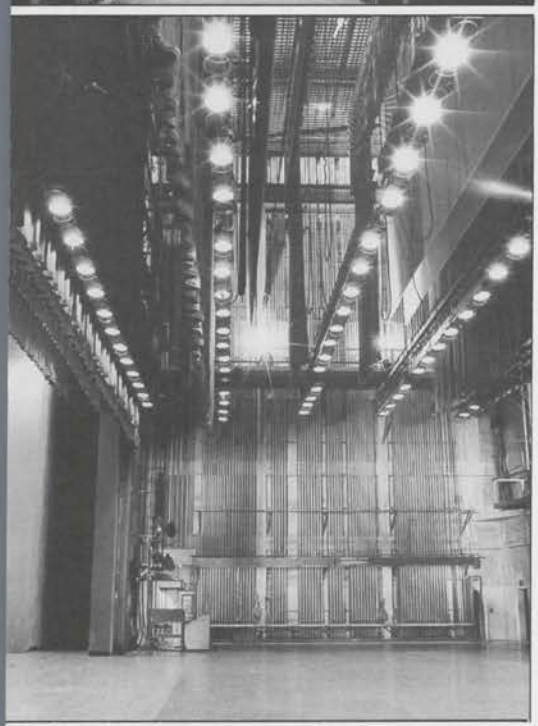


"A New Star Is Born"

by Robert M. Gilbert, assisted by Rudy Frey

Once upon a time, in a land of beauty overlooking San Francisco Bay, nearly every theatre had a pipe organ to enthrall its patrons. But as time went by, one by one the organs fell silent and were removed. Then, after a while, some who had not forgotten the exciting sounds of these great instruments began to realize what had been lost. They gathered in groups and began to search for organs they could install in some theatre or hall, church or home, to regain something of the old magic.

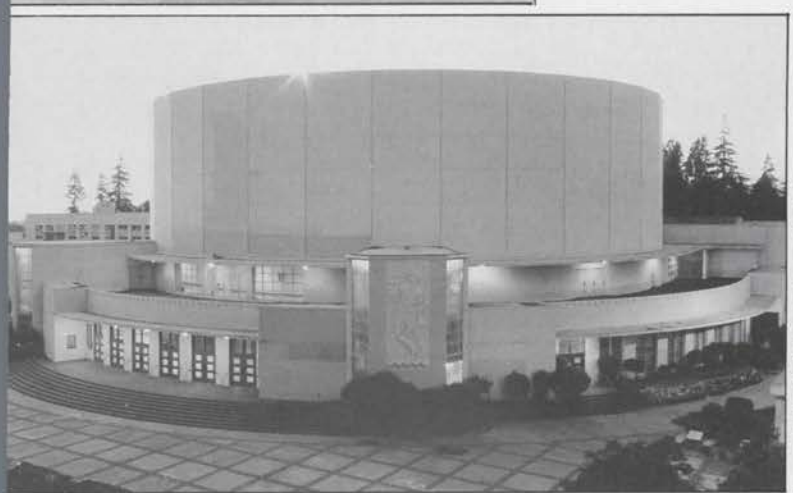
One of these groups was the NorCal Theatre Organ Society. Over the years the members met in pizza parlors, in the two or three theatres in which organs had been reinstalled, even occasionally in a church, all the while dreaming the seemingly impossible dream of owning their own mighty organ. They hardly dared hope for a truly grand theatre in which to install it, one ideally suited in every way.

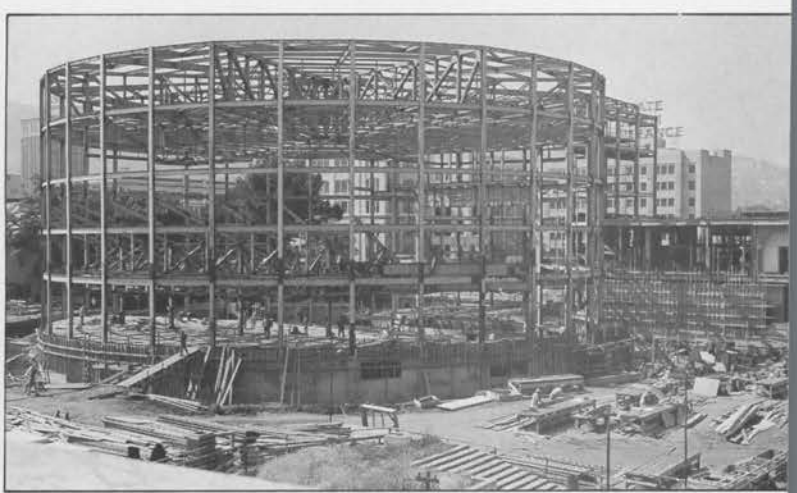
But the Fates were kind, and the perseverance of these dedicated enthusiasts was rewarded. They did acquire the instrument of their dreams, and they did find the ideal place for it. Those who attend the 1991 ATOS Convention in San Francisco will see and hear this outstanding installation.

