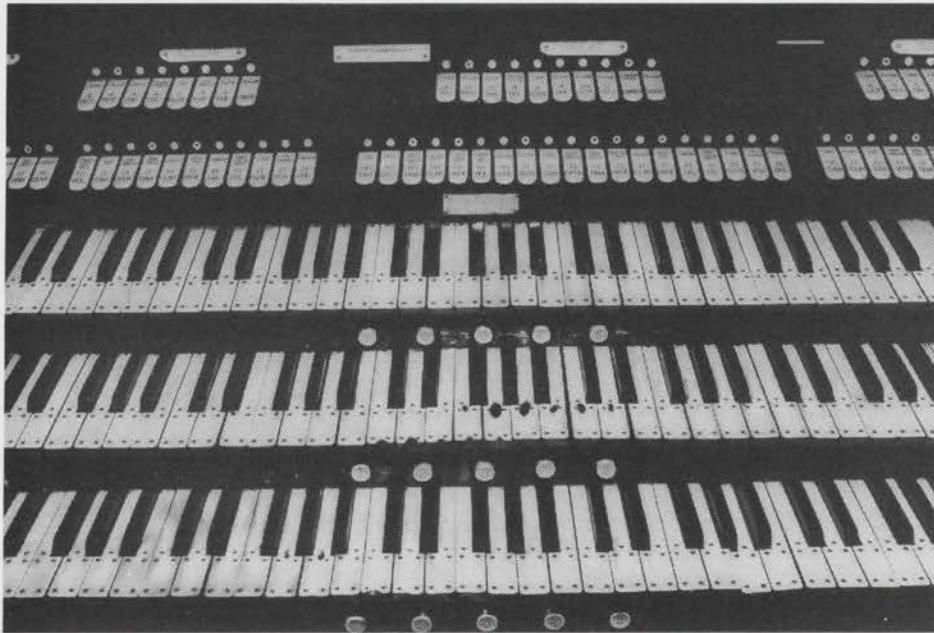


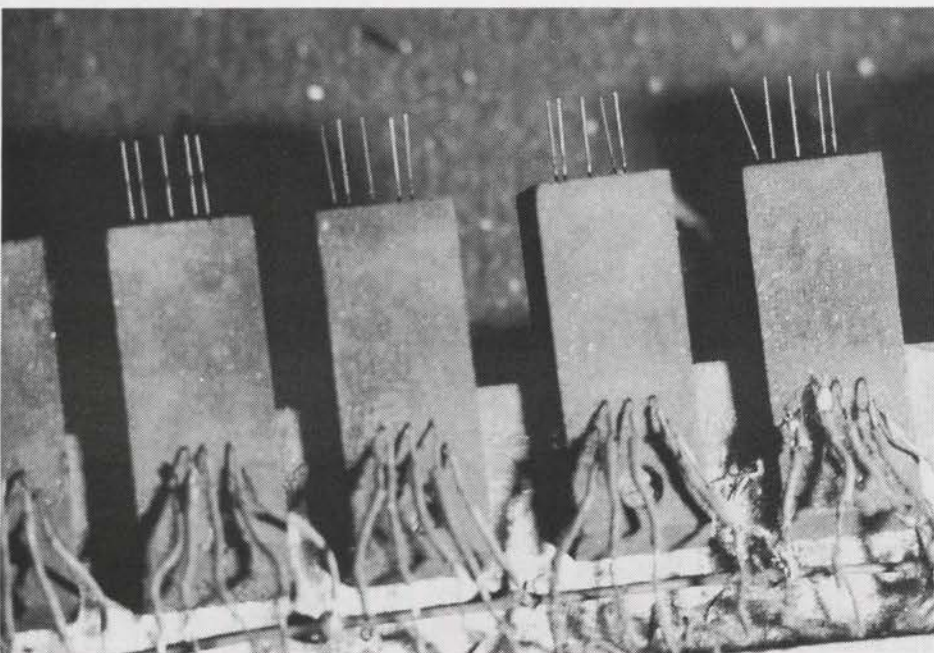
Here's a horror story to curl your hair!

