

# DICK SCOTT'S "SINGALONG"



ATOE Vice-President Dick Loderhose (Dick Scott) at the console of the RKO Madison Theatre Wurlitzer 260 Special during an actual performance of "Singalong" program. (What's with the glasses, Dick? ED.)

Dick Loderhose has reason to smile. The 7-week trial of the organ program has now been extended for 16 weeks. Congratulations to the RKO Circuit and to Dick Loderhose.

## Questions and Answers

Answers by Judd Walton

**Q** Should some stops such as the Vox Humana be used only in combination with others?

**A** Not necessarily. If you have some of Crawford's 78 rpm Victor Records available, careful listening will detect the tasteful use of most of the stops available as solo stops, including the Vox Humana. Some of the combination "niceties" that were used by this consummate artist are also noticeable when heard by the use of a roll player installed on some of the later theatre organs. For instance, quick removal of the tremolos before using the Chrysoglott so as to eliminate the sound of the tremolos when using such a soft stop!

**Q** Can you give a simple explanation of Unification?

**A** The word unify signifies, according to Webster, "To form into one." There perhaps is nothing in the nomenclature of pipe organs that has done more to separate or divide the people involved with them than the word which means: to bring together, to form one.

Unification of an organ is one of the most misunderstood processes not only to laymen but to many organists of considerable experience and talent. Per-

haps the least controversial way to describe unification is to describe the opposite, since the latter also further clarifies the former. An organ that has a stop tablet or similar device connected to each different rank of pipes, regardless of pitch, is called a "straight organ". In other words, a tablet denoting an 8' flute would be wired to a rank of pipes starting at the 8' pitch and going through the compass of the keyboard. A 4' flute tablet would be wired to another rank of pipes starting at the 4' pitch and extending through the compass of the manual.

A six rank pipe organ could be designed in this fashion. Our stoplist would have just six different tablets. All other pitches would be made available using octave couplers. The straight organ with couplers cannot produce the same number of possible combinations as making the six sounds and their octaves controlled by separate tablets. Such an arrangement is called unification. Using the flute example above, in unifying this stop and doing away with the extra rank of pipes, we would add twelve pipes to the top end of the 8' flute rank. Then we would take the 4' flute tablet and wire it up one octave so that in playing we would actually be using the same pipes over again.

The entire arrangement of unifying an organ gives the instrument a great deal more versatility and, therefore, is made to order for theatre playing. It also makes for a larger instrument, tonally while conserving space by using less pipes for the given stoplist.

The detractors of the unit organ claim that the manufacturer of a unit organ is

trying to impress falsely by putting a lot of tablets on the stoplist all with different names but playing actual limited number of pipes. This argument is, of course, not valid. The reason different names are given to the various stops is for convenience. As an example of this, let's take a string stop. Give a rank of string pipes with 73 notes; the organ builder might signify the 8' rank as "Cello", then call the 4' tablet "Violina", or, if the string stop is being used on the pedals as well as the manuals, the builder might label the pedal stop "Cello 8'", the manual stops - "Salicional 8'" and "Salicet 4'", using the same 73 note rank for the three stops.

The mention of unification has automatically evoked an argument whenever mentioned. The argument has been heatedly pursued for the last sixty odd years, and it is expected that the foregoing explanation will probably set off more comments and "fireworks". So be it; anything revolutionary, or a change, is subject to controversy. Everyone connected with pipe organs, "unified" or "straight", is invited to start beating the writer over the head verbally or by the written word.

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There have been so many questions about his pipe organ from fellow employees that Dave Strassman has made up a typical question and answer session which he hopes will cover all of the unanswered questions you may have.

**Q.** Why did you buy a pipe organ?

**A.** Just like the sound of it.

**Q.** Isn't that sort of silly?

\* Please turn to next page

## NEWS FROM ROCHESTER

(Concluded from page 28)

23-ranker. A new bourdon rank has replaced the former one.

Enthusiasts in the area have been saddened by the death of a fine organist, Maurice B. Nicholson. Mr. Nicholson, who died on February 27, had been in ailing health for three years. In his prime, he was organist in Shea's Buffalo Theatre, which was the "flagship" of Mike Shea's theatre empire. When the 4/28 WurliTzer ceased to be used in regular programs, Mr. Nicholson and his wife went into business, operating a Children's and Misses' specialty shop in Batavia. He kept his hand in by assuming organist's duties at First Presbyterian and First Methodist churches in Batavia, where he had resided for 42 years. He was 67.

The writer greatly treasures a letter Mr. Nicholson wrote him about three years ago. One sentence of the letter illustrates a theatre organist's thinking on the subject: "I am of the conviction that if the managers of the large theatres would put their instruments to good use as was done years ago, the public would eat it up, especially the newer generation which has never heard any such thing." To those words of wisdom, we say "Amen."

