

WICHITA'S MILLER THEATRE: A HAPPY EXCEPTION!



BOB FOLEY playing a Tribute to Raymond Shelley for the Mid-America ATOE.

During the last few years we have witnessed a steady decline in the number of "Golden Era" picture palaces which were designed and built in the 1920's to dazzle the public and to enhance the glamour of the silent photoplay. A happy exception to this trend is the Miller Theatre, Wichita, Kansas, which is well maintained and appears today much as it did when first opened May 1, 1922, at 8 o'clock in the evening. The gala occasion was described in the Wichita papers as "the greatest event in Wichita's history since the Armistice was signed." The opening attraction was Gloria Swanson and Rudolph Valentino in "Beyond the Rocks." Orchestra, pipe organ, entertainers, scenic and lighting effects completed the deluxe presentation.

The Miller Theatre pipe organ is a style 235 Hope-Jones Wurlitzer of three manuals and eleven unified ranks. The main organ of seven ranks is on the left side and contains the diaphonic diapason, concert flute, clarinet, orchestral oboe, viol d'orchestre, viol celeste and salicional. In addition, the chrysoglott and the relay are located in this chamber. The solo organ, consisting of harmonic tuba, vox humana, tibia clausa and kinura, plus percussions and traps, is on the right side.

The organ was #515 in the factory list and was shipped from North Tona-wanda, N. Y., February 14, 1922. Installation was by Walter Weaver of Kansas City. According to the *Wichita Beacon*, the Miller organ, when installed, was the "biggest in the Southwest," costing \$40,000.

The original 5-hp. blower was soon replaced with a 7½-hp. motor and the organ pressures were raised to 18" on the Tuba and 11⅞" for the main. At this time the console was moved from the center to the left side of the pit, its present location.

The organ was used 15 to 20 hours daily from 1922 until July, 1930. P. Hans Flath, Roxie Messersmith, Cecil Crawford, Roy Cato, Amy Law, Dave Lexy and Eddie Horton were featured organists in the early years. From 1933 until 1949 the instrument was heard in daily broadcasts over KFH and KANS by the late Raymond Shelley.

Mr. Shelley played the instrument for an A.G.O. "Milkman's Matinee" in June of 1961 as part of the activities of their regional convention for that year. Ray also did a series of FM broadcasts in the

fall of 1964 and spring of 1965, on the Miller instrument. From 1933 until his untimely passing in 1965, Mr. Shelley kept the organ in good condition, with the assistance of Dave Weaver, Bill Wilson, and Bob Foley.

Since Raymond Shelley's death the organ has been kept up under the guidance of Bob Foley with the cooperation of Mr. Roy Hill, manager of the Miller Theatre.

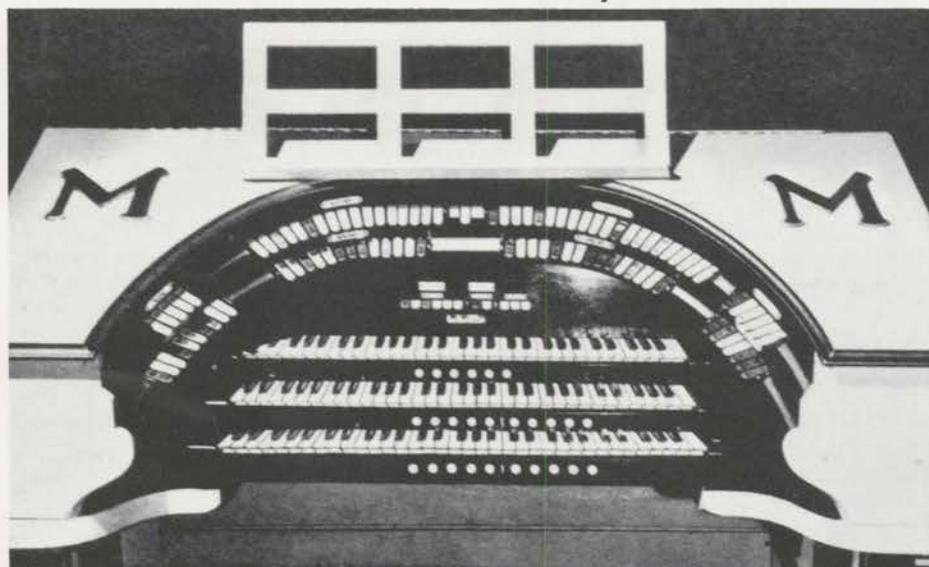
The Mid-America Chapter of ATOE presented Bob Foley in a "Tribute to Raymond Shelley" on April 29, 1967. This was the initial program for the newly formed chapter and gave the group a rousing start. It is our hope that the Mid-America Chapter will have the pleasure of hearing the Miller Wurlitzer often for many, many years to come.

