

HIS MIGHTINESS,

The Crown Prince of North Tonawanda



Dick Loderhose and "The Crown Prince" as it was when he purchased it.

THE STORY OF A FAMOUS ORGAN NOW LAUNCHED ON A SECOND GREAT CAREER

By Ben Hall

The house on Radnor Street, in Long Island's Jamaica Estates, is not the largest in the block. But it has a distinction that sets it apart from its neighbors and, indeed, from any other house in the world. For behind it, in a huge concrete block studio building (where Jane Loderhose's rose garden used to be) lives the biggest privately-owned Wurlitzer in captivity.

Dick Loderhose, its proud keeper, refers to the high-pressure Behemoth in more respectful terms--"The Crown Prince of North Tonawanda," he calls it, with a deferential bow towards the Queen Mother of all the Wurlitzers, the great instrument still enthroned in New York's Paramount Theatre and considered by COGNOSCENTI to be the

definitive theatre organ of all time.

The Loderhose Wurlitzer--now boasting 37 ranks and still growing--is composed of the original Paramount building studio Wurlitzer of 21 ranks plus some additions with a personality all their own. The organ is fiery, almost overpoweringly brilliant, and (if it is fair to compare Victor records of 30 years ago with today's United Artists products) sounds very little like it did in its earlier days. The reasons for this we'll touch on later. Meanwhile a bit of background on the instrument for those not already familiar with it.

When Adolph Zukor decided to build a monument to the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation in the form of

the Paramount Theatre and its towering building at New York's Times Square, he included in his scheme the finest pipe organ money could buy. Naturally, it would be a Wurlitzer. But he wisely did not leave its design up to the artisans in North Tonawanda entirely; instead, he summoned a young organist from Chicago, the brightest star in the Balaban & Katz constellation, to plan the instrument, and to supervise its voicing and installation. Jesse Crawford and the original "Crawford Special" were an immediate sensation when the Paramount opened in November, 1926. Every week the marquee proclaimed "Jesse Crawford at the Organ," and newspaper advertisements carried special boxes reading "Come

and hear Jesse Crawford and the "Mystery Voice" of the Wurlitzer" or (later) simply "The Crawfords at THAT organ."

Crawford had already become an established Victor recording star. His records, since the "Pre-Orthophonic" days, had been made in the Wurlitzer showrooms in Chicago on one of the several small instruments set up there for demonstration. After Zukor stole him away from the Chicago Theatre to the Paramount, Crawford at first continued to go back to Chicago to record. But this soon proved impractical, and Victor arranged for Crawford to record on a modest instrument in Wurlitzer Hall on New York's 42nd Street, only a few blocks from the Paramount. But Crawford felt (and rightly) that he needed an organ with more range and resources for his recordings. No doubt tests were made in the Paramount Theatre, and it was decided that Victor's microphones (this was in 1927) could not do justice to the far-away acoustics of the huge theatre and the idea was abandoned. (What wouldn't you give today to hear some of those "rejects"?)

And so it was decided that Wurlitzer would build a special organ, ideal for recording and broadcasting, and install it in a studio on the 8th floor of the Paramount building. After all, Wurlitzer's stake in Crawford's Victor recordings was a large one—every record bore the legend: "Played On the Wurlitzer Organ" (a device copied by Kimball on Lew White's Brunswicks with less success.) So Wurlitzer agreed to build the "dream organ" for Crawford exactly as he specified.

By this time a second console had been installed in the pit in the Paramount Theatre (plus two more spinet-like portable consoles on the stage) to permit Jesse and his beautiful wife, Helen, to perform duets before dazzled Paramount audiences. Consequently, the new studio organ had two consoles, also, as it was to be used not only for broadcasting and recording but for rehearsal by the Crawfords. Both consoles were on movable platforms; the second console had no stop tabs, only pistons, and was a slave to the main.

