

"An Acre of Seats in a Palace of Splendor"

T & D THEATRE Oakland, California

Architects: Cunningham & Politeo, San Francisco

Opened: November 22, 1916

Organ: Wurlitzer op. 99, Style 35, 2-3/5 manuals / 15 ranks

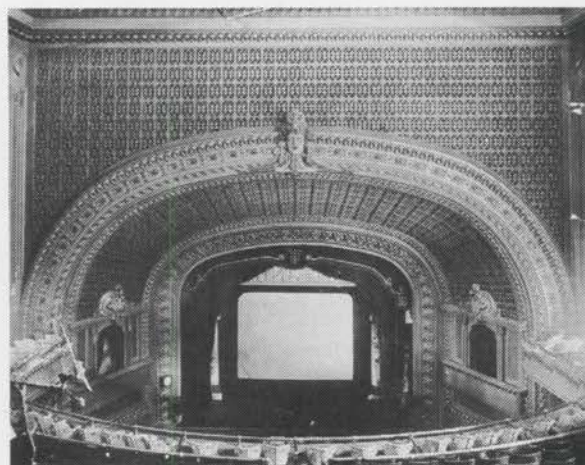
James Turner and Fred Dahnken, pioneer distributors and exhibitors, built up a chain of eponymous theatres which, when sold in 1924, formed the core of the (Fox) West Coast empire in Northern California. With c2750 seats, this immensely odd pile was by far the builders' and architect's largest.

Like many 'teens houses,' the T & D had a main-floor projection booth, ramps to the balcony and minimal public spaces. The architects' characteristic Art Nouveau ornament was largely limited to the facade, proscenium, balcony rail, dome and cornices. Sidewall decorations were entirely painted on, and often revised.

Effectively left behind as newer and larger theatres appeared farther uptown, the T & D was vacated by Fox upon their opening of the new Paramount in December 1931. Its great size, however, gave the T & D viability as an independent operation in a city otherwise dominated by Fox. Blumenfeld Theatres maintained a long tenure there. The house finished its long career with porn, finally falling to urban renewal in 1978. During the porn regime, a small theatre was inserted under part of the balcony, but the main house, otherwise intact, remained in use.

Opus 99, the first large Wurlitzer in California, spoke out of tall, shallow chambers behind the huge face, with a plaster deflector, probably installed later, to direct some of the sound downstairs. Opening night organist was Albert Hay Malotte. In 1932, organman Fred Wood moved the organ to the new United Artists Theatre in nearby Berkeley, gilding the console in the process. Seldom used, it remained playable until about 1960, when age and water finally caught up with it. Subsequent attempts to revive the corpse appear to have been counter-productive. Upon the plexing of the UA in 1973, Jack M. Bethards purchased and removed the organ. Since 1976, it has been complicating the life of this feature's editor.

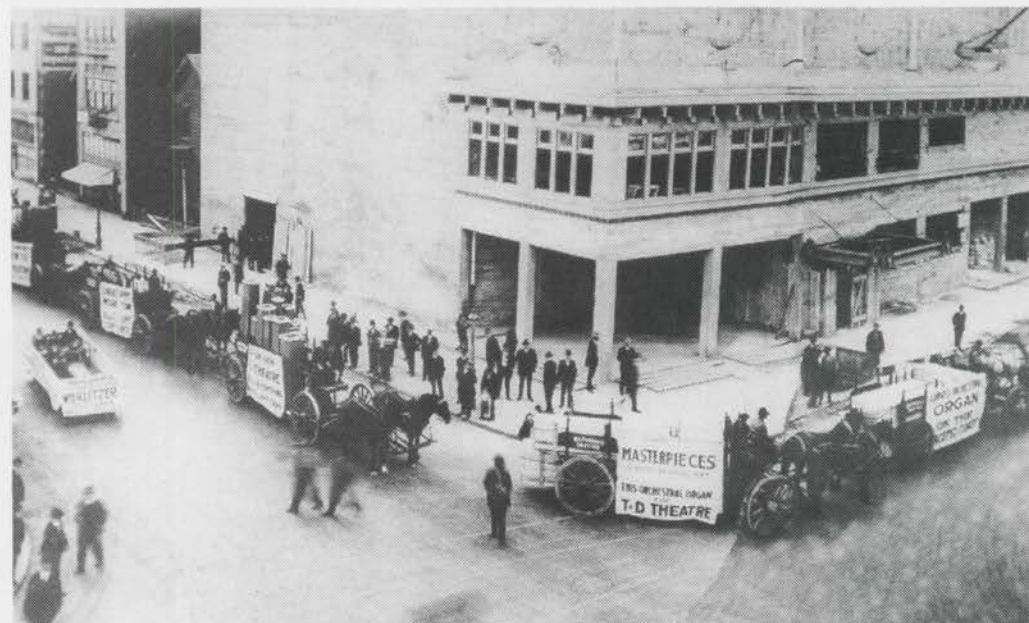
The Style 35 contains the same 15



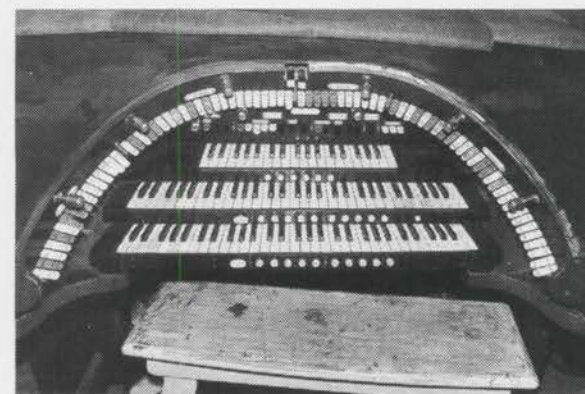
ranks as a basic Style 260, but only nine are unified. The remainder, including the Tibia, stand on a 49-note quasi-Pitman chest and are drawn only on the Solo manual. Most early 3- and 4-manual Wurlitzers, about 20 organs, were set up this way, but opus 99 appears to be the only one to have survived intact. The console is also believed to be the only short-Solo unit in captivity. Your editor eagerly seeks illumination in this connection.

Steve Levin

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WHOA. MULE! Quadruped power brings Opus 99 to the customer. Uncrated 32' Diaphone sections are visible on the third dray from the right. The octave stood behind the dummy box on the left and was removed in 1932. Unused at the UA, the pipes were later cut up.



Unusual console gadgets include a tremulant-cancel piston below the Great and a Suitable Bass releasing system involving trip-wires on double-sprung Pedal stop keys. The army of dash lights, especially the pair on the nameboard, is a Fred Wood trademark.