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THE LATE RAYMOND SHELLEY in the midst of the Miller Theatre pipework. This montage picture was taken from the program given to A.G.O. members as they entered the Miller Theatre at midnight on June 20, 1961, to hear Mr. Shelley perform on the organ which he maintained for many years.



Console of the Miller Theatre's Style 235 Wurlitzer



SPECIFICATIONS OF OPUS 515, STYLE 235 WURLITZER, MILLER THEATRE, WICHITA, KANSAS

ACCOMPANIMENT

16' Bourdon
16' Contra Viol (TC)
8' Harmonic Tuba
8' Tibia Clausa
8' Clarinet
8' Orchestra Oboe
8' Kinura
8' Viol d'Orchestre
8' Viol Celeste
8' Salicional
8' Concert Flute
8' Vox Humana
4' Piccolo
4' Viol
4' Viol Celeste
4' Salicet
4' Flute
4' Vox Humana
2-2/3' Twelfth
2' Piccolo
16' Piano
8' Piano
4' Piano
Harp
Chrysoglott
Snare Drum
Tambourine
Castanets
Chinese Block

ACCOMP. SECOND TOUCH

8' Harmonic Tuba
8' Tibia Clausa
8' Clarinet
Sleigh Bells
Xylophone
Triangle

GREAT

16' Tuba Profunda
16' Diaphone
16' Bourdon
16' Contra Viol (TC)
8' Harmonic Tuba
8' Tibia Clausa
8' Clarinet
8' Orchestral Oboe
8' Kinura
8' Viol d'Orchestre
8' Viol Celeste
8' Salicional
8' Concert Flute
8' Vox Humana
4' Harmonic Clarion
4' Octave
4' Piccolo
4' Viol
4' Octave Celeste
4' Salicet
4' Flute
2-2/3' Twelfth
2' Fifteenth
2' Piccolo
1-3/5' Tierce
16' Piano (now 16' Vox)
8' Piano (now 5-1/3'
Tibia Quint)
4' Piano (now 2-2/3'
Tibia Twelfth)
Harp
Cathedral Chimes
Sleigh Bells
Xylophone
Glockenspiel
Bells
Chrysoglott

GREAT SECOND TOUCH

16' Tuba Profunda
8' Tibia Clausa
(now 16' Tuba)

SOLO

16' Tuba Profunda
8' Harmonic Tuba
8' Diaphonic Diapason
8' Tibia Clausa
8' Clarinet
8' Orchestral Oboe
8' Kinura
4' Harmonic Clarion
4' Piccolo
Cathedral Chimes
Xylophone
Glockenspiel
Orchestral Bells

PEDAL

16' Tuba Profunda
16' Diaphone
16' Bourdon
8' Harmonic Tuba
8' Diaphonic Diapason
8' Tibia Clausa
8' Clarinet
8' Cello (2 ranks)
8' Flute
4' Octave
16' Piano
Bass Drum
Kettle Drum
Crash Cymbal
Cymbal
Tremulants: Main, Solo, Vox Humana
Effects: Auto Horn, Fire Gong, Bird,
Horses' Hoofs, Steamboat Whistle,
Bell (toe pistons)
Sforzando (toe levers)

SAN FRANCISCO AVENUE THEATRE SET TO RE-OPEN

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 4.—It was announced today that the Avenue Theatre in this city would reopen with organ-oriented programming by the first of the year. The Avenue has been closed since October for reorganization. Mr. Vernon Gregory is now the sole operator of this over-1,000-seat Wurlitzer-equipped house.

The organ in the house is a three-manual, 11-rank Style 240 Wurlitzer

(opus 1773) which was installed during 1966 after earlier removal from the State Lake Theatre in Chicago. It was the second organ in the Avenue, having been installed in 1927 to replace an earlier instrument. It is also the second installation in the Avenue, the original Style D Wurlitzer having been removed many years ago. A full story on the Avenue installation will appear in a future issue.

Saved . . . !

DETROIT, MICHIGAN THEATRE RE-OPENS

Variety Magazine for October 18, 1967, carried a story regarding the re-birth of the 4,000 seat Michigan Theatre in Detroit, Michigan. Since the theatre was closed several months ago, many persons were concerned over the plans for developing another parking lot. Nicholas George, Detroit theatre owner, has announced plans for reopening the house in December.

The Theatre, built in 1926 at a reported cost of \$6,000,000, is equipped to handle every type of film presenta-



THE MICHIGAN AUDITORIUM as it appeared in 1927.
—Photo by The Detroit News

tion as well as full stage productions. Mayor Cavanaugh thanked Mr. George for "saving one the city's brightest jewels". Mr. George further announced that he intends to restore the Michigan to its former prominence as an entertainment center, as well as to its number one position as a movie theatre.

At the time of the 1967 ATOE Convention, members tried in vain to gain entrance to the closed theatre.

Mr. Fred Hermes secured the five manual Wurlitzer from the theatre several years ago.

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**DUES DUE!
DO!!**