(BUT WITH A HAPPY ENDING!)

by Victor C. Searle



Keyboards showing wear through ivory. Tops were held on with six brass screws.



Pedal key contacts showing wear and poor condition.

Imagine yourself sitting down to a 3/12 Wurlitzer console in a luxurious department store. You are on a second-floor balcony, and behind you, in the middle of a central court, five stories high is a gorgeous 30-foot statue, elaborately carved from a 500-year old tree and lavishly decorated with gold and silver leaf. In such surroundings, what a sound this organ should have!

Look at the console. It is obviously a Style R-20 residence Wurlitzer, with 89 stopkeys in two straight rows. You wonder why all of them are down! Take a good look at the manuals. The Solo seems okay, even though each ivory on the organ is screwed on with six tiny brass screws. But the Great! Up from middle C for an octave, there are deep grooves worn clear through the ivories and a quarter-inch into the wood. Every key is at a different level. The Accompaniment is even worse, with warped keys rubbing against each other. A good look at the console case shows that the latest paint job seems to have been done with Hershey's Chocolate Syrup, although nicks and scratches here and there testify to numerous attempts at camouflage, including ivory and gold.

Well, maybe it will sound okay. To turn on the blower, you have to crawl through a 3½' doorway into a cubbyhole. Back to the console — let's see what it sounds like.

First open both chambers. The Solo is to your left, Main on your right, shutters visible from the bench, although hidden from the public by thick red velvet curtains. The rubber matting is gone from the expression pedals, but you bravely push them both open. A glance right and left shows only **one** of the fourteen Solo shutters open and but **two** of the eighteen Main ones! Push a piston — nothing! So, let's try a scale on the Great. Middle C: Brass Trumpet. D: Concert Flute. E: dead silence. F: Clarinet. G: Salicional. A: Piccolo. B: Tuba 16' and so on, up the scale!

Is there a toy counter? No, but the keys rattling a quarter-inch from side to side make a lovely Castanet! Chimes? Chrysoglott? They are there, hanging in front of the shutters, behind the velvet curtains. But nary a clunk!

To compound the horror, think of yourself having to play this monstrosity for fifteen minutes, three times a day, six times a week, for thirty-five years!

This should furnish you some lovely nightmares for a few weeks.

THIS ISN'T FICTION . . .

such an organ is, or was, exactly as described until just a short time ago.

Regular readers of THEATER ORGAN may recall several articles about the Wurlitzer organ in Tokyo's Mitsukoshi Department Store. Back in 1928, a big-wig from the store visited Wanamaker's in Philadelphia and was so impressed with the organ and the similarity of the Grand Court to that of the Tokyo store that he decided then and there to buy an organ. Visiting Wurlitzer's New York showroom, he casually asked the price of the demonstrator organ there. It was Wurlitzer Opus 2099, with 12 ranks and an automatic player. When the salesman mentioned a price in the vicinity of \$35,000, the visitor whipped out his checkbook and bought it on the spot, the easiest sale Wurlitzer ever made!

They had the organ dismantled and sent back to the factory, where every inch of the wooden parts was painted silver, inside and out, supposedly to tropicalize it, and then it was shipped to Tokyo. Preparing a balcony location for the organ would take some time, so it was temporarily erected in the Seventh Floor Exhibition Hall.

Finally, in 1932 the instrument was moved to its permanent home in the balcony. There was no regular organist until 1951, so the auto-player saw plenty of use in those pre-war days. The last roll played was "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere," and this only remaining roll is still in place on the tracker-bar today.

