

# THE WURLITZER SOUND LIVES ON AFTER A QUARTER-CENTURY OF LOVING LABOR!

by BROTHER ANDREW, csc



Robert Rickett seated at the 3 manual console of his 18 rank residence installation.

## A BIG SOUND IN A SMALL ROOM Or This Wurlitzer Sounds Good Like a Pipe Organ Should

The first thing to catch the eye of any true organ fan in the living room of the Rickett residence is the 3 manual Wurlitzer console. This is a thing of such beauty that one is liable to be taken up with the design and the compactness of the console and overlook the three long narrow grills in the ceiling; one on each side of the room and one directly over the console. However, once the blower is on and someone is seated at the console you are bound to realize just how important those three grills are. For it is through these grills that one hears a sound comparable to the famous Paramount Studio Wurlitzer of Jesse Crawford's.

Hard to believe? Possibly, but it is true. Here is a home installation with plenty of power and guts and yet one that can be heard for prolonged periods with no tendency to irritate or abuse one's ear drums. From the very beginning of the project Bob has sought to duplicate the "Paramount Sound." And anyone listening to Bob do his version of the Crawford arrangement of "Nesting Time" will agree that he has indeed accomplished his end.

All work on this installation as well as others mentioned in article was done by Rickett with the help of many organ enthusiasts and friends, including the author, Brother Andrew, csc.

The story really starts with a small Photoplayer, acquired for \$25 in 1938, the year Bob Rickett was married. The marriage was permanent, but not the Photoplayer. After all, this isn't the kind of pipe organ that one's dreams are built on, so in 1940 Bob purchased a 4 rank Wicks from the Granada Theatre in LaGrande, Oregon. This organ had been originally installed in the Liberty Theatre there and had been replaced by a gorgeous little 7 rank Robert-Morton.

Later that year the 2m/9r Wm. Wood organ from Radio KXL, in Portland, was purchased. This was the organ from the Oregon Theatre which had been repossessed during the depression and sold to the radio station. From this organ, which contained all Gottfried pipe-work, the Wicks was enlarged to seven ranks by adding Tibia, Tuba and a VDO Celeste, the rest being sold piecemeal.

By 1942 World War II and Bob's entrance into service resulted in the sale of this organ to St. Rose's Catholic Church in Portland, with the original organ purified to 5 ranks with percussion and traps removed and with Diapason, VDO, VDO Celeste, Flute and Dulciana remaining. This organ was purchased some years ago by Doug Phillips of Portland and is now undergoing its final face lifting back to a 7 rank Theatre organ complete with traps and percussions.

Once out of the service another big step was made, this time it was a 2 manual (double bolstered console) 13 rank Page organ purchased from Schine's Athena Theatre in Athens, Ohio. The organ was removed and shipped to Portland in 1946 and installed in the same home that the Wicks had resided in prior to the war. In 1951 this Page organ was moved to Bob's present home and was replaced two years later by the Castle Wurlitzer, his present organ.

The present 3 manual—18 rank Wurlitzer started as opus 1680, originally built for the newly constructed Castle Theatre, Vancouver, Washington. The Castle opened its doors in 1927 and was the pride of the city at that time. The organ was installed in shallow chambers with large shutter openings, behind open grill work with no drapes to muffle the tone. The console was on a lift in the center of the orchestra pit with the piano to the right of the console. The Castle organ was purchased in 1953 and installed in Bob's home in its original form, being completed in 1954.

The Wurlitzer factory list describes the organ as a "Special H," with piano. This evidently was their way of describing a basic 2m/10r organ with a 235 console and with piano added along with a Post Horn and Krumet being substituted for the usual Kinura and Orchestral Oboe. The complete specifications being: VDO, Flute, VDO Celeste, Diapason, Clarinet in the Main, and Tibia, Post Horn, Tuba, Vox and Krumet in the Solo. Pedal ranks were standard extensions with three 16's—Bourdon, Opheclide and Diaphone. Percussions included a large scale Marimba Harp instead of a Chrysoglott and a set of 25 note class M Chimes along with the regular Orchestra Bells, Xylophone, Traps and Toy Counter.

In its new setting the pipes were installed in a large bedroom above the living room and spoke through grills in the ceiling from tone chutes on each side. During the ensuing years additional ranks, chests, etc., were purchased in anticipation of enlarging the organ. One of the additions, in 1958, was the 235 Special with Brass Trumpet which was purchased from Loew's Century Theatre in Baltimore. The pipe work was in excellent condition but the relay had suffered serious water damage and the entire organ needed releathering. It was removed and shipped by steamer from Baltimore to Portland. Two more ranks, a Quintadena and an Oboe Horn were acquired from Shea's Toronto Theatre. A large scale Chrysoglott and a Brass Saxophone came later. A complete 235 relay along with additional chests came from the Boulevard Theatre in Los Angeles.

By 1959 a total of two complete 3 manual Wurlitzers and chest work and pipes for 30 ranks, plus extra tremelos, regulators and a one manual Morton relay had been acquired, readying for the enlarging program. The plan was to approximate a Publix No. 1 with a Post Horn instead of an Orchestral Oboe, all to be controlled by a three manual console with more unification of the Tibias plus additional couplers.

