

# Not Just Another Wurlitzer



Ron Wehmeier in Solo Chamber. Note 16' Wood Diaphone in back.

Like many theatre organ buffs, Ron Wehmeier of Cincinnati, Ohio, was first introduced to the sounds of theatre pipes by the many recordings of the legendary George Wright. Unlike most of us though, Ron decided he wanted a theatre pipe organ in his home, and he acquired a 2/5 Wurlitzer from radio station WLW, the last of three Wurlitzers owned by Crosley Broadcasting. Ron brought the organ to his parents' lovely turn-of-the-century home on a hill in Cincinnati, rebuilt it carefully, and installed the pipe-work in a basement room with the console on the first floor. Although this turned out to be a very nice-sounding installation, it was not quite as "mighty" as Ron desired.

After some searching, Ron bought the three-manual Wurlitzer from the Plaza Theatre in Kansas City, Missouri, rebuilt

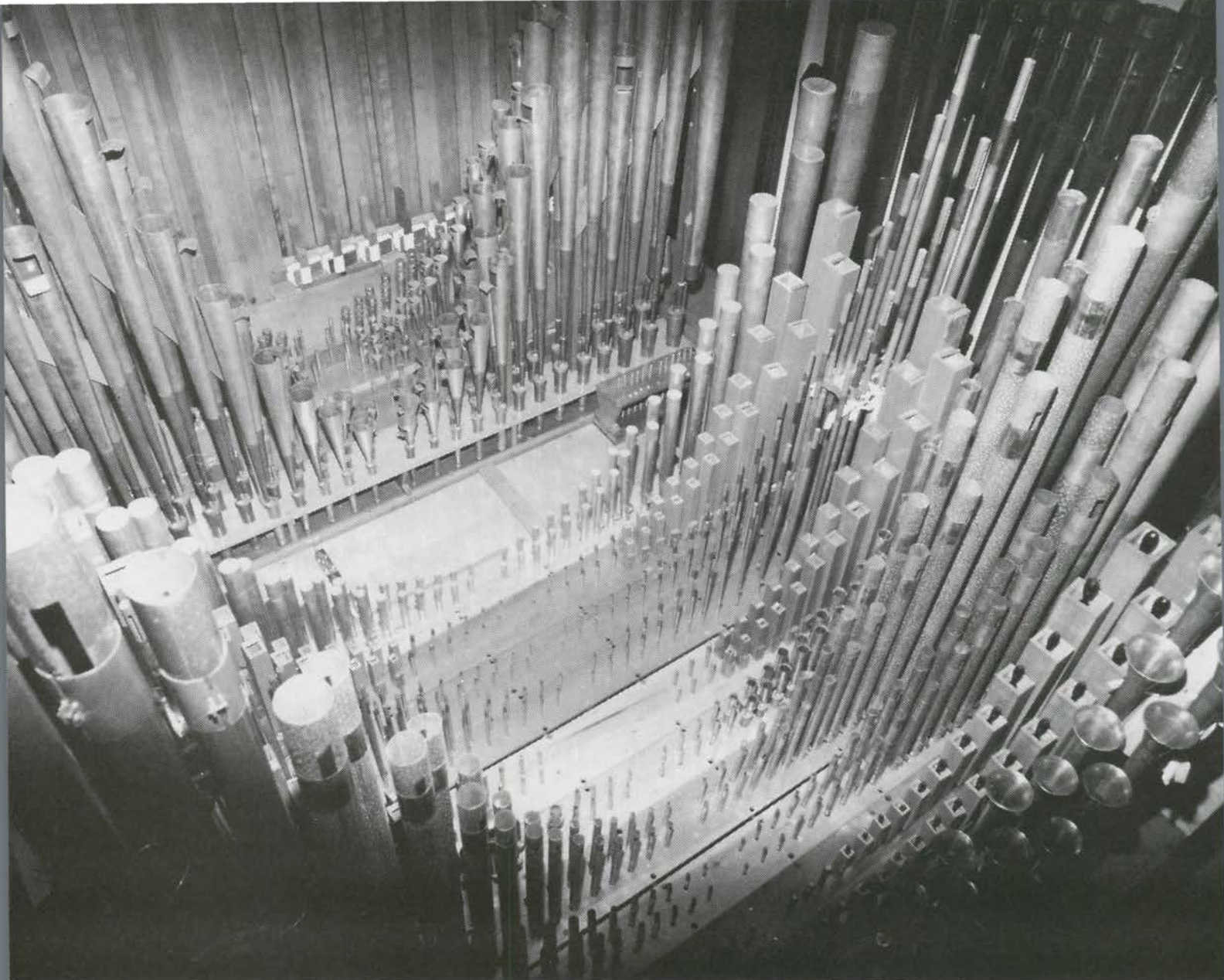


*Wehmeier Wurlitzer console platform contains bronze from a bank in Cincinnati.*

Jack Doll Photos

and reinstalled it in the same basement room and eventually expanded it to twenty-two ranks (See January 1979 THEATRE ORGAN). This venture took a few years to accomplish since Ron was also working full-time as the area sales and service representative for the M.P. Moller Pipe Organ Company. Along the way, Ron made the acquaintance of George Wright who was most helpful with suggestions for the organ. As those who have played the organ would attest, this was a very fine-sounding Wurlitzer. Ron says, "I thought at the time this would be the organ for the rest of my life."