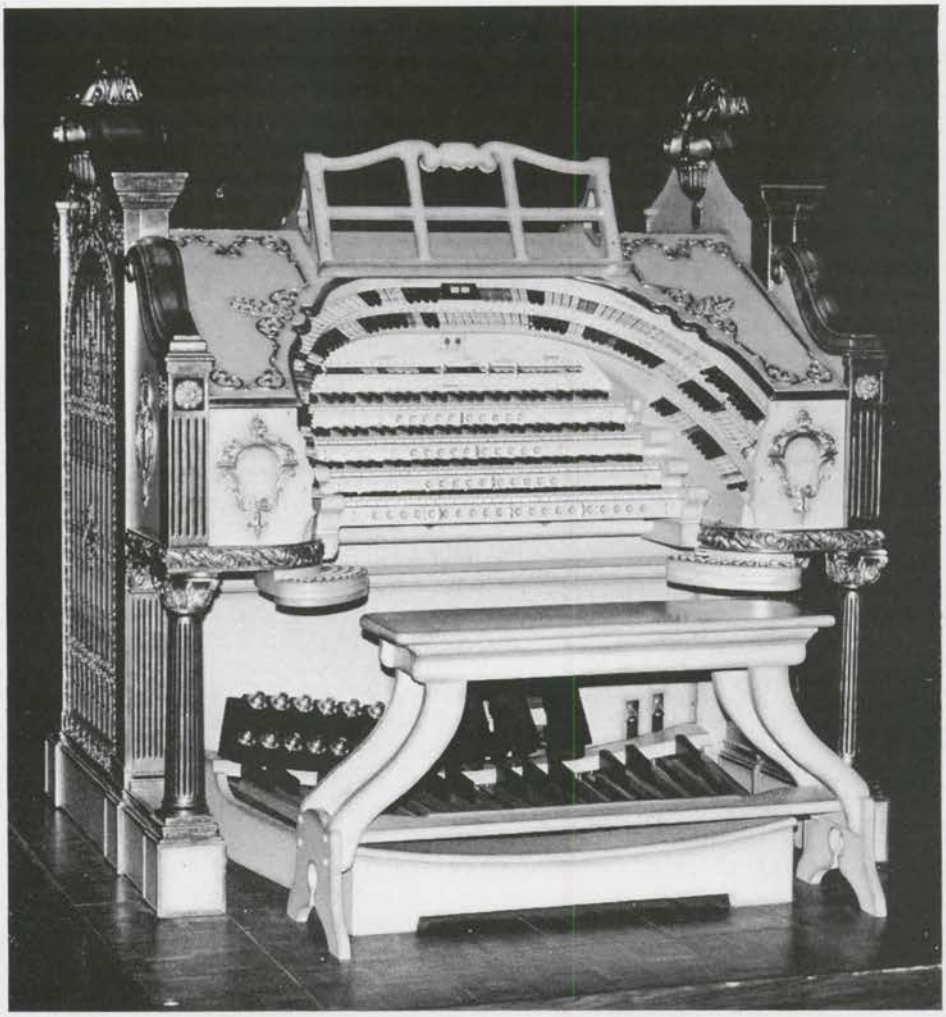
The word "community" in the name of a theatre usually brings to mind something like a 200-seat meeting hall. In the case of the Berkeley Community Theatre, that impression could not be further from reality. How about a 3500-seat theatre with a 100' x 55' fully professional stage, a 53'-wide orchestra platform on a lift, dual 35-mm sound movie projectors, and three pipe chambers, main wind line, blower room, relay room and electrical conduit all provided in the original design?

Planning began in 1935 for the building complex, which was to serve not only the needs of the Berkeley High School, but as a major performing arts center for the city and surrounding communities. Construction got underway in 1941, but the work was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. The steel framework, popularly known as the "birdcage," was a landmark until work was resumed in 1948. The building was dedicated in 1950. It includes the main 3500-seat auditorium, a 600-seat Little Theatre, and facilities for the school music department.

The three organ chambers and the relay room are located above the stage, Main on the left, "Perfound" (Percussion/Foundation) in the middle, and Solo on the right, with the relay room adjacent to the Solo. The chambers are reached from the stage by a series of three steel stairways, not a ladder up the wall. One enters the Main chamber and goes from chamber to chamber to relay room through full-size doors. All the chambers are 13½' deep, and almost 15' high. The Main and Solo chambers are each 19'9" wide, the Perfound 22' wide. The floor and back wall are reinforced concrete. The blower room is in the basement, under the left side of the stage. A 21" main wind line rises 80' straight up from the







blower room to the attic, then runs 60' across over the chambers. Each chamber has a 12" wind outlet in the center of its ceiling. Offstage on the right is a locked fireproof room for storing the console and a grand piano. A steel platform above the stage behind the main curtain valence provides mounting space for the house loudspeakers, the organ piano and the 16' Tibia Plena octave. The organ chambers speak through a very large grille in the ceiling of the auditorium above the orchestra, and the organ sound truly fills the house.

The theatre was equipped with a projection booth, but no projectors were ever installed. So the NorCal organ committee tackled the problem, with the result that Preston "Sandy" Fleet donated to the school twin Super Simplex 35-mm sound projectors with Peerless Magnarc lamps. Walter Blanchard aided in obtaining lenses, and Jim Combs installed the machines.

