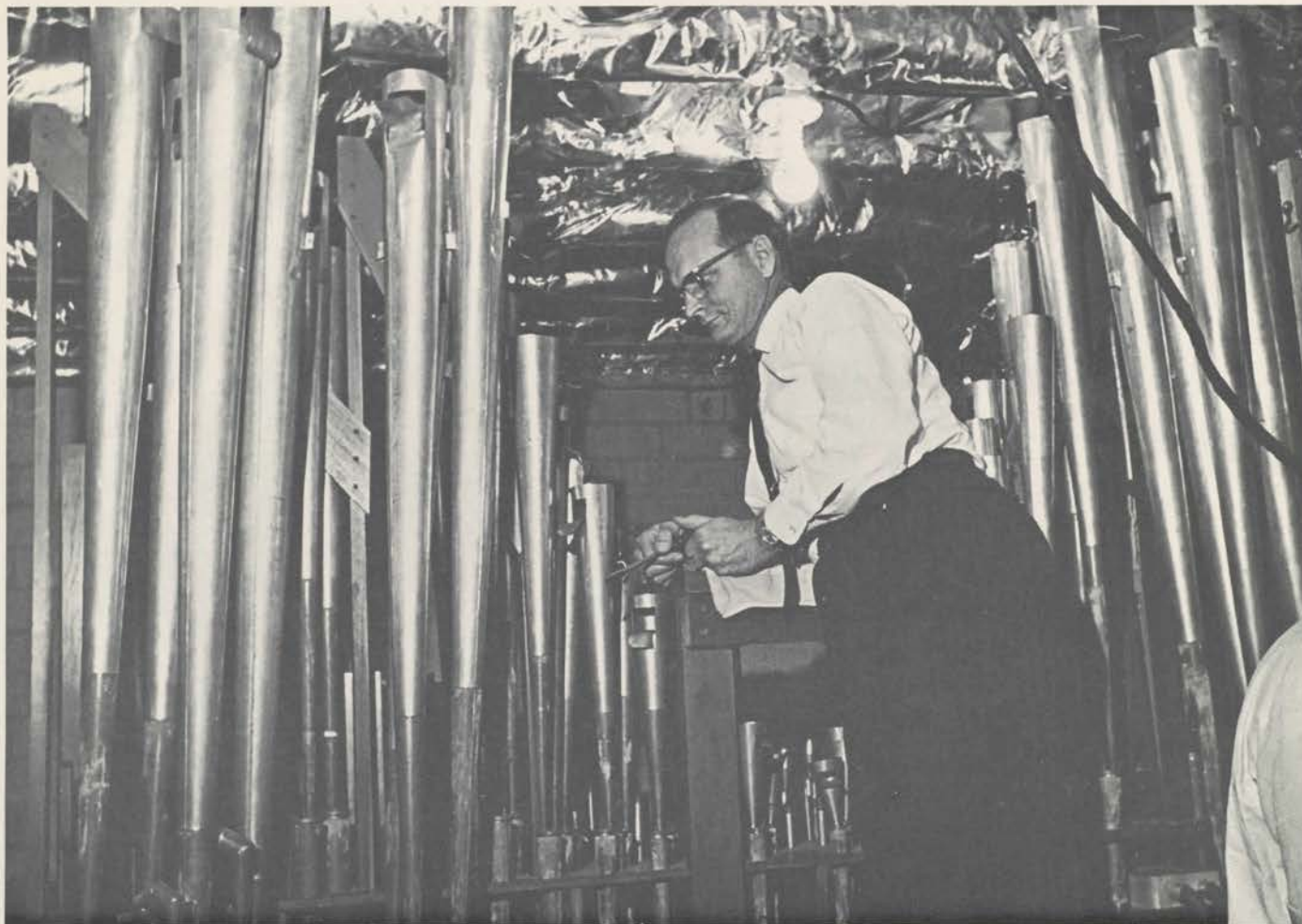


# THEATRE PIPE ORGANS



Frank Netherland of Stuart, Va., at the Abernethy Console.

