

# It's Ninety-One-Derful

by Robert M. Gilbert



Castro Theatre

Rudy Frey photo

The Ninety-One-Derful Convention will feature two familiar theatres, the Castro and the Oakland Paramount, in addition to the two new venues described in the preceding issues of THEATRE ORGAN. Conventioneers will also be treated to a concert at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

The Castro Theatre was designed by San Francisco architect Timothy Pflueger, and is one of the larger, more elaborate neighborhood theatres in the city. It originally seated over 1800, but this has been reduced to 1640. The theatre was built for the Nasser Brothers, who operated it from its opening in 1922 until 1976, when it was leased to Surf Theatres. There has been no change in the decoration of the auditorium over the years.

In 1983 for the 28th ATOS Convention, the Castro Wurlitzer had 16 ranks playing. The description in the January/February '82 issue of THEATRE ORGAN was of the instrument as it would be when completed. Five ranks have been added

since 1983, and the original Moller English Horn (10" pressure) has been replaced with a Wurlitzer English Horn on 15" pressure, to make the Castro organ a 4/21 all-Wurlitzer instrument.

A 2/11 Robert-Morton organ was installed in the Castro originally. That instrument was sold and removed in 1961. The architect provided generously for the organ, with two chambers on each side, one above the other. The upper chambers are used for the pipes of the Wurlitzer, with the percussions installed in the smaller chambers below. Some of the large offsets and the piano are located on the stage, as is a double-walled soundproof enclosure housing the 20-hp blower. The organ relay is placed at stage level under the right percussion chamber. There was no lift for the Robert-Morton console, so a scissor lift was installed in the center of the orchestra pit for the Wurlitzer console.

Installation of the organ was begun in 1979, under an agreement between the Taylor family, who own the organ, and Mel Novikoff of Surf Theatres, lessor/op-

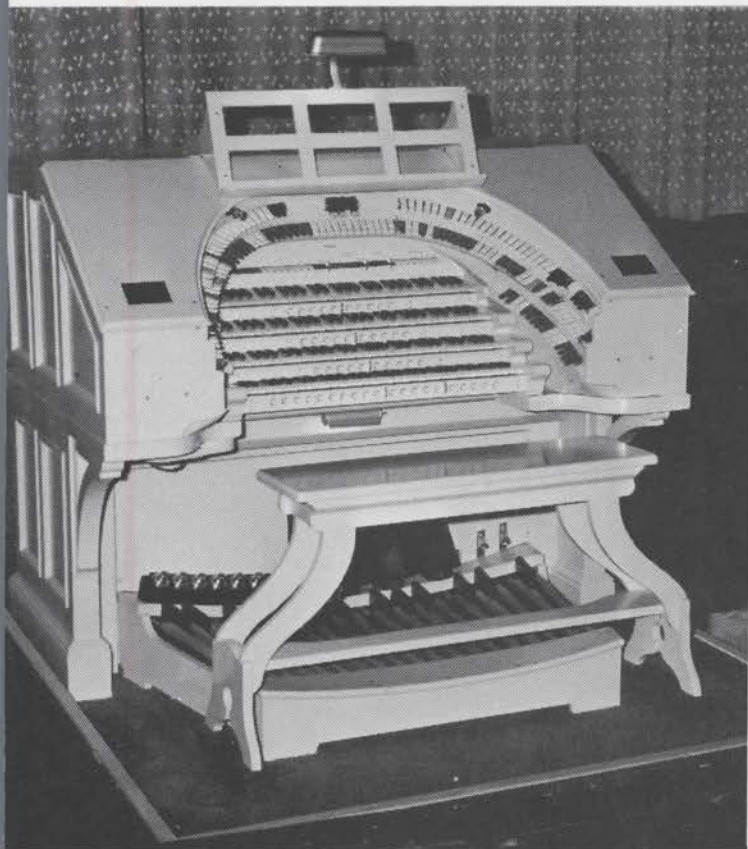
erator of the Castro. Mr. Novikoff died in the late 1980s; subsequently, the lease and operation of the theatre was taken over by Blumenfeld Enterprises. Robert Blumenfeld has been most cooperative.

The organ has been played nightly since January 1982. The original staff organists were Elbert La Chelle and David Hegarty, with Bob Vaughn accompanying silent films. Bill McCoy became relief organist after La Chelle retired, with David Hegarty and Bob Vaughn continuing to play regularly. Dennis James accompanies silent films sponsored by the Pacific Film Archives.

