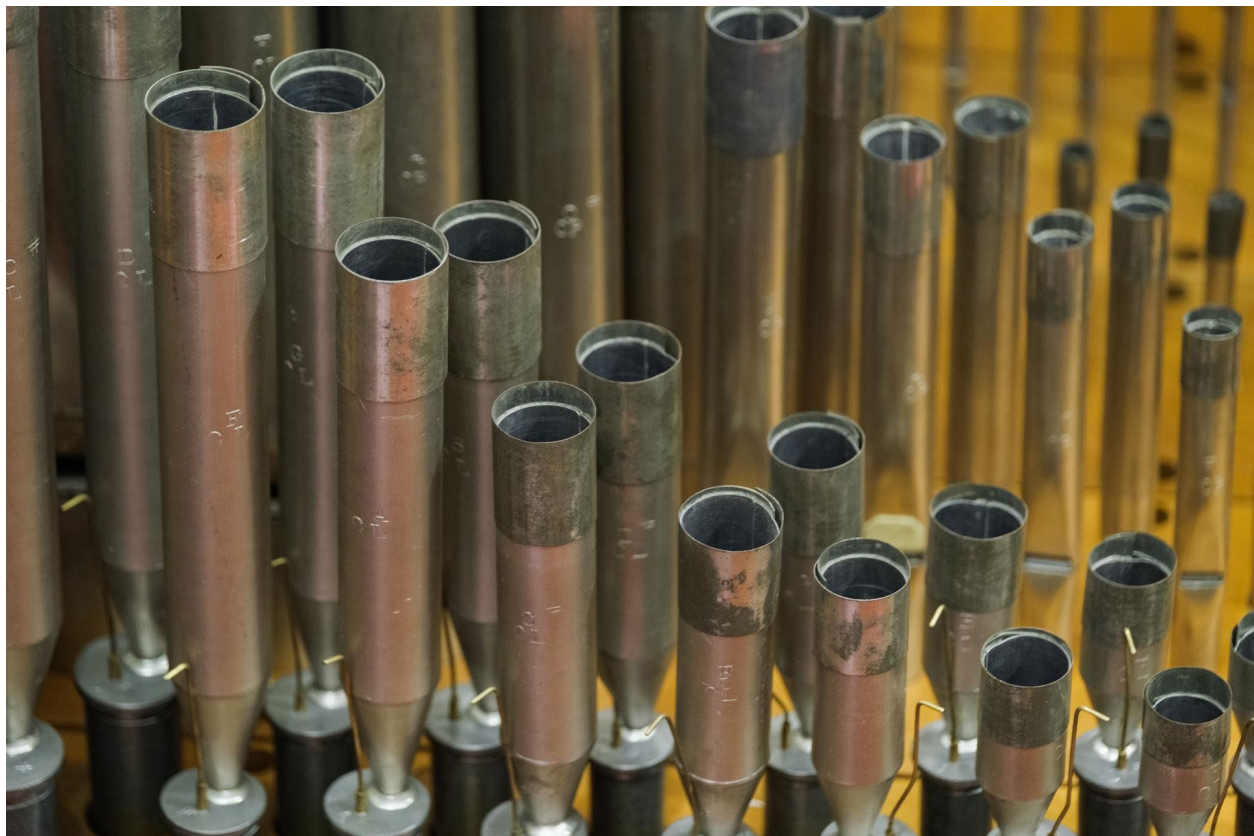
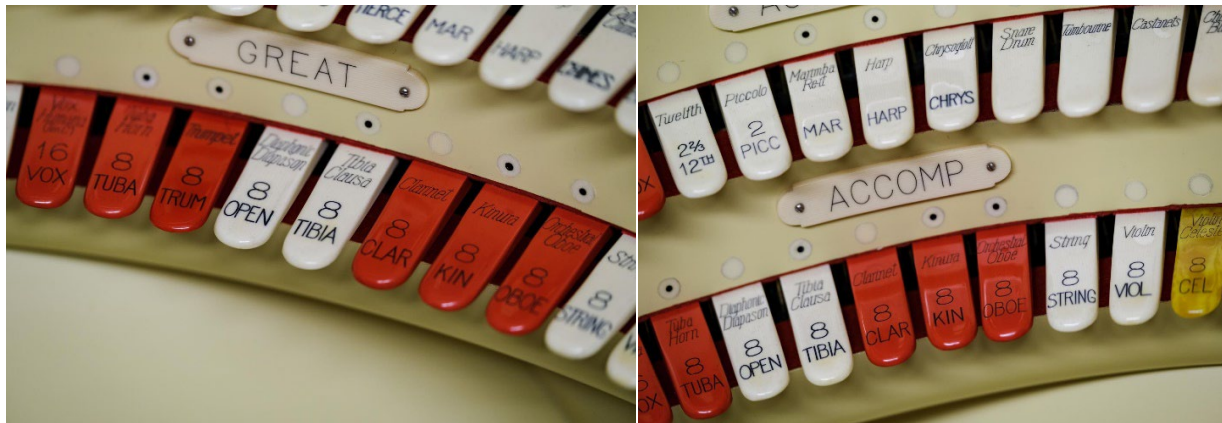




Think of the possibility of playing the drums, bass, and violins all at once. The idea of it seems impossible. But the Paramount's 1928 built Wurlitzer organ makes it possible. It is a high-pressure orchestral pipe organ with flutes, clarinet, string section, and various color reeds - played like a "one man band". In addition, the organ has tuned percussions like marimbas, xylophones, and even tuned sleigh bells. It is considered a medium-sized theatre organ with twelve ranks (sets) of pipes and three keyboards. The musical bass line is played with the organist's feet. The Wurlitzer has just over 1,200 pipes that range from 16 feet to only an inch length. Pipe length determines the physics of whether the note played is a rumbling low bass or high-pitched sound. The pipes are all behind the false box seats on each side of the stage. The Wurlitzer was designed for accompanying silent films but had a short public life as talking/sound films were invented in the early 1930s rendering the organ silent - covered in the orchestra pit.

The Wurlitzer organ has seen waves in its popularity. One rise was between 1969 and 1974 when the Cedar Rapids Area Theatre Organ Society (CRATOS) began repairs and reintroduced the instrument with several sold-out concerts featuring the Wurlitzer. Programming continued throughout the 1990s with a resurgence due to renewed interest and nostalgia for silent films.



The flood of 2008 caused havoc that destroyed the original console. A sister console built for the Kenmore theatre in Brooklyn, New York was purchased as part of the flood recovery efforts. The Brooklyn console was built at the exact same time as our Wurlitzer and was restored and decorated to match. Although the pipes were unharmed, the Mighty Wurlitzer organ began its first ever complete rebuild. With only around 2,200 Wurlitzer organs built between 1925 and 1932, the task of finding qualified restorers was difficult. The Crome Organ Company of Reno, Nevada was selected and provided the full removal, restoration, and reinstallation after the 2008 flood.

In the 1920s, there were other smaller Wurlitzers in the Cedar Rapids Isis Theatre (organ repossessed when theatre closed in 1928) and Majestic (theatre and organ burned suspiciously in 1934) theatres. There is only a handful of Wurlitzer Theatre organs in their original theatres, and we are lucky that ours exists.

For more information visit the Cedar Rapids Theatre Organ Society [www.cr-atos.org](http://www.cr-atos.org) vintage images, more history and flood images.

Watch Mark Herman play the Mighty Wurlitzer [here](#).