The war years were almost fatal to the organ. Although the store itself escaped bombing, the war effort required more and more metal, so the original attractive antimony grillework was removed and carted off to be melted down. In a like manner, every third baluster support on every stairway in the store was sawed off! These were very attractive spiral brass pipes and they probably made excellent bullet casings. How the pipework itself escaped confiscation is not known. The blower motor was also taken, and so the organ remained mute until the war was over.

Sometime in early 1946, an organ-loving GI "liberated" a 7 hp motor from some US Army installation and once again the organ became somewhat capable of producing sounds. The auto-player and combination action no longer worked, and the organ itself was quite decrepit.



Hiroshi Matsuzawa

In September of 1946, another organ fan appeared on the scene — Vernon Brown, a civilian with the Occupation Army. Shocked at the miserable condition of the organ, he wrote to the factory in North Tonawanda for repairing advice.

Of course, by this time, Wurlitzer was long out of the organ business, but Brown's letter was forwarded to Hugo Hellstern, who had done the original installation in Tokyo. Although he was retired, Mr. Hellstern very kindly supplied a great amount of information which enabled Vernon (amateur though he was) to carry out a fairly comprehensive repair job.

For him it was a labor of love, and in the course of his work, he learned a great deal about the innards of organs. This was to stand him in good stead when, years later, he acquired and completely rebuilt an old tracker organ from Organ Clearing House in his home. This instrument is a real showpiece, and a must for visiting firemen to see when in Tokyo.

In 1950, the Japanese National Broadcasting Corporation decided to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Bach's death with a series of nationally broadcast organ concerts. Still in my teens, I was at that time organist at the Eighth Army Chapel Center in Yokohama. I had taken two years off from music school to live in Japan with my parents where my father was on General Mac

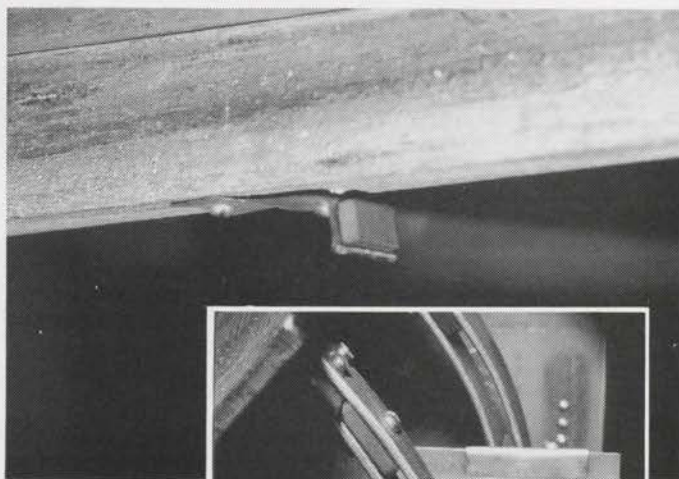
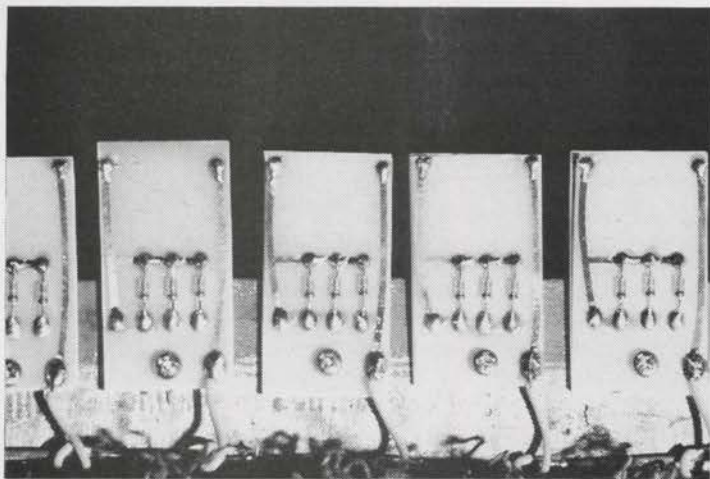
Arthur's staff, and I was invited to give the opening concert in May of 1950. Even after Vernon's work, the organ was just barely playable. However, the interest aroused by this series led to the employment by the store of a staff organist, Mr. Hiroshi Matsuzawa. Since 1951, he has been struggling three times a day, six days a week, to provide music for the customers. It was through his efforts that the organ became a symbol for the department store, along with the two bronze lions which guard the front entrance.