During the 1991 ATOS Convention, Clark Wilson will play the Castro Wurlitzer on Saturday morning, July 6, and Simon Gledhill will play on Monday evening, July 8. There will be Open House at the Castro, with cameo artists, during the Afterglow on Wednesday morning, July 10, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.



THEATRE ORGAN



Castro Theatre 4/21 Wurlitzer.

Rudy Frey photo



◀ Interior of the Castro Theatre. Rudy Frey photo

## STOP LIST

MAIN CHAMBER	Pipes	Press.	ORIGIN
Concert Flute 16-2	97	10"	State, Stockton
Viole d'Orch. 8-2	85	10"	Fox, Brooklyn
Open Diapason 16-4	85	10"	State, Stockton
VDO Celeste 8-4	73	10"	Fox, Brooklyn
Clarinet 8	61	10"	Royal, Bronx
Tibia Clausa 8-2	85	10"	State, Stockton
Violin 8-4	73	10"	State, Stockton
Violin Celeste 8-4	73	10"	State, Stockton
Flute Celeste 4	61	10"	Royal, Bronx
Tuba Horn 16-8	73	15"	Fairfax, Oakland
Marimba-Harp	49		Fox, Brooklyn
Chrysoglott	49		Golden Gate, S.F.
Toy Counter			Royal, Bronx
<b>SOLO CHAMBER</b>			
Kinura 8	61	10"	Chester, Bronx
Orchestral Oboe 8	61	10"	Golden Gate, S.F.
Tibia Clausa 16-2	97	15"	Unknown
English Horn 8	61	15"	Fox, Brooklyn
Brass Trumpet 8	61	10"	Keith's, Cincinnati
Horn Diapason 8-4	73	10"	Fox, Brooklyn
Gamba Celeste 8-4	73	10"	Missouri, St. Louis
Quintadena 8	61	10"	Metropolitan, Boston
Gamba 8-4	73	10"	Missouri, St. Louis
Brass Saxophone 8	61	10"	Uptown, Chicago
Vox Humana 8	61	6"	State, Stockton
Glockenspiel	37		State Lake, Chicago
Xylophone	37		Royal, Bronx
Cathedral Chimes	25		Fox, Riverside
Piano	85		Carthay Circle, L.A.
4-manual Console			State, Detroit
4/20 Relay			State, Detroit
20-hp Blower			Fabian, Paterson
5-rank Chest (Main)			Fairfax, Oakland
5-rank Chest (Main)			Fox, Brooklyn
5-rank Chest (Solo)			Fox, Brooklyn
7-rank Chest (Solo)			State, Stockton

## THEATRES OF ORIGIN

State Theatre, Stockton, CA . . . . . 2/7 Style E, Opus 1073  
 Fox Theatre, Brooklyn, NY . . . . . 4/37 Fox Special, Opus 1904  
 Royal Theatre, Bronx, NY . . . . . 2/8 Style F, Opus 1420  
 Fairfax Theatre, Oakland, CA . . . . . 2/8 Style F, Opus 1311  
 Chester Theatre, Bronx, NY . . . . . 3/15 Style 260 SP, Opus 1793  
 Golden Gate Theatre, S.F., CA . . . . . 3/13 Style 240, Opus 1980  
 Keith's Theatre, Cincinnati, OH . . . . . 3/13 Style 235 SP, Opus 1834  
 Missouri Theatre, St. Louis, MO . . . . . 4/32 Style 285, Opus 402  
 Metropolitan Theatre, Boston, MA . . . . . 4/26 SP, Opus 2101  
 Uptown Theatre, Chicago, IL . . . . . 4/28 Style 285, Opus 1060  
 State Lake Theatre, Chicago, IL . . . . . 3/13 Style 240, Opus 1773  
 State Theatre, Detroit, MI . . . . . 4/20 Publix 1, Opus 1148  
 Fabian Theatre, Paterson, NJ . . . . . 4/28 Style 285 SP, Opus 1168  
 Carthay Circle Theatre, L.A., CA . . . . . 3/11 Style 235, Opus 1308  
 Fox Theatre, Riverside, CA . . . . . 2/10 Style 216, Opus 1998

