

Tivoli Theatre, Downers Grove. Home of 2/7 Barton

Macomb Theatre Organ Society

With only four days notice, the Macomb Theatre Organ Society, ceased presenting concerts on the Society's Kilgen theatre pipe organ. Owners of the Macomb Theatre entered into a long-term lease with an individual who has converted the building for use as a dinner theatre.

After negotiations with the new management the Society learned that they would have only two hours per week to rebuild and maintain the sixty-year-old instrument. The Board of Directors of the Macomb Theatre Organ Society voted to accept an offer to purchase the 3/9 Kilgen for shipment to Wisconsin. This was the third interruption of concerts for the group, the Macomb Theatre twice being closed due to lack of funds. Already the console and some percussion instruments have left the building and the pipe work was shipped in December.

The Macomb Theatre Organ Society is currently operating as a social organization until a new organ and/or home can be found. Any information regarding either of these should be sent to Marvin M. Spear, President, M.T.O.S. - 22403 St. Gertrude Ave., St. Clair Shore, Michigan 48081. The Macomb Theatre Organ Society is indebted to the Wolverine Theatre Organ Society (a local ATOS chapter) for their hospitality in helping to host some of its functions.

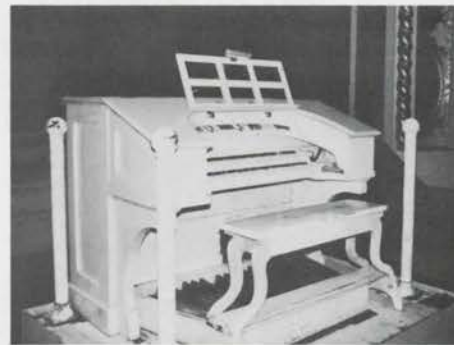
Marvin M. Spear

Remember to VOTE!

THE TIVOLI: Pride of Downers Grove

Twenty-five miles west of Chicago is the pleasant town of Downers Grove, Illinois. Across the street from the Burlington Northern Interurban railroad station is the Tivoli Building. Built in 1928, the building houses a hotel, a bowling alley, several stores and a beautiful 1400-seat theatre! The theatre opened on December 25, 1928, originally designed with talking pictures in mind for the future. Although two large organ chambers were included in the theatre, it is believed that the owners opted for a small style E 2/7 Wurlitzer. Over the years, while many other theatres went the cycle of boom and bust, the Tivoli survives fairly well intact today. In 1986, a major redecoration was undertaken by the owner, Mr. Willis Johnson. About this time, Mr. Johnson located a complete 2/7 Barton theatre organ in the closed Rialto theatre in Champaign, Illinois. Since the Tivoli's chambers had been empty for many years, the Barton would find a new home. The organ, as usual, had been neglected for years and much soot and dirt had to be removed. Mr. Johnson's "right hand" maintenance man at the time, Mr. Frank Minnis, coded every pipe, chest and wire before removal from the Rialto so reassembly would be simplified. The parts were moved to the Tivoli, cleaned, inspected and repaired when necessary. As with most Bartons, the inside leather pneumatics were in beautiful condition after almost 60 years! (No other organbuilder has ever matched Barton's choice of leather).

Mr. Minnis adapted the left chamber and began installation of the organ, based on its original layout. In spite of the fact that Mr. Minnis had never even seen the inside of a pipe organ before, his electrical and carpentry skills paid off.



Tivoli Barton console on its lift.

About this time, another Tivoli employee suggested that Evan Chase, Toledo Area Theatre Organ Society's President be contacted to "fine tune" the project. After a few trips by Mr. Chase to Downers Grove, the organ began making music.

Not long afterward, a Barton lift was located in Lansing, Michigan, and installed in the Tivoli's orchestra pit. Tom Wibbels played the "dedication" during a gala event for the theatre restoration in September, 1986. Currently, volunteer organists play weekends before the feature picture. In 1988, just as in 1928, the Tivoli theatre — and now, organ — is still going strong!

THE ORGAN: Built in 1926, an interesting "economy" model Barton. Seven ranks: Tibia, Tuba, Flute, Vox Humana, Violin, Violin Celeste, and Diapason. Six of the ranks are on two vented chests, one unified rank (Flute). To produce broader sound, Sub and Super Couplers are used. Despite its full sound, the entire organ plays on 5" wind pressure. The one-horsepower Spencer blower generates 12" static wind. The percussion department of the organ is well represented by a snappy Barton 37-note xylophone.

