

# THE PARAMOUNT WURLITZER MOVES WEST

(From a Wurlitzer  
News Release)

When workmen loaded the Paramount Theatre's Mighty Wurlitzer console-keyboard aboard a California-bound truck recently, it marked the demise of a Broadway landmark - and the ending of an era.

Logistics involved in dismantling the Mighty Wurlitzer piece by piece were enormous. In fact, Louis Ferrara, Brooklyn contractor in charge of the move, specified 60 to 90 days merely to get the organ taken apart and out of the Paramount.

Ferrara's first job was with Wurlitzer in November, 1926 -- helping to install the magnificent new pipe organ. It took four weeks, but an additional year was necessary before it was fully tuned and in perfect operating condition.

In the inaugural program, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Crawford played the twin consoles on stage.

Although most people think of the keyboard-console as *the organ*, it is actually a small percentage. Consider behind the scenes:

- On each side of the Paramount's proscenium arch, eight floors of chambers are filled with pipes, instruments, wires and superstructure.

- Thirty-eight ranks of pipes in the chambers.

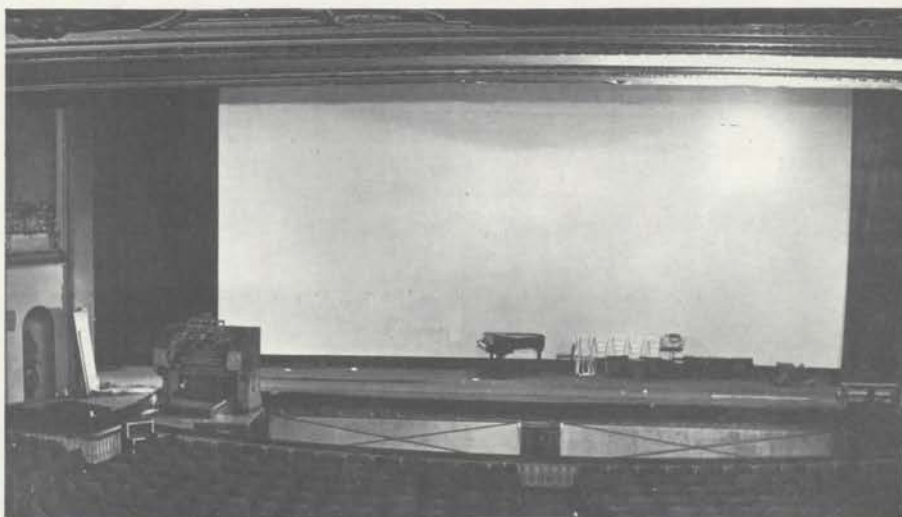
- Really a programmed orchestra, the organ contains within its workings two harp marimbas, three xylophones, two chrysoglotts, two sets of chimes (one a cathedral chime set), a grand piano capable of a mandolin effect, tuned tympani with a range of more than an octave, drums, cymbals, castanets, and a tiny little instrument that makes the sound of a canary.



Donald V. N. Conover, organ tuner and technician, checks the adjustment of the action of one of the two pianos that could be played from the Mighty Wurlitzer console. The other piano was a grand. Both are in good condition to this day.



Miss Connie Jason of the Wurlitzer public relations staff, New York, caresses keys on the console of the Paramount Mighty Wurlitzer prior to its removal.



View of the Mighty Wurlitzer console as it rolls from the Paramount pit for the last time. At one time there were two consoles of this size and two portable consoles. Parts from the remaining consoles have long since been incorporated into this one, which is in prime working condition.



The lobby of the Paramount serves as the final departure point for parts of the Mighty Wurlitzer. Square items in foreground are bellows for the instrument. To the left of the snack stand are some of the many ranks of pipes. The piano mechanism is immediately in front of the snack bar.

- It also contains a set of rare brass trumpets in the style perfected by Rudolph Wurlitzer about 1908.

- Below stage are two 50 horsepower motors and two blowers -- one each for normal use and a standby for emergency. Today's average church organ needs only a 3 to 5 horsepower motor.

