



Portland's Organ Grinder

by Grace McGinnis

Catch the starlight in a child's eyes. Chase the laughter of the children of all ages as they watch Laurel and Hardy try to sell Christmas trees in California. Share with a little, white-haired lady her joy at hearing the 1919 "Mickey" again "after all those years." Feel the power of the pipes as the whole restaurant shakes during "Star Wars." Share with us the magic of the Organ Grinder.

Much of this magic is generated by Dennis Hedberg's "ultimate toy," his passion since he was sixteen years old and the "working laboratory" for his research on the physics of tremolos (this organ has 17) which was explicated in the

November/December THEATRE ORGAN. The 3/13 Wurlitzer from the Portland Oriental Theatre inspired this creativity and is now the nucleus of the Organ Grinder's Wurlitzer.

ATOS members heard this Wurlitzer at the 1973 National Convention when Lyn Larsen and Jonas Nordwall presented concerts on its first 17 ranks. It was also heard during the 1981 Convention when Seattle brought the group to Portland for a day. This summer, fifteen years and 30 ranks later, conventioners will hear Paul Quarino and Walt Strony perform on this awesome music machine.

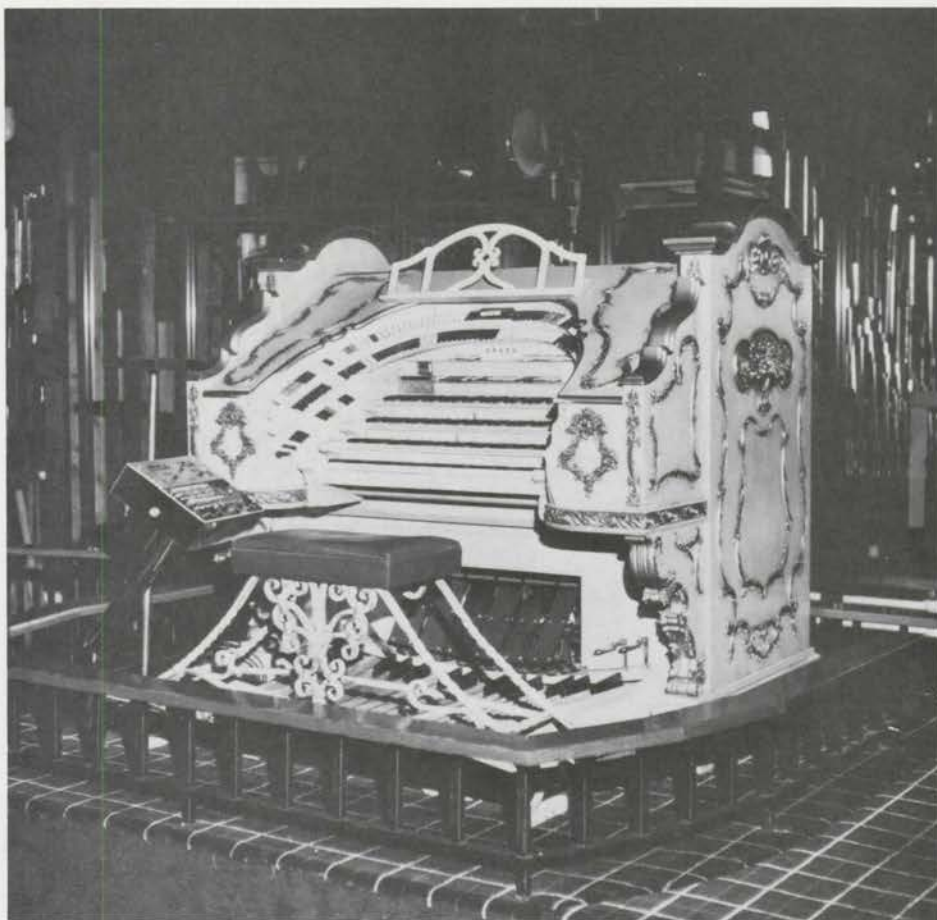
The Organ Grinder Wurlitzer has, from its beginning, been Dennis Hedberg's brain-child. Starting with the 13 ranks, he added the 32' Diaphones from Portland's Liberty Theatre and has subsequently obtained pipes and parts from all over the country. The 32' Contra Bourdon, for example, is from the Old North Church (of Paul Revere fame) in Boston, the four-manual console came from Boston's Metropolitan Music Hall Theatre, and other components were once heard in Cleveland, Chicago, Denver and Brooklyn. This instrument now contains an example of every major voice ever used in Wurlitzer pipe organs. It also has the thirteen-note tympani (some call them garbage-can lids) from the Brooklyn Fox, and a rare set of Swiss Bells from a theatre in Maine. A close look at the toy counter will reveal an authentic submarine "dive" horn which can probably be heard on the other side of town.

