

## "THE BRAZEN HUSSY"

Saga of Wurlitzer Opus #878 - 3/8

"The evening's program was opened by a delightful concert on the new Hope-Jones orchestral organ by Miss Grace Brown, who was elevated from the pit to the stage level by the electric elevator which is one of the unique features of the modern Craterian equipment. Miss Brown, with her usual artistry, brought out the melodic resources of this wonderful instrument with rare skill and feeling, responding to an encore and was the recipient of floral tributes from admiring friends."

(Medford, Oregon) Mail Tribune,  
October 21, 1924.

Thus Wurlitzer Opus 878 began its career, installed in the new Craterian Theater which was built on the ashes of the old Chandler Theater, Medford, Oregon. Medford was a small town, maybe 8,000 residents in 1924, although it was the largest city in Southern Oregon. It is located geographically in the ideal location for the road companies of the 1920's to stop-over for a two or three day stand between the major engagements of Portland and San Francisco. This enabled the show to brush up on weak spots in the program, "shake scenery," and prepare for the major city opening. In view of this, theatres such as the Craterian had facilities more complete than were usually found in small town movie houses.

Miss Brown reigned at the console for several years. But the inevitable happened . . . sound pictures . . . and the organ slept. Well, almost slept. Sometimes it was played by fans, was maintained by organ repair man Minear, had a spurt of use after the war when Jerry Miller played for shows and Saturday kids entertainment. Then it quietly rested.

The eight-rank Wurlitzer remained asleep until 1962 when Bob Burke, who was looking for an organ, happened along.

Everyone interested in theatre organs knew about the Craterian, but let's let Bob tell us about it . . .

"I called on the manager while I was in the area and learned I could play the organ but that it was tied up in the lease and could not be sold. After I played it the first time, I told my wife that I had found THE ORGAN, but it could not be bought. Yet, as I discussed the dilemma with my Medford friend, Don Herried, he told me he thought that his attorney, Otto

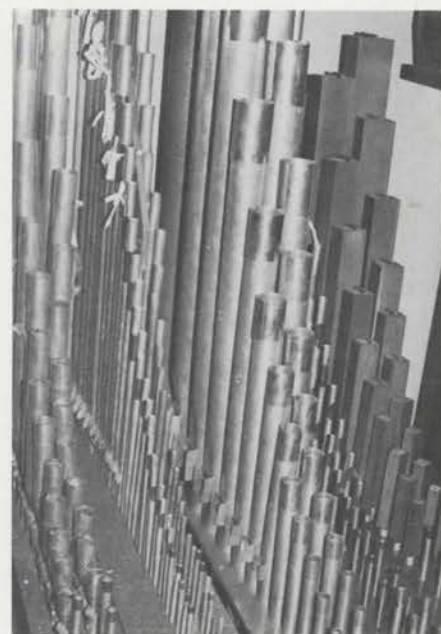


"The Brazen Hussy," as shown in the Robert Burke home in Portland.

Frohmayer owned an interest in the building. Suddenly, the light dawned on me and an inquiry of Otto Frohmayer revealed the organ was owned as a part of the building, that the lease was up, renovations were in prospect, the organ might even be covered over by acoustical material, and that an offer would be considered. Then my offer was accepted and I had a 3m/8r Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra.

"To inspect my prize! On the right side of the theatre, entrance to the loft through the storage room of a restaurant, borrow the stepladder, then squeeze through a trap, black as Calcutta, lit matches, burned fingers, gosh! fire hazards . . . found globe, Eureka! Like King Tut's Tomb — untouched. Back down . . . dragged the ladder to the other side, crawled through an unfinished passage behind the usherettes rest room, climb again . . . more matches. Eureka! Light! GREAT HEAVENS, WHAT HAVE I GOT INTO! What do you do with this thing? But he who rides a tiger cannot dismount. So, to arrange with the building contractor for removal. All arranged — chambers not to be covered, come down with my crew on February 22, 1963 (three weeks hence), and have three days to remove. Secured Ted Marks, Harry Becraft, Roy Moyer. Arrived Friday noon and plowed in. Borrowed a steel scaffold, brought in block and tackle, power tools . . . the works. Out came the small pipes, stored in small cartons. Disassembled shutters and passed through opening. Down came bass drum . . . dropped it . . . almost broke head . . . more pipes . . . air line . . . offset chests . . . then chimes. Then to get the glock off the stack along with the Xylophone, the toy counter, the

chimes and the crash cymbal. Lucky Moyers' back is strong. Hurry, hurry! Ever see so many screws? Or wire? Hurry, unsolder . . . nothing comes easy. Mark. Tag. Tie. Protect. Saturday more of the same until the solo was cleared. Then while the work was starting on the left (main), rent a 16 foot truck, park in the alley and start loading. Then back to taking out the main. Gosh, such big stuff! Pretty, like-new Chrysoglott. What a load of relay. Almost pulled my arms off with the block and tackle. Lucky Harry Becraft grabbed on the rope. Sweet sleep again. Get the cable loose, crawl through the air-conditioning duct. Pull cable. Ouch! Cut my hands on the relay spreader. Forgot the blower. Too heavy to drag up the



Pipe work of the Burke Wurlitzer organ





Mrs. Burke points to the grillwork in living room floor, where the organ speaks from the basement chamber.



Robert Burke is shown in the immaculate chamber of his Wurlitzer, truly one of the most meticulous installations we have ever seen.

stairs. The truck was full as were the service cars. SOS to Mayflower to lift the console out of the pit . . . pick up relay and blower, too. Sunday night — we're all in — the Organ's all out.

#### Chapter II — The Renovation

"Opus 878 was stowed away over at my old family home only occupied by an elderly uncle. The console was placed in the living room. The chests and pipes were put in the basement, relay and blower in the garage. Let it rest awaiting installation? Couldn't keep my hands off it! I couldn't install it in my present house . . . no room. Would work it over while looking for another home and then install it. First the pedal board. Such dirt and crud to remove, new maple and then recap the blacks. Varnish remover and new wires in contacts. Piece by piece I'd drag it home and work it over. Bob Rickett inspected the chests. Ultimatum! Re-leather the secondaries. My wife, Laura, was drafted to become an organ expert. So together we cut, fit, glued, worked, gossiped, griped, cut, fit, and glued. It only took three weeks to do all eight ranks.

Then the Console. Varnish remover, replat metals, sand, stain, finish, rub, re-leather, check circuits, and reassemble. Now to check the relay — unwrap main cable so switch stack could be carried alongside. Whew! A million wire — two broke and were lost in the mess. Cable lengthened and rewrapped and the switches cleaned. Work neared completion. Everything looked good . . . WAIT! . . . The Blower. Rushed around and finally swapped for a 3-HP single-phase motor and got Harry Bercraft to lengthen the shaft 8". My Stars! We're ready to install and it's

only September.

#### Chapter III — The Installation

But where? Busy again really house hunting this time. Realtors thought we were cuckoo, always measuring, always objecting; but finally the right house came along. It was a stately English Tudor with large rooms and a deep basement. I could see the installation in my mind. The console in the living room beside the leaded picture window, a grill in the floor alongside, a row of shutters across the party room directly underneath, and the works behind the shutters . . . So, we bought the house.

Then the planning started all over again. First move in the organ. I had a mover bring it over and met the loads with a crew to help. But first we had to cut the floor with an opening 2 1/2 x 8 feet. We unloaded into the living room, then dropped each unit into the basement with ropes using four to six men on all the larger pieces. Just stowed in the party room (16 x 27). Next we moved in the household goods and got settled — fix this and that, repaint . . . you know the job if you ever moved. Finally we started to install the organ . . . already December 1. I've forgotten. Was there a Christmas in 1963? I was so busy I missed the season. To make sure things fit, I cut out scale replicas of all the chests and parts and stuck them to an outline. Moved back and forth a hundred times, conferred with other organ fans (especially Bob Rickett), then got busy. On problems, I'd call Bob Rickett or Dennis Hedburg. Wife Laura or Son Roger held pieces and I soldered, and soldered, and cut tin, and soldered. It seemed like the electrical end went fast after the tin work. Finally I put out the

word that I was almost ready to go.

"EASTER SUNDAY. An unexpected trio appeared at the door: Bob Rickett, Andy Crow and Dennis Hedburg. With a smile and a 'Let's make her play,' they dived into the basement, sorted and stuffed pipes while Dennis set pressures and I worked on the wiring to the blower control. By Nine PM she played! I'll always remember Easter, 1964. Well, by the time she was adjusted, regulated and the dead notes fixed, she sang out real fine. Three shutters enclosed one end of the basement room and the fourth was stored in the open sound chamber with the unenclosed chrysglott. A lucky thought caused me to place it near the opening at an angle like a reflector. The sound came out twice as bright and clear. She sounded out like a Brazen Hussy . . . and the name stuck."

#### Chapter IV — The Additions

"After a year of playing I thought that a few additions would improve the timbre and tonal quality. A couple of strings would add a lot and another reed could help. Almost at once they were available. Doc Andriessen offered me parts from the Cargill Organ: VDO, VDO Celeste, and Clarinet with chests. So . . . back to work. Stop tabs from the upper rail to a trap rail. Remake the backboard above the keys. Then rearrange and rewire the stop tabs and rewire the relay. Nice little job. Only took three months to do and there were only 10,000 feet of wire and only 2,000 soldered connections. I'd had it! But the addition together with couplers, which were new, seemed to

*(Continued on page 22)*



## Closing Chord

*Cecil Chadwick, cinema organist, died July 20 at the age of 70 in Leeds, England, only three days after playing a concert on the 3-10 Wurlitzer in Buckingham Town Hall. As a former staff organist with Odeon theatres he was resident organist at the Leeds Odeon for several years. Chadwick made well over 500 organ broadcasts for the BBC. He was a polished player of "middle brow" music, reports the C.O.S. Newsletter.*

Archibald March, who specialized in voicing string pipes for many major builders, died at 70 on July 26, at his home in Alhambra, Calif., of cancer, thus ending a long and distinguished career of service to pipes. "Archie's"

autograph (or his father's) can be found on the "C" pipe of many a Morton Gamba, Salicional, VDO, VDO Celeste, String, Violin, Cello or Viola, indicating that he finished it back in the 1920s. He was born in England.

*Fulton Lewis Jr., news commentator, died in Washington D.C. on August 21. Known to millions as a vocal opponent of liberal elements in politics, few knew he was a theatre organ enthusiast. He had a 2-3 Robert Morton installed in his home which he had rescued from a Tampa, Florida, theatre. He loved to relax at the console and thus provided much musical enjoyment for family and friends. One of his first jobs was playing in a theatre, a position he admitted he got by convincing the auditioning manager that he was doing some impressive pedalling, although the pedals*

*(Continued on Page 30)*

## SYRACUSE WURLITZER SAVED

By Grant Whitcomb

Syracuse, New York.

About two years ago an organization calling themselves the Syracuse Theatre Organ Society was formed by a handful of local people interested in the preservation of both the instrument and its music. This was prompted to a great extent by the gradual demise of eighteen of these instruments which were originally in the Syracuse area in the early 1900's. As the years went by, time and vermin had taken their toll and by 1964 there were only two instruments left which had been worked on by Theatre Organ enthusiasts, one of which was a 4-Manual Wurlitzer in the Loew's State Theatre, and the other being a 3/11 located in the next block at R.K.O. Keith.

It was a considerable shock to enthusiasts both local and elsewhere in upstate New York when the Loew's State organ was quite suddenly purchased and moved to another area. This left only one instrument which was also possibly doomed by urban renewal which indicated demolition of the R.K.O. theatre in favor of a department store. To their everlasting credit, this small, local group resolved to save this instrument and preserve it in this area. Gaining the support of the local Chamber of Commerce, a new organization was formed, known as THE EMPIRE STATE THEATRE AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MUSEUM, INC. When the R.K.O. Keith finally goes next year, the completely restored 3/11 Wurlitzer will be reinstalled in the Harriet May Mills Building at the State Exposition Grounds just a few miles northwest of downtown Syracuse. Here, this fine instrument will become a major part of a special musical museum containing 600 seats and will be available for concerts and other functions.

Of course all of this activity requires money, and the major portion of the fund-raising drive took place on this date with the presentation of a special program at R.K.O. Keith entitled *A Glimpse of the Past*. In anticipation of what turned out to be a truly magnificent program, the theatre was completely sold out on a reserved seat basis at \$2.00 per seat. It was really gratifying to notice the extent of support Syracuseans have lent to this project.

Not content with mere Theatre Organ concertizing, this ambitious program included a complete range of nostalgia with Silent Movies, Vaude-

*(Continued on Page 30)*

## JOHN LEDWON STOP LIST

*(Continued from page 20)*

### SOLO

16' English Post Horn  
16' Ophicleide  
16' Tibia Clausa  
16' Tibia Minor (Ten. C)  
16' Contra Viol  
8' Post Horn  
8' Tuba Horn  
8' Trumpet  
8' Diaphonic Diapason  
8' Tibia Clausa  
8' Tibia Minor  
8' String  
8' Clarinet  
8' Kinura  
8' Orchestral Oboe  
8' Musette  
8' Quintadena  
8' Vox Humana No. 1  
4' Clarion  
4' Octave  
4' Piccolo  
4' Piccolo  
4' Solo String  
2-2/3' Twelfth (Tibia Min.)  
2' Piccolo Tibia Min.)

16' Piano (Upright)  
8' Piano (Upright)  
4' Pinaw (Upright)  
Marimba (Re-it)  
Xylophone  
Glockenspiel  
Bells (Re-it)  
Cathedral Chimes  
Sub Octave  
Unison Off  
Octave  
Ancillary to Solo

### ANCILLARY

\*8' String Celeste, 3 ranks  
\*8' Melodia (from Harmonic Flute)  
8' Unda Maris  
\*8' Horn Diapason  
8' Vox Humana No. 2  
8' Oboe Horn  
4' String Celeste, 3 ranks  
4' Harmonic Flute  
4' Unda Maris  
4' Octave  
4' Vox Humana No. 2  
8' Piano (Steinway Grand)

### REMEULANTS

Main No. 1  
Main No. 2  
Solo  
Tuba  
Tibia Clausa  
Tibia Minor  
Vox Humana No. 1 (Solo)  
Ancillary  
Vox Humana No. 2 (Main)

### GENERAL CONTROLS

Piano Loud  
Mandolin  
Chime Dampers  
Vibraphone  
Percussion  
Main Solo Open

\* Indicates ranks in the Solo Chamber; the Percussions and effects which are in their own chamber.

Ancillary ranks are located in both Solo and Main Chambers.

## THE BRAZEN HUSSY

*(Continued from Page 11)*

double the fullness of the instrument.

"I'd hardly finished with the job when organ man De Autrey offered me a Wurlitzer piano from the Spokane Liberty Theatre and off I went again. I'll bet you can guess the procedure . . . varnish remover, fill and stain, lacquer, re-leather, fix. Say, how can you put a piano through a trap in the floor that is 1-1/2" narrower than the piano case? Easy . . . Just take the piano . . . and the action . . . and the case . . . apart! Then it only takes six men to lower it down with ropes and a simple job to re-assemble.

But there she is! Augmented to eleven ranks and a piano. She's beautiful and she belts out a song as clear as a Brazen Hussy."

*The Robert Burk Wurlitzer 3/11 has the following ranks:*

*Trumpet, Open Diapason, Tibia Clausa, Clarinet, Orchestral Oboe, Kinura, Viol D'Orchestra, VDO Celeste, Salicional, Flute, and Vox Humana.*



*Be sure and keep us notified of your change of address.*

*The post office does not forward Theatre Organ Bombarde.*