# It's Ninety-One-Derful!



Paramount Theatre. Rudy Frey photo

Oakland's Paramount Theatre began life November 7, 1931. It was designed by Timothy Pflueger, who had done the Castro Theatre nine years earlier, and was one of the last of the great movie palaces and a masterpiece of Art Deco architecture. Restoration of the theatre was begun in December 1972, to provide a home for the Oakland Symphony Orchestra. The project took nine months, and when it was completed the theatre looked exactly as it did when it opened. Some of the workmen and artists employed on the construction and decoration in 1931 were re-employed for the restoration 41 years later. Fortunately, the original blueprints and architectural files were available, as was a complete set of photographs taken early in 1932. New carpeting was woven by the original manufacturer to exactly match the original, and mohair upholstery fabric for the seats was also specially made to match the original. The restoration was completed September 22, 1973.

The Paramount was originally equipped with a 4/20 Publix 1 Wurlitzer organ, Opus 2164, the last Publix 1 built. The organ was used intermittently until it was removed in the late 1950s. That organ is now installed in the Paramount Music Palace, Indianapolis, where it has been enlarged to 42 ranks.

The console, many ranks of pipes,

windchests, and framing from the first Publix 1, Opus 1123, installed in 1925 in the Capitol Theatre, Detroit, form the core of the present Paramount organ. After its removal from the Capitol, the organ was installed and used in a skating rink for a while. It was eventually acquired by J.B. Nethercutt, who donated it to the Paramount in 1974. Later, Preston M. "Sandy" Fleet donated a 4/26 Wurlitzer made up of parts of several instruments (New York Hippodrome Publix 1, Opus 1538; Chicago Tower Theatre Publix 1, Opus 1267; and Pittsburgh Stanley Theatre 260 SP, Opus 1788). A classical organ was also donated to the Paramount. Unneeded parts of the two Wurlitzers, and the classical organ, were auctioned to raise funds for the new installation.

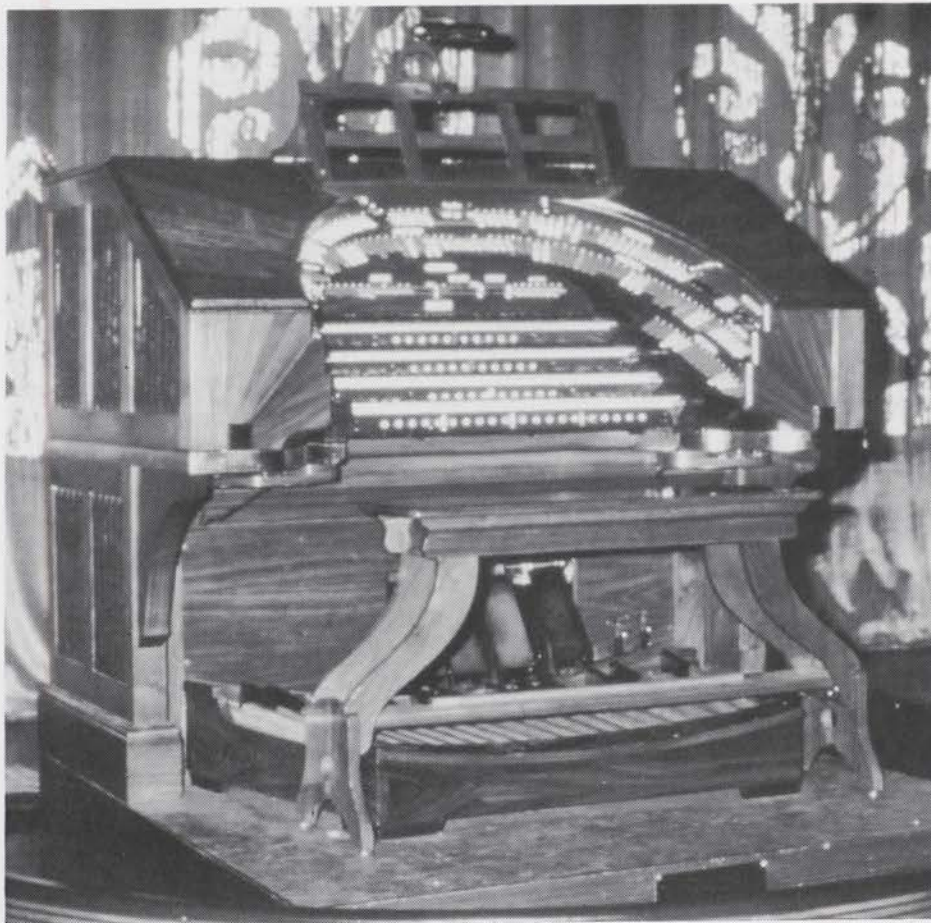
The console of the Capitol Theatre Wurlitzer was chosen for the new instrument. Its unique appearance is the result of design and reconstruction by Edward M. Stout's firm, Quality Pipe Organ Service. Some years after the debut of the new Paramount organ, Sandy Fleet donated to the theatre the four-manual slave console originally used by Helen Crawford at the New York Paramount Studio.