As the years passed, however, the organ went from bad to worse to impossible. By the spring of 1985, the only way to make anything resembling music was to have all stops and couplers on. There were so many dead notes on each manual that performing "Silent Night" for example involved playing G-A-G on the Great, E on the Solo for the first two measures; D-D-B on the Great, C-C on the Accomp and back to G on the Great! How Mr. Matsuzawa escaped being committed to the funny farm is still a source of amazement.

Since Mitsukoshi's mandatory retirement age is 60, Mr. Matsuzawa was scheduled to end his career last year. Realizing that no other performer would put up with an organ in that condition, the store authorities asked the leading Japanese musical instrument manufacturer about the possibility of repairing the organ. This firm being the Japan agent for several European builders, they at once replied that it was absolutely unrepairable and that they should seriously consider purchasing a new Baroque tracker organ from Germany! If this was not feasible, they would be willing to dismantle the organ, take it to their factory and get a technician from Casavant (of all places!) to come out for six months and try to do something about it, all for the paltry sum of \$100,000!

Faced with these two equally unacceptable alternatives, it was almost decided to retire both Mr. Matsuzawa and the organ and install a Yamaha Electone. Hearing this rumour, Vernon (who had kept in touch with Mr. Matsuzawa through the years) was extremely upset, and since I had helped him a bit in working on his own organ, he advised the store to get a "second opinion" — mine.

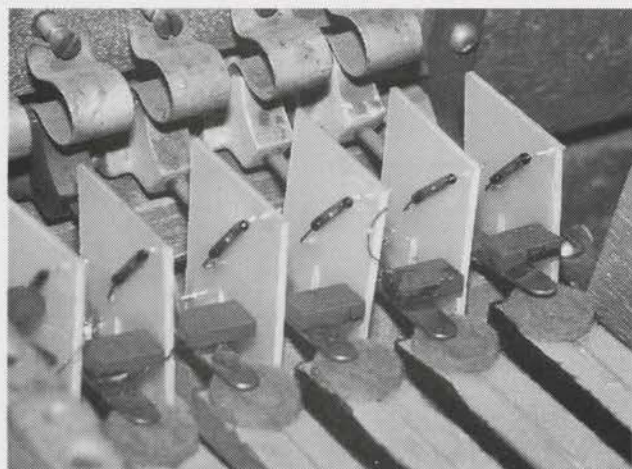
It was extremely fortunate that Phil



*Clockwise from top:
Pedal keying diode boards,
turned on by magnetic switch
on underside of board.*

*Keying magnet mounted on
pedal keying shorting bar.*

*Arndt magnetic pedal con-
tacts replaced worn out con-
tacts on expression shoes
and crescendo pedal.*



Magnets mounted on stop tab levers and magnetic switches which replaced defective contacts.

Wickstrom from Los Angeles was spending a year in Tokyo studying Japanese. Phil is a superb technician and expert on theatre organs, while my experience has mainly been in building classical instruments. We took a look at the poor beast and found that it was quite repairable. We realized that it would be a tremendous job, but along with the formidable challenge, it would preserve a historic organ and perhaps earn us a tiny niche in Japanese organ history. We estimated we could do it for a quarter of the "expert" quotation. However, since the organ had to be used three times a day, we could only work at night or on days when the store was closed. We figured it might take over a year to complete the project.

Our proposal was eagerly accepted and we began work in October 1985. The first task was to get all the shutters working. Actually, only a few pneumatics had to be releathered; the outsides of the shutters had been painted so many times that they were just glued shut. A good kick got them all moving. The next day, unaware that we had begun work, Mr. Matsuzawa opened the expression pedals and was almost blasted off the bench.