Of course, in the eyes of an enthusiast, the crown jewel of this theatre is the Mighty Wurlitzer. It began life as Opus 2006, a 4/20 Publix 1, installed in 1928 in the Paramount Theatre, Toledo, Ohio. A classified advertisement offering the instrument appeared in the May/June 1985 issue of THEATRE ORGAN. This was followed up immediately by Lowell Wendell, then chairman of NorCal. The negotiations were successful and Gary Brookins, the owner, donated the organ to NorCal. Perhaps the most important factor in obtaining the Toledo organ was the agreement the Chapter had recently concluded with the Berkeley Unified School District to house a chapter-owned organ in the theatre.

When the good news was received, Rudy Frey and Judson Owens flew to Detroit, rented a truck and drove to Pontiac, where they purchased and loaded the 32' Diaphone and the Concert Flute Celeste pipes. They then drove to Olmsted Falls, Ohio, where the organ was in storage.

Gary Brookins had installed the Master Xylophone and the Glockenspiel from the Toledo Publix in the Kimball organ in a restaurant he owned in Olmsted Falls. He asked for help in locating replacements, which was gladly given. The Publix components were removed and taken to the warehouse where the organ was stored.

Bill Schlotter and Lowell Wendell flew to Ohio and joined forces with Rudy and Judson to pack and load the organ. They purchased plywood and lumber, had it mill-cut to size, then assembled the pipe crates at the storage site. Bob Maes arranged for a 45-foot, 18-wheel van for the moving job. Gary Brookins paid four men to help with the loading. The van left Olmsted Falls at midnight on a Thursday, and arrived in Berkeley on Monday morning.

Judson, manager of the theatre, had twelve student stage-hands ready to help unload, and the job was accomplished in four hours. The stage was *covered* with organ parts. One of the nice features of this stage is that a pair of large doors at the rear open directly on the public sidewalk of the street behind the theatre, with no stairs to negotiate. A hoist was installed on the grid over the stage and all of the pipe crates and some other parts were lifted to a storage loft across the back and both sides of the stage about halfway between the stage floor and the grid. The chests and other large parts were stored in whatever space was available near the stage, as they were to be worked on early in the project. Two weeks later, a truck was rented and the console was taken to Crome Organ Company in Los Angeles for rebuilding.

Work on the restoration and installation was begun immediately. Lowell Wendell organized and led classes to train volunteers in the procedures to be used. Layout of the chambers was planned by Crew Chief Bill Schlotter, Lowell Wendell and Rudy Frey, with Edward M. Stout of Quality Pipe Organ Service as consultant. The first tasks in the chambers were a complete paint job and the installation of lighting fixtures.

Of the original 20 ranks of pipes, 17 were used in the new installation; the Brass Saxophone was in poor condition and the two Solo Strings were designed for 10" pressure. A saxophone rank from Keith's Memorial Theatre in Boston, and two 15" strings from the Stanley Theatre in Jersey City were used instead. Additional ranks from various sources were added to the organ to bring it to a total of 33, with one 32' and thirteen 16s. The instrument contains 24 regulators and 16 tremulants.

The Toledo Publix used a 10-HP Spencer Orgoblo, which was insufficient for the new installation, so two 20-HP Spencers were purchased. Bill Schlotter refurbished both blowers, after which they were installed in the blower room feeding through a "Y" into the main wind line. To simplify winding, a 3-HP Spencer is used for the 32' Diaphones, which are located on the storage loft at the center stage rear. The blower and two regulators are installed adjacent to the pipes. All of the exposed percussions and traps, except the piano, are mounted on a platform in front of the chambers.

The tuned percussions were rebuilt by a crew of volunteers who met every Mon-

The NorCal organ crew, L to R, front row: Charles Hagstrom, Kevin King, Rudy Frey, John Piro, Mark Putterbaugh. Back row: Wesley Cavett, Harold Soderstrom, Chris Nichols, Dave Banks, Carl Pinnow, Lowell Wendell. *Bill Schlotter photo*

day night in a building owned by Wesley Cavett in San Francisco. One of this crew was Jim Roseveare, who also worked on chest rebuilding. Dave Quinlan and Dave Banks each releathered over 2500 pneumatics. Master woodworker Carl Pinnow repaired damaged chests, built new chests and special wind conductors, made all the wind line coupler flanges, and cut all the needed framing pieces to Wurlitzer dimensions. Kevin King fabricated and installed the metal wind lines.

Twenty regulators were sent to Villemin Organ Company in Porterville, California, for refurbishing and releathering; the NorCal crew restored the other four. Some flue pipes were rebuilt by Organ Supply Industries in Erie, Pennsylvania, and some reed pipes by Trivo Company, Inc., of Hagerstown, Maryland.

A decision was made very early in the project to replace the original Wurlitzer relay with a Devtronix Organ Computer Control system. This system gives the organist the greatest possible flexibility in the use of the instrument (see THEATRE ORGAN, November/December 1986). All of the Devtronix magnet driver output boards were installed on a panel in the relay room, rather than in the chambers on the chests, in order to simplify maintenance. Of course, this required multiconductor cables to the relay room, but this was no problem because of the close proximity of the chambers to the relay room. Ron Downer helped to obtain the necessary cable. The organ action is completely controllable from the console. The computer controls in the console were designed and installed by Bill Schlotter, who also did the console wiring. Chris Nichols did the computer programming and all the chamber-to-relay wiring. The console magnet power supply was built by Lowell Wendell.

