

Portland Paramount Publix #1 Wurlitzer Opus 1831

Story and Photos - by Bill Peterson

The day was Thursday, March 8, 1928, the hour was 7:00, for the opening of the magnificent new Portland Theatre (later Paramount Theatre). The house lights dimmed and, from the orchestra pit, Liborius Hauptmann directed the Portland Grand Orchestra in selections from Faust. Following the overture came a short novelty film and the Paramount News. As the velvet curtain closed, a white spotlight caught the ivory and gold Wurlitzer as it rose from the pit with Ralph Hamilton playing "Organs I Have Played". After the console had slowly sunk from sight, Alex Hyde and the Portland Stage Band appeared to accompany "A Merry Widow Revue" direct from the New York Paramount Theatre and produced by Frank Cambria. This revue consisted of six acts.....then the curtains opened on the feature picture which was "Feel My Pulse," starring Bebe Daniels, William Powell, and Richard Arlen.

The Portland Theatre was designed by C.W. and George Rapp and was built by the Association of Publix and Loew under the direction of West Coast Theatres. The 3300-plus seats were placed amid sumptuous surroundings indeed. After about a year, the theatre was renamed the Paramount. The Wurlitzer console was presided over by such well-known artists as Oliver Wallace, Stanleigh Mallotte, and the popular team of Don and Iris Wilkins, among others. As a matter of fact, the organ was used regularly well into the 1930's.

After many years of just very occa-

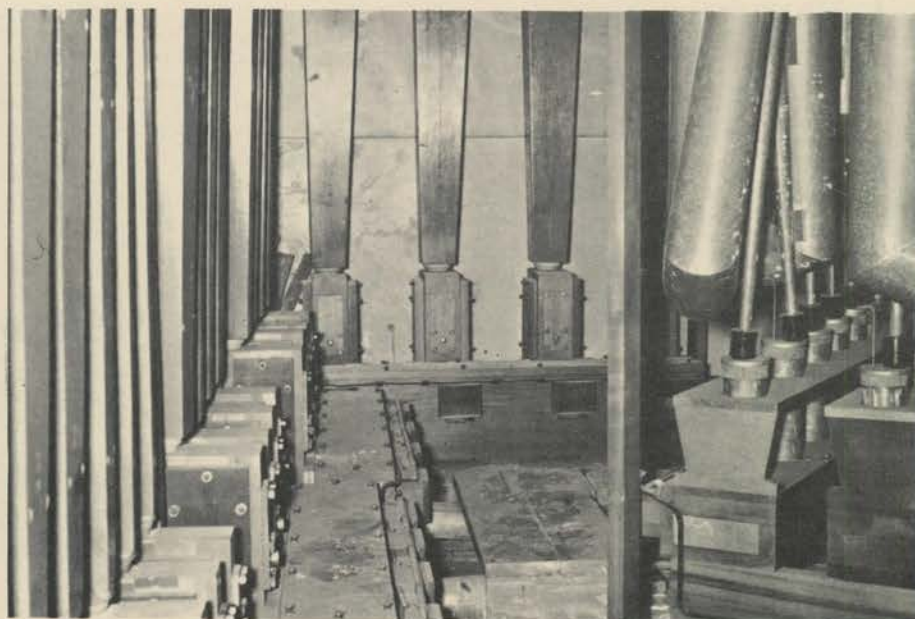
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Wurlitzer 4/20 Publix #1, Paramount Theatre, Portland.



Solo chamber, Portland Paramount. Piano and Master Xylophone located just above this chamber, unenclosed.



Main chamber, Portland Paramount. 16' wooden Diaphones and 16' Ophicleide.

theatre organ

RECORD REVIEWS

"AMERICA'S FAVORITE ORGAN HITS"
Reprise Label R9-6008. Played by
Don George. Stereo Version.

Here we have a record of smooth organ played by an old pro who knows his way around a theatre organ.

You will not find too much in the way of tricks and gimmicks, but you will hear several standards played in the beautifully smooth theatre style of years ago.

The artist, Don George, has been around for quite awhile. At one time he was featured at the Robert Morton in the Orpheum Theatre, San Francisco. Later he spent considerable time at the Princess Theatre, Honolulu, Hawaii, where several 78's were cut for Victor which are now collector's items. Don returned to the mainland after ten years at the Princess, in 1943, settling in Hollywood.

The organ on this recording, according to our information, is the Lorin Whitney Robert Morton located in Whitney's studio, Glendale, California. Since Don George has made most of his public appearances on Morton organs, this record makes a happy combination of artist and organist, as he draws on his Morton experience to bring us ear-pleasing tonal effects. The Hawaiian tunes are especially effective.

Technically, the record is adequate, with some distortion noted in only one or two places. The balance seems good, the organ sounding quite natural. There was very little surface noise on the copy we used.

