

ELSINORE

THEATRE

The Elsinore's Mighty Wurlitzer Organ

The Elsinore's Mighty Wurlitzer is the result of Salem organ buffs Clayton and Rick Parks wanting to find the perfect home for their residence theatre pipe organ.

In 1966, Clayton Parks acquired a 4 rank Wurlitzer organ for his West Salem home. The organ was originally installed in the United States Theatre in Vancouver, WA. It contained about 250 pipes. Three years later, another small Wurlitzer with 6 ranks, originally installed in Wurlitzer's San Francisco store, was purchased and combined with the first organ. The instrument contained about 700 pipes while in the Parks residence. Live pipe organ music was enjoyed in the home for twenty years, before the decision was made to remove it. Many parts had been collected and were stored since 1966, with the intent of someday finding a large building for the organ to speak into.

In 1986, Clayton's son, Rick, found a new home for the instrument. The Elsinore Theatre in downtown Salem, then owned by Tom Moyer was being operated as a movie theatre. The Parks family kept ownership of the organ and reached an agreement with Mr. Moyer to install their pipe organ in the theatre's existing chambers, left vacant in 1962 when the original 13 rank Wurlitzer was removed. The Elsinore changed ownership to an Act III theatre in 1989. The theatre became a performing arts center four years later, currently owned and operated by Historic Elsinore Theatre Inc.

The Parks Family donated the organ to the theatre in 1994. The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust generously gave \$60,000 towards improving the theatre's Mighty Wurlitzer. An anonymous donor also gifted one of the original Wurlitzer's ranks of pipes.

To make the Elsinore's current Wurlitzer a fine performing instrument several items needed to be replaced and upgraded. The first acquisition was a larger 3 manual console to control the additional planned ranks of pipes. This particular console was completely rebuilt, including new electronic stop actions. Besides the larger console, a state-of-the-art personal computer relay system was purchased to replace old 1920's era air and electricity operated relays. The old relays are bulky and were hard to maintain, besides taking an entire room to house them. The computer relay is really the "brains" of the organ, controlling all keying, switching and operating functions while the organ is being played.

Some of the additional ranks (a rank usually consists of at least 61 pipes having a distinct sound) and other items that were added to the organ are: 16' solo tibia (original), 16' diaphonic diapason, 16' tuba horn, 8' trumpet (new), 8' orchestral oboe, 8' krumet (new), 8' gambas (two sets, new), upright piano, marimba/harp, orchestral roll cymbal (custom-built), various sound effects, tremulants (the shaking bellows devices that produce audible vibrato), three regulators (new), a 4 rank windchest, several single rank chests, leather, felt, stop tablets and stop action magnets (new).

The organ now has 26 ranks, for a total of 1,778 pipes. The pipes range in size from a pencil up to 16' in length. The four chambers above the proscenium arch contain 11 tons of pipe organ!

The organ is now called the Parks/Murdock Mighty Wurlitzer. All maintenance on the instrument is done by a volunteer crew, assisted and supervised by Rick and Clayton Parks.

The Elsinore's Wurlitzer is currently the largest theatre organ installed in a theatre or performing arts center in the Pacific Northwest. The instrument can be heard during regularly scheduled silent movies and for occasional concerts. It is one of the finest Wurlitzer pipe organs in the country!