In refurbishing this organ, every part has been restored to as near new condition as possible, both inside and out. Metal pipes were cleaned and polished; wood pipes, chests, regulators, tremulants and framing lumber sanded and re-shellacked. All leather was replaced. All new wood is poplar.

In addition to those already mentioned in this story, Herb Boese, Charles Hagstrom, Jim Jeskey, Al Sefl and Bob Smith did wood refinishing and chamber erection.

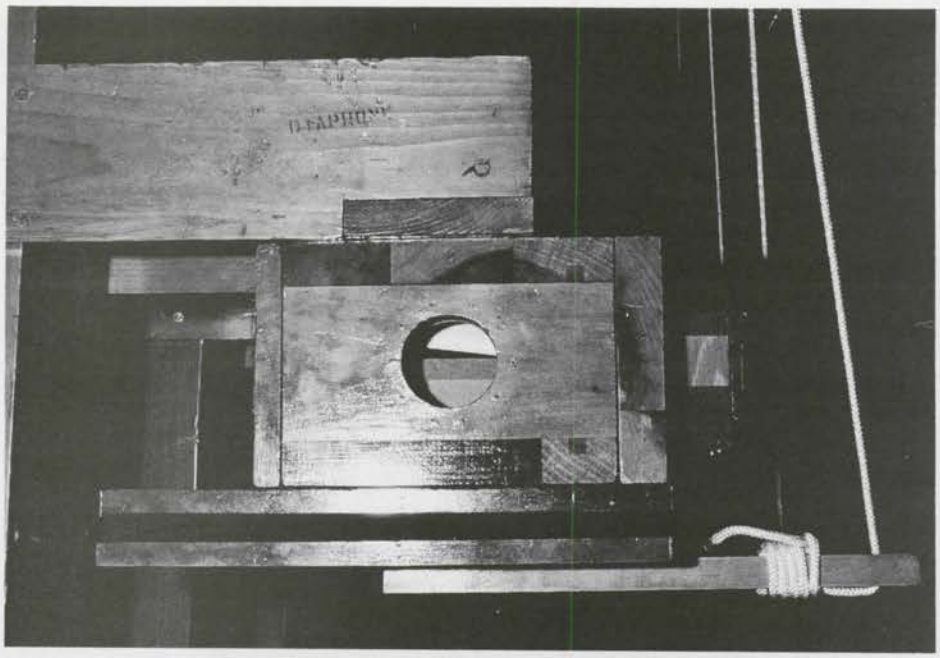
Crew chief Bill Schlotter overseeing refinishing of Bombarde pipes by Charles Hagstrom and an unknown helper.

Bob Smith and Wesley Cavett also did gasket work. Don Kofoid made gasket cutting dies and repaired chests. Frank Harshberger constructed the 3-phase magnet power supply for the organ. Lowell Wendell did metal pipe repair, and Quentin Bellamy, Rudy Frey, Pat Patterson, Mark Putterbaugh, Dick Schuldt and Harold Soderstrom worked on pipe refurbishing and chamber installation.

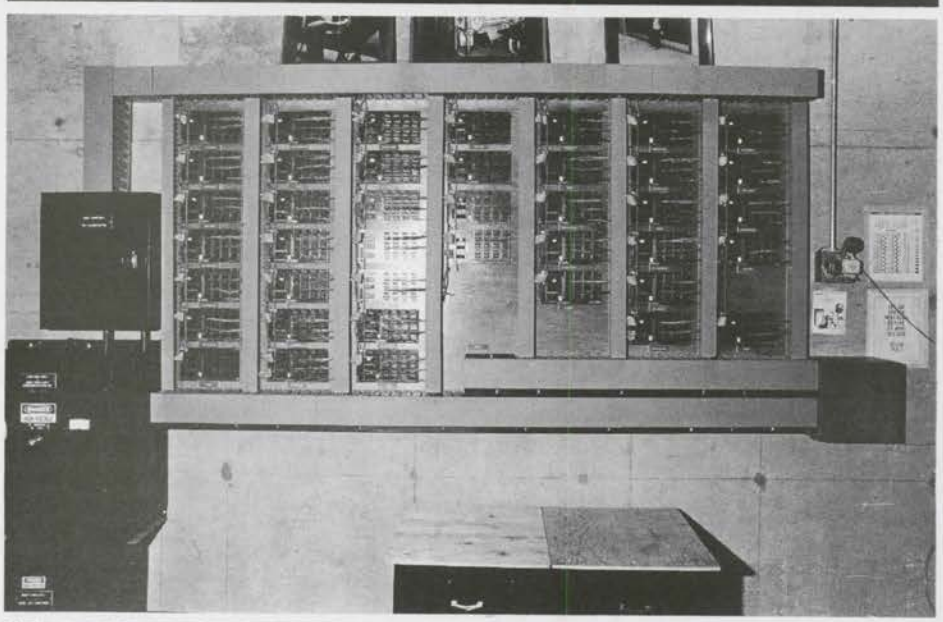
Quentin Bellamy came to Berkeley in October 1989 from Wales as an exchange student at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific. A few days after his arrival, he came to the theatre, introduced himself, and immediately joined the crew. After a short while it was discovered that he was a fine classical and theatre organist. He joined the chapter and became very active, playing a concert at the membership meeting in December. In May 1990 he returned to Wales, and in June was ordained in the Church of Wales. Quentin expects to attend the 1991 convention to witness the debut of the organ.