Selections heard include Smoke Gets In Your Eyes, Always, Tenderly, Fascination, Hawaiian Wedding Song, My Isle of Golden Dreams, and others of the same type. For easy listening, this record is recommended.

"FAVORITE HITS BY JESSE CRAWFORD", ETC.

This is not a review of a recording by the late master of the theatre organ. It is written as a warning to the unsuspecting record buyer.

At the present time there are a number of albums on the market, under a variety of labels which have titles similar to the one listed at the head of this article. Upon listening to the selections played, you will find many of them lifted from other recordings; in fact, a selection heard on one of the alleged Crawford records has been heard on at least five other records, each record listing a different organ and 'artist'. In each case the recording is exactly the same, note for note, combination for combination, etc.

This group of records appears in

great quantities on discount racks in supermarkets and variety stores. They are not on major labels and should be avoided like the plague. Our advice is not to buy any of the off-brand labels until you have had a chance to hear at least a sampling of each track on the disc. We underline 'each' track as a recent pipe organ record contained several tracks of electronic organ in its makeup. If you are looking for the latest genuine Jesse Crawford recordings, we wholeheartedly recommend the Decca albums made on the Simonton WurliTzer just recently. Decca also has some Jesse Crawford recordings made on the Lorin Whitney WurliTzer/Morton which are excellent.

PIPE ORGAN ENCORES IN STEREO:
RCA-Camden CAS 591 \$2.98 (Stereo)
Robert Brereton at PARAMOUNT
THEATRE WURLITZER, New York
City.

From the album notes accompanying this disc, we're told that Mr. Brereton has been blind from birth -- all the more remarkable, then, that this album should show off the mighty monster of Times Square far better than anyone has yet... at least, anyone that's recorded the Paramount WurliTzer in "hi-fi".

Mr. Brereton's selections consist entirely of classical pieces, well adapted to the resources of the "second" mightiest WurliTzer of 'em all; the posthorn and the tibia chorus are magnificent -- worthy of the highest praise...as is his playing -- in both the "easy" and difficult numbers. (Classic organ fanatics, if you've never heard a WurliTzer brass trumpet take over the solo in Purcell's "Trumpet Voluntary" -- harken well!)

Mr. Brereton never -- to this reviewer -- misses a note...and heaven knows he has plenty to miss.

If you're a fan of "Michael Cheshire" and "Kenneth Lane" on the classics, buy this. You won't regret it -- and for \$2.98, in stereo, it's well worth it.

BOB MACK AT THE WURLITZER PIPE ORGAN. Renwick's Volume III (Stereo or Mono). Available only by mail order from Renwick Records, 100 Sutton Street, Brooklyn 22, New York.

This latest disc made on the Loderhose 4/38 Studio WurliTzer features the well known New York organist Bob Mack playing a group of standards in his own excellent style. This is the first time this reviewer has heard Bob Mack play, and after listening to just a couple of numbers it was easy to see how this organist is called on to play the well known New York Paramount WurliTzer whenever it is used these days.

Foot tapping selections included are Ain't Misbehavin', Georgia On My Mind,

The Sheik, and Boogie Woogie Shoe-shine Boy, while on the ballad side are such favorites as Wonderful One, Remember, and Blue and Broken Hearted. Altogether there are twelve numbers on this disc.

The recording provides the sound of a big organ in a studio, and is probably pretty close to the way this organ sounded when it was located on the 8th floor of the New York Paramount Building. There has been no artificial echo added and the recording is sharp and clean with no distortion noted. This is certainly an excellent addition to any theatre pipe organ record collection.

"MUSIC FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF SILENT MOVIES" - RCA VICTOR LSP-2560. Available in Stereo or Mono.

Here is the inimitable Gaylord Carter recording on the Simonton WurliTzer. An excellent recording, terrific playing featuring some of the old silent chase bits that Gaylord can really play plus some old standards, Jeannine; Charmaine; Angela Mia to name a few.

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sional use, the organ is now being brought back to first-class condition by Dennis Hedberg of Portland. Dennis spent many hours during 1961 bringing back to glory the 3/13 WurliTzer 235 Special in the Portland Oriental Theatre. The Publix #1 in the Paramount is the only other organ still installed in a Portland theatre, so Dennis welcomed the opportunity to start on this organ. The theatre management has expressed the hope of presenting public concerts on this organ as soon as it is in shape.

The stop list is the familiar Publix #1 consisting of 20 ranks, and is the same as when the organ was installed in 1928. Preliminary inspection revealed only a few dead notes but no major damage.

Editor's Note: A recent letter from Dennis Hedberg brings this story right up to date. He says, in part, "Since I moved the drapes away from the shutters, the organ speaks out real well -- Restoration of the organ was going without incident until the right side chambers were flooded about six weeks ago. At this date, the damage caused by the water is almost completely repaired. This organ sounds fabulous but isn't really in as good shape as the Oriental organ....yet!"



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