Evan Chase

Renaissance Theatre

From the Renaissance Theatre in Mansfield, Ohio, we report that Lyn Larsen came back to help us kick off our 87/88 season. A near capacity crowd was here to greet him.

His choice of selections always pleases, and he made the wonderful 3/20 Wurlitzer tell a composer's story, but then, Franz Liszt might have been a bit surprised to have heard his "Hungarian Dance" become the "Hungarian Rag."



Lyn Larsen at the console of the 3/20 Wurlitzer in the Renaissance Theatre in Mansfield, Ohio.

We provided an extra helper for Lyn. A very friendly left-over summer fly. Sometimes he sat on Lyn's hand and he must have had a great ride during the second half riser, "76 Trombones."

For a pre-Halloween concert, Dwight Thomas presented an evening of true delight. He gave us a sampling of the old masters by playing "Broken Rosary" in the Jesse Crawford arrangement. Then to the music of Billy Joel. His renditions showed us that almost all music can be adapted to Strings, Voxes and Tibias.

Dwight Thomas will go far in the organ concert world. Let's hope that theatre managers will not be afraid to book the young artists being found across our country. They are very, very good and need public exposure along the concert tours.

On May 7 Father Miller will introduce us to his famous type of jazz and blues. Our audiences are growing and they are applauding loudly for the artists and the beautiful tones of our Wurlitzer.

Virginia White

*"The affairs of music ought,
somehow,
to terminate in the love of the beautiful."*

PLATO, Republic



The ATASCADERO PLAYHOUSE with Glen Playman Orchestra on stage, 1935. The 2/3 Smith organ is in the pit.

Theatre Organs in San Luis Obispo

The following is a list of theatre organs that were installed in San Luis Obispo County, California.

In the city of San Luis Obispo, the OBISPO THEATRE had a 2/4 Wurlitzer, Style 135. It opened on May 14, 1921. The opening concert was played by Agnes Wallace Harrison. Later, three ranks of Maas pipes were added. The organ was sold in the mid-1940s.

Also in the city of San Luis Obispo, the ELMO THEATRE had a Wurlitzer Style 135 dedicated on December 17, 1919. The opening concert was played by E.H. Bush (or Brush) of Chicago. Disposition of the organ is unknown.

In the city of Paso Robles, the PARK THEATRE also had what was announced as "A mammoth Hope-Jones Wurlitzer organ will be installed. The largest organ between Los Angeles and San Francisco." Actually, it was another Style 135 dedicated April 12, 1921. This organ was sold to the local Methodist Church in 1935, and in 1953 was given to a church member who installed it in his home. There is no further record of it.

In the city of Atascadero, the ATASCADERO PLAYHOUSE had a 2/3 Smith organ dedicated in November 1926 by a Mr. Thelinder. This organ was used in the theatre through the thirties and was donated to a local church in the early

forties and later still was sold to a buyer in the Sacramento area.

In Pismo Beach, the PISMO THEATRE OPENED July 2, 1927 with a Reuter theatre organ played by Dr. Edward P. Delevanti (RSM). On July 6, Mary Patterson, an organist from the BELMONT THEATRE in New York, was guest organist and on August 18, Ivan Rowley became "permanent" organist. There is no information as to when this organ was removed from the theatre.

There was another 2/6 Wurlitzer Style D in the county. It was located in the old San Miguel Mission, San Miguel, California, until January 1965 when Bob Denny bought it. It was originally installed in the WALKER THEATRE in Santa Ana, California.

Bob Longfield



Weiler Plays for AGO

The Central Arkansas Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, on January 19, 1988, sponsored a "Music For The Silents" program in Shorey Auditorium, of the University of Arkansas Medical Science College in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Jeff Weiler, of Chicago, presented a well rounded and well received program for the Charlie Chaplin film, *Gold Rush*. Mr. Weiler performed on a Morton-Wurlitzer, eight-rank instrument which was installed in Shorey Auditorium during the early 1970s by Dr. James L. Dennis, a member of ATOS.

Dr. Dennis gave the instrument to the school during his tenure as Chancellor of the Medical Science College.

Earl V. Kelone