For technical guidance and tonal finishing, the chapter contracted with Ed Stout and his partner, Dick Taylor, and they, because of their heavy workload in the Bay Area, engaged Clark Wilson to assist.

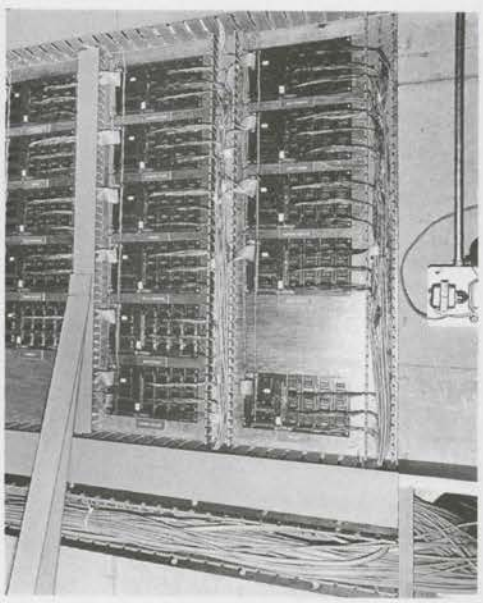
All the members of NorCal Chapter, and many other enthusiasts, are anxiously awaiting July 5, when this great organ sounds forth in its premiere concert. We hope you will be here to savor the thrill with us.

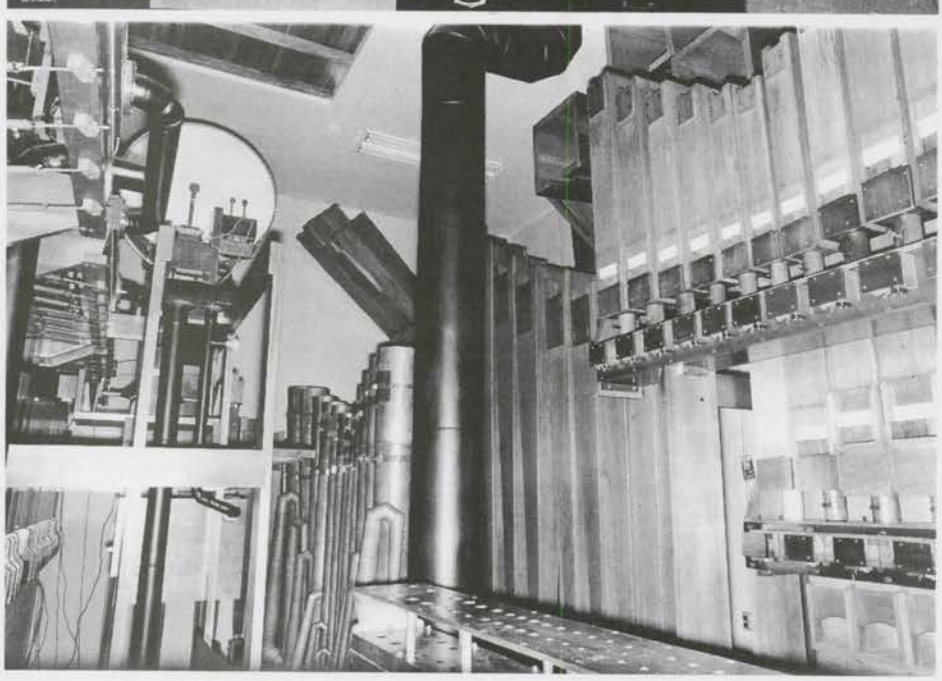


Mechanism for operating the trap door at the top of the 32' Diaphone. When actuated, the pneumatic on the bottom opens downward, pulling on the rope which opens the door. The door is held closed by spring hinges.