With plans completed and material on hand, work was begun. The Century console provided the additional parts necessary for the added stops and actions

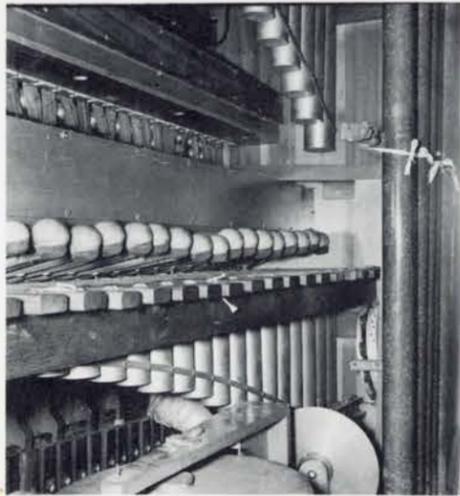
to the bolster as well as necessary setter boards and relays. The console was stripped to the floor and the task of rearranging stops, a complete new wiring scheme to be strung plus a new combination system was begun. Four months later the console emerged with the appearance of a 260 Special. At this stage there were 20 ranks plus the new Percussion chamber which also provided space for the bass pipe work. After tuning and regulation it was determined the extra chamber space occupied by a second Tibia and Vox could be better used for work room and accessibility without greatly affecting the overall tone or versatility of the organ and were subsequently removed.

The remaining chests and pipe work from the Century Wurlitzer were acquired by Dick Chase of Corvallis, Oregon, and were assembled into a magnificent 14 rank organ including an English Post Horn. It is controlled from a large 3 manual Robert-Morton console with a Page and a Wurlitzer relay. A real snappy installation and a mecca for organ fans from all over the west coast.

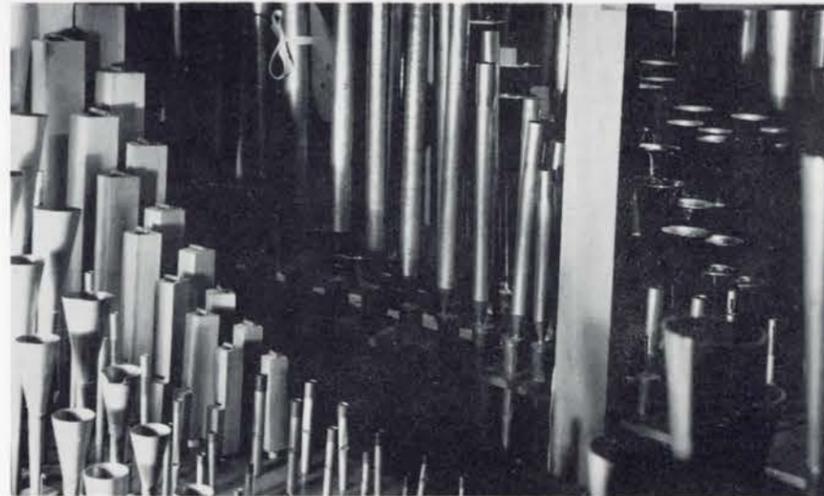
This is Bob Rickett's third pipe organ . . . and probably the last, it being the culmination of almost twenty-five years of buying, selling, swapping, installing, moving and re-arranging. Greater love than this no man hath for these monsters of music from the by-gone days of the old silent movie palace.



One of the three grills immediately above and surrounding the console can be seen at top left of the photo.



The percussion chamber is jam-packed with percussions, traps and the pedal ranks. The toy counter, sleigh bells, xylo and effects are mounted within framework of the Marimba.



The single chamber has separately operated shutters on each side, opening directly into the tone chutes to the living room grills. All 18 ranks are in this chamber.



The Quintadena chest is NOT Holtkamp! It was originally a 73 note "W" flute chest, cut in half, with the ends reversed and the top 12 notes removed to shorten it to fit the space.



The 2 manual Page console was unusual in that it was a double bolstered factory made job for 13 ranks. The console shell was built later by Kilgen.

The original Castle Theater console listed as a Special H was actually a 235 console with piano.



The 2m/4r Wick was the first true pipe organ for Rickett. He soon enlarged it to 7 ranks. The console case was designed and built by Bob around the original Wick keyboards and bolster.



Dick Chase has this 3 manual ROBERT-MORTON console which controls 14 ranks... 9 of which came from the Baltimore Century WURLITZER. All the chest work, trem, regulators, etc. are Wurlitzer-Hope Jones.