- The operation of the organ itself might be likened to a forerunner of a modern computer. The musician sets the electrical apparatus in motion by adjusting various stops and playing the keys. Then, in a basement relay room filled with a myriad of relays, switches, and wires, combinations of instruments and pipes are selected and mechanically activated.

- The organ originally had twin consoles -- one on each side of the orchestra pit that could be lowered out of sight or raised to stage height. In addition, there was the unusual feature of two portable consoles that could be set up on stage. One console and the two portables have long since disappeared -- used as parts for the one remaining console.

- When built in the middle 1920s, the organ cost \$100.00. If jigs and fixtures were available, the organ would cost \$350,000 to build and to install today.

At the time of its installation, the Paramount Mighty Wurlitzer was hailed as the world's largest and best organ. Today, some are a little larger, but none is as versatile. Fanny R. Wurlitzer, board chairman of The Wurlitzer Company, says the massive Paramount organ was his company's finest installation.

In fact, through intercession of Wurlitzer, the Paramount organ will live on. It is being shipped (in three huge truck-trailers) in Los Angeles for installation in the Belmont Theatre and will become the property of a group of American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts and will be available for concerts.

### FAREWELL CONCERT FOR SPRINGFIELD ORPHEUM

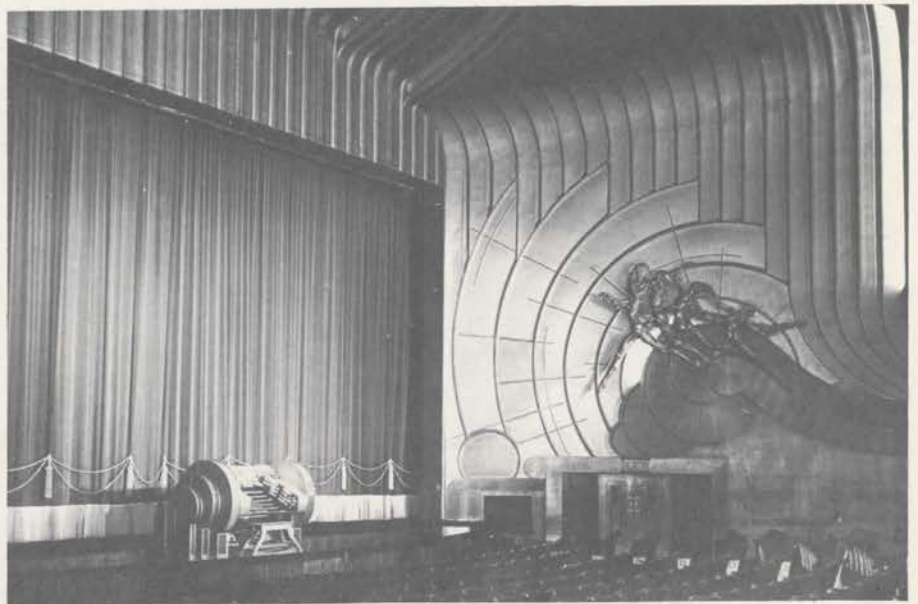
Springfield, Illinois -- The State's largest theater outside of Chicago has been sentenced to the rubble heap starting July 1. A number of local theatre buffs, unwilling to let the passing of an old friend go unmarked, have scheduled a gala farewell performance for the evening of June 1. The main attraction will be Wendell Kennedy at the Orpheum's 3-11 Barton organ. Kennedy will score the 1926 silent Valentino starrer, "Son of the Sheik" with Vilma Banky as the love interest, also a Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle two reeler. An hour of pro vaudeville acts will round out the bill.

The 2884 seat theatre must go to make way for a bank parking lot. The bank may donate the Barton to the city of Springfield.

- Dave Junchen



Workmen wrap cable prior to loading the Paramount Mighty Wurlitzer console for its trip to the West Coast.



Interior of the ODEON THEATRE, Leicester Square, London, England showing console in 'up' position.