In all his thirty-five years at the console,

he had never heard either the Chimes or the Chrysoglott. Christmas was approaching, so we decided to releather these pneumatics first. Sometime in the past, an "organ technician" (not Vernon!) had recovered them with camera bellows material! We were able to do this work in my shop, so we spent the available store time getting notes to play again. Of the 852 pipes, 268 were silent. Dirt in the reeds was the problem in many cases, but there was an extraordinarily large number of dead magnets. Restoring the autoplayer seemed to be a hopeless job, so we cannibalized it for magnets while we had replacements sent from the U.S.

The way the organ had originally been installed was unbelievable! Many dead notes had never been soldered to contacts, magnets, spreaders or switch-fingers. We came to the conclusion that when it was originally assembled, Wurli- tzer had already realized that their market was dying, and not really caring, they just threw together any parts that might have been lying around the factory.

While Mitsukoshi was closed January 1-3 for the 1986 New Year, we recovered all the keys, replacing many burnt-out contacts. Re-bushing and aligning was a major task. It was decided to strip off the

chocolate syrup and the other 17 layers of paint, and now the console is in its original mahogany, oiled and rubbed down to a beautiful lustre. Expression pedal mats were replaced, the combination action pneumatics releathered and the stopkey contacts exchanged for reed switches with magnet actuators. The expression and crescendo pedals, along with the regular pedal contacts got similar units.

Perhaps the weakest point in the original design was the trem and wind system. The entire Solo (four ranks) had one puny trem which extended all the way down to the lowest note on the Tibia. We switched regulators around, and rewound a large part of the organ since many of the zinc wind trunks were deteriorating. Now the Tibia has its own trem, the Brass Trumpet and Oboe Horn are on one, and the Orchestral Oboe has its own.

The entire ensemble lacked brilliance because the original 2²/₃' and 2' stops were unified from the Main Concert Flute, a rather nondescript voice. These two stops on the Great were wired to the Tibia rank. The Tibia offset chest stood in the middle of the chamber, making it almost impossible to get around. This we mounted on a side wall so that now there

is room for another four-rank chest (if we can locate one) and suitable pipes.

While many people may argue that we should have done an authentic restoration, back to the original, we decided to make use of modern technology. Every magnet in the organ now has a fly-back diode which should end burnt-out magnet problems. The Tibia transfers are transistor-driven and Phil built a 30-amp solid-state rectifier to replace the old generator which was run from the blower motor shaft. The commutator was so pitted that it seemed ready to conk out at any moment.

As the work on the organ proper neared completion, it was asked if there was any hope for the player. There had originally been about 200 rolls, including many by Jesse Crawford, but a year's search failed to turn them up. Phil made a futile trip to the States to see if he could locate some, so the final decision was a compromise.

Wurlitzer Band Organ rolls are readily available, and when the store is full, the organ needs lots of guts, so we built a completely new roll player to take 165 rolls. The store officials wanted the console keys to move, but this being impractical, we wired the 165 register changes to move the stopkeys, so the customers can enjoy seeing the organ in action.

Adding the roll player suggested

another project, because there are a number of percussion controls cut in the 165 rolls. Therefore, we went "whole-hog" and built a complete toy counter, playing from the Accomp and Pedals. These are controlled by eighteen On/Off lighted buttons in a new set of key-cheeks. Some Wurlitzer toe studs were also added. The toy counter is suspended next to the Chimes in front of the Solo chamber. Naturally, the red velvet curtains were removed early in the game and replaced by fishnet drapes, which let the percussions be seen, as well as allowing free egress to the sound.