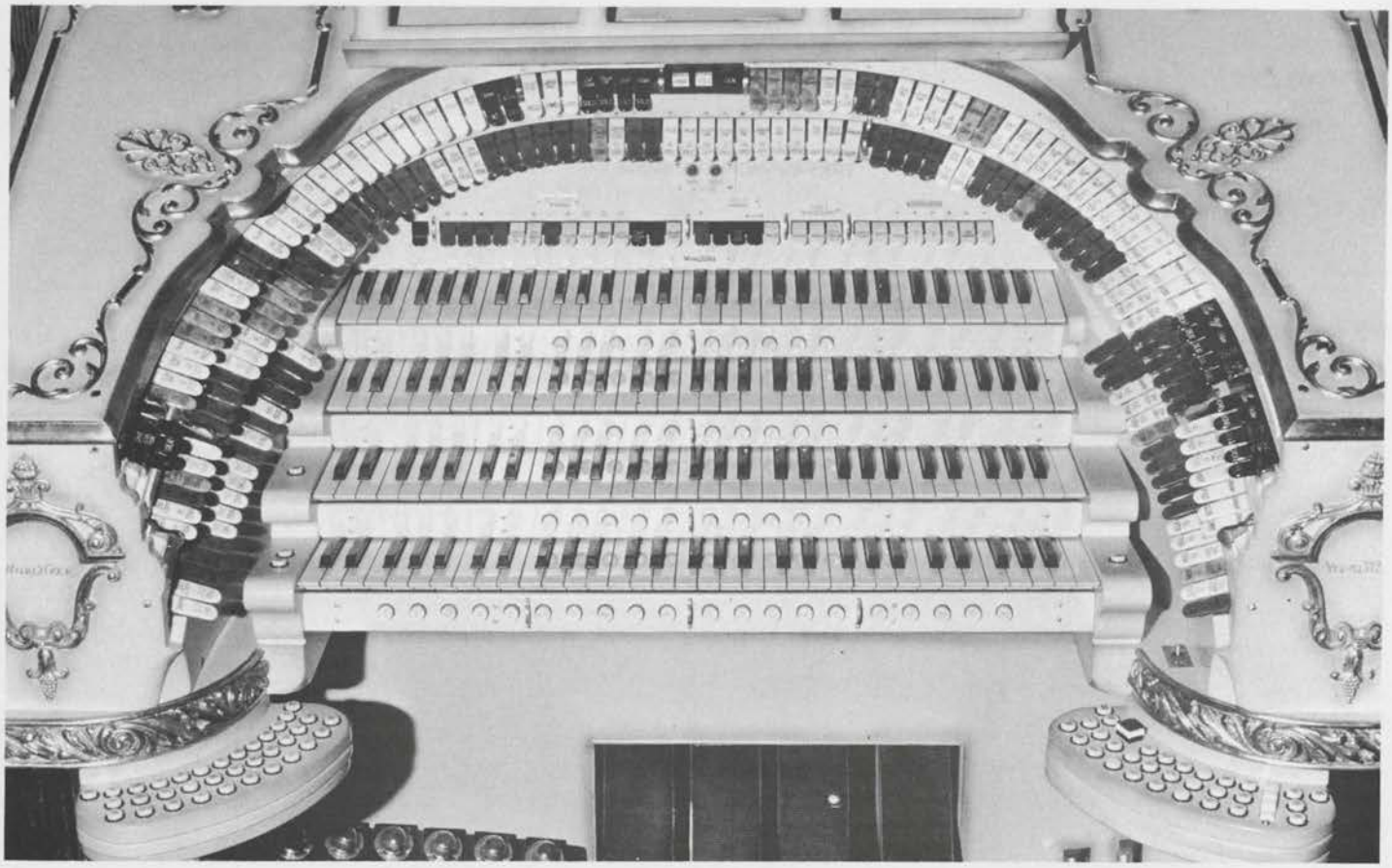


Devtronix magnet driver out put boards on panel in relay room. All wiring is in "Panduct" for neatness and accessibility. Lower photo shows some of duct covers removed. Black boxes on left contain the 3-phase magnet power supply.



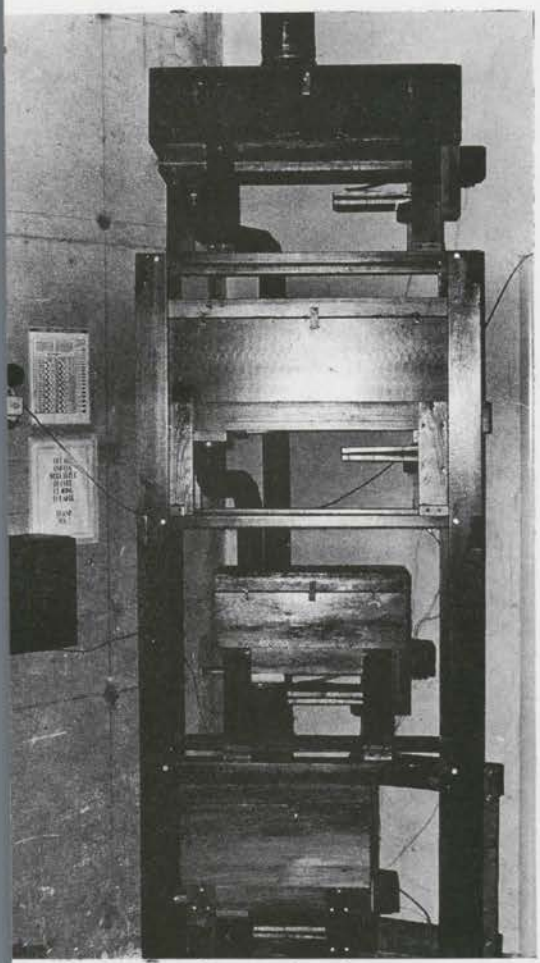


Perfound chamber with percussions on left, immediately behind shutters; rare Tibia Plena on right.

