

TOURING BRITISH THEATRE ORGANS

By Lloyd E. Klos
(From Information Supplied by
Daniel O. Schultz)

When it comes to the mechanics of restoring and maintaining a theater organ, there is no one in the Rochester area more capable of doing so than Daniel O. Schultz. This young man of 34 years, has been the "Doctor of Wurlitzers" since the 1950's when he restored two of the instruments in his home locale in Florida. Then, coming to Rochester in May 1960, he undertook the restoration of the 4M 21R Opus 1951 Wurlitzer in the RKC Palace Theater, with the assistance of Jess G Littlefield and the writer. The organ is used often for concerts for theater organ lovers in this area, and is one of the organs featured at the Buffalo Annual Meeting.

Schultz, then an electronics engineer for General Dynamics/Electronics, after a year of preparatory training and work in Rochester, departed in September 1961 for duty in Germany with his firm. With his wife, Oline, and three young sons, Stephen, Rickey and Michael, Danny spent 14 months overseas. Although he put in a busy 12-hour day, weekends afforded the family opportunities for trips about the countryside to inspect and record church organs, and to meet organists.

In October 1962, his work finished, Danny began his trip home via England. He desired to see some of the famous organs which have been publicized in the various periodicals devoted to theater organ lore. The visit also afforded him an excellent opportunity to meet some of the English Theater Organ enthusiasts with whom he had been corresponding. Their schedule permitted a rather fast tour, as a week's time was all they could spare before leaving for America.



Blackpool Tower, England.

Fall 1964



The Stanley Whittington 3/10 Compton, Silbey, England. From left: Wilf Smith, Stanley Whittington, and the local Constable who dropped in to take a break. Three boys in front are the Schultz brothers.

Arriving in London, they looked up Eric Offer, who is the treasurer of the Cinema Organ Society, and its publication officer, Herbert Quaddy. "They were most gracious hosts", says Danny. They helped his family get located in a hotel, and then arranged some visits whereby they were to hear some organs.

First, they went to the Odeon Leicester Square Theater, where Harold Shaw was playing the 5-Manual Compton. It is reportedly the largest theater organ in a theater in the British Isles. Shaw did not rise from the pit, but began his stint by playing into the last few bars of music coming from the movie, the big, deep pedal notes enveloping the audience. The organlude served as a bridge into the newsreel, the whole period lasting about two minutes. It was disappointing to Danny that he was unable to see the console.

Next day, Danny and his family were taken over to the Rawle "Wurlitzer Lodge" where they saw an excellently installed and maintained 3M 8R Wurlitzer. Mr. Rawle's son, Len, expertly demonstrated and played the organ—a most enjoyable experience. Stored in the Rawle's garage was a 4M 20R Wurlitzer from the Empire Theater, Leicester Square, which will eventually be installed in a home for Len.

Leaving London, the Schultz family headed north, on the look-out for a Wurlitzer player unit. For a long time, Danny has harbored a burning determination that once he returns to the states, he would acquire a 3M Wurlitzer, and build a new home to house it. (Danny now owns a 3M Wurlitzer) A player attachment is one of the accouterments he wants for the organ. He learned that there was a mansion, named Stanford

Hall, near Loughborough in Leicester County which has an organ with player. The organ, a 2M 5R Wurlitzer with tibia, is well-maintained. Looking over the collection of player rolls, he found several done by the late Jesse Crawford, and surprise of surprises, some done by Rochester's Tom Grierson! To Danny's chagrin, he was unsuccessful in his attempt to purchase the unit. This player, by the way, is supposed to be the only Wurlitzer in England. The organ is located in a small, well-equipped theater on this estate, and is occasionally used for local affairs such as plays and stage productions.

While talking with the electrician and manager of the estate, Danny learned that the man responsible for the maintenance of the organ lived below Loughborough in a little town of Silbey, and had moved an organ into his home also. His name is Stanley Whittington, and upon Danny's contacting him, was invited to stay overnight in the area, and visit him. This, they did, and were delighted to see and hear a 3M 10R Compton installed in a shop adjoining his house. Mr. Whittington is a fine organist, plays weekends for a club, and is in the finishing stages of getting his organ installed. It is a unique project in that it is located on the second floor, and speaks through a tone opening in the flooring into the listening & playing area on the first floor. It was in good condition, and Danny says that "it was a pleasure to hear Mr. Whittington rattle off some American and British tunes on it."

While enjoying Mr. Whittington's playing, there came a knock at the door, and in walked the local constable. *At

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Chicago in '65

first, I thought perhaps he was responding to a complaint, but he was only stopping by for a break to warm himself and enjoy some organ music." This Compton contains an unusual stop, a set of hooded fanfare trumpet which play on one octave, and sound a chord for each key pressed. They are loud!

