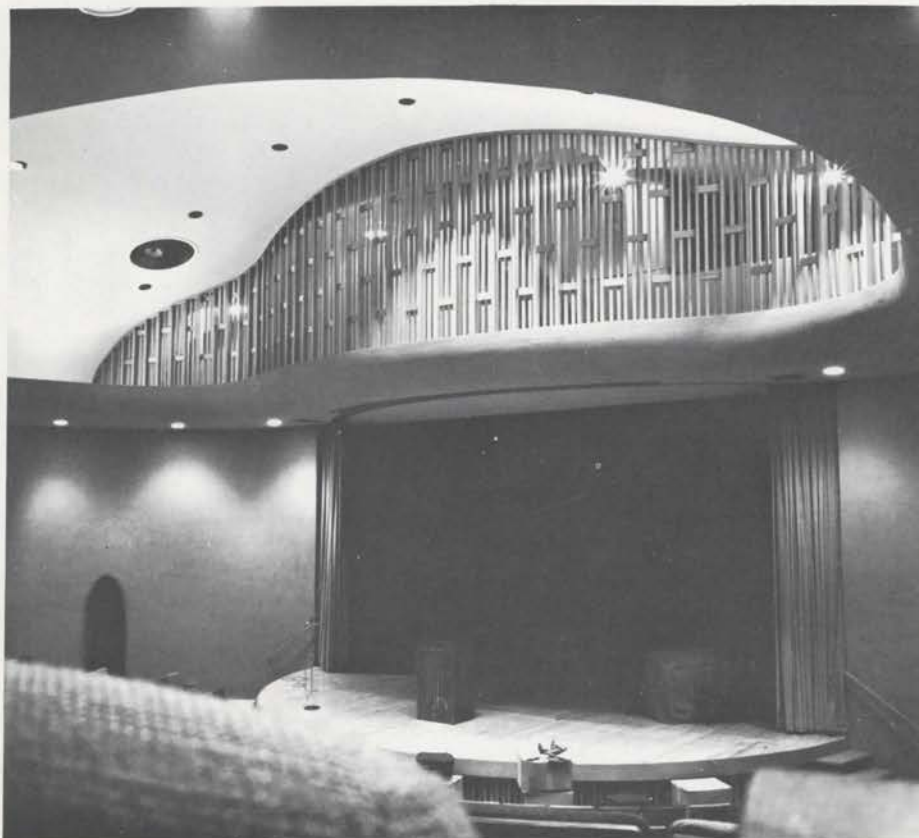


St. Louis Chapter Readying Theatre Organ



VIEW FROM STAGE, looking into new auditorium. Four-manual Kimball console will lift from basement to stage center, immediately behind the podium pictured. Blower and relays will be in basement; chambers above stage. Seats are in variegated colors.

VIEW FROM REAR of new Kirkwood Auditorium, Kirkwood, Mo. St. Louis Chapter will install theatre organ in chambers to be constructed behind grille shown above stage. Center section of grille is removable for installation requirements. (Photos by Francis Scheidegger.)



To the Saint Louis Chapter went the honor of presenting the first musical program in the auditorium of the Kirkwood, Mo., million-dollar Civic Center complex. The auditorium is the site selected for installation of a theatre organ by the chapter.

The building was dedicated on Saturday, October 7, with national, state and local dignitaries present. Then, promptly at 8 o'clock on Sunday evening, October 8, the chapter presented Stan Kann in a formal concert. Kann, a chapter member, is house organist at the St. Louis Fox and stars in a local TV show.

Super-showman Kann was at his best in running through a variety of popular and show tunes and light classics, highlighted by medleys from "Mame" and "Fiddler" and a sparkling Kann version of "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers." The pipe organ is not yet installed and probably will not be playing for at least another year, so the concert was played on a borrowed electric. Kann coaxed the most from the Thomas theatre organ. The large audience was generous in its expressions of appreciation of Kann's artistry.

As has been reported in these columns, the St. Louis Chapter will combine the best features of a 3-13 Wurlitzer originally in Loew's State Theatre in St. Louis and a 4-19 Kimball formerly in the St. Louis Theatre. The Kimball was given to the chapter by the St. Louis Symphony Society when it commenced renovation of the St. Louis Theatre into Powell Symphony Hall, which will become the new home of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Crews have worked four nights a week all during the past months on the Herculean task of completely re-leathering the huge Kimball console and relays which will be used on the Kirkwood project. The leather had rotted away in 30 years of silence. The end of this task is in sight with switch stacks already going back into the relays, to be followed by the hundreds of pneumatics upon which work is in an advanced stage.

The chapter has rented space in what was the lobby of the famous old Missouri Theatre and will commence other re-leathering, layout and a general refurbishing of ranks to be installed at Kirkwood. It is planned to assemble the instrument completely before moving it into the new auditorium.

Chapter members are looking forward to a winter of productive work on the Kirkwood project.

—Virgil Sederquist, St. Louis

POSTSCRIPT—N.Y.

It's interesting to note that the St. Louis Chapter's project parallels a similar installation in Binghamton, N. Y.—a theatre organ being accepted as a cultural asset and given refuge in a civic building where, until now, only "straight" organs were considered proper. And the installation of a Wurlitzer in a state-financed museum in Syracuse, N. Y., is very similar in ramification and concept. It's encouraging to see the theatre organ finally being accepted as a respected part of Americana. It was a long, uphill battle to gain the appreciation and dignity these installations represent. The foot soldier and prime mover has been the theatre organ enthusiast. His faith in his instrument is paying off.

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