Although there were many loose ends, the project was complete enough to have a dedication concert on November 2, 1986. Mr. Matsuzawa played Japanese folk songs; Phil's "Sentimental Journey," "Around the World in 80 Days" and "Syncopated Clock" showed how a theatre organ should really sound. I played Bach, Clarke, Purvis and Sousa! The program had to be repeated twice, and parts were nationally televised.

The store officials are so thrilled with their "new" organ, that they have decided not to put Mr. Matsuzawa out to pasture, but make him *Organist Emeritus* for life. We are happy for him, and now that he has an instrument that plays, he is making excellent progress toward being able to utilize all its possibilities.

The work is now completed, and everyone is "gung ho" about enlarging the instrument. A glockenspiel and xylophone are now under construction in my shop, and Phil will be scouring the U.S. for a new chest and four extra ranks to add to the Solo.

It has been a real source of satisfaction to both of us, and also to the several junior high boys who got into the tight spots where we big foreigners couldn't wriggle (especially since Phil got stuck and had to be forcibly yanked out!) This being the only Wurlitzer in the Orient, we feel it has been an historic project and we hope that any ATOS members visiting Japan will come and take a look at our pride and joy, the *Mighty Mitsukoshi Wurlitzer!*

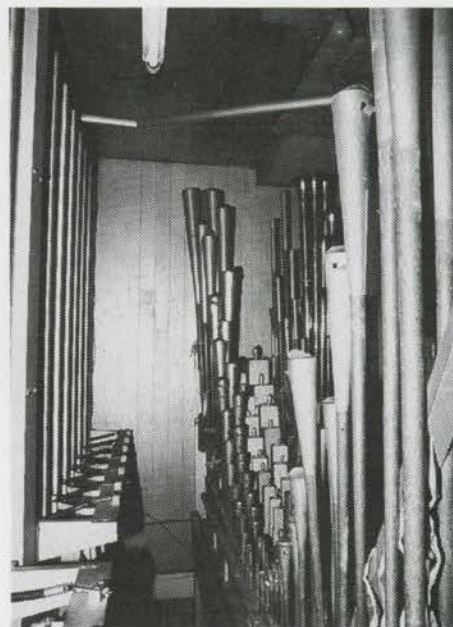
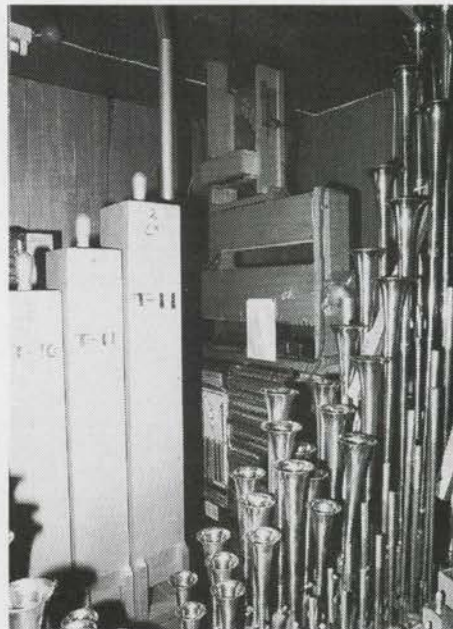


Keyboards after recovering.



*Music is the electrical soil in which
the spirit lives, thinks and invents.*

BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)



Solo Chamber: Oboe Horn, Tibia, Orch Oboe and Trumpet.

Mitsukoshi Wurlitzer Opus 2099 Specifications

PEDAL

Tuba 16'
 Bass 16' (Diaphone)
 Bourdon 16'
 Tuba 8'
 Diapason 8'
 Tibia Clausa 8'
 Clarinet 8'
 Cello 8'
 Flute 8'
 Dulciana 8'
 Acc to Ped 8'
 Great to Ped 8'
 Solo to Ped 8'
 *Bass Drum
 *Rhythm Cymbal
 *Woodblock