(Recently, Danny received a letter from Stan Whittington in which he says that he has practically finished the installation. Mrs. Whittington has curtains at the windows and "the place is looking quite smart." Because of the long spell of extremely cold weather, his calculations on officially opening the organ have been upset. He has had a rugged job to keep the temperature in the chambers as required. The tuning, as a result, has gone haywire. "The good thing about the Compton is that practically all the pipework is metal, and therefore, all the pipes have 'dropped the same' as regards to pitch. As the result of several musical evenings, Mr. Whittington has a waiting list of prospective viewers.)

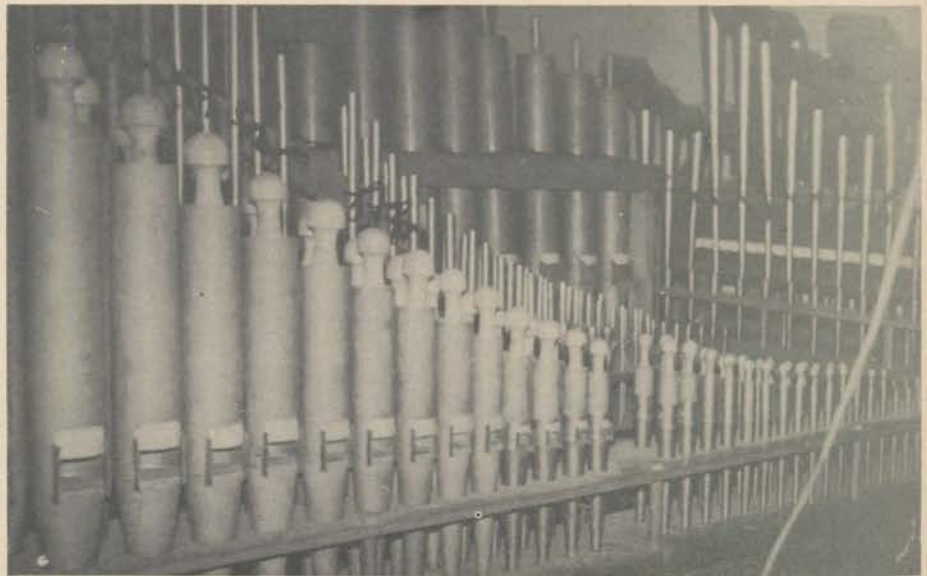
Next morning, the Schultz's were on their way to Lancaster. This is where Derrick Marsh, one of the leading theater recording technicians of England resides. Arrangements were made concerning issuance of a disc of theater organ music, featuring Tom Grierson. The record titled TOM GRIERSON PLAYS PALACE FAVORITES features Tom Grierson at the Rochester Palace 4/21 Wurlitzer. Copies are still available from Danny Schultz, Box 53, Fishers, New York 14453.

From there, the organ enthusiasts headed for England's playground--Blackpool. No trip to England is complete without going to the Tower Ballroom. "I must say that Blackpool is one big Coney Island, it is definitely a resort town, and very brilliantly lighted." They arrived in time for the famous illumination, with streets aglow, streetcars having strings of lights arranged as fishboats etc. It was the Schultz's misfortune that the one and only Reginald Dixon was not playing that night. However, they were treated by an equally fine artist, Watson Holmes, playing the 3M 13R Tower Ballroom Wurlitzer. The people thoroughly enjoyed themselves, listening to the music and dancing. "Why something like this wouldn't go over in America is a mystery to me", says Danny. Young and old alike were dancing to waltzes, rock 'n roll, etc, all to the Mighty Wurlitzer.

After Watson's performance, the Schultz family left for the Empress Ballroom, where Horace Finch was the organist. He likewise plays for dancing on a 3M Wurlitzer which has been in constant use for many years like its counterpart in the Tower, though not as widely publicized. According to Danny, the two organs sounded quite different, the Empress instrument is much mellower, and has "the most tremendous pedal I have ever heard--it simply envelops you, practically lifts you off



The Tower Ballroom. Watson Holmes at the Wurlitzer.



View of Metal Compton Tibias, Stanley Whittington's Compton. At far right of Tibias is unique Fanfare Trumpet that plays in chords as one key is depressed. Danny says, "Boy, is it loud."

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your seat." They spent about 30 minutes in the Empress, and the evening drew to a close.

The next day, the visitors drove to Carlisle, located near the Scottish border, to visit the cathedral where Rochester's Tom Grierson was reared, and learned his organ technique. Happily, Dr. Wadely was present, the same Dr. Wadely who was Tom's teacher. This man, obviously in his 80's, is still quite active, examines for the Royal College of Organists, and teaches everyday. "A very wonderful person with whom to talk; it was one of the highlights of our trip," Danny had the Doctor say a few words to Tom on tape, and when they returned to America, played it for him.