- PEDAL:**  
 16' Tuba  
 16' Diaphone  
 16' Bourdon  
 8' Trumpet  
 8' Tuba  
 8' Diapason  
 8' Tibia  
 8' Flute  
 8' Quintadena  
 8' Salicional  
 8' Cello  
 8' Clarinet  
 8' Krumet  
 4' Octave  
 Bass Drum  
 Kettle Drum  
 Crash Cymbal  
 Cymbal  
 Trap Switch 1st or 2nd Touch

- PIZZACATO (Pedal)**  
 16' Tuba  
 16' Diaphone  
 8' Tibia  
 8' String Celeste

**ACCOMPANIMENT**

- 8' English Horn  
 8' Brass Trumpet  
 8' Tuba  
 8' Dia. Diapason  
 8' Horn Diapason  
 8' Tibia  
 8' Oboe Horn  
 8' Brass Sax  
 8' Clarinet  
 8' Krumet  
 8' Kinura  
 8' Flute  
 8' Viol d'Orchestra  
 8' Salicional  
 8' Quintadena  
 8' Vox Humana  
 4' Piccolo  
 4' Horn Diapason  
 4' Flute  
 4' Viol d'Orch  
 4' Salicet  
 4' Gambette  
 2½' Twelfth  
 2' Piccolo  
 2½' Tibia Twelfth  
 2' Tibia Piccolo  
 Harp  
 Tambourine  
 Castanets  
 Chinese Block  
 Snare Drum  
 Tom Tom  
 Trap Sw. 1st or 2nd T

**GREAT:**

- 16' Trumpet—TC  
 16' Tuba  
 16' Tibia—TC  
 16' Bourdon  
 16' Viol—TC  
 16' Vox Humana—TC  
 8' English Horn  
 8' Trumpet  
 8' Dia. Diapason  
 8' Horn Diapason  
 8' Tibia  
 8' Oboe Horn  
 8' Brass Sax  
 8' Clarinet

- 8' Krumet  
 8' Kinura  
 8' Flute  
 8' Viol d'Orch  
 8' Gamba  
 8' Quintadena  
 8' Vox Humana  
 4' Brass Trumpet  
 4' Clarion  
 4' Octave  
 4' Horn Diapason  
 4' Piccolo  
 4' Flute  
 4' Viol  
 4' Salicet  
 4' Gambette  
 4' Vox Humana  
 2½' Twelfth  
 2' Piccolo  
 2' Fifteenth  
 1½' Tierce  
 5½' Tibia  
 2½' Tibia Twelfth  
 2' Tibia Piccolo  
 1½' Tibia Tierce  
 Chimes  
 Harp  
 Marimba  
 Tuned Sleigh Bells  
 Xylophone  
 Glockenspiel

**SOLO:**

- 16' Tuba  
 16' Diaphone  
 16' Tibia—TC  
 8' English Horn  
 8' Brass Trumpet  
 8' Tuba  
 8' Dia. Diapason  
 8' Tibia  
 8' Oboe Horn  
 8' Brass Sax  
 8' Clarinet  
 8' Krumet  
 8' Flute  
 8' Viol d'Orch  
 8' Salicional  
 8' Gamba  
 8' Quintadena  
 4' Clarion  
 4' Octave  
 4' Piccolo  
 4' Gambette  
 4' Salicet  
 2½' Tibia Twelfth  
 2' Tibia Piccolo  
 1½' Tibia Tierce  
 Harp  
 Chimes  
 Xylophone  
 Glockenspiel

**BACK RAIL (2 rows stops)**

- Top Row—left to right  
 ACC: Second T.  
 8' Solo to Acc.  
 8' Clarinet  
 8' Dia. Diapason  
 Chimes  
 Xylophone

**GREAT: Second Touch**

- 4' Acc. to Great  
 16' Tuba  
 8' Clarinet

**CELESTE:**

- (ex) Solo Tibia  
 Viol Celeste  
 Mandolin

**VIBRAHARP:**

- 8' Accomp.  
 8' Great  
 16' Solo  
 8' Solo  
 4' Solo

**PIANO:**

- 8' Pedal Piano  
 16' Acc. Piano  
 8' Acc. Piano  
 4' Acc. Piano

**BACK RAIL, BOTTOM ROW:**

- PEDAL COUPLERS:**  
 8' Great to Pedal

**ACC. COUPLERS:**

- 16' Solo to Acc.  
 8' Solo to Acc.

**GREAT COUPLERS:**

- 16' Great to Great  
 4' Great to Great  
 16' Solo to Great  
 8' Solo to Great  
 4' Solo to Great  
 2' Solo to Great

**SOLO COUPLERS:**

- 16' Solo to Solo  
 4' Solo to Solo  
 8' Acc. to Solo  
 4' Acc. to Solo  
 16' Great to Solo  
 8' Great to Solo  
 4' Great to Solo

**TREMULANTS:**

- Solo  
 Tuba  
 Main  
 Tibia  
 Post Horn  
 Vox Humana

**TOGGLE SWITCHES:**

- Vibraharp  
 Percussion  
 Left  
 Tuba  
 (These last three put all the shutters on the "general swell" pedal)

**TOE PISTONS:**

- 6 combination buttons on left side of swell pedals  
 1 General Cancel  
 4 Effect Toe Pistons mounted above the 6 combination Pistons on the left.  
 Steamboat Whistle  
 Fire Gong  
 Surf  
 Horses Hoofs

**KEY CHEEK BUTTON**

- Bird Whistle  
 Maid's Bell  
 Auto Horn

All Stops on Combination. 10 Combination Pistons on each manual.  
 6 General Pistons on left end of accompaniment manual.