ACCOMPANIMENT

Contra Viol (TC) 16'
 Tuba 8'
 Open Diapason 8'
 Tibia Clausa 8'
 Clarinet 8'
 Oboe Horn 8'
 Salicional 8'
 Voix Celeste (TC) 8'
 Flute 8'
 Vox Humana 8'
 Dulciana 8'
 Octave 4'
 Piccolo 4' (Tibia)
 Salicet 4'
 Octave Celeste 4'
 Flute 4'
 Vox Humana 4'
 Dulcet 4'
 Chrysoglott 49 bars
 Solo Sub Acc 16'
 Solo Octave Acc 4'
 *Snare Drum Tap
 *Snare Drum Roll
 *Maracas
 *Castanets
 *Tambourine
 *Triangle
 *Woodblock
 *Sleighbells

GREAT

Tuba 16'
 Bass 16'
 Tibia Clausa (TC) 16'
 Clarinet (TC) 16'
 Oboe Horn (TC) 16'
 Contra Viol (TC) 16'
 Bourdon 16'
 Trumpet (Brass) 8'
 Tuba 8'
 Open Diapason 8'
 Tibia Clausa 8'
 Orchestra Oboe 8'
 Clarinet 8'
 Oboe Horn 8'
 Salicional 8'
 Voix Celeste (TC) 8'
 Flute 8'
 Vox Humana 8'
 Dulciana 8'
 Octave 4'
 Dulcet 4'
 *Twelfth 2²/₃' (Tibia)
 *Piccolo 2' (Tibia)
 Cathedral Chimes 25 tubes
 Solo Sub Great 16'
 Solo Unison Great 8'
 Solo Octave Great 4'
 *Glockenspiel 32 bars

SOLO

Tuba 16'
 Trumpet 8'
 Tuba 8'
 Open Diapason 8'
 Tibia Clausa 8'
 Orchestra Oboe 8'
 Oboe Horn 8'
 Clarinet 8'
 Salicional 8'
 Flute 8'
 Vox Humana 8'
 Octave 4'
 Piccolo 4' (Tibia)
 Salicet 4'
 Flute 4'
 Twelfth 2²/₃' (Flute)
 Piccolo 2' (Flute)
 Cathedral Chimes
 *Xylophone Tap 32 bars
 *Xylophone Roll

TREMULANTS

SOLO:

*Trumpet & Oboe Horn on one
 *Orchestral Oboe independent
 Tibia operated by Vox Trem stopkey

MAIN:

VOX HUMANA: (with Tibia)

TUBA:

ACCESSORIES

Solo and Main Expression Pedals
 Crescendo Pedal (operates Great and Pedal stops)
 with 3 indicator lights*
 5 Combination Pistons per manual (operates Pedal stops also)
 *5 General Combination Toe Pistons

*TOY COUNTER PISTONS

*Steamboat Whistle
 *Nightingale
 *Woodblock
 *Triangle
 *Crash Cymbal (Toe)
 *Tympani Roll (Toe)
 *Snare Drum Roll (Toe)

SOLO CHAMBER

Brass Trumpet 8'	61 pipes
Tibia Clausa 8*	73 pipes
Oboe Horn 8'	61 pipes
Orchestral Oboe 8'	61 pipes
Trems: Tibia; Orch. Oboe; Trumpet & Oboe Horn	
Cathedral Chimes (in front of shutters)	
Toy Counter	ditto
Xylophone & Glock	ditto

MAIN CHAMBER

Tuba 16'	73 pipes
Open Diapason 16'	85 pipes
Clarinet 8'	61 pipes
Salicional 8'	73 pipes
Voix Celeste 8' (TC)	61 pipes
Bourdon 16'/Flute 8'	97 pipes
Dulciana 8'	73 pipes
Vox Humana 8'	73 pipes
Trems: Vox Humana, Main, Tuba	
Chrysoglott (in front of shutters)	

*AUTO-PLAYER

Plays Wurlitzer #165
 Band Organ Roll (10-tune)
 *New Additions, 1986