We will hear the Paramount organ twice during the 1991 Convention. Jim Riggs will play on Saturday evening, July 6, and Lew Williams on Sunday afternoon, July 7.



Jesse Crawford at the slave console, now at the Oakland Paramount.  
Photo supplied by Ken Crome.

## STOP LIST



Paramount Theatre 4/27 Wurlitzer.

Rudy Frey photo

MAIN CHAMBER	Pipes	Press.
Vox Humana 8	61	6"
Concert Flute 16-2	97	10"
Viol d'Orchestre 8-2	85	10"
Solo STring 8	61	10"
Viol Celeste 8-4	73	10"
Clarinet 8	61	10"
Solo String Celeste 8	61	10"
Tibia Clausa 8-2	85	10"
Diaphonic Diapason 16-8	73	15"
Tuba Horn 16-8	73	15"
Quintadena 8	61	10"
Violin Celeste 8-4	73	10"
Horn Diapason 16-4	85	10"
Violin 16-4	85	10"
Flute Celeste 8-4	73	10"
Oboe Horn 16-8	73	10"
Chrysoglott		12"
Marimba/Harp		12"

### SOLO CHAMBER

Diaphone (metal) 16	32	10"
English Horn 8	61	10"
Saxophone 8	61	10"
Solo String 16-8	73	10"
Trumpet 8	61	10"
Vox Humana 8	61	6"
Kinura 8	61	10"
Orchestral Oboe 8	61	10"
Solo String Celeste 8	61	10"
Solo Tibia 16-2	97	15"
Tuba Mirabilis 8	61	15"
Xylophone		12"
Glockenspiel/Bells		12"
Chimes		12"
Sleigh Bells		12"
Marimba/Harp		12"

### UNENCLOSED PERCUSSIONS

Piano		12"
Xylophone Master		12"
Vibra Harp		12"
Crash Cymbal		12"
Jazz Cymbal		12"
Siren		12"

