

Wurlitzer, Villa Marina Arcade



This is a 'unit' organ, that is to say, it has a number of ranks of pipes of various tones, each set out on its own mechanism or 'chest.' Each rank has additional notes to the top and bottom of the compass, giving it more pipes than there are keys on the keyboard, and enabling the ranks to be played, not only at different pitches, but also on different keyboards and on the pedals. This is the ultimate in flexible design so far as use of the available pipes is concerned, and was developed by Rudolf Wurlitzer from original ideas by Robert Hope-Jones (a Liverpool telephone engineer.)

In addition to pipework, theatre organs also include various sound effects (bird calls, surf, drums, train whistle, sleigh bells etc.

etc.) as was at one time necessary in their rôle as an accompaniment to silent films, most of these organs being originally built for cinemas.

The organ was brought to the Island in 1988, when it was first intended to install it in the Gaiety Theatre. This plan fell through, and after a less than satisfactory installation in the ill-fated Summerland building (which had to be pulled down because of concrete failure) it was recently overhauled by Len Rawl and built, much more successfully, into the refurbished Villa Marina Arcade in Douglas, where it has become a major attraction to visitors and locals alike.

