox Humana 8' - 6" |

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SIR:

In reading the magazine it was like going back to my early pipe-organ-building days when Joseph Carruthers and I were the first two organ buildings to leave Elmira and enter the greasy old machine shop that Wurlitzer allotted to the building of pipe organs in No. Tonawanda. I remained two years in the development laboratory and then went to New York as service manager of the New York store of Wurlitzer where Eugene Licombe was in charge of sales. This was the beginning of Theatre Organs. The old Century Theatre — now gone — was equipped with an organ for the play "The Daughter of Heaven" which was a beautifully staged Chinese play.

In 1910 I took over the service of the Hope Jones organ in the Ocean Grove Auditorium and cared for it until 1954. This organ had a varied history with many false stories about what it consisted of, who played it, and so on. If you are interested in this organ I can give you an accurate account of its history up to '54. I was Jim Nutall's helper in voicing its 50-inch Tuba, 25-inch Tromba, etc.

I dropped organ building in 1944 and became interested in electronics and as of now am the Vice President of our organization. If I can be of any statistical help to you I will be glad to assist.

I have a collection of pipe organ recordings and enjoy George Wright's releases as well as many others. I certainly feel that the

organ would be well received in major cities just as it is in Denver, if it could be revived again. Of course this would be possible only in such places where the organ is still in such condition as would warrant its being put into operating service. Unfortunately, electronic organs would make a challenge for this market if it were opened.

VICE PRESIDENT
Schulmerich Carillons, Inc.

SIR:

A word of praise for *TIBIA*. I think it is a wonderful magazine, and it is doing a great work in restoring interest in theater organs. Glad to know about the activities it reports on. Would it be possible to run a series of technical articles on the construction of theater organs? I know many would be interested in it.

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SIR:

Through the kindness of another 'Enthusiast' I have come into possession of the first two issues of *THE TIBIA*. Naturally I wish to support the organization which is represented by this publication. I am sorry not to have known in time to have supported it from the beginning. But around 1929 I had to make up my mind whether it was to be music or some other pursuit by which I attempted to gain a living. My appraisal of my own talent suggested that I might do better than to try to carve a place for myself among an apparently diminishing field for theater organists, most of whom must surely have had more on the ball than I was likely to have. I therefore went into medicine and am now doing consultations only. And for the first time in some thirty years I am in a position to devote a little time to a love which never deserted me. Through the magic of truly fine high fidelity equipment, and painted with the nostalgic brush of recollection, I am once again a kid on the front row of the old Strand Theatre in San Francisco, sitting through all the matinee showings in order to watch a very young organist from Woodland make the picture talk. A collection of Jesse Crawford records that must have scratched hundreds of needles into dust, still does service for me.

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SIR:

I am a genuine Theater organ enthusiast since about 1925. I used to go to the movies and had no thought of how the music was made, perhaps always automatic, until one time I noticed a light go on down front after the shorts and then came the music. I went down and discovered a pipe organ, something quite new to me, and a young man organist sitting there, also new to me. To listen and watch him play a while put into me an everlasting enthusiasm for theater pipe organ music. And then later on when in the cities I always went to the large theater and sat in the front seat just behind the console. In no time the organist would notice me and turn around to speak to me. But that music, swelling in and out from the skies, so to speak, down from the stars, uplifted me in a way I could never be able to explain — it always did. I took some piano lessons and a few pipe organ lessons on a church organ in Bentonville, Ark. On a trip back to East Tenn., the home section, I visited the place of first inspiration, Bristol, Va-Tenn., met the manager of the theater, and was given the opportunity to practice of a morning before show time, under some guidance of the organist, a Mr. Skinnel, supposedly to be in trim as assistant some time. Had to go back home then, but was told to come back following summer. Came back as did the talkies. All off. But some time ago heard of this organ I used to practice on being stored mercilessly in a damp basement and bought it for almost a come-and-get-it price, mostly because of sentiment, for it is almost hopelessly damaged. The console is a keepsake, the mashed pipes and warped chests as well.

I was sitting back thinking of those good old silent picture days when one could listen to the finest kind of pipe organ music which comes not from a cool planned recording but from the warm fingers of the organist as he sat there. (But recordings we can get now are getting warmer.) That was the best organ music, right from the cue-sheet origin we'll say. But — could it ever come again? Then came your sample copy of *THE TIBIA*. This is great indeed! My memory is of Dwight Brown at the Palace in Dallas, Lawson Reid at Hot Springs, Milton Slosser at the Missouri in St. Louis, John Hammond at the Saenger in New Orleans, Daugherty at the Strand in Shreveport, the first George Gookin at the Isis in Bristol, Va., and many others.

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