One day, however, he received a phone call from Dr. Larry Kass of Cleveland, Ohio, who expressed interest in acquiring a fine Wurlitzer for his home. Eventually a deal was worked out whereby Larry and Sara Kass acquired the Plaza Wurlitzer, and Ron helped de-



sign its new home and supervised its installation (See Jan/Feb 1990 THEATRE ORGAN).

Once again, the search was on for an even mightier Wurlitzer! Ron finally found it in California. And what a mighty one it was. Well-known organ collector Russ Nelson had installed a 4/22 in his home and then sold it for a pizza parlor installation. After being rebuilt by Ken Chrome plans were changed and the parlor never built. The organ was stored for ten years before being acquired by Ron who says, "The pipework Russ had collected was all hand-picked by him over the years and is exceptional. I am privileged to have it." Ron added some hard-to-find sets of pipes he'd collected over the years and several new ranks made by Trivo. In addition, the organ has two pianos: a 1928 Duo-Art 6'2" Steinway grand expressively playable from the console, and the original Wurlitzer upright which is used for mandolin effects.

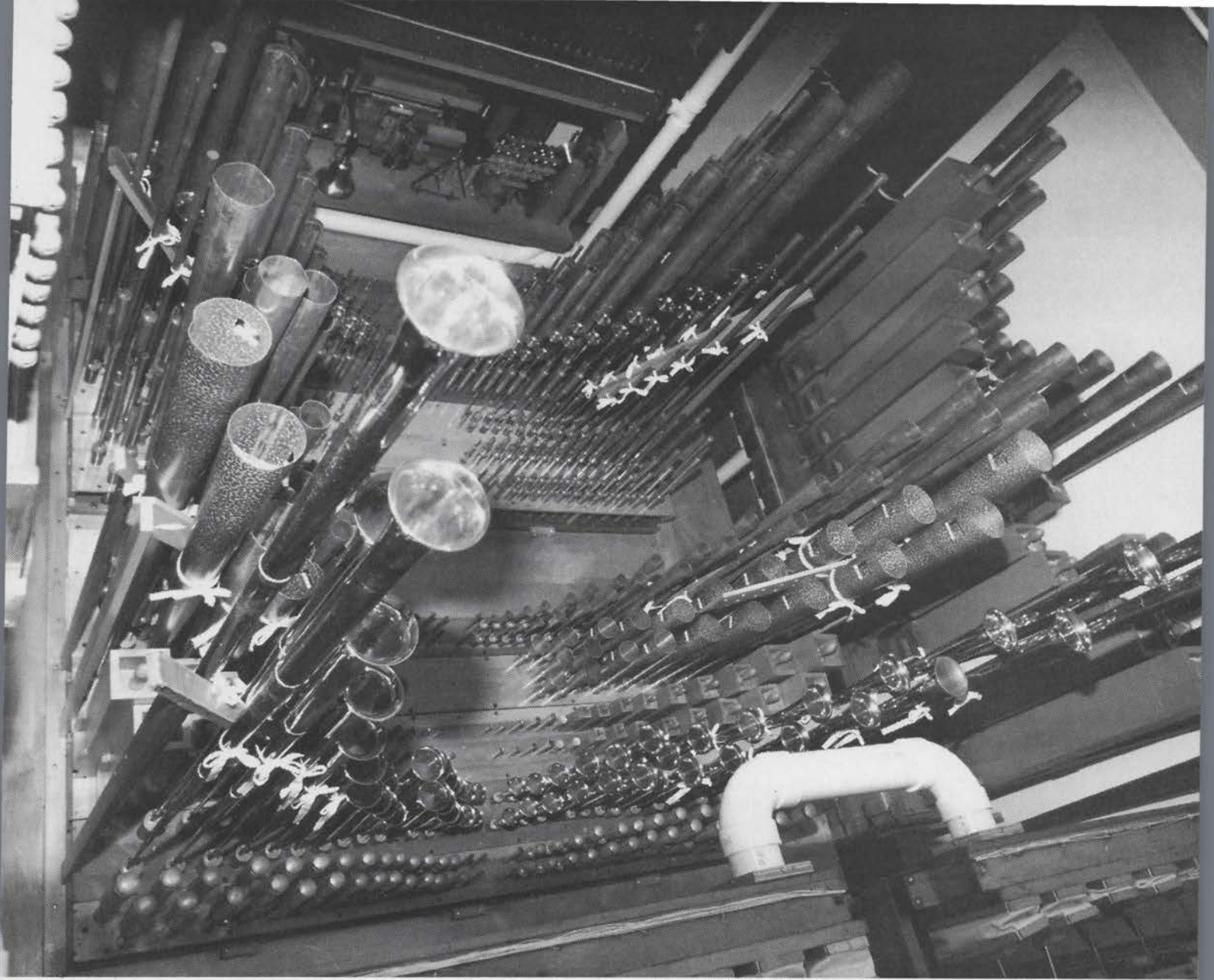
In total, the organ would be a 4/33, so the original basement pipe chamber was far too small. Ron decided to expand the house with the addition of a 35'x70' room with a cathedral ceiling 18' in height at the peak. "The contractor thought I was nuts," Ron says, "when 12" poured concrete wall, double I-beams, 12" joists, and 3/4" plywood sheathing were specified." In the basement of the addition, built into a hill, are the garage, a large shop used in Ron's work for Moller, and his office.