—Photo by Jim Sparks

## DOCTOR ABERNETHY ACQUIRES OPUS 1371

By Don Hall

For years Dr. Paul Abernethy has been thinking about the sound of the mighty theatre pipe organs that used to hold movie audiences spellbound with their varied sounds and wondered if he would ever hear those sounds again.

Well, thanks to HiFi sound, ATOE, and many other things, the doctor found that the theatre pipe organ was not completely lost, and following the lead of another Piedmont Chapter (ATOE), he started looking for his own pipe organ. George Anthony struck pay dirt first by locating a Robert Morton in the Paramount Theatre, Lynchburg, Virginia, which he now owns.

The first nibble came last spring when word reached Burlington, that the First Baptist Church in New Bern, North Carolina wanted to get rid of its old Wurlitzer to replace it with a new electronic organ. That was all that Dr. Abernethy needed, he and five healthy friends piled into a rented truck



Dr. Paul Abernethy and friends.

—Photo by Jim Sparks

and spent most of the Easter week-end taking the organ out of the church.

The organ (Opus 1371, Model 105) was shipped from the factory 6/22/26,

and was originally installed in the Athens Showshop, New Bern, North

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## ABERNATHY OPUS 1371

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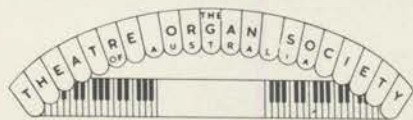
Carolina in November 1926. It was moved to the First Baptist Church four years later after the advent of talking pictures did away with the use of organs in theatres. It is a five rank organ with Flute, Tibia, Trumpet, Vox Humana, and Salicional, with all the percussion missing. Dr. Abernethy has been able to acquire a set of percussions from a Catholic Church in a nearby town that has another theatre organ in storage awaiting installation. The percussions include a Xylophone, Orchestra Bells, Harp, and Chimes, plus a collection of traps including a Bass Drum, Snare Drum, Tom-Tom, Chinese Block, Tambourine, Castanets and Cymbals.

The re-installation job took nearly 9 months to complete using the expert services of E. C. White, an organ technician from Greensboro, plus the amateurish but enthusiastic help of friends with plenty of time to kill. "Considering the age of the organ, it was in real good shape. We spent most of our time just hooking it up and making small repairs on the electrical and air systems", said Abernethy.

When Abernethy built his new home on the outskirts of Burlington, he had made provisions for making his dreams come true, by having the architect design a special room in the basement to hold his prospective 'beast'. This has certainly paid off as there was no major remodeling necessary to install his Mighty Wurlitzer.



Dr. Abernethy 'doctors' the relay and switch stack. —Photo by Jim Sparks



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## CENTER THEATRE MORTON

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of them. Leaks in the console were cured and heavy sound absorbers were constructed about the tremulant units. As a result, superfluous noise was eliminated.

Later Hall and Ross cured a rather temperamental second touch and succeeded in rerigging the crash cymbal and tympani which for some reason had never been attached when the instrument was moved to the Center Theater.

Don Hall presented a second concert in August of 1963 and a pre-Christmas concert by guest artist Steve Brown, organist from the Tennessee Theater in Knoxville, completed the 1963 season.

During this past summer, work was once again started on the Morton, this time to take the squeaks out of the Kinura. This stop was of such overpowering

brilliance that it dominated the entire organ, even when played full. The Kinura was winded so that it received air from the same chest which supplied air to the Tibia. The very deep Tibia tremulant would modulate the air' so much that the Kinura would nearly stop functioning with the trem on. It was decided to reroute the air line to the Kinura chest so that it would get air from the lower pressure and more lightly modulated Vox reservoir.

For this first venture in the craft of metal working, Hall was joined by Jim Sparks, a Durham resident whose photographs accompany this article. The old air line was taken loose and the original supply hole covered. Then the line was cut, bent, and refitted to the Vox reservoir. After this work was completed the Kinura was returned to its new wind pressure and now makes a useful contribution to the sound of the Wonder Morton. Hall said, 'It's like



The organ technicians work over one of the pneumatics inside the console.

—Photo by Jim Sparks



Hall tries the Morton to see how the morning's work went while Ross lends his critical ear.

—Photo by Jim Sparks