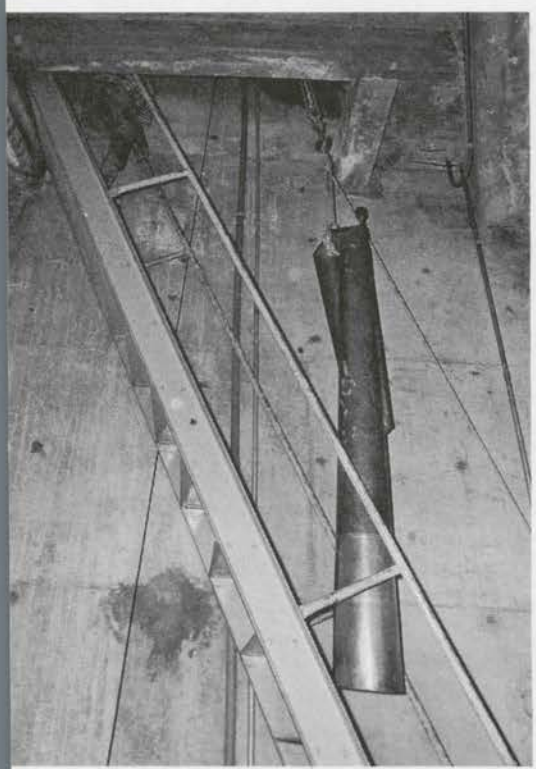


Right swingout shelf contains buttons controlling Devtonix Organ Computer Control system. The square buttons control Sostenuto action.

Left swingout shelf, containing buttons for projection booth signal, left controls, celestes off, Tibia Plena stops, and traps. All buttons are reversible, and can be controlled from combination pistons.



Four tremulants in the relay room, to minimize noise in Solo chamber. Four others are mounted in similar fashion outside Main chamber.



Hoisting a pipe up the stairway to the chambers.

PIPES AND ORIGINS

Pitch	Rank	Pressure	Pipes	Chamber	Origin
32′	Diaphone (12 notes)	15″	6	Exposed	UA, Detroit
16′	Diaphonic Diapason	15″	12	Perfound	Para., Toledo
8	Diaphonic Diapason	15″	61	Main	Para., Toledo
16′	Double English Horn	15″	12	Solo	Metro, L.A.
8′	English Horn	15″	61	Solo	Granada, S.B.
16′	Bombarde	15″	12	Perfound	Metro., Boston
8′	Tuba Mirabilis	15″	73	Solo	Para., Toledo
16′	Tuba Horn	15″	85	Main	Para., Toledo
16′	Diaphonic Horn	10″	12	Solo	Royal, S.F.
8′	Horn Diapason	10″	61	Solo	Uptown, Chi.
16′	Tibia Plena	15″	12	Exposed	Uptown, Chi.
8′	Tibia Plena	15″	85	Perfound	Uptown, Chi.
16′	Tibia Clausa	15″	97	Solo	Para., Toledo
16′	Tibia Clausa	15″	12	Main	Keith's, Bos.
8′	Tibia Clausa	15″	85	Main	Para., Toledo
16′	Clarinet	10″	12	Main	Uptown, Chi.
8′	Clarinet	10″	61	Main	Para., Toledo
16′	Double Solo String	15″	12	Solo	Uptown, Chi.
8′	Solo String	15″	61	Solo	Stanley, N.J.
16′	Oboe Horn	10″	12	Solo	Denver Audit.
8′	Oboe Horn	10″	61	Solo	Para., Toledo
16′	Bourdon/Concert Flute	10″	97	Main	Para., Toledo
16′	Tuba Diaphone	15″	12	Perfound	Unknown
8′	Open Diapason	10″	73	Main	Unknown
8′	Brass Trumpet	10″	61	Solo	Para., Toledo
8′	Orchestral Oboe	10′	61	Solo	Para., Toledo
8′	Kinura	10″	61	solo	Para., Toledo
8′	Solo String Celeste	15″	61	Solo	Stanley, N.J.
8′	Gamba	15″	73	Main	Uptown, Chi.
8′	Gamba Celeste	15″	61	Main	Uptown, Chi.
8″	Violin	10″	85	Main	N.Y. area
8′	Violin	10″	73	Main	L.A. area
8′	Viol d'Orchestre	10″	85	Main	Para., Toledo
8′	VDO Celeste	10″	73	Main	Para., Toledo
8′	Brass Saxophone	10″	61	Solo	Keith's, Bos.
8′	Krumet	10″	61	Main	Uptown, Chi.
8′	Quintadena	10″	61	Solo	Para., Toledo
8′	Quintadena Celeste	10″	61	Solo	Keith's, Bos.
8′	Vox Humana (Solo scale)	6″	61	Solo	Para., Toledo
8′	Vox Humana	6″	61	Main	Para., Toledo
8′	Dulciana	10″	61	Solo	Para., Toledo
8′	Dul. Cel (Unda Maris)	10″	61	Solo	Unknown
4′	Harmonic Flute	15″	73	Main	Metro, L.A.
4′	Concert Flute Celeste	10″	73	Main	Unknown
TUNED PERCUSSIONS					
Piano/Mandolin, 85 notes				Exposed	Para., Toledo
Marimba/Harp, 49 notes, re-it.				Exposed	Para., Toledo
Chrysoglott/Vibraharp, 49 notes				Exposed	Para., Toledo
Master Xylophone, 37 notes				Exposed	Para., Toledo
Xylophone, 49 notes				Perfound	Rock. Ctr., NY
Glockenspiel/Orch. Bells, 37 notes				Perfound	Para., Toledo
Cathedral Chimes, 25 notes				Exposed	Rock. Ctr., NY
Tuned Sleigh Bells, 25 notes				Exposed	Para., Toledo
TRAPS					
40″ Bass Drum				Exposed	Uptown, Chi.
30″ Bass Drum				Perfound	Para., Toledo
Snare Drum				Perfound	Uptown, Chi.
Field Drum				Exposed	Uptown, Chi.
Cymbal				Perfound	Para., Toledo
Crash Cymbal				Perfound	Para., Toledo
30″ Chinese Gong				Perfound	Singapore
27″ Malaysian Gong				Perfound	Singapore