The chambers are on the far end of the room in a space 16' in depth and 35' in width, divided into two equal chambers. The blower room is located beneath the chambers with two 7½ horsepower Spencer blowers and thirteen tremulants. With the regulators sub-floored, the installation is very quiet and was well worth the extra effort. The acoustical properties of the room are excellent. The 3/4" oak floor and the cedar ceiling give the

## Main Chamber

(from swell shades back)

Vox Humana	Wurlitzer
Oboe Horn	Wurlitzer
Tibia	Wurlitzer
Tuba Horn	Wurlitzer
Quintadena	Wurlitzer
Concert Flute	Wurlitzer
V D O	Wurlitzer
Viol Celeste	Wurlitzer
Flute Celeste	Wurlitzer
Clarine	Wurlitzer
Horn Diapason	Kimball
Horn Celeste	Kimball
Lieblich Flute	Moller
French Trumpet	Gottfried
Marimba	
Chrysoglott	
Toy Counters	
Mandolin	



## Solo Chamber

(from swell shades back)

Echo Vox Humana  
 Brass Trumpet  
 15" Tibia  
 Tuba Mirabilis  
 Post Horn  
 Kinura  
 Musette  
 Orchestral Oboe  
 Brass Saxophone  
 Open Diapason  
 Salicional  
 Voix Celeste  
 Glockenspiel  
 Xylophone  
 Tuned Sleighbells  
 Chimes,  
 Toy Counters

Wurlitzer  
 Wurlitzer  
 Wurlitzer  
 Trivo  
 Wurlitzer  
 Gottfried  
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sound a warm texture, and the natural reverberation helps the entire organ blend together.

Although the console had been finished in black lacquer for the intended pizza parlor installation, Ron followed the suggestion of his friend, Sara Kass, and redid the console in mahogany veneer with tasteful ornamentation in gold leaf. Two inlaid Wurlitzer nameplates completed the console appearance. New Hesco stop tabs were engraved and 48-volt Syndine stop action magnets were used. Above the console is a spectacular crystal chandelier from a now-demolished downtown Cincinnati hotel ballroom.

Ron is most grateful for the help he has received from his parents in this three-year project. They have spent many hours in any capacity needed. George Wright, in numerous phone conversations, has been a great help with his support and suggestions. Lyn Larsen drew up the specifications and suggested installing

a Devtronix relay system. Ron also gives special thanks to Dave Hazelton, his long-time associate, for invaluable support throughout the entire project.

Now that the organ is installed and playing, it really comes alive with the artistry of first-class young organist Barry Baker, who lives only ten minutes away in Ft. Thomas, Kentucky. Barry is a frequent visitor, and Ron feels lucky to have him nearby. "His use of all the tonal colors and effects, along with flawless technique, really shows off the Wurlitzer," Ron says.

All who have heard this unique and beautiful installation readily attest that this is "not just another Wurlitzer" but one of the truly fine home installations in the country. Visitors to the 1990 ATOS National Convention in Indianapolis will have the opportunity to attend the Afterglow in Cincinnati where this organ will be publicly played for the first time ever. It will be an event to remember!