From Carlisle, the Schultz family headed toward Newcastle, riding the road which parallels the old Roman wall. They stopped at Durham Cathedral to hear its organ. The maintenance team was tuning it, and invited the family to visit their employers, the Walker Organ Works. Time prevented acceptance of this invitation. The Durham organ was built by Willis, one of the great British organ builders. The voices are richly beautiful, according to Danny. There were 3 or 4 diapasons for each manual, a tuba mirabilis on 25" wind pressure, 32' open diapasons, 32' bombards—a simply wonderful organ.

From there, they stopped at York Cathedral, then headed back to London. The end of the week had come, and they were invited to a concert on Oct. 28 at Wurlitzer Lodge to hear such British greats as Vic Hammett, George Blackmore, Robin Richmond, and Felton Rappley. "I must say, the hospitality of the British Theater Organ group, the

fellowship, and the artistry which were shown there were indeed something which will long be remembered by us." Naturally, there were the tea and cakes, served by Mrs. Rawle and her helpers to top off the British hospitality.

"The Rawle Wurlitzer is a very uniquely-installed instrument, and it sounds nearest to any theater sound of any home installation I have ever heard", says Danny. This is without any electronic reverberation or trick sounds to accomplish it. The chamber is of concrete, 14 inches thick. All the swell shades which were in the theater are installed in one wall of the chamber. The sound speaks into a small flue about 1½ feet deep. The tone finally comes through an aperture 2' x 3' above the console. The organ is very well balanced, the highs coming out clear and crisp, and the pedal notes coming out booming. Yet, one can engage in conversation without shouting. The excellent blending of voices is a great asset, and this feature caused Danny to make some radical changes in the plans of his own installation.

On October 29, the family left for Southampton, the embarkation port for the SS America to the good old United States.

Although their British tour was limited as to their time available for this venture, they were able to sample the famed British hospitality, which they say was "tremendous." The British enthusiasts couldn't do enough for their guests. The welcome mat is always out to any theater organ lover, no matter who he may be.

What is most important to Danny Schultz is that he was able to glean new ideas for his proposed home installation.

in the audience. The crowd laughed heartily, sang gustily and seemed to enjoy every minute of their audience participation for the Sing-along.

Mr. Nolan is a Judy Garland fan and he doesn't let his listeners forget it for he always includes Garland numbers in his programs. This organ concert was no exception for he closed with several tunes she has made famous (tunes that he hadn't used in previous programs) — "Born In A Trunk," "The Man That Got Away," etc. During the Garland medley the white and gold console was spotlighted from the ceiling and balcony with all blue lighting that was extremely effective.

Before he played his closing, Nolan thanked the audience for their interest, attendance, and support. He then called his stage manager to come from backstage to take a bow and the gentleman walked out into the spotlight dressed in a Beatle outfit. After that bit of comic relief, Nolan played Judy Garland's famous closing number "I Will Be Back." The audience interpreted that as a promise of a future organ program. He stepped from the console and stood next to the Page accepting the applause as the lift slowly descended into the organ pit. Nolan and his crew must have spent many hours working on the lighting effects for this program which made it more than an organ program and they are certainly to be commended for it.

Theatre Organ fans of Fort Wayne and the Tri-State area look forward to that next in the series of Nolan sponsored programs. We can imagine that it will be bigger, but it is difficult to consider it could be better.

VESTAL REISSUES WURLITZER CATALOGUE

Of interest to both the theatre buff and the organ buff is a Vestal Press reissue of a Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra catalog, originally printed in about 1916, called "The World's Greatest Achievement In Music for Theatres." Of sixty pages, and including over thirty photos of Theatres (both interiors and exteriors), it is a priceless adjunct to the Wurlitzer Factory Shipping List (published in Theatre Organ earlier).

For example, we discovered that the Style 6 Wurlitzer had a console almost identical to the rare Style 35 models (3 manuals with a 37 note Solo). We find a photo of the original 3 manual instrument in the Paramount Theatre, Seattle; the fantastic Ocean Grove Auditorium Wurlitzer in New Jersey; the Elks Lodge in New York. But we won't give any more secrets away — get a copy and see for yourself. (Ad elsewhere in this issue.)



Seated at console of Wurlitzer in the Rawle home, London left to right are Robin Richmond and George Blackmore. Standing in front of console - Vic Hammett. Behind console is owner Len Rawle. Danny Schultz seated in front of window.

—Photo by John D. Sharp

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