PIPES AND ORIGINS

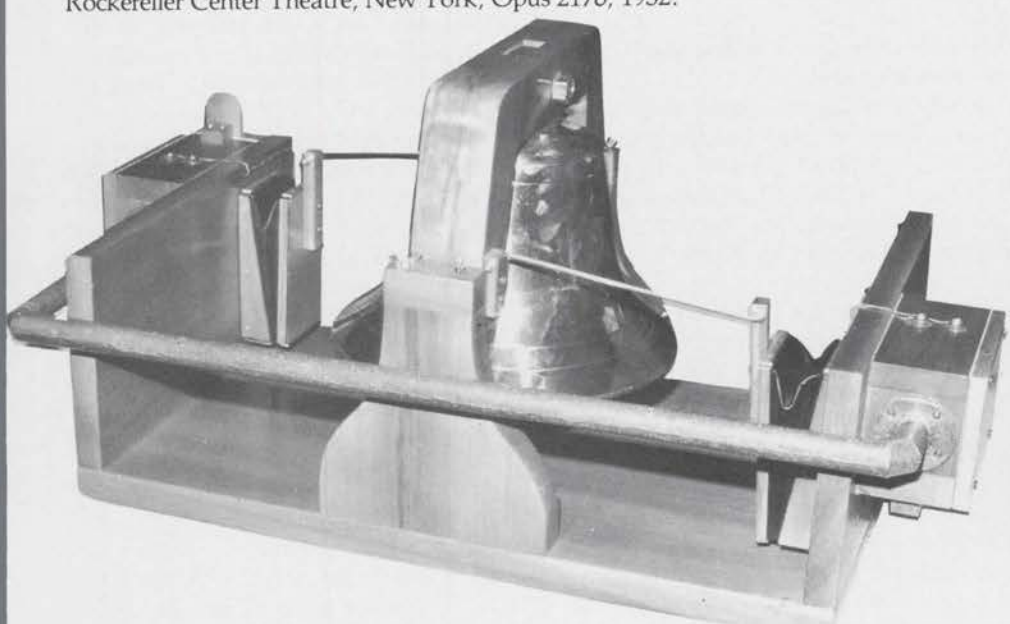
TUNED PERCUSSIONS continued

12" Locomotive Bell	Perfound	Singapore
10" Cable Car Bell	Perfound	Ron Downer
Air Raid Siren	Perfound	Judson Owens
Triangle	Perfound	Para., Toledo
Horses Hooves	Perfound	Para., Toledo
Bird Whistle	Exposed	Para., Toledo
Train Whistle	Perfound	Para., Toledo
Door Bell	Perfound	Para., Toledo
Fire Gong	Perfound	Para., Toledo
Klaxon	Perfound	Para., Toledo
Castenets	Perfound	Para., Toledo
Wood Block	Perfound	Para., Toledo

TREMULANTS
Clarinet & Krumet
Main I
Main II
Harmonic Flute
Solo Strings
Dulciana
Solo I
Solo II
Tibia Clausa (2)
Tibia Plena
Vox Humana (2)
Tuba
Diaphonic Diapason
English Horn

[= indicates complete rank.

THEATRES
United Artists Theatre, Detroit, Opus 1824, 1927
Paramount Theatre, Toledo, Opus 2006, 1928
Metropolitan Theatre, Los Angeles, Opus 534, 1922
Granada Theatre, Santa Barbara, Opus 793, 1924
Metropolitan Theatre, Boston, Opus 2101, 1930
Royal Theatre, San Francisco, Opus 1005, 1925
Uptown Theatre, Chicago, Opus 1060, 1925
Keith's Memorial Theatre, Boston, Opus 1910, 1928
Stanley Theatre, Jersey City, Opus 1836, 1928
Denver Civic Auditorium, Opus 154, 1918
Rockefeller Center Theatre, New York, Opus 2178, 1932.



12" Locomotive Bell. The bell (and the 30" Chinese Gong and 27" Malaysian Gong) were brought from Singapore by Bill Schlotter. Carl Pinnow built the mounting and operating mechanism, modeled on the one at Shea's Buffalo Theatre.

32' Diaphone pipes, with Judson Owens for size comparison. Each pipe sounds a second note a half tone higher when the trap door at the top of the resonator is opened. The wind lines had not yet been installed when the picture was taken. This is one of only two sets of these pipes made by Wurlitzer.

Erecting the 16' Bombarde in the Perfound chamber. The tallest pipe cleared the ceiling by ½". It was not necessary to do any additional metering of any pipes in the organ.

All photos by Rudy Frey, except where noted. Title page photos courtesy of Judson Owens.