Because all of its pipes are contained in glass chambers, so they may be viewed from outside as well as inside the restaurant, it is difficult to maintain a constant temperature (for tuning stability), so twenty tons of refrigeration equipment are employed to keep the chambers and blower from overheating. The wind for this machine is generated by a three-stage turbine blower powered by a 60 hp electric motor which develops over 6,000 cubic feet of wind per minute at static pressures of 37 and 69 inches of water displacement. A totally solid-state electronic relay and power supply was created for the organ. This system utilizes about 35,000 diodes, 4,000 discrete transistors and thousands of tiny components.

Dennis Hedberg's quest for the finest theatre organ of its kind in the world actually began when he first heard the pipes in the Oriental Theatre and continued through his years as an electronics engineer for the Rodgers Organ Company in Hillsboro and, for a period of time, as manager of the Oriental Theatre. When the Oriental closed, Dennis was able to buy its Wurlitzer, and finding a new home for it led him into the restaurant business. In April of 1985, Hedberg became the sole owner of the Organ Grinder and, while the organ as it stands is the largest of its kind in the world, it is very possible that it is not yet finished!

Organ buffs in this area have been avid "Organ Grinder Wurlitzer Watchers" as the various components of the organ were added, and we have concurrently been privileged to hear some of the finest organists in the country. Regular staff organists in the seventies were Jonas Nordwall, Paul Quarino, Jack Coxon and Don Simmons. While no longer on the staff, Jonas presents occasional "Classic Night" programs which never fail to fill the house. In August 1985, Paul initiated

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Elegant four-manual console controls the 47 ranks behind it.

Claude Neuffer Photo

a Sunday afternoon program of Old-Time Gospel Music which has been exceptionally well received and manages to fill the tables against such competition as the Super Bowl. Organists Dan Bellomy, Don Feely and Russ Chilson, complete the staff of musicians and provide musical entertainment which appeals to all ages and tastes. As we have heard styles and sounds created by different artists, we are reminded that the theatre organ is perhaps the most versatile instrument in all of history.

The versatility of the Organ Grinder Wurlitzer and of the artists who play it may well be the key to the enchantment of the restaurant. When patrons can experience popular, classical, Gospel, or rock music in an ambience augmented by thousands of lights, hourly silent movies and a friendly dancing mouse, there is clearly something there that appeals to all who have experienced it — that magic we hope to share with you.



A 1966 shot of Dennis Hedberg at the Portland Oriental Console.



Lyn Larsen at the 1973 Convention when the Wurlitzer was much smaller.

Claude Neuffer Photo



Beth and Bob Gilbert visited from Palo Alto, California, and were welcomed by Mitzi Mouse.

Claude Neuffer Photo

Portland has all the fun!

JULY 2 - 6, 1988 • 1988 CONVENTION

THEATRE ORGAN

The Organ Grinder's Tonal Resources

SOLO CHAMBER	Pipes
8' Kinura	61
8' Orchestral Oboe	61
16' Tibia Clausa	97
32' Harmonic Tuba	85
8' Musette	61
8' Vox Humana	61
8' Gamba	73
8' Gamba Celeste	73
8' Solo Brass Trumpet	61
8' Quintadena	61
5 1/3' Gross Quinte	20
FOUNDATION CHAMBER	
8' Brass Saxophone	61
4' Harmonic Flute	73
4' Harmonic Flute Celeste	73
8' Vox Humana	61
16' Solo String	73
16' Solo String Celeste	73
8' Viola	73
8' Viola Celeste	73
16' Tibia Clausa	97
16' Tuba Mirabilis	73
16' English Post Horn	73
32' Diaphonic Diapason	85
Marimba/Harp	49
Chrysoglott	49
Glockenspiel	30
Sleigh Bells	25
Chimes	25
Xylophone	37
Miscellaneous Traps and Effects	
MAIN CHAMBER	
16' Concert Flute	97
8' Viol d'Orchestra	85
8' Viol Celeste	73
8' Vox Humana	61
8' Krumet	61
16' Open Diapason	85
8' Salcional	73
8' Salcional Celeste	73
16' Clarinet	73
8' Harmonic Trumpet	61
8' Oboe Horn	61
32' Tibia Clausa	109
8' Brass Trumpet	61
8' Horn Diapason	73
8' Horn Diapason Celeste	61
16' Dulciana	85
8' Unda Maris Celeste	73
8' French Horn	61
32' Cor Anglais	85
IV Rank Vox Humana Chorus	244
16' Lieblich Flute	85
UNENCLOSED PERCUSSIONS	Notes
Piano	85
Sleigh Bells	25
Glockenspiel	37
Marimba/Harp	49
Tower Chimes	25
Cathedral Chimes	25
Chrysoglott	49
Swiss Bells	18
Master Xylophone	49
Tympani	13
Miscellaneous Traps and Effects	