### TRAPS IN MAIN CHAMBER

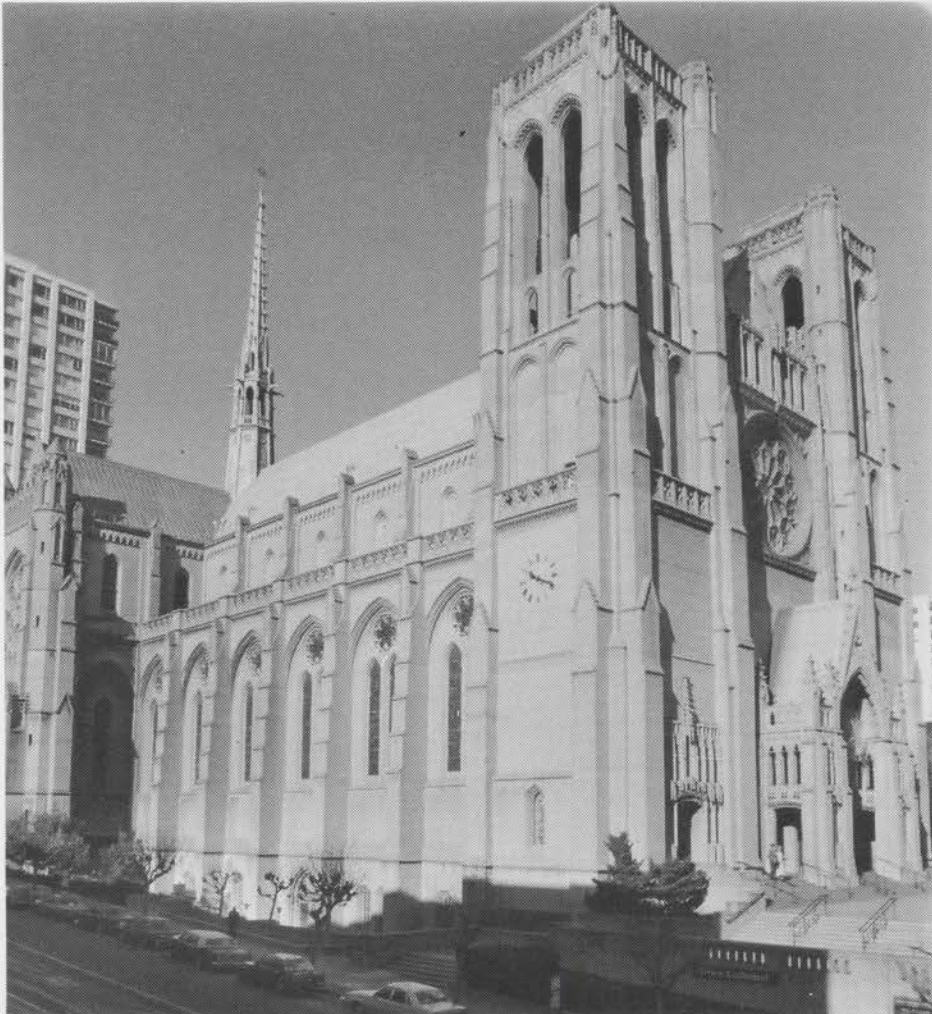
Tambourine		12"
Castanets		12"
Chinese Block		12"
Triangle		12"
Snare Drum		12"
Tom Tom		12"
Bass Drum		12"
Tymp.		12"
Tap Cymbal		12"
Bird		12"
Horse		12"
Boat Whistle		12"
Fire Gong		12"
Door Bell		12"
Sand Block		12"
Auto Horn		12"
Surf		12"



Paramount entrance lobby.

Rudy Frey photo

# *It's Ninety-One-Derful!*



Grace Cathedral.

Rudy Frey photo

On Tuesday morning, July 9, we will travel by bus from the St. Francis Hotel to Grace Cathedral, atop Nob Hill, to hear Dr. John Fenstermaker in concert on the 5/123 Aeolian-Skinner/Casavant organ.

The first Grace Church, a small chapel, was erected at Powell and Jackson Streets in 1849. Two years later it was replaced on the same site by a larger wooden church, which was used for 11 years. In 1862, a larger, ornate church built of brick was erected on a new site in California and Stockton Streets. This third Grace Church was destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906, which also destroyed two palatial homes of the Crocker family. The Crockers gave the entire block of land where their homes had been to the church, and this is the site of Grace Cathedral.

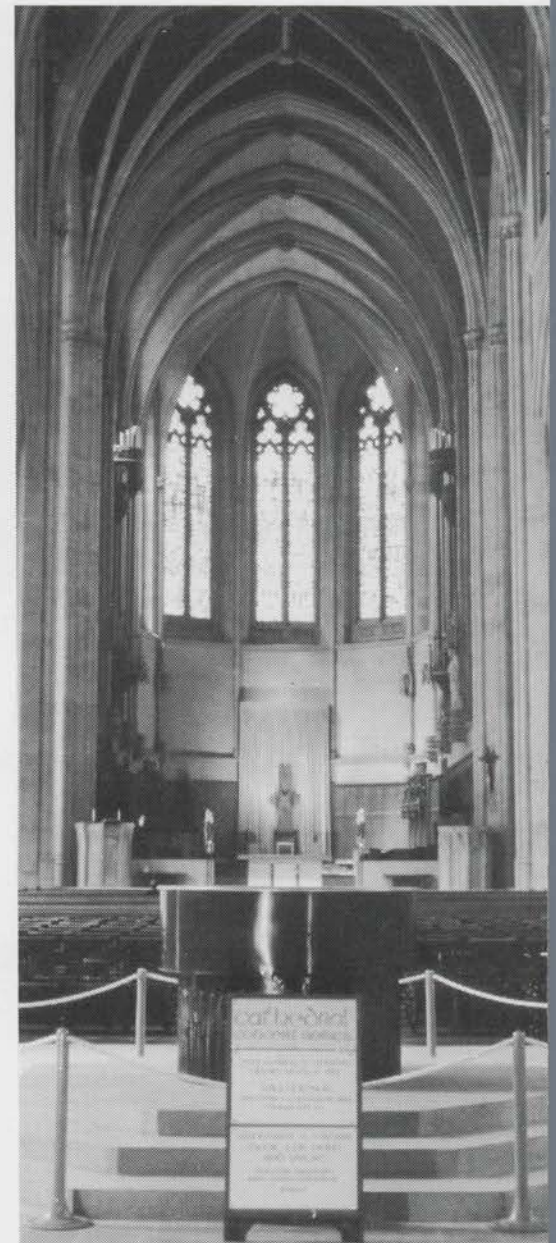
The foundation stone of the cathedral was laid in 1910, but actual construction

did not begin until 1928, only to be interrupted in 1931, before the eastern half of the nave and the narthex had been built. The building remained unfinished for 30 years, until work was resumed in 1961. The cathedral was consecrated in November 1964.

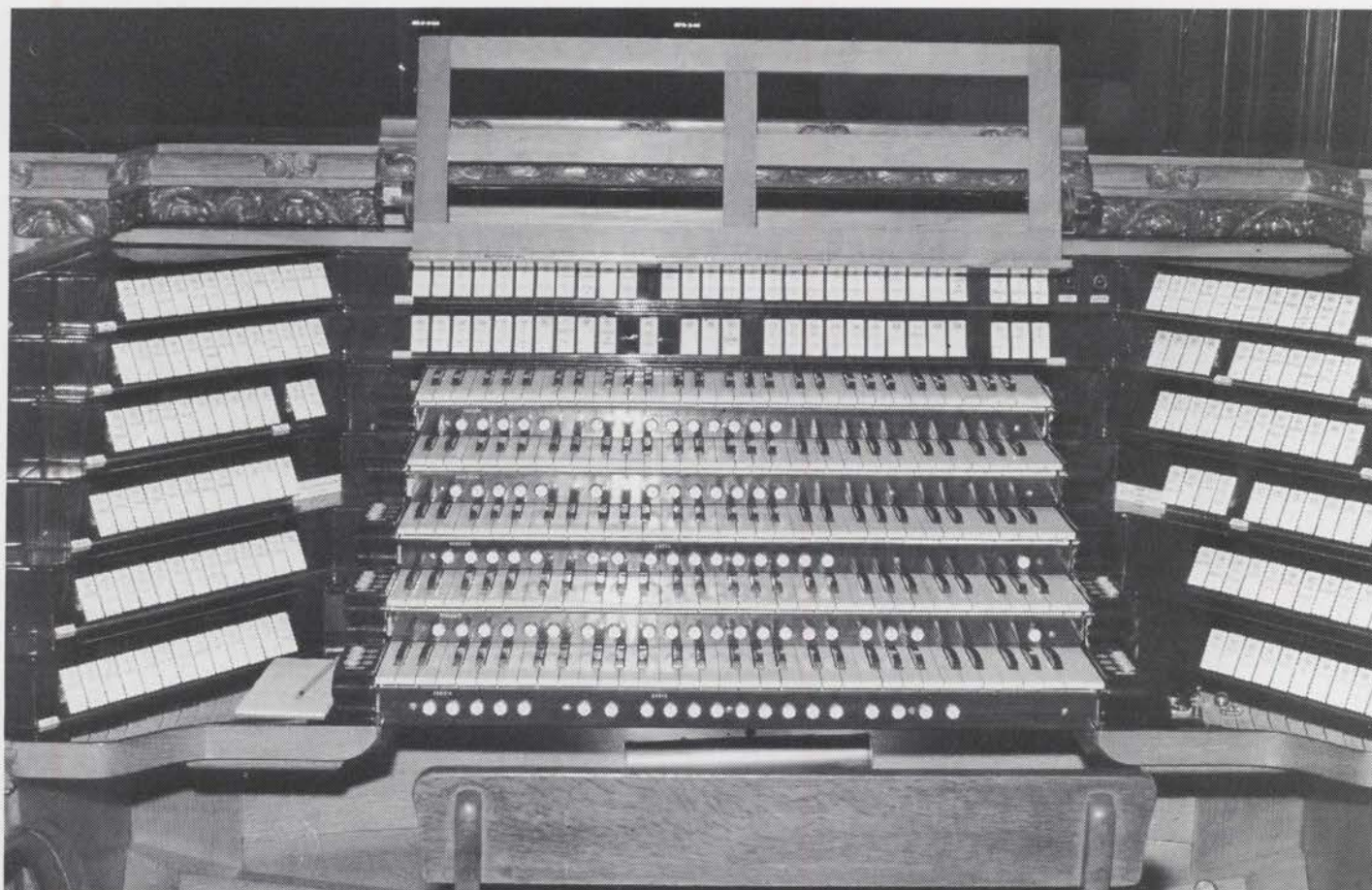
Grace Cathedral's organ was built and installed in 1934 by Aeolian-Skinner as their Opus 910. The entire project was under the direction of G. Donald Harrison, President and Tonal Director of Aeolian-Skinner. The organ consisted of Choir, Great, Swell, Solo and Pedal Divisions, housed in chambers 14 feet deep and over three stories high. Wind is supplied by a 20-hp Spencer blower. Minor tonal revisions throughout the instrument were made in 1951, again under the supervision of G. Donald Harrison. In 1968, the Italian firm, Fratelli Ruffatti, replaced the four-

manual electro-pneumatic console action with an all-electric five-manual action, retaining the original oak console shell. The console was also made movable for special concerts. The fifth manual was included to control a future Bombarde Division. Casavant Freres, a Canadian company, installed the Bombarde and Gallery Divisions in 1974.

NorCal member Edward M. Stout has been Curator of Musical Instruments at Grace Cathedral for over 30 years. Richard C. "Dick" Taylor has been his associate for a number of years.



Chancel, Grace Cathedral. Rudy Frey photo



Console of 5/123 Aeolian-Skinner/Casavant organ.

Rudy Frey photo

## STOP LIST

<b>GREAT</b>		Principal	4	Zimbel III-Iv		<b>PEDAL</b>	
Gamba	16	Spitz Flute	4	Clarinet	8	Diapason	32
Diapason	8	Harmonic Flute	4	Trompette	8	Open Bass	16
Quintaton	8	Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Harp		Diapason	16
Gemshorn	8	Fifteenth	2	Tremulant		Gamba	16
Flute Harmonique	8	Larigot	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	<b>SOLO</b>		Bourdon	16
Rohr Gedeckt	8	Plein Jeu III		Gamba	8	Violone	16
Quint	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Sharff III		Gamba Celeste	8	Lieblich Gedeckt	16
Octave	4	Fagotto	16	Flauto Mirabilis	8	Gemshorn	16
Principal	4	Trompette Harm.	8	Harmonic Flute	4	Quint	10 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Flute	4	Cornocean	8	French Horn	8	Octave	8
Twelfth	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Clarion	4	English Horn	8	Cello	8
Fifteenth	2	Oboe	8	Tuba Mirabilis	8	Flute	8
Blockflote	2	Vox Humana	8	Clarion	4	Still Gedeckt	8
Tierce	1-3/5	Tremulant		Tremulant		Gemshorn	8
Italian Principal	1	Zimbelstern		<b>BOMBARDE</b>		Octave Quint	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Forniture IV		<b>CHOIR</b>		Montre	8	Super Octave	4
Cymbal III		Gemshorn	16	Prestant	4	Choral Bass	4
Double Trumpet	16	Viola Pomposa	8	Doublette	2	Flute	4
Trumpet	8	Viola Celeste	8	Fourniture VII		Blockflote	2
Clarion	4	Melodia	8	Cornet V		Mixture III	
<b>SWELL</b>		Lieblich Gedeckt	8	Bombarde	16	Contre Bombarde	32
Lieblich Gedeckt	16	Erzahler	8	Trompette	8	Bombarde	16
Geigen	8	Kleine Erzahler	8	Clarion	4	Contra Fagotto	16
Stopped Diapason	8	Gemshorn	4	<b>GALLERY</b>		Trompette	8
Gamba	8	Lieblich Flute	4	Diapason	8	Clarion	4
Voix Celestes	8	Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Octave	4		
Flauto Dolce	8	Kleine Flote	2	Fifteenth	2		
Flute Celeste	8	Tierce	1-3/5	Mixture VIII			
Echo Celeste II	8	Sifflole	1	Pid. Principal	16		