16th Notes. Mrs. David Marr, widow of the Marr & Colton Company's founder, observed her 80th birthday in January. All ATOE members extend to Mrs. Marr best wishes for many more happy years. ....David Teeter, boss of the Elmira Theatre's Marr & Colton project, says that although his investment in the restoration is now over \$5,000, he and Lauren Peckham have been installing a platform in one chamber to accommodate the toy counter and additional ranks. These fellows deserve a lot of praise for bringing this organ back, literally from the dead. A feature on the organ will appear in a future issue of TO.....The 1200-seat Madison Theatre in Rochester, which once housed model E-X WurliTzer, opus #1470, is being converted to apartments. Organist was George Garis, who broadcast over WHAM. His theme song, according to those with long memories who heard him over the 50,000-watt station, was "Beyond the Blue Horizon".... ..Harry Radloff, boss of the Roosevelt Marr & Colton, is now a full-fledged electrical engineer, having been graduated from the University of Buffalo on February 22.....Danny Schultz, whose name is synonymous with the Palace organ restoration, will be moving into a home in nearby Fishers April 1. He still has not landed the 3-manual WurliTzer he has been seeking.....Area enthusiasts were pleasantly surprised to see a sequence of the Huntley-Brinkley news program of February 15 devoted to the Fox Theatre in San Francisco. The interior was shown with the 4-manual WurliTzer console prominently shown. Theatre organ music was provided as background.....The Associated Press sent out a picture by Wirephoto in February of Sam D'Amico, Philadelphia plumbing

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from page 29)

- A. Yes but I'm not married so I can indulge in that sort of silliness.
- Q. Where did you get it and when?
- A. From the old Colonial Theatre on 15th and Vliet. I have always been interested in theatre pipe organs and I knew from some years back that the Colonial had an organ still in reasonable condition. When I found that the theatre had been closed last year I approached the owners with an offer to buy the organ.
- Q. What did they say?
- A. They said, "Isn't that sort of silly?"
- Q. What's the going price on old pipe organs these days?
- A. This particular instrument was built in Oshkosh in 1927, and was installed in the theatre that April at an estimated cost of \$22,000. What with talking pictures and high fidelity sound, there is absolutely no market today for such a gismo. I purchased it for less than 10% of that cost.
- Q. What are the specifications of this gismo?
- A. Well, the whole thing weighs around five tons. The console contains three manuals or keyboards plus pedal keys. There are over 750 pipes ranging in size from a metal midget about the size of a lead pencil to a wooden giant that is a foot square and 14 feet tall. The largest metal pipe is shaped somewhat like a trumpet and is 17 feet tall. Also included are a marimba, xylophone, harp, glockenspiel, snare drum, bass drum, chimes and other assorted noise-makers, all electrically played from the console. In the theatre, the instrument was housed in two triangular rooms, about 14' x 14' x 18' high. The organ is powered by a five-horse blower which also operates a 12-volt generator for the action current.
- Q. Interesting! What else?
- A. Well, it took me a two-week vacation working with from two to five others (George Gloff and Gil Reid were pressured into helping) to remove it from the theatre and store it here at Kalmbach's.
- Q. I thought we were tight for space here?
- A. True, but I spent another two weeks constructing a suspended loft on the fourth floor. No floor space is involved.
- Q. Now what?
- A. Eventually I will build a house with space set aside for the organ.
- Q. Are you kidding?
- A. No.

warehouseman seated at his theatre organ console, playing for his workmen's lunch hour. This organ was once the pride of the Mastbaum Theatre, and was a 4/27 instrument, opus #2000. D'Amico paid \$5,000 for it, and the original price was quoted at "more than \$100,000." The picture was carried by the morning Democrat & Chronicle.

Q. Isn't it frustrating in the meantime not to be able to hear the organ?

A. Yes, except that just before we disassembled it, we recorded several organists playing it at the theatre. Copies of the stereo tape are available at a price — and it sounds real professional-like.

Q. One last question. Can you play the instrument?

A. No.

Q. Isn't that sort of silly?

Ed. Note: To complicate things just a little more, the author of this material has recently moved to the West Coast.

Q. Reed Pipes in older organs not infrequently seem to have acquired an indentation in the reed tongue where the tuning wire has worn against it over a long period of time. If one tries to tune or regulate the reed by a slight movement of the tuning wire, it promptly works its way back into the indentation, and the tuning does not hold. What can be done to remedy this condition, short of revoicing the pipe with a new tongue?

A. In only a very few instances has it been possible to roll out such an indentation from a reed tongue. Once so conditioned, there is usually a slight and almost indiscernible kink at the point of tuning wire contact. While the kink may appear to have been removed, the pipe tunes in with an annoying buzzing sound when re-assembled. However, one method in particular has been successful more often than not, as follows. Disassemble the pipe and remove the wedge, reed tongue and shallot. File off the top or small end on the shallot reducing its length by about 1/32". Ream out the hole in the block (careful now - easy does it!) so that the shallot will extend into it by about 1/32" more than before. Carefully measure the length of the shallot protruding from the block before dis-assembly as a reference. Likewise, carefully file off a like amount from the LOWER end of the reed tongue, and then re-assemble the pipe. The tongue will now align itself in a new location with respect to the shallot and tuning wire when the pipe is tuned to its reference pitch. The kink or depression in the reed tongue will have been moved just far enough below the tuning wire to avoid the original problem. The tongue should, of course, be flattened as much as possible to eliminate the kink without, however, deforming the metal. Admittedly, this is a delicate operation, and some recurving of the tongue may be required, especially at the tip, to restore the proper speech.

## BACK ISSUES

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