



**Van Andel Museum Center
Meijer Theater
Public Museum of Grand Rapids**

272 Pearl Street N.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

The Wurlitzer Company
1928

Three Manuals, 30 Ranks

G. M. Buck Pipe Organ Company
1994

Main Chamber

8	Clarinet	61 pipes
8	Quintadena	61 pipes
8	Quintadena Celeste	61 pipes
8	Brass Trumpet	61 pipes
16 - 4	Horn Diapason *	85 pipes
4	Horn Diapason Celeste	61 pipes
8	Tibia Clausa	61 pipes
16 - 8	Tuba Horn	73 pipes
16 - 8	Oboe Horn	73 pipes
8	Vox Humana	61 pipes
16 - 2	Concert Flute	97 pipes
8	Flute Celeste	61 pipes
8 - 4	Salicional	73 pipes
8 - 4	Voix Celeste	73 pipes
4 - 2	Lieblich Flute	73 pipes

* 1-12 Metal Diaphone

**Main Unenclosed
Percussion**

Chrysoglott
Marimba
Traps and effects

Solo Chamber

8	Vox Humana	61 pipes
8	Brass Saxophone	61 pipes
16 - 8	Open Diapason *	73 pipes
16 - 4	Solo String	85 pipes
8 - 4	Solo String Celeste	73 pipes
16 - 2	Tibia Clausa	97 pipes
8	English Post Horn	61 pipes
8	Krumet	61 pipes
8 - 2	Viol d' Orchestra	85 pipes
8 - 4	Viol Celeste	73 pipes
8	Kinura	61 pipes
8	Orchestral Oboe	61 pipes
8	Tuba Mirabilis	61 pipes
8	Pedal Tibia Clausa	32 pipes

* 1-18 Wood Diaphone

**Solo Unenclosed
Percussion**

Glockenspiel
Xylophone
Sleighbells
Cathedral Chimes

Unenclosed

Traps and Effects

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 8 Trompette en Chamade | 61 pipes
on rear wall |
| Grand Piano | On stage |

30 ranks of pipes	380 stops and controls
7 tuned percussions	Digital stop combination action
15 traps and effects	Digital relay computer
20 horsepower blower	Transposer
Over 25" static wind pressure	Digital organ record/playback system

The Mighty Wurlitzer

The Public Museum's theater organ, opus 1836, was built in 1928 by the Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda, New York, for the Stanley Theatre in Jersey City, New Jersey. Designated a "three-manual special", it was one of three identical instruments specifically designed and built for the Stanley-Warner Theatres in Pittsburgh, Jersey City and Atlantic City. After nearly three decades of service, the theater and organ fell into disrepair. It was rescued by a New York theater organ enthusiast and placed into storage. In the mid 1970s it was purchased by the Roaring Twenties Pizza Parlor in Grand Rapids, MI. The restaurant, later to become Good Time Charley's, provided theater organ entertainment for thousands between 1977 and 1991.

When it was learned that the organ might be sold to an Australian buyer, a local group known as the "Organ Transplant Committee," was formed to try to keep this unique instrument in Grand Rapids. At the same time, plans were being finalized for the new Public Museum of Grand Rapids. Through the combined efforts of the Organ Transplant Committee and the Public Museum staff, the decision was made to install the organ in the Meijer Theater of a new museum building under development. In September 1991, theater organ consultant Ken Crome of Reno, Nevada, came to Grand Rapids to supervise the dismantling of the organ. More than 90 crates were constructed to contain the organ components, and it was stored at Powell Moving Co. until restoration work could begin.

Over five hundred donors responded to a two year appeal for funds to save and restore the Mighty Wurlitzer. Their names are listed on the theater's rear wall under the Trompette en Chamade. The Museum's development staff helped the Organ Transplant Committee to accomplish its many tasks, and its design architect, E. Verner Johnson & Associates of Boston, Mass, Lawrence

Mann, Project Architect, redesigned the 257-seat Meijer Theater to accommodate the instrument.

After requesting and evaluating bids, the Organ Transplant Committee recommended that the Museum's governing board award the contract to restore and install the organ to the G. M. Buck Pipe Organ Co. of Grand Rapids, whose principal, George Buck, brought 15 years of experience with the Wurlitzer Co. to the task. Restoration began in July 1993 and continued until the opening of the Van Andel Museum Center. Then, on November 19, 1994, the Wurlitzer Organ was heard once again. Twenty community volunteers, supervised by the Buck Pipe Organ staff, contributed over 2,000 hours of work towards the restoration.

The organ has three manuals (keyboards) and thirty ranks (set of pipes). Twenty-nine ranks are installed in two chambers at the rear of the theater. Windows and lighting inside the chambers allow the public to see what the organ's inner works look like. The Trompette en Chamade is mounted horizontally on the rear wall. Percussions are housed in two small chambers above the rear doorways. Air is supplied by a 20 horsepower blower producing of twenty inches of static wind pressure.

Recently some changes have been made in the placement of the swell shades of the pipe chambers to improve the sound in the room, and in their coverings to help match the décor in the auditorium. The marimba-harp, cathedral chimes, and xylophone were removed from the enclosed chambers and installed on the rear wall of the theater where they can be heard and seen.

Several years after the organ's premier at the Museum it was learned that the large wood Diaphone pipes that had been separated from the organ some years back had become available. They were acquired, restored, refinished, and installed. Once again, the original instrument is complete.