One of the many unique features of the studio organ was its percussion chamber—a low-ceilinged section running the width of the studio and extending about six feet out in front of (and below) the shutters to the two organ chambers. The percussion chamber had its own expression shutters in the top of the chamber that could be operated independently from the rest of the organ. A large Wurlitzer concert grand piano on the studio floor, playable from either console, completed the set-up. A duplicate 20-Hp Spencer Motor and blower was installed as a standby.

The studio was heavily draped and was about as dead acoustically as a padded cell. This was back in the days when "reverberation" was a dirty word;



-- N.Y. Daily News Photo

Interior of solo chamber of "Crown Prince".
Pictured are Dick Loderhose and Ronald Bishop.

those ancient microphones couldn't cope with anything but a pure sound coming in a straight line from one direction.

The first recording made on the new organ was the memorable "You're The Cream In My Coffee" coupled with "Me And The Man In The Moon" on Victor 21844. The year was 1928, and Crawford (with an occasional assist from Mrs. Crawford) continued to record on it until after the mid-thirties. Of course, Helen Crawford made two recordings on her own: the sensitive and rollicking accompaniments to Bing Crosby's singing of "Can't We Talk It Over" and "I Found You" on the Brunswick label—a tantalizing sample of her artistry in her own right.

Crawford's Victor records never identified the organ; it was always simply a "Wurlitzer." But there is one organist who almost single-handedly put the Paramount studio Wurlitzer on the map in the minds of millions of people all over the country. Ann Leaf, with her CBS network broadcasts, "Nocturne," and "Ann Leaf At The Organ," always came on with her theme song, "In Time," and faded under while the announcer said, "The next program originates in the Paramount Theatre building in New York, where Ann Leaf, at the console of the Wurlitzer, is waiting to greet you."

"Nocturne" was heard around midnight or later, depending on where you were tuned in, and at least one younger listener (whose parents thought he was sound asleep) used to sneak a Philco "Cathedral Gothic" midget radio under the covers and suffocate slowly to the strains of the Paramount Studio Wurlitzer every night.

Many other artists have been identified with this famous organ. Don Baker, during his highly successful reign at the Paramount Theatre, made (in addition to a series of hymns for Brunswick) two 78-RPM. albums for Columbia which, in LP form, still sound marvelous. George Wright made a less-fortunate album on it "accompanying" (as it turned out) Cozy Cole and his drums on a New Year's Eve some years back; George's wonderful King recordings, made during the same period on the 36 ranker in the theatre downstairs more than redeem this indiscretion, however. Lew White and Fred Feibel both recorded a number of hymns, Christmas carols and light program material, plus the usual standards from the field of wedding music on the studio Wurlitzer during the late thirties, and Ann Leaf made a series of transcriptions for even more somber use, for Summit Sound Systems. Dick Leibert also made albums of a some-

theatre organ

what restrained nature on it. No one will ever know how many "Ave Marias" and "Oh, Promise Me's," performed on this organ, have been heard in funeral parlors and wedding chapels all over America — or why.

Maybe it was a case of too many "Traumereis"...whatever the reason, the 1940's found the Paramount studio organ in almost total eclipse. It sat there in solitary confinement, gathering dust for almost ten years. Meanwhile, the theatre had changed hands—the once-proud Publix chain was trust-busted out of existence and the American Broadcasting Company-Paramount Theatres, Inc., took over. The space occupied by the studio was needed to house some hush-hush communications projects, and the organ was put on the block.

This was 1956. Enter a man and his dream.

Dick Loderhose had been bugs on organs ever since he followed the classic pattern and stayed behind to play the organ in church one Sunday. Theatre organs came next, and soon he was playing semi-professionally at the RKO Kieth's Theatre in his neighborhood. Even after he went into the Navy he kept at it, performing in theatres in his sailor suit or on Hammonds in service clubs. Soon after becoming a civilian again he bought the beautifully-voiced Wurlitzer from station WMCA in New York and set it up in his home, where he was happy with it...

Still, Dick had the dream.

The dream was to own the biggest and mightiest Wurlitzer (outside of a theatre) in the world. Nothing else would do. So, when he heard that the famous Paramount building Wurlitzer was for sale, his course of action was clear.

Negotiations were complicated, but Dick, a negotiator of no little experience, managed to get the deal set. What did it cost? "You wouldn't believe me if I told you," he will answer, while wife Jane (among the more understanding of the nation's "Wurlitzer Widows") looks heavenward. Even so, the price he paid ABC-Paramount was only the beginning. It cost more than \$5,000 simply to remove the organ from the Times Square building and store it until its new home was ready. To take the organ out of the Paramount meant demolishing and then restoring whole parts of the building. Walls had to be removed, doors had to go, and to get the parts down the elevator shaft, a platform had to be built on top of the elevator car itself.

In building the new studio, Dick wanted to duplicate the dimensions and general plan of the original while at the same time improving the listening conditions. His architects designed a building 71 feet long, 26 feet wide, 20 feet high. The studio proper occupies more than half this space, and is complete with its own radiant heating system in the walls, telephone system and "smoking room" facilities. The entire building is made of stout concrete block, painted pale green inside with a

Fall, 1960

black and white vinyl tile floor, all highly sound-reflective. To alter the acoustics, curtains may be drawn in front of the shutters. As many as 150 have attended recitals in the studio, and on summer afternoons the crowd spills out on the lawn, hearing the organ through large double doors.

In the studio area is enough musical merchandise to startle even the most sophisticated visitor. First, there is the original 4-manual Wurlitzer console, refurnished completely in glistening white hand-rubbed enamel and gold; it sits on a rolling platform covered in red plush with deep gold fringe. The only thing that hasn't been completely renovated is the upholstery on the Howard seat. That well-worn fabric has been glorified by so many famous posteriors as to make replacement unthinkable. Otherwise, all is new; the console has been completely re-leathered, all the brightwork has been re-chromed, new scarlet felt has been inserted throughout, stop tabs have been cleaned, even the inlaid brass and burl walnut "Wurlitzer" nameplates were refurbished. To accommodate the added ranks in the organ, two additional bolsters of stop tabs have been added to the horseshoe, plus greatly enlarged 2nd touch and tremulant facilities.

Next to the main console is the slave console, still in its original walnut finish. Behind the two, just as in the Paramount studio, is the setter board where new combinations may be set up conveniently. Then comes the latest addition to the Loderhose organ empire: the huge golden five-manual Kimball console from the late-lamented Roxy Theatre. This most recent acquisition will soon be hooked up to the Wurlitzer relays; with its more than 300 stop tabs, it will open up even wider horizons for the man with the dream.

Along with the giant console, Dick brought home the Kimball Fanfare Trumpet, Military Bugle and 8' Post Horn which are being added to the organ.

Also of Kimball pedigree, though

not from the Roxy but from the Strand Theatre in Brooklyn, is the upright piano which stands along the wall to the percussion chamber. Audiences at recitals in the studio always gape when the piano starts to "play itself." Mounted above the piano is a set of Hope-Jones tuned saucer bells bought from Lorin Whitney—rare but juice-consuming trappings.

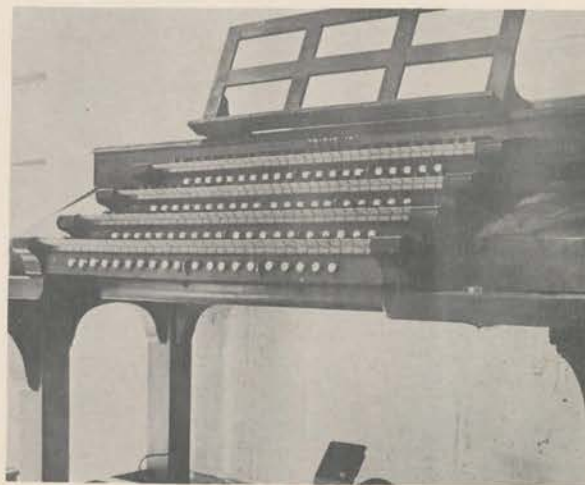
The electronic equipment in the studio is pretty rare (and juice-consuming) too. There's a big Ampex 351-1 installed in a movable console, with attendant mixers and remote-control switches. Then there are the two matched Capps condenser mikes, S-M-mike and Altec mikes and their power systems.

In either corner of the studio, at the organ end, is a big Altec Laguna speaker system, powered by two 60-watt Grom-Amplifiers. A complete stereo record-playback system completes the set-up.

But it's what's up front that counts.

"Up front" consists of two chambers, each 19 feet deep, 12 feet wide, and 17 feet high, finished in hard-surface plaster. Behind them, the blower room and relays. Laid out in front of the organ chambers, just as in the Paramount Building, is the percussion chamber with its overhead expression shutters. The original chests, (all chromatic) are built 4 feet above the floor and are 12 feet long instead of the usual 8 feet. According to Dick this is a feature not found in any other Wurlitzer. Dick has gone to great pains in soundproofing the chests, tremulants, wind trunks and reservoirs; during some early recording sessions several of Jane's best pink blankets were pressed into emergency duty. Now 3 inches of fiberglass between a sandwich of plywood and special acoustical board do the job. For all its ponderous size and power, it is an amazingly quiet organ (until someone strikes a chord at the console!).

Of course, Dick hasn't done the job alone. He has had some of the fin-



Studio organ slave console used by Mrs. Helen Crawford. Not now with the Loderhose organ, it is owned by Reiny Delzer, Bismarck, N.D.

est professional help in the business-- Danny Papp (who still gives the Paramount Theatre organ the loving care it deserves, and who installed it as well as the studio organ originally); Louis Ferrara, custodian of the Radio City Music Hall's 58-rank giant; Don De Witt, the well-known "Tibia Gynecologist"; Douglas Pennoyer, former Aeolian-Skinner technician; and Ronnie Bishop, assistant to Louis Ferrara, and now representing Casavant. All these, as well as numerous volunteers with varying degrees of enthusiasm and skill, have helped make the Loderhose organ what it is today.

The organ was officially "unveiled" at a premiere concert by Ann Leaf on Sunday, October 19, 1958. Since that time Don De Witt and Johnny Seng have given recitals to full studios, and many of the outstanding figures of the organ world have played it informally. Dick's telephone is constantly ringing with calls from out-of-town visitors who feel that their visit to New York is not complete without a chance to see and hear this outstanding organ. Dick graciously welcomes them all, and the studio guest book has already gone into Volume II.

Now the organ is being heard all

over the country through the United Artists records that have been made on it--"Introducing The Mighty Wurlitzer," "Sing Along With The Mighty Wurlitzer"; featuring the "King Of The Bouncing Ball", Dick (Loderhose) Scott, "Christmas In Your Heart" (Reginald Foort), "Beyond The Blue Horizon" (Johnny Seng), "Organ Treasures" (Don De Witt).

Dick has even greater plans for the months ahead. In the meantime he extends a cordial invitation to ATOE members and their friends to visit him and "The Crown Prince Of North Tonawanda."

SPECIFICATIONS OF DICK LODERHOSE WURLITZER 37 RANKS & PERCUSSIONS

<p>GREAT-MANUAL II</p> <p>TUBA MIRABILIS TC 16 ENG HORN 16 OPHICLEIDE 16 DIAPASON TC 16 DIAPHONE 16 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 16 CLARINET 16 SAXOPHONE TC 16 SOLO STRING 16 SOLO STR CELESTE II 16 FRENCH HORN TC 16 BOURDON 16 VOX HUMANA (S) TC 16 VOX HUMANA (M) TC II 16 TUBA MIRABILIS 8 ENG HORN 8 SOLO TRUMPET 8 TRUMPET 8 TUBA HORN 8 OPEN DIAPASON 8 HORN DIAPASON 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (M) 8 CLARINET 8 SAXOPHONE 8 SOLO STRING 8 SOLO STRING CELESTE II 8 STRING CELESTE II 8 VIOL CELESTE II 8 GAMBA CELESTE II 8 KRUMET 8 FRENCH HORN 8 KINURA 8 ORCH OBOE 8 FLUTE 8 VOX HUM. (S) 8 VOX HUM. (M) II 8 MUSETTE 8 COR ANGLAIS 8 CLARION 4 OCTAVE 4 PICCOLO (S) II 4 PICCOLO (M) 4 SOLO STRING 4 SOLO STR CELESTE II 4 STRING CELESTE II 4 VIOL CELESTE II 4 FLUTE 4 TIBIA 12TH (S) II 2-2/3 TWELFTH 2-2/3 PICCOLO (S) II 2 15TH (VIOL CEL) II 2 PICCOLO 2 TIEREE 1 3/5 PIANO 16 PIANO 8 PIANO 4 MARIMBA SUB OCT HARP SUB OCT XYLO MASTER SUB OCT XYLO MASTER</p>	<p>GLOCKENSPEIL CHRYSSUB OCT CHRYSOGLOTT SNARE DRUM TAMBOURINE BRUSH CYMBAL CASTANETS CHINESE BLOCK GREAT 16 GREAT 4 SOLO 16 SOLO 8</p> <p>PIZZICATO</p> <p>SOLO 8</p> <p>ACCOMP.-MANUAL I</p> <p>TUBA MIRABILIS 8 ENG. HORN 8 TRUMPET 8 TUBA HORN 8 OPEN DIAP 8 HORN DIAP 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (M) 8 CLARINET 8 SAXOPHONE 8 SOLO STRING 8 SOLO STRING CELESTE II 8 STRING CELESTE II 8 VIOL CELESTE II 8 GAMBA CELESTE II 8 KRUMET 8 OBOE HORN 8 QUINTADENA 8 CONCERT FLUTE 8 FLUTE CELESTE TC. 8 VOX HUMANA (S) 8 VOX HUMANA (M) II 8 OCTAVE 8 PICCOLO (S) II 4 PICCOLO (M) 4 SOLO STRING 4 SOLO STRING CELESTE II 4 STRING CELESTE II 4 VIOL CELESTE II 4 VIOL CELESTE II 4 GAMBA CELESTE II 4 FLUTE 4 VOX HUM. (M) II 4 VOX HUM. (S) 4 PICCOLO 2 PIANO 8 PIANO 4 MANDOLIN VIBRAPHONE CHYS. DAMPERS MARIMBA HARP XYLO-MASTER SUB OCT. CHRYSOYLOTT</p>	<p>CHRYSSUB OCT SNARE DRUM TAMBOURINE CASTANETS CH. BLOCK BRUSH CYMBAL ACCOMP 4 SOLO 8</p> <p>2ND TOUCH</p> <p>TUBA MIRABILIS 8 TRUMPET 8 ENG HORN 8 TUBA HORN 8 OPEN DIAP 8 TIBIA CL (S) 8 SAXOPHONE 8 PICCOLO (S) II 4 PICCOLO (S) II 2 CHIMES GLOCKENSPEIL GREAT 4 SOLO 8 SOLO 4 PIZZICATO SOLO 8</p> <p>BOMBARDE-MANUAL III</p> <p>TUBA MIRABILIS TC 16 ENGLISH HORN 16 SOLO TRUMPET TC 16 DIAPASON TC 16 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 16 SAXOPHONE TC 16 SOLO STRING 16 SOLO STRING CELESTE II 16 VOX HUMANA (S) TC 16 VOX HUMANA (M) TC II 16 TUBA MIRABILIS 8 ENG HORN 8 SOLO TRUMPET 8 TUBA HORN 8 OPEN DIAP 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 8 SAXOPHONE 8 SOLO STRING 8 SOLO STRING CELESTE II 8 SOLO STRING 8 VOX HUMANA (SX) 8 VOX HUMANA (MX) II 8 SOLO TIBIA II 5 1/2 CLARION 4 PICCOLO (S) II 4 SOLO TIBIA II 3-1/5 SOLO TIBIA II 2-2/3 SOLO TIBIA II 1 FT. PICCOLO (S) II 2 PIANO 8 CHIMES XYLO MASTER SUB OCT XYLO MASTER SLEIGH BELLS ELECTRIC BELLS (REIT.)</p>	<p>SOLO-MANUAL IV</p> <p>TUBA MIRABILIS TC 16 ENG HORN 16 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 16 SAXOPHONE TC 16 SOLO STRING 16 SOLO STRING CELESTE II 16 VOX HUMANA (S) TC 16 VOX HUMANA (M) TC II 16 TUBA MIRABILIS 8 ENG HORN 8 SOLO TRUMPET 8 TUBA HORN 8 OPEN DIAP 8 MUSETTE 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (M) 8 CLARINET 8 SAXOPHONE 8 SOLO STRING 8 SOLO STRING CELESTE II 8 STRING CELESTE II 8 VIOL CELESTE II 8 KRUMET 8 FRENCH HORN 8 ORCH OBOE 8 KINURA 8 COR ANGLAIS 8 VOX HUMANA (S) 8 VOX HUMANA (M) II 8 PICCOLO (S) II 4 HARMONIC FIFE 4 SOLO TIBIA II 2-2/3 PICCOLO (S) II 2 SOLO TIBIA II 1-3/5 SOLO TIBIA II 1 HARMONIC FIFE 2 PIANO 8 CHIMES MARIMBA HARP XYLO MASTER SUB OCT XYLO MASTER GLOCKENSPEIL BELLS REIT CHRYSSUB OCT CHRYSOGLOTT SOLO 16 ACCOMP 8</p> <p>PEDAL</p> <p>RESULTANT 32 DOUBLE ENG. HORN 16 OPHICLEIDE 16 DIAPHONE 16 BASS 16 TIBIA (CL) (S) II 16 DBL. STRING 16 DBL. STR. CEL. 16 OBOE HORN 16 BASSOON 16 BASS CLARINET 16 BOURDON 16</p>	<p>TUBA MIR. 8 ENG. HORN 8 TRUMPET 8 TUBA HORN 8 OPEN DIAP. 8 HORN DIAP. 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (S) II 8 TIBIA CLAUSA (M) 8 CLARINET 8 SOLO STRING 8 SOLO STR. CELESTE II 8 STRING CELESTE II 8 VIOL CELESTE II 8 GAMBA CELESTE II 8 OBOE HORN 8 QUINTADENA 8 FLUTE 8 PIANO 16 BASS DRUM SIZZLE CYMBAL SNARE DRUM CRASH CYMBAL BRUSH CYMBAL ACCOMP 8 GREAT 8 BOMBARDE 8 SOLO 8</p> <p>TREMULANTS</p> <p>MAIN (3) SOLO (2) SOLO HIGH PRESSURE TIBIAS (3) ENGLISH HORN VOXES (3) TIBIA CELESTE (SOLO) VOX CELESTE (MAIN) 20 PISTONS ON ACC.- DOUBLE TOUCH PEDAL 20 PISTONS ON GREAT- DOUBLE TOUCH GENERALS 20 PISTONS ON BOMBARDE 20 PISTONS ON SOLO TOE LEVERS: SFORZANDO CYMBAL & DRUM TOE STUDS: 17 TOE STUDS FOR TRICK EFFECTS 2 CONSOLES: 2ND CONSOLE IS ROXY 5 MANUAL KIMBALL</p> <p>BOTH CONSOLES ON MOVABLE PLATFORMS. CAN BE ROLLED ANYWHERE IN STUDIO. 3 CHAMBERS: MAIN SOLO PERCUSSION 20 H.P. ORGOBLO BLOWER</p>
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ABOVE SPECIFICATIONS INCLUDE 3 TIBIAS (SOLO 1, SOLO 2, AND MAIN), 2ND POST HORN ON BOMBARDE ONLY, QUINT CELESTE

BY CUTOUT SWITCH, AND